



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Spring 2010 Update

*Requirements for
the Participation of
Students with Disabilities
in MCAS*

*Including Test Accommodations
and Alternate Assessment*

A Guide for Educators and Parents/Guardians



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

January 2010

Dear Colleagues, Parents, and Guardians:

I am pleased to present the spring 2010 update of *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for the participation of students with disabilities in statewide tests and to familiarize educators and parents/guardians with available test accommodations. Please use this manual during IEP and 504 team meetings throughout the school year to make assessment decisions. I also want to call your attention to the recent decision by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to suspend testing in History and Social Science, including alternate assessment, in spring 2010.

The appropriate use of accommodations provides students with disabilities greater access to classroom instruction and assessments. Decisions about which accommodation(s) are provided to students must be made carefully, based on the requirements outlined in this manual. *Nonstandard accommodations*, such as a test administrator reading aloud the English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test, are intended for use by a very small number of students with disabilities who meet certain criteria. Data from the 2008 and 2009 spring MCAS administrations suggest that, in many schools, disproportionately large numbers of students are using nonstandard accommodations, while in other cases, these accommodations have not been provided to any students. The Department plans to continue to work with schools and districts to support the appropriate use of test accommodations, and to provide these data to districts on an annual basis.

Please be aware that test accommodations may *not* be provided to non-disabled students. In addition, IEP and 504 teams must seek approval from the Department to use accommodations that are not listed in this document before including them in a student's IEP or 504 plan.

I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the policies and guidelines provided in this publication, and contact Student Assessment Services at 781-338-3625 with any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

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

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I. Overview of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

A. Background

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is the Commonwealth's statewide assessment program for students educated with public funds. MCAS tests measure the performance of students, schools, and districts on the academic learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, fulfilling the requirements of the Education Reform Law of 1993 and No Child Left Behind.

All students, including students with disabilities, are required to participate in all MCAS tests scheduled for their grade. Students with significant disabilities who are unable to take the standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations, must take the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt).

B. Definition of a Student with a Disability

For the purposes of MCAS, a student with a disability is defined as having an Individualized Education Program (IEP) provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 71B, or a plan provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. There are limited exceptions to this, as discussed in Chapter III, Section B of this manual.

C. Meeting the High School Competency Determination (CD)

In order to graduate from high school, all students, including students with disabilities, are required to earn a CD in ELA, Mathematics, and STE, as well as meet all local graduation requirements.

To earn a CD, students must either earn a scaled score of at least 240 on the grade 10 MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests, or earn a scaled score between 220 and 238 on these tests and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP). Additional information on the EPP is available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/hsreform/epp/. In addition, students must earn a scaled score of at least 220 on one of the high school MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) tests: Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, or Technology/Engineering. Students who fail one or more of the required tests will be offered multiple testing opportunities. For more information on Competency Determination graduation requirements, visit www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html.

A small number of students are able to meet the CD requirement in one or more of the required content areas through participation in MCAS-Alt. In order to earn a CD through participation in the MCAS-Alt, a student must submit a portfolio that

1. demonstrates knowledge and skills at grade-level expectations for a student in grade 10
2. demonstrates evidence of the student's thinking and problem-solving skills
3. demonstrates accurate and independent performance on the work samples that address all required learning standards and strands in the subject being assessed, as described on pages 26–32 of the *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt*, available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html

II. Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS

The Massachusetts Education Reform Law of 1993 mandates that *all* students with disabilities who are educated with Massachusetts public funds participate in MCAS testing for their grade, including

- students enrolled in public schools
- students enrolled in charter schools
- students enrolled in educational collaboratives
- students enrolled in approved and unapproved private special education schools and programs within and outside Massachusetts
- students receiving educational services in institutional settings
- students in the custody of the Department of Social Services
- students in the custody of the Department of Youth Services

Students with disabilities must participate in grade-level tests that correspond with the grade in which they are enrolled as reported to the Department's Student Information Management System (SIMS).

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students with Disabilities

All LEP students with disabilities must participate in all MCAS tests given at their grade level, regardless of the number of years they have been enrolled in U.S. schools. An exception to this requirement is made for LEP students who **first enrolled in a U.S. school after March 1, 2009**. Schools have the option of assessing first-year LEP students on the English Language Arts tests. All other tests are required for these students.

LEP students with disabilities are entitled to receive test accommodations or to take the MCAS-Alt, as determined by their IEP or 504 teams.

Additional information on the participation of LEP students with disabilities in MCAS can be found in *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Limited English Proficiency in MCAS and MEPA*. This document is available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/?section=lep.

A. Determining How Students with Disabilities Will Participate in MCAS

During its annual meeting, a student's IEP or 504 team must determine how the student will participate in MCAS for each subject scheduled for assessment. This information, including any accommodations that a student will use, must be documented in the student's IEP or 504 plan. Guidelines for making participation decisions for individual students appear in sections C and D in this chapter.

B. MCAS Participation Guidelines

IEP and 504 teams should use the following guidelines at annual team meetings to determine how each student with a disability will participate in MCAS.

The student's IEP or 504 team should begin by asking the following questions and considering options 1, 2, and 3 in the chart that follows:

- Can the student take the standard MCAS test under routine conditions?
- Can the student take the standard MCAS test with accommodations? If so, which accommodations are absolutely necessary in order for the student to participate?

- Does the student require an alternate assessment? (Alternate assessments are intended for a very small number of students with significant disabilities who are unable to take standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations.)

The student’s IEP or 504 team must make a separate decision for **each subject** scheduled for testing, and may be revised each time the team convenes. A student may take the standard test in one subject and the alternate assessment in another.

Characteristics of Student’s Instructional Program and Local Assessment	Recommended Participation in MCAS
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OPTION 1

<p><i>If the student is</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) generally able to demonstrate knowledge and skills on a paper-and-pencil test, either with or without test accommodations and is b) working on learning standards at or near grade-level expectations, or is c) working on learning standards that have been modified and are somewhat below grade-level expectations due to the nature of the student's disability 	<p><i>Then</i></p> <p>The student should take the standard MCAS test, either with or without accommodations that are consistent with the instructional accommodation(s) used in the student’s instructional program and are documented in the approved IEP or 504 plan prior to testing.</p>
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Characteristics of Student’s Instructional Program and Local Assessment	Recommended Participation in MCAS
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OPTION 2

<p><i>If the student is</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) generally unable to demonstrate knowledge and skills on a paper-and-pencil test, even with accommodations and is b) working on learning standards that have been substantially modified due to the nature and severity of his or her disability and is c) receiving intensive, individualized instruction in order to acquire, generalize, and demonstrate knowledge and skills 	<p><i>Then</i></p> <p>The student should take the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) in this subject.</p>
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OPTION 3

If the student is

- a) working on learning standards **at or near grade-level expectations** *and* is
- b) **sometimes able** to take a paper-and-pencil test, either without or with one or more test accommodation(s), *but*
- c) has a **complex and significant disability** that does not allow a student to demonstrate knowledge and skills on a test of this format and duration.

(Examples of other complex and significant disabilities for which a student may require an alternate assessment are provided on the following page.)

Then

The student should take the **standard MCAS test**, if possible, with necessary accommodations that are consistent with the instructional accommodation(s) used in the student's instructional program and that are documented in the approved IEP or 504 plan prior to testing.

However

The team may recommend the **MCAS-Alt** when the nature and complexity of the disability prevent the student from fully demonstrating knowledge and skills on the standard test, even with accommodations.

C. Other Complex and Significant Disabilities for Which a Student May Require an Alternate Assessment

While the majority of students who take alternate assessments have significant *cognitive* disabilities, participation in the MCAS-Alt is not limited to these students. When the nature and complexity of a student's disability present complex and significant barriers or challenges to standardized testing, even with the use of accommodations, and even when the student may be working at or near grade-level expectations, the student's IEP or 504 team may determine the student should take the MCAS-Alt in that subject.

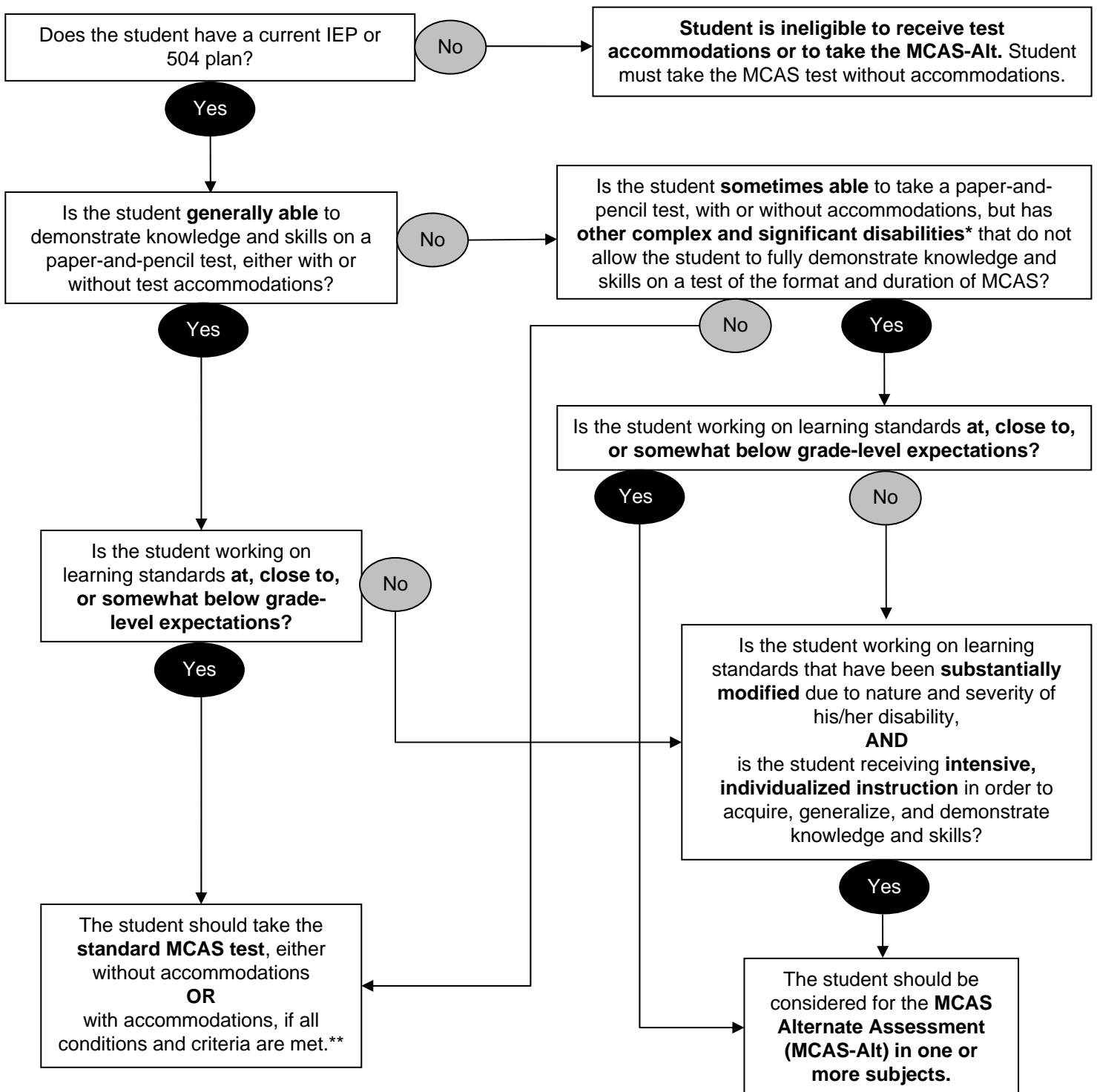
In addition to the criteria outlined in Options 2 and 3 on the previous page, the following examples of unique circumstances are provided to expand the team's understanding of the appropriate use of alternate assessments. An alternate assessment may be administered, for example, in each of the following situations:

- a student with a severe emotional, behavioral, or other disability is unable to maintain sufficient concentration to participate in standard testing, even with test accommodations
- a student with a severe health-related disability, neurological disorder, or other complex disability cannot meet the demands of a prolonged test administration
- a student with a significant motor, communication, or other disability requires more time than is reasonable or available for testing, even with the allowance of extended time (i.e., The student cannot complete one full test session in a school day.)

These students may use the MCAS-Alt to satisfy the Competency Determination requirement if they can demonstrate in their portfolio a level of achievement comparable to that of a student who has met the Competency Determination requirements on the standard grade 10 test or retest in that subject. Students who meet these requirements on the MCAS-Alt will be eligible to earn a Competency Determination.

D: MCAS Participation Guidelines for IEP/504 Team Decision-Making

The “decision tree” below may be used by IEP and 504 teams to make decisions regarding appropriate annual student participation in MCAS for each content area(s) being assessed.



*Examples of other complex and significant disabilities can be found on page 5 of this manual.

**Please refer to Chapter III of this manual for eligibility and requirements regarding test accommodations.

III. MCAS Test Accommodations

Please use the information in this chapter as a general guide for IEP and 504 team decision-making. Only a student's IEP or Section 504 plan team can make decisions regarding test accommodations. The principal is responsible for ensuring that each student is provided with all test accommodations listed in his or her IEP or 504 plan.

A. Definition and Purpose of Test Accommodations

A test accommodation is a change in the way a test is administered or in the way a student responds to test questions. Similar to instructional accommodations, test accommodations are intended to offset the effects of the disability and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills on statewide assessments.

Test accommodations **must be provided** when the student's IEP or 504 team has determined their necessity. Teams must ensure that a student meets all conditions and eligibility criteria in order to receive an accommodation. See section C for guidelines on allowable accommodations.

Reliance on test accommodations should never replace appropriate and rigorous instruction in the subject being tested.

B. Eligibility for Test Accommodations

ELIGIBLE: Students with disabilities served by an IEP or 504 plan

The right of a student with a disability to receive accommodations on MCAS and MEPA tests is protected by both federal and state laws. The student's IEP or 504 plan must specify precisely which test accommodation(s) he or she will receive. In cases where an IEP is under development, the IEP team, including the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), must have met and agreed upon which MCAS accommodations are necessary before a student may be provided the accommodations.

NOT ELIGIBLE: Students without documented disabilities, and students with documented disabilities not served by an IEP or 504 plan

A student who does not have a documented disability is **not eligible** to receive accommodations on MCAS tests, regardless of whether the student already receives instructional support or accommodations, for example, through either an Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP) or District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP).

C. General Requirements for Use of Test Accommodations

The use of accommodations is based on the individual needs of a student with a disability and may only be provided when all of the following conditions have been met:

- 1) The student **has a documented disability** (non-disabled students may **not** use test accommodations) that is **documented** in an IEP or 504 plan.
AND
- 2) The student **uses the accommodation routinely** during classroom instruction and assessment in the subject, both before and after the test is administered (with rare exceptions).
AND
- 3) The student **requires the accommodation** in order to participate in statewide testing.
AND
- 4) The **accommodation is listed** in parts I or J of this section (or, prior to testing, the district has consulted with the Department and received permission to use an accommodation not included in this document).
AND
- 5) If a **nonstandard accommodation** will be provided, the student meets **all** of the eligibility criteria for that accommodation listed in Part J of this section.

Accommodations **may not**

- alter, explain, simplify, paraphrase, or eliminate any test item, reading passage, writing prompt, or multiple-choice answer option;
OR
- provide verbal or other clues or suggestions that hint at or give away the correct response to the student;
OR
- contradict test administration requirements or result in the violation of test security, for example:
 - test items may not be modified, reordered, or reformatted in any way for any student,
 - tests may not be photocopied, enlarged, or duplicated, and
 - English language dictionaries are not allowed for any student on any test except the ELA Composition test.

When accommodations used on the test do not meet the conditions stated above, the student's test score may be **invalidated**.

If the above conditions have been met, the accommodation(s) **must be provided** to the student during MCAS testing. If a student refuses an accommodation listed in his or her plan, the school should document in writing that the student refused the accommodation, and the accommodation must be offered and remain available to the student during testing.

If the IEP or 504 team believes that a test accommodation listed in the student's IEP or 504 plan should be removed because it is no longer necessary and appropriate for the student, the **team must amend the plan accordingly** prior to testing. The students' parent(s)/guardian(s) must be included in this decision.

It is acceptable for teams to list an accommodation in the plan with the notation "as requested by the student," signifying that the student may require the accommodation only periodically during testing; for example, a student who tires easily may need a scribe only during the latter part of a test session.

In the event that a student was provided a test accommodation that was not listed in his or her IEP or 504 plan, or if a student was **not** provided a test accommodation listed in his or her plan, the school should immediately contact the Department at 781-338-3625. If a student was provided an accommodation that was not in his or her IEP or 504 plan, all or part of the student's score may be **invalidated**.

D. Untimed Test Sessions

All MCAS test administrations are untimed. Since any student may be given additional time beyond the scheduled test administration session, additional time is not considered an MCAS accommodation. However, no single test session may extend beyond the end of the regular school day, and any single test session must be completed on the same day in which it begins. Students taking the English language Arts (ELA) Composition test must complete two sessions (Session A and B) in one day.

To ensure equivalent testing conditions in schools across the state and to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, are afforded an equal opportunity to benefit from untimed tests, it is particularly important for all testing to occur during regular school days. If testing must occur on an "early release" day, arrangements must be made for staff to stay with students who have not finished their work until the time at which school would end on a regular school day.

E. Determining School Resources and Other Testing Needs

Prior to MCAS testing, IEP and 504 team chairpersons should provide information to the principal or MCAS coordinator regarding each student who will require test accommodations, along with the specific accommodation(s), resources, and/or space that each student will need. All special test formats, including Braille, large-print, American Sign Language video, and Kurzweil 3000 CD, must be ordered online by the principal or designee during the MCAS Enrollment Verification.

Use of Dictionaries on MCAS Tests

The use of English language dictionaries is prohibited for all MCAS tests except for the ELA Composition. All LEP and former LEP students may use authorized word-to-word bilingual dictionaries on all MCAS tests. A list of authorized word-to-word dictionaries is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/lep_bilingualdictionary.doc.

F. Definition of Standard Accommodations

For the purposes of MCAS, a *standard accommodation* is defined as a change in the routine conditions under which students take MCAS tests that do not alter what the test is intended to measure. Standard accommodations are grouped into the following four categories:

- Changes in timing or scheduling of the test; for example, administering the test in short intervals or at a specific time of day
- Changes in test setting; for example, administering the test in a small group or a separate setting
- Changes in test presentation; for example, using a large-print or Braille edition of the test
- Changes in how the student responds to test questions; for example, dictating responses to a scribe

A list of standard test accommodations can be found in section I of this chapter.

G. Definition of Nonstandard Accommodations

For MCAS, a *nonstandard accommodation* is defined as an accommodation that:

- changes the way an MCAS test is presented
- OR**
- changes the way a student responds to test questions
- AND**
- alters a portion of what the test is intended to measure.

A list of nonstandard accommodations and the conditions under which they may be used appears in section J of this chapter.

Nonstandard accommodations are intended for use by a very small number of students who would not otherwise be able to access the test. Teams must exercise caution, therefore, in considering whether a student requires a nonstandard accommodation, and must carefully review the criteria described for each nonstandard accommodation on the list. Test results for a student who took the test using nonstandard accommodation(s) must be interpreted with caution by parents and schools.

The Department will continue to review the rates of nonstandard accommodations use, and provide districts with this information. Districts must ensure that IEP and 504 teams are applying appropriate criteria for use of nonstandard accommodations by carefully reviewing all criteria and eligibility requirements for the nonstandard accommodations listed in Section I, and revising the IEPs and 504 plans of students with disabilities accordingly.

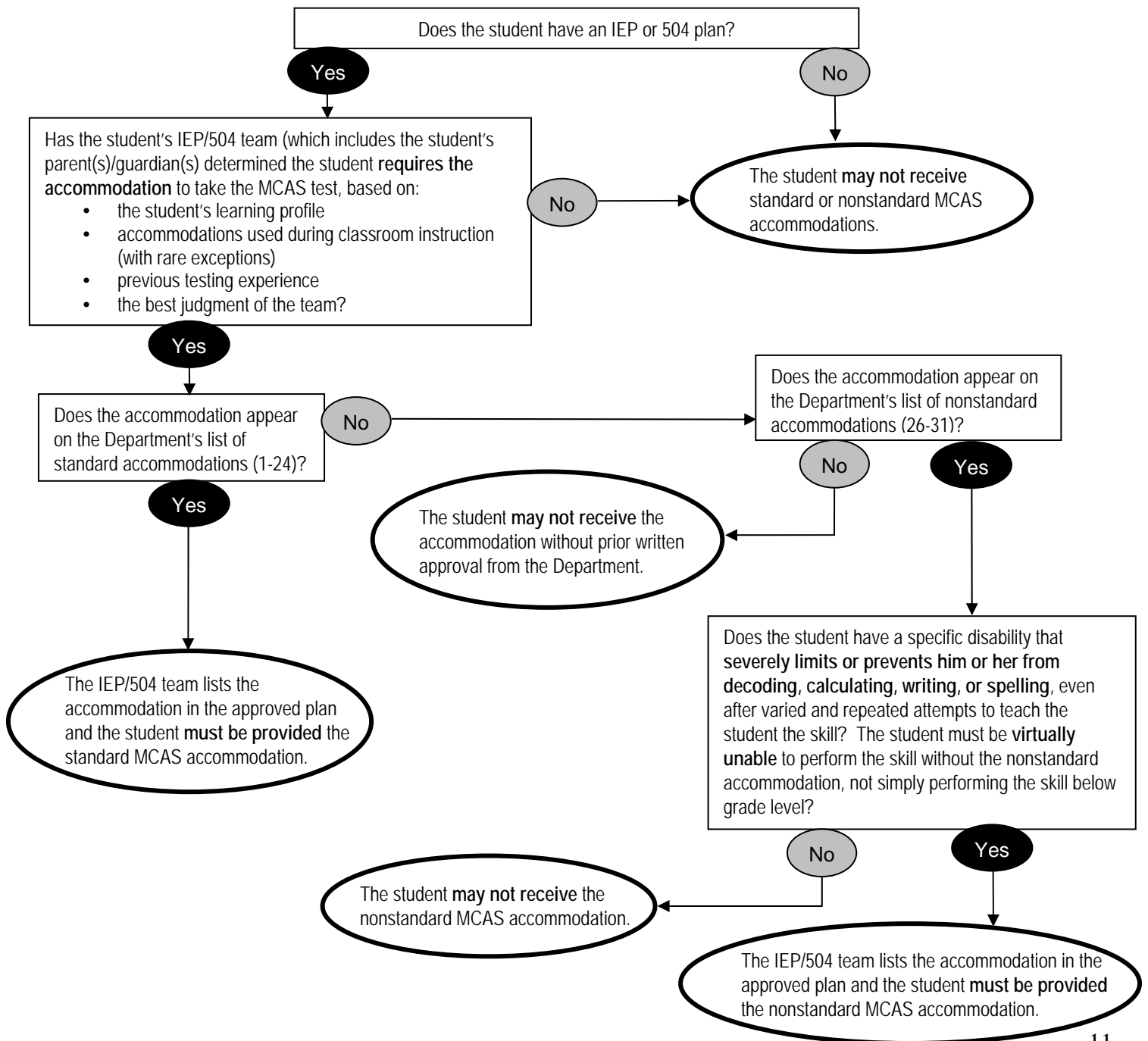
Please call the Student Assessment office at 781-338-3625 with any questions about accommodations.

H. IEP/504 Team Selection of MCAS Test Accommodations

Standard accommodations are changes that do not alter what the test measures (i.e. changes in timing, setting, test presentation, or how a student responds to test questions).

Nonstandard accommodations are changes either in test presentation or in how a student responds to test questions that alter part of what the test measures. These are intended for a **very small** number of students with disabilities. Nonstandard accommodations include: reading aloud the ELA Reading Comprehension test; using a calculation device for the non-calculator session of the Mathematics test; or using a scribe or spell- or grammar-checking device for the ELA Composition test.

The “decision tree” below may be used by IEP and 504 teams to make decisions about the use of accommodations with individual students.



I. List of Standard Accommodations

Following is a list of standard test accommodations for students with disabilities. Specific information regarding test administration for students using accommodations, including instructions for administering accommodations and for returning accommodation materials after test administration, is available in the *Principal's Administration Manual*, and is no longer included in this publication.

Changes in Timing or Scheduling of the Test

1. **Frequent Breaks:** The test is administered in short periods with frequent breaks.
2. **Time of Day:** The test is administered at a time of day that takes into account the student's medical or learning needs (IEP or 504 plan must specify time of day).

Changes in Test Setting

3. **Small Group:** The test is administered in a small group setting (no more than 10 students). **Note:** If students will also receive the accommodation of having the test read aloud or signed, the group can be no more than 5 students.
4. **Separate Setting:** The test is administered in a room other than the one used by the rest of the class.
5. **Individual:** The test is administered to the student individually.
6. **Specified Area:** The test is administered with the student seated at the front or other specified area of the room, in a study carrel, or in another other enclosed area (IEP or 504 plan must specify location).

Changes in Test Presentation

7. **Familiar Test Administrator:** The test is administered by a test administrator familiar to the student.
8. **Noise Buffers:** The student wears noise buffers, after test administration instructions have been read (music may **not** be played on headphones worn during MCAS testing).
9. **Magnification or Overlays:** The student uses magnifying equipment, enlargement devices, colored visual overlays, or specially tinted lenses (IEP or 504 plan must specify which).
10. **Test Directions:** The test administrator clarifies general administration instructions. No portion of the test items or reading selections (including the introduction to reading selections) may be read or signed.
11. **Large-Print:** The student uses a large-print (18-point font) edition of the test. All answers must be transcribed verbatim from the large-print answer booklet to the student's standard answer booklet.
12. **Braille:** The student uses a Braille edition of the test. All answers must be either scribed or transcribed verbatim into the student's answer booklet.

Note: Under secure conditions supervised by the principal, the Braille test administrator may review

Braille test materials up to four days prior to test administration. Test materials may never be removed from the school.

13. **Place Marker:** The student uses a place marker.
14. **Track Test Items:** The test administrator assists the student in tracking test items (e.g., moving from one test question to the next) or by redirecting the student's attention to the test.
15. **Amplification:** The student uses sound amplification equipment.
16. **Test Administrator Reads Test Aloud (except ELA Reading Comprehension test, which is nonstandard accommodation 26):** The test administrator reads the ELA Composition, Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/Engineering test(s) aloud to the student.
 - Test session(s) must be read word-for-word, exactly as written. The test administrator may **not** provide assistance to the student regarding the meanings of words, intent of any test item, or responses to test items. The test administrator must read in a **neutral** tone, with no emphasis given to any terms, passages, or response options, and with no detectable changes in inflection. The test can be read aloud in one of the following ways, which **must be specified** in the IEP or 504 plan:
 - Test administrator reads entire test session word-for-word exactly as written.
 - OR**
 - Test administrator reads selected words, phrases, and/or sentences as directed by the student. The student points to the word, phrase, or sentence that he or she needs read aloud.
 - If the test is read aloud, it must be administered in a **separate setting**, either **individually** or to a **small group (2–5 students)**. For reading aloud to a small group, follow the procedures outlined in the appendix to this document.
17. **Test Administrator Signs Test (except ELA Reading Comprehension test, which is nonstandard accommodation 27):** The test administrator signs the ELA Composition, Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/Engineering test(s) to the student who is deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Test sessions(s) must be signed exactly as written, except in cases when doing so would reveal an answer to a test question. When use of a sign would visually define the concept being tested (e.g., using the sign for parallel lines that demonstrates this concept visually), the term or concept must be finger-spelled. Interpreters may not provide assistance to the student regarding the meanings of words, intent of any test question, or responses to test items.
 - The test may be administered either **individually** or to a **small group (2-5 students)**. For signing the test to a small group, follow the procedures outlined in the appendix.

Notes:

- Under secure conditions supervised by the principal, sign interpreters may review test materials up to four days prior to test administration. Test materials may never be removed from the school.
- American Sign Language DVDs and VHS videotape cassettes of the grade 10 Mathematics test are available.

18. **Electronic Text Reader (except ELA Reading Comprehension test, which is nonstandard accommodation 28):** The student uses an electronic text reader for the ELA Composition, Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/Engineering test(s).

All MCAS tests are available on a CD in the Kurzweil 3000 format. Responses to all test questions must be submitted in the student's standard answer booklet for students using this format.

Changes in How the Student Responds to Test Questions

19. **Scribe Test (except ELA Composition, which is nonstandard accommodation 29):** The student dictates or signs responses to a scribe or uses a speech-to-text conversion device to record responses. Guidelines follow:
- The scribe must record the student's words **exactly as dictated** into the student's answer booklet and may not edit or alter the student's responses in any way.
 - The scribe must allow the student to review and edit what has been scribed.
 - When a student uses an electronic speech-to-text conversion device, the test administrator must follow the instructions for submitting typed responses described in the *Principal's Administration Manual*.
 - If a scribe is used, the test must be administered **individually** in a **separate setting**.
20. **Organizer, Checklist, Reference Sheet, or Abacus:** The student uses a graphic organizer or checklist to answer open-response items or to respond to a writing prompt, an individualized mathematics reference sheet, or an abacus on the Mathematics tests.

Note: The use of calculators (on non-calculator test sessions), arithmetic tables, and manipulatives on the mathematics tests is nonstandard accommodation 30.

- a) A student may use a **graphic organizer** or **checklist** to generate a draft ELA Composition or open-response, to check the steps in the writing process, or to recall reading comprehension strategies. The student may use **no more than two** different graphic organizers per test. Generic graphic organizers (e.g., webs, Venn diagrams) without text do not need to be submitted to the Department for approval. Graphic organizers containing text, and all checklists, **must be pre-approved** by the Department.

Graphic organizers **may not include**

- definitions,
 - specific examples (e.g., examples of adjectives or synonyms), or
 - sentence starters.
- b) A student may use an **individualized mathematics reference sheet** or **checklist** to provide memory prompts, mnemonic devices, formulas, word banks, and/or generic steps in solving a mathematics problem, provided it has been **previously approved** by the Department.

The mathematics checklist or reference sheet **must be**

- developed in response to the individual student's learning needs,
- no more than 3 pages, and
- specific to the student's grade.

c) The mathematics checklist or individualized reference sheet **may not include** the following:

- arithmetic tables (including addition/subtraction and multiplication/division charts), unless the student also meets the criteria for **nonstandard accommodation 30** and this accommodation is listed in his or her IEP or 504 plan. **(If arithmetic tables are included on a math reference sheet they will not be approved unless it is noted that the student will also receive accommodation 30.)**
- definitions of any mathematical terms
- graphic illustrations (e.g., graphs, pictures of geometric shapes, or images that define a mathematical concept)
- specific examples showing solutions to actual mathematical problems

d) A student who is visually impaired may use an **abacus** during all sessions of the Mathematics test.

ELA graphic organizers, checklists, and mathematics reference sheets **approved by the Department in 2008 or 2009**, do not need to be resubmitted for approval this year. Please submit all math reference sheets, customized graphic organizers containing text, and checklists for approval by the Department **by fax to 781-338-3630** or email (in MS Word or PDF format only) to **mcas@doe.mass.edu at least two weeks prior** to the MCAS test for which it will be used. Reference sheets, checklists and/or graphic organizers submitted after these deadlines will not be reviewed for approval. Notice of approval may take up to 10 business days from the time the materials are received at the Department. **Please indicate the specific test and grade for which the reference sheet, checklist or organizer will be used, as well as the school name and contact information.** Do not submit multiple copies of identical graphic organizers or math reference sheets for approval.

21. **Student Signs or Reads Test Aloud:** The student

- reads the test aloud to himself or herself, OR
- reads the test and records answers on an audio recording device, then writes responses to test items while playing back the recorded segment(s) (including the ELA Composition), OR
- types responses, then uses text-to-speech software to play back and review the typed responses (student must also have accommodation 23 on his or her IEP or 504 plan), OR
- signs test items/responses onto video, then writes answers while playing back the video (for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing).

Notes:

- a) The test must be administered **individually** in a **separate setting**.
- b) All video and audio CDs, DVDs, and tapes must be returned with other nonscorable materials.
- c) Text-to-speech software may **not** be used to listen to test items or passages.

22. **Monitor Placement of Responses:** The test administrator monitors placement of student responses in the student's answer booklet.

23. **Typed Responses:** The student uses a word processing program or Alpha-Smart (or similar electronic keyboard) to type the ELA Composition, answers to open-response questions, or answers to short-answer questions on any MCAS test.

Notes:

- A student using this accommodation may not have access to the Internet or other files on the computer during testing.
- When the ELA Composition is typed, the student may **not** use the **spell- or grammar-checking function**, unless the student also receives nonstandard accommodation 31.
- The test administrator must follow the instructions for submitting typed responses described in the *Test Administrator's Manual* and the *Principal's Administration Manual*.

24. **Answers Recorded in Test Booklet:** The student records answers directly in the test booklet or uses **special paper** for drafts or computation (e.g., lined paper or graph paper).

Note: The test administrator **must** transcribe answers verbatim into the student's standard answer booklet. If the student transcribes his or her own responses, the transcription must be done during the test session and completed on the day in which the test session begins.

25. **Other Standard Accommodation:** Other standard accommodation used by the student during routine instruction that is identified by the IEP or 504 team as being necessary for the student to participate in MCAS tests.

The accommodation must meet the *Requirements for Use of Test Accommodations*, in section C of this chapter. The principal or designee **must** request written permission from the Department at least two weeks prior to test administration in order to provide a standard accommodation not on the above list to a student. Accommodations must meet the criteria set forth in Section C of this chapter. The student's IEP or 504 Plan team must reconvene in order to document any changes to accommodations listed in the plan, and the plan must be signed by the parent before the accommodation may be used. Please call 781-338-3625, email mcas@doe.mass.edu, or fax requests to 781-338-3630.

J. Requirements for the Use of Nonstandard Accommodations

IEP and 504 teams may allow the use of one or more of the following nonstandard MCAS test accommodations **only when all of the criteria are met**, as described next to each nonstandard accommodation. The accommodation must only be provided when it is documented in a signed IEP or 504 plan. Please also review Section F of this chapter carefully for additional information. **Use of an accommodation during instruction does not necessarily qualify a student to receive the same accommodation on an MCAS test.**

The Department will continue to carefully review the number of students with disabilities in each district who receive nonstandard accommodations on MCAS tests. IEP and 504 teams are encouraged to make consistent, defensible, and appropriate decisions for each student, and to amend the IEPs and 504 plans of students who do not meet the criteria listed below.

#	Accommodation	Criteria Required for Use
26.	<p>Test Administrator Reads Aloud the ELA Reading Comprehension Test</p> <p>Note: Reading aloud the ELA Composition writing prompt, or the Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/ Engineering tests is standard accommodation 16. The decision to use nonstandard accommodation 26 must be made separately from the decision to use standard accommodation 16.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student has a specific disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from decoding text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so. The student must be a virtual non-reader, not simply reading below grade level. AND 2. The student has access to printed materials only through a reader, and/or is provided with spoken text on audiotape, CD, video, or other electronic format during routine instruction, except while the student is actually being taught to decode.
<p>Special Instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All passages and test items must be read word-for-word, exactly as written. The test administrator may not provide assistance to the student regarding the meanings of words, intent of any test item, or responses to test items. The test administrator must read in a neutral tone, without emphasis on any terms, passages, or response options, and with no detectable changes in inflection. • If the test is read aloud, it must be administered in a separate setting, either individually or to a small group (2-5 students). When reading aloud to a small group of students, follow the procedures outlined in the appendix. 		

<p>27. Test Administrator Signs ELA Reading Comprehension Test for a Student Who Is Deaf or Hard of Hearing</p> <p>Note: Signing the ELA Composition writing prompt or the Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/Engineering tests is standard accommodation 17. The decision to use accommodation 27 must be made separately from the decision to use standard accommodation 17.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student has a specific documented disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from decoding text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so. The student must be a virtual non-reader, not simply reading below grade level. AND 2. The student has access to printed materials only through a sign language interpreter, or is provided with signed text on video or other electronic format during routine instruction, except while the student is actually being taught to decode.
<p>Special Instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All passages and test items must be signed exactly as written, except in cases when doing so would reveal an answer to a test question. When use of a sign would visually define the concept being tested, the term or concept must be finger-spelled. Interpreters may not provide assistance to the student regarding the meanings of words, intent of any test question, or responses to test items. • If the test is signed, it must be administered in a separate setting, either individually or to a small group (2–5 students). When signing a test to a small group of students, follow the procedures outlined in the appendix. • Under secure conditions supervised by the principal, sign interpreters may review test materials up to four days prior to test administration. Test materials may never be removed from the school. 	
<p>28. Electronic Text Reader for the ELA Reading Comprehension Test The student uses an electronic text reader (i.e., Kurzweil 3000) for the ELA Reading Comprehension test.</p> <p>Note: Using an electronic text reader for the ELA Composition writing prompt or the Mathematics, Science and/or Technology/Engineering tests is standard accommodation 18. The decision to use accommodation 28 must be made separately from the decision to use standard accommodation 18.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student has a specific documented disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from decoding text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so. The student must be a virtual non-reader, not simply reading below grade level. AND 2. The student has access to printed materials only through an electronic text reader and is provided this accommodation during routine instruction, except while the student is actually being taught to decode. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Continued...</i></p>

	<p>Special Instructions:</p> <p>Kurzweil edition MCAS tests are read-only. All answers must be submitted in the student’s answer booklet.</p>	
<p>29.</p>	<p>Scribe ELA Composition The student dictates the ELA Composition to a scribe or uses a speech-to-text conversion device to record the ELA Composition.</p> <p>Note: The Department strongly urges IEP teams to consider alternatives to the use of a scribe for students who are deaf and who are taking the ELA Composition test. One such alternative is accommodation 21, which would permit a deaf student to sign his or her draft composition onto video and then transcribe the signed composition into written English while viewing the video.</p>	<p>1. The student has a significant disability which requires the dictation of all written compositions to a scribe or use of an electronic speech-to-text conversion device for all compositions.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>2. The student is unable to use his or her writing hand or arm at the time of testing due to a broken bone or fracture. (See Section B in this chapter for additional information on using a scribe for a student who is not yet on an IEP or 504 plan.)</p>
<p>Special Instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The test must be administered individually in a separate setting. • Clarification on the role of a scribe for the ELA Composition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ During session A, the scribe must write exactly what the student dictates into the student’s test booklet. The scribe may not edit or alter the student’s dictation in any way. When scribing the draft composition, the scribe may assume that each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. All other capitalization, punctuation, and paragraph breaks are the responsibility of the student. ○ After the student has finished dictating his or her draft composition, the scribe must ask the student to do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spell key words. Key words include proper nouns, multi-syllable words, and other words pertinent to the composition. - Review the draft composition and make any necessary edits, including edits to capital letters, punctuation, and paragraph breaks. The student may make edits independently or may direct the scribe to make the edits. The scribe must not assist the student in making decisions during the editing process. ○ During session B, the scribe copies the final draft, including the student’s edits, into the student’s answer booklet. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Continued...</i></p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a student uses an electronic speech-to-text conversion device, the test administrator must follow the instructions for submitting typed responses described in the <i>Principal's Administration Manual</i>.
<p>30.</p>	<p>Calculation Devices: The student uses a calculator, arithmetic table (including addition/subtraction and multiplication/division charts), or manipulatives (IEP/504 must specify which) on the non-calculator session of the Mathematics and/or the grades 5 and 8 Science and Technology/ Engineering tests.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The student has a specific disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from calculating mathematically. The student must be virtually unable to perform calculation without the use of a calculator or arithmetic table, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so. AND The student has access to mathematical calculation only through the use of a calculator, arithmetic table, or manipulatives, which the student uses during routine instruction except while the student is actually being taught to calculate.
<p>31.</p>	<p>Spell- or Grammar-Checking Function on Word Processor, Spell-Checking Device, or Word Prediction Software for the ELA Composition: The student uses a spell- or grammar-checking function, spelling device (including hand-held electronic spellers), or word prediction software (IEP/504 must specify which function or device) for the ELA Composition.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The student has a specific documented disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from spelling correctly, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so. The student must be virtually unable to spell simple words. AND The student can produce understandable written work only through the use of a spell- or grammar-checking device or word prediction software which the student uses during routine instruction.
<p>Special Instructions:</p> <p>When word prediction software is used, the “predict-ahead” and “predict online” software functions must be turned off.</p>	

<p>32.</p>	<p>Other Nonstandard Accommodation: Other nonstandard accommodation used by the student during routine instruction that is identified by the IEP or 504 team as being necessary for the student to participate in MCAS tests.</p> <p>The accommodation must meet the Requirements for Use of Test Accommodations in section C of this chapter.</p>	<p>The principal or designee must request written permission from the Department at least two weeks prior to test administration when a nonstandard accommodation not on the above list is being considered by the student’s IEP or 504 team. Accommodations must meet the criteria set forth in Section C of this chapter and receive written approval from the Department. The student’s IEP or 504 team must reconvene in order to document any changes to accommodations listed in the plan, and the plan must be signed by the parent before the accommodation may be used. Please call 781-338-3625, email mcas@doe.mass.edu, or fax requests to 781-338-3630.</p>
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IV. MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt)

A. Overview

The MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) is intended for the relatively small number of students with significant disabilities who are unable to participate in regular statewide assessments even when accommodations are provided. The MCAS-Alt measures the student's achievement of the academic learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

For each student scheduled to take the MCAS-Alt in one or more subjects, the student, the student's teacher, and other adults who work with the student will develop a portfolio over the course of the school year. The student's portfolio must include data and other evidence of the student's performance in the subject being assessed.

To assist teachers in providing instruction in the general curriculum to students with significant disabilities, the Department has developed the *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities (Fall 2006)*. In addition, the *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* includes important forms and information on the requirements of the MCAS-Alt. To view and download copies of these documents or to order printed copies, visit the Department's MCAS-Alt website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html.

Teachers who are conducting alternate assessments are strongly encouraged to participate in an MCAS-Alt training session or to view the Department's training presentations available at the website listed above. Training sessions are conducted annually in October, January, and March. Since requirements are updated annually, teachers who have not attended a recent training session or reviewed updated materials may place their students at a disadvantage. MCAS-Alt training specialists are available to assist teachers in conducting the MCAS-Alt. Please call Student Assessment Services at 781-338-3625 for additional information.

B. Participation Guidelines

IEP and 504 teams must determine annually which students will take alternate assessments in each subject after reviewing the participation guidelines in Chapter II, Section C. of this document. Since the MCAS-Alt portfolio includes data and samples of student work collected during the school year, it is advisable to start this process early in the school year. The Department will monitor the use of alternate assessments statewide to ensure that they are being conducted appropriately and that participation decisions are made in accordance with the law.

C. Obtaining Portfolio Binders and Submission Materials

In January, principals must order MCAS test materials online using the MCAS Enrollment Verification. As part of this process, principals also indicate the number of students taking the MCAS-Alt. The Department uses this information to determine the number of three-ring portfolio binders, Student Information Forms, and pre-paid mailing materials to send to principals in March 2010. Additional materials may be ordered by calling the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103.

D. Submitting MCAS-Alt Portfolios

Completed MCAS-Alt student portfolios must be submitted to the Department in three-ring binders provided to the school by the Department for that purpose (see section C in this chapter) postmarked no later than **Thursday, April 1, 2010**.

Submitted MCAS-Alt portfolios will be returned to schools in fall 2010 and must be kept on file at the school in a secure location.

V. Reporting MCAS Results for Students with Disabilities

MCAS results are reported to parents/guardians, schools, and districts according to four performance levels: *Advanced (Above Proficient at grade 3)*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, and *Warning (Failing at grade 10)*. Results for the MCAS-Alt typically are reported as *Awareness*, *Emerging*, *Progressing*, or *Incomplete* which are within the *Warning/Failing* level. Each year a small number of students taking the MCAS-Alt earn scores of *Needs Improvement* or higher by demonstrating that they have mastered grade-level standards. A score of NI or higher is necessary to meet the state's graduation requirements to earn a diploma.

Performance level results for students with disabilities—whether they take the standard tests with standard or nonstandard accommodations, or without accommodations, or participate through the MCAS-Alt—are aggregated in MCAS reports with the results for students who took the tests without accommodations. Scaled score results for students who participated in testing with either standard or nonstandard accommodations are aggregated in MCAS reports with scores of students who participated in testing without accommodations. MCAS-Alt portfolios do not receive scaled scores.

New
for
2010

Notations for Nonstandard Accommodations

Beginning in 2010, confidential reports of student records, including the *Parent/Guardian Report*, will include a notation in cases where a nonstandard accommodation was used. However, in order to protect the confidentiality of students with disabilities, notations will *not* appear on reports that include the results of fewer than ten students per school for school reports, and per district for district reports. Rates of use of nonstandard accommodations will also be reported at the school and district levels.

In school and district reports, the results for students with disabilities are disaggregated; these results also include those of LEP students with disabilities.

Students in Out-of-District Placements

Test results for a student who attends an out-of-district placement are reported to the school or collaborative where the student took the test(s) and are included with the scores of the student's sending district, regardless of whether the student took standard MCAS test(s) or the MCAS-Alt. Out-of-district placements include approved and unapproved private special education schools, educational collaboratives, and other special education placements outside the student's home (i.e., sending) school district.

VI. Preparing Students with Disabilities for MCAS Testing

A. Role of Educators

Educators of students with disabilities are expected to implement an instructional program that has all of the following characteristics:

- The program is based on the learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- The program uses varied and individualized approaches to instruction that enable each student to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills.
- The program provides students with disabilities access to all the necessary resources, materials, and opportunities to learn that are provided to students without disabilities.
- The program provides necessary and appropriate supports and instructional accommodations to ensure access to the general curriculum by students with disabilities.

B. Role of Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians of students with disabilities play a key role in preparing their child(ren) for MCAS. Some suggestions follow:

- Make sure your child attends school regularly.
- Review class assignments and make sure that adequate time is set aside for homework.
- Set aside time for your child to read.
- Meet regularly with your child's teacher(s) to discuss how you can support your child's education.
- Review your child's *MCAS Parent/Guardian Report*, and use it to identify your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- Inquire about the use of appropriate MCAS accommodations at IEP or 504 team meetings, and whether the MCAS-Alt or the standard MCAS test is appropriate for your child.
- Review MCAS test questions with your son or daughter. Released test items are posted on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html.
- Ask whether the school offers an MCAS support program that would benefit your child.
- If your child is participating in the MCAS-Alt, you may ask to view your child's MCAS-Alt portfolio.
- Become familiar with the learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

C. Available Resources

The following publications are available on the Department's Web site at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas. Many are also available in Massachusetts public libraries:

- *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities* (Fall 2006)
- *2010 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt*
- Release of spring test items (available for 2005–2009)
- Release of fall retest items (available for 2005–2008)
- Release of spring retest items (available for 2005–2009)
- MCAS scoring guides and sample student work (available for 2005–2009)
- *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Limited English Proficiency in MCAS and MEPA* (Spring 2009 Update)

In addition, released test items are available in the following specialized test formats:

- Release of test items in Braille, available for 1999–2009, by calling the Accessible Instructional Materials Library at 800-827-7772
- Release of test items in Kurzweil 3000 electronic text reader format, available for 2004-2008, at www.kurzweiled.com/proof_educator_sampletest_mcas.aspx
- Release of spring 2007 and 2008 grade 10 Mathematics American Sign Language DVDs, available by contacting the Department's Student Assessment Services office at 781-338-3625

APPENDIX

Procedures for Using Test Accommodations 16 and 26: Reading MCAS Tests Aloud to a Small Group of Students (2-5)

The test administrator may read the test aloud to a small group of students, provided that each student has an IEP or 504 plan that includes either standard accommodation 16 (for the ELA Composition, Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/Engineering tests) or nonstandard accommodation 26 (for the ELA Reading Comprehension test). **The following procedures must be followed:**

- **No more than five students** may be grouped together, since students typically proceed through the test at different rates.
- The principal or designee must supervise the assignment of students to groups that will have test items read aloud to them. Student test booklets may not be opened or reviewed by students or test administrators prior to testing.
- Students grouped together must have the **same test form number**, since all questions in a given test form are identical. Test form numbers appear in the upper right-hand corner of each student test booklet.
- The principal or designee may order packets of six (6) of the same test form online through the MCAS Enrollment Verification. These packets are intended specifically for use with accommodations 16 and 26. Each packet includes six test booklets (one each for a group of up to five students and one for the test administrator).

Procedures for Using Test Accommodations 17 and 27: Signing MCAS Tests to a Small Group of Deaf Students (2-5)

The test administrator may sign test items to a small group of students, provided that each student has an IEP or 504 plan that includes either standard accommodation 17 (for the ELA Composition, Mathematics, and/or Science and Technology/Engineering tests) or nonstandard accommodation 27 (for the ELA Reading Comprehension test). **The following procedures must be followed:**

- No more than five students may be grouped together, since students typically proceed through the test at different rates.
- Students grouped together must be given test Form 1 (Form 00 for Grade 10 Mathematics) since all questions in a given test form are identical. Test form numbers appear in the upper right-hand corner of each student test booklet. These test forms must be ordered by the principal or designee online through MCAS Enrollment Verification.
- Student test booklets may not be opened or reviewed by students prior to testing.
- Under secure conditions supervised by the principal, sign interpreters may review test materials up to four days prior to test administration. Test materials must be reviewed in a secure location supervised by the principal and may not be removed from the school.

