

MCAS and Accountability Interpretation and Action Guide

The release of 2022 MCAS and Accountability data offers an opportunity for DESE, districts, schools, and communities to celebrate progress and strengths, as well as to identify areas for improvement.



Given the many challenges of the past few years, our students will likely have extensive and varied needs, while also having strengths to build on. To focus our collective efforts in the coming years, the Department continues to recommend the evidence-based approach of **learning acceleration**, outlined in the [Acceleration Roadmap](#) (published in spring 2021), which asserts that **regular access to grade-appropriate work, and developing a sense of belonging, are critical to student academic development**. Learning acceleration is not a short-term initiative, but rather the center of a **systems-level, multi-year path** that ensures all students have consistent, daily access to [grade-level work](#) that is relevant, real world, and interactive, which fosters not only mastery but also identity development and creativity.

This multi-year path to requires engaging in a coherent planning process that examines the following:

- Does our school and district community have a **shared instructional vision** that is grounded in evidence-based practices and high expectations for all students (such as culturally responsive grade-appropriate instruction and a sense of belonging?)
- Have we identified a **high-leverage instructional priority** (or priorities) that will move us closer to that vision?
- Do we have **strong and coherent tiered supports** that will enhance or increase access for all students to culturally responsive grade-appropriate instruction and a sense of belonging?
- Have we **aligned relevant and adequate systems and structures** (such as staff development, resources allocation, and continuous improvement efforts) to support our instructional priority and tiered supports?

As you consider your next steps, take stock of your current strategic plan, and note where the data affirms your plans, and where it challenges them. Use this opportunity to update and refine your plan as appropriate:

If the data show your current efforts are working	»»»	STAY THE COURSE Continue to celebrate, scale up and sustain successful systems and practices. Be sure to dig further into data for specific students, grades, subjects and schools to ensure your efforts are truly working for <i>all</i> students
If the data is consistent with your current priorities, but results are lower than expected	»»»	STAY THE COURSE AND FOCUS ON QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION Consider ways to strengthen and better align systems, structures, and resources, as well as communication. Ensure everyone from the district to the classroom are clear on roles.
If the results are surprising or conflict with your current priorities	»»»	LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT THE DATA Convene diverse stakeholders, and gather additional student experience data to examine the dissonance. Consider naming a more narrow set of priorities, or supplementing your current plans to address emerging needs. Maintain focus on the quality of Tier 1, core instruction.

Keep in mind that MCAS and Accountability data should not be considered in isolation, but rather triangulated with other sources to gain a more holistic understanding of strengths and areas for improvement, for example:

- **Additional student outcomes**, such as content-specific summative assessments, portfolios, and capstones, disaggregated for all specific student groups served by the school or district.
- **Instructional data**, such as [classroom observations](#) and instructional walks; availability of culturally-responsive high-quality instructional materials; [analysis of tasks and assignments](#); and school visit reports
- **Perspectives data**, such as stakeholder surveys; culture and climate data such as [VOCAL student survey data](#); focus group feedback; and district review reports.
- **Systems and structures data**, such as results of equity audits; improvement and strategic plans; lists of initiatives and partners/vendors; and relevant policy and procedures (such as handbooks and [schedules](#)). Be sure that any analysis includes data regarding the experience of students currently least well served by school and district practices, including the perspectives of the students themselves.

Below are some scenarios that schools or districts may encounter upon reviewing MCAS and other results, along with recommendations to consider.

What if we were surprised by our results?



- Ensure there is a [clear system and process](#) for collecting and analyzing assessments, student work and other data throughout the year to monitor adult practice and student performance.
- [Add time for teacher teams](#) at grade levels and departments to review data and set plans to fill gaps and strength instruction in areas of concern
- Review common assessments and student assignments to ensure that they are standards-aligned and universally designed.
- [Survey staff on the data culture](#) in your organization and create action items to address the areas of challenge.

What if achievement and/or growth is low across multiple areas?



- Is there culturally responsive, grade-level work in all classrooms? Assess current instructional materials to ensure they are high quality and standards-aligned using existing resources like [CuRATE](#) or [EdReports](#).
- Identify positive “outliers” in achievement and/or growth (e.g. schools, grade-level teams, teachers, student groups) and identify specific practices to scale up.
- Ensure all educators have time to plan collaboratively using common protocols such as the [English Learner Education Collaboration Tool](#).
- Ensure all schools and/or teams have routines for frequent observation and feedback focused on clearly defined expectations for effective instruction.
- Review classroom assignments to monitor understanding and identify just-in-time scaffolds throughout the year.

What if students in a particular demographic group, grade, subject or school had relatively low achievement and/or low growth?



- Which students are least well served by our current practices? Use this [Data Equity Pause Protocol](#) to examine your data through an equity lens.
- Learn more about the experience of those students through focus groups, surveys, shadowing, and/or analysis of student tasks.
- Allocate additional resources (professional development, coaching, instructional aides, tutors, etc.) and focus data review cycles and progress monitoring for this targeted area.
- Ensure [multi-lingual learners](#) and [students on IEPs](#) receive appropriate services and can also access Tier I instruction.
- Ensure all students can access additional [tiered supports](#), as needed.
- Ensure all schools and/or teams have routines for frequent observation and feedback focused on clearly defined expectations for effective instruction.
- [Set specific goals for this student group](#) during student assignment reviews and data review cycles.