

MCAS-Alt

Same Standards • High Expectations for ALL Students



October 2009
Volume 7, Issue 2
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.

"We cannot do everything at once, but we can do something at once."

-Calvin Coolidge

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Updates and Reminders

All portfolios submitted in spring 2009 have been returned to schools.

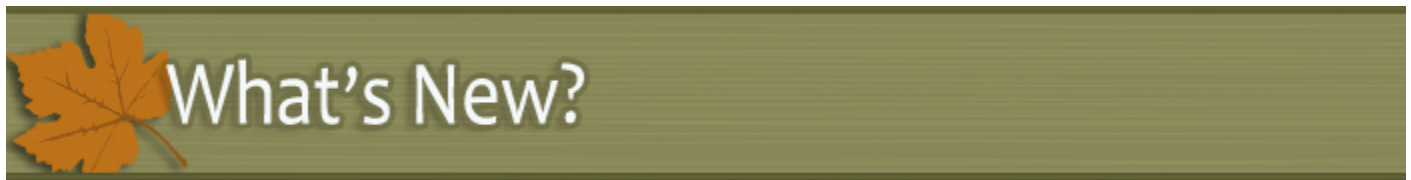
Two versions of the **Online 2010 MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs** program are now available for completing the required MCAS-Alt forms, data charts, and work description labels on a computer.

- **Option 1** allows you to download the program to complete the forms and graphs on one computer.
- **Option 2** provides access to the application on a secure, password-protected website. This allows you to complete the forms and graphs from multiple computers.

To obtain either version of this computer-based forms and graphs program, please visit the MCAS-Alt Web page at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html.

The order form for MCAS-Alt manuals is now posted. If you have not received a print copy of the *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities* (fall 2006) or the *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt*, you may order one copy of each online at www.mcasservicecenter.com. First click on "MCAS Alternate Assessment," and then click on "Order Manuals." Each of these publications is also available for viewing and/or downloading at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html.

Brief descriptions are required for all data points on data charts. Descriptions on data charts must be brief and informational. However, the descriptions should accurately describe the type of activity the student did and not just list the setting or the staff involved. For example, "Student played an addition game on the computer" is brief and informative; "Math class" is brief but uninformative.



MCAS-Alt portfolios are due on **Thursday, April 1, 2010**, for all content areas and grades. This submission deadline will allow preliminary results to be posted electronically by mid-June and will allow the information to be used in making placement and instructional decisions for the following school year.

Electronic (MCAS-Alt EV) portfolios have been discontinued due to the decline in the number of EV portfolios submitted and due to the advancements made to the online 2010 MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs program. Digital evidence may still be submitted in VHS, VHS-C, CD, and DVD formats. Please refer to the *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* for additional details for submitting video portfolio evidence.



Because portfolios are due on April 1, 2010, it is important to start organizing your portfolios and gathering evidence now. It is important to establish and follow a schedule for completing the portfolios to avoid falling behind in the spring. Here are some helpful tips:

- Use pages 16–22 of the *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* to determine the required subject areas and strands for each student's grade level.
- Begin completing the Strand Cover Sheets and other required forms by using either the paper version provided in the *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* or one of the two versions of the online 2010 MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs program available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html.
- Based on each student's grade level, determine the strands required for alternate assessment, as well as the learning standards and measurable outcomes you will teach and assess for each student's portfolio.
- Set up data charts for each student based on each measurable skill you have identified for assessment. Then select the chart or graph you will use to collect the data; for example, a field data chart, a line graph, or a bar graph.
- Begin recording data regarding each student's performance (accuracy and independence).

- If you plan to take photos or videos of students, obtain parent/guardian signatures on the Consent Form to Photograph and Audio/Videotape a Student. Keep signed consent forms on file at your school.
- Begin saving work samples created by each student.

Additional Suggestions

- Think about organizational systems you have used to put together portfolios in the past. Continue using the systems that worked and make changes to the systems that did not.
- Determine who will assist you, and communicate with them so they will be able to help you gather relevant information and evidence. Share with them your organizational system, the type of evidence you need, and how they can best help you.
- Label work samples with the student's name, the date, and the student's accuracy and independence as the work is produced. This will save time and help ensure accuracy.
- Talk with your principal about the support you may need, including setting aside the necessary time to work on portfolios.



It is important to identify the students who are participating in the MCAS-Alt and the teachers who are responsible for putting together the portfolios.

- Check in with these teachers as soon as possible to find out what their support needs are. Portfolios are due Thursday, April 1, 2010, a month earlier than in the past, so teachers may feel additional pressure to complete portfolios for their students.
- Set up a regular scheduled time for teachers to work on their students' portfolios, if possible. (For example, work with teachers to set aside one afternoon a month or two hours every other week.)
- Designate experienced mentors, where possible, to assist teachers new to the MCAS-Alt process.

We greatly appreciate your response to any requests the teachers make for assistance. Please remember to check in with teachers periodically and to support them in compiling high-quality portfolios. Teachers need your assistance to find the time to meet and collaborate on portfolios, create data charts, label portfolio evidence, and attend portfolio review sessions in January and March. MCAS-Alt portfolios contribute to the AYP determinations for your school and district.

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.

Published monthly during the school year by the
 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt