

Age-Appropriate Standards - Draft 1.1

DRAFT 1.1 | September 2026 | Audience: parents, educators, school boards, curriculum leaders, policymakers

Young children should first learn enough about the world to understand difficult ideas before being asked to interpret the world through them.

1. Cognitive readiness	Can students understand the concept with enough background knowledge to reason about it rather than repeat adult conclusions?
2. Emotional burden	Does the material introduce sexual, graphic, traumatic, or highly conflict-laden content beyond what is needed for the academic purpose?
3. Academic necessity	What specific knowledge or skill is being taught, and why is this content needed at this grade?
4. Less-burdensome alternative	Can the same competency be taught with simpler, more concrete, less emotionally intense, or more neutral material?
5. Opportunity cost	How much time does it require, and what reading, math, science, art, play, or other instruction will be displaced?
6. Assessment neutrality	Is the student graded on knowledge and reasoning, or on affirming a prescribed identity, ideology, moral conclusion, or political position?

Burden of proof for statewide mandates

The authority proposing a new statewide content requirement bears the burden of documenting the competency, developmental rationale, evidence for grade placement, instructional time, foreseeable burden, less-burdensome alternatives, assessment method, and displaced instruction. Missing documentation is a reason to delay statewide imposition.

Presumption by age band

K-2: concrete foundations

Prioritize structured reading, oral language, number sense, stories, nature, family and community vocabulary, friendship, fairness, rules, maps, art, music, movement, play, and simple civic roles. Complex political, sexual, ideological, or systemic social theories should not become the organizing framework for required instruction.

Grades 3-5: knowledge before abstraction

Build chronology, geography, science, U.S. and Minnesota history, civic institutions, reading, and mathematics. Difficult history may be introduced accurately and proportionately when students have enough context to understand it.

Grades 6-8: systems and competing explanations

Students can examine institutions, discrimination, conflict, reform, political movements, economics, media, and law. Emphasize evidence, comparison, causation, source judgment, and civic mechanics rather than compelled advocacy.

Grades 9-12: mature analysis and independence

Students can study difficult, controversial, and abstract ideas in depth, compare frameworks, evaluate evidence and consequences, and form defensible conclusions. Rigorous analysis should remain distinct from compelled political participation or belief.

What this standard does not do

- It does not ban honest teaching of slavery, racism, treaties, Tribal sovereignty, civil rights, discrimination, war, injustice, or other difficult history.
- It applies the same developmental test across viewpoints and frameworks.
- It is a draft MLP standard and does not replace Minnesota law.