

AN UPDATE FROM STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYTICS—MARCH 24, 2021

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Person Testing Required • Online MCA Location Question • Minnesota's Accountability Waiver: Public Comment Now Open • After Hours Testing • April Q&A Webinar for New DACs: Save the Date • TMS Update: Completion of Cross-Posted Trainings • Transportation and Meals Reminders • Students Moving Into or Out of the District Reminder • Headphones Reminder • High School Science MCA and MTAS Reminder • Upcoming Opportunities 	<p>April 9: Additional orders window closes for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS</p> <p>April 16: Testing window closes for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS</p> <p>April 23: Deadline to ship ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS materials back to DRC.</p> <p>March 8–May 21: MCA and MTAS testing window</p>

In-Person Testing Required

As in previous years, all Minnesota Assessments (ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS) must be administered at school (in-person) and with a Test Monitor present. There is NOT an option for students to take any of these tests remotely.

While a remote option for MCA was previously evaluated, it was determined that it was not feasible as it could not be a secure administration (i.e., could not be monitored remotely).

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Online MCA Location Question

Though there is no remote administration, a question about the location where the test is being taken still appears in students online MCA tests. The question asks if the student is taking the test today “at school” or “somewhere else.”

In the [Testing Directions: Online](#) there is a script box that the Test Monitors must read aloud, where students are directed to **select “at school.”** Students who take their online MCA in a different physical location than where they typically receive instruction (i.e., distance learners or students in an online school) may need additional clarification by the Test Monitor during that part of the directions.

Pearson will be sending a weekly report to MDE indicating test sessions where the student response was “somewhere else” throughout the test window. If a high number of students respond with “somewhere else,” MDE may contact the DAC to confirm where students tested to ensure test security has been maintained (i.e., students tested in person with a Test Monitor).

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Minnesota's Accountability Waiver: Public Comment Now Open

School leaders received the following communication on Monday, March 22:

In response to an opportunity from the U.S. Department of Education, Minnesota is submitting a waiver for the accountability sections of its ESSA state plan. Under this waiver, Minnesota will still collect and report data on student learning. However, due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection and usability, data collected during the 2020–21 school year will not be used for accountability purposes.

The draft of Minnesota’s waiver is available for public comment Monday, March 22, 2021 through Tuesday, March 30, 2021. [Read the waiver](#). Comments can be submitted via email to mde.essa@state.mn.us.

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After Hours Testing

Especially this spring, districts and schools may need to have students test outside of regular school hours or on weekends.

To provide districts and schools the most flexibility for scheduling, DACs may request testing times outside of regular hours (i.e., 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. for online testing, or 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for data entry). 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 specific 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.

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April Q&A Webinar for New DACs: Save the Date

The April Q&A webinar will be held on Tuesday, April 13, from 2–3 p.m. The April New DAC Q&A has one prerequisite as DACs prepare for the end of the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing window: read Chapter 10 of the [Procedures Manual](#). In addition, MDE will answer any questions related to test administration. Registration and a link to submit questions will be available in next week's *Assessment Update*.

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TMS Update: Completion of Cross-Posted Trainings

The [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) was updated earlier this year so that trainings posted to multiple tabs, categories, and courses (e.g., Test Security Training) now show as complete across all locations when completed once in TMS.

- For individual users, all instances of the completed training(s) are reflected on the user's dashboard and transcript. A user who completed all three trainings in the MCA Test Monitor course (e.g. Test Security, Active Monitoring, and Administering the MCA) will also get credit for completing others courses (e.g., ACCESS for ELLs Test Administrator – Grades 1–12) since courses overlap. The user's transcript will reflect the completion of all applicable trainings/courses. The Test Security Training will also appear separately (i.e., not connected to a course) on the user's transcript, because this training is also posted separately in TMS.
- For district and school assessment coordinators with access to reports through the Admin feature, all instances of the completed cross-posted training(s) are shown in the Staff Records online report and Staff Records tab of the downloadable excel report.

Please contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#) if you have questions.

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Transportation and Meals Reminders

Transportation

Districts and charter schools need to make all reasonable efforts to explore transportation options for families who choose distance learning. Transportation arrangements and planned testing days must be communicated to families.

A portion of the general education revenue that all public school students are generating is intended to be available for student transportation. The revenue generated is not dependent on the learning model. Additional funding for transportation costs specifically related to administering statewide assessments is not currently being proposed.

If a district or school has made all reasonable efforts to plan for and provide transportation and is unable, then an EXC code may apply.

Meals

Depending on the amount of time staff and students will be in the building on testing days, schools may need to provide meals on site consistent with MDH guidelines. Districts should communicate to families that students will be receiving meals at school on statewide assessments days.

School nutrition programs are able to serve and claim meals for students who are attending school for statewide assessments. MDE recognizes there may be overlap in the meals a student receives and encourages schools to do their best to not duplicate meals.

More details about preparing for in-person administration are available in the [2020–21 Minnesota Assessments Guidance during COVID-19](#).

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Students Moving Into or Out of the District Reminder

Districts should attempt to test all students who are enrolled during the testing windows. If a student moves from another state and was administered the other state's standards-based and/or English language proficiency accountability assessments, the student must be tested again in Minnesota if they are enrolled during the applicable accountability window. If a student moves into a district after the accountability window but during a testing window and has not taken a test, the district should test the student if possible.

Refer to page 191 of the [Procedures Manual](#) for additional information about students moving during the testing windows.

MCA/MTAS

If a student moves into your district from a different district and does not appear in PearsonAccess Next for you to add to a test session, view the *Student Tests Not Associated with the Student Organization* operational report in PearsonAccess Next (under Reports > Operational Reports in the Online Testing category). This report will include student information (i.e., MARSS/SSID, Name, Date of Birth), the student's current organization, the organization associated with the student test, and the test status (Testing or Attempt). Based on the test status, action may be needed by the DAC.

- **Attempt:** The student has submitted their test or it has been marked complete (with or without a test code) by the previous district. No action required from the DAC unless the student will finish the test. Refer to the [MCA/MTAS Irregularities](#) document for more information.
- **Testing:** The student has started the test but it has not been submitted or marked complete. The DAC must contact Pearson to move the test to your district.

More information about this operational report is available in the applicable [user guides](#) (i.e., *MCA Online Testing*, *MCA Data Entry*, *MTAS Data Entry*).

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Headphones Reminder

Headphones or earbuds may be supplied by the school, or students may use their own. They are required for the online reading, listening, and writing domains of ACCESS, and the online Mathematics and Science MCAs. Headphones or earbuds with built-in microphones are required for the online speaking domains of ACCESS, though districts and charter schools may consider having students use the built-in microphone on their testing device depending on the district's health and safety protocols. Headphones or earbuds are recommended for the online Reading MCA so that students can listen to the Student Directions at the beginning of the test.

Bluetooth headphones and earbuds are not allowed as they have the ability to connect to and receive information from a device other than the testing device, which cannot be verified by the Test Administrator or Test Monitor during testing.

More information is available on page 145 of the [Procedures Manual](#) and in the [2020–21 Minnesota Assessments Guidance during COVID-19](#).

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High School Science MCA and MTAS Reminder

High School Science MCA is administered to students in the school year when they complete a life science/biology class that covers grades 9–12 Minnesota Academic Standards in Life Science (Strand 4) and the Nature of Science and Engineering (Strand 1). For MTAS, the High School Science MTAS is administered in the year students receive this life science instruction.

Students who were unable to take the High School Science MCA or MTAS in 2019–20 due to COVID-19 will not take the test in 2020–21 (or any other year), unless they are retaking their life science/biology coursework.

If a district wishes to indicate the EXC-N test code for these students who would have tested in 2019–20, these students can be added to a MCA test session along with any other students this year who will need to have the EXC-N code indicated during Posttest Editing. Similarly, action will need to be taken in PearsonAccess Next during testing for MTAS as well.

Instructions about adding these students to test sessions and submitting MTAS records are available in the *MCA Online Testing User Guide* and *MTAS Data Entry User Guide*, which are posted on the [User Guides page](#) of PearsonAccess Next.

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Upcoming Opportunities

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 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 > Districts, Schools and Educators > Teaching and Learning > Statewide Testing

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