

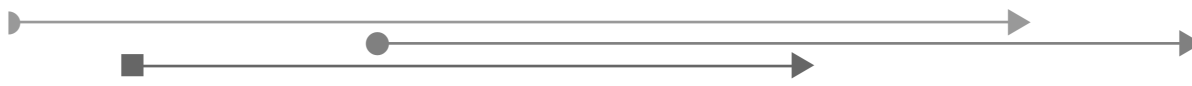
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Framework

What's Included in This Chapter

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- Integrating Minnesota Graduation Standards into Special Education
- State and District Rules and Policies
- Academic Team Philosophy
- Transition Team Philosophy
- Developmental Team Philosophy
- Low-Incidence Team Philosophy
- Who Should Use This Framework
- How the Framework Is Organized



It is the role of the school district to establish high expectations for students.

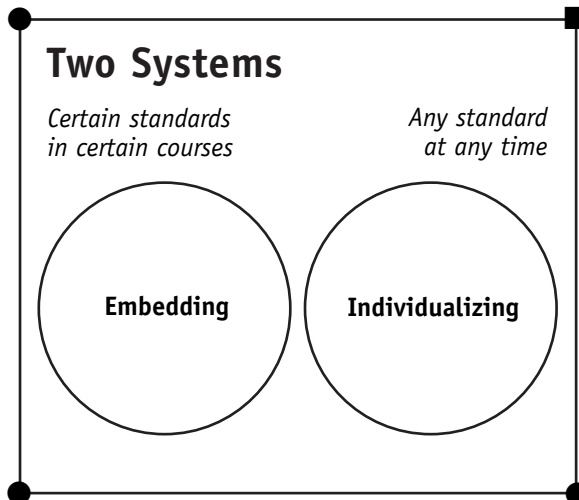


What Is a Framework?

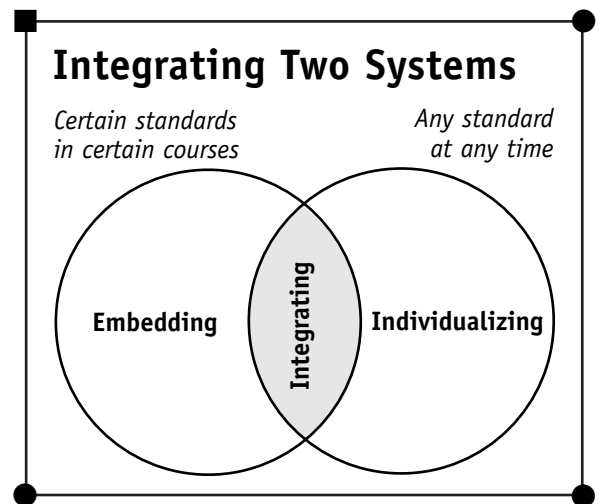
An educational framework provides a structure for supporting teaching and learning. The Framework for Integrating Minnesota Graduation Standards and Special Education reflects the policy and educational goals of the state. It gives guidance for organizing the delivery of the Minnesota Graduation Standards into special education. It is not intended to serve as a blueprint for how to assess standards, but rather to provide tools for determining how standards might be aligned with goals and curriculum in separate site special education programs and with students with low-incidence disabilities.

Integrating Minnesota Graduation Standards into Special Education

There are currently two systems for thinking about delivering standards.



The solution involves integrating the embedding model from general education with the individualizing model from special education.



After examining Minnesota policy guiding the graduation standards, and federal and state rules about special education, guidelines for those who need to live in the middle of these two worlds were determined. The framework offers a way to think about moving students who are in individualized programs into the graduation standards system.

The graphic on page 1-2 illustrates the role the framework plays in informing sites about integrating the graduation standards system into special education.

State and District Rules and Policies

Framework for Integrating Minnesota Graduation Standards and Special Education

WILL INFORM

Existing guidelines
for curriculum-
based systems

Center-based teachers
*Implementers
of standards*

Low-incidence teachers
*Consultants
about standards*

Existing guidelines
for individually
based systems

We believe...

The Framework for Integrating Minnesota Graduation Standards and Special Education represents the collective thinking of over one hundred special education teachers who work in separate site programs or are consultants for students with low-incidence disabilities. Through a series of retreats, workshops, and meetings this framework evolved into its current form. Four philosophical belief statements emerged during the course of this project and served as guiding principles for the developers. It is our hope that these beliefs will support other educators as they strive to integrate the graduation standards with special education.

We acknowledge that separate site special education programs are not able to replicate what a general education high school provides. Most sites are small, serving students with low levels of achievement and significant disabilities that may affect behavior or cognitive ability or both. Decisions must be guided by student needs when looking for solutions. We know that programs will face obstacles when trying to integrate the standards into curriculum that has traditionally focused on individual student goals. But throughout our work it was clear to us that the standards do apply in special education.

We discovered...

- Standards-referenced Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), as opposed to standards-driven IEPs, will include more students in the graduation system.
- Choosing an annual cycle of standards can focus program and student goals at a site.
- Exempting a student from a standard does not mean that the student is excluded from the system of standards.

Academic Team Philosophy

We are educators working in academically oriented special education sites. We provide an appropriate selection of standards (to be determined by site resources and student needs as well as the mission of each site) within a core curriculum. Our philosophy represents a shift from grouping by disability to grouping by ability.

Transition Team Philosophy

Transition programs are designed for students 14 to 21 years old with unique learning needs. The focus is on content standards that relate to the five areas of transition as outlined in the IEP, which is standards-referenced, not standards-driven, linking the identified goals for that unique student to the graduation standards content areas.

Developmental Team Philosophy

As educators of and advocates for students with multiple developmental disabilities, we strive to help students build life skills that enable them to become as empowered and connected as possible. We recognize that some students will be exempt from the state level of the standards. However, students will remain accountable to a performance outcome in a content standard area at a level appropriate to their individual strengths and needs.

Low-Incidence Team Philosophy

The goal of the education for students with low-incidence disabilities is maximal participation in inclusive school and community environments. This can be promoted through completion of curricular activities related to the Minnesota Graduation Standards. The low-incidence staff are effective IEP team members in their roles as consultants, including the implementation of the Minnesota Graduation Standards in special education.

Who Should Use This Framework

This framework was written for everyone involved in the education of Minnesota students receiving special education services within center-based or through low-incidence student-based programs. It offers teachers, specialists, administrators, parents, and policymakers a way to think about and use practical tools for including students in Minnesota Graduation Standards.

Both the terms “center-based” and “low-incidence student-based” may be better understood by referring to one of the ways in which the federal government has defined types of special education services. The federal setting levels provide a basis to view the scope of center-based and student-based programming.

Federal Setting K–12	Setting
Special Education (less than 21%)	I
Resource Room (21–60%)	II
Separate Class (more than 60%)	III
Public Separate Day School	IV
Private Separate Day School	V
Public Residential	VI
Private Residential	VII
Home-based/Homebound/Hospital	VIII

Center-based programs are, by definition, setting levels IV, V, VI, and VII. The writers of this framework have expertise in level IV programming. However, much of the framework will apply to any separate site (levels IV through VIII) or separate class (level III).

The development teams had first-hand experience with the enormous challenges faced in center-based programs. Such

programs often have few teachers (many of whom do not have content expertise in all of the learning areas) and less centralized support than other school settings. The teams created this framework to suggest ways to integrate graduation standards with individualized education, while taking into account the particular difficulties encountered by any program which is physically or programmatically removed from the mainstream.

Student-based programming refers to the particular support a student receives in order to be successful in any of the federal settings. The largest group of students to receive support are students with learning or emotional/behavioral disabilities who are able to spend most of their day in a regular classroom or resource room. This framework provides some information that may apply to these students; however, prior models for allowing them to be successful with regard to the graduation standards are available. Most notably, the Collaborating to Accommodate Performance Assessment (CAPS) model and training is available through the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning (*see Resources*).

Chapter 5 on “Student-based Guidelines” is written primarily to address students for whom accessing any of the general education curriculum and standards in any setting might be difficult without the intervention of specialists. These are students with low-incidence disabilities who require interpreters, assistive technology, or other instructional adaptations in order to learn and to show that they have learned.



Teachers in Center-based Special Education Programs

Teachers in center-based special education programs such as academic, transition, or developmental, are responsible for teaching and assessing students with regard to graduation standards. The framework may assist them in this role as they develop curriculum, coordinate child study teams, and identify their own professional development needs.

Teachers and Specialists in Student-based Low-Incidence Special Education Programs

Teachers and specialists who provide services to students but who are not the main instructors are responsible for helping all members of a student's child study team make decisions about how that student can be involved with standards. As a consultant about standards, teachers and other related service staff must be knowledgeable about the content of the standards, aware of the instructional strategies and assistive technologies that will allow students maximal participation, and available to help teams reach decisions. To address all of these facets of the role, the framework includes information to adapt assessments, to facilitate decision making or consult within child study teams, and to identify professional development needs.

Administrators

The role of the administrator is to integrate district policies with the direction set by state standards and the needs of individual students and teachers at the sites. The framework provides perspective on the important role the district plays in separate sites and in low-incidence services. It also offers planning tools for all the decision-making levels, any of which may be used by administrators or as the basis for training staff.

Staff Development Committees and Coordinators

Staff development planners and teams who seek to find practical information for teachers and who value the opportunity to connect new systems to existing ones will find both the philosophy of the construction of this framework and the tools it contains of value.

Parents

Parents who work with educators to create learning opportunities for their children and who wish to understand more about the specific workings of the Minnesota Graduation Standards will find information on the requirements of the standards and how standards might relate to the education of their children. The role of the parent is addressed directly in Chapter 5 on "Student-based Guidelines."

Policymakers

As policymakers in education promote new practices and examine how changes in systems affect the individuals in those systems, they look to practitioners for implementation solutions. The practitioners who have offered the implementation solutions in this framework are also offering a new level of thinking about the impact of standards. By suggesting how standards do apply in some of the most difficult instructional situations they have also documented the need for continued refinement and support of the systems which should include as many students as possible at the fullest extent possible.

How the Framework Is Organized

The main organizing principle of the framework is to clarify which decisions about Minnesota Graduation Standards either have been or will be made at each level—state, district, site, and student—and then include text, tools, or timelines that relate to those decisions. It is intended to be a dynamic document, able to accommodate new ideas as well as additional pages.

State Guidelines

Chapter 2 outlines the requirements of the Minnesota Graduation Standards as defined by rule and law. It gives information on the intent of the standards and provides an introduction to the need for considering standards with all student populations.

District Guidelines

Chapter 3 recognizes the role of the district in the implementation of standards for separate sites or within student-based low-incidence services. Since many center-based programs operate quite independently on a day-to-day basis, sites may not always recognize the district responsibility for such things as policy direction, curricular support, and adoption of reporting mechanisms. By including district guidelines, the authority and responsibility of the district can be clarified.

Site Guidelines

Chapter 4 is the synthesis of the work of the three teams who represented center-based programming. Some of the site tools are usable by any type of center-based program. Some of them relate more to an academic curriculum, and some to a functional curriculum. When a tool is specific to one particular group, it is designated for that group.

Student-based Guidelines

Chapter 5 represents primarily the work

of the low-incidence, student-based team. Since it includes information on how to make decisions for individual students, it can be used by any teacher or specialist involved with students who have individualized education plans (IEPs). However, it will be most applicable for students with low-incidence needs or when decision-making for an individual student within a center-based program has been particularly difficult.

Staff Development

Chapter 6 offers ways to think about professional development as it relates specifically to the graduation standards. The planning tools apply to the district level and the site level.

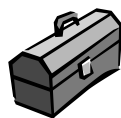
Resources

Chapter 7 includes a glossary of terms, frequently asked questions, and an extensive listing of resources for implementation of Minnesota Graduation Standards.

Appendixes

The appendixes include basic information about the standards that is needed by all teachers—a reprint of the standards themselves, common accommodations for students, and possible assessment adaptations for certain students—as well as many of the forms that can assist in student-level decision making.

Symbols



The toolbox symbol refers to tools that are included throughout this document, such as checklists, sample documents, and planning matrixes. The formats encourage the reader to copy and use them.



The “i” symbol refers to information found elsewhere in the document. It signals charts, lists, or definitions that further explain the text or that will help the reader in implementing standards.