

000209

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children
Families &
Learning*

**Graduation
Standards**

**Report
To the
Legislature**

**as required by
M.S. 120B.02**

RECEIVED

MAR 30 2000

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
STATE OFFICE BUILDING
ST. PAUL, MN 55155

COMMISSIONER:
CHRISTINE JAX, Ph.D.

**Graduation
Standards**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mary Lillesve, Manager

Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

T: (651) 582-8812

FAX: (651) 582-8876

E-MAIL: mary.lillesve@state.mn.us

**Report to the
Legislature**

1500 Highway 36 West

Roseville, MN 55113-4266

TTY: (800) 627-3529 OR (651) 582-8201

**as required by
M.S. 120B.02**

2000

Report on Implementation of Graduation Standards

CONTENTS

Cost Estimate of Preparing ReportPage 2

Summary of Progress.....Page 3

Staff Contacts.....Page 11

Cost Estimate for Preparing this Report

The 1994 Legislature enacted, in Chapter 559, Section 1, a provision that provides as follows:

"A report to the legislature must contain, at the beginning of the report, the cost of preparing the report, including any costs incurred by another agency or another level of government."

The following provides the estimated cost incurred in the preparation of this report. This report provides information that the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning already collects as part of its normal business functions. Therefore, the cost information reported below does not include the cost of gathering and analyzing the data, but rather is limited to the estimated cost of actually preparing this report.

Funding for this report:

The graduation standards project received no appropriated funds for this biennium. All costs, personnel, editing, producing and printing were paid from agency funds.

The following is an estimate of the cost incurred by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning to produce this report: \$1,500. This is the total estimated cost of preparing the report.

Graduation Standards
Report to the Legislature
as required by M.S. 120B.02

Summary of Progress towards Implementation of the Results Oriented Graduation Rule

To meet the demands of the 21st Century, Minnesota is focusing on both the basics and on the higher levels of information and skills that our students need to succeed in this changing world. These include content knowledge, creative and critical thinking skills, problem solving and application.

Minnesota's Graduation Standards have two components, the High Standards and Basic Standards. The High Standards define what students should know, understand and be able to do to demonstrate a high level of achievement. In standards based education the instruction, assignments and assessments of student achievement are squarely focused on what and how well students are learning. While the standards are set by the state through the rule making process, assessment of student learning is demonstrated in the classroom through assignments and application activities designed by the teacher. The Basic Standards are a "safety net" to make sure no student graduates without learning the basic skills needed to live and work in today's society. Students must pass tests in reading, mathematics and written composition. In order to graduate from high school, students must pass the Basic Standards Tests and have a record of their achievement on 24 High Standards.

As directed in MS121.11, the State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted all rules necessary to implement a "rigorous, results oriented graduation rule." A standards-based system, Basic and High Standards, is now in place for all Minnesota public school students currently in the tenth grade or below.

I. Rulemaking

The Graduation Standards Rule for the Basic Standards in Reading and Mathematics (3501.0010-3501.0180) was amended. The amendment will align rule language with the 1996 law to keep the passing score at 75% and with the 1997 law to require the use of state tests only. The proposed rule for this revision was heard before an administrative law judge (ALJ) on November 8, 1999. Based on the ALJ's report, the Commissioner signed into rule the amendments in January 2000. Copies of the Statement of Need and Reasonableness (SONAR) and the revised rule are available on the CFL web site at <http://cfl.state.mn.us>.

Copies of the rule language and the SONAR are being widely disseminated to schools, parents, community members, and policy makers.

II. Basic Standards: Reading, Writing and Mathematics

A process for the development of new test items for the Basic Standards tests has been developed. The process includes input from Minnesota teachers regarding the selection, quality and alignment of the items to the Minnesota test specifications. The process insures a set of quality test items that are valid and reliable for each of the three tests. The Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL) facilitates this process in collaboration with the vendors selected to create and administer the tests.

The following test dates have been set for the Basic Standards in reading, mathematics and written composition in 2000. A five-year calendar for test dates has been adopted and sent to every district. The Basic Standards tests are high stakes for students and procedures to insure test security have been established. In order to meet district needs and be as flexible as possible within these parameters, makeup and additional test dates are included in the testing schedule.

Reading	February 1	8 th graders and retakes
Mathematics	February 3	8 th graders and retakes
Written Composition	January 26	10 th graders and retakes
Reading	April 17	Seniors (new and retakes)
Mathematics	April 18	Seniors (new and retakes)
Reading	July 18	9th-12th graders (new and retakes)
Mathematics	July 19	9th-12th graders (new and retakes)
Written Composition	July 20	9-12th graders (new and retakes)

III. High Standards: Profile of Learning

1. Implementation Manuals

With adoption of the Profile of Learning Rule in May 1998, all Minnesota school districts responded to the rule language by preparing an Implementation Manual and submitting it to the Commissioner by September 1998. The Manual includes local district policies and procedures that guide implementation of the rule within the district. The rule requires each district to update their Manual annually and inform the Commissioner of changes in district policies or procedures. All districts have submitted changes to their Manuals or notification that they have not made any changes.

In their Manuals, each district includes the policy and procedures which describe how they:

- provide opportunities for students to achieve the standards and assess them in courses and other learning activities, K-12;
- review and adopt assessments (performance packages);
- provide appropriate staff development for improvement of curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- enable students to meet graduation requirements within or outside of the district's program;

- advise students and their parents or guardians regarding student progress and achievement;
- keep records and report student achievement; and
- facilitate appeals of local policies and procedures

Additional information regarding staff development activities will be available in the Staff Development Report to the Legislature submitted on February 15, 2000.

2. Support for Implementation

Many state-wide activities and materials have been designed to assist districts and schools implement the Graduation Standards. Following is a description of some of those activities or products.

- Each district has identified a person to be the key point of contact to insure a two-way flow of information between each district and the department of CFL. Graduation Standards Technicians meet with Minnesota Educational Effectiveness (MEEP) Coordinators at least 6 times during the school year. These meetings occur at 17 locations across the state and provide an opportunity to disseminate accurate, consistent information, identify issues, provide feedback to CFL and solve problems.
- Workshops were conducted to provide information, materials, and strategies to assist educators in the implementation of the Graduation Standards. All workshops were conducted in multiple locations state-wide. While this is not a complete list, topics for the workshops included:
 - Basic information regarding Minnesota's standards
 - Advanced learning for teachers including writing of assessment tasks and differentiated instruction
 - Leadership strategies to review and redesign the school system
 - Reading strategies for K-3 teachers
 - Bi-annual seminars for superintendents for superintendents to provide current information regarding policy and support activities
 - Examination of curriculum materials in science and mathematics aligned with Minnesota standards
 - Using the environment as an integrating context for delivering the Standards
 - Workshops for school counselors to address placement, scoring and reporting issues
 - Collaborative strategies for Special Education teachers and classroom instructors
 - Writing assessment tasks aligned with the standards and district curriculum.
 - Using the new integrated mathematics curriculums
 - Instructional activities aligned with the high school Economics Standard
 - Implementation strategies for health and physical education
- Best Practice Networks, comprised of approximately 375 practicing teachers, have been established in the areas of Mathematics, Science, Reading, Writing, Arts and People and Cultures. These teachers have in-depth understanding of the Graduation Rules as well as a repertoire of best instructional strategies in their content areas. They are available to assist

teachers in their own or other schools to plan effective instruction that is aligned with the High Standards.

- Curriculum framework documents have been published for the Art, Math, Science, Decision-making, and People & Cultures Learning Areas. The documents can be used to guide decisions at the district and classroom levels regarding curriculum design and instructional strategies.
- Twenty-two K-12 teachers who have demonstrated skills in standards-based classroom instruction and outstanding leadership in their districts were selected to assist their colleagues. These Improvement Support Team (IST) teachers have been released from their classroom assignments through Intergovernmental Agreements in order to assist schools and individual educators at all levels to select and implement best educational strategies in order to improve student performance as described in the Graduation Standards.
- Videotapes designed to demonstrate exemplary student performance and clarify criteria used for scoring student work were completed in three Learning Areas: Inquiry, Write and Speak, and People and Cultures. A copy of each of these videotapes was disseminated to every district and the teacher preparation colleges/universities. Videotapes for the Learning Areas of Mathematics and Science are being produced at this time and will be disseminated to every district by June, 2000.
- State Scoring Criteria for each Learning Area were revised for the primary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels. Copies were disseminated to all districts and are available on the Minnesota Electronic Curriculum Repository (MECR). Teachers will use the criteria to evaluate student work when sufficient evidence of learning has been collected and a check list has been used to insure that evidence of student learning for all parts of the standard is included. It is at this time that a score for the standard is given and recorded. ✓
- Scoring with Criteria: Mentor for Minnesota™ was produced and disseminated to every district on a CD-ROM. This professional development tool was designed to provide information regarding scoring methodology, demonstrate the criteria used to score performance items for Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) tests in reading and mathematics, and writing and the Basic Standard Tests in written composition. This tool also provides teachers with an excellent opportunity to practice scoring student work with feedback.
- The Minnesota Electronic Curriculum Repository (MECR) was developed as a web site available through the Internet. Model assessment packages for most Preparatory and High School Standards are available on the site. Procedures for soliciting, approving and adding additional materials to the site have been established. Additional materials including links to other web sites and assessment tasks are being added. The software supporting the site is being modified to insure that educators have easy access to the site using the wide variety of hardware available throughout the state.

- Procedures for granting waivers related to implementation of the Graduation Standards have been established. Districts have two options during the 1999-2000 school year.
 1. Request a waiver from the Commissioner under Minn. Statute 120B.03 (1998). This option would allow a district to phase-in the learning areas during the 1999-2000 school years and/or develop a "local plan" for implementation. This option must result in full implementation by the 2001-2002 school year.
 2. Request a waiver from the State Board of Education under Minn. Rules pt. 3500.1000. Under this scenario, a district could request a waiver of certain aspects of the rule under the experimental programs rule. This option transferred to the Commissioner of CFL on January 1, 2000.

At the time this report was written, eight requests have been received but no waivers have been granted. One request was returned by the SBE as not meeting the criteria established through law or rule. The other requests are being considered according to established procedures. The Commissioner will act on the requests as soon as possible.

IV. Data Gathering and Planning

Since the end of the 1999 Legislative session, CFL has initiated a variety of strategies to gather data regarding implementation of the Graduation Standards. Commissioner Jax and members of her Cabinet have attended over 200 meetings where implementation of the Graduation Standards was discussed. These included:

- A Student Summit was held in October in St. Paul, Duluth, Crookston and Marshall. Students at the sites met with members of the Cabinet and expressed their concerns, questions and positions. All sites were electronically linked.
- Postcards were sent to every teacher in the state soliciting feedback regarding successes, issues and concerns.
- Educators are encouraged to communicate directly with the Commissioner via e-mail and at the Jaxchats address on the CFL web site.

Findings from these data gathering activities include the following:

- Service should be provided through a regional delivery system
- Many teachers see standards as an add on to the curriculum
- Few districts have staff development plans consistent with the National Standards of Professional Development
- Not enough time is devoted to staff development at the local level
- Support for standards based reform is sporadic throughout the state
- CFL has numerous training models, resources and other activities that are rarely coordinated or aligned with each other
- The current regional delivery model (MEEP) has emphasized "information sharing at the district level" with little follow-up at the site level
- Effectiveness of graduation standards technicians varies from district to district
- Many districts lack an adopted curriculum making it difficult to embed the Standards
- Many districts do not have curriculum specialists

- CFL does not have content experts in all Learning Areas
- Improvement Support Team (IST) teachers have been very successful
- Best Practice Networks are effective but not used to the extent possible
- CFL needs to establish its priorities and deploy resources towards those priorities
- Current research on teaching and learning, performance assessment and different learning styles should be gathered and disseminated by CFL
- No reform movement survives without leaders. However, CFL cannot provide sufficient leadership by itself to sustain the reform
- Record keeping is a critical need for teachers
- Parents do not have clear or sufficient information about the standards
- Information regarding the standards must be clear and understandable

Based on these findings, seven areas of need were identified and a strategic plan was formulated. The plan addresses:

1. Training and Support
2. Continuous Research and Development
3. Local Leadership
4. Informed Policy Development
5. Record-Keeping Tools
6. Supportive Parent Involvement
7. Accurate, Consistent and Clear Communication

Following are some of the specific activities that have been initiated to support the system in the transition to standards..

1. Local Professional Development Plan. An Advisory Committee has been established to develop a system for ongoing, sustained and continuous professional development in schools; promote local professional development plans that are consistent with the best practice characteristics of staff development, and develop local leadership that supports and sustains continuous and effective professional development. Several tasks are being accomplished in response to this goal. They include: a review of state and federal requirements for staff development plans, a review of all requirements in MN laws relating to professional development, collection of research literature and models of effective professional development, design of a needs assessment instrument for district use, and assistance to districts as they develop and implement their plans for staff development.

2. Delivery System for Assistance and Support. Goals include the development of a single system for delivering services to support the implementation of the standards at the site level and building the capacity of CFL to deliver services in the areas of best practice in teaching and learning, curriculum and instruction, performance assessment, embedding the standards, and information regarding the Graduation Standards rules. Support for implementation of the Graduation Standards is being strengthened by the reconfiguration of CFL staff assigned to Graduation Standards into one effective, coordinated delivery system model. Roles, relationships and processes to deliver comprehensive, coordinated support to schools are being

clarified and/or developed. The two main components of the delivery system are the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program (MEEP) and Learning Area Support Teams (LAS).

MEEP Coordinators will:

- Facilitate training and meetings at the regional level
- Coordinate services, meetings and training for their regions
- Assist districts with local professional development planning
- Act as broker/facilitator to sites/districts in locating resources to meet needs
- Receive requests for training and technical assistance and coordinate with the LAS teams to meet the needs of the site /district
- Coordinate dissemination of information and materials

Seven Learning Area Support teams have been established to:

- Design/establish models and strategies to promote:
 - Curriculum development in which standards are embedded in the local curriculum;
 - best instructional practices;
 - best assessment practices; and
 - identification of important content.
- Find/design/establish creative models for adult learners for each of the areas described above. These include but are not limited to using Best Practice Networks, Improvement Support Team teachers, curriculum framework documents, workshops, video/audio tapes, linking with other organizations
- Disseminate accurate information regarding the Graduation Standards

Each LAS team is led by a CFL content specialist and is composed of ISTs, BPN members, and representatives from higher education, district staff, and other CFL staff. LAS Teams have been organized for Communication Arts, Art, Mathematics, Science, People and Cultures, Decision Making, and World Languages. Inquiry standards will be infused into the planning of all LAS teams. Appropriate LAS teams will address standards in Resource Management. All LAS teams have been asked to integrate technology into the activities and materials they develop.

V. Recordkeeping

A format for local record keeping and interdistrict and state reporting for the standards has been established. This information is available in a document titled "High School Level Graduation Standards: Local Record Keeping and Interdistrict and State Reporting. The document has been available to all districts and vendors for the past two years. The document was revised in December 1999 to accurately reflect the final language of the Profile of Learning. This document is used by vendors to design software products to meet the recordkeeping requirements of the rules.

Criteria were developed aligned with requirements described in the rules and with the document described above. A process to certify vendor products was then established. Twelve products have been reviewed and certified by the CFL as meeting the Graduation Standards record keeping requirements. Five products are available to districts at no cost. However, setup, training, ongoing maintenance and updates will not be provided free.

CFL conducts regular meetings with vendors of software systems that can or will support implementation. The purpose of the meetings is to clarify rule requirements; surface issues, and identify potential for further development. Many teachers have voiced a need for electronic assistance in managing day to day information as it relates to instruction and assessment of the standards.

VI. Implementation of Graduation Standards in Each District

During December and January, MEEP Coordinators conducted a structured interview in each district in the state in order to elicit local perceptions regarding implementation. Data from these interviews will be used to inform policy makers, influence plans for assistance and support from CFL, and involve stakeholders at the local level in an analysis of what is and what should be happening in their district. The format not only identifies key components for successful implementation, but also allows participants to see where there is a consensus of perception and where there are discrepancies. Districts were encouraged to invite the superintendent, principals, teachers, school board members, students, community education staff, and community members to participate in this activity. Each participant was asked to individually respond to a set of nine questions and then participate in a discussion of those items. The questionnaire is configured so that participants respond to each item based on their belief of what should be and what is reality in their district.

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota has been contracted to review the collected data and prepare a report of the findings. This report will be disseminated to all districts and available to policy makers by the end of February.

Department of Children, Families & Learning

Staff Contacts

CFL Commissioner	Christine Jax	651/582-8207
------------------	---------------	--------------

Assistant Commissioner Office of Teaching & Learning	Jessie Montano	651/582-8690
---------------------------------------------------------	----------------	--------------

Learning Area Support Teams

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| • *Arts Education | Pam Paulson | 651/591-4700 |
| • *Communication Arts | Micheal Thompson | 651/582-8312 |
| | Alton Greenfield | 651/582-8785 |
| • Decision Making | Mary Thissen-Milder | 651/582-8452 |
| • *Math | Sharon Stenglein | 651/582-8859 |
| • *People & Cultures | Charles Skemp | 651/582-8850 |
| • *Science | Kathleen Lundgren | 651/582-8815 |
| • World Languages | Linnea Swenson | 612/798-6024 |
| • *Have Best Practice Networks | | |

Implimention Support Team Teachers	Mary Lillesve	651/582-8812
---------------------------------------	---------------	--------------

Implementation	Mary Lillesve	651/582-8812
----------------	---------------	--------------

Limited English Proficiency	Leigh Schleicher	651/582-8630
-----------------------------	------------------	--------------

MN Education Effectiveness Program	Diane Cirksena	651/582-8759
---------------------------------------	----------------	--------------

MN Electronic Curriculum Repository	Mary Lillesve	651/582-8812
----------------------------------------	---------------	--------------

Recordkeeping	Mark Manning	651/582-8820
---------------	--------------	--------------

Rulemaking	Mary Lynne McAlonie	651/582-8824
------------	---------------------	--------------

SciMath Minnesota	Bill Linder-Scholer	651/582-8813
-------------------	---------------------	--------------

Special Education	Barbara Stahl	651/582-8659
-------------------	---------------	--------------

MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF

*Children
Families &
Learning*

MISSION

*"Increasing the capacity of
Minnesota communities to
measurably improve the well being
of children and families."*

1500 HIGHWAY 36 WEST
ROSEVILLE, MN 55113-4266

T: (651) 582-8200
TTY: (651) 582-8201
<http://cfl.state.mn.us>