

**Minnesota Science Teachers Association (MnSTA)
2010 Legislative Platform**

Submitted by the MnSTA Legislative and Government Relations Committee
Lee S, Committee Chair
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In order to provide 21st century science education for all Minnesota K-12 students, the MnSTA Board of Directors has designated the following issues as priority items for the 2010 Minnesota Legislative session.

1. Increased Funding for Science Classrooms

Issue: A high percentage of science teachers across the state lack adequate laboratory facilities and have unsafe numbers of students working in the laboratory due to high class size. With the new high school chemistry/physics requirement for all students beginning in 2014, this strain on laboratory facilities will become even more acute.

Data from the MnSTA membership show 87% support class size limits for science labs, 59% support ongoing safety training for science teachers, and 87% agreed that Minnesota should establish and enforce minimum safety requirements for laboratory facilities. Most survey comments to the question “What are the most important issues facing Minnesota science teachers and teaching?” related to overcrowding and unsafe conditions in science labs.

MnSTA concurs with the National Science Teachers Association position statement that “NSTA strongly believes that developmentally appropriate laboratory investigations are essential for students of all ages and ability levels.” President Obama has called for a “National Lab Day” to be held this spring.

MnSTA recommends the State Legislature focus funding (whether current allocations or STEM initiatives) on the following priorities:

- Dedicated money for schools to reduce class size in science laboratory courses.
- Dedicated money for schools to improve science laboratory facilities and equipment.
- Dedicated money that allows schools to increase science instructional time at the elementary level.

2. Final Approval of State Science Standards

MnSTA supports the adoption of the newly-revised K-12 Minnesota Academic Standards in Science. Minnesota Legislative members and the K-12 Education Policy Committee should support the new science standards as they move through the rulemaking process.

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3. Grade-level Banding of New Science Standards

Issue: State science standards are written according to statute that dictates grade-specific standards through grade 8. Minnesota science teachers, especially those in smaller districts, would prefer the new standards allow for grade banding of standards in grades K-2, 3-5 and 6-8.

Local control for the placement of specific science standards within grade bands would allow districts to use their professional judgment to do what is best for their local population. In small schools with limited resources, classes might have multiple grades combined and certain standards might be offered alternating years. Many schools are using an integrated middle school science approach. Some schools are using cross-curricular integration of science with health and social studies. Grade banding would allow the flexibility for schools in these circumstances to continue these types of practices.

In order for grade banding of science standards to be allowed, legislative action will need to be proposed and passed.

4. Licensure Requirements for Science Teachers

Issue: MnSTA supports maintaining high standards for science teacher licensure.

Survey results show the MnSTA membership strongly supports maintaining high standards for science teachers to gain initial and additional licensure, with the majority (77%) opposing any reduction in rigor of the science licensure standards. Most members (87%) feel that those in alternative licensure programs should meet the BOT science teaching standards for content and pedagogy, and 63% feel additional instruction in pedagogy and safety related to the new content area should be required for those that receive additional science licensure via the testing rule.

The State Legislature should not support alternative licensure programs in science that do not provide a combination of content, laboratory safety and pedagogical rigor. Minnesota students deserve no less than the best prepared science teachers.