



MCA Score Application Document

Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards

[Minnesota Statute 120B.021](#) defines required academic standards for all students for statewide accountability. The Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards division worked with teachers to set statewide expectations for student achievement in our K–12 public schools. Student mastery of the standards is measured through a combination of classroom, school, district, and state assessments for formative and summative purposes.

The importance that *all* students are taught and satisfactorily complete *all* academic standards cannot be emphasized enough. Historically, when educational outcomes and curriculum are left open and loosely defined—that is, no standards are set—many children do not have access to rigorous curricula, particularly children of color, American Indian students, and students from low-income families (Scherer, 2001, pp. 14–18 & Lachat, 1999, pp. 8–11). By clearly defining the knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve, Minnesota’s academic standards were created to provide the basis for educational equity for K–12 public schools across the state. While local districts, schools, and teachers design curricula that sequence standards and define how long is spent on specific standards, students must not be taught a limited number of academic standards (e.g., “Power Standards”) due to prioritization or test preparation. All students are expected to satisfactorily demonstrate understanding of all standards.

Statewide Testing

[Minnesota Statute 120B.30](#) and [ESSA Federal Law](#) define the federally required standardized testing for Minnesota students. Standardized statewide summative assessments provide some of the information used to determine if school systems are teaching the standards in reading, mathematics, and science. Often the statewide assessments are used, in isolation, to make high-stakes decisions (i.e., teacher performance reviews and charter school authorizer renewal decisions). MDE is working on creating outreach opportunities specifically designed to help teachers understand the construction and purpose of statewide summative assessments and why assessment results should not be used alone when informing instruction but instead used alongside formative and interim assessment data.

Educator Application

It is important for educators to recognize the results of statewide summative assessments as one of many factors that inform the design and implementation of their curricula. Understanding statewide summative assessments does not imply that teachers should only teach certain standards or “teach to the test;” it means teachers are empowered with the knowledge to make informed curriculum decisions. Over the last few years, we have been listening to educators from around the state and have started creating resources in order to better support teachers in connecting academic standards with a deeper understanding of state summative assessments.

The MCA data is not intended to be used in isolation; it is intended to be used alongside all data points gathered throughout the year. When looking at the MCA data, educators need to ensure they are also looking at their local formative and interim assessment data points. The MCA data and reports generated are one data point among many that educators should use when making decisions about curriculum and instruction. Other possible resources to use alongside all data points can include, but are not limited to, the [Minnesota Academic Standards](#), [Achievement Level Descriptors](#), [Webb’s Depth of Knowledge](#), and the [Test Specifications](#).

References

- Lachat, M. A. (1999). *Standards, Equity and Cultural Diversity*. Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB).
- Scherer, M. (2001). How and Why Standards Can Improve Student Achievement: A Conversation with Robert J. Marzano. *Educational Leadership: Making Standards Work*, 59(1), 14–18.