DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Assessment Update

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT—FEBRUARY 16, 2022

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
• After Hours Testing • Guidance for Test Codes • MDE Monitoring Test Administrations • Initial Shipment of MCA and MTAS Test Materials • PearsonAccess Next Setup and Preparation • New Educator Resources for Alternate MCA • Training Management System (TMS) Phone Audio • Odds and Ends • Upcoming Opportunities	*Jan. 21–March 18:* ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS additional test materials ordering window *Jan. 31–March 25:* ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing window *Feb. 22–24 or March 1–3:* Receive MCA paper and MTAS test materials

After Hours Testing

To provide districts and schools the most flexibility for scheduling, District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) may request testing times outside of regular school hours or on weekends. As noted in Chapter 8 of the *Procedures Manual*, the DAC must email mde.testing@state.mn.us at least two business days in advance and provide the following information:

- The district and school name

- Grade and subject/domain

- Name of test session(s)

- Planned dates and times to begin and end testing

- Rationale for after-hours testing or data entry need

Note: Service provider help desks have set customer service hours and may not be available during after hours testing sessions.

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Guidance for Test Codes

The following article provides guidance on test codes for all statewide assessments: ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS.

EXC Test Codes

In spring 2020 and 2021, the Extenuating Circumstances test codes (EXC-N, not attempted, and EXC-A, attempted) were available to document that tests could not be attempted or completed due to COVID-19. In addition, data from statewide assessments was not used for accountability purposes based on waivers granted from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). This meant there were no accountability implications for any test codes indicated during spring 2020 and 2021.

These EXC test codes **are not planned to be available** for spring 2022. To date, the information MDE has received from ED indicates that statewide assessments are required to be administered, and accountability is to be calculated as required in federal legislation.

Existing Test Codes

All of the existing test codes should be applied consistent with the definitions in Chapter 9 of the *Procedures Manual*. However, the following guidance may be used when considering situations that may not be addressed in the manual, such as student absences due to quarantines and students who are enrolled in online programs.

- For students attending school in person:

    o If a student is absent due to required quarantine at the time of testing and unable to make up the test before the end of a testing window, the ABS (absent) test code should be indicated.

    o If a student has started testing, is absent due to required quarantine, and unable to complete the test before the end of a testing window, no test code is indicated and the portion completed is scored.

    o Note: The same guidance applies if a classroom, school, or district is required to temporarily move to online learning during the testing windows and unable to start or complete testing.

- For students attending an online program:

    o In terms of refusals, the applicable refusal test code should only be indicated if it is the assessment itself that is being refused.

        ▪ For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, the DEC (declined) test code is used for both parent/guardian and student refusals.

        ▪ For MCA and MTAS, the test codes are REF-P (refusal by parent/guardian) and REF-S (refusal by student).

- If the district has received a refusal that they determine is more related to concerns for health and safety or other logistics (e.g., distance from testing site), the ABS (absent) test code may be more appropriate. Similarly, if the district arranges logistics for testing and a student does not show up, the ABS test code may be most appropriate if there is no communication about the test itself.

Districts will make determinations on which test codes to apply, as needed for their situations. Note that there is not a difference in terms of how refusal or absent test codes are handled for accountability purposes, and differentiating between the two is more for district data collection and analysis. For more information on accountability calculations, refer to Accountability Indicators page of the MDE website or contact mde.essa@state.mn.us.

MDE Monitoring Test Administrations

MDE visits schools to monitor test administrations as part of an overall strategy to improve the administration of Minnesota's statewide assessments and to verify that test security requirements are followed. MDE conducts monitoring visits for both the ACCESS and MCA test administrations. It is important that districts keep their posted testing calendars updated, which includes a requirement to specify the days each grade will be taking the various domains/subjects.

Starting on page 293 of the *Procedures Manual*, the *Minnesota Statewide Assessments Monitoring List* outlines the areas the monitors will observe and questions they will ask assessment staff during ACCESS and MCA site visits.

MTAS Field Audits

Each year, MDE employs Field Auditors to observe MTAS administrations in selected schools. The primary purpose of MTAS field audits is to gather evidence to evaluate the validity and reliability of the assessment. Since Test Administrators score the assessment, it is critical they are properly trained in MTAS administration and scoring. Likewise, it is critical for test score integrity that all Test Administrators across the state are applying this training consistently.

Unlike monitoring visits for MCA or ACCESS, which are unannounced, the Field Auditors work with the District Assessment Coordinator and the school to schedule the visit. MDE recently sent an email to districts to communicate the schools that have been selected. These notifications were sent to DACs, Superintendents, and Special Education Directors.

Information about how MTAS field audits are scheduled is on page 117 of the *Procedures Manual*, and the *MTAS Field Audit Checklist*, which outlines the areas the Field Auditors will observe and questions they will ask, starts on page 295.

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. 21. Delivery dates for MCA and MTAS test materials have been updated to a three-day range (from a two-day range) to allow more time for shipping. The shipment of these test materials will arrive at the district office or schools on either Feb. 22–24 or March 1–3, 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. 22–24.

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 training 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.

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. 22. Additional test materials can be ordered until noon on the Tuesday before the last day of the testing windows. The deadline was updated (previously the last Wednesday) to ensure there is enough time for districts to receive the requested materials. Additional orders may be placed for any of the following reasons:

- Students have newly enrolled or there were changes in accommodations/linguistic supports or test assignments after Jan. 21.

- 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.

PearsonAccess Next Setup and Preparation

Starting Feb. 21, district will be to set up test sessions, assign MTAS Score Entry users, and create reporting groups in PearsonAccess Next. Various user guides, including the *MCA Online Testing User Guide*, *MCA Data Entry User Guide*, and *MTAS Data Entry User Guide*, are available on the User Guides page of the PearsonAccess Next website.

Setting up MCA Test Sessions

Step-by-step instructions for setting up test sessions are available in the *MCA Online Testing User Guide*. Test sessions cannot be started prior to the first day of the testing window, and it is recommended that test sessions are not started until the actual day of test administration. The *MCA Data Entry User Guide* and *MTAS Data Entry User Guide* provide information and instructions for test preparation and guidance for data entry for students taking a paper MCA or MTAS.

Assign MTAS Score Entry users

District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) and Assessment Administrators (AAs) must assign students with MTAS test assignments to staff with the MTAS Score Entry user role in PearsonAccess Next before those users can enter MTAS data in PearsonAccess Next. For step-by-step instructions on assigning MTAS Score Entry users in PearsonAccess Next, refer to MTAS Data Entry User Guide.

Additional Training

The following trainings are available in the Training Management System (TMS) on the Other Trainings tab in the District-Assigned Trainings category.

- *Managing MCA Test Sessions in PearsonAccess Next* is an optional training for staff who manage MCA test sessions in PearsonAccess Next; it provides information about using the system before and during testing.

- *Entering MTAS Data in PearsonAccess Next* is an optional training for staff who enter the Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI) data and MTAS scores in PearsonAccess Next.

Reporting Groups

DACs and AAs can create reporting groups in PearsonAccess Next for staff to access student results, including On-Demand Reports and Historical Student Data. There are three options for creating reporting groups—manually, importing a file, or creating a reporting group from a test session. For more information, refer to the *Reporting Groups User Guide* or the *Reporting Groups in PearsonAccess Next* short video training in TMS on the

Data and Reporting tab in the Pearson Data and Reporting Trainings category. Note: This training references the previous test administration but contains accurate information for spring 2022 testing.

New Educator Resources for Alternate MCA

Please share the following information with your educators.

Minnesota's alternate assessment for the MCA, the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), is the standards-based accountability assessment designed for, and limited to, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Students who receive special education services and meet the eligibility criteria may take the MTAS.

The MTAS will be transitioning over to a redesigned alternate assessment in each subject area as new academic standards are implemented. The Alternate MCA will replace the MTAS. The timeline for the first administration of the Science Alternate MCA is school year 2024–25, Reading Alternate MCA is school year 2025–26, and Mathematics Alternate MCA is still to be determined based on the standards revision schedule.

The Testing 1, 2, 3 Alternate Assessment webpage now has several resources to support educators in understanding the changes with the transition from the MTAS to the Alternate MCA, including a recorded presentation describing some of the changes to the format of the assessment and a sample task.

Training Management System (TMS) Phone Audio

Some trainings on the Training Management System (TMS) do not immediately support audio when viewing on a phone. If viewing a training on a phone and unable to hear audio, either plug-in headphones (all devices) or toggle silent mode off (iPhones) to hear the training audio. If you have any questions, please contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or submit a Pearson help desk request.

Odds and Ends

- MDE will be closed next Monday, Feb. 21, in observance of Presidents Day.

Upcoming Opportunities

February New DAC Q&A: Registration

The February MDE Q&A webinar for New DACs will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 22, from 2–3 pm. Register for the February New DAC Q&A Webinar. Details for joining the webinar will be provided once participants register. Experienced DACs are also welcome to attend.

The prerequisites for this webinar are as follows:

- *Understanding Student Precode* training in the Training Management System (TMS) (on the District Assessment Coordinator tab, under the New DAC Training category)

- Excerpts from Chapter 11 of the *Procedures Manual* related to preliminary results:

  o *Preliminary Student-Level Results* (pages 220–221)

  o *Embargoed Final Assessment Results* (pages 222–224)

MDE uses questions from new DACs to prepare for the webinar. After completing the prerequisites, submit questions for the New DAC Q&A webinar.

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Minnesota Department of Education

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

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