

AN UPDATE FROM STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYTICS—FEBRUARY 10, 2021

| QUICK LINKS   | IMPORTANT DATES   |
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## 2021 Minnesota Assessment Administration Decisions

MDE’s priority is to protect the health and safety of students and staff throughout the assessment administration. Without further direction or instruction from the federal government, Minnesota is bound by federal and state law to administer the MCA and MTAS. Just like in previous years, the online Reading, Mathematics, and Science MCAs will be administered in person at school for spring 2021. There will NOT be an option to administer the test remotely.

Administering 2020–21 statewide assessments will require MDE and Minnesota districts and charter schools to undergo additional preparation and develop creative solutions. The additional work is not perfect or ideal. To balance the school year 2020–21 assessment data collection needs with district responsibilities, MDE is stressing administration flexibility, creative problem solving, and active district-family engagement to ensure that as many assessment experiences as possible can be safely administered.

While only in-person administrations will be available, the EXC (extenuating circumstances) test codes, as previously communicated, will be available for students/families and schools who are unable to be assessed due to health and safety concerns.

In addition, MDE is exploring flexibility with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for accountability calculations and public reporting for this year. The memo sent to ED has been posted to [MDE website](#).

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## ***ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS***

Based on MDE's recommendation to districts to wait until this week to start administering ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing, MDE anticipates an increase in testing starting this week and is including the following testing tips to support districts. The testing window for the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS is open until April 16.

### **Tips for Test Administrators**

During ACCESS testing, there may be times when a student is making slow or no progress in their domain. It is important that Test Administrators use appropriate prompts or encouragement in these situations so the student can progress through the domain as intended. Page 59 of WIDA's [Test Administrator Manual](#) (available under the Key Resources heading) provides some guidance for Test Administrators, including the following:

- Monitor student progress and be proactive in helping students if they are having difficulty progressing.
- Watch for students who pause for a long time, and encourage those students to move on.
- Watch for students who click through the test rapidly, and encourage those students to do their best on each item.

Remind your staff that ACCESS is a language proficiency test rather than an academic content test, and that spending more testing than the estimated test administration times provided by WIDA will generally not increase a student's score; WIDA's field test studies support this conclusion. Each domain is designed to be administered in a relatively short amount of time in order to measure each student's English proficiency. If a student is working productively, Test Administrators should use their professional judgment to give students the time they need to complete the domain.

### **Common Misadministrations**

Consider reminding your Test Administrators to be diligent in order to prevent these common misadministrations:

- Students logging in with the wrong test ticket. Be sure Test Administrators distribute the correct test tickets to students and that each student verifies they are logging in with the correct information. This check is part of the *Testing Administrator's Script* that is required to be read before students begin testing.
- Students in grades 4–12 being placed in the wrong session (i.e., keyboarding or handwriting) for their Writing domain. Before beginning any grades 4–12 online ACCESS Writing sessions, please verify that students are assigned to the session in WIDA AMS that aligns with their response mode.

- The grades 4–5 Writing domains are typically completed in handwriting (HW) sessions in which the writing prompts are presented online, and students respond in a writing response booklet. If students in grades 4–5 are competent at typing and wish to respond online, districts must remove the students from the handwriting (HW) session and then move them into a keyboarding test session.
- The grades 6–12 Writing domains are typically completed in keyboarding sessions. Writing prompts are presented online, and students will type their responses. Students in grades 6–12 who are inexperienced, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable with typing may handwrite their responses in a writing response booklet. This decision must be made on an individual student basis and in conjunction with the student. In these cases, districts must remove the students from the keyboarding session and then move them to a handwriting (HW) session.

## Paper Administrations and Alternate ACCESS

Paper administrations of the entire ACCESS test are considered accommodations for English learners with an IEP or 504 plan or who have been enrolled in Minnesota schools for less than a year and have an English proficiency level of 2.9 or below on the ACCESS or a 2.0 on the WIDA screener. Before ordering a paper test for a student who meets these two criteria, please consider the following:

- Other than the provisions for the writing test, it is not possible to combine administration modes. Students cannot take some domains on paper and some online.
- Students should be included in the decision-making process before selecting a paper administration.

For English learners with significant cognitive disabilities, it is recommended that the IEP team collaborates with EL staff and uses the [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Participation Criteria Decision Tree](#) to determine if the Alternate ACCESS is the most appropriate English language proficiency accountability assessment in place of the ACCESS.

Note: The decision regarding which test or accommodations to administer must be made before a student takes any assessment for the year, and in conjunction with EL staff and the IEP or 504 team. The decision cannot be changed after the student starts testing.

## Special Education Deferred (SPD)

English learners with disabilities should participate in as many domains of the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS as possible, and the Special Education Deferred (SPD) test code cannot be used to exempt a student from taking a test. If the student's disability is such that they cannot participate in any domains of the ACCESS with accommodations, the IEP team and EL staff should consider the Alternate ACCESS.

If it is impossible to administer a domain due to the student's disability (e.g., the listening domain for a deaf student), indicate the SPD code for that domain. If the EL staff and the IEP team determine that the SPD code is appropriate for more than two domains, contact MDE at [mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us) for guidance.

## Test Administrator Script

Test Administrators must use the exact wording from the *Test Administrator’s Script* when administering the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS.

## Active Monitoring

Test Administrators must actively monitor students throughout the entire test administration and ensure that all students are working independently and making progress in their tests. They cannot complete other tasks, including lesson planning, grading papers, or talking casually with other staff.

## Materials on Walls or Student Desks

Any materials used for a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) should be covered or removed during test administration. If testing is taking place in the EL classroom, all materials on walls or student desks that pertain to language instruction should be covered or removed. Although content is referenced in the test items, a student’s content knowledge is not part of the language proficiency scoring. Because of this, standards-based materials on the walls or on a student’s desk can stay as determined by the district. If there are questions about whether the materials are considered content or for language instruction, then cover or remove them.

## Test Security Reminders

DACs should remind their staff that it is not acceptable to copy, reproduce, retain, or use any portion of test items or test materials in a manner inconsistent with test security policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- Capturing and/or sharing any secure test content.
- Making a copy of a test.
- Allowing untrained staff to take any part in the testing process, including handling test tickets or having access to securely stored test materials.

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# ***WIDA AMS: Tasks and Resources***

## Manually Adding Students

When districts need to manually add any English learners directly into WIDA AMS (e.g., a newly enrolled student), ensure all student information entered matches MARSS—including the student’s date of birth and gender—to decrease discrepancies in Test WES during Posttest Editing. For more information, watch the recorded ACCESS Webinar [During Testing: Managing Students in WIDA AMS \(online\)](#) or consult the [WIDA AMS User Guide](#), starting on page 64.

Note: Recordings of previous ACCESS webinars and the *WIDA AMS User Guide* can both be accessed under the Key Resources section listed within any Training Course on the [My Account & Secure Portal page](#).

## Additional Orders

When placing additional orders, DACs must use the District-Level Additional Orders Only Site-WWW in the school drop-down. Do not choose a school name in the drop-down when ordering. Additional guidance on placing additional orders can be found in *Tips for Placing Your Additional Materials Order*, which is available in the [WIDA Secure Portal Download Library](#), under the ACCESS for ELLs heading.

While districts may need to order more Kindergarten and Alternate ACCESS test materials this year (i.e., to minimize sharing of materials), please consider how many additional materials are needed beyond those materials sent in initial orders before placing additional orders. Guidance for adapting materials for easier cleaning is included in the *2020–21 Minnesota Assessments Guidance during COVID-19* and should be followed whenever possible. MDE will follow up with districts if alerted by DRC about large quantities of material requests.

## Indicating Test Codes and Accommodations

For students that need an accommodation or test code (referred to as Do Not Score codes in WIDA AMS), districts indicate those in WIDA AMS during the testing window. Detailed information about indicating accommodations starts on page 58 of the [WIDA AMS User Guide](#), and information about indicating test/Do Not Score codes starts on page 61.

Note: Certain test codes (e.g., Extenuating Circumstances (EXC), Not Enrolled (NE), and Medical Excuse (ME)) can only be indicated during Posttest Editing in Test WES; for more information, refer to the *Test Codes* section in the [Procedures Manual](#), starting on page 197.

## Monitor Test Administration across the District

In order to monitor the status and progress of testing across schools, DACs can use the following resources as described in the [WIDA AMS User Guide](#).

- **Student Status Dashboard:** The Dashboard displays student testing status by school and includes filter options by testing status, grade, domain, and assessment. More information starts on page 76.
- **Status Reports:** WIDA AMS provides a number of status reports you can use to track testing activity for a test administration in a particular district and school. During testing, these reports are updated daily at the end of each testing day for the online assessments. For details about the contents of the status reports, see the table on page 133.
- **Online Testing Statistics Report:** View reports by student/grade or date with the Online Testing Statistics reports, which are described on page 135.

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## ***Initial Shipment of MCA and MTAS Test Materials***

The initial quantities of paper test materials for MCA and MTAS are based on information that was entered in Pretest Editing by Jan. 22. The shipment of these test materials will arrive at the district office or schools on either Feb. 23–24 or March 2–3, depending on the shipping location and dates selected in Test WES. If no changes were indicated in Test WES, the default options were ship to district and a delivery window of Feb. 23–24.

It is important that districts have staff available to receive the materials. DACs must ensure there is a plan for receiving the shipments and keeping the test materials secure upon delivery following the district's procedure.

Districts can track the status of the shipment in PearsonAccess Next 2–3 days prior to the arrival date. For more information, refer to [Viewing Test Material Reports and Tracking Information](#).

### **Receiving and Inventorying Test Materials**

MCA paper test materials and MTAS test materials will be boxed separately and have different packing lists and security checklists. Use these materials to inventory all materials received; electronic copies of each school's security checklists are also available on PearsonAccess Next. For more information, refer to the [Receiving Secure Test Materials guide](#). A copy is also included in the test materials shipment.

The security of the test materials must be maintained when inventorying and organizing, and all secure test materials must be kept in a secure, locked location until testing. The *Handling Secure Paper Test Materials* is an optional module for staff who will handle paper test materials for any statewide assessments, and it provides information about keeping materials secure and maintaining the chain of custody. It is available in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) on the Other Trainings tab, under the District-Assigned Trainings category.

Note: Due to COVID-19, UPS will enter the name of the person who receives test materials into their device instead of asking for a signature. UPS still requires a record of receipt for all secure test materials. Ensure someone is available to receive test materials when they are delivered. If your district has a policy in place that allows UPS to deliver packages without a record of receipt, your district is assuming responsibility for the receipt of materials as recorded by UPS.

### **Placing Additional Orders in PearsonAccess Next**

The window for placing additional orders in PearsonAccess Next for MCA paper test materials and MTAS test materials opens on Feb. 23. Additional test materials can be ordered until noon on the Wednesday before the last day of the testing windows. Additional orders may be placed for any of the following reasons:

- Students have newly enrolled or there are changes in accommodations/linguistic supports or test assignments after Jan. 22.
- The district decided not to receive MTAS test materials in the initial test materials shipment (a decision made during Pretest Editing).

- Students require the MTAS Presentation Pages and Response Option Cards for reading in a symbol format.

For step-by-step instructions on placing an additional order, refer to [Ordering Additional Test Materials](#). For any questions about placing additional orders, contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#).

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## ***Availability of MCA and MTAS Resources***

Now that decisions have been made for spring 2021 test administrations, the current posting timelines of resources are as follows; any updates will be communicated in future *Assessment Updates*:

- The [Testing Directions: Online](#) and [Testing Directions: Paper](#) are posted to PearsonAccess Next.
  - Translated versions (for districts providing translated directions as a linguistic support) are posted for the *Testing Directions: Paper*; translations for the *Testing Directions: Online* are expected by Feb. 26.
  - A separate *Health and Safety Guidance for Test Monitors* document is posted along with the *Testing Directions*. This resource is optional and includes relevant guidance and considerations from MDE that may be helpful to provide to Test Monitors.
- [Student tutorials](#):
  - The Tools and Item Types tutorials and teacher guides are already available.
  - The Navigation tutorial and teacher guide will be posted by Feb. 12.
  - The Science MCA-IV tutorial and teacher guide (which provide information specific to the Science MCA-IV item formats and item types that will be field tested this year) will be posted by Feb. 12.
- Pearson user guides:
  - The [On-Demand Reports User Guide](#) and [Reporting Groups User Guide](#) are posted to PearsonAccess Next.
  - The [MCA Online Testing User Guide](#), [MCA Data Entry User Guide](#), and [MTAS Data Entry User Guide](#) are scheduled to be posted by Feb. 19.
- The *Managing MCA Test Sessions* training is scheduled to be posted in early March in [TMS](#) on the Other Trainings tab, under the District-Assigned Trainings categories.
- The [MCA/MTAS Irregularities](#) document is scheduled to be posted in early March.

Note: Since the decision has been made not to have a remote administration option for MCA, the course for Test Monitors administering the remote MCA will be removed on Feb. 11 from the Training Management System (TMS). While the *Test Security Training* mentions the possibility of a remote administration, the content

of the training itself was unchanged, so no updates are needed based on the remote administration decision. In addition, with the TMS enhancement this year, the *Test Security Training* will appear as complete across all courses and trainings in TMS after completed once so the removal of the course will not affect any *Test Security Training* completions.

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## Upcoming New DAC Q&A Webinar

The February New DAC Q&A webinar will be on Tuesday, Feb. 23, from 2–3 p.m. [Register for the New DAC Q&A Webinar](#).

- [Submit your questions for the Feb. 23 New DAC Q&A](#).
- Prerequisites:
  - Chapter 9 of the [Procedures Manual](#) (Student Participation and Students in Special Circumstances and Situations)
  - *Understanding Student Precode* training in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) (on the District Assessment Coordinator tab, under the New DAC Modules category)

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## Odds and Ends

- **MDE Closed for Holiday:** The [mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us) inbox will not be monitored on Feb. 15 in observance of Presidents Day.

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## Upcoming Opportunities

### Accountability Addendum to ESSA State Plan

In response to an opportunity from the U.S. Department of Education, MDE is submitting an *Addendum to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Consolidated State Plan due to the COVID-19 National Emergency* to its [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) State Plan](#).

This addendum will allow MDE to make temporary changes to its accountability system to reflect the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on accountability data collection and usability. MDE is also ready to discuss any additional flexibility the U.S. Department of Education might offer.

The one-time addendum proposal is available for public comment Feb. 2–10. The *Cover Letter* and full *Addendum* are available for review on the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) State Plan](#) page.

## DAC Trainings from Pearson

Pearson will provide a variety of training options for DACs and any other interested staff in the district. The table below contains the training topics, high-level agendas, dates, and links to join each session on the day of the training. Refer to the [Upcoming Pearson Trainings \(2020–21\)](#) document for more information.

| DATE                              | TRAINING AND TOPIC   | MEETING LINK   |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Thursday, Feb. 18<br>9–11:30 a.m. | <i>Pearson DAC Test Administration Training</i><br>Overview of changes to PearsonAccess Next, TestNav, Training Management System, and reporting for the MCA and MTAS 2021 administrations.<br>*Registration required. | <a href="#">Select this link to register for the webinar on Feb. 18.</a><br><br>Note: Once registered, a confirmation email with the meeting password and call-in information is sent. |

Note: The *TestNav and Item Samplers: For New DACs and Educators (1–2 years)* training is an additional training that will be recorded and posted to the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) on Friday, Feb. 19.

A recording and PowerPoint of the PearsonAccess Next: New DACs (1–2 years) training from Tuesday, Feb. 9 will be posted to the Training Management System (TMS) on Friday, Feb. 19.

## Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence: Webinar Series

MDE did a series of webinars about evidence-led teaching and learning in the fall, and we have now scheduled webinars on additional topics based on feedback received from educators. These webinars are for any teacher or school leader who wants to center instruction on evidence of student learning or would like to sharpen their data and assessment skills.

Registration is required for each WebEx session using the links below. Participants will earn one continuing education unit (CEU) for each session. All sessions will be recorded and posted on [Testing 1, 2, 3](#) for future reference.

- **Session 7:** [How can results from Minnesota Assessments be accessed and used by teachers?](#)  
Thursday, Feb. 25, 4–5 p.m.
- Participants will gain:
  - An overview of the types of assessment data publicly available and how to access it
  - How to interpret and filter assessment data by student group or grade level using the MN Report Card
  - A comparison of the various public reports that MDE generates of assessment results

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# Tech Update

## Pearson Technology Coordinator Training

Pearson will provide a training session to support technology staff in preparation for the 2021 MCA administration. This live webinar will provide an overview of technology systems and resources and discuss new information for the 2021 administration. Throughout the training, technology coordinators can ask questions of the Pearson Field Engineering team.

| DATE                         | TRAINING AND TOPIC   | MEETING LINK   |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Tuesday, Feb. 16<br>1–2 p.m. | This training provides an overview of technology systems and resources for technology staff in preparation for the 2021 MCA online test administration.<br><br>*No registration or password is required. | <a href="#">Select this link to join the webinar on Feb. 16.</a><br><br>Call-in phone number:<br>866-789-9850<br><br>Conference code:<br>629 951 02# |

The *New Technology Coordinator Training (1–2 years)* training and PowerPoint are available to view on the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#). This training provides a high level overview of technology systems and resources tailored towards new technology coordinators. Note: If you do not have a TMS account, enter your email address and register an account. No password is required.

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[education.mn.gov](http://education.mn.gov) > Districts, Schools and Educators > Teaching and Learning > Statewide Testing

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