

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

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## Update on Statewide Assessments

The following information was communicated to DACs and school leaders on Friday, March 5.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) [announced flexibilities regarding assessment, accountability and reporting requirements](#) for the 2020–21 school year on Feb. 22. The federal government did not offer a waiver for statewide assessments like they did last year and therefore MDE is bound by federal and state law to administer the MCA and MTAS exams. The accountability flexibilities are still being reviewed. After discussions with educators, school leaders, parents, advocates and other Minnesotans, MDE is offering the following flexibilities:

- **Longer testing windows.** The MCA and MTAS testing windows will be extended through Friday, May 21. This extension applies to all subjects of MTAS and MCA (online and data entry), and allows for more flexibility in scheduling testing, while balancing the need to receive results prior to the start of the next school year. The testing window for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS has already been extended to April 16.

- **More flexibility in the requirement for administering make-up tests.** If a student is unable to participate or finish testing when originally scheduled, districts and schools will determine the level of effort they will make to reschedule a make-up time. As appropriate for the situation, this may be zero attempts for make-up testing, one attempt, or multiple attempts.

Last year, when the statewide assessments were cancelled entirely, MDE directed schools to consider other sources of data in evaluating student learning goals for Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE) and Q-Comp. Although we will be administering statewide assessments this year, MDE encourages local teams to consider alternative ways to evaluate teachers on these goals as well. Additional guidance will be provided on this in the coming weeks.

Flexibility for administration is already described in the [2020–21 Minnesota Assessments Guidance during COVID-19](#) in regards to scheduling (e.g., larger groups are allowed and multiple subjects/domains/grades may be tested together if health and safety can be maintained; students who are not testing are allowed to be present), and staffing (e.g., larger ratio of students to Test Monitors/Test Administrators allowed).

The letter by ED also offered flexibility for accountability. MDE is awaiting further details from ED on these flexibilities and will provide more information as it becomes available.

MDE has created a [questions and answers document](#) for districts and schools to use when talking with their colleagues and communities about this year’s assessments: a [sample letter](#) for communicating with families, as well as some one-pagers for families, are available in [English](#), [Hmong](#), [Karen](#), [Spanish](#) and [Somali](#).

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## ***Updated Minnesota Assessments Guidance***

An updated version of the *2020–21 Minnesota Assessments Guidance during COVID-19* is available on the [Assessment Update](#) page on PearsonAccess Next. This version reflects the updated information communicated to DACs and school leaders in the *Update on Statewide Assessments* article above and the DAC Test Administration Training: Part 2 (see [Odds and Ends](#) below for information on the recording of this training). The date for updated information is used to highlight updates from the previous version.

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## ***Updated Important Dates***

With the extension of the ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS and MCA/MTAS testing windows, the dates to order additional test materials and the deadline to return materials have been updated; a tentative timeframe for Posttest Editing is also included. Other dates, including for reporting, are still to be determined.

## English Proficiency Accountability Assessments

EVENT	DATES FOR ACCESS AND ALTERNATE ACCESS
Complete administration tasks in WIDA AMS	Jan. 4–April 16
Order additional paper test materials in WIDA AMS	Jan. 15–April 9
TESTING WINDOW (including make-ups)	Jan. 25–April 16
Deadline to ship paper test materials to DRC	April 23
Posttest Editing in Test WES	June 7–25 (tentative)

## Standards-Based Accountability Assessments

EVENT	DATES FOR MCA AND MTAS
Pretest Editing in Test WES	Nov. 29–May 20
Order additional MCA paper and MTAS test materials in PearsonAccess Next	Feb. 23–May 19 (noon)
Enter LCI data in PearsonAccess Next	March 1–May 21
TESTING WINDOW (including make-ups) for all tests and subjects	March 8–May 21
Deadline to confirm in Test WES that all staff have completed required trainings and all students taking MTAS are eligible.	May 21
Deadline to ship secure MCA paper and MTAS test materials to Pearson	May 24
Posttest Editing in Test WES	June 7–25 (tentative)

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## *Scheduling Considerations for MCA*

MDE does not typically recommend that students take multiple tests (e.g., Reading and Mathematics MCA) in the same day, but 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 into school with what is best for student test taking.

Districts may decide to administer different grades and/or subjects in the same testing room, but Test Monitors should be aware of any differences in administration or directions (e.g., use of headphones, scripted instructions about calculators) that may need to be clarified for students. While more uncommon, districts may administer paper and online tests in the same room if they choose, but districts must consider what is in the best interest of students and any accommodations or supports specified in the IEP or 504 plan. If administered together, Test Monitors must understand that both versions of the *Testing Directions* need to be used, and they must be familiar with the differences in administration.

More information is available in Chapter 7 of the [Procedures Manual](#).

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## ***On-Demand Reports in PearsonAccess Next***

On-demand reports provide preliminary student scores for MCA and MTAS within 60 minutes after testing or data entry is completed. Results in on-demand reports can be generated as student detail reports (as PDFs) for individual students or downloaded in a list report (as a PDF or Excel spreadsheet). See the [On-Demand Reports and Export User Guide](#) for more detailed information.

Note: Districts determine whether to share on-demand reports with teachers, students, and/or families for instructional purposes.

- In order for users with the Test Monitor/Data Entry or MTAS Score Entry user roles to access On-Demand Reports in PearsonAccess Next, reporting groups must be set up for them. There are three options for creating reporting groups—manually, importing/exporting a file, or **New for 2020–21**: directly from a test session. For more information, refer to the [Reporting Groups User Guide](#).
- Preliminary student assessment results should not be discussed in public forums (e.g., on social media), reflected in public meeting minutes (e.g., school board meetings), or shared with the general public or media until the final assessment results have been released publicly. Chapter 11 of the [Procedures Manual](#) includes additional information about the use of these results in the *Preliminary Student-Level Results* section (pages 212–213) and *Abiding by the Embargo* section (pages 214–215).

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## ***Who to Contact (DRC, WIDA, Pearson, MDE)***

### **DRC**

Contact DRC Customer Service at [WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com](mailto:WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com) or 855-787-9615 for the following questions:

- Additional paper test materials orders
- Session management in WIDA AMS
- Student management in WIDA AMS

- Technology issues

## WIDA

Contact WIDA Client Services Center at [help@wida.us](mailto:help@wida.us) or 866-276-7735 for the following questions:

- Preparing students for ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS testing
- Staff training/quizzes
- Test administration manuals

## Pearson

Contact Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or submit a [Pearson help desk request](#):

- Additional orders for MCA/MTAS materials
- Completing tasks in PearsonAccess Next (e.g., creating test sessions or entering MTAS Scores)
- PearsonAccess Next user accounts
- PearsonAccess Next user role responsibilities
- Technology requirements/issues for TestNav\*

\*If you have any questions about technology, you can request assistance from the Level 2 technical team when contacting Pearson. If you call Pearson, the person answering the call will still collect some initial details before transferring the call. You may also utilize Pearson's [Technology Office Hours](#) and schedule a one-on-one virtual meeting with one of Pearson's Field Service Engineers. Note: If students are actively testing and you experience a technical issue, be sure to call the help desk and ask for Level 2 technical support rather than submitting a help desk request.

## MDE

Contact MDE at [mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us) for the following questions:

- Accommodations, linguistic supports, and general supports
- Decisions for alternate assessments
- Minnesota Assessments guidance during COVID-19
- Test codes (e.g., EXC-N, ABS)
- Training requirements
- Minnesota test administration policies and procedures
- Misadministrations
- Scheduling

- Test WES
- Creation of a DAC account for WIDA and WIDA AMS
- Ordering additional district/school labels (for ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS)
- Allowing students to complete a domain across multiple days (for ACCESS)
- Domain regeneration requests for online ACCESS
- Precode Student Eligibility (for MCA/MTAS)
- High School Science MCA/MTAS participation

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## ***Testing Reminders***

### **Active Monitoring**

Test Administrators and Test Monitors must actively monitor students throughout the entire test administration by circulating around the room to carefully observe student behavior 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. If space is limited and students can potentially see other screens, the active monitoring must be heightened.

### **General Reminders**

- For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, remove any materials used for a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) during administration. For MCA and MTAS, remove or cover any instructional posters or graphics, including strategies, techniques, or methods, in the testing room or on student desks.
- Ensure student test tickets, scratch paper, and any other materials provided to students (e.g., hard-copy mathematics formula sheets, paper translated word lists, paper mathematics tables for MCA), are collected from students and accounted for at the end of each test session.
- Do not use actual student tests as part of a practice session with Test Administrators or Test Monitors or to verify technology or check any technical issues.

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## ***Additional Orders in PearsonAccess Next Reminder***

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

Note: When ordering a script for Mathematics MCA (MS), the MS accommodation code must be indicated in Test WES, but the 12-point font test book and the script will not be automatically sent. Instead, they need to be ordered separately in PearsonAccess Next.

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## ***Incompatible Codes in Test WES Reminder***

Some accommodations and linguistic supports can be used together, but others cannot. In Precode Search and Edit, you cannot save a record if conflicts exist. Similarly, these conflicts will cause an error when uploading a file in Precode Download/Upload.

As accommodation and linguistic supports are reviewed in preparation for testing, refer to the appendix of the [2020-21 Test WES Pretest Editing User Guide](#) for detailed information on code conflicts and which code to indicate.

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## ***Recording of DAC Test Administration Training***

The recording of the second DAC Test Administration Training held on March 9 will be available in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) on March 12. It will be posted on the DAC tab under MDE Recorded Trainings.

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## ***Upcoming Opportunities***

### **New DAC Q&A Webinar Registration**

The New DAC March Q&A webinar will be held on March 16, from 2–3 p.m. [Register for the New DAC Q&A Webinar](#). Details for joining the webinar will be provided once participants register.

For the March webinar, there are no prerequisite readings or trainings to review. MDE will answer any questions related to test administration. Experienced DACs are also welcome to attend. [Submit your questions for the March webinar](#).

### **Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence Session 8 – How Should Individual MCA Scores be Interpreted and Used to Make Decisions?**

This webinar is a continuation of the series for teachers and school leaders who would like to sharpen their data and assessment skills. All previous sessions have been recorded and posted on [Testing 1, 2, 3](#).

Registration is required using the WebEx link in the description below. Participants can earn one continuing education unit (CEU) for each session by sending a request to [testing123@state.mn.us](mailto:testing123@state.mn.us) after attending the session.

- **Session 8:** [How should individual MCA scores be interpreted and used to make decisions?](#)
- March 25, 4–5 p.m.
- Participants will gain:
  - An overview of the MCA and what it is designed to measure
  - An understanding of individual student score interpretations
  - Guidance for using results to look at student growth

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STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYTICS

Minnesota Department of Education

[education.mn.gov](http://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](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us).