

**MCAS-Alt Update**

**January/February 2024**

This newsletter is published by DESE to provide Massachusetts educators with information, guidance, and support as they teach students with significant cognitive disabilities and conduct the MCAS Alternate Assessment (the MCAS-Alt).

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

Malcolm Forbes, businessperson, publisher

1. **Follow-up to the January Review Sessions**

Following the January review sessions, here is what your colleagues want you to know:

1. **Completeness Questions**

To improve the likelihood of submitting a complete assessment, review the [*Completeness Questions*](https://profile.measuredprogress.org/MCAS-Alt/Materials/Default.aspx)*.*

1. **Timeline and Important Dates**

* Review the timeline and important dates on pages 1–2 of the [Educator’s Manual](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/edmanual.docx).
* Review grade-level requirements on pages 7–13 of the [Educator’s Manual](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/edmanual.docx).

1. **Copy Assessment**

Each time a strand is completed, make a copy. Copies are required if an appeal is warranted.

1. **February and March MCAS-Alt and Competency and Grade-Level Review Sessions**
2. **In-Person Review Sessions**

MCAS-Alt and competency and grade-level portfolio review sessions will be offered as follows:

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| Date | Time | Location |
| Wednesday, February 28 | 8:30 –12:00 | Taunton Conference Center, Taunton |
| Thursday, February 29 | 8:30–12:00 | MassMutual Center, Springfield |
| Tuesday, March 5 | 8:30–12:00 | Marriott, Peabody |

The MCAS-Alt review sessions are an outstanding professional development opportunity for teachers compiling alternate assessments for their students. Educators are encouraged to bring their students’ in-progress assessments and a tablet or laptop to update data. State-trained reviewers will answer questions and give feedback in an informal setting.

For competency and grade-level review sessions, participants are invited to bring student work for grades 3−8 grade-level and high school competency portfolios to receive feedback. Content specialists will be available at most locations.

1. **Virtual Review Sessions**

For participants unable to attend the in-person review sessions, DESE will host two virtual sessions for the MCAS-Alt and one competency and grade-level session. Participants for the MCAS-Alt sessions may sign up for a one-hour time block and are encouraged to prepare questions in advance. There will be a limit on the number of educators in these sessions to allow participants and reviewers sufficient time to discuss their questions.

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| Virtual Review Session | Date | Timeframe |
| MCAS-Alt\* | March 7 | 8:30 a.m.– 2:50 p.m. |
| MCAS-Alt\* | March 12 | 8:30 a.m. – 2:50 p.m. |
| Competency and grade-level portfolios | March 6 | 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. |

\*For the MCAS-Alt Sessions, register for a 1-hour block.

[Registration](https://profile.measuredprogress.org/MCAS-Alt/Materials/Register.aspx) for all review sessions will open on **January 26**.

If an ASL interpreter is needed, please contact [**MCASevents@cognia.org**](mailto:MCASevents@cognia.org) **by February 9**

1. **Administrator’s Corner**
2. **Review sessions**

Please encourage teachers in your school or district to attend a review session.The in-person session is a beneficial professional development opportunity for teachers to complete data entry. If coverage is difficult for your school, a virtual review session gives teachers an hour to ask questions of a training specialist. Dates and locations are provided above.

**b. MCAS-Alt Materials Shipments**

Your school’s shipment of MCAS-Alt submission materials (e.g., binders, envelopes, identification booklets) will arrive during the **week of February 26**. Once it arrives, please open the box and verify that the quantity of materials received is accurate by following the instructions to complete **Section 2** of the online MCAS-Alt PCPA.

* Click on “MCAS Alternate Assessment,” then click on “Principal Certification.”
* After receiving your MCAS-Alt materials, order additional submission materials if needed.

1. **Late transfers**

Students who transfer into the school late in the school year and are designated to participate in the MCAS-Alt are required to submit a portfolio. We ask schools to do the best they can with late-arriving students, as they have in the past. Remember to check with the sending school to obtain any assessment documentation already collected.

1. **MCAS-Alt Participation Tool**

The MCAS-Alt Participation Tool should be completed for each student being recommended for the alternate assessment for the 2024–2025 school year. Please review the [Eligibility/ESSA](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa/default.html) website for more information.

Thank you for your attention to this information.

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