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Students enrolled in Minnesota public schools must show that they understand state academic standards in certain academic areas. While standards are determined at the state level, each district selects curriculum, instructional materials, and methods of instruction to implement the standards, and determines whether students meet the standards. This publication outlines state academic standards, development and review of the academic standards, equivalencies and waivers, and local standards and benchmarks.

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## State Standards

An academic standard is a summary description of student learning in a content area. Standards must be clear, concise, objective, measurable, and grade-level appropriate; not require a specific teaching methodology or curriculum; and be consistent with the constitutions of the United States and the State of Minnesota. Each standard has benchmarks—specific knowledge or skills that a student must master to complete part of an academic standard by the end of the grade level or grade band.

## Required State Standards

State law requires state standards in language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, health, and the arts. The standards in some areas must include specific content.

- **Math** standards must encompass algebra II and integrated math III or an equivalent in high school. In addition, the grade 8 standards must include completion of algebra.
- **Science** standards must include earth and space science, life science, and the physical sciences, including chemistry and physics.
- **Social studies** standards must include history, geography, economics, and government and citizenship that includes civics.

In 2024, the legislature required the Minnesota Department of Education to develop statewide health education standards. Locally developed health standards will apply until statewide rules implementing the statewide health standards are required to be implemented in the classroom. The health standards must include the content listed in [Laws 2024, chapter 115](#), article 2, section 21. This required content was already required to be taught in public schools even though health standards were locally determined.

## Equivalencies and Waivers

Schools must develop a process for a student participating in a rigorous course of study to seek a waiver from a required state or local standard. The school may waive the standard if: (1) the student is participating in a program or course of study that is at least as rigorous as the corresponding required state or local academic standard; (2) requiring the student to achieve the standard would preclude the student from participating in the rigorous course of study; and (3) the student satisfactorily completes the requirements for the rigorous course of study, learning opportunity, or education program. For example, a student enrolled in Advanced Placement American Government may receive a waiver from the government and citizenship state standards.

## State Standards Development and Review

The commissioner of education reviews and revises state standards on a ten-year cycle. The commissioner appoints a committee of persons with a variety of backgrounds, including parents, teachers, and current students, to review the current standards, develop draft standards, solicit feedback, and revise the proposed standards. The final draft of the standards then goes through a rulemaking process that includes publishing the draft in the state register, a public comment period, and a hearing. At the conclusion of the process, the standards are adopted in rule. The committee review, draft, and revision process may last several years, while the rulemaking process can take up to two years.

During the development process, the commissioner must:

- include the contributions of Minnesota American Indian Tribes and communities and embed Indigenous education for all students consistent with recommendations from Tribal Nations and urban Indigenous communities in Minnesota;
- embed technology and information literacy standards consistent with recommendations from school media specialists into the standards; and
- embed ethnic studies as they relate to the academic standards.

After the standards are adopted in rule, the department works with school districts and charter schools on implementation. At this stage, districts and schools identify and develop professional learning for teachers, evaluate current and future curriculum, align curriculum and assessments, pilot curriculum, and make other adjustments. This stage may last several years.

## Local Standards

Schools must develop local career and technical education (CTE) and world language standards and benchmarks, and establish a periodic review cycle for these standards and benchmarks. CTE standards must align with CTE frameworks developed by the Department of Education, standards developed by national CTE organizations, or recognized industry standards. For world languages, districts must use current world languages standards developed by the ACTFL (formerly known as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).



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