November 2026 MCAS High School
Administration FAQs

Contents

November 2026 MCAS High School Administration FAQs 1
Introduction 2
MCAS Portal and Training Site 2
Test Administration Policies 5
Staffing Guidance 5
Guidance on Materials for Testing 6
Scheduling Guidance 6
Make-Up Testing Guidance 6
PCPA Guidance 7
Students with Disabilities 7
English Learners (ELs) 9
Accessibility Features for All Students 10
Student Participation 11
Technology 12
ChromeOS Guidance 12

Introduction

This document provides responses to questions that principals frequently ask during the November high school MCAS test administration. It is intended to supplement the *Principal's Administration Manual* (PAM), which contains all the basic information needed for test administration. Answers to other questions can be found by searching for a keyword in the PDF version of the PAM.

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.

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 an email for the MCAS Portal containing their username, with a link to set their password.
- Users will receive an email for the MCAS Training Site containing their username, with a link to set 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 set 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 Student Registration .CSV file into the MCAS Portal after fixing errors or making updates to accommodations?
A. *Yes.* You can update the Student Registration via the file import, or this can be done manually on the Students page in the MCAS Portal.

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.

Refer to additional information and instructions in Part III of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Student Registration, available on the MCAS Portal page of the MCAS Resource Center.

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.

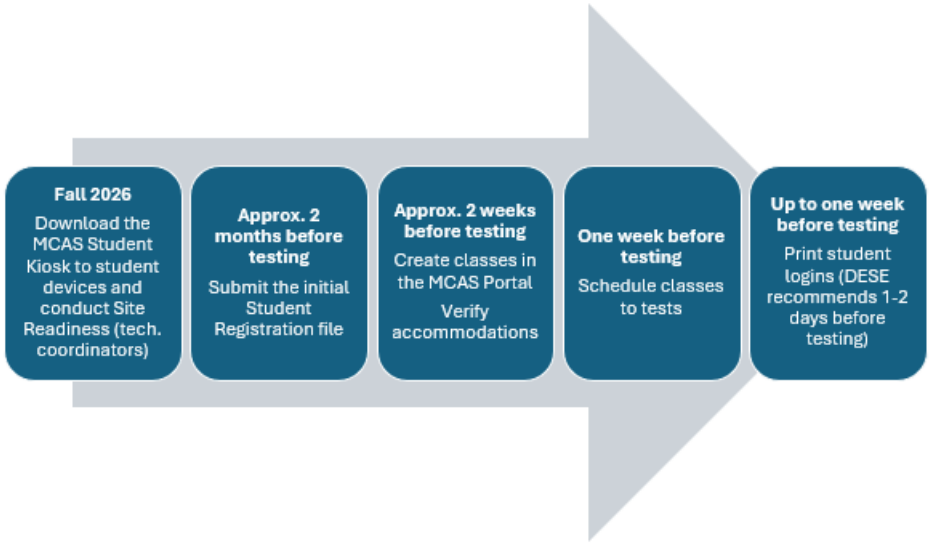
Follow the steps in Part IV of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Enrollment Transfers, available on the MCAS Portal page of the MCAS Resource Center, to request an enrollment transfer for this student.

Q. What are the pre-administration tasks in the MCAS Portal and when are they done?
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 student logins 1–2 days prior to testing.

Refer to the graphic below for a visual depiction of pre-administration tasks.



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 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).

For additional guidance on class naming conventions, refer to Part V of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Creating Classes, available on the MCAS Portal page of the MCAS Resource Center.

Q. For the November high school tests, can I create classes for ELA now and then create classes for Mathematics 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 blank. Then, you can export the file from the MCAS Portal closer to the Math administration and assign those classes. Then, do a second file import with these new classes assigned.

Q. What are the Course Level and Grade Level tabs on the Classes page?
A. High schools must select the **Course Level tab** when creating classes in order to create course level classes. This allows students from multiple grade levels to be added to the same class (e.g., grade 9 and grade 10 students can be added to the same math class).

Q. I added a student to the wrong class. How do I fix this?
A. To fix this, you will first need to remove the student from the class they are currently in. Then the student will need to be added to the correct class.

To remove a student from a class, follow these 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 the appropriate tab, **Course Level** for high schools, to view the table of classes that have been created.
3. Select **Edit** for the class you need to remove the student from.
4. Locate and select the student in the **class list box** on the right side of the page.
5. 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 the appropriate tab, **Course Level** for high schools, to view the table of classes that have been created.
3. Select **Edit** for the class.

4. Locate and select the student in the **student list box** on the left side of the page.
5. 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.
6. Select **Save**.

Q. We print student logins on index cards. Which Avery label template can we use to print 27 student logins?
A. Avery 5160

Q. Can I change a student name to their preferred name on their student login?
A. *Yes*, you can change a student's name to their preferred name for testing, but you need to change it back in the MCAS Portal 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.

For additional guidance, refer to Part IV of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Enrollment Transfers.

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, monitors stationed at the restrooms with lines of sight to the testing rooms, or with staff who escort students to and from the restroom. Remember that only one student should use the restroom at a time.

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 or educational assistant to administer tests if all education professionals have been assigned to testing rooms and additional test administrators are needed. However, DESE strongly recommends supervision/monitoring of paraprofessionals or educational assistants who administer the test, meaning they must be observed closely by another test administrator, especially if they are providing accommodations, and only if they have been appropriately trained.

Guidance on Materials for Testing

Q. May students use an 8.5”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 dismissed at the end of each session.

Q. May students use tracing paper during testing in addition to or instead of scratch paper?
A. *Yes.* Schools may choose to provide tracing paper to students for use during testing, either in addition to or instead of scratch paper. The same requirements for other types of scratch paper must be implemented for tracing paper (tracking the scratch paper and limiting the number of sheets a student may have at a time).

Scheduling Guidance

Q. May schools group students in the same room if they are taking different subject tests, are in different grades, or are using different testing modes?
A. *No*, for the November tests. Schools should email mcas@mass.gov with any special requests.

Make-Up Testing Guidance

Q. Do I need to create a special make-up class in the MCAS Portal for students participating in make-up testing?
A. Schools may keep students in their original classes for make-up testing using their original student logins and 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. If students are moved to a new class, you will need to print new student logins and provide new access codes.

For students who have started a test, DESE strongly 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 and they cannot complete the session that day?
A. Refer to page 27 of the PAM for Procedures for Students Who Become Ill During a Test Session or Experience a Technology Failure.

PCPA Guidance

Q. The PAM states that only the principal may sign the Principal's Certification of Proper Test Administration (PCPA) and that the principal's name must match the name listed in School/District Profiles on DESE's website. How should a school sign the PCPA if the principal is out of school during testing (e.g., for medical reasons or an emergency)?
A. The principal's designee while they are out of school should add their title to their signature on the PCPA.

Students with Disabilities

Q. How can I verify whether accommodations have been assigned correctly?
A. Principals and test coordinators should follow the instructions for verifying accommodations prior to testing described in the PAM on page 51. Doing so can help to avoid a situation that might cause a test to be voided or results to be invalidated.

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*).

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

- Appendix A, section F, of the PAM
- Appendix B, section F, of the CBT TAM

Q. I can't correctly download the supplemental reference sheets/ELA organizers.
A. Supplemental reference sheets and ELA organizers are posted. School staff may remove references, enlarge tables, or change font colors, but schools cannot add information and text to the provided ELA organizers and mathematics supplemental reference sheets. If you are unable to access the posted versions of the documents, please contact mcas@mass.gov.

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 speech-to-text in Student Registration.

Q. How do I create test administrator logins for human-read aloud or human signer sessions?
A. Refer to the steps outlined in Appendix H of the MCAS Accessibility and Accommodations Manual. New for 2026–27, these steps are provided in this document instead of the *Principal's Administration Manual*.

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. Schools must continue to implement the student's existing, consented-to IEP until they receive written parental consent for the new or amended IEP.

Q. What accommodations may be provided to a student with a recent disabling injury (e.g., a broken arm or wrist) 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 listed 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 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 review whether the refused accommodation is necessary for the student.

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 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. Refer to instructions for adding test report codes

in Part VI of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Scheduling Tests, Printing Student Logins, and Other Tasks on the Test Scheduling Page, available on the MCAS Portal page of the MCAS Resource Center.

4. Go to **Administration > Students**.
5. Search for the student and click **Edit**.
6. Update the accommodation and click **Save**. Refer to information on editing student accommodations in Part III of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Student Registration.
7. Create a new class with this student and schedule that new class for the test. Refer to instructions in the Guide to the MCAS Portal:
    a. Part V: Creating and Managing Classes
    b. Part VI: Scheduling Tests, Printing Student Logins, and Other Tasks on the Test Scheduling Page
8. Print out a new student login for the student. The student will also require a new 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**. Refer to information on editing student accommodations in Part III of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Student Registration.
5. Instruct the student to sign back in to their original test using their same username and password.

English Learners (ELs)

Q. Who is eligible to take the Spanish/English edition of MCAS tests?
A. Refer to the eligibility guidance.

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. Bilingual glossary is an *optional* accessibility tool and not appropriate for every EL. If the student is utilizing a published resource in a language not currently available in the authorized list, Word to Word, or NYU Steinhardt, the resource must be shared with DESE for prior approval (minimum of one month prior to the first spring MCAS test). administration window. Requests should be sent to mcas@mass.gov. Resources created by the district or school will not be approved for use during MCAS. Accessibility tools of any level should never be introduced for the first time during the operational test administration.

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. How do I set up students in the MCAS Portal so that they receive the Spanish/English edition of the test?
A. During Student Registration, test coordinators must 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.

New for 2026–27, schools do not need to separately schedule the Spanish/English test on the Test Scheduling page.

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.

If a student wishes to change the localization language after they have begun testing (e.g., a student taking the Spanish/English test did not switch the language to Spanish and now wants to do so), this can be done with the test administrator's assistance:

1. The student should be instructed to exit the test.
2. Then they can change the localization option, after which they can sign back in to the kiosk with their username and password.
3. The test administrator will need to provide the access code again for the student to resume testing.

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

Q. Are students in grade 11 or 12 required to participate in the November 2026 MCAS high school tests if they have not yet participated in ELA and/or Mathematics MCAS testing?
A. *No*. Students are not required to participate in the November tests. The only purpose for participating in the November administration is to attempt to qualify for scholarships or the Seal of Biliteracy (view the question below for clarification on scholarship eligibility for grade 12 students).

Q. Can a grade 12 student who is new to Massachusetts take the November tests for scholarship purposes?
A. To qualify for the Adams Scholarship or the Koplik Award, students need scores in math, ELA, and science. Because grade 12 students may not participate in the February 2027 science administration for scholarship purposes, grade 12 students who have not already taken a high school Science test cannot qualify for these awards and therefore should not participate in the November administration.

Q. Can grades 11 and 12 students participate in the spring 2027 grade 10 ELA and Math tests *instead of* the November high school tests?
A. Students in grade 11 or 12 who were reported as grade 9 students in the prior school year **are required to participate** in spring 2027 grade 10 ELA and Mathematics testing for accountability purposes. All other grades 11 and 12 students are not required to participate in spring 2027.

Note that students in grade 11 or 12 who were reported as grade 9 students in the prior school year may choose to participate in the November administration as well, if they would like to attempt to qualify for scholarships.

Students in grade 11 (with the exception noted above) are **eligible** to participate in the spring grade 10 ELA and Mathematics tests in addition to the November tests if they are

attempting to qualify for scholarship purposes or the Seal of Biliteracy. Please note that qualification for the Adams Scholarship is based only on first time scores.

Students in grade 12 are **not eligible to participate** in spring grade 10 tests for scholarship purposes or the Seal of Biliteracy.

Additional details are provided in the spring grade 10 MCAS participation guidelines.

Technology

Q. For Site Readiness, I can run the System Set-Up test, but I cannot find the Student Interface Test. What should I do?
A. Please use the Site Readiness credentials found in the MCAS Portal to log in to the MCAS Student Kiosk and take the site readiness test. Do not use the System Set-Up test link in the bottom right corner of the MCAS Student Kiosk sign-in page.

You should view two options once you are logged in with Site Readiness credentials: System Set-Up Test and Student Interface Test. Both tests must be done in order to complete Site Readiness.

Q. I completed Site Readiness after I downloaded the updated MCAS Student Kiosk, but we have updated our technology since then. Do I need to complete Site Readiness again?
A. *Yes*, if schools have made any updates to technology, they should complete Site Readiness again before testing.

Q. Will we be able to view students' real-time progress through tests?
A. MCAS Portal users are able to view student progress through tests. Additional information is available in Part VI of the Guide to the MCAS Portal: Scheduling Tests, Printing Student Logins, and Other Tasks on the Test Scheduling Page.

Q. What should I do if a student loses internet connection during the test?
A. If the student completes testing while the device is offline, additional steps will need to be taken. Refer to the instructions on pages 69–70 of the PAM.

ChromeOS Guidance

Q. What do I need to do to verify the MCAS Progressive Web App (PWA) for ChromeOS was installed and configured correctly?
A. Once all steps have been verified, it is important to complete Site Readiness testing to ensure the **MCAS PWA for ChromeOS** has been configured correctly. Site Readiness consists of the **System Set-Up Test** and the **Student Interface Test,** and both tests must be complete for the Site Readiness details to appear within the MCAS Portal.

Refer to Part V of the MCAS Student Kiosk Technology Guide, available on the Technology Setup page of the MCAS Resource Center, for step-by-step instructions.

Q. I was able to launch the MCAS PWA for ChromeOS and complete the System Set-Up Test. However, when I access the Student Interface portion of Site Readiness, I receive an error stating "This test must be taken with the kiosk or mobile app".

A. If you receive the message that the test must be taken with the kiosk or mobile app, check the following:

1. Verify that the iTester Chrome Carrier Extension is added to the **MCAS Progressive Web App for ChromeOS** in the Google Admin Console.
2. Ensure that Verified Mode in the Google Admin Console is set to **Require verified mode boot for verified access** and the service account email address is listed correctly.
3. Verify that the **MCAS Progressive Web App for ChromeOS** was installed in the Kiosks section of the Google Admin Console rather than the User & browser section.
4. Verify that the device being used is assigned to an Organizational Unit that has the **MCAS Progressive Web App for ChromeOS** properly configured.

For step-by-step instructions and screenshots, refer to Part IV A of the MCAS Student Kiosk Technology Guide, available on the Technology Setup page of the MCAS Resource Center, beginning on page 8.