MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

MCAS-Alt Update
Winter 2025–2026

This quarterly update is published by DESE to provide Massachusetts educators with information, guidance, and support to complete the MCAS-Alt for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

1. New DESE Coordinator for the MCAS-Alt

We are pleased to announce that Sarah Luz is now serving as the Coordinator of MCAS-Alt. Previously, Sarah worked at MassAbility and served as a Transition Specialist and Life Skills educator. Educators and administrators can contact Sarah at Sarah.luz@mass.gov with MCAS-Alt questions and concerns.

2. Webinar Recordings of MCAS-Alt Trainings

For additional assistance and support, the following MCAS-Alt training webinars are available on DESE's MCAS-Alt web page:

- Introduction to the MCAS-Alt: Core Concepts:
  - Part A and Part B
- ELA–Writing
- Science and Tech/Eng (STE) for Grades 5, 8, and High School
- Civics for MCAS-Alt (Grade 8)

3. MCAS-Alt Review Sessions: January 2026

Review sessions for the MCAS-Alt will be offered in-person and virtually in January; see the Training Opportunities webpage for dates, times, locations and registration.

For assistance, contact the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103. If an ASL interpreter is needed, requests can be made by emailing MCASevents@cognia.org no later than December 12 to ensure the availability of an interpreter.

4. Administrators' Corner

a. Supporting Educators

Given the time it will take educators to input the data for their students' alternate assessments, DESE requests that principals support educators by doing the following:

- facilitating flexible scheduling, planning time, and classroom coverage where possible for educators to work on documenting data
- reviewing the MCAS-Alt recommended timeline, found in the 2026 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt
- encouraging educators to attend an in-person or virtual DESE review session in January and again in February/March

- reviewing assessments periodically to ensure that they are on schedule for completion by the March submission deadline

b. Returning MCAS-Alt Materials
Administrators or their designee will need time to review the assessments prior to returning test materials. Principals should also sign the Principal's Certification of Proper Administration (PCPA) form to verify the authenticity of students' portfolios. A UPS pickup of completed binders should be scheduled through MCAS Service Center by 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 26.

5. MCAS-Alt Participation Tool

School staff must complete and retain the Alternate Assessment Participation Tool within the student's records for all students that were designated by their IEP teams to participate in the MCAS-Alt. Please review the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) information on MCAS-Alt eligibility.

6. Ordering MCAS-Alt Materials: January 5–21, 2026

Beginning on January 5, principals should order MCAS-Alt submission materials for their school by following these steps:

- Log in to the MCAS Service Center and select MCAS Alternate Assessment.
- Click on Enrollment Verification.
- Log in with your 2026 MCAS password, which will be posted in the DESE Security Portal by January 2026.
- Confirm your contact and school information by following the onscreen prompts.
- Order materials for students in each grade who are taking the MCAS-Alt.
- Click the Submit button.

After submission, a confirmation page will be available to print for your records.