



**Assessment  
Advisory Committee**

**March 2008**

**Report  
To the  
Legislature**

**As required by  
MN Statute  
120B.365**

**Report to the  
Legislature**

Assessment  
Advisory  
Committee

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**As required by  
Minnesota  
Statute  
120B.365**

**March 2008**

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Upon request, this report can be made available in alternative formats.

**2008 LEGISLATIVE REPORT  
OF THE  
ASSESSMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Estimated Cost of Preparing This Report**

This report provides information that is maintained and published as Minnesota Rules by the Office of Revisor of Statutes as a part of its normal business functions. Therefore, the cost information reported below does not include the cost of gathering the data but rather is limited to the estimated cost of actually analyzing the data, determining recommendations and preparing this report document.

Special funding was not appropriated for the costs of preparing this report.

The estimated cost incurred by the Minnesota Department of Education in preparing this report is \$800.00.

**Report of the Assessment Advisory Committee**

The 2008 Assessment Advisory Committee Report has been prepared as required by Minnesota Statutes, 120B.365, subdivision 1. Subdivision 1 includes requirements for committee member requirements as well as the advisory role of the committee. This report describes the state of the statewide assessment program and recommendations of the committee.

**Table of Contents**

Statute Establishing Committee and Members	Page 4
Introduction	Page 5
Part I: The State of Statewide Assessments in 2008	Page 6
Part II: Recommendations of the Committee	Page 9

**Statute Establishing Committee and Members**

**120B.365 ASSESSMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** An Assessment Advisory Committee of up to 11 members selected by the commissioner is established. The commissioner must select members as follows:

- (1) two superintendents;
- (2) two teachers;
- (3) two higher education faculty; and
- (4) up to five members of the public, consisting of parents and members of the business community.

The committee must review all statewide assessments. The committee must submit its recommendations to the commissioner and to the committees of the legislature having jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education policy and budget issues. The commissioner must consider the committees' recommendations before finalizing a statewide assessment.

Subd. 2. **Expiration.** Notwithstanding section [15.059, subdivision 5](#), the committee expires on June 30, 2014.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Bruce Watkins	Superintendent	St. Cloud Public Schools
Dwayne Strand	Superintendent	Yellow Medicine East Public Schools
Neil Witikko	Teacher	Hermantown Public Schools
Michelle Stiller	Teacher	Bagley Public Schools
Sandra G. Johnson	Higher Ed	St. Cloud State University
Paul Carney	Higher Ed	Fergus Falls Community College
Jerry Hanson	Parent (Elem Principal)	Detroit Lakes
Lori Grivna	Parent	Mounds View Public Schools
Jacki McCormack	Parent	ARC
John Ferlaak	Parent	MN PTA
Paul Halverson	Business Community	IBM, Rochester

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **2008 Legislative Report**

The Minnesota Assessment System has continued to develop to meet the needs of federal requirements, state requests, and district desires. To fulfill all the requirements and requests cannot be done in a technically sound manner with just one test. Therefore, additional assessments have been developed to fulfill the needs for educators and students alike.

While educators, parents, and policymakers may ask for more information about student performance on Minnesota's academic standards, none of these constituencies are regularly requesting more testing for students. The call is for "more information with less testing," and these two elements are on opposite ends of a continuum. In general, test makers can provide a relatively short test, but will only provide summary information, or they can develop a long test that will provide more comprehensive and specific information. To find out more about student performance, we need to ask more questions where they can demonstrate that performance.

Still, the goal of the Minnesota Assessment System is to have the assessments do as much work as is technically appropriate. This means that if a student is taking a mathematics exam to fulfill federal No Child Left Behind requirements then Minnesota should look for ways to use that same exam as its graduation test instead of administering two tests. If an English language learner is taking a reading proficiency test to measure that skill for federal Title III requirements, then the state should investigate how this same test can be used for graduation as well.

Many challenges still face the state's assessment system. How can results be delivered more quickly to the classroom teacher? Will computer-based testing be a panacea to the time required to test, or does it hold other obstacles when implemented on a large scale? How can test information be used in a more formative manner, to inform instruction during the school year? How can the state promote the professional development of data-driven decisions in the classroom, school, and district? These and many more issues face the state in the development of a comprehensive assessment program that can serve many masters: teachers, administrators, state and federal policymakers – and especially students.

**PART I****THE STATE OF STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS  
2008****OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENTS  
Title I Requirements of No Child Left Behind**

<b>Assessment:</b>	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments – Series II (MCA-II)
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Mathematics, Reading, Science
<b>Grade(s):</b>	Mathematics – 3-8, 11; Reading 3-8, 10; Science 5, 8, HS
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2006 – Mathematics and Reading; 2008 - Science
<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of the MCA-II is to measure Minnesota students' achievement with regard to the Minnesota Academic Standards. In addition, the MCA-II results can be used to inform curriculum decisions at the district and school level, inform instruction at the classroom level and demonstrate student academic growth from year to year.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	2011 – Mathematics; 2012 – Science; 2104 – Reading. Based on statutory revision schedule of the Minnesota Academic Standards (M.S. 120B.023)

<b>Assessment:</b>	Mathematics Test of English Language Learners (MTELL)
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Mathematics
<b>Grade(s):</b>	3-8, 11
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2007
<b>Purpose:</b>	As an accommodated form of the MCA-II for English language learners, the MTELL has been designed to offer qualifying ELLs an assessment with a reduced language load, thereby also reducing the confounding effects of language on math performance. By creating the MTELL, it is hoped that ELLs, regardless of linguistic or cultural background, are better able to demonstrate the extent to which they have met the state grade level expectations in math.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	None. Test is planned to be retired in 2011, based on statutory revisions of the Minnesota Academic Standards in mathematics (M.S. 120B.023). All of the MCA-IIIs that start in 2011 will use items with reduced linguistic complexity. The lessons learned from MTELL are being incorporated into the MCA assessments.

<b>Assessment:</b>	Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Mathematics and Reading
<b>Grade(s):</b>	Mathematics – 3-8, 11; Reading – 3-8, 10; Science – 5, 8, HS
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2007 – Mathematics and Reading; 2008 - Science
<b>Purpose:</b>	The Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) is Minnesota’s alternate assessment instrument for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is designed exclusively for use with students who receive special education services and whose participation has been determined on an individual basis by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	2011 – Mathematics; 2012 – Science; 2104 – Reading. Based on statutory revision schedule of the Minnesota Academic Standards (M.S. 120B.023)

**Title III Requirements of No Child Left Behind**

<b>Assessment:</b>	Test of Emerging Academic English
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Reading and Writing for English Language Proficiency
<b>Grade(s):</b>	3-12
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2002
<b>Purpose:</b>	The Minnesota Tests of Emerging Academic English (TEAE) are series of tests administered in grades 3-12. The tests are designed to assess the progress of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in academic English acquisition. Additionally, the test results will be used to determine the amount of funding distributed to districts.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	2010 – based on the revisions to the English language proficiency standards. The assessment will be either revised or replaced.

<b>Assessment:</b>	Minnesota Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (MN-SOLOM)
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Listening and Speaking for English Language Proficiency
<b>Grade(s):</b>	K-12
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2002
<b>Purpose:</b>	The MN-SOLOM is a rating scale that teachers can use to assess their students' command of oral language on the basis of what they observe in a variety of situations - class discussions, playground interactions, encounters between classes. The teacher matches a student's language performance in six categories – academic comprehension, social comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar - to descriptions on a five-point scale for each. A rating is immediately available and can be used to group and regroup students for ESL, to report student progress, or to guide refinements to instructional methods and materials.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	2010 – based on the revisions to the English language proficiency standards. The assessment will be either revised or replaced.

**Minnesota Diploma Assessments**

<b>Assessment:</b>	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments – Series II (MCA-II)
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Mathematics and Reading
<b>Grade(s):</b>	Mathematics – 11; Reading – 10
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2008 for reading; 2009 for Mathematics
<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of the MCA-II is to measure Minnesota students’ achievement with regard to the Minnesota Academic Standards.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	2011 – Mathematics; 2104 – Reading, based on statutory revisions of the Minnesota Academic Standards (M.S. 120B.023)

<b>Assessment:</b>	Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD)
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Mathematics, Reading, and Writing
<b>Grade(s):</b>	9-Writing; 10-Reading; 11-Mathematics
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	2007 for writing; 2008 for reading; 2009 for Mathematics
<b>Purpose:</b>	The Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma (GRAD) measure the reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency of high school students. By requiring high school graduates to reach a specified level on each of these assessments, Minnesota is making sure its students are on track to have the essential skills and knowledge necessary for graduation in the 21st century.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	2011 – Mathematics; 2104 – Reading and Writing, based on statutory revisions of the Minnesota Academic Standards (M.S. 120B.023)

<b>Assessment:</b>	Minnesota Basic Skills Test
<b>Subject(s):</b>	Mathematics, Reading, and Writing
<b>Grade(s):</b>	Retest mode only
<b>Initial Operational Year:</b>	1996
<b>Purpose:</b>	The Basic Skills Tests in reading, mathematics and written composition are the “safety net” portion of Minnesota’s requirements for high school graduation. These tests measure some basic skills and knowledge representative of those that all students should have in a literate society. They are not graduation-level tests. Rather, they represent the minimum levels of math, reading and written composition.
<b>Next Planned Revision:</b>	This test is only available to those students who were in grade 8 in the school year 2004-2005 or before. The new graduation requirements (MCA-II or GRAD) are now required for students who entered grade 8 after that year.

PART II

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE**

*The Minnesota Assessment System*

**Mission**

Measure students’ knowledge and skills on Minnesota Academic Standards.

**Vision**

An assessment system that provides accurate results to inform curriculum decisions and instruction to improve student achievement.

**Strategy**

- Establish a coherent assessment system that meets state and federal requirements.
- Enhance the system to provide timely information in user-friendly ways.
- Equip stakeholders to use the information to make informed decisions.

**Values**

- A commitment to our students
- Efficiency for our schools
- Integrity with our stakeholders

The Minnesota Assessment System has several different types of tests to serve the many unique student populations of Minnesota. Just as a physician uses several types of tests for different purposes, no one educational assessment can serve every purpose for a student. Still, one of our goals is to have the Minnesota assessments provide as much information as is appropriate for a variety of educational needs.

Four populations of students are accounted for in the following recommendations:

<b>General Ed</b>	These are typical students in the classroom who do not require additional educational services to be successful in school. Many students who are English language learners or who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) may still participate in general education assessments using accommodations that allow them to participate equally.
<b>ELL</b>	These English language learners are still developing the language skills that will help them be successful in school. Specially-designed assessments measure their language proficiency or allow these students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without their limited language skills as a barrier.
<b>Special Ed Modified</b>	Some students with IEPs are able to be assessed on grade-level content but with modified expectations of their achievement. Specially-designed assessments allow these students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills appropriately.
<b>Special Ed Alternative</b>	Some students with IEPs are able to be assessed on content aligned to grade-level standards but with alternative expectations of their achievement. Specially-designed assessments allow these students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills appropriately.

Black Text = Current Assessment; Gray Text = Proposed or In Development

**Title I of No Child Left Behind**

	<b>Math (Gr. 3-8,11)</b>	<b>Reading (Gr. 3-8,10)</b>	<b>Science (Gr. 5,8,HS)</b>
<b>General Ed</b>	MCA-II	MCA-II	MCA-II
<b>ELL</b>	MTELL	MCA-II	MCA-II
<b>Special Ed Mod</b>	MCA-II-Modified	MCA-II-Modified	MCA-II-Modified
<b>Special Ed Alt</b>	MTAS	MTAS	MTAS

Recommendation:

The available assessments for Title I of No Child Left Behind should serve the four majority populations allowed under these requirements. MDE should continue its development of the MCA-II-Modified for students with special needs, where these students for whom it is appropriate can take a grade-level assessment based on modified achievement standards. MDE should continue its goal of making the MCA-II-Modified available to students by 2011.

**Title III of No Child Left Behind (K-12)**

	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Listening</b>	<b>Speaking</b>
<b>ELL</b>	ELL Test	ELL Test	ELL Test	ELL Test
<b>ELL – Sp Ed</b>	ELL Test	ELL Test	ELL Test	ELL Test

Recommendation:

MDE should continue to seek out a comprehensive English language learner proficiency test that fulfills all four modalities of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Development of other assessments previously conducted should be considered for formative purposes. Minimal administration time and maximum efficiency should be considered in finding an assessment to serve Title III purposes starting in 2010.

**Minnesota Diploma Assessments**

	<b>Math (Gr. 11)</b>	<b>Reading (Gr. 10)</b>	<b>Writing (Gr. 9)</b>
<b>General Ed</b>	MCA-II or GRAD	MCA-II or GRAD	GRAD
<b>ELL</b>	MTELL or GRAD	MCA-II or ELL Test	GRAD or ELL Test
<b>Special Ed Mod</b>	MCA-II-Modified	MCA-II-Modified	GRAD-Modified
<b>Special Ed Alt</b>	MTAS	MTAS	GRAD-Alternate

Recommendation:

MDE should continue to develop appropriate rulemaking policy as allowed by the legislature. This draft policy language is fair, equally rigorous to all students, yet allows a single assessment to serve the purposes of Minnesota graduation requirements and federal No Child Left Behind requirements for the various student populations in the state.

**Formative Assessment Series (Proposed, Voluntary)**

<b>Math</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Listening-ELL</b>	<b>Speaking-ELL</b>
tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd

Recommendation:

The Minnesota State Legislature should fund a voluntary formative assessment. These aligned assessments will provide students, teachers, and parents with real-time instructional information as well as forecast information on their summative performance at the end of the year. This state-level formative assessment would allow every district to have access to an aligned formative assessment system if it chooses to use it.