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| Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education logo | Student Assessment UpdateOctober 9, 2020 |

## Contact Information

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| [**MCAS Service Center**](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/support/) | Email: [mcas@cognia.org](mailto:mcas@cognia.org) | Phone: 800-737-5103 |
| *for logistical support, including tech support for PearsonAccess Next and TestNav* | | |
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| [**Student Assessment Services**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/) | Email: [mcas@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mcas@doe.mass.edu%20) | Phone: 781-338-3625 |
| *for policy questions, including student participation* | | |

## Latest Updates from Student Assessment Services

**For All Schools**

1. **Welcome Back to School**

We welcome everyone back for the new school year. We are pleased to release the following information about MCAS testing for the coming year, along with an initial testing schedule for high school MCAS tests. We acknowledge that we are releasing the testing schedule later than usual, and we appreciate your patience.

1. **About this Update**

The Department automatically sends the Student Assessment Update typically on a biweekly basis to principals, MCAS test coordinators, special education directors, and EL program directors based on contact information submitted to the Department.

We encourage you to share this update with your test administration teams or develop a plan for communicating relevant information to them. Individuals who would like to receive the update directly can subscribe by following the instructions at the bottom of this newsletter.

1. **Announcement of the Initial 2021 High School Testing Schedule**

DESE is planning to offer a different schedule than usual for high school ELA and Mathematics testing, as detailed in [this memo](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/cal.html). In 2021, there will be administrations in January and May.

***Clarification on Participation Requirements for High School Students***

Students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 must pass the required MCAS tests in order to earn their Competency Determination (CD). Schools and districts are required to provide the January and May testing opportunities to all students in these two classes. However, individual students in these classes may choose whether to participate in each particular administration. We strongly recommend that students take advantage of every opportunity presented to them. The Department is working on an FAQ document for the high school administrations, which will be shared with schools and districts soon.

1. **Legacy Testing for January**

The January high school MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests will be legacy tests administered on computer, with a paper version available for accommodations. For information on the January 2021 MCAS high school [English Language Arts (ELA) test](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/testdesign/ghs-ela.docx) and [Mathematics test,](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/testdesign/ghs-math.docx) including reporting categories, alignment to standards, question types, and the structure of the test, refer to the embedded links.

1. **Accessibility and Accommodations Manuals Now Available**

* The [*Accessibility and Accommodations Manual for the 2020−2021 MCAS Tests/Retests*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/) is now available and contains important updates, including details of new accessibility features and accommodations.
* The [*Assistive Technology Guidelines for MCAS*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/guidelines.docx) (September 2020 edition) describes the use of assistive technologies on the MCAS tests, including the **new** test-compatible “web extensions” for **speech-to-text** and **word prediction**.
* Based on feedback from educators, revisions to the [ELA graphic organizers and supplemental mathematics reference sheets](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/organizers/) used by students with disabilities are now available.

1. **MCAS-Alt Submission Date and Resources**

The MCAS-Alt will be administered during the 2020–21 school year, and the 2021 MCAS-Alt submission deadline is **Thursday, April 1, 2021**.

Below are links to MCAS-Alt resources as well as registration for virtual educator trainings to be held this fall:

* News and registration link
  + [MCAS-Alt News (September/October)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/newsletter/2020-09-10.docx)
  + [Registration Flyer for Fall Educator and Administrator Virtual Training Sessions](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/training.docx)
* Manuals and materials for MCAS-Alt submission
  + [*2021 Educators Manual for MCAS-Alt*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/edmanual.docx)
  + [*2021 Principal’s MCAS-Alt Administration Manual*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/pam.docx)
  + [*Fall 2020 Resource Guides to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html)
  + [2021 MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs](https://profile.measuredprogress.org/MCAS-Alt/login.aspx)

1. **MCAS Performance Appeals**

Students who have been unable to meet CD requirements by passing the required high school tests may be eligible for an MCAS Performance Appeal, an alternative pathway to meet the CD requirements. Please review the [step-by-step guide](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/filing/online-guide.pptx) for the new online process. Other important information about submission deadlines, cohort appeals, portfolio appeals, and required appeals submission forms can be found [here](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/).

Cohort appeals must be received by the Department by the **first Friday** of each month, from October to June, in order to be reviewed that month. Portfolio appeals will be reviewed in November, May, and July, according to this [published timetable](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/filing/portfolio/).

**New:** Students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 who have not earned a CD in ELA or mathematics may be eligible to have an [MCAS appeal](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/)filed on their behalf after two, instead of the usual three, failed attempts at passing MCAS.

1. **Grade-Level and Competency Portfolios**

Students with significant disabilities who are performing *at or near grade-level* but cannot demonstrate their knowledge and skills on standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations, may be eligible to submit a “grade-level” or “competency” portfolio. The new [*Grade-Level and Competency Portfolio Manual*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/cd-reqs/gl-cd-manual.docx) provides guidelines on student participation and requirements for submission.

1. **ACCESS for ELLs**
2. **ACCESS for ELLs 2020–21 Administration Dates and Initial Steps for Preparation**

The ACCESS for ELLs tests will be administered in January and February 2021 during the **expanded testing window** shown below with other important dates and activities for the 2020–21 ACCESS for ELLs. More information will be shared over the coming months as deadlines approach and important details become available.

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| Activity | Date(s) |
| WIDA AMS test setup | December 3, 2020–February 25, 2021 |
| ACCESS for ELLs test materials arrive in schools | January 4, 2021 |
| Additional test materials ordering window | January 4–February 19, 2021 |
| ACCESS for ELLs test administration window | **January 7–February 25, 2021** |
| Deadline for schools to return test materials | February 26, 2021 |
| Results available in WIDA AMS | June 4, 2021 |

As part of your fall preparations, please ensure that:

* names and contact information for new principals and ACCESS for ELLs Test Coordinators (school and district) are updated in **School and District Profiles** by the District [Directory Administrator](http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/diradmin/list.aspx?firstname=&lastname=&orgkeyword=)
* ACCESS for ELLs Test Coordinators have a [WIDA AMS account](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access/PersonalAccount-Instruct.html)
* ACCESS for ELLs Test Administrators have a [WIDA personal account](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access/PersonalAccount-Instruct.html)
* ACCESS for ELLs Test Coordinators and Test Administrators complete online training modules and certification quizzes

DESE will pre-order test materials for schools based on students who are reported as “EL” in the October SIMS. Additional materials may be ordered during the additional test materials ordering window. Students may be removed from test sessions in WIDA AMS during test set-up if they have been exited from EL status after October SIMS reporting.

1. **ACCESS for ELLs Test Coordinator Training Webinars**

Training for new and returning ACCESS for ELLs Test Coordinators will be conducted according to the schedule below. ACCESS for ELLs Test Coordinators should complete their online training modules and certification quizzes prior to attending a webinar. Registration information will be provided in an upcoming [EL Assessment Update](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access/ell-updates.html).

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| Returning Test Coordinators:   * November 16: 1:00–2:30 p.m. * December 8: 10:00–11:30 a.m.   New Test Coordinators:   * November 19: 1:00–2:30 p.m. * December 3: 10:00–11:30 a.m. |

1. **Transition to One Paper Copy of MCAS Parent/Guardian Reports**

Early in 2019, the Department surveyed superintendents regarding a future transition to electronic versions of MCAS Parent/Guardian Reports. Based on the survey responses, Student Assessment will transition to sending **one** paper copy of the reports to districts, beginning with the spring 2021 MCAS test administrations. Electronic versions of **next-generation** parent/guardian reports will continue to be available in [PearsonAccess Next](https://mcas.pearsonaccessnext.com/); electronic **legacy reports** for retests and select high school Science and Technology/Engineering tests will continue to be available in [PearsonAccess Next](https://mcas.pearsonaccessnext.com/) and posted in DropBox Central, in the Department's [Security Portal](https://gateway.edu.state.ma.us/).

Schools and/or districts with a secure communication system, such as a password-protected "parent portal," may use it to send the reports electronically to parents; organizations should continue to provide paper copies of the reports to parents who do not have the ability to receive them electronically.

**For High Schools**

1. **MCAS Parent/Guardian Reports for the February Biology and March Retests: October 13 Delivery**

As noted in the [May 5 Student Assessment Update](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/2020/updates/0505.docx), school and district closures in spring 2020 required the Department to postpone the shipment of the February Biology and March Retest Parent/Guardian reports, which was originally scheduled for delivery in mid-May. With district offices now able to receive mail and parcel deliveries, the Department has scheduled the reports to arrive in district offices on **October 13, 2020**. This shipment will include two paper copies of the Parent/Guardian reports. As noted above, beginning in spring 2021, shipments of Parent/Guardian reports, including subsequent retest administrations, will include one paper copy.

1. **John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Letters**

High schools will soon be receiving a delivery of letters for students who have qualified to receive the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. The letter is important because students must provide a copy of it along with their completed FAFSA application each year. Without this letter, the college/university will not apply the tuition credit.

Letters regarding student eligibility for the scholarship were posted on the [MCAS Service Center](http://mcasservicecenter.com/) on **September 25**. Paper copies are scheduled for delivery to district offices on **October 13**.

Schools will need to do the following:

* 1. Make copies of the letters for students' files for future reference.
  2. (Recommended) Designate an individual in the school to be the point of contact for the letters.
  3. Inform students of the name of the person at the school whom they can contact with any questions about the scholarship or the letter.

**Subscriber Information**

Principals, MCAS test coordinators, special education directors, and EL program directors automatically receive this [Student Assessment Update](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/updates.html) based on contact information submitted to the Department. To change your email address or to add another staff member who serves in one of these roles, please follow the instructions below:

* Public school districts, public schools, charter public schools, educational collaboratives, approved private special education schools, and alternative education programs: Submit the new email address to your [District-Level Directory Administrator](http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/diradmin/list.aspx).
* Test sites, adult education programs, out-of-state schools, SEIS-DYS programs: Go online to the [EOE Information Technology web page](http://eoe.state.ma.us/contactus.aspx) (select “District/School Information Update” as the subject) to submit your update (be sure to include your District and School Code).

For others who wish to subscribe, email [imailsrv@list1.doe.mass.edu](mailto:imailsrv@list1.doe.mass.edu) with the following information in the **body** of the email: “subscribe SASUpdate Your\_Name” (Example: subscribe SASUpdate John\_Smith). To unsubscribe, send an email to the same address with the following information in the body: “unsubscribe SASUpdate.”

In addition, DESE sends occasional communications regarding state policies that affect educators, parents, and other community stakeholders, as well as opportunities for community members to participate in state initiatives. Please visit our [newsletter sign-up page](http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/newsletter-signup.aspx) if you are interested in receiving other news and information from the Department.

We welcome your questions and feedback at [mcas@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mcas@doe.mass.edu). Thank you.