

Common Principles of Effective Practice (CPEP) and Implementation:  
A Framework for Integrating Initiatives and Sustaining Evidence-based Practices

## Alignment with State and Local Academic Standards

### ***What are academic standards?***

The *Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards* set the statewide expectations for achievement for K-12 students. The standards for a particular grade level or grade band describe the academic content that is to be mastered by all students by the end of that grade level or band. Minnesota has state standards in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and the arts. School districts must establish their own local standards in career and technical education, world languages, health and physical education and the arts (if not using state arts standards).

In order to graduate, students are required to satisfactorily complete all state academic standards or local academic standards where state standards do not apply. Students also are required to satisfactorily complete the state's course credit requirements and successfully pass graduation examinations (Minn. Stat. § 120B.02).

The use of defined academic standards in Minnesota and other states and countries has become a critical means of evaluating educational effectiveness and monitoring student progress. Aligning educational practices to achieve academic standards has been identified as one of the eight *common principles of effective practice* that the Minnesota Department of Education recognizes as integral component of a systemic framework needed to support and sustain educational innovations.

### ***Why do we have academic standards?***

Standards define learning targets. The standards identify the most important knowledge and skills of the content area without specifying particular curriculum or instruction. Put another way, the standards identify what must be taught, rather than how it must be taught. By setting the expectations for achievement for K-12 students, the academic standards:

- Help define the statewide subject area requirements for course credits and graduation.
- Define the academic content for state tests which must be constructed and “aligned with the state’s required academic standards” (Minn. Stat. § 120B.30).
- Guide school districts in designing K-12 curricula.

Academic standards are paramount to every academic initiative in which schools and districts engage. Curriculum, instruction and classroom assessment must be aligned with state and local standards in order to achieve the knowledge and skills that have been identified as essential to the education of Minnesota’s students. All best practices including those that reflect the common principles of effective practice (e.g., data-driven decision-making, establishing goals and outcomes, culturally responsive teaching and learning, evidence-based practice) are driven by Minnesota’s K-12 Academic Standards and locally established standards.

### ***What are key components of academic standards?***

Schools are required to teach and assess both the state and local academic standards. State standards documents include standards and grade-level benchmarks. A *standard* is a general goal of student learning in a content area. A *benchmark* specifies the academic knowledge and skill that schools must offer and students must achieve to satisfactorily complete a standard by the end of a grade level or grade band. Benchmarks are used to inform and guide parents, teachers, school districts and others, and for use in developing state tests (Minn.Stat.120B.023). Performance on these assessments, in turn, informs educational practice, programming and policy. In addition, Minnesota's standards are required to reflect technology and information literacy standards and college and work readiness skills (Minn. Stat. § 120B.023), and the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities (Minn. Stat. § 120B.021).

### ***How are academic standards developed?***

K-12 academic standards are created by committees of stakeholders including parents, licensed teachers who are providing instruction in the subject area, faculty teaching core subjects at postsecondary institutions in Minnesota, local charter and school board members, and representatives of the Minnesota business community (Minn. Stat. § 120B.021). The Minnesota Department of Education facilitates the process for creating and revising state academic standards according to a periodic review cycle established by the state legislature. In content areas for which there are no state standards, districts create their own standards review process and a periodic review cycle (Minn. Stat. § 120B.023).

### ***How do we know whether students are achieving the academic standards?***

Academic standards are paramount to every academic initiative in which schools and districts engage. Curriculum, instruction and classroom assessment must be aligned with state and local standards in order to achieve the knowledge and skills that have been identified as essential to the education of Minnesota's students. Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards are assessed through the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) in language arts, mathematics and science, and local assessments. These assessment data help schools identify the needs of all students and improve curriculum and instruction. MCA testing is done at Grades 3-8 and Grade 10 in Reading, Grades 3-8 and Grade 11 in Mathematics, Grades 5, 8, and in High School for Science, and Grade 9 for Writing. Districts are also required to administer local assessments to determine if students have achieved elective locally established standards in career and technical education and world languages.

The Division of Academic Standards and Instructional Effectiveness provides technical assistance and support for Minnesota educators as they articulate standards-based instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners. The division also collaborates across the agency to coordinate efforts and integrate initiatives that impact schools.

### ***For more information on Academic Standards and Instructional Effectiveness***

Contact Dr. Beth Aune, Director: [beth.aune@state.mn.us](mailto:beth.aune@state.mn.us) or 651-582-8795.

K-12 Academic Standards: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards/>

Graduation Requirements: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/GradReq/index.html>

### ***For more information on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, Alternative Assessments and EL Tests:***

Testing resources for parents: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/JustParent/TestReq/>

Testing resources for teachers: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/Testing/index.html>