

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT — DEC. 20, 2023

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2023–24 College Entrance Exam FRP Reimbursement

Districts are required to offer a nationally recognized college entrance exam (ACT or SAT) to grades 11 and 12 students during a 2023–24 school day. Districts must enter into a contract directly with the test vendor. While a district may offer other assessment options to students at their discretion (for example, ASVAB or ACCUPLACER), a college entrance exam must still be offered. The requirements for offering a college entrance exam have not changed and are detailed in Chapter 2 of the [Procedures Manual](#).

MDE reimburses districts for students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FRP) (in addition to students who are determined to be unable to pay). To be eligible for reimbursement under FRP, the student must have been identified in student enrollment data as eligible for FRP at some point during the school year the exam is administered. The reimbursement criteria has not changed with the passing of the Free School Meals for Kids Program. Refer to the [Free School Meals for Kids Program](#) for more information, including an FAQ that includes information about collecting Applications for Educational Benefits.

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Student Records in ACCESS Precode File

For ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS, only one precode file is sent to DRC annually to load student data into WIDA AMS for online testing and to create student labels for paper test materials. This precode file was pulled last week to send to DRC.

New validations required by DRC required that a dual-enrolled student's information be sent for precode for only one of the schools, which means that only one school and/or district will have the student's information sent. The same hierarchy used to select a record for MCA/MTAS precode was used to determine which school was selected. Refer to the appendix of the [Test WES Precode User Guide](#) for more information. Students can be manually entered into WIDA AMS if a student was not sent in the initial precode file for your school and you will be testing the student.

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Test Security Desk Audits

The MDE Test Security and Data Integrity (TSDI) program is currently conducting desk audits of district level test security procedures, online assessment calendars, and usage of the medical excuse (ME) test code during the 2023 spring administrations. These desk audits are one way that TSDI works with districts to ensure requirements found in statute and/or the [Procedures Manual](#) are being carried out. The audits also identify opportunities where improvements could occur.

Desk audits are created by TSDI as a new Assessment Security Record in Test WES, and emails are sent to the DAC and Superintendent/Director to notify the district that TSDI is requesting an action. Documentation, feedback, and other communication related to the desk audits will be attached the record.

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New WIDA Alternate ACCESS Resources

WIDA has released several new resources on the [WIDA Alternate ACCESS Updates webpage](#). Go to the *What's New* section of the page to find links to:

- A brand-new *What is Alternate ACCESS?* flyer for families (in multiple languages).
- New Alternate ACCESS sample test items to get students familiar with test content.
- A new section, Glossary and Text Examples, at the end of the *Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors* PDF that defines terms and gives examples of student responses.
- A recording of the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for New Test Administrators Q&A Webinar.

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MDE Employment Opportunity: Kindergarten Fall Assessment Data Specialist

The Data Practices and Analytics division is currently seeking a Kindergarten Fall Assessment Data Specialist to support the Kindergarten Fall Assessment with high quality, accurate, relevant and timely data collection and quantitative analyses. If you are interested (or know someone who may be interested) in a new and challenging opportunity, consult the position description and application instructions on the State of Minnesota Careers website. The Job ID is 71954, and the posting is open until Jan. 2. Visit the [State of Minnesota Careers](#) website for more information and to apply.

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Upcoming Opportunities

January WIDA and DRC Webinars

WIDA and DRC will be hosting the following webinars in January:

- Post Testing: Returning Materials for ACCESS Paper, Jan. 23, 1–2 p.m.
- During Testing: Monitoring Completion for Test Coordinators for ACCESS Online, Jan. 25, 1–2 p.m.

More information, including the webinar link, can be found in the WIDA Secure Portal on the Webinars page. The recordings for WIDA Q&A Webinars are posted to the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) on the Webinars page within a week of the presentation.

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Odds and Ends

Due to the holidays, MDE will be closed on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

There will be no *Assessment Update* next week, Dec. 27.

There will be limited staff available to monitor the mde.testing@state.mn.us mailbox on Dec. 20–22. There may be a delayed response to your email. From Dec. 25–Jan. 1, staffing will be very limited and monitoring will be for time sensitive correspondence only. All other messages will be responded to the first week of January.

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Tech Update

Key Technology Information for ACCESS

Testing Window: Jan. 29–March 22

Service Provider and Website: Data Recognition Corporation (DRC); wida-ams.us

System Requirements: [Technology Requirements for WIDA assessments](#)

Customer Support: 855-787-9615 or WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com

Key Technology Resources: The *Technology User Guide*, *Technology Readiness Checklist for Deploying WIDA Online Assessments*, and *WIDA AMS User Guide* are available on the [WIDA AMS](#) website. (No log in required. On the login page, select the link for “WIDA AMS Library” to visit the Training Materials page. Next, select the button labeled “Show Documents” to access downloadable resources).

Training Opportunities: Live and recorded webinars are included in the *2023-2024 Q&A Webinar Schedule for Technology Coordinators*, which is included in the list of technology resources on the WIDA AMS website, referenced in the previous bullet.

Key Technology Information for MCA

Testing Windows: Reading/Mathematics MCA, March 4–May 3 and Science MCA, March 4–May 10

Service Provider and Website: Pearson; minnesota.pearsonaccessnext.com

System Requirements: [TestNav system requirements for MCA administration](#)

Customer Support: 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#); in addition to the Pearson help desk, you may also utilize Pearson’s [Technology Office Hours](#) and schedule a one-on-one virtual meeting with a technology field engineer to talk through specific setup instructions, or discuss other challenges. New for 2023-24: When working in PearsonAccess Next, users can now engage directly with a live help desk agent via the chat feature located on the PearsonAccess Next homepage.

Key Technology Resources: The [Infrastructure Readiness Checklist](#) is available on the Technology page to assist districts and schools with preparation for online MCA testing. This checklist provides steps to help create a successful testing experience for schools and students while administrating the online MCA. To limit test day technical issues, technology staff should perform the tasks outlined in the *Infrastructure Readiness Checklist* according to the recommended timelines.

Training Opportunities: The *New Technology Coordinator Training (1–2 years)* recording and PowerPoint is now available on the [Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#) under the Technology Coordinators learning path. This recorded webinar provides an overview of technology systems and resources for new technology staff in

preparation for the 2024 MCA online test administration. Pearson will host a live training on Jan. 9. Refer to the *Upcoming Technology Trainings* document posted on the [Technology](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website (under Additional Technology Resources) for more details.

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Minnesota Department of Education

education.mn.gov > District, Schools and Educators > Teaching and Learning > Statewide Testing.
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