

**Part I of the Spring 2012 MCAS
Principal's Administration Manual:
MCAS Test Security Requirements**

MCAS Test Security Requirements

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests are designed to elicit students' work in order to assess their comprehension of the subject being tested. The purpose of the MCAS Test Security Requirements is to protect the validity of MCAS results.

Section A describes responsibilities of principals and designees (i.e., individuals authorized by the principal to assist in coordinating test administration).

Section B describes shared responsibilities of all individuals who have access to secure test materials.

Section C describes responsibilities of test administrators.

Section D provides instructions for reporting testing irregularities and describes the process the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("the Department") follows for investigation.

Principals and school personnel authorized to have access to secure materials must follow the requirements listed below and may not participate in, direct, assist in, encourage, or fail to report any testing irregularity or act of misconduct.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that all test administrators and school personnel authorized to have access to secure test materials comply with the requirements and instructions contained in this part and in the *Test Administrator's Manuals (TAMs)*.

Principals in schools that are conducting the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) are also responsible for ensuring that educators submitting MCAS-Alt portfolios comply with the requirements and instructions contained in the *2012 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt*.

Please note the following definitions for the purposes of this section and this manual:

- **"Secure"** refers to a test question, student response, or test that has not been made available to the public by the Department. All test questions, student responses to those test questions, test booklets, and answer booklets¹ are confidential and must be kept secure at all times. Principals must return all secure materials to the testing contractor after testing is completed.
- **"Access"** refers to handling test materials, but does not include reviewing tests or individual questions. Students may never transport secure test materials.
- **"Locked storage area"** refers to the locked area that must be used to store all MCAS test materials **at all times** when materials are not in use. Principals must restrict access to the locked storage area to only those school personnel authorized by the principal to handle secure materials. For example, custodial or cleaning staff may not have access to the locked area where the principal stores secure materials.

Each principal must complete the Principal's Certification of Proper Test Administration (PCPA) to certify that the school has followed proper MCAS test security requirements and test administration protocols. See Appendix E for the certification statements to which the principal must attest.

New In addition, before testing superintendents will review their principals' plans for maintaining test security so that they are comfortable with the procedures in their school buildings. Your superintendent may ask you to use the sample Superintendent's Assurance of Proper Test Administration form in Appendix E to document your preparations.

¹ Throughout this manual, the terms "test booklet" and "answer booklet" also refer to the combined test & answer booklet used at grade 3.

A. Responsibilities of the Principal and Designee

1. **Authorize specific personnel to serve as test administrators, and train them to properly administer MCAS tests. Designate other school personnel permitted to access secure test materials, and train them in MCAS security requirements.**
 - Before the training session, distribute
 - a copy of the appropriate TAM to every test administrator; and
 - a copy of the test security requirements (available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin) to all school personnel who have access to secure materials.
 - Document that all test administrators have received TAMs and that school personnel who have access to secure materials have received the test security requirements. **New**
 - Train test administrators prior to each administration (i.e., March–April and May–June) during which they will administer any MCAS test. The *Principal's Administration Manual* (PAM) and TAMs describe the protocols necessary to conduct a proper MCAS test administration.
 - Train test administrators who provide test accommodations to students with disabilities in the implementation of accommodations in accordance with Appendix B and *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*.
2. **Develop local policies and procedures to ensure maximum test security at all times.**
 - Schedule tests to avoid conflicts with recess or lunch (see pages 16–19 for more information about scheduling test sessions).
 - Ensure that tests are administered on the prescribed days and in the prescribed order.
 - Ensure that test administrators administer tests according to section C on the following pages.
3. **Keep MCAS test materials in locked storage when MCAS tests are not being administered.**
 - Account for all secure test materials at the end of each day of testing and keep them in locked storage when not in use.
 - Restrict access to the locked storage area to only those school personnel authorized to have access to secure materials.
4. **Monitor the receipt and return of all test materials.**
 - Inventory materials immediately upon receipt and investigate any discrepancies in counts of materials as described in this manual.
 - Return all materials to the testing contractor according to the prescribed packing instructions and the deadlines in this manual.

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B. Shared Responsibilities of Principals, Test Administrators, and Other School Personnel Authorized to Have Access to Secure Materials

1. Receive training in test security requirements and test administration protocols.

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- Principals must participate in a Department-led training session in February 2012.
- Test administrators, test coordinators, and other school personnel authorized to have access to secure test materials must attend the school training session.

2. Document the location of secure materials at all times.

- Track secure materials using the sample Test Materials Internal Tracking Form in Appendix E or a similar document (principals keep these forms on file for three years).

3. Ensure the security of the testing environment.

- Prohibit visitors to the classroom or testing environment (including parents, researchers, reporters, and school personnel not authorized to serve as test administrators), except under emergency conditions.

4. Ensure the security of test questions, test booklets, and other secure materials.

- Do not engage in any of the following activities:
 - leaving materials unattended when MCAS tests are not being administered
 - viewing, discussing, or otherwise revealing the contents of test booklets or answer booklets before, during, or after a test administration (see TAMs for exceptions)
 - duplicating any portion of test or answer booklets, including but not limited to audiotaping, videotaping, photographing, photocopying, and copying by hand²
- Do not remove test materials from the school. For example, do not share test booklets and answer booklets with another school or program housed in your building.³
- Ensure that test booklets and answer booklets are not retained, discarded, recycled, removed, or destroyed.⁴
- Ensure that students are not provided access to secure test questions prior to testing.
- Do not read, review, or change student responses.
- Do not attempt to score unreleased test questions.

² The only exceptions are for test administrators who must transcribe student responses into answer booklets for students with disabilities receiving certain accommodations or for students who did some or all of their work in damaged, defective, or void booklets.

³ The only exception is for principals who receive prior written permission from the Department to test a student in an alternate setting. Alternate setting requests must be resubmitted to the Department for approval for each test administration, even if approved for a previous administration.

⁴ The only exception is for test materials that have become contaminated; see page 28 for procedures.

C. Responsibilities of Test Administrators

1. **Receive training from the principal/designee in administering test sessions properly and securely.**
 - Review the TAM and all relevant test security requirements before administering test sessions.
 - Attend the training session led by the principal/designee before each test administration (e.g., March–April and May–June).
 - Understand and follow the protocols related to administering tests to students with disabilities.
2. **Administer all tests according to appropriate protocols.**
 - Administer tests during the prescribed testing window, on the prescribed days, and in the prescribed order.
 - Follow the directions and read the scripts in the TAMs (and any subsequent updates provided to principals by the Department) verbatim to students.
 - Remove or cover any classroom displays that provide information related to the content being assessed or to test-taking strategies (see page 20).
 - Provide students with all required test materials as listed in the TAMs. Supplemental or reference sheets are not allowed (except as approved by the Department).
 - Prevent the use of unapproved materials (see pages 21–22 for lists of approved and unapproved materials). Note that results will be invalidated for students who use cell phones during testing.
3. **Focus full attention on the testing environment at all times.**
 - Continually monitor the testing process by moving unobtrusively about the room. While monitoring the classroom, a test administrator may view students' booklets for the sole purpose of confirming that students are working in the correct session. A test administrator may not monitor a student's placement of responses and may not review booklets to confirm whether a student has marked all his or her responses.
 - Ensure that students are not left unsupervised during testing, including during breaks and transitions to test completion locations.
 - Students must work only on the session being administered. If a test administrator observes a student working in the incorrect session of the answer booklet or reviewing the incorrect session of the answer booklet or test booklet, this is a testing irregularity that must be reported immediately to the principal. The principal must then report the irregularity to the Department.
4. **Ensure that students provide answers that are strictly their own and do not participate in any form of cheating.**
 - Ensure that students do not consult notes, textbooks, or other teaching materials; do not share test questions with other students; and do not consult other students, school personnel, or anyone else during testing.

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5. **Do not provide a student with answers to any test question or make suggestions for responding to any test question.**
 - Test administrators must **not**
 - answer verbally or nonverbally any question that relates to the secure content of a test unless specifically authorized to do so by instructions in the TAMs;
 - provide clues, hints, and/or actual answers in any written, printed, verbal, and/or nonverbal form (including chalkboards, charts, and bulletin boards);
 - coach⁵ a student during testing or alter or interfere with a student’s responses in any way (At any time during a test session, however, a test administrator may repeat a portion of the TAM script if necessary for clarification.);
 - alter, explain, simplify, paraphrase, or eliminate any test question, reading passage, writing prompt, or multiple-choice answer option;
 - ask or permit a student to go back to any previous test session or to go ahead to the next session.
6. **Do not read, review, or change student responses.**
7. **Follow proper procedures for students with disabilities.**
 - Provide testing accommodations as prescribed in Appendix B and in *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*.
 - Ensure that students are not provided with accommodations that were not approved by the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 team or that are not listed as approved in Appendix B.
 - Test administrators for students with certain disabilities must sign an MCAS Non-Disclosure Agreement prior to their receipt of secure test materials. Principals must keep signed Non-Disclosure Agreements in the school files for three years. See Appendix B for more information about which test administrators this requirement applies to, and see Appendix E for the MCAS Non-Disclosure Agreement.

New

D. Testing Irregularities

Testing irregularities are incidents that represent a deviation from prescribed testing procedures. Testing irregularities may include student impropriety, test violations, educator misconduct, or the mishandling of secure test materials.

In order to ensure the security and confidentiality of the MCAS program, the Department may conduct announced and unannounced monitoring visits to schools to observe the procedures followed during test administration. Principals should prepare to meet the observers or designate

⁵ Examples of coaching include, but are not limited to, the following: providing answers to a student; changing a student’s responses; providing synonyms for unknown words; influencing a student’s responses by offering hints, clues, cues, facial expressions, nods, or voice inflections; or providing any other manner of assistance that could impact a student’s answers. Suggesting to a student that he or she write more on a question, check his or her work, or reconsider or review a question constitutes coaching.

an individual in the school to meet the observers upon their arrival and also be available during the observation to answer any questions. School staff may contact the Department's Student Assessment Services Unit at 781-338-3625 to verify the identity of Department observers.

Department observers will confirm that all test security requirements in Part I of the PAM are being met, including the following:

- Materials are stored properly.
- Staff have been trained.
- Test administrators are administering tests appropriately.
- The testing environment is secure.

1. Reporting an Irregularity

To report a testing irregularity, principals must contact their superintendents and the Department. Test administrators and other school personnel must contact their principal or superintendent and the Department at 781-338-3625.

On occasion, individuals contact the Department anonymously to allege that testing irregularities have taken place. Anonymous parties must provide the Department with sufficient information related to the matter, including the following:

- a description of the alleged incident
- the name of the school involved
- the name(s) of the individual(s) engaged in the inappropriate practices
- the grade level(s) and specific test(s) affected
- in student-specific reports: the student's name and State-Assigned Student Identifier (SASID), if the SASID is known

2. Investigations into Irregularities

In response to a report of a serious irregularity, the Commissioner will write to a district superintendent, ask that he or she conduct a local fact-finding investigation into the alleged irregularity, and require that he or she report back to the Department in writing, within an established timeframe, regarding the results of the investigation.

Prior to making a final determination, the Commissioner will review the report from the superintendent and will request, if necessary, additional information or documentation. Once the Commissioner has determined whether an irregularity took place, the Commissioner will notify the superintendent. If the Commissioner determines an irregularity has taken place, he will also inform the public about what has taken place, including any potential consequences, such as the invalidation of results, which may follow from his determination.

3. Consequences

Testing irregularities and/or misconduct may result in any or all of the following:

- delay in reporting of district, school, and/or student results
- invalidation of district, school, and/or student results
- prohibiting school personnel from participating in a future MCAS test administration
- possible licensure sanctions for licensed educators

Consequences/sanctions imposed by the Department do not limit a local district's authority to impose its own sanctions.