

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

MINNESOTA

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The Minnesota State Assessment System

Two sets of standards have been developed in Minnesota: the **Basic Standards** and the **High Standards**. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) assesses the Basic Standards and includes the following:

- ***Grade Levels and Subjects Tested***
 - Reading and Math in grades 3, 5
 - Writing in grade 5
 - The Basic Skills Test includes Reading and Math and is administered for the first time in grade 8. The test may be taken as many times as needed to pass and is a requirement for graduation.
 - Grade 10 students are tested writing, and must pass the test to graduate.

- ***Norm or Criterion Referenced*** – Criterion

- ***Matrix and Census Testing*** – Census

- ***Item Types***

Multiple choice and short answer for the MCA except for the writing sections which are more performance oriented as students produce a piece of writing on a specific topic.

- ***Student Performance Levels***

For testing in grades 3 and 5:

- Level 1=little evidence of knowledge and skills
- Level 2= partial knowledge and skills
- Level 3= solid academic performance

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- Level 4= superior performance

Testing for grades 8 and 10 require the following to pass the assessments:

1. 75% in Reading and Math
2. Level 3 or higher in Writing

- ***Inclusion Policies***

No students are automatically excluded due to disabilities or primary language. Exclusions are based on the IEP and decisions with regard to accommodations are made by the local districts.

- ***Other Assessments***

High Standards are assessed by the **Profile of Learning** for all students, starting with the class of 2002. This includes the compilation “performance packages” aimed to assess student knowledge in ten broad learning areas. *High School* students must choose 24 of a total of 48 packages geared to state standards. The state provides “model” performance packages as examples of possible assessments that can be used. However, the specific assessments used in the classroom are determined at the local level.

2. Minnesota also participates in the NAEP.

- ***State requirements for local assessment***

Districts are required to administer assessments that measure performance on the High Standards.

Performance Data

- ***What data are reported?***

The Summary and Profile Reports from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning include the following achievement data on the MCA test:

Student reports include three scores for each subject:

1. the scale score received (represents the number of points scored on the test)
2. achievement level achieved, and
3. state average scale score.

State, district and school reports include the average scale score and the percent of students in each of the four achievement levels.

- School and District Summary Reports provide expanded information about test objectives
- School, District and State Profile Reports include:
 1. the average scale score of all students tested
 2. the percentage of students included (specifying the number of special education students, LEP students, and those receiving free and reduced lunch)
 3. all students enrolled
 4. all students not including LEP students
 5. the percent of students at each achievement level
 6. the number of students tested, absent and not tested, and
 7. demographic information.

- ***How are the data distributed?***

State information compares district performance across the state, the districts themselves must also issue performance reports and reports are issued to the public.

- ***How are the data disaggregated?***

Data are not disaggregated by ethnicity at this time, but are disaggregated by the number of students with limited English proficiency, students receiving free and reduced lunch, and special education students.

The Minnesota State Accountability System

The Minnesota system of accountability has high stakes for students and low stakes for schools and districts, aside from public reporting.

- ***Student Accountability***

Students are held accountable for performance on the MCA and the Profiles of Learning. Students must pass the 8th and 10th grade assessments in reading, math and writing to graduate.

- ***School Accountability***

Schools are held accountable for Performance on the MCA and the Profiles of Learning only through public reporting.

The state has not yet come to a final definition of adequate yearly progress for **Title I schools**, so their transitional recommendation to districts is that a school must increase by two NCEs and 60% of students in the school must have achieved the district outcomes. Ultimately, it is a district decision at this point, and is only related to Title I schools.

The state does not have a rewards system in place for schools or districts that do well on the MCA or other assessments (Quality Counts 99)

- ***District Accountability***

District levels of achievement as set by the state are as follows:

- 1996-97 achievement is set at 70%
- 1997-98 achievement is set at 75%
- 1998-99 achievement is set at 80%
- By 2000 achievement is set at ensuring that all students who graduate will have passed the Basic Skills tests required in reading and math.

However, districts are only held accountable for MCA and Profiles of Learning through public reporting; achievement data are given to parents and reported in the press. The transitional definition of adequate yearly progress for districts is the same as the school definition.

- ***Subgroup Performance as an Indicator***

This indicator is not considered in the formal accountability system.

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- ***Identification***

The state has never identified schools or districts outside Title I that were considered low performing, and no definitions have been developed outside Title I. However, schools do report their testing data to the state, and the state will identify schools not making the transitional definition of adequate yearly progress and remind the district of its responsibility to identify and support that school(s). Districts are working with schools that show low performance on state or norm-referenced tests, but it varies by district.

- ***Assistance***

If a Title I school is not making adequate yearly progress according to the transitional definition, the school is then notified by the *school support team* and a visit is scheduled. The school support team goes to the school and spends time at the site, interviewing staff and observing the school, and then an exit interview is conducted. A written report is developed and delivered to the school once the team returns to the department and is able to discuss their findings. There is follow up with the school as well.

- ***Who provides the assistance?***

The school support or improvement teams are composed of Title I staff and other personnel who work on federal programming within the department as part of the Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program (MEEP). They serve on a regional basis, with 11 offices across the state and 15 full-time coordinators that work on systemic reform. Teachers within the state's Best Practices Network of expert teachers and other educational experts in the state serve on these teams. Teams are generally 4 to 5 people.

- ***Does support to Title I schools differ?***

MEEP support is provided to all schools undertaking reform, not just Title I schools.

Alignment of the State Accountability System and Title I

Although the state has not yet met the Title I requirements, the development of the current assessment and reporting systems are a direct result of the state attempt to come into federal compliance. The adequate yearly progress definitions and support systems in place at this time are only for Title I schools, and adequate yearly progress results are only reported to the state. The state has a strong history of local control.

Contact Information

Contact information is unavailable

For further information, go to the state's web site for the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning at www.educ.state.mn.us.