



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
**EDUCATION**

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*Release of  
Spring 2016  
MCAS Test Items*

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**June 2016**  
**Massachusetts Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education**

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This document was prepared by the  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

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## *Commissioner's Foreword*

Dear Colleagues:

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is committed to working in partnership with schools to support a system that will prepare all students to succeed as productive and contributing members of our democratic society and the global economy. To assist in achieving this goal, the Department regularly releases Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test items to provide information about the kinds of knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate. This publication contains all MCAS test items on which student scores are based for grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics tests and for high school Biology and Introductory Physics tests (only the reporting category and standard are provided for each item on the Chemistry and Technology/Engineering tests). This document also contains approximately 50% of common test items from spring 2016 MCAS tests in grades 3–8.

The Department has banked thousands of MCAS items that are currently posted on the Department website. These items, which are available at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html), will continue to be a rich resource for schools.

This publication is available only on the Department website. The released test items for individual subjects at each grade level can be printed from this site. I encourage educators to use the relevant sections of this document together with their test item analysis reports as guides for planning changes in curriculum and instruction that may be needed to support schools and districts in their efforts to improve student performance.

Thank you for your support as we work together to strengthen education for our students in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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# I. Document Purpose and Structure

# *Document Purpose and Structure*

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to share with educators and the public the spring 2016 test items on which student results are based. Local educators will be able to use this information to identify strengths and weaknesses in their curriculum and instruction and to plan instruction to more effectively meet their students' individual needs.

This document is also intended to be used by school and district personnel as a companion document to test item analysis reports. The reports list, for the school accessing the report, the names of all enrolled students in the grade covered by the report as well as information about how each student answered each item contained in this document. The reports also label each item as multiple-choice, open-response, short-response, short-answer, or writing prompt and identify the item's MCAS reporting category. Item numbers in this document correlate directly to the item numbers in the test item analysis reports.

## **Structure**

Each subsequent chapter of this document contains information and materials for one MCAS test (one grade level and one content area). For example, chapter II contains information for the grade 3 ELA test; chapter XV contains information for the grade 10 Mathematics test. Note that chapter VIII contains information for both the ELA Composition (Part A) and the ELA Reading Comprehension (Part B) tests for grade 10.

Beginning with chapter II, each chapter has three main sections. The **first section** provides information about the content being assessed, including the Web address for the relevant framework and the page numbers on which the learning standards can be found. In addition, there is a brief overview of the test (number of test sessions, types of items, and reference materials allowed).

For grades 3–8, the **second section** of each chapter contains approximately half of each content area's common test items used to generate spring 2016 MCAS student results. The second section of each chapter for grade 10 ELA and Mathematics tests and high school Biology and Introductory Physics tests contains all of the common items on which spring 2016 MCAS student results are based. With the exception of the grade 10 ELA Composition writing prompts, the test items in this document are shown in the same order and basic format in which they were presented in the test booklets.

In order to support future test development, items from the spring 2016 high school Chemistry and Technology/Engineering tests are not included in this publication. The omission of these items will have no impact on the reporting of results. The reporting category and standard for each item are provided.

The Mathematics Tool Kit pieces used by students to answer released items in grades 3 and 4, as well as the Mathematics Reference Sheets used by students during MCAS Mathematics test sessions in grades 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10, are inserted immediately following the last item in each Mathematics chapter. Students were provided with a

plastic ruler during the grades 3–8 Mathematics tests and the high school Technology/Engineering test. An image of the ruler is not presented in this document. The reference tools used by students during the high school Science and Technology/Engineering tests (Chemistry Formula and Constants Sheet/Periodic Table of the Elements for the Chemistry test; formula sheets for the Introductory Physics and Technology/Engineering tests) are inserted immediately before the table at the end of the associated chapter.

Due to copyright restrictions, certain English Language Arts reading passages may not be available on the Department’s website. Copyright information for all reading passages in this document is provided. Note that the Department has obtained permission to post all ELA passages that appear on its website. While the Department grants permission to use the posted test items for educational purposes, it cannot grant or transfer permission to use the passages that accompany the items. Such permission must be obtained directly from the holder of the copyright. For further information, contact Student Assessment Services at 781-338-3625.

The **final section** of each chapter is a table that cross-references each released MCAS common item with its MCAS reporting category and with the *Framework* standard it assesses. For grades 3–8 ELA and Mathematics, the table shows how the items assess standards in the 2011 frameworks. Information about how these items assess standards in the previous frameworks, if applicable, can be found in electronic reports only. For grade 10 ELA and Mathematics, the table shows how the items on the test assess standards in both the 2011 frameworks and the previous frameworks. Correct answers to released MCAS multiple-choice questions in all content areas, as well as correct answers to released short-answer questions for Mathematics, are also listed in the table.

For grades 3–8, the final section of each chapter includes a second table that cross-references each unreleased MCAS common item with its MCAS reporting category and with the framework standard it assesses.

Responses to short-response questions, open-response questions, and compositions written in response to writing prompts are scored individually. An overview of procedures for scoring these responses and compositions is presented in the MCAS Frequently Asked Questions, which are available on the Department’s website at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/overview.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/overview.html). Sample student responses and compositions from previous MCAS administrations may also be viewed on the Department’s website.

Materials presented in this document are **not** formatted **exactly** as they appeared in student test booklets. For example, in order to present items most efficiently in this document, the following modifications have been made:

- Some fonts and/or font sizes may have been changed and/or reduced.
- Some graphics may have been reduced in size from their appearance in student test booklets; however, they maintain the same proportions in each case.
- For the grade 10 ELA Composition, the four lined pages provided for students’ initial drafts are omitted.
- All references to page numbers in answer booklets have been deleted from the directions that accompany test items.

## **Changes for 2016**

### **Inclusion of PARCC Items**

The 2016 MCAS tests in ELA and Mathematics at grades 3–8 were augmented with a small number of items developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a consortium of states that was formed to create new assessments in ELA and Mathematics. The decision to include a limited number of PARCC items on the MCAS tests was part of a plan, approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in November 2015, to transition Massachusetts to a next-generation MCAS assessment. PARCC items were included on the 2016 tests to make statewide comparisons easier and to offer students and educators the opportunity to experience PARCC items while new assessments for 2017 and beyond are being developed.

The numbers and types of PARCC items included on the 2016 MCAS tests at grades 3–8 were as follows:

- ELA: Students answered four evidence-based selected-response items and wrote a narrative response to a text.
- Mathematics: Students answered six items, which included multiple-choice, multiple-select, short-answer, and open-response questions.

Student performance on the PARCC items is being scored and will be reported to schools and parents/guardians. However, results on the PARCC items will not be factored into students' MCAS scores. For this reason, information on the PARCC items is not being included in this document, which is intended to share the spring 2016 test items on which student results are based. The Department will post information about the PARCC items to the Student Assessment webpage in a separate document.

For more information on Massachusetts's participation in the PARCC consortium, please visit [www.doe.mass.edu/parcc/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc/). For more information on the work being done to develop a next-generation MCAS assessment, please visit [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/nextgen/default.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/nextgen/default.html).

### **Elimination of ELA Composition at Grades 4 and 7**

MCAS ELA assessments have traditionally included a Composition test at three grade levels: grades 4, 7, and 10. In 2016, the Department decided to eliminate the ELA Composition test in grades 4 and 7. This decision was based on the fact that all MCAS ELA test forms in grades 3–8 included a PARCC narrative writing task in 2016. The decision did not affect the Composition test for grade 10, which was administered as usual in March 2016.