

How does it Abandon Academics?

"Minnesota's Graduation Standards serve as the cornerstone of Minnesota's School-to-Work System... This helps to ensure that Minnesota's efforts to establish a comprehensive statewide School-to-Work System are directly aligned with the state's Goals 2000 plan and the Graduation Standards." page 6, "Minnesota School-to-Work Initiative."

By shifting the emphasis of education away from academics, and placing it on performance, the Graduation Standards have altered the purpose education.

Examples of School To Work:

Instead of providing a broad base of knowledge to equip students as well-rounded individuals, students are now taught entry-level job skills and given the time to demonstrate their "proficiency" by working various jobs during the school day.

For instance, Eden Prairie students discover their future by learning to operate a cash register, while a Saint Paul student gains experience in "media arts" in the Walgreen's photo department. While students wanting to pursue a vocational track should have the opportunity, it should not be forced upon everyone. In Saint Paul and Minneapolis, under the name of Small Learning Communities, ALL 8th graders are forced to have a career focus for their high school education.

The Graduation Standards and School to Work place government in the driver's seat of our children's future by making them the directors of their future occupations. We force children to grapple with careers at the ages of 12 and 13. **We limit horizons by narrowing their training.**

What Can Be Done?

"The patient [Profile of Learning] may not be on life support yet, but it's getting awful close."

-Senator Dan Stevens, 2002 Legislative Conference Committee

Become Involved:

As a parent, the most important thing to do is become involved in your children's education. Start reviewing their curriculum, looking at what is and is not being taught. Many times, simply voicing your concern can bring about change. Other times, you will be made to feel like you are the only one to have these concerns. That is simply not true. **State law requires that every school district allow for parental review of curriculum and alternative instruction if requested.** (Section 120B.20)

Say "NO" to Career Tracking:

Minnesota law also provides **protection against mandatory career tracking**. If your child is made to choose a career cluster or spend school hours at a job-site, you have the authority to stop this. (*MN Statute 120B.125*). **Parental involvement and non-compliance can have the greatest impact in stopping this system.**

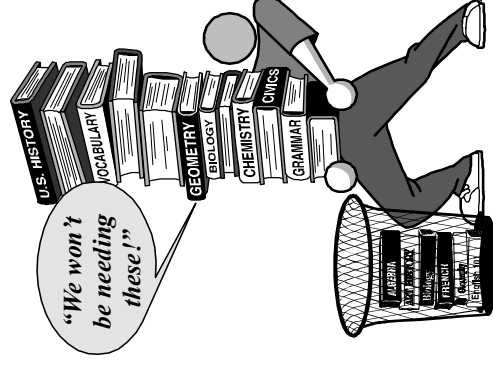
Legislative Level:

Our state must seek a waiver to remove us from the mandates of GOALS 2000. If the waiver is denied, Minnesota taxpayers need to ask themselves if it is worth handing over 100% of classroom curriculum and testing to federal government mandates when only 2% of the total cost is being borne by the federal government for compliance with those mandates. **Legislators need to hear their constituents' views on these issues.** The highest academic standards ever attained in the history of Minnesota occurred without federal or state mandates or standards. Local control is the most viable avenue to academic excellence.

Minnesota's Profile of Learning: What Is It?

"To call the Profile of Learning high standards would be laughable if it weren't such a serious issue as the education of our children,"

-John Knapp, Chairman of the Mathematics Department at Southwest High School, Minneapolis.



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Minnesota's Profile of Learning: What Is It?

For four years, Minnesota's Profile of Learning (POL) has been the most contested issue at the state legislature, teachers have been subjected to unreasonable federal mandates, and our children have become the subjects of an experimental education. **So what is the Profile of Learning all about?**

Minnesota's Profile of Learning is one part of the new Graduation Standards. The Grad Standards consist of two parts: **1) The Basic Skills Test** and **2) The Profile of Learning**. To graduate from a public high school in Minnesota, students must pass the Basic Skills Test with a 75% passing score, and they must have at least a score of "1" on required Profile of Learning "performance packages."

1) Basic Skills Test:

First administered in 8th grade, the Basic Skills Test sets minimum competencies in math and reading. Students who do not pass this test are allowed to retake it every year until they do. *The Basic Skills Test is the only academic achievement test required for high school graduation, yet it only requires 6th grade level competencies.*

2) Profile of Learning:

Many recognize the Profile as its "performance packages," now renamed "standards." The performance packages consist of 80 content standards, 56 of them required in grades K-8th and 24 from 9th -12th. *Packages are highly specific and detailed projects that focus on attitudes, values and beliefs of students, rather than on academics.*

According to the U of M Study, *The Impact of MN's "Profile of Learning*, released April of 2002,

a "constructivist philosophy toward teaching and learning" underlies the development of these "high standards". Education is no longer focused on academics; rather children "construct" their own meaning.

Failing, Non-Academic Standards:

Proponents of the Profile describe them as high standards, although **the Profile continuously receives failing grades from outside evaluators.**

The Graduation Rule defines performance packages as "a group of assignments and application activities [exercises] that a student must **perform** to demonstrate completion of the specifications of a content standard." How do you grade performance? It is almost impossible. Even a score of "0" represents an "incomplete," not failing, grade.

To give an example of the non-academic Profile standards, one class of juniors and seniors spent hours constructing a Mexican Government building out of graham crackers to fulfill their World Language requirement. Teachers often have to sacrifice chapters of academic education to pave way for time-consuming projects. While project learning has always been incorporated into education, students must first be factually grounded.

Much could be written to explain the Profile. In summary, it is a **federal system which shifts the focus away from academics towards minimum competencies, attitudes, values, and beliefs.**

For your free packet of information or copies of the referenced laws, please call our office at 651-646-0646 or e-mail us at mredco@mcleodusa.net. Visit us on the web at www.edwatch.org.

Where Does It Come From?

"Shouldn't they be telling us to enjoy our youth and get the best liberal arts education so that we can actually figure out what we even enjoy? Instead they want to split us up into career groups." - Freshman at Central High School, Saint Paul

Federal Mandates: GOALS 2000 & HR6

In 1994, both the federal education funding bill (HR6) and the federal GOALS 2000 passed. HR6 required that states must comply with the so-called "voluntary" GOALS 2000 standards in order to receive federal education funds. In 1995, Minnesota accepted the GOALS 2000 money, along with its mandate to implement the Profile of Learning. Minnesota's Goals 2000 grant application states that the **Graduation Standards are the "centerpiece" of Minnesota's compliance with the federal Goals 2000 regulations.**

For years, the Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL), the department which implements the Profile in MN, claimed that the Profile was a local initiative. However, in 2000, federal administrators threatened to pull funds from local schools not implementing the Profile. **The Profile's federal connection is now accepted as fact.**

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) track and enforce the implementation of the Profile. The MCAs are statewide assessments to hold schools, districts and teachers accountable to the Profile. **The MCAs do not test individual academic achievement and students are not required to take them.** Many parents opt their children out of MCAs as there is no academic consequence and it is a way to express disapproval of the Profile.

