****Spring 2025 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 mcas@cognia.org or 800-737-5103 for clarification on test administration procedures, logistics, or technology. Contact DESE’s Office of Student Assessment Services at mcas@mass.gov or 781-338-3625 with policy questions or questions on student accommodations.

Questions on the MCAS Portal and Training Site

**Q. How do I get my password for the MCAS Portal and the MCAS Training Site?**

**A.** When a user account is created, users will receive automated emails from mcas@cognia.org.

* Users will receive two emails for the [MCAS Portal](https://mcas.cognia.org/): one containing their username and one containing their password.
* Users will receive two emails for the [MCAS Training Site](https://mcas-training.cognia.org/): one containing their username and one containing their password.

After receiving the emails, users will need to follow the links to log in to both the MCAS Portal and MCAS Training Site and reset their passwords.

If you have forgotten your password, navigate to the MCAS Portal or MCAS Training Site and select the **Forgot Password?** link, and then enter your username. Select the **Submit** button. The system will send an email to the email address associated with the account that provides instructions to reset your password.

Note that users will need to set up passwords separately for each site; DESE recommends setting the same password for the MCAS Portal and the MCAS Training Site.

**Q. Am I able to import my .CSV file into the MCAS Portal 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 Student Registration 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 Student Registration via the file import, or this can be done manually on the Students page in the MCAS Portal. See further information in the [MCAS Student Registration Guide](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/MCAS-Student-Registration-Guide_Final_Updated-1-21.pdf).

**Q. In Student Registration, what does the error “Student Enrollment” mean?**

**A.** This indicates that the student is already enrolled in the MCAS Portal in a different organization. Please follow the steps in the [Enrollment Transfer Guide](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Enrollment-Transfers-in-the-MCAS-Portal-FINAL.pdf) to request an enrollment transfer for this student.

**Q. When can classes be created? When will scheduling be available? When can student logins be printed?**

**A.** Classes can be created during Student Registration or anytime leading up to scheduling tests. DESE recommends creating classes approximately two weeks prior to testing to minimize the changes needed. Test scheduling becomes available one week prior to each test administration in the MCAS Portal. Student logins may be printed up to one week in advance, and are available as soon as a test is scheduled. DESE recommends printing students logins 1–2 days prior to testing. See the graphic below for a visual depiction of pre-administration tasks.



**Q. Can I create classes for ELA now and then create classes for Math, STE, and Civics later?
A.** *Yes*, you can import the Student Registration file with just the classes for ELA populated in column K, leaving the class names for Math, STE, and Civics blank. Then, you can export the file from the MCAS Portal closer to the Math, STE, and Civics administrations and assign those classes. Then, do a second file import with these new classes assigned. For more information on creating classes, please see the [Guide to Creating and Managing Classes](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Creating-and-Managing-Classes-in-the-MCAS-Portal-FINAL.pdf).

**Q. I added a student to the wrong class. How do I fix this?
A.** Refer to the instructions below. Foradditional guidance , refer to the [Guide to Creating and Managing Classes](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Creating-and-Managing-Classes-in-the-MCAS-Portal-FINAL.pdf).

To fix this, you will first need to remove the student from the class they are currently in. To remove a student from a class, take the following steps:

1. On the Classes page in the MCAS Portal, select the **organization** from the organization drop-down list, and then select the **subject** from the subject drop-down list for the class that you need to remove the student from.
2. Select **Edit** on the classes table for the class you need to remove the student from.
3. Locate and select the student in the **class list** **box** on the right side of the page.
4. Select **Remove** to remove the student from the class. Once selected, the student will move from the class list on the right side of the page to the student list on the left. Select **Save**.

This student is now removed from the class and can be added to a different class. To add the student to a different class that is already created, follow the steps below:

1. On the Classes page in the MCAS Portal, select the **organization** from the organization drop-down list, and then select the **subject** from the subject drop-down list for the class to which you will add the student.
2. Select **Edit** on the classes table for the class.
3. Locate and select the student in the **student list box** on the left side of the page.
4. Select **Add** to add the student to the class. Once selected, the student will move from the students list on the left to the class list on the right side of the page. Select **Save**.

**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 the MCAS Portal but before they started testing. What should I do?
A.** Students who unenroll from your school prior to testing should be removed from any classes they have been assigned to. If the student has transferred to another school in Massachusetts, you may also receive an enrollment transfer request that will need to be approved. Further instructions can be found in the [Guide to Enrollment Transfers in the MCAS Portal](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Enrollment-Transfers-in-the-MCAS-Portal-FINAL.pdf).

**Q. How do I mark a student in the MCAS Portal who refuses to test?
A.** The student can be removed from the class in the MCAS Portal. No other steps are required. If the student did not begin testing, they will be reported as absent.

**Q. How do I mark a student in the MCAS Portal who was absent for medical reasons?
A.** Assign a Report Code on the Test Scheduling page. See the instructions in the [Additional Tasks on the Test Scheduling Page of the MCAS Portal: Adding Report Codes, Reactivating Tests, and Exports](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/02/Additional-Tasks-on-the-Test-Scheduling-Page-of-the-MCAS-Portal-Adding-Report-Codes-Reactivating-Tests-and-Exports.pdf).

**Q. How can test administrators find their classes in the MCAS Portal?**
**A.** There is no mechanism to assign classes to a specific test administrator. Test administrators have access to see all classes created in their organization. DESE recommends using a naming convention that makes it easy for test administrators to identify their own class (e.g., include the test administrator name or room number). See the [Guide to Creating and Managing Classes](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Creating-and-Managing-Classes-in-the-MCAS-Portal-FINAL.pdf) for more information on class naming conventions.

**Q. Which Avery label template can we use to print 27 student logins?**

**A.** Avery 5160

Test Administration Policies

*Staffing Guidance*

**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. Does DESE have additional guidance on who may serve as a test administrator?**
**A.** Schools should use the guidance in the [PAM](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/PAM.pdf) 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.

*Guidance on Materials for Testing*

**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).

*Scheduling Guidance*

**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 area tests should take place in separate rooms, because students will have different materials, different TAM scripts, and different administrations. Schools should not group students doing computer-based testing with students doing paper-based testing, including for make-up testing, without prior permission from the Department. Note that students in different classes in the MCAS Portal will have different session access codes – if grouped together for makeup testing, test administrators will need to share the different session access codes with the students.

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.

Schools should email mcas@mass.gov with any special requests about testing different grades or subjects together.

**Q. May schools group together students in different grades for high school tests (e.g., a group of students in grade 9 and grade 10 who are all taking the Biology test)?**

**A.** Each grade will need to be assigned to a separate class in the MCAS Portal. However, if students are taking the same test, they can test in the same testing room. Note that each class in the MCAS Portal will have a separate session access code.

**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.

**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.”

*Make-Up Testing Guidance*

**Q. Do I need to create a special makeup class in the MCAS Portal for students participating in make-up testing?**

Schools may keep students in their original classes for make-up testing using their original student logins and session access codes. If students have not started any session of a test, you may choose to move those students into a new class for make-up testing. You will need to print new student logins and provide new session access codes.

For students who have started a test, DESE recommends that those students continue to test in the class they were originally assigned to. Moving students into a make-up class after they have already taken one session of the test would create two separate tests for that student: one in the first class and one in the second class. This introduces additional risks and administrative work for schools as they would need to track the student’s progress in each of the two classes while ensuring that the student does not take either test session (session 1 and session 2) a second time.

**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 have the student exit the test, and the student can continue on with the rest of the session as a make-up on a separate day (see page 26 of the PAM).

The student should select “Pause/Exit” and then “Exit” to exit the MCAS Student Kiosk. When the student signs back in to the test during make-up testing, the test administrator will need to enter the proctor password. Any highlighting or notes that the student had previously made in the kiosk will not be available. Any items they had previously visited will be automatically locked. See additional information in the [Instructions for Unlocking Test Questions in the MCAS Student Kiosk](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Instructions-for-Unlocking-Test-Questions-in-the-MCAS-Student-Kiosk-.pdf).

**Q. What qualifies as a medical absence?**

**A.** Students may be considered medically absent if they did not participate in MCAS testing for medical reasons and have medical documentation, even if they were physically present in school on MCAS testing days.

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 the MCAS Portal? Can I assign a different student the speech-to-text and scribe accommodations in the MCAS Portal?**
**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 text-to-speech in Student Registration. 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 in Student Registration.

**Q. What steps should I take if a student starts a test with an incorrect accommodation?**
**A.** If the incorrect accommodation is a form-dependent accommodation (ASL, compatible assistive technology, human read-aloud, human signer, screen reader edition, or Spanish/English edition), take the following steps:

1. The student should exit the test.
2. In the MCAS Portal, go to **Administration > Test Scheduling.**
3. Add the Test Report Code of **Void (wrong accommodation)** in the MCAS Portal for the test the student started. See instructions for adding test report codes in the [Additional Tasks on the Test Scheduling Page of the MCAS Portal: Adding Report Codes, Reactivating Tests, and Exports](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/02/Additional-Tasks-on-the-Test-Scheduling-Page-of-the-MCAS-Portal-Adding-Report-Codes-Reactivating-Tests-and-Exports.pdf).
4. Go to **Administration >** **Students**.
5. Search for the student and click **Edit**.
6. Update the accommodation and click **Save**. See information on editing student accommodations beginning on page 8 of the [MCAS Student Registration Guide](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/MCAS-Student-Registration-Guide_Final_Updated-1-21.pdf).
7. Create a new class with this student and schedule that new class for the test. See instructions in the [Guide to Creating and Managing Classes](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Creating-and-Managing-Classes-in-the-MCAS-Portal-FINAL.pdf) and the [Guide to Scheduling tests and Printing Student Logins](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/Guide-to-Scheduling-Tests-and-Printing-Student-Logins-in-the-MCAS-Portal.pdf).
8. Print out a new student login for the student. The student will also require a new session access code in order to begin the new test.

If the incorrect accommodation is **not** form-dependent (i.e., an accommodation not listed in the parentheses above), take the following steps:

1. The student should exit the test.
2. In the MCAS Portal, go to **Administration > Students**.
3. Search for the student and click **Edit**.
4. Update the accommodation and click **Save**. See information on editing student accommodations beginning on page of the [MCAS Student Registration Guide](https://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2025/01/MCAS-Student-Registration-Guide_Final_Updated-1-21.pdf).
5. Instruct the student to sign back in to their original test using their same username and password.

**Q. Is text-to-speech available in Spanish?**

**A.** No, text-to-speech is not available in Spanish.

**Q. How should I verify accommodations have been assigned correctly?**
**A.** To avoid a situation that might cause a test to be voided or results to be invalidated, principals and test coordinators should follow the instructions for verifying accommodations prior to testing, as described in the [PAM](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/PAM.pdf) on page 46. Principals should confirm their test administrators understand the steps they need to do prior to testing (they are prompted to check students’ accommodations prior to testing in the “Before Students Arrive” section of each script in the [*Test Administrator’s Manual for Computer-Based Testing*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/TAM-CBT.pdf)*)*.

The following resources are available to assist schools when an accommodation has been incorrectly assigned:

* Appendix A, section F, of the [PAM](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/PAM.pdf)
* Appendix E, section F, of the [CBT TAM](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/manual/TAM-CBT.pdf)

**Q. How do I create test administrator logins for human-read aloud or human signer sessions?**

**A.** Refer to the steps outlined in Appendix F of the [MCAS Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/default.html).

English Learners (ELs)

**Q. Who is eligible to take the Spanish/English edition of MCAS tests?**

**A.** Please see guidance at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/spanish-2025.html>.

**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.

**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 grades 3–8 Mathematics, STE, and Civics, grade 10 Mathematics, and high school Biology and Introductory Physics tests, for both the computer- and paper-based formats.

Refer to this [guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/spanish-2025.html) for more information about the Spanish/English editions.

**Q. How do I set up students in the MCAS Portal so that they receive the Spanish/English edition of the test?**

**A.** For students receiving a Spanish/English edition, enter “Y” for the student in column AE of the Student Registration file for the test, or add the “Spanish English” accommodation manually for the student in the MCAS Portal by locating the student on the **Students** page and checking the box for **Spanish English** on the accommodations tab for the selected test.

Students receiving a Spanish/English edition for the computer-based test students must be assigned to a Spanish/English class and scheduled for the Spanish/English test prior to testing.

To create a Spanish/English class, follow the steps below:

1. On the Classes page in the MCAS Portal, select an **organization** from the Organization drop-down list, and then select a **subject** from the Subject drop-down list.
2. Select **Create Grade Level Class.**
3. Type the name of the class in the **Class Name field**. It is recommended that the name of the class include an identifier that the class will be scheduled for the Spanish/English test (e.g., include “Spanish” in the class name).
4. Select a grade from the **Choose a Grade drop-down list** for the class.
5. Select or deselect the **“Show only students that are not assigned to a class” checkbox** to activate or deactivate this filter as needed. When the box is checked, only students who are not assigned to a class are shown as available to add to the class.
6. Add students to the class by selecting one or more students from the list on the left, and click **Add**. To remove students from the class list, select one or more students from the list on the right and click **Remove**.
7. Select **Save** to create the class.

Students taking the Spanish/English edition will also need to be scheduled for the Spanish/English edition of the test during test scheduling. To schedule a class for the Spanish/English test, follow the steps below:

1. On the Test Scheduling page in the MCAS Portal, select the **organization** from the Organization drop-down menu.
2. Select the **program** from the Program drop-down menu (MCAS Grades 3–8 or MCAS High School).
3. Select the **subject** from the Subject drop-down menu.
4. Select the **Spanish/English edition** from the Test drop-down menu.
5. Click the green **Schedule New Test** button.
6. Select one or more of your classes that need to be scheduled for the Spanish/English edition.
7. Click **Schedule** to schedule the test.

**Q. What is the localization menu and how is it used?**

**A.** The localization menu on the MCAS Student Kiosk sign in screen allows a student to choose whether the tools and navigation buttons in the kiosk are in English or Spanish language. Students who are taking the Spanish/English edition of a test may choose “Español” from the drop-down to ensure that the tools and navigation buttons within the MCAS Student Kiosk are in Spanish.

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.