

Minnesota's K-12 Academic Standards and Assessments

The 2006 Legislature added math and science courses to the state's required academic standards

The 2003 Minnesota Legislature repealed the profile of learning portion of the high school graduation rule for the 2003-04 school year and replaced it with required academic standards in five subject areas: language arts; mathematics; science, including biology; social studies, including U. S. and world history, geography, economics, government, and citizenship; and the arts. The 2004 Legislature adopted science and social studies standards for the 2005-2006 school year and added locally developed health and physical education standard as a sixth required subject area. The 2006 Legislature imposed additional math and science course requirements on the class of 2015 and later. Public high school students must complete these standards to graduate. The federal No Child Left Behind Act makes state academic standards in language arts, mathematics, and science applicable to all public school students.

Students entering ninth grade must complete four language arts credits; three mathematics credits that encompass algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability; three science credits that include at least one biology credit and may include an agriculture science credit; three and one-half social studies credits; one arts credit; and at least seven elective course credits. In addition, students in the class of 2015 or later must complete an algebra I credit by the end of eighth grade, and an algebra II credit and a chemistry or physics credit before graduating. Districts may apply state or locally developed academic standards for the arts. Districts decide whether students meet course credit requirements by successfully completing an academic year of study or by demonstrating mastery of the applicable subject matter.

In addition to meeting course requirements, public school students also must satisfy existing state basic skills requirements in reading, math, and writing in order to graduate. A district must adopt the new graduation requirements no later than the 2007-08 school year; a district that adopts the new graduation requirements earlier must allow students who enter ninth grade by the 2003-2004 school year to graduate based on local requirements in effect when the students became ninth graders.

Benchmarks specify the academic knowledge and skills used to implement state academic standards

The Commissioner of Education must supplement the required academic standards with published grade-level benchmarks that specify the academic knowledge and skills that schools must offer and students must achieve to satisfy the standards. Benchmarks provide information about the content of standards and are used to develop tests. The commissioner must embed technology and information literacy standards and implement a cycle in the 2006-07 through 2013-2014 school years to review required academic standards, related benchmarks, and elective standards.

State assessments are aligned with state academic standards

As they become available, districts must use state assessments aligned with state-required academic standards in language arts, mathematics, and science to measure student progress in achieving those standards and to determine whether

students have satisfied state basic skills requirements in reading, math, and writing. The commissioner must not develop statewide assessments for social studies and arts standards. An 11-member assessment advisory committee reviews statewide assessments before they are finalized.

Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, students in grades 3 through 8 and in high school take annual language arts and mathematics assessments. Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, students take science assessments one time in the 3-5 and 6-9 grade spans, and a life sciences assessment in the 10-12 grade span. Districts administer alternative assessments to students with disabilities or limited English proficiency only when appropriate. The state and local districts must publicly report student, school, district, and state assessment results. By the 2006-07 school year, the commissioner must include in the assessment results a value-added component that measures students' growth in achievement over time. Public schools and districts may use students' assessment performance to promote or retain students or as a percentage of students' final course grade, or may record the performance on student transcripts.

Districts set local elective standards

Districts must establish local elective standards for and offer courses in vocational and technical education, health and physical education, and world languages. Districts use locally selected assessments to determine whether students achieve these standards. Districts must periodically review the local standards.

Legislature must approve changes in rules

The Education Commissioner adopted rules for standards in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and arts. The commissioner cannot amend or repeal these rules nor adopt new rules without specific legislative authorization.

Commissioner annually identifies high and low performing schools

The commissioner must use objective criteria, including student performance, school safety, staff characteristics, and by the 2006-07 school year, a value-added component, to identify four to six designations of high and low performing public schools. Annually, by September 1, the commissioner must post performance report cards that show each school's designation on the Education Department's web site. A school or district may appeal its designation to the commissioner; the commissioner's decision to uphold or deny an appeal is final. For 2006 only, the department must release all school performance report cards and AYP data to the public by September 1, unless a school or district submits an appeal to the department by August 31.

Timeline for Implementing New Standards

| School Year | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | 2007-2008 |
|---------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| Requirements | Profile of learning repealed and replaced with standards in six subjects; schools' report cards and high or low performing designations are posted on web | Students entering ninth grade must complete credit requirements in six subjects in order to graduate | Students in grades 3-8 and high school must take annual language arts and math assessments; science and social studies standards must be implemented for all students | Commissioner must include a value-added component when designating high and low performing schools; commissioner must review required standards, related benchmarks, and elective standards through 2013-2014 | All high school students are subject to new graduation requirements; students must take science assessments in grade spans 3-5 and 6-9, life sciences assessment in grade span 10-12 |

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