

2023 Legislative Impacts on Minnesota Science Education

The 2023 Minnesota legislative session resulted in historic legislation being passed with regard to education—including changes to state statutes that directly impact K–12 science education. This document presents an overview of those changes.

Information for contextualizing the legislative impacts of the updated graduation requirements presented in this document.

Minnesota is currently in transition from the 2009 Academic Standards in Science to the 2019 Academic Standards in Science*. The 2019 standards represent significant shifts in science instruction and assessment, including the shift to phenomena-driven, three-dimensional science instruction.

The 2019 science standards are scheduled for full implementation in the 2024-2025 school year, and students will take the new MCA-IV aligned to the 2019 science standards in the Spring of 2025. As part of full implementation of the 2019 science standards, middle school courses will change.

As of the 2024-2025 school year:

- 6th grade science includes Earth and Space Science Benchmarks
- 7th grade science includes Life Science Benchmarks
- 8th grade science includes Physical Science Benchmarks

In addition to the above changes due to implementation of the 2019 Academic Standards in Science, the 2023 legislative session resulted in updated language in the Graduation Requirements for Science. More information about the updated language, and clarification of that language are provided below.

* Resources to support transition to the 2019 Academic Standards in Science can be found on our [Science Standards Implementation page](#).

Updated Language in the Graduation Requirements for Science

Summary of change: Students must complete one credit to satisfy all the earth and space science standards for grades 9-12, one credit to satisfy all the life science standards for grades 9-12, and one credit to satisfy all the chemistry or physics standards for grades 9-12.

- **Clarification:** [Minnesota Statutes 2022 Section 120B.018 DEFINITIONS Subdivision 4. Credit](#). “Credit” means the determination by the local school district that a student has successfully completed an academic year of study or mastered the applicable subject matter.
- **Clarification:** The most straightforward approach to meeting graduation requirements in science includes an Earth and Space Science course addressing all the benchmarks, a Life Science course addressing all the benchmarks, and a Physics **or** Chemistry course addressing all the benchmarks. This approach aligns with teacher licensing and teacher preparation.

- **Clarification:** Alternative approaches to meeting the graduation requirements are permitted, but will require careful planning to ensure that each and every student satisfies all required academic standards, and that courses offered are taught by appropriately licensed teachers.

Effective date: Effective beginning with the 2024–25 school year

- **Clarification:** Districts must ensure this change is in place for students entering the 9th grade during the 2024-25 school year.

Statutory references:

- Graduation Requirements: Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 120B.024, subdivision 1, has been amended by [Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 55, article 2, section 7.](#)

Next steps:

- MDE will provide guidance to support all districts implementing the Minnesota Academic Standards in Science. Specifically, MDE can provide guidance to districts interested in an alternative approach to meeting the graduation requirements.
- For help identifying which license is required for a particular assignment, please consult the [Assignment-Licensure Table](#).

Updates to Required Academic Standards for Science

Summary of change: Required Academic Standards for Science now include earth and space science, life science, and the physical sciences, including chemistry and physics.

Effective date: Effective beginning with the 2024–25 school year

Statutory references:

- Academic Standards: Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 120B.021, subdivision 1 has been amended by [Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 55, article 2, section 4.](#)

Contact Information

If you have questions about teaching licensure, please email PELSB@state.mn.us. For all other questions related to science education state policy and guidance, contact Angie Kolonich, MDE Science Education Specialist, at angela.kolonich@state.mn.us.