

Student Participation
(excerpted from the spring 2024 PAM)

Part II



Student Participation

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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 (See section D on the following page for information about high school 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 16.)
- 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 in section D.²⁰

Additional participation requirements for EL students, students with significant cognitive disabilities, high school students, 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 17). 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.

²⁰ 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 2023 SIMS submission).

If a first-year EL student participates in ELA testing, results are reported 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 STE 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 2024 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 Section 504 plan must indicate whether a student requires an alternate assessment.



A student may take the standard test in one subject and the alternate assessment in another. The student's IEP or 504 plan must include a separate decision for each subject scheduled for testing. These decisions must be made by the IEP team on an annual basis.

High school students with disabilities who are unable to participate in standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations, can satisfy the CD requirement in an MCAS “competency portfolio” if they can demonstrate a level of achievement comparable to that of a student who has met the CD requirement by taking the standard test. See the *Principal’s Manual for MCAS-Alt*, the *Grade-level and Competency Portfolio Manual*, and the *Educator’s Manual for MCAS-Alt*, which are posted at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html, for more information.

For more information about the MCAS-Alt, refer to www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt.

D Participation Requirements and Guidelines for High School Students



1. Competency Determination

All Massachusetts students who are seeking to earn a high school diploma must meet the Competency Determination (CD) standard, in addition to meeting all local graduation requirements. More information about CD requirements, modifications to the CD for certain classes, and MCAS-related scholarships is posted at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html.

2. High School Students in Military Families

If a high school student in a military family moves from another state and enrolls in a Massachusetts public high school in grade 11 or later, the district may, in lieu of having the student participate in MCAS retests, submit to the Department alternative evidence or information that demonstrates that the student has met the CD graduation standard in each required content area.

For more information about the CD requirement for students in military families, refer to www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/Military-GradPolicyForm.docx.

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3. Guidelines for Adults Participating in High School Tests

Individuals may continue to participate in ELA and Mathematics retests and Science tests after leaving high school. Adults who want to earn a high school diploma and have not yet met the testing requirements of the CD may participate in testing at the high school they most recently attended, another high school, or an adult/external diploma program. High school principals that have adults contacting them requesting to take the MCAS tests may contact the Department for guidance. See page 120 in Appendix C for information about testing adults with accommodations.

4. Participation Guidelines for the Grade 10 ELA and Mathematics Tests

Eligibility	Spring 2024 Grade 10 ELA and Mathematics Participation Guidelines
Required to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All first-time grade 10 students Students in grade 11 or 12²¹ who were reported as grade 9 students the previous school year in SIMS and were not counted²² in a school's participation results
Eligible to participate for CD purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeating grade 10 students²³ who have not yet earned a scaled score of at least 455 on the ELA test or at least 469 on the Mathematics test²⁴ Students in grade 11 or 12²⁵ who were unable to participate in the March retests and have not earned their CD in ELA or Mathematics
Eligible to participate to qualify for the Adams Scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeating grade 10 students²³ and students in grade 11 who are testing for the first time, regardless of whether the students were reported as MED or ABS in grade 10, or are new to a MA public school
Eligible to participate to qualify for the Koplik Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeating grade 10 students²³ and students in grade 11 who are attempting to improve their scores for the Koplik Award
Eligible to participate in ELA to qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who are repeating grade 10, or are in grade 11 or 12^{21, 26}

²¹ Results for grade 12 students will be reported according to the regular grade 10 reporting schedule.

²² For the purpose of these guidelines, a student is defined as having counted in a school's participation results if they were reported on an MCAS Student Roster (All Subjects) (report "PE617" in Edwin Analytics) for the previous spring's grade 10 ELA or Mathematics test with any of the following Test Status Codes: T (Tested), NTA (Not Tested Absent), NTL (Not Tested First-Year EL), NTM (Not Tested Medically Documented Absent), or the achievement level INV (test results were invalidated).

²³ Repeating grade 10 students who participate will not be included in MCAS reporting of participation and performance results along with all grade 10 students. Participation in retests is usually a better option for these students and their schools.

²⁴ These are the minimum MCAS test scores to earn a Competency Determination (CD) for the class of 2025, along with an EPP. Refer to www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html for additional guidance on the CD.

²⁵ Results for grade 12 students will be reported according to the regular grade 10 reporting schedule. Principals may want to file MCAS performance appeals for eligible grade 12 students in addition to, or instead of, having them participate in grade 10 MCAS tests (participation in retests is generally a better option for these students and their schools). Information about the performance appeals process is posted at www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals. Students in grade 12 are permitted to take the March Mathematics retest and then the grade 10 Mathematics test if they do not pass in March, but they are not permitted to take both the March ELA retest and the spring grade 10 ELA test.

²⁶ Although results from the grade 10 ELA test will not be available until early August, the Seal of Biliteracy can be awarded retroactively, so grade 12 students may take the test for this purpose. However, the Department recommends that grade 12 students take the March ELA retest instead. Students should not take both the March ELA retest and the spring grade 10 ELA test.

Eligibility	Spring 2024 Grade 10 ELA and Mathematics Participation Guidelines
Not eligible to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 9 students²⁷ Adults who exited high school and are attempting to meet the MCAS ELA or Mathematics testing portion of the CD requirement; schools should email mcas@doe.mass.edu for permission (Adults are recommended to take the retests instead.)

5. Participation Guidelines for the High School Science Tests

Eligibility	Spring 2024 High School Science Participation Guidelines
Required to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 10 students who have not yet taken a high school MCAS Science test²⁸
Eligible to participate for CD purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in grade 9 or 10 who have completed or are expected to complete a high school course in biology or introductory physics and have not yet earned their CD in Science²⁸ Students in grade 11 or 12²⁹ who have not yet earned their CD in Science Adult learners who have not yet earned their CD in Science
Eligible to participate to qualify for the Koplik Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeating grade 10 students and students in grade 11
Not eligible to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who have already earned their CD in Science (except students repeating grade 10 or in grade 11 taking the test for Koplik purposes)

6. Additional Student Participation Guidelines for the High School Science Tests

Guidance on Participation in Grade 9 or 10

The Department encourages students taking a Biology or Physics course in grade 9 to participate in the test that corresponds to their course. However, parents/guardians, in consultation with principals and other school personnel, have the option to request that their child participate in testing at grade 10 instead.

Because eligibility for the Adams Scholarship is based on students' first-time MCAS test scores, the Department recommends that schools notify all students and their parents/guardians about this criterion, regardless of whether students participate in grade 9 or 10.

Additional Guidance for Students in Grade 10 and Above

Students in grade 10 and above who previously participated in Science but did not earn a passing score have additional opportunities to take one of the tests for CD purposes, including the same subject area in which they previously tested. For example, grade 10 students who took the Biology test in grade 9 and did not earn their CD may participate in the Biology test the following year, regardless of the science course in which they are then enrolled (or they may take Introductory Physics).

A student who participates in February but does not earn their CD may participate again in June.

²⁷ For repeating grade 9 students to be eligible to participate, their status must be changed from grade 9 to grade 10 by the June SIMS submission.

²⁸ Results will also be used to determine eligibility for the Adams Scholarship

²⁹ Results will not be available in time for graduation. Principals may want to file MCAS performance appeals for eligible grade 12 students in addition to, or instead of, having them participate in June High School Science MCAS tests. Information about the performance appeals process is posted at www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals.

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Accountability Determinations for Science

School and district accountability determinations are made when students complete grade 10, using the tests in which they participated in grade 9 or 10. Note that determinations also include students in grade 11 or 12 who were in grade 9 the previous school year.

Outreach to Eligible Test-Takers

Refer to www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/highschool.html for additional information.

E 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.

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.

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 PearsonAccess^{next}.)

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.

F 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.

G 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 or special access accommodation SA3.1), speech-to-text (accommodation A10.2) for students with a recent injury to their hand or arm, and other accommodations may be appropriate as well. See Appendix C for information on assigning accommodations.

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