

**Student Participation**  
**(excerpted from the spring 2025 PAM)**

## **Part II**

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### **Student Participation**

# Student Participation

## A General Participation Requirements

Students educated with Massachusetts public funds are required by federal laws and the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Law, state law M. G. L. Chapter 69, section 1I, to participate in statewide testing.

The statewide testing requirement includes the following groups of students:

- students enrolled in public schools
- students enrolled in charter schools
- students enrolled in innovation schools
- students enrolled in a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School (CMVS) or a single-district virtual school
- students enrolled in educational collaboratives
- students enrolled in private schools who receive special education that is publicly funded by the Commonwealth, including approved and unapproved private special education schools within and outside Massachusetts
- students enrolled in institutional settings who receive educational services from the district
- students in military families
- students in the custody of either the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the Department of Youth Services (DYS) (See page 13.)
- EL students (See the exception in section B that follows.)
- students with disabilities, including students with temporary disabilities such as a broken hand or arm (See the exception for students with significant cognitive disabilities in section C that follows.)
- students who have been expelled but receive educational services from the district
- foreign exchange students who are coded as #11 under “Reason for Enrollment” in the Student Information Management System (SIMS) in grades 3–8 and 10

Students must participate in MCAS tests only for the grade in which they are enrolled and reported in SIMS (for grades 3–8 and 10); students beyond grade 10 may participate according to the guidelines posted on the Department’s website at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/highschool.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/highschool.html).<sup>17</sup>

Additional participation requirements for EL students, students with significant cognitive disabilities, and students educated in alternate settings are provided in the sections that follow.

All students who are present in school on testing days must participate in the tests for which they are scheduled, with the exception of students who have been diagnosed with a concussion (see detailed participation requirements for students participating in post-concussion “graduated reentry plans” on page 14). See Part III, section C, for information about scheduling test administration, including scheduling make-up sessions for students who are absent on the day of testing.

<sup>17</sup> Students must participate in the same grade’s tests in all subject areas. If a student’s grade changes after the March SIMS submission, update it as soon as possible in the School Interoperability Framework (SIF) or June SIMS for non-SIF districts. Otherwise, results may be invalidated. Also note that students must respond to at least one question in each test session to be counted as a participant for accountability purposes.

## **B Participation Requirements for EL Students**

For grades 3–8, EL students must participate in all MCAS testing scheduled for their grade, regardless of the program and services they are receiving, with one exception: participation in English Language Arts (ELA) testing is optional for EL students who are in their first year of enrollment in U.S. schools (i.e., students first enrolled after the March 2024 SIMS submission).

Scaled scores and achievement level results for first-year EL students are not aggregated with official school/district results and are provided for diagnostic purposes only.

Grade 10 EL students must participate in the grade 10 Mathematics test. Grade 10 EL students must also participate in ELA testing, with the same exceptions for first-year ELs as noted above. EL students in high school must participate in one of the Science tests by the end of grade 10.

In addition, **all** EL students are required to participate in the ACCESS for ELLs tests to comply with federal and state laws.

See Appendix C for more information about EL students and Spring 2025 MCAS testing.



## **C Participation Requirements for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities**

The MCAS-Alt is available for students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the criteria to participate and are unable to participate in standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations. The IEP or 504 plan must indicate whether a student requires an alternate assessment.

For more information about the MCAS-Alt, refer to [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt).



## **D Participation Requirements for Students Educated in Alternate Settings**

### **1. Home/Hospital Instruction and Other Settings**

For the small number of students who are enrolled in a school but are unable to physically attend school, and therefore receive tutoring services from their district, or have been expelled but receive educational services from the district, every effort must be made to administer the MCAS tests to these students in school.

If a student is unable to participate in school but could participate in an alternate setting, school principals may submit a request to test the student in an alternate setting off-site. The request form is available online at [massgov.service-now.com/mcasaltsetting](http://massgov.service-now.com/mcasaltsetting).

If the student is not able to be tested at the school or in an alternate setting, the principal must contact the Department to determine other options for the student's participation in MCAS testing (options may include the use of test accommodations or having the student participate in the MCAS-Alt).

Principals are encouraged to submit requests at least two weeks prior to testing. Requests must be submitted for approval for each test administration, even if approved for a previous test administration.

### **2. DYS and Placements Conducting an Extended Evaluation for Students with Disabilities**

For the small number of students who are enrolled in a school and are in the temporary custody of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) or are in a placement conducting an extended evaluation for a student with a disability, every effort must be made to administer the MCAS tests at the student's placement.

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The principal of the sending school is responsible for the following:

- contacting the placement to notify the director of MCAS participation requirements
- confirming that the placement has been established as a site for testing and has a Department district and school code for MCAS testing purposes (If not, refer the facility's director to the Student Assessment Services Unit at 781-338-3625.)
- informing the placement of which test sessions, if any, the student completed at school  
(**Note:** If a student participates in a session twice, the results may be invalidated.)

If it is determined that the student is not well enough to participate in one or more test sessions, the student should be considered as having a medically documented absence. (See instructions in Appendix D for marking students as having a medically documented absence in the MCAS Portal.)

If a student is removed from school during test administration after participating in a test session, keep records of the student's transfer as part of your school files.

## E Participation Guidelines for Students Currently Participating in Post-Concussion “Graduated Reentry Plans”



Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulation 105 CMR 201.010 requires that schools place a student diagnosed with a concussion on a post-concussion graduated reentry plan for academic and extracurricular activities. The graduated reentry plan must also document how the student will participate in MCAS testing.

Students who are determined to be well enough may participate in the standard MCAS test using test accommodations or may participate in the MCAS-Alt if they meet the participation criteria.

A student may be **excused** from testing only if it is determined that participation would impede the student's recovery or endanger the student's health. If it is determined that the student is not well enough to participate in one or more test sessions, the student should be considered as having a medically documented absence.

For more information about the participation of students diagnosed with concussions, refer to the Guidelines for Participation in MCAS of Students Diagnosed with Concussions at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/concussions.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/concussions.html).



## F Participation Guidelines for Students with an Injury to Their Hand or Arm at the Time of Testing

For students with a disability such as a broken bone in their hand or arm, the school must initiate the development of a 504 plan if the students will require the use of a scribe or another accommodation in order to participate in MCAS testing; or a scribe may be added as an IEP amendment.

Do not contact the Department for permission to initiate the development of the 504 plan unless there is a need for specific guidance on accommodations. Many schools give a scribe accommodation (accommodation A10.1/special access accommodation SA3.1) or the speech-to-text accommodation (accommodation A10.2/special access accommodation SA3.2) for students with a recent injury to their hand or arm, and other accommodations may be appropriate as well.

Be sure to ask the district SIMS contact to include the student's 504 designation in the next SIMS submission.