

STATE OF MINNESOTA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF NEED AND REASONABLENESS
FOR PROPOSED RULES §§ 3500.2010-3500.2110 GOVERNING REQUIRED
THREE-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM OFFERINGS

AUTHORITY

The State Board of Education's authority to promulgate the proposed rule is contained in Minnesota Statute Section 121.11, subdivisions 7 and 12. (1982)

INTRODUCTION

State Board of Education rule EDU 43 Completion of secondary school requirements specifies the number of credits necessary for graduation from a Minnesota secondary school:

- A. Graduation requirements. Each student must successfully complete 15 credits earned in a three-year secondary school, or 20 credits earned in a four-year secondary school in order to graduate. These credits must include the same subjects required in 5 MCAR §§ 1.00401 and 1.00402 and elective subjects.

5 MCAR §§ 1.00401 and 1.00402 specify 6 credits, composed of 3 communication skills, 2 social studies, $\frac{1}{2}$ physical education and $\frac{1}{2}$ health, plus 9 elective credits, which must be earned for graduation from a three-year secondary school and 10 $\frac{2}{3}$ credits, composed of 4 communications skills, 3 social studies, 1 science, 1 math, $\frac{1}{2}$ physical education and $\frac{1}{2}$ health in 10th grade and $\frac{2}{3}$ physical education in 9th grade, plus 9 $\frac{1}{3}$ elective credits, which must be earned for graduation from a four-year secondary school.

The State Board of Education rules are not specific as to the breadth or balance of elective courses available for students from which to choose the required 9 elective courses.

EDU 4 General Education Program Requirements mentions this issue in general:

- A. Program for all pupils. The educational program shall provide a general education for all pupils and suitable special education for exceptional children -- handicapped, gifted and talented. It shall meet the needs and interests of all pupils and the needs of the community served.

It is the intent of these proposed rules to establish a minimum comprehensive secondary school program of studies from which a student may choose elective courses which address his/her interests, abilities, and career goals. This intent is compatible with Minnesota Statute Section 121.11, subdivision 7:

General Supervision of educational agencies. The state board of education shall exercise general supervision over public schools and public educational agencies in the state, classify and standardize public elementary and secondary schools, and prepare for them outlines and suggestive courses of study. The board shall establish rules relating to examinations, reports, acceptances of schools, courses of study, and other proceedings in connection with elementary and secondary schools applying for special state aid.

In February 1983 the State Board of Education passed a resolution recommending that all secondary schools in Minnesota provide no fewer than the number and kind of credits specified on the accompanying list. That list is essentially the same as the number and kinds of courses specified in the presently proposed rule with the exception of five programs of vocational education which has been revised to ten credits in five subject areas.

In the 1983 legislative session Chapter 314, Article 8, Section 23, states:

By September 30, 1984, the state board of education shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 14, establishing elementary and secondary curriculum requirements which will ensure that a minimum comprehensive educational program is available to all public school students in the state. The rules adopted by the state board shall be effective beginning in the 1985-1986 school year.

Proposed rules §§ 3500.2010 and 3500.2110 establish the minimum courses which each secondary school would be required to make available to meet the specific courses required for graduation and minimum breadth and balance of elective courses necessary to provide the additional credits and meet the needs, abilities, interests, and career goals for a selection by students from the elective array.

In addition to the specific subject area courses, the rules specify two programs without specific minimum clock hours of instruction. These rules require schools to establish programs for students based on learner outcomes. Learner outcomes are defined as the knowledge, skills, or understandings that an individual student derives from a learning experience. While it is generally understood that this is the goal of all instruction, the usual measure is a specified number of credits or hours of instruction without specific reference to the learner outcomes. These programs could be taught in the most efficient and effective manner approved by the local board of education. These programs would not require additional courses. They may be infused and included in one or more existing courses of study as local districts deem most appropriate.

HISTORY

Concern for the options available to students in their elective choices has been a priority to all who have been interested in quality secondary school education for several decades. In 1959, Dr. James Conant reported in the American High School Today that he had concern for small high schools which, he said, find it difficult to provide a variety of necessary course options because of limited funding resources directly related to limited numbers of students. Since then, international events, economic concerns, and emphasis on individual development of personal interests have spawned repeated concern for quality education and

adequate opportunities for all students. The ensuing years have seen revision in funding policies, revisions in mandates, opportunities for special education students, an explosion in numbers of school age youth, followed by declining enrollments. Special concerns and events have all placed a burden on the local district's ability to develop and maintain a balanced program offering. The result of these events has produced a situation in the smallest, least financially able districts which found it necessary to limit the number of courses they were able to provide. Students in these districts have limited opportunities from which to choose their nine electives. Sometimes their future career choices are limited because they lack opportunities to study courses which meet their interests, abilities, and career goals.

In 1980-81 a survey of elective course offerings was conducted in 75 of the smallest secondary schools in Minnesota. These schools all had fewer than 200 pupils in grades 7-12. Elective courses included those taught by the district, those taught through cooperative efforts with other districts, and those taught through cooperative centers. The range of electives taught was from 18 to 49 courses. The researcher attempted to discover relationships between elective courses taught in these smallest schools and some other variable in the school district. Of the 18 variables examined, only enrollment size showed a positive correlation of .41. The relationship of other variables or groups of variables proved to be insignificant. An interesting observation on the findings of this survey revealed that of those 75 small secondary schools, 4 met all the requirements of the proposed rule, 9 met all requirements except for 1 credit unit.

In analyzing the proposed rule requirements and the 75 smallest school responses, the following table has been developed:

Schools in the study of 75 smallest schools which did not meet proposed rule requirements

<u>SUBJECT AREA</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Foreign Language	56	75
Visual Arts	55	73
Communication Skills	38	50
Science	22	29
Math	14	19
Social Studies	14	19
Music	13	17
Industrial Arts	10	13
10 Electives	0	0

It would be an error to assume all small schools cannot meet these requirements. The survey reveals that in 1980-81 at least four small schools were meeting all proposed requirements and nine more could have met the requirements of the proposed rule without great difficulty by adding only one elective course.

National Reports on American High Schools and Expectations. A plethora of critiques on the American high school recently have offered many solutions to what some call a national crisis. A common criticism is that more academic rigor should be expected of high school students and higher expectations for academic achievement should be required. Some critics have looked at colleges and universities and

added that their responsibility for high school student increased achievement includes raising admission requirements to include some minimal number of years of high school study of math, science and foreign languages, among others. If colleges and universities actually respond in this manner, it places a responsibility on high schools to offer the subjects required for college admission.

This proposal addresses this expressed need, as well as the need for a balanced minimum program, by initially requiring the necessary credits to be available for study in each high school so that all Minnesota students will have the opportunity to study and prepare for college and university admission as well as other advanced technical schools and vocational training.

The proposed rule does not describe the manner in which these additional courses should be made available. Indeed, present practice by secondary schools in Minnesota illustrates the genius of administrators and school boards in expanding their curriculum to meet the needs, abilities, interests and career goals of their students. Presently, schools are cooperating through sharing students through busing, sharing teachers, joining efforts offered by educational cooperative service units, participating in vocational cooperative centers, entering cooperative agreements with colleges and Area Vocational Technical Institutes, utilizing low power TV, closed circuit TV and cable TV, alternating every other year course offerings, utilizing interactive computer assisted video courses and correspondence programs. Modern technology will undoubtedly further influence the capability of communication and transmission of educational services in the future. The 1983 legislature has provided financial incentive for those small districts to encourage cooperation in providing additional program offerings.

If this rule had been proposed as recently as fifteen years ago, it would have meant that any school not offering the required courses would have had to employ additional teaching staff for those courses not already being taught. Small enrollments would have made this extremely difficult if not impossible with a financial revenue system based on numbers of students. At that time and earlier very few options to a classroom teacher were available. Fortunately, communication technology has provided several options for the small modern school.

Because of these modern technological options and the willingness of local boards to explore cooperative efforts in order to provide a broader range of courses, requirement of a minimum comprehensive curriculum is most reasonable at this time. It would be unreasonable for any school district not to provide the minimum opportunities for a student to study basic courses which prepare her/him in the development of her/his ability when that opportunity exists as it does today.

The minimum comprehensive secondary school balanced program requirements have been publicized for several years. Discussions have been held throughout the state in every educational organization interested and requesting a presentation. Generally the concept has been acceptable. It has been most heartily endorsed by parents of young students who have been concerned about the balance of educational opportunities for their children.

CONCLUSION

The Elementary and Secondary Education Section of the Department of Education thinks that adequate minimum comprehensive program opportunities for study as described in the proposed rule for secondary schools is necessary for providing students with opportunities to satisfy their needs in areas of interests, abilities, and career goals.

WITNESSES FOR THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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May 14, 1984

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