

The Seamless Web: Minnesota's New Education System

2 The Profile of Learning

Minnesota's new Graduation Standards consist of two parts. The first is the requirement by law that all students must pass an eighth grade level competency test to be eligible to graduate from a public high school. Benchmark tests in grades three and five are also required but are not a condition for graduation. Part two of the Graduation Standards consists of the high school level Profile of Learning. This is the requirement by law that students must complete 24 "content standards" to be eligible to graduate from a public high school, beginning with the class of 2002. The new rules specify that these content standards can only be met by the completion of "performance packages." For that reason, the real requirement of the Profile is that high school students complete 24 performance packages (unless more than one content standard is included in a performance package, then the number could be less than 24).

The Profile of Learning also requires that schools teach 78 content standards from grades K-12, including the 24 required in high school. Once again, all these content standards can only be met by completing the performance packages.

The Profile of Learning became a requirement for Minnesota education in the spring of 1998 by means of the rule-making process. In Minnesota government, rules have the effect of law unless they are overturned by the legislature. The proper intent of rule-making is to implement policy decisions made by the legislature. In the case of the Profile of Learning, however, rule-making was used to create education policy, not to implement policy decisions already made.

The Profile of Learning is a radical redefinition of education. As far as the State of Minnesota is concerned, students now need meet no requirements of courses completed, nor of credits earned, nor of grades received, nor of academic tests taken or completed past the basic eighth grade level tests (the writing test is given in the 10th grade). The Profile of Learning fulfills the prediction of Lamar Alexander who said, "Substantial, even radical changes, will have to be made." (The brief government publication containing this statement used the words "radical" or "revolution" nine times.)²⁸

What is the real objective of the Profile of Learning? Minnesota's School-to-Work grant application refers to it as the "Profile of Learning or High Standards, which is evolving from the high standards movement as well as from SCANS and STW that emphasize the integration of academic skills and workforce competencies."²⁹ As was noted in chapter 1, the Profile of Learning is also the "centerpiece" of Minnesota's compliance with Goals 2000. This means that the Profile of Learning is primarily Minnesota's way of implementing the national education agenda—including Goals 2000, STW and the SCANS Report. To illustrate that essential truth, consider the following chart in the SCANS Report.³⁰

All the basic tenets of the Profile of Learning are outlined in the chart from the SCANS Report: Teachers become facilitators instead of instructors, group projects are valued more than independent study, students assess themselves as opposed to being tested by their teachers, learning areas replace academic disciplines, education must occur in applied form instead of being theoretical and academic, problem solving is more important than knowing facts, and values and attitudes are inculcated by the nature of the classroom structure.

From the conventional classroom...	...to the SCANS classroom
Teacher knows answer.	More than one solution may be viable and the teacher may not know it in advance.
Students routinely work alone.	Students routinely work with teachers, peers and community members.
Teacher plans all activities.	Students and teachers plan and negotiate activities.
Teacher makes all assessments.	Students routinely assess themselves.
Information is organized, evaluated, interpreted and communicated to students by teacher.	Information is acquired, evaluated, organized, interpreted and communicated by students to appropriate audiences.
Organizing system of the classroom is simple: one teacher teaches 30 students.	Organizing systems are complex: teacher and students both reach out beyond school for additional information.
Reading, writing and math are treated as separate disciplines; listening and speaking often are missing from curriculum.	Disciplines needed for problem solving are integrated; listening and speaking are fundamental parts of learning.
Thinking is usually theoretical and "academic."	Thinking involves problem solving, reasoning, and decision making.
Students are expected to conform to teacher's behavioral expectations: integrity and honesty are monitored by teacher, self-esteem is often poor.	Students are expected to be responsible, sociable, self-managing, and resourceful; integrity and honesty are monitored within the social context of the classroom; student's self-esteem is high because they are in charge of their own learning.

The above chart, printed by the federal government in 1992, is an accurate description of the Profile of Learning. In 1996, Minnesota's CFL reprinted the same chart to describe how Minnesota's School-to-Work system is a "reinvention" of education in our own classrooms.³¹ Minnesota's program is obviously the product of the master plan at the federal level. (See chapter 17.)

Is the Profile of Learning "High Standards"?

Minnesota's new system of education is largely implemented by means of the performance packages. Following the federal outline, these performance packages are designed to be mostly non-tested. For that reason, they provide no information which can allow for the comparison of Minnesota students to students in earlier classes, or to students in other states, or to students in other countries. The suggestion that these packages are "High Standards" is not true.

In addition, the CFL determines how the performance packages are to be evaluated. Their required system is primarily one of rating scales, a procedure that is inherently subjective and notoriously unreliable.³² That is why the firm that was hired to estimate the cost of the Profile

made this comment, "... not much more than participation is required to fulfill [Minnesota's] graduation requirements."³³ The performance packages tell us little about whether students are meeting the state content standards.

These content standards are inadequate as well. Their inferior quality prompted education analyst Diane Ravitch to comment: "In the area of social studies, the Minnesota standards are among the worst in the nation....They are not testable...They are not high standards....I advise you to throw them out and start over."³⁴ Why would CFL adopt standards that are "not high" and "not testable"? The reason, as we shall see, is that they exist to reinvent education and to change the nature of the students produced by our schools, not to raise academic achievement.

Individual schools may make additional requirements for graduation beyond passing the basic standards tests and the completion of 24 content standards (done by performance packages), but state government requires no more than that. Why would schools adopt a new system that is so clearly non-academic? The reason is they were given no choice (as explicitly stated in the State Board of Education rules adopted in the spring of 1998). The revolution is being imposed from the top. It is being imposed by the force of state and federal law.

Why would legislators agree to force this radical new system onto all our schools? The reason is because, for all practical purposes, the Minnesota Legislature was bypassed in the decision-making process. In 1993, the legislature agreed to enable the State Board of Education to establish a "results-oriented graduation rule." By that language, most legislators thought they were voting on academic achievement tests. Most legislators had no idea that they were empowering the education central planners to set up a bureaucratic system of performance packages, portfolios, rubrics, and subjective assessments.

How does the Profile of Learning fit into the new revolutionary system of education? As was mentioned, the Profile of Learning consists of the required teaching of 78 content standards by means of performance packages. Notice the word "performance." Why require "performance" packages instead of "academic achievement" packages?

The reason is because "performance" packages require students to engage in, to buy into, and to be judged on certain, specified behavior. Allow education bureaucrats to determine what must be taught in the schools, and how it must be taught, and they cannot help themselves. Their behavioral goals rise quickly to the top.

In its 1995 Report to the Legislature, the CFL described its objectives of student behavior change as follows:

Education reform movements in other states have shown that these [comprehensive] goals are difficult to assess directly and that parents do not want student records to refer to these goals. However, students will have the opportunity to practice these behaviors in all classes, they are the task management skills in the Profile of Learning assessment packages. [Emphasis added.]³⁵

It should be noted that the CFL now claims that the performance packages are really "assessments," and that they are called "performance" packages because they measure what students can do. Once again, there is a huge difference between the rhetoric and the reality of what the system actually is. The new state rules correctly define "performance packages" as "a group of assignments and applications activities [exercises] that a student shall perform to demonstrate completion of the specifications of a content standard." The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* defined the packages as "lesson plans with [an] attitude."³⁶ *The packages are assignments, not assessments. To call them assessments deliberately confuses the issue.* The performance packages are used for instruction. They are used to teach identifiable behaviors,

values and concepts. They are lesson plans. The teachers are then required to evaluate (assess) how well the students have done the assignments.

Why require assessments instead of tests? The reason is because the word "assessments" is broader and more ambiguous than "tests" and includes student opinion as well as subjective rating-scales designed to measure behavior and values. The core meaning of "assess" is to assign a value to something. Tests, in contrast, are more clearly defined objective instruments which are especially useful for measuring academic knowledge and skills. The new jargon is totally consistent with the goal of shaping student behavior as opposed to improving academic knowledge.

This is why the activities required by the packages are mostly group projects, also called "collaboratives," another god-word in the revolution in education. (One wonders how much difference there is between "collaboratives" and "collectives.") Group projects are well-known in education circles for being a relatively inefficient way to teach academic content.³⁷ Why, then, do the packages rely on group projects? One reason is because group projects are especially effective in changing values, attitudes and behavior. In addition, big business, we are told, wants employees who work well in groups. At the same time, however, we are told that businesses don't hire people because they understand Shakespeare, or because they are well-versed on our federal Constitution, or because they can balance their checkbook. The revolution in education is designed to obtain the support and cooperation of large corporations by promising to deliver the kind of employees that big businesses supposedly wants to hire. It is unlikely that will actually happen, however.

WORDS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE PROFILE OF LEARNING	
"team" or "group" used 16 times	"individual responsibility" used 0 times
"consensus" used 5 times	"debate" used 0 times
"Environment" or "environmental" used 16 times	"private property" used 0 times
"diversity," "culture" or "cultural" used 36 times	"equality," "liberty" or "right to life" used 0 times

What are the attitudes and values which are at the heart of the Profile of Learning? The "Words and Concepts" table, which summarizes the use of various words and concepts in the rules which mandate the Profile of Learning, will give us some idea of the world-view that is being taught along with the behavior.

A more complete description of the values promoted by the new system of education appears in the "Profile of Learning Values" chart. The values outlined in the chart can be found throughout the new system of education. For example, Minnesota's *Goals 2000 Technology Plan* says: "To develop such learners [in the new system], the classroom teacher must be the one who *facilitates* learning, rather than inculcates instruction."³⁸

The *Technology Plan* also states: "Instead, students and educators will enter into a brave new technological world in which students will become self-directed learners..." (Emphasis added.)³⁹

The *Technology Plan* adds:

World View Attributes describe student **attitudes** and perspectives... These attributes prepare students for future career, **family** and **personal roles**....students must be expected to understand the need for technology and its impact on economic, **social** and **ecological** systems. When the impact of technology, both **personal** and **global**, is recognized by students, they will perceive

PROFILE OF LEARNING VALUES		
Group identity	NOT	Individual identity
Government control	NOT	Limited government
Teachers as facilitators	NOT	Teachers as instructors
Compliance	NOT	Independence
Globalism	NOT	Nationalism
Managed economies	NOT	Free enterprise
Quality of life	NOT	Right to life
Relative morality	NOT	Universal morality
Relative truth	NOT	Objective truth
Rights granted by government	NOT	Inherent rights protected by government
Unrestrained environmentalism	NOT	Environmentalism with property rights and the importance of free enterprise
Gay rights elevated	NOT	Marriage elevated
Diversity	NOT	Equality
Feelings are important	NOT	Knowledge is important

learning as a **lifelong** process and associate new learning with the continually changing technological environment. Through recognition and utilization of recent developmental opportunities, use of a **multi-cultural approach to technology, and identification of interrelated technology, students will attain a global** perspective of technology. [Bold print added.]⁴⁰

Notice that the document is quite open about the need for the new system of education to teach "world-view" and "attitudes." Two paragraphs later, the Technology Plan used the phrase "attitudes and values." Notice that the paragraph used the word "global" twice, but does not use the word "national." Notice that "multicultural" is dragged into the script in a bizarre way—what is a "multicultural approach to technology"? Most importantly, notice the advocates of the revolution in education emphasize that indoctrination in world-view, personal attributes, attitudes and values (social engineering) is essential to their vision for education's brave new world.

Minnesota's New Education Goals

Minnesota's Department of Children, Families and Learning has repeatedly said that the Profile of Learning is built around Minnesota's new "comprehensive goals." These five goals are:

1. Purposeful thinking
2. Effective communicating
3. Self-directed learning
4. Productive group participation
5. Responsible citizenship

In its 1995 Report to the Legislature, the Department of Education described these goals as the answer to the question "What do you want students to be like when they leave our schools?" Notice the question is not, "What do you want students to know?" The question is what should students be like? Look at the five new goals. They are more about attitudes, values and behavior than about knowledge. The department commonly describes these goals as "behaviors."⁴¹

The next question is what do the education revolutionaries mean by goals like "productive group participation" and "responsible citizenship"? The following chapters on performance packages will answer that question.

Notes:

28. United States Department of Education, "America 2000: An Education Strategy," August 1991, p. 41.
29. Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, Minnesota School-to-Work Initiative, August 30, 1996, p. 6.
30. U. S. Department of Labor. Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance, A SCANS Report for America 2000 (Washington D. C., April 1992), p. 42.
31. Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, Making Connections: School-to-Work Resource Guide (St. Paul, 1996), pp. 12, 13.
32. Peter N. Berger, Teacher Magazine, March 1998.
33. Augenblick & Meyers, p. 6.
34. Diane Ravitch, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and former Assistant Secretary of Education, from a letter sent to Minnesota's CFL.
35. Linda Powell et. al., Commissioner of Education, "Report to the Legislature," p.117.
36. Star Tribune, January 24, 1999.
37. Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs: University of Minnesota, "The Education Industry Report," September 1998, p. 7.
38. Minnesota Goals 2000 Technology Panel, Goals 2000 Technology Plan, September 1995, p. 11.
39. Ibid., p. 43.
40. Ibid., Appendix B.
41. Linda Powell, Commissioner of Education, and Georgina Stephens, President, State Board of Education, "Report to the Legislature on the Graduation Standards Project," p. 117.