

MCAS-Alt

Same Standards • High Expectations for ALL Students

September 2011

Volume 9, Issue 1

www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt



This newsletter is published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and will provide Massachusetts educators with information, advice, and support to teach the Massachusetts learning standards to students with significant disabilities, and to conduct the MCAS Alternate Assessment.

"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

-Malcolm Forbes

Welcome to the 2011–2012 school year!

We wish you all a successful school year and look forward to seeing you at trainings throughout the year.



In This Issue

- **What's New**
- **Updates and Reminders**
- **Getting Started**
- **Administrator's Corner**



What's New

Reporting of MCAS-Alt Results

The 2011 MCAS-Alt portfolios were scored last spring, and principals received preliminary electronic results in June. Please see your principal about MCAS-Alt results if you have not done so already.

The following materials will be delivered in early fall:

- The 2011 MCAS and MCAS-Alt *Parent/Guardian Reports* (in English and translated versions) will be sent to district offices, approved private special education schools, and educational collaborative offices during the week of September 19. These reports, including translations of

the report template where necessary, must be sent to each student's home as soon as possible.

- Student portfolios will be returned to the schools from which they were submitted during the week of September 19. Once schools have received the returned portfolios, they become part of each student's temporary record. Temporary student records must be kept on file at the school and follow students to any new placements. For more information about student records, please visit www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/cmr23qanda.html?section=summary.

Fall Trainings

Department-sponsored MCAS-Alt training sessions will be conducted in October 2011, January and March 2012. Flyers and registration information for the fall training sessions have been posted to the MCAS-Alt website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html and shortly will be faxed to each district, school, and collaborative. MCAS-Alt educator training sessions will include the following presentations:

- "MCAS-Alt Overview" for educators who are conducting the MCAS-Alt for the first time
- "What's New for 2012 MCAS-Alt?" for educators with previous MCAS-Alt experience
- Sessions on the following specific topics:
 - Data-collection strategies
 - Compiling portfolios at grade-level expectations for students in grades 3–8 and competency portfolios for high school students
 - Access skills for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities

If you will be conducting the MCAS-Alt with one or more students this year, you are strongly encouraged to attend one of the following sessions, especially if you have not compiled an MCAS-Alt portfolio previously.

Week 1 (8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)	
Tuesday, October 4, 2011	Taunton – Taunton Inn and Conference Center (formerly Holiday Inn)
Wednesday, October 5, 2011	Marlborough – Best Western
Thursday, October 6, 2011	Springfield – Sheraton
Friday, October 7, 2011	Danvers – CoCo Key Hotel (formerly Crowne Plaza)
Week 2 (8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)	
Friday, October 14, 2011	Springfield – Marriott
Monday, October 17, 2011	Quincy – Marriott
Tuesday, October 18, 2011	Mansfield – Holiday Inn
Friday, October 21, 2011	Peabody – Marriott



Updates and Reminders

Prospective 2012 MCAS-Alt Training Specialists - Invitation to Apply

If you are an educator with two or more years' experience conducting the MCAS-Alt, please consider applying to become an MCAS-Alt training specialist for the 2011–2012 school year. Selected training specialists will serve as resources to their schools and districts by training and assisting other teachers to conduct the MCAS-Alt. Details about the responsibilities and benefits of becoming a training specialist, and an application form, are available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/trainingspecialist.doc. Prior experience as a training specialist is not required. **Completed applications are due no later than 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, September 14, 2011.**

2012 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt

The *2012 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html. Printed copies of the Educator's Manual and the *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities* (2006) will be available at the MCAS-Alt training sessions in October, and thereafter by ordering online. Because the 2006 version of the Resource Guide is the most current, you will not need to obtain a new copy if you still have last year's.

MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs Online

Digital versions of the MCAS-Alt forms and graphs will soon be available online at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html. These computer-based applications allow you to complete, save, and print all required forms for the MCAS-Alt either online (through a secure, password-protected website) or by downloading the forms onto your personal computer. These will include the 2012 versions of cover sheets, blank data charts, and work description labels. The MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs Online program minimizes the time needed to complete the forms required for each student's portfolio and has been used successfully by hundreds of teachers.



Getting Started

September is an ideal time to review the results of last year's portfolios and the current IEP objectives for your students. Be sure to review the scores and comments provided on the Portfolio Feedback Form(s) which are posted online and available to your principal via the Department's Security Portal. Consider how your students performed at the end of last year, and review their current IEP goals and benchmarks in order to establish goals for the current school year.

At this point, you should:

- Determine who can support you in compiling MCAS-Alt portfolios. Talk with your principal about the role of other classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, OTs, PTs, speech and language staff, and other staff in gathering evidence for portfolios.
- Establish a consistent routine for working on MCAS-Alt portfolios.
- Meet with colleagues who are compiling portfolios in order to brainstorm ideas and provide support when needed.
- Talk with your principal about the possibility of flexible scheduling, classroom coverage, or release time that would allow you to work on portfolios throughout the year.



Administrator's Corner

Fall Trainings

Flyers and registration information for Department-sponsored MCAS-Alt training sessions will be faxed to each school shortly. It is important for teachers conducting the MCAS-Alt to attend a training session in October, even if they are familiar with the alternate assessment process. We encourage you to inform your teachers when training workshops are offered and allow them to attend.

Supporting Teachers Who Conduct the MCAS-Alt

Early September is a good time to establish a routine that provides your teachers the opportunity to work on their MCAS-Alt portfolios and collaborate with others engaged in the same activities. Teachers have reported that it is very helpful to have consistent release time to do this work. Please consider weekly or monthly release times for teachers to assemble MCAS-Alt portfolios.

Training Specialists Needed

Do you know a teacher in your school or district who has previously compiled high-quality MCAS-Alt portfolios and can assist others this year? If so, he or she may be an ideal candidate to assume a higher-profile role as an MCAS-Alt training specialist. You may want to encourage this individual to apply to become an MCAS-Alt training specialist for the 2011–2012 school year. Training specialists receive additional training and can serve as resources to other teachers conducting the MCAS-Alt in their schools and districts. Training specialists also make a commitment to attend one-day training sessions in September, October, January, and March to receive training and assist teachers from across the state to construct their students' portfolios. As a result, training specialists will bring back instructional ideas, strategies, and resources to share with others in your school and district. The application to become an MCAS-Alt training specialist is available online at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/trainingspecialist.doc.

Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14, 2011.

Who Participates in MCAS-Alt?

Please remember that the decision to participate in the MCAS-Alt is made solely by a student's IEP or 504 team. It is also important to remember that each year the IEP or 504 team revisits (and revises, if necessary) its decision on how students with disabilities participate in MCAS in each subject. Additional information and participation guidelines can be found in the *2012 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt*, and also in the *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS* (Spring 2011 Update), available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/?section=sped.

Was this email forwarded to you?

Get on our mailing list. [Click here](#) to sign up for the MCAS-Alt News.

We'd love to hear from you.

Please [let us know](#) if there is a topic you'd like us to address in a future MCAS-Alt newsletter.