

**MCAS-Alt Back-to-School Edition**

### **Quote of the Day:**

***“It's always worthwhile to make others aware of their worth.”***

Malcolm Forbes, businessperson, magazine publisher

*We wish you and your students a productive and peace-filled school year!*

**New for the 2023–2024 school year**

Participation Criteria for MCAS-Alt

The US Department of Education requires each state to establish a definition for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for the purpose of defining a clear participation criterion for the state’s Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards, which is the MCAS-Alt.

* DESE defines “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities” as students who:
	+ have cognitive disabilities evidenced by significant delays in attaining age-level academic achievement standards, even with systematic, extensive individually designed instruction, related services, and modifications;**and**
	+ have cognitive disabilities that significantly impact their educational performance and ability to apply learning from one setting to another; **and**
	+ require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled; **and**
	+ perform significantly below average in general cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. This is defined as a student **functioning two or more standard deviations below the mean on commonly accepted norm-referenced assessments** in **both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior** (e.g., two or more adaptive skill areas such as daily living skills, communication, self-care, social skills, and academic skills*).*
* If the student is determined eligible for the alternate assessment **all** content areas must be alternately assessed.
* A companion document, the *Participation Assessment Tool,* will be completed and submitted to DESE when a student is found eligible to participate in the MCAS-Alt. (*coming soon)*

**Mathematics: Conceptual Categories to Domains**

* Based on the results of the student’s mathematics skills survey, teachers may access an appropriate lower domain. Please review the *Fall 2023 Mathematics Resource Guide* for grade-level requirements.

**Reminders for the 2024 MCAS-Alt**

MCAS-Alt submission date: Thursday, March 28, 2024

* See the **recommended timeline** on page 2 of the *2024 Educator’s Manual for MCAS-Alt* for a list of important dates projected for the MCAS-Alt in the coming school year.
* The updated **Fall 2023 Alternate Academic Achievement Standards to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (a.k.a “The Resource Guides”**) are coming soon as will be the *2024 Educator’s and MCAS-Alt Principal’s Manual.*
* The [**MCAS-Alt Skills Survey**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/skills-survey.docx) is still a required component of the MCAS-Alt.
* **Educator Materials,** can be found at the[**log-on**](https://profile.measuredprogress.org/MCAS-Alt/Login.aspx)page of the **Online Forms and Graphs** including state-wide training registration, links to STE high-quality instructional material, and much more. You do not have to log in to access the material.

**Apply to Become an MCAS-Alt Training Specialist**

**Are you a teacher who has demonstrated an understanding of the MCAS-Alt process with at least two years of experience submitting high-quality MCAS-Alt portfolios? Do you want to network with other teachers from across the state? Do you enjoy assisting your colleagues?**

**If so, you may be a candidate to assume a higher-profile role as an MCAS-Alt training specialist in the 2023**–**2024 school year. This volunteer position will require approximately 3-5 full days either out of your school (review sessions) or in a virtual meeting (training, review sessions, and orientation).**

**As a training specialist, you will:**

* **be an MCAS-Alt resource person.**
* **advise other teachers in your school and district on compiling their assessments.**
* **facilitate review sessions in January and February/March**
* **be among the first to receive new information from DESE on alternate assessments.**
* **provide the Department with your feedback on various aspects of the MCAS-Alt process in the future.**

**The** [application](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/23MCASALTTSNEWAP) **is available now through September 18. If you are considering applying, please sign up to attend the fall *Introduction to the MCAS-Alt* and review the *New and Notable* section of the *2024 Educator’s Manual*. Notification of accepted applicants will be emailed by the end of the day, September 21.**

**We will consider all applications carefully, although we can take only a limited number of training specialists, based on qualifications such as your responses to the questions, geographical region of the state, and grade level. For accepted applicants, a mandatory training specialist orientation will be held virtually on December 7.**

**Please Note: Applicants currently employed by a district will require an administrator to approve their application before submission.**

**Coming Soon**

[**Online Forms and Graphs**](https://profile.measuredprogress.org/MCAS-Alt/login.aspx), the password-protected application used by educators to complete the MCAS-Alt, will be available for use in September. Teachers must register for a *new account* for the 2023–2024 school year.

**Training Fall Educator Training Sessions**

Training sessions for the MCAS-Alt will be conducted virtually. Teachers whose students are participating in the MCAS-Alt should review the *2024 Educator’s Manual for MCAS-Alt* prior to attending a session. Administrators and teachers will receive registration information via email.

**Register** for all sessions [here](https://profile.measuredprogress.org/MCAS-Alt/Materials/Register.aspx). Choose the session and follow the instructions on the site for dates and times. Closed caption transcripts and video recordings will be available within a week to 10 days of each session at the [DESE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html) and Educator Material site. If you need an ASL interpreter, please send an email request to the MCAS Events team (mcasevents@cognia.org) at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the session. This flyer is also available [online](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html).

**Introduction to MCAS-Alt Core Concepts: For teachers who have not conducted the MCAS-Alt**

Core Concepts (Parts A and B) will be conducted on the same day, one session in the morning and one in the afternoon. Sessions will include guidelines for conducting the MCAS-Alt Skills Survey, creating a portfolio strand, acceptable evidence, data collection, and using the Online Forms and Graphs program.

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| **Introduction to the MCAS-Alt Core Concepts (Choose one date)** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Wednesday, September 27 | **Part a**: 9:00–10:30 a.m., **Part b**: 1:30–3:00 p.m. |
| Tuesday, October 3 | **Part a**: 9:00–10:30 a.m., **Part b**: 1:30–3:00 p.m. |

**MCAS-Alt Update: For teachers with recent experience conducting the MCAS-Alt.** Updates include new and notable information for the 2024 MCAS-Alt submission.

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| **MCAS-Alt Update (Choose one date)** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Wednesday, October 11 | 9:30−11:00 a.m. |
| Thursday, October 12 | 1:30−3:00 p.m. |
| Monday, October 16 | 9:30−11:00 a.m. |

**ELA−Writing Science and Technology/Engineering (STE), and ACCESS Skills** available to all educators who will be conducting MCAS-Alt assessments this year, regardless of experience. The **ELA−Writing** session will describe the requirements for ELA−Writing in all grades.

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| **ELA–Writing (Choose one date)*****\*Access Skills for Writing will be the focus of the last hour of this session*** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Friday, September 29 | 10:00– 11:30 a.m. |
| Wednesday, October 4\* | 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.  |

**Science and Technology/Engineering (STE)** session will describe the requirements for this subject in grades 5, 8, and high school.

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| **STE for Grades 5, 8, and High School (Choose one date)** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Friday, September 29 | 1:00–2:30 p.m. |
| Wednesday, October 4 | 10:00–11:30 a.m.  |

**Access Skills** session willaddress all grades for access skills and low entry points.

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| **Access Skills** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Monday, October 16 |  1:30–3:00 p.m.  |

**MCAS Competency and Grade-Level Portfolios** for teachers of students with significant disabilities who achieve *at or near grade level* in their classroom work but cannot demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations. Special educators are encouraged to invite their general education colleagues to attend this session.

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| **Competency and Grade-Level Portfolios (Choose one date)** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Tuesday, September 26 | 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. |
| Tuesday, October 10 | 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. |

**AdministratorsOverview Sessions** for administrators and special education leaders according to the schedule below. Sessions will cover a range of topics concerning the statewide assessment of students with disabilities, including:

* Revised Criteria for MCAS participation
* Important Dates—Bring your calendar (digital or hard copy)
* How to find and share the alternate assessment results
* ESSA 1% Cap update
* Competency Portfolio option

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| **Administrators Overview Sessions (Choose one date)** |
| **Date** | **Time** |
| Tuesday, September 26  | 1:30−3:00 p.m. |
| Thursday, October 12 | 9:30−11:00 a.m. |

**Thank you for your attention to this important information.**

Published bi-monthly during the school year by the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt).

If this was forwarded to you [sign-up](https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/PMveeWr/MCASaltNews) for the Newsletter.