Spring 2024 MCAS Test Administration FAQs

This document provides responses to questions that principals frequently ask during MCAS test administrations. It is intended to supplement the *Principal’s Administration Manual* (PAM), which contains all the basic information needed for a smooth test administration. Answers to other questions can be found by searching for a keyword in the [PDF version of the PAM](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/).

Please contact the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103 for clarification on test administration procedures and with questions about MCAS materials. Contact DESE at 781-338-3625 with policy questions.

PearsonAccess Next (PAN)

*Accessing PAN*

**Q. I can’t sign in to PAN, so I tried clicking on the “forgot password” link. What should I do next?**  
**A.** If you are unable to access your PAN user account, contact your school or district test coordinator. Test coordinators should follow the instructions in the [Guide to Managing User Accounts](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/manuals/) (under *PearsonAccess Next Guidance*) to assign PAN user accounts to staff involved in testing.

**Q. How do I access the PearsonAccess Next brown training website?**  
**A.** Sign-in credentials for the brown [training site](https://trng-mcas.pearsonaccessnext.com/) are the same as for the blue [live PearsonAccess Next site](https://mcas.pearsonaccessnext.com/customer/index.action). If you are unable to sign in, contact your school or district test coordinator. District and school test coordinators should note that user accounts need to be created **separately** for the brown training site and the blue live site.

*Tasks in PAN*

**Q. Am I able to import my .CSV file into PAN after fixing errors or making updates to accommodations?**  
**A.** *Yes.* After correcting any errors or making updates, you can re-upload (import) the file. If you change a student’s testing mode to PBT during the extended pre-administration SR/PNP window, you will need to place an additional order for paper-based materials by contacting the MCAS Service Center if your school does not have an overage of materials that will cover this student. You can update the SR/PNP via the file import, or this can be done manually on the student record in PAN. See further information in the [Guide to the SR/PNP Process](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/resources/manuals/MCAS%20Guide%20to%20SR-PNP.pdf) in Section III: Steps for Updating Student Information After the Initial Upload.

**Q. Can I create PAN Sessions for ELA now and then create PAN Sessions for Math and STE later?**  
**A.** *Yes*, you can import the SR/PNP file with just the PAN Sessions for ELA populated in column M, leaving the PAN Sessions for Math and STE blank. Then, you can export the file from PAN closer to the Math and STE administrations and assign the Math and STE PAN Sessions. Then, do a second file import with these new PAN Sessions assigned. For more information on creating PAN Sessions, please see the Creating Sessions module on the [MCAS Resource Center](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/training/).

**Q. I added a student to the wrong PAN Session. How do I fix this?**  
**A.** The [Moving Students Between Sessions module](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/training/) provides step-by-step instructions on how to move students from one Session to another in PearsonAccess Next. Note that if a student is moved to a different PAN Session, they will need a new testing ticket.

**Q. Can I change a student name to their preferred name on their testing ticket?**  
**A.** *Yes*, you can change a student’s name to their preferred name for testing, but you need to change it back after testing, before the end of the testing window, so that it matches the name in SIMS.

**Q. A student transferred out of my school after I registered them in PAN but before they started testing. What should I do?**  
**A.** Students who unenroll from your school prior to testing should be removed from any PAN Sessions they have been assigned to. If the student has transferred to another school in Massachusetts, you may also receive an Enrollment Transfer Work Request that will need to be approved. Further instructions can be found in the [Enrollment Transfer Guide](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/resources/manuals/MS1147905_EnrollTransferBlkUpld_23_WEBTAG.pdf).

**Q. How do I mark a student in PAN who refuses to test?**  
**A.** If a student did not sign in to the test, and is still in ready status, they can be removed from the PAN Session. If they signed in and did not finish, the test will need to be marked complete. Instructions for marking a student test complete can be found beginning on page 62 of the [Principal’s Administration Manual](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/). Note that the “Reason” box in the Marking Tests Complete section in PAN is for record-keeping only. The student will be reported as absent.

**Q. How do I mark a student in PAN who was absent for medical reasons?**  
**A.** Fill out a Not Tested Code on the Manage Student Tests screen in PAN. See the instructions on page 136 of the [Principal’s Administration Manual](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/PAM.pdf) for details.

**Q. When should a school stop a session in PAN?**  
**A.** A session in PAN can only be stopped once testing is completed and the statuses for students are all **Complete** or **Marked Complete**. Further instructions are provided in the [PAN user guide](https://support.assessment.pearson.com/PAsup/testing/stop-a-session).

*Test Administrator Tasks in PAN*

**Q. How can test administrators find their Sessions in PearsonAccess Next?**  
**A.** There is no mechanism to assign PAN Sessions to a specific test administrator. Test administrators have access to see all PAN Sessions created in their organization. DESE recommends using a naming convention that makes it easy for test administrators to identify their own Session (e.g., the test administrator name or room number). Instructions are included in the *Test Administrator’s Manual for Computer-Based Testing* to assist test administrators in locating their PAN Sessions.

**Q. When should a test administrator lock a test session in PAN? What are the steps to do this?**  
**A.** Test sessions should be locked at the end of each day. The test administrator goes to **Testing > Students in Sessions** and ensures that the test session is selected in the Session List. The test administrator can then slide the toggle bar next to the lock icon from unlocked to locked. At the start of the next day’s testing, this process should be repeated, sliding the toggle from locked to unlocked. The *Test Administrator’s Manual for Computer-Based Testing* contains screen shots and instructions.

**Q. What’s the difference between *Resume* and *Resume Upload*? How do I resume a student’s test in PAN?**  
**A.** Both of these statuses refer to situations when a student is exited from TestNav without submitting their test properly.

* **Resume** is used when a student is ready to sign back in to their test during the same session as an interruption removed them from testing. It uses only the test data last sent to the Pearson server, rather than data saved on a specific testing computer.
* **Resume Upload** is used when a student is ready to sign back in to the test session, but some responses may not have been sent to the testing subcontractor’s (Pearson’s) servers before the student exited the test. When using Resume Upload, the student may see a prompt on their screen asking the test administrator to check for a saved response file (SRF) on the student device.

On the Students in Sessions page in PAN, click on the drop-down menu next to the student’s name, and select **Resume**. To resume multiple student tests, on the Students in Sessions page, select the checkboxes next to the students’ names. Then, select **Resume Student Tests** from the Select Tasks menu, and click **Start**. Select the student names again and click **Resume**.

If a student is being resumed from an “Active” status in PAN, **Resume Upload** will be the only available option. This is to alert test administrators that there has been an abnormal exit such as the device being powered off. To resume the test, select **Resume Upload** from the drop-down menu next to the student’s name. Then, select the drop-down menu again, and select **Resume**.

**Q. When should a test administrator see a student’s status as “Complete?” When should a student be “Marked Complete?”**  
**A.** The status for students who complete a session of a subject area test will appear in PAN as “Complete” if they clicked to “submit their final answers” at the end of that session. The status for students who have started the test but exit without submitting their final answers will appear as “Exited” (or “Resumed” if they have been resumed by a test administrator) — in these cases, if the student will not return to complete testing, the school or district test coordinator will need to mark a student’s test complete. Once a test is “Complete” or “Marked Complete,” a student cannot go back into the test. If a test was “Marked Complete” accidentally, the district test coordinator will be able to unsubmit a test. Instructions for marking tests complete can be found in the [PAN user guide](https://support.assessment.pearson.com/PAsup/testing/mark-student-tests-complete).

Test Administration Policies, Scheduling, and Staffing

**Q. The PAM states that only the principal may sign the Principal’s Certification of Proper Test Administration (PCPA) and that the principal must sign their name on the PCPA exactly as the name is listed in School/District Profiles on DESE’s**[**website**](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/)**. How should a school sign the PCPA if the principal is out of school during testing (e.g., because of surgery or other emergency)?**  
**A.** The acting principal’s signature for the PCPA should include “Interim” or “Co-principal.”

**Q. Does DESE have additional guidance on who may serve as a test administrator?**  
**A.** Schools should use the guidance in the PAM to assign test administrators. When necessary, substitute teachers may administer tests if they are employees of the district and meet the other qualifications stated in the PAM. Schools may also assign a paraprofessional to administer tests if all education professionals have been assigned to testing rooms and additional test administrators are needed. However, DESE strongly recommends additional training for paraprofessionals and supervision/monitoring of paraprofessionals who administer the test, meaning they must be observed closely by another test administrator, especially if they are providing accommodations.

**Q. What staff coverage is appropriate for restroom breaks?**  
**A.** Students must be supervised at all times between the testing room and restroom. This can be done with monitors stationed in the hallways or monitors stationed at the restrooms with lines of sight to the testing rooms, or with staff who escort students to and from the restroom.

**Q. What assistance can a test administrator provide to a student who asks for help with an onscreen tool?**  
**A.** It is important that students have an opportunity to learn about the use of the onscreen tools by viewing the student tutorial and taking a practice test before testing begins, so they will become familiar with the tool and how it works. During testing, test administrators should read aloud the section of the script reminding students that they may ask for help with the computer tools.

If a student is struggling to use any onscreen tool or perform an onscreen function, the test administrator may assist with the following activities:

* signing students in
* locating a tool button (e.g., the calculator or answer eliminator button)
* helping a student understand how to use the drag-and-drop feature
* helping a student understand how to use the equation editor
* moving from one test question to the next
* helping a student submit their test
* helping students locate a second text using the tab interface (in the case of paired texts on an ELA test)
* helping students use the scroll bar to see additional text, if a student is in the middle of reading a text but does not know how to continue reading

With the exception of helping students sign in to TestNav (for which test administrators may type usernames and passwords if necessary), test administrators assisting students with the tasks above should not type or select any responses, but guide students to do so. Students should enter all answers into TestNav themselves.

An example of **prohibited** assistance is telling a student to use the calculator or a specific tool on a particular question.

**Q. When a student needs more time than is scheduled to complete a test session, should the student click on “Submit Final Answers?”**  
**A.** *No.* A student who needs more than the allotted time to complete a test should use the drop-down menu in the upper right corner of the screen to select “Sign out of TestNav.” Then, on the pop-up message, click “Save and Return Later.” The test administrator should then follow school protocol to allow the student who needs additional time to complete the test (e.g., in a different test setting). When the student signs back in to the test, he or she will need to use the same testing ticket as before to complete the session, once the test is resumed by the test administrator.

**Q. May schools group students in the same room taking different subject tests, in different grades, or using different testing modes?**  
**A.** To achieve efficiencies, particularly for make-up testing, schools may group students taking different tests together if the following conditions are met: the script in the TAM is the same for these different tests and the materials needed for the students are the same (e.g., students will use a reference sheet for both tests). Different subject tests should take place in separate rooms, because students will have separate tests, different materials, different TAM scripts, and different PAN administrations. Schools should not group together students doing computer-based testing and any students doing paper-based testing, including for make-up testing, without prior permission from the Department

DESE discourages students in different grades testing together unless the scripts are the same. The TAM script is the same for the following tests: grades 3–8 ELA, grades 3 and 4 Math, grades 5 and 6 Math, grades 7 and 8 Math, grades 5 and 8 STE.

**Q. May students use an 8 ½”x11” whiteboard during testing instead of scratch paper?**  
**A.** *Yes.* Schools may choose to provide whiteboards to students instead of scratch paper during testing; schools should also provide slim-point markers for students to use, so that their writing may not be easily read by a neighboring student. Whiteboards must be tracked (similar to scratch paper) and must be erased completely before students are excused at the end of each session.

**Q. May students use tracing paper in addition to or instead of scratch paper during testing?**  
**A.** Schools may choose to provide tracing paper to students for use during testing, either in addition to or instead of scratch paper. This option may be particularly useful during Mathematics testing if schools are using tracing paper in regular instruction. The same requirements for other types of scratch paper must be implemented for tracing paper (tracking the scratch paper, and the limitation on the number of sheets a student may have).

**Q. What if a student becomes ill during a test session or experiences a technology failure?**  
**A.** If a student becomes ill during testing or a student experiences a technology failure and cannot complete the session that day, the school may allow the student to complete the session on another day. The student should be instructed not to discuss the test, and the school should provide a closely monitored make-up session, during which the student may complete the test, but may not return to any questions that were previously answered.

If a student needs to leave in the middle of a testing session due to medical reasons: The school can stop testing, and the student can continue on with the rest of the session as a make-up on a separate day (see page 31 of the PAM).

The student should select “Sign Out of TestNav” when they exit TestNav. The student will then be in Exited status in PAN in test session 1. The school should lock session 1 once all students have completed testing today. The next morning, they should make sure that only session 2 is unlocked. The student will be able to log in and complete session 2.

When it is time for make-up testing, the school will need to unlock session 1 for the student and resume the student test in PAN. The student should be instructed not to go back to any previously visited test questions and should be monitored closely.

**Q. For grades 5 and 8, can we schedule STE before Mathematics?**

**A.** When possible, schools should administer Math and then STE, but schools are not prohibited from administering STE first.

*Make-Up Testing*

**Q. Do I need to create new PAN Sessions for make-up testing?**  
**A.** For make-up testing, you can create separate PAN Sessions specifically for make-ups, or you can keep students in their original PAN Sessions. More information was provided in the *Tasks in PAN During Testing* training; the recording and slides are available on the [Training page](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/training/) of the MCAS Resource Center.

**Q. Can I unlock multiple PAN Sessions at once? For example, could I have ELA Session 1 and Math Session 2 open at the same time during make-up testing?**  
**A.** Multiple PAN Sessions can be unlocked at one time. You are able to select multiple PAN Sessions to work with on the Sessions or Students in Sessions screen. However, for an individual student, only one test session can be unlocked at a time in PAN.

Students with Disabilities

**Q. If a student has an IEP but the parents have not signed the most recent version, should the school administer the MCAS tests to the student using accommodations from the old IEP or from the newly amended one?**  
**A.** A new or amended IEP must be signed by the student’s parent/guardian prior to testing in order to implement the IEP changes during testing. No part of an IEP may be implemented until it has been signed by a parent/guardian.

**Q. What accommodations may be provided to a student with a recent disabling injury that may or may not be temporary?**  
**A.** If the school has documentation or clear evidence of a disabling injury and the student needs classroom or MCAS test accommodations because of the disability, the school should develop an emergency 504 plan that states which accommodations the student will need, based on the nature of the disability. There is no need to contact DESE to request permission to create the 504 plan. However, schools must report in SIMS that the student has a 504 plan.

**Q. What should a school do if a student refuses an accommodation during testing?**  
**A.** If a student is offered an accommodation based on their IEP or 504 plan and refuses it, the school **must** continue to make the accommodation available to the student for the remainder of testing. The school should [document the refusal of the accommodation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/forms/PAM-student-accom-refusal.docx) but should *not* have the student sign a waiver of any accommodation. Rather, the documentation provides a record for the school to keep on file that the accommodation was offered but not used by the student. At the next IEP or 504 meeting, the team should discuss whether the refused accommodation is still appropriate and necessary for the student.

**Q. Can I assign a student both the human read-aloud and text-to-speech accommodations in PAN? Can I assign a different student the speech-to-text and scribe accommodations in PAN?**  
**A.** *No.* If a student requires a text-to-speech accommodation and needs a human reader for some sections (e.g., due to fatigue), only select the text-to-speech SR/PNP designation. The test administrator can still provide both required accommodations. The same scenario is also true for students who require speech-to-text and may also need a scribe accommodation: only select the speech-to-text SR/PNP designation.

**Q. What steps should I take if a student starts a test with an incorrect accommodation?**  
**A.** **For the** **web extension speech-to-text/word prediction, Alternate Cursor, Calculator, and Spell-Checker accommodations and accessibility features:** a student can log out of TestNav and the SR/PNP can be updated in the Manage Student Tests task by the test administrator. When the student signs back in to TestNav, the accommodation or accessibility feature will be available. A new test form is not needed.

**For** **text-to-speech, ASL, Spanish-English, screen reader, assistive technology, or if a student is incorrectly assigned to a Human Read-Aloud/Human Signer PAN Session**, see the [Resolving Incorrect Accommodations During Testing](http://mcas.pearsonsupport.com/training/) module to review the following guidance:

* The test administrator should ask the student to exit the test using the User Icon on the top, right-hand side of the TestNav screen.
* The test coordinator should Mark the Test Complete.
* The test coordinator will need to void the test.
* Once the test is marked void, the test coordinator can assign a new test to the student with the correct accommodation or feature selected on the [Manage Student Tests Screen](https://support.assessment.pearson.com/PAsup/setup/manage-students/update-pnp-settings).
* The test coordinator will [create a new PAN Session](https://support.assessment.pearson.com/x/KoDy) and place the student in it.
* The test administrator will prepare and start the new PAN Session.
* The student will sign in to the test using a new testing ticket.
* The principal or designee should follow instructions in the Principal’s Administration Manual on reporting the irregularity to the Department.

**Q. Since embedded speech-to-text is not available for Mathematics or Introductory Physics, can we use a human scribe instead?**  
**A.** For students with a speech-to-text accommodation for MCAS Mathematics or Introductory Physics, there are two options:

* Option 1: Students may use their own speech-to-text devices on a separate computer; responses must be transcribed into the student’s test by the test administrator.
* Option 2: Since scribing is equivalent access, the student can use a scribe accommodation instead of speech-to-text if necessary. IEPs may include the following language: “Speech-to-text, or scribe if appropriate.”

English Learners (ELs)

**Q. If a school has students who speak a language that does not have a bilingual word-to-word dictionary on the approved list, can the school submit a request to add a specific dictionary to the list?**  
**A.** *Yes.* Requests for additions and updates should be submitted via email to [MCAS@mass.gov](mailto:MCAS@mass.gov).

**Q. A student attended school here for a short time, returned to their native country for a year, and is now back at the same school (and is reported as EL). Should the student be reported as first-year EL?**  
**A.** *No.* The student may be reported as EL but is no longer *first-year* EL, because the student was previously reported to SIMS in their first year of enrollment in a U.S. school. A student may only be considered “first-year EL” once.

**Q. For which tests is the Spanish/English edition available?**  
**A.** The Spanish/English edition is available for the grade 10 Mathematics, Biology, and Introductory Physics tests for both the computer- and paper-based formats.

Computer-based tests consist of stacked text, Spanish text above English text, and paper-based tests consist of Spanish and English on facing pages (side-by-side). Note that these tests are intended for Spanish-speaking EL students who have been in the U.S. fewer than three years, and that students may respond either in Spanish or English.

Accessibility Features for All Students

**Q. Can a student use headphones during testing as an accessibility feature for noise cancelling?**  
**A.** *Yes.* However, test administrators must ensure that the headphones are not connected (by Bluetooth or other means) to any source of music or sound. Students should not begin to use headphones until after the test administrator has read the testing instructions to the students being tested.

Student Participation

**Q. Are private school students permitted to participate in MCAS?**  
**A.** Only private school students whose tuition is publicly funded are allowed to participate in MCAS. Other private school students are not allowed to take MCAS tests.

Only students educated with Massachusetts public funds are required by federal and state laws to participate in statewide testing. The state uses data from testing to help improve teaching and learning in Massachusetts schools. The state also uses the data to inform our accountability system, which targets resources and assistance where they are needed most.

**Q. Are home-schooled students permitted to participate in MCAS?**  
**A.** *No.* Students in approved home education programs are not enrolled in public schools or educated with Massachusetts public funds. Consequently, they are neither required nor permitted to take MCAS tests.