

AN UPDATE FROM STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYTICS—OCTOBER 7, 2020

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Procedures Manual for 2020–21 and Related Documents

The *2020–21 Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments* is now available on the [Policies and Procedures page](#) of PearsonAccess Next. The *Procedures Manual* has been prepared for DACs, administrators, and others with a role in administering Minnesota Assessments. It provides the Minnesota policies and procedures for implementing statewide assessments and using the results in your district or charter school.

This version of the *Procedures Manual* provides policy and procedure information for a typical school year and test administration; it does not reflect any possible changes or considerations due to COVID-19. As needed, this information will be provided in *Assessment Updates*.

The *Procedures Manual* is filled with important information regarding the statewide assessments. There are a variety of ways it can be used:

- Keep an electronic copy on your computer and make frequent use of the Find function (Ctrl + F, Command + F).
- Print some of the lists to use as checklists.
- Refer to the *Important Dates* in the front of the manual to schedule testing in your district and make sure you do not miss an important task.

- Provide specific chapters to district and school staff (e.g., special education staff or English learner staff), as needed.

When DACs have questions or need clarification about anything in the *Procedures Manual*, they can contact MDE at mde.testing@state.mn.us.

New for 2020–21

Like other years, Chapter 1 of the *Procedures Manual* highlights the changes for the current year. One change of note is that accommodated text-to-speech and the script are no longer available as linguistic supports for English learners on the Mathematics and Science MCAs; English learners who need read-aloud support should use the standard text-to-speech that is available. This decision was made in consultation with national experts, local experts, and EL educators, and is based on the cognitive load required to process the additional information embedded in accommodated text-to-speech or the script. Additional information is available in *MCA Linguistic Supports Change: Removal of Accommodated Text-to-Speech and Script*, which is posted on the [Policies and Procedures page](#). The standard text-to-speech, available to all students, provides read-aloud support without increasing the cognitive load, especially for students at lower levels of language proficiency.

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Statewide Assessments for 2020–21

The MDE Statewide Student Assessments and Data Analytics team has received some questions from districts regarding MDE's plan for administering statewide assessments this spring.

Statewide assessments (ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS and MCA/MTAS) are required by both federal and state statute. As explained in a recent letter from Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to Chief State School Officers (including MDE) regarding statewide assessments, the U.S. Department of Education does not anticipate granting waivers to states this year, as they did in the 2019–20 school year.

Regardless of the learning mode of a district or an individual student, districts should prepare and plan to administer all required statewide assessment in person for the 2020–21 school year. Information in the *2020–21 Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools* has been updated to reflect this.

MDE continues to discuss considerations for this spring's administration and will provide information to DACs as it is known.

District Testing Calendar

Despite the uncertainties that the 2020–21 school year brings, districts were required to post a comprehensive district testing calendar on the district website by the first day of the school year. This should include the district's best estimates for specific test administration dates; schedules by grade and subject should be promptly updated if changes are identified. Districts choose how to provide the information (e.g., links, separate documents) and its format (e.g., in a chart, in calendar format). While links to the information may be provided

rather than including all the information in one place, districts need to make sure the information is publicly available and as accessible as possible.

Some highlights of what districts must include on their testing calendar includes the following:

- Information about all tests administered, which includes both statewide testing and any local assessments given
- The purpose for each assessment
- Specific dates when most students will be testing for each grade and subject at each school within the district; for grades 1–12 ACCESS, this includes specifying by domain (The actual test administration dates must be posted, not just the dates of the state-designated testing window.)
- For each assessment individually administered (i.e., MTAS, Kindergarten ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS), the range of dates the assessments will be administered should be indicated.
- Include the timeline and format for disseminating assessment results.

Detailed information is available on page 121–123 of the [2020–21 Procedures Manual](#).

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Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)

Over the years, educators have requested more detailed descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and abilities demonstrated by students who scored at various achievement levels on the MCA, beyond what the traditional [Achievement Level Descriptors \(ALDs\)](#) offer. In response to this need, MDE staff collaborated to outline more specific descriptions: Benchmark ALDs for Mathematics and Reading in grades 3–8 and high school. The purpose of the Benchmark ALDs is to:

- Promote equity for all students across the state, by clarifying the expected learning outcomes for instruction and classroom assessment aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards in reading and mathematics.
- Support teacher analysis of the depth of their curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessments.

The Benchmark ALDs will be available in two formats. The table format for all grades is now available for download on [Testing 1, 2, 3](#). Classroom teachers may find this format useful for lesson and unit planning, as it shows all the benchmarks continuously for a grade.

The Benchmark ALDs will be available in a vertical articulation format later in October. District curriculum planning and professional learning communities (PLCs) may prefer this format, as it provides the benchmarks by reporting category across all grades. Note: The specific descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and abilities are the same in both formats.

Additionally, a training module will be available in early November on [Testing 1, 2, 3](#).

Opportunity for ACCESS Review

WIDA invites Minnesota educators to participate in their upcoming ACCESS review events. Note that these events are virtual, so no travel is necessary. DACs, please share this information with applicable educators in your district.

If educators are interested in being a part of one of the events listed below, [WIDA asks that they complete this brief survey](#) by Friday, Oct. 23, to indicate their interest. Note that one of the events takes place on Veteran's Day (Nov. 11). Participants will be selected based on experience, expertise, representation of regions, and diversity. If selected, WIDA will contact participants directly with event details and next steps.

Virtual Writing ACCESS for ELLs Bias & Sensitivity Review

- **Purpose:** Review the ACCESS for ELLs writing domain to ensure that test items are free of material that might favor any subgroup of students over another on the basis of gender, race or ethnicity, home language, religion, culture, region, or socio-economic status.
- **Staff needed:** Any educators
- **Total time commitment:** Four hours over two evenings
- **Dates**
 - Training (all grades): Wednesday, Nov. 11, from 5–7 p.m.
 - Review breakout groups: Thursday, Nov. 12, from 5–7 p.m.
 - Grade 1 and Grades 2–3
 - Grades 4–5 and Grades 6–8 Tier A
 - Grades 6–8 Tier B/C and Grades 9–12

Virtual Writing ACCESS for ELLs Content Review

- **Purpose:** ACCESS for ELLs writing domain to ensure that test item content is grade-level appropriate and factually accurate.
- **Staff needed:** EL educators, including those with content expertise in English language arts, math, science, and social studies
- **Total time commitment:** Four hours over two evenings
- **Dates**
 - Training (all grades): Monday, Nov. 9, from 5–6:30 p.m.
 - Review breakout groups: Tuesday, Nov. 10, or Wednesday, Nov. 11; from 5–7 p.m.
 - Grade 1 (Nov. 10)

- Grades 4–5 (Nov. 10)
- Grades 9–12 (Nov. 10)
- Grades 2–3 (Nov. 11)
- Grades 6–8 (Nov. 11)

If you have questions, please reach out to Sonia Upton at Sonia.upton@wisc.edu.

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Deadline for Late Score Entry or Rescore Requests

The deadline for late score entry or rescore requests for spring 2020 MCA and MTAS testing is Oct. 14.

The Request for Late Score Entry Form can be found on page 239 of the [Procedures Manual](#). These requests can be made if a district did not enter a student's MTAS scores or responses from an MCA paper test book in PearsonAccess Next during the testing window. Contact Pearson at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#) with further questions.

Note: For late score entry requests received at this time, students will not receive an Individual Student Report (ISR), but districts can request that Pearson provide an On-Demand Report for the student.

A rescore may be requested when a parent/guardian or school district staff disagrees with the final score a student received (typically for an MCA paper administration). Because of the scoring processes for online MCA items (where items are reviewed multiple times before and during testing for scoring accuracy and unanticipated responses), a rescore is highly unlikely to result in a score change for an individual student; any scoring changes required for online items based on these scoring reviews are updated for all affected students. DACs must email mde.testing@state.mn.us with the student's MARSS number and the rationale for requesting a rescore, and MDE will review the request. If approved, the cost for rescoring a test is \$125 per test. A rescore does not include test or score code changes (INV, NC, EXC-A, EXC-N, etc.).

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MDE Employment Opportunity: Communications Specialist in Statewide Student Assessment (repeat)

The *Statewide Student Assessment and Data Analytics* division is currently seeking a communications specialist to work on the Program Management team. This position will be the main contact for District Assessment Coordinators (DACs), as Sequoia will soon be reducing his hours at MDE and shifting more time and attention to parenting and grad school. If you are interested (or know someone who may be interested) in a new and challenging opportunity, see the complete position description and application instructions on the State of Minnesota Careers website. The Job ID is 41601, and **the posting is open until tomorrow, Oct. 8**. Visit the [State of Minnesota Careers website](#) (<http://mn.gov/mmb/careers/>) for more information and to apply.

Upcoming Opportunities

Virtual New DAC Orientation: Registration

MDE and Pearson will provide a virtual New DAC Orientation. In the past, this orientation was provided as an in-person, full-day session. For this year, in order to provide the best training experience for participants, the New DAC Orientation will be a virtual event spread across three days for a few hours each day, and each session will cover different topics. MDE recommends that DACs attend the live sessions, if possible, as they will include interactive information sharing as well as time to discuss topics with colleagues. However, the presentation will be recorded for each day's sessions if participants are unable to attend the sessions live. **Note: DACs should sign up for all three sessions, as each session will provide different information.**

MDE will provide an overview of the various roles and responsibilities of a DAC, the Minnesota Assessments, relevant MDE and WIDA systems, available resources, and training opportunities. Pearson will provide information on PearsonAccess Next, TestNav, reporting resources, and the Training Management System. Though designed as an introduction for new DACs in their first or second year, other relatively new DACs are also welcome to attend.

To prepare for the orientation, new DACs are encouraged to review the following New DAC training modules: *Understanding Training Requirements*, *Scheduling Testing*, and *Testing Policies and Procedures*. These modules are now available in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) under the District Assessment Coordinator tab, New DAC Modules category. The *Minnesota Assessments Overview* module in this category is optional as the orientation will address much of the content in this module. Note: If you are a brand new DAC, you will use your district email to access TMS and select your district.

Note: This training will not provide information that may be specific to any changes for spring 2021 test administrations; it will provide information on what happens in a typical school year.

Contact mde.testing@state.mn.us to request a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event. MDE requires a two-week advance notice to provide accommodations and 48-hour notice to cancel the request.

Registration links are in the following table. Details for joining the webinar will be provided once participants register.

DATE AND TIME	TOPIC AND DETAILS
Session 1: Tuesday, Oct. 20 9–11 a.m.	Register for Session 1
Session 2: Wednesday, Oct. 21 9 a.m.–noon	Register for Session 2

DATE AND TIME	TOPIC AND DETAILS
Session 3: Thursday, Oct. 22 9–11:30 a.m.	Register for Session 3

WIDA Webinar

WIDA will host the *Ordering Materials in WIDA AMS* webinar on Tuesday, Oct. 13, from 1–2 p.m. [Join the *Ordering Materials in WIDA AMS* webinar on Oct. 13](#). The webinar is designed for DACs and Test Administrators and will address the following topics:

- Ordering test materials for paper and online
- Monitoring order status
- Confirming shipping address
- Communicate ordering expectations

For a list of all of WIDA’s planned webinars, the *2020-21 ACCESS and Screener Webinar Calendar* document is available on the [ACCESS Webinars page](#), which includes registration links. WIDA also posts recordings of their webinars on the ACCESS Webinars page for those who are unable to attend the live webinars.

WIDA eSummit

WIDA will host an eSummit for educators from Oct. 12–30. All Minnesota educators have access to this free virtual learning opportunity as long as they have a WIDA Secure Portal account. The content is designed to be relevant to all educators including content teachers. Since a WIDA Secure Portal account is required, DACs should work with their educators to provide or confirm accounts for those interested in this event. See [WIDA’s eSummit webpage](#) for more information.

If a DAC does not have access to the WIDA Secure Portal, contact mde.testing@state.mn.us to approve the creation of a DAC account. If DACs have questions with how to set up other accounts, contact WIDA at help@wida.us or 866-276-7735.

Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence Webinar Series

This series of webinars is for any teacher or school leader who wants to center instruction on evidence of student learning. Kendra Olsen, MDE’s Outreach Specialist in Statewide Student Assessment and Data Analytics, will facilitate each session to engage teachers and school leaders in making sense of assessment and data, so that it can be used to build trust and collaboration and develop fluency in decision making to help close gaps in instruction and learning.

Registration is required for each WebEx session, using the links in the table below. Participants will earn one continuing education unit (CEU) for each session. All sessions will be recorded and posted for future reference. Please contact Kendra at kendra.olsen@state.mn.us with any questions.

Note: The first three sessions have already taken place. Staff can join any session, and if someone did not attend the first three sessions, they are still encouraged to attend any session of interest.

SESSION #	DATE AND TIME	TOPIC AND DETAILS	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
4	Thursday, Oct. 22, 4–5 p.m.	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning – How do we know what our students really know? Register for Session 4	Participants will be able to: Integrate simple, frequent “checks for understanding” into existing instructional plans that elicit an accurate picture of the depth of what students know Improve rigor and alignment of formative assessment to the standards Define success criteria for students
5	Thursday, Nov. 12, 4–5 p.m.	Assessment <i>of</i> Learning – Summative Assessments for your Classroom Register for Session 5	Participants will be able to: Improve alignment of classroom assessments to standards Increase the rigor of questions to eliminate student misconceptions Ensure assessments measure the extent students have mastered the standards for an instructional unit

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Tech Update

WIDA Webinars

The *Technology Installations* webinar is on Thursday, Oct. 8, from 1–2:30 p.m. and will provide information about installing the various requirements on different types of devices (e.g., Chromebooks and iPads), as well as more information about updated system requirements. [Join the Technology Installations webinar on Oct. 8.](#)

For a list of all of WIDA's planned webinars, the *2020-21 ACCESS and Screener Webinar Calendar* document is available on the [ACCESS Webinars page](#), which includes registration links. WIDA also posts recordings of their webinars on the ACCESS Webinars page for those who are unable to attend the live webinars.

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Minnesota Department of Education

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

If you have any questions or want to unsubscribe, please send an email to mde.testing@state.mn.us.