

## 2020–21 Minnesota Assessments Guidance during COVID-19

This document is meant to provide guidance for District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) related to the administration of the Minnesota Assessments (ACCESS for ELLs, Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, MCA, and MTAS) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is intended to be flexible so it can adapt to the changing situation, and it will be updated as required. It is also meant to supplement the policy and procedure requirements outlined in the [2020–21 Procedures Manual for Minnesota Assessments](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > Policies and Procedures); in general terms, the information in the manual should be followed unless revised guidance is included here.

MDE’s priority is to protect the health and safety of students and staff throughout the test administration. Districts and charter schools should also consult the [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools: Health Considerations for Navigating COVID-19](#) and the [CDC Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19](#) for health-related guidance. In addition, some information in this document comes from the WIDA [Assessment Best Practices during COVID-19](#).

**The content of this documentation reflects MDE’s current administration best practices and guidance. It is not medical advice, and it does not replace or amend any guidance provided by Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) or your district or charter school’s Safe Learning Plan.**

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## Overview and Purpose of Statewide Assessments

The Minnesota Assessments (ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS and MCA/MTAS) are required by both federal and state statute, and the results from these assessments are used to evaluate how successfully districts and schools are implementing the WIDA English Language Development Standards and Minnesota Academic Standards. As explained in the Sept. 3 letter to Chief State School Officers (including MDE), the U.S. Department of Education does not anticipate granting waivers to states this year, which it did in the 2019–20 school year. In addition, stakeholders have expressed the importance of collecting student data to evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on educational equity. The guidance and information in this document is provided to show how these requirements and concerns may be addressed while balancing health and safety needs of students and staff.

Minnesota Assessment results are used as part of Minnesota’s North Star accountability system. While Minnesota is applying for flexibility in accountability calculations, final details of Minnesota’s application is not yet known. While some general information is provided in the *Test Codes* section below, detailed guidance related to accountability is not provided in this document and will be communicated by the MDE Division of Equity and Opportunity.

### Administration Modes

For Kindergarten ACCESS, grades 1–12 ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS (with or without accommodations), MTAS, and MCA paper accommodations (regular print, large print, and braille test books and script), the assessments must be administered in person (i.e., at school).

For MCA online administrations, the assessments can be administered in person, and MDE is continuing to explore options for administering remotely (i.e. at a location other than at school, like at home).

- A remote administration could be available for online Reading MCA (grades 3–8 and 10), online Mathematics MCA (grades 3–8 and 11), and online Science MCA (grades 5, 8, and high school).
- For a remote administration, the functionality will NOT be available for the Test Monitor to remotely monitor the student taking the test (i.e., the Test Monitor cannot visually monitor the student taking the test). While this functionality is being investigated in a fall 2020 pilot study, it will not be available for spring 2021 test administrations.
- MDE anticipates announcing whether remote administration will be available for spring 2021 MCA administrations by early February.

### MDE Considerations for Administration Options

The following provides information about how MDE made decisions about the administration modes as outlined in the previous section:

- For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, Minnesota is part of the WIDA Consortium with 40 other states and territories, so decisions regarding administration are not determined by Minnesota alone. While WIDA researched options for a remote administration of grades 1–12 online ACCESS that included remote monitoring for 2020–21, the decision was made not to move forward for this year. An important

consideration WIDA took into account was thinking about what the student score would mean and considering whether it should be used for programming and reclassification decisions, as it would be based on data from an administration that would not be as secure or standardized as an in-person administration.

- For the MCA administration, the possibility for remote forms to be available is because the content is owned by the state of Minnesota but also because of plans that were in progress for a different purpose.
  - In 2019, MDE began exploring the creation of an online fixed-form assessment for each grade and subject that would be reserved for use in the case where a widespread breach of assessment content occurred. (This is an industry best practice, but requires a very large quantity of items that cover a broad range of content.) In spring 2020, MDE began constructing the forms that would serve this purpose. The items on these forms are now separate from the pool of items that are used on operational tests moving forward.
  - In fall 2020, given the continuing pandemic and its impact on the 2020–21 school year, MDE began exploring a different use of these forms than was originally intended: remote administration. Without this work done in previous years, a remote administration would not be possible.

## Testing Windows

At the time of the publication of this guidance, the testing windows and other applicable dates as outlined in the *Important Dates* in the *Procedures Manual* remain as originally published.

## Test Codes

Due to the unique circumstances districts and schools are facing, the EXC-N (extenuating circumstances – not attempted) and EXC-A (extenuating circumstances – attempted) test codes used last spring will be available again this year during Posttest Editing in Test WES for the following reasons:

- Using the EXC test codes provides consistency with data/indications from 2019–20, and also differentiates the situation from a decision by parent/guardian or student to refuse participation in statewide assessments.
- Using these test codes again this year provides additional flexibility for not including those students in accountability determinations. This possible flexibility is not available for other test codes, like parent/guardian refusal (where the current accountability implications would still apply) and these test codes may be used when looking at three-year averages for accountability. However, keep in mind this flexibility for EXC test codes is pending based on state and federal conversations and decisions.

## EXC-A and EXC-N Test Codes

Applying the EXC test code is a district or charter school decision that is made at a student level; districts and charters do not request approval from MDE to use the codes. MDE expects that districts and schools will be making the best decisions at the time of testing based on their professional judgement for the health and safety of their staff, students, and families.

- In general terms, if the pandemic is the reason that the student or family does not want or is unable to take an assessment, then the EXC-N test code may apply. Similarly, if a district or school has made all reasonable efforts to plan for and provide the administration of an assessment but is unable, then the EXC-N (or EXC-A for started tests unable to be finished) may apply.
- Examples of specific instances where EXC-N or EXC-A may apply include:
  - A student requires a linguistic support or accommodation that can only be provided in person, but the student is unable to test in person; in these cases, the EXC-N test code may apply. (See *MCA Linguistic Supports and Accommodations* below for more information.)
  - A student who needs to test in person is required to quarantine at the time of the scheduled test administration and cannot come in to make up the test before the end of the applicable testing window.
  - Kindergarten is the only grade where EXC-A could apply for ACCESS if a student starts testing but cannot finish for a reason related to the pandemic. This is because the domains are not separated for Kindergarten ACCESS like they are for grade 1–12 ACCESS assessments.
- Due to changing conditions that may affect learning models or logistics, decisions to apply the EXC test codes should be made at or near the time of testing.
- EXC-N and EXC-A may be more applicable to assessments that require in-person administrations; however, there may be cases where they also apply to remote administration of the MCA (e.g., repeated attempts to test remotely but technical issues prevent the student from finishing the test), if the remote administration is available.
- Keep in mind that test codes may be requested as part of public data requests, which means that districts and schools should be prepared to provide information about the decision-making process utilized in regards to test codes.
- Districts and schools are not required to keep documentation regarding why an EXC test code is applied for each student; however, if it is helpful to document for specific circumstances, the *Test Administration Report* (TAR) or another district-developed process may be used.
- Districts and schools need to consider their specific local situations and the following when applying EXC test codes, especially in regards to parent/guardian refusals:
  - If the district or charter school receives or has already received parent/guardian refusal documentation from parents/guardians, they may consider applying the EXC-N code if the refusal is related to the pandemic (i.e., refusing testing because of health and safety reasons). This may require additional communication with the family to verify their intent.
  - The district or school may need to clarify for parents/guardians what will appear on Individual Student Reports (ISRs) based on the code indicated. If EXC-N is indicated, the ISR will indicate that the student did not participate due to extenuating circumstances, rather than a parent/guardian refusal.

- The type of communication or documentation required for these situations may depend on individual families and district or school policies and procedures.

Specifically for High School Science MCA or MTAS, action must be taken during the testing window in order to be able to indicate the EXC-N test code, since a blank assessment record cannot be added in Posttest Editing for high school science.

- Students who would have taken the High School Science MCA (based on their enrollment in a life science or biology course) but are unable, as determined by the district or school, must be added to a test session in PearsonAccess Next. Further instructions will be provided in the [MCA Online Testing User Guide](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > User Guides).
- Similarly, for any students who would have taken the High School Science MTAS, further action will be needed in PearsonAccess Next in order to create an assessment record for Posttest Editing; these details will be included in the [MTAS Data Entry User Guide](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > User Guides).

Note: If a district or school was not able to indicate the EXC-N test code for high school science in 2019–20 and now wishes to make these indications (in order to reflect that students would have already had their opportunity for testing based on coursework completion), the applicable students may be added to test sessions this year in order to indicate the code. If the district or school chooses to indicate codes for students who would have tested last year, they should be prepared to explain the increase in test codes indicated this year.

## Existing Test Codes

All of the existing test codes should be applied consistent with the definitions in Chapter 9 of the *Procedures Manual*. While there may be some additional circumstances where the test codes would apply for this year, the general information provided in the manual is relevant. For example:

- There may be additional situations that occur during remote administrations (if available) where a student’s test may need to be invalidated (INV). Districts and schools should follow the information in Chapter 9 to determine which INV test code would apply.
- Medical excuse (ME) may be applied for students with COVID-19 if all of the specific criteria in Chapter 9 apply. Because the criteria for medical excuse is specific and requires a significant medical emergency, the use of the ME test code for COVID-19 will likely be rare.
- In terms of refusals, the REF-P (refusal by parent/guardian) and REF-S (refusal by student) should only be used if it is the assessment itself that is being refused. If the district or school has received a refusal that they determine is more related to a refusal to come to the building for in-person services of any kind, EXC-N may be more appropriate. The district or charter school will make these determinations, in communication with families, as needed. Refer to the previous section for more information.

Note: For test code documentation, like parent/guardian refusals, MDE understands that districts and schools may not be able to collect documentation “in writing” in the same ways as past years. Each district or school determines how they will document required information, and collecting refusals electronically (e.g., via email) is an option if the district or school chooses. More flexibility is also allowed this year (e.g., creating

documentation based on a phone call as students may not be in school to return forms). If the district or school is gathering this documentation in a different way, they must ensure that families understand or provide all parts of the required documentation (e.g., talking through all parts of the [Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) form).

## Test Security

### Test Security Requirements

Test security requirements outlined in the *Procedures Manual* and required *Test Security Training* must be followed as written, especially for all administrations of ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs; in-person MCAs (online and paper); and MTAS.

This section includes some additional information about changes that would apply for remote administrations of online MCAs, if the remote administration option is available.

- All staff involved in any aspect of testing must complete the *Test Security Training*. However, some requirements in the *Test Security Training* and the *Assurance of Test Security and Non-Disclosure* cannot be implemented or maintained in the same manner for MCA remote administrations. See the *Training Requirements* section in this document for additional information.
- Students testing remotely cannot be actively monitored by the Test Monitor, as is required during in-person administrations.
  - No remote monitoring functionality is available through TestNav. While districts and schools may choose to use other online programs to provide instructions to students and answer student questions (i.e., online meeting or application), no monitoring of student testing is required. Districts and schools should follow procedures consistent with their protocols for classroom assessments during distance learning.
  - While students will be instructed, through the student directions in the test and *Testing Directions: Remote*, to maintain test security practices, MDE understands that the Test Monitor will not be able to ensure these requirements are met (e.g., use of prohibited materials, students completing the test independently, unauthorized viewing of test content by someone other than the student).
  - Additional details about the responsibilities and logistics for Test Monitors of remote administrations are addressed in the *MCA Remote Administrations* section below.
- As a result of the changes required for a possible remote administration, the items appearing on the remote form are now separate from the pool of items that are used on operational tests moving forward. However, these items may be used for other purposes in the future so it is important that the test security is maintained to the extent possible. This means that the same security procedures for review and sharing of test content must be followed – staff and students are not allowed to view, share, or save test content in any manner other than what is allowed for the administration of the test.

## Test Security Violations and Misadministrations

DACs are expected to investigate and report potential test security violations to MDE through the *Test Security Notification* (TSN) process in Test WES as outlined in the *Procedures Manual*.

While the majority of test security violations for in-person administrations also apply to remote administrations, there are some key exceptions if the remote administration is available:

- Student scratch paper, and other similar materials used by students during testing, cannot be kept secure in the same manner for remote administrations. These logistics are described in detail in the *MCA Remote Administrations* section below, but the lack of security for these materials is not reported as a TSN for remote administrations since they cannot be collected and secured following testing.
- Student testing ticket/student login information should be kept secure in the same manner that districts and schools protect student data privacy on other student materials (i.e., student login information is being sent to students securely electronically via a classroom site or app). These logistics are described in detail in the *MCA Remote Administrations* section below, but the lack of security for these materials is not reported as a TSN for remote administrations since they cannot be collected and secured following testing.

If the remote administration option is available, the DAC should follow their district or school processes to the best of their abilities when investigating if test security violations or misadministrations requiring invalidations have occurred during a remote administration; any invalidations must be indicated and documented on the *Test Administration Report* (TAR). Student tests must be invalidated if it is determined that their actions require it, as outlined in the *Procedures Manual* (e.g., student cheating or using prohibited materials).

## Monitoring and Audit Changes

Although MDE takes test security seriously, the impact of the pandemic and the need to ensure that districts and charter schools have the time and resources to focus on the unique circumstances for statewide testing this year have necessitated the following changes related to test security requirements that are monitored or audited by MDE:

- District and charter school test security procedures: MDE will not request or review test security procedures from selected districts or schools. Districts and schools are still required to have a test security procedure on file that addresses all of the requirements outlined in Appendix B of the *Procedures Manual*. Note: The logistics for this year's test administrations may require some changes in procedures; while districts and schools may choose to document these changes, MDE does not require that the test security procedure is updated to reflect them.
- Testing calendars: For this year, MDE recommends that posted district or charter school testing calendars reflect larger estimates or windows for when testing days will occur for each grade and subject. These scheduling logistics will be understandably fluid this year, and MDE does not require that the planned testing dates be as specific as typically required.
- ACCESS/MCA monitoring and MTAS audits: MDE will not be completing ACCESS or MCA monitoring visits or MTAS audits this year due to health and safety concerns of having non-school staff present in schools

and the more flexible scheduling needs of districts and schools. DACs may monitor testing within their schools, if possible, but this is not required; districts and schools should follow their policies and procedures in terms of whether additional staff members are allowed in classrooms.

## Training Requirements

All of the training requirements outlined in Chapter 7 of the *Procedures Manual* apply; the only addition is a course in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) specifically for Test Monitors administering the MCA remotely, if the remote administration option is available (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > Training). This course will contain the following trainings:

- *Test Security Training* (same training for all staff; completed once annually)
- *Administering the Remote MCA* (will include information specific to the administration of the remote MCA)

Test Monitors who are administering multiple assessments must complete all applicable courses. For example, if the remote administration option is available, a Test Monitor administering the MCA in person and remotely would complete both MCA Test Monitor courses. Note: With a TMS enhancement this year, the *Test Security Training* will appear as complete across the courses and trainings in TMS after completed once.

## MCA Linguistic Supports and Accommodations

The following table provides information about how linguistic supports and accommodations can be administered for in-person and remote testing, if the remote administration option is available. Districts and schools must consult Chapter 4 of the *Procedures Manual* for detailed information about available linguistic supports and accommodations. The information provided here is meant to supplement Chapter 4 and the tables must be used in conjunction for all information related to test administration. For in-person administrations, all requirements outlined in Chapter 4 must be followed.

Note: If a student requires a linguistic support or accommodations that can only be provided in person but the student is unable to be in person for testing, the EXC-N test code may apply.

Linguistic Support/Accommodation	Mode Required	Notes
Linguistic Supports		
Recording a reading test (MT)	Either	For remote administrations, the device used for the audio recording is not required to be school owned. The student must be instructed not to access the Internet or applications beyond the recording function and to delete any recordings after each test session.
Simplified or clarified directions (TD)	Either	For remote administrations, the district or charter school must determine how simplified or clarified versions of the <i>Testing Directions</i> will be provided to students before testing begins.
Standard text-to-speech	Either	Because standard text-to-speech is embedded in the online test, it is available for both in person and remote tests.
Translated directions (TD)	Either	For remote administrations, the district or charter school must determine how translated versions of the <i>Testing Directions</i> will be provided to students before testing begins.

Linguistic Support/Accommodation	Mode Required	Notes
Word-to-word translation using commercial dual language dictionaries, online language programs, or translated word lists (OL)	Either	<p>For remote administrations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For dual language dictionaries, ensure the student is using a dictionary that meets the requirements in Chapter 4.</li> <li>• If using a device for the dictionary or online language program, the student must be instructed not to access the Internet or applications other than the dictionary or program.</li> <li>• For translated word lists, a clean copy (i.e., no notes) of the list from PearsonAccess Next must be used.</li> </ul> <p>The district or school may need to determine how these materials will be provided to students if they do not have a clean copy.</p>
Word-to-word translations using pop-up translations (HM, SO, SP)	<p>Either for science</p> <p>Either for grade 11 Mathematics MCA</p> <p>In person only for grades 3–8 Mathematics MCA</p>	<p>Pop-up translations are available in both the in person and remote online forms for Science MCA and grade 11 Mathematics MCA.</p> <p>Based on the forms that are available for the grades 3–8 Mathematics MCA remote administration, the remote online form does not have pop-up translations available; they are only available on the in-person online test.</p>
<b>Accommodations</b>		
Paper test books: 12, 18, 24, BU, or BC	In person	Paper test materials require in-person test administration.
Accommodated text-to-speech (MC)	Either	Because accommodated text-to-speech is embedded in the online test, it is available for both in person and remote tests.

Linguistic Support/Accommodation	Mode Required	Notes
Assistive technology (AT)	Varies	<p>For remote administrations, if using a device for scratch paper or a calculator application as assistive technology, the student must be instructed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not to access the Internet or applications other than the applications needed for this accommodation</li> <li>• To erase any notes if used as scratch paper</li> </ul> <p>For other assistive technology for the remote form, contact <a href="mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us">mde.testing@state.mn.us</a>.</p>
Handheld calculator (HC) or mathematics manipulatives/tables/abacus (HC) for grades 3–8 Mathematics MCA	In person	<p>In-person test administration is required because this accommodation requires paper test materials.</p> <p>(Note: For grade 11 Mathematics MCA, since a calculator is allowed for all segments, a handheld calculator or the other materials may be used remotely, following the requirements in Table 4 in Chapter 4.)</p>
Recording a reading test (MT)	In person	<p>For remote administrations, the device used for the audio recording is not required to be school owned. The student must be instructed not to access the Internet or applications beyond the recording function and to delete any recordings after each test session.</p>
Scribe and audio recording for transcriptions (SC)	In person	<p>The scribe accommodation requires in-person test administration because scribes must be trained district or school staff and they must be in the same location as the student. This role cannot be filled by someone in the home.</p> <p>For audio recording for transcription, the accommodation also requires paper test materials, which must be administered in person.</p>

Linguistic Support/Accommodation	Mode Required	Notes
Script (MS) for Mathematics and Science MCA  Signed Interpretation of the Mathematics or Science script (OA)	In person	For Mathematics MCA, in-person test administration is required because the student must test on paper.  For online Science MCA, in-person test administration is required because the online portion of the script does not align to the remote form; it aligns only to the in-person online form. For paper Science MCA, in-person test administration is required because the student must test on paper.
Signed interpretation of directions (TD)	Either	For remote administrations, the district or school must determine how signed interpretation of the <i>Testing Directions</i> will be provided to students before testing begins.

## Student Preparation for Testing

As communicated in the *Procedures Manual*, districts need to ensure that students are familiar with the test that they will be taking, and which resources will need to be used may vary by grade or student. The [Student Resources](#) section (MDE website > Districts, Schools and Educators > Teaching and Learning > Statewide Testing > Student Resources) has information on available student resources. Districts should consider the following:

- With limited testing last year, additional students may need to review resources in order to prepare for testing this year than in past years (e.g., both grades 3 and 4 students for MCA).
- The way student resources are typically provided may need to be adjusted (e.g., students may complete online resources independently or teachers may demonstrate functionality for students).
- If students are using different devices for testing than in the past, ensure students are familiar with how to take a test on the device they will be using.

Note: Because the online remote and in-person versions of the MCA forms function similarly, the same student resources may be used for either administration mode if the remote administration option is available.

## General Health Protocol Requirements

For the administration of assessments, districts and charter schools must follow the health and safety protocols in their Safe Learning Plans if the district or school is implementing in-person or hybrid learning. For schools that are in distance learning, all hybrid health and safety protocols outlined in MDH's [2020-21 Planning Guide for](#)

[Schools](#) must be followed. This protocol needs to be available on the district or charter school website and made available to every test participant.

## Communication with Students and Families

As each district or charter school's situation is different in regards to communicating with families, MDE cannot provide templates for communication that will meet the needs of each district and their individual situations. However, the following guidelines and considerations may be helpful as you prepare your communications:

- What is the district or school's plan for ensuring students and families understand the following about participating in statewide testing?
  - Concern for health and safety. MDE recommends districts inform students and families of the options they have not to participate in testing based on concerns about student health and safety because of the circumstances related to COVID-19.
  - Potential impact, if any, if students do not participate in testing.
    - For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, the test results are used for individual student English learner programming and reclassification decisions, and students cannot be considered for exiting without a valid ACCESS score.
    - For all Minnesota Assessments, not participating affects the data available to schools and districts for their evaluation of instruction in the applicable standards and inform curriculum planning.
  - The purpose of the test and use of results by the district or charter school to evaluate instruction in the applicable standards and inform curriculum planning.
- What does communicating in a manner that provides students families with meaningful access to information look like in your district or school?
  - Consideration for translated materials or oral communication in the family's home language, following your district or school procedures for this kind of communication with families.
  - Use the most appropriate communication methods (e.g., phone, text, email, parent portal, website, audio recording of information in multiple languages). Work with trusted community partners to communicate information as applicable.
- What timing is best for sending this communication to families (e.g., earlier to inform planning, later when logistics are determined)?
- For students participating in testing, what is the plan for communication about the following?
  - Health and safety protocols that will be followed.
  - Logistics for test administration (e.g., day and time of testing, transportation, materials needed by students like headphones).

- What is the district or school’s plan for communication if there are changes (e.g., transportation, flexibility around rescheduling)?

## Considerations for Students in School-Age Child Care for Children of Essential Workers

For school-age care provided within the district, each district may determine how test administration will be handled for district or school-enrolled students who attend.

- For tests that require in-person administrations (ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA paper accommodations, and MTAS), districts and charter schools may train staff members working in the school-age care setting to administer the tests if they choose. All test administration and test security requirements must be followed. Schools may also choose to handle test administration separately (i.e., make other arrangements for student testing).
- For online MCA, the district or charter school may choose which administration mode they will use:
  - Districts and schools may choose to administer the MCA following in-person requirements, meaning that a staff member would be trained as a Test Monitor and administer the test following all requirements for in-person test administrations. In this case, students would select the “At school” option for the testing location question (refer to *MCA Online In-Person* below for more information).
  - Districts and schools may choose to administer the MCA remotely (if the remote administration option is available), meaning that students would be receiving instructions for test administration from a Test Monitor outside of the childcare program (e.g., their classroom teacher). Students may test at home or during school-age care hours. If multiple students are testing remotely in the care setting, they may test in the same room if there is someone available to ensure students are working independently. MDE understands that this will not be possible in all situations and the main objective is that the student is completing the test independently. These students would select the “Somewhere else” option for the testing location question (refer to *Remote Testing Locations* below for more information).

## Preparing for In-Person Administrations

The following information applies to any in-person administrations of ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, online or paper MCAs, and MTAS. Health and safety guidelines specific to each test administration are described in the sections below when necessary.

### In-Person Testing Locations

For all in-person testing, it is important that test administration procedures are coordinated as necessary with school and district administrative staff, staff involved in test administration, building security staff, and janitorial service staff.

If the school is in a distance learning model at the time of testing, consider the following:

- Transportation arrangements and options will need to be established by the district or charter school and communicated for planned testing days; schools determine if they will provide transportation and/or if students may be dropped off. All health procedures related to transportation must be followed, including:
  - Establishing safe procedures for busing, consistent with MDH guidelines.
  - Establishing procedures for student drop off (e.g., where are students dropped off and picked up; where do students and/or family members wait before and after testing; are family members allowed to enter the building or only students).
- Depending on the amount of time staff and students may be in the building on testing days, schools may need to provide meals on site consistent with MDH guidelines.
- Districts may set up specific schools or sites for testing, rather than preparing all schools for test administrations, to help with some of logistics related to bringing students in to buildings.
- Staff may need to be granted access to buildings and classrooms, especially if the school has been in distance learning since the start of the school year.

Consider logistics if students or staff become sick or begin to experience COVID-related symptoms during testing, and follow plans and health processes that have been developed. In addition, references to applicable health guidance are provided at the beginning of this document to assist with this planning as needed.

## Scheduling

Consider the following when developing the testing schedule:

- How many students can be tested safely at once? Are more sessions needed due to social distancing requirements?
- Are there certain factors that can help ensure testing will be completed within the applicable testing window?
  - Will the schedule prioritize groups of students, grade levels, or subjects earlier in the testing window rather than later?
  - Have all English learners been screened this year using a formal ELP screener or have students only been screened with provisional identification tools? See *EL Screening and ACCESS Participation* below for more information.
  - Will students need to complete more than one domain or subject when present? Note: While MDE does not typically recommend that students take an entire test (e.g., all domains of ACCESS) or multiple tests (e.g., Reading and Mathematics MCA) in the same day, districts or charter schools may need to schedule this way this year. Districts should do their best to balance the logistics related to bringing students in with what is best for student test taking.
  - Will students need to test at times that may fall outside of regular school hours? Note: To give districts and schools the most flexibility for scheduling, there are no limitations this year for when service provider systems can be accessed for online testing or data entry (i.e., not limited to week days from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. for online testing or 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for data entry). Keep in

mind that service provider help desks have set customer service hours and may not be available for technical assistance or troubleshooting depending on the time of the test session.

- If students will be taking breaks during testing, how will breaks be coordinated to ensure the number of students in one location (e.g., hallways, restrooms) is minimized?
- Similarly, what is the plan for ending testing sessions to ensure students can leave or move to a new location while maintaining physical distance?
- Does the schedule allow enough time in between sessions to sanitize or replace materials and equipment?
- Will the schedule allow time for make-up testing? What is the plan if students miss their scheduled testing session(s)?
- Is there a backup plan if the building(s) planned for testing need to close?

## Staffing

The requirements for who can be a Test Administrator or Test Monitor are the same as outlined in Chapter 7 of the *Procedures Manual*. However, districts and charter schools may need to consider training additional staff members to administer assessments due to the extra time needed for health and safety protocols and more, smaller test sessions. This may be especially important for grades 1–12 online ACCESS in order to ensure that EL instruction can continue to be provided. As communicated last year in [Guidance on English Learner Instruction during ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Testing](#), the administration of the grades 1–12 online ACCESS is similar to the administration of the online MCA and is not required to be administered by EL staff. Refer to the information in Chapter 7 for detailed information on who can be Test Administrators for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS.

In addition, if the district or charter school has determined that student teachers may fill the role of substitute teachers (as outlined in an [FAQ from the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board \[PELSB\]](#)), these student teachers may also be Test Monitors or Test Administrators, following the information in Chapter 7 of the *Procedures Manual* for substitute teachers.

All staff members who will be administering assessments must complete the applicable trainings required for their role(s) during test administration.

Ensure that sufficient staff are available to administer accommodations, especially for accommodations that require additional staff or a specific expertise, like sign language interpretation or translations. Additional planning may also be needed to ensure sufficient staffing for individual administrations of Kindergarten ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, and MTAS as these administrations require familiarity with the student and specific training for scoring.

## Technology Considerations

Even for in-person online testing, where technology requirements may be similar to previous years, the circumstances for this year may require additional planning in conjunction with district or school technology staff.

- If the devices that will be used for testing are currently issued to students for distance learning, will student devices need to be updated to meet all requirements for applicable online tests?
- Have or can updates be reliably pushed out to student devices, or is additional time for updates needed when students bring in their devices?
- How can the sharing of devices between students be minimized?
- If students must test on shared devices, are their disposable barriers (e.g., plastic wrap) that can be placed over keyboards or screens to provide a sanitary surface for each student?
- How will shared devices be sanitized between uses by students? Note: Some electronics cannot be sanitized in the same way as other surfaces. Confirm with technology staff the best way to sanitize devices and headsets.
- Will students be asked to bring in personal headphones to reduce required cleaning? See *Test Material Considerations* below for specific considerations for the grades 1–12 online ACCESS Speaking domain.

## EL Screening and ACCESS Participation

For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, there may be students who were temporarily identified for EL programming this year using approved provisional identification tools. If these students are receiving EL services, the assumption is that they are indicated in MARSS as EL = Y.

- Provisionally-identified students who are [Recently Arrived English Learners](#) should be administered the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS, even if they are not able to take a formal ELP screener to verify ELP status prior to testing.
- For all other provisionally-identified students, if there is any doubt about a given student’s EL status, staff should make efforts to use a formal ELP screener to verify EL status prior to being administered the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS. *Note: This is important because once students begin ACCESS testing, they will be formally identified for EL status and must meet the minimum English proficiency criteria before exiting EL programming and EL status.*
- Provisionally-identified students who score proficient on a formal ELP screener will no longer receive temporary EL programming and will **not** be administered the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS. Their EL status will need to be retroactively changed in MARSS to EL = N for the 2020–21 school year.

For students provisionally-identified as not needing EL programming: If there are any doubts about a given student’s EL status, staff should make efforts to use a formal ELP screener to verify EL status prior to the close of the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing window. If upon formal screening, it is determined that the student is eligible for EL status, that student should be administered the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS and will receive EL programming. The status will need to be retroactively changed in MARSS to EL = Y for the 2020–21 school year.

Please direct questions regarding EL identification and EL programming to [MDE.EL@state.mn.us](mailto:MDE.EL@state.mn.us).

## Test Material and Test Administration Considerations

- Physical test materials should be inventoried immediately upon arrival. Materials are not touched for several days during shipping so there is no need to quarantine test materials upon delivery.

- Consider having staff wear gloves when organizing, distributing, handling, or collecting materials to minimize the direct handling of materials between adults (for organizing and distributing) and adults to students (for handing out and collecting). Note: Any kind of glove may be used; medical-grade gloves are not required.
- When possible, avoid having Test Administrators/Test Monitors share materials.
  - Additional copies of resources may be printed from the WIDA Secure Portal or PearsonAccess Next as needed.
  - Additional copies of secure materials used by Test Administrators/Test Monitors (grades 1–3 *ACCESS Test Administrator’s Scripts*, *ACCESS Speaking* test booklets, Alternate *ACCESS* test booklets, MCA mathematics and science scripts, and MTAS Task Administration Manuals) can be ordered in additional orders as needed.
- Consider providing writing utensils for students so they do not need to share them.
- Ensure students are prepared and know what to expect for the additional measures that will be taken for health and safety reasons, as test administration may look different than in the past.
- Have a plan in place to ensure test materials are secured when not used for testing. While all districts and charter schools need to follow their chain of custody procedures, they should also know what the plan is if the district or a school is changing learning models. For example, if the district or a school is moving from in-person or hybrid instruction to distance learning:
  - Ensure someone will be at the district or schools to receive test materials shipments.
  - If buildings need to close or there will be limited access, ensure test materials are stored securely.

Note: For Kindergarten ACCESS, paper grades 1–12 ACCESS, and Alternate ACCESS, do NOT modify test materials that are returned for scoring in any way.

### ***Kindergarten ACCESS***

- Some materials, like the activity board, can be wiped down as needed between administrations.
- The activity pages in the back of the storybook can be laminated or placed in clear plastic bags that can be wiped down after each administration.
- Cards may be put in page protectors, placed on the table under a transparent overlay (such as a sheet of Plexiglass or plastic wrap), or laminated to make them easier to sanitize and reuse.
- Avoid sharing materials. In situations where the Test Administrator or a student can turn pages in a booklet, do not have the student assist with page turning.
- If there is concern about working in the same student response booklet during test administration, one option is for the Test Administrator to use scratch paper to transcribe the student’s writing response and then transferring it to the student response booklet later. Once entered in the student response booklet, Test Administrators must securely destroy the used scratch paper.
- Encourage students to use their pencils as pointers to indicate their answers in the books or on the cards, instead of using their hands.

## **Grades 1–12 Online ACCESS Speaking Domain**

- Consider allowing students to use their own headsets or earbuds with built-in microphones for online test administration; make sure that the microphone attached to personal headsets or earbuds passes the mic check prior to the start of the test session. In addition, make sure that a child who is wearing a mask can be understood using the mic check feature at the beginning of the test.
- Have students continue to wear masks throughout testing. Encourage students to speak loudly during the Speaking test.
- If possible with scheduling, districts and charter schools may consider having students use the built-in microphone on the Chromebook or laptop. This would require students to test individually or ensure there is additional space between students.

## **Alternate ACCESS**

There are no manipulatives involved in the Alternate ACCESS; the student responds by pointing at pictures in the test book or responding with their voice when prompted. If appropriate for the student, Test Administrators can have students point with their pencil or some type of pointer that can be sanitized (rather than their finger).

## **MCA Online In Person**

Students taking the online MCA in person will need to be set up in separate test sessions from students testing remotely (if the remote administration option is available); this ensures that students receive the correct form of the test with all TestNav security features incorporated (e.g., TestNav locks out all other applications) and typical resume functionality in PearsonAccess Next. Additional details about setting up test sessions will be provided in the [MCA Online Testing User Guide](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > User Guides).

Within student tests, a question about the location where the test is being taken has been added to the student directions. This question is used as another data point, in addition to the information in PearsonAccess Next, to confirm where students are testing.

- Where are you taking the test today?
  - At school
  - Somewhere else

Students testing in-person should select “at school”, even if taking the test at a different location than they typically would have (e.g., testing at different school than the one they would normally attend). Test Monitors may assist students with this question as needed.

If students start testing in person at school and there is a change in learning models (i.e., a school moves to distance learning) or vice versa, the options for how the student should finish testing will be detailed in the [MCA/MTAS Irregularities](#) document (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > Policies and Procedures). If a student is assigned to the remote form (if available) and should have been assigned the in-person form because they are testing in person, the student may complete that test; refer to *MCA/MTAS Irregularities* for additional details.

## MTAS

- MDE recommends ordering separate MTAS test materials for each student this year for health and safety reasons. Additional kits (containing the Task Administration Manual, Presentation Pages, and Response Option Cards) can be ordered in additional orders as needed.
- If needed, Presentation Pages materials may be disassembled and placed in sheet protectors or laminated, as needed, so they can be easily wiped down. As with any other adaptations to Presentation Pages, these pages must be return to Pearson following testing.
- Objects or manipulatives can be placed in clear plastic bags, which can be wiped down or discarded after each test administration.
- If appropriate for the student, Test Administrators are encouraged to have the student respond with their voice or by pointer with their pencil or some type of pointer that can be sanitized (rather than their finger).

## Testing Rooms

- Identify a testing room as large as is possible and practical. While the guidance typically is to use a closed space to prevent disruptions, this may not be possible, especially if larger groups of students need to test at one time. Ensure to allow for a minimum of 6 feet of space between students when planning seating arrangements and follow local guidance on desk or chair spacing.
- Even for smaller or individual administrations, avoid small offices or classrooms when possible.
- If feasible and available, schools may consider using clear dividers between the students and Test Administrators/Test Monitors, especially for Kindergarten ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, and MTAS where the administration requires close physical contact.
- Consider setting up the room before students enter with the applicable test materials (e.g., ACCESS test booklet, MCA paper test books, scratch paper and testing tickets). At the end of the testing session, have students return materials to a specific container to minimize handling materials between Test Administrators/Test Monitors and students.
- Consider the following in line with your district and school policies:
  - The use of face coverings and/or face shields as outlined in MDE's [Safe Learning Plan](#) and MDH's [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools: Health Considerations for Navigating COVID-19](#).
  - Providing hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies for each testing room.
  - Designating someone to be responsible for cleaning frequently touched surfaces between testing sessions if room or supplies used by different groups.

## Preparing for MCA Online Remote Administrations

***MDE is continuing to explore options for administering remotely (i.e., at a location other than at school, for example at home). MDE anticipates announcing whether remote administration will be available for spring 2021 MCA administrations by early February, but this section is provided for information and planning.***

## Technology and Test Session Set Up

If the remote administration option is available, students taking the online MCA remotely will need to be indicated in Pretest Editing in Test WES with a specific code: RT (remote testing). This code will be indicated by subject in the same location where linguistic support and accommodation codes are indicated; this will allow the code to be entered on an individual student basis or uploaded. This code is anticipated to be available in Pretest Editing in early February, and detailed instructions will be provided.

These students will also need to be set up in separate test sessions in PearsonAccess Next from students testing in person; the RT code entered in Test WES will ensure that students are added to the correct session and receive the correct form of the test that is published with limited security features in order to allow the most flexibility for student testing:

- Students may test using a browser, which does not require installation, or with the TestNav app.
- The limited security features mean that TestNav will not lock out other applications, but this is required in order to minimize student technology issues.

Detailed information for preparing technology will be posted on the [Pearson Technology page](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Technology). Additional details about setting up test sessions will be provided in the [MCA Online Testing User Guide](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > User Guides).

## Testing Directions

A separate version of the *Testing Directions* will be posted for remote administrations: [Testing Directions: Remote](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Preparing for Testing > Testing Directions) if the remote administration option is available. It will include a *Script to be Read to Students* section with instructions that must be read to students prior to test administration. Districts and schools will determine when these instructions will be provided, but the recommendation is to provide them as close to the start of each testing session as possible. Districts and schools will need to plan for a method to provide the directions (e.g., read to students in a live meeting, a recording provided to students).

## Providing Student Login Information and Other Materials

If the remote administration option is available, districts and schools are not required to provide the PDF testing tickets from PearsonAccess Next to students for remote administrations; the student login information can be provided in other formats.

Districts and schools must ensure that student login information is provided in a method that ensures individual students are only receiving their login information and they do not have access to other student login information. Student login information must be provided in a secure manner in order to maintain student data privacy, like providing to students securely through a student portal or app used for instruction or hard copy.

Other allowable materials that may be provided include:

- Scratch paper. Districts and schools may provide scratch paper or allow students to use their own materials. However, the guidelines for allowable scratch paper in Chapter 7 of the *Procedures Manual* must be followed if instructing students to provide their own scratch paper.
- Hard-copy formula sheets and translated word lists (as a linguistic support) may be provided if applicable; they must be printed versions from PearsonAccess Next.

If providing materials hard copy, districts and schools will need to determine a method for students to receive them (e.g., providing packets for pick-up, mail).

## Prohibited Materials

The same guidelines for prohibited materials in Chapter 7 of the *Procedures Manual* apply for remote administrations (if the remote administration option is available); however, MDE acknowledges that Test Monitors will be limited in their ability to verify if students accessed prohibited materials. If a district or school believes that a student used prohibited materials or had unauthorized assistance, their procedures for investigating misadministrations should be followed. See *Test Security Violations and Misadministrations* above for additional information.

## Locking Testing Sessions and Auto-Resume Functionality

Prior to the first day of testing, students are unable to access the test until the test session is started. For this reason, MDE recommends that test sessions are not started until shortly before test administration, or test sessions should be locked in PearsonAccess Next until shortly before test administration.

In addition, remote tests will be automatically resumed in PearsonAccess Next once a student exits the test. This allows students to more easily sign back in to their test without assistance if there are technology issues during testing. However, it also requires test sessions to be locked once the testing time for that day is over. Since students have their testing tickets and their tests will be auto-resumed, they would be able to access their tests if the test session is not locked. Detailed instructions will be provided in the [MCA Online Testing User Guide](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > User Guides).

## Remote Testing Locations

Whenever possible, students should be instructed to test in quiet setting separate from other individuals. If a student is in a setting with other students (e.g., childcare, day program or other setting), multiple students may test in the same room if there is someone available to ensure students are working independently. MDE understands that this will not be possible in all situations and the main objective is that the student is completing the test independently. Refer to *Considerations for Students in School-Age Child Care for Children of Essential Workers* above for more information about school-age care programs within.

Within the student tests, a question about the location where the test is being taken has been added to the student directions. This question is used as another data point, in addition to the information in PearsonAccess Next, to confirm where students are testing.

- Where are you taking the test today?
  - At school
  - Somewhere else

Students taking the remote form should select “Somewhere else.” Test Monitors may assist students with this question as needed.

If students start testing remotely and the district or a school changes learning models (i.e., moves to hybrid or in-person instruction) or vice versa, the options for how the student should finish testing will be detailed in the [MCA/MTAS Irregularities](#) document (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > Policies and Procedures).

If a student is assigned to an in-person form and should have been assigned the remote form, the student should stop testing as soon as possible and MDE must be contacted for a potential security violation of the test content. Refer to the [MCA/MTAS Irregularities](#) for additional details.

## Test Administration

As no remote monitoring capabilities are available in TestNav, no active monitoring of student testing is required for remote administrations, if the option is available. Districts and schools should follow procedures consistent with their practices for classroom assessments during distance learning. If Test Monitors have the Test Monitor/Data Entry user role in PearsonAccess Next, they will be able to monitor student testing progress in PearsonAccess Next. Districts and schools may consider assigning this role to staff members for remote administrations, even if this typically has not been part of their role in the past.

However, districts and charter schools will need procedures for how students and Test Monitors will communicate for the following situations; districts and schools may use other online programs (i.e., online meeting or application) or other communication methods (e.g., email, student portals).

- How will students ask questions/receive assistance or let the Test Monitor know if they are having technical issues?
- How will the student report a suspected issue with test content (i.e., they do not believe there is a correct answer)? Note: Students must be instructed to only provide the item number and not reference test content in whatever manner they are sharing the information; sharing test content electronically is a violation of test security.
- How will the student alert the Test Monitor in the event of an unexpected situation (e.g., student begins feeling ill)? Similarly, what is the process for the Test Monitor to alert their students and other school staff in the event of an unexpected situation (e.g., Test Monitor begins feeling ill)?
- How will the student know the time for testing is over? (Note: There is not a way for the Test Monitor to stop the test through TestNav or PearsonAccess Next.)

## After Test Administration

Following testing, students should be instructed to throw away any test materials used during testing (e.g., scratch paper, testing tickets). These materials are not required to be returned to the school or district.

## Results and Reporting

Final decisions about how test results will be communicated is still to be determined, but the following provides some general information about results for this year.

- Results from all Minnesota Assessments are intended to be used as a “system check” at the district and school levels. Having additional options for MCA administrations allow for more available results that can be considered.
- For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, the in-person administration ensures the test is administered in a secure, standardized manner so individual student results can be used for EL programming and reclassification decisions.
- On-Demand Reports will be available for online MCAs administered remotely, in addition to in-person MCAs and paper MCA and MTAS data entry. The On-Demand Reports will indicate if the assessment was administered remotely. If On-Demand Reports are provided to students and families, districts and schools may need to consider providing additional context for this year’s administration; MDE will provide further guidance on language that may be used.
- Whether enough results will be available to summarize publicly for any assessment is still to be determined. However, regardless of the number, students testing remotely for MCA will not be summarized with students testing in person.