mn DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION   **Assessment Update**

AN UPDATE FROM STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYTICS—APRIL 7, 2021

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
- Test Security Training Reminder - ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS Reminders - MCA/MTAS Reminders - Entering Reimbursement Requests in GRR - Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence: Session 8 Rescheduled - Science and English Language Arts Standards Implementation Delay - Invitation to Minnesota Science Teachers - New Training Modules on Testing 1, 2, 3 - Odds and Ends - Upcoming Opportunities	*April 9:* Additional orders window closes for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS *April 16:* Testing window closes for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS *April 23:* Deadline to ship ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS materials back to DRC. *May 21:* Testing window closes for MCA and MTAS testing window

Test Security Training Reminder

The DAC is responsible for ensuring all applicable staff complete the *Test Security Training*, receive guidance for district-specific policies and procedures, and complete test-specific trainings prior to testing. Though training requirements vary by role and test, the *Test Security Training* is required for all individuals who are associated with any aspect of test administration or test content.

The *Procedures Manual* provides additional information about each of the options for how the *Test Security Training* may be completed (i.e., viewing the training online, viewing the training as a group, or completing the checklist), as well as the required documentation for each. See pages 153–155 for detailed information. MDE recommends that DACs review this information when determining the training plan for their district.

ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS Reminders

Additional Orders Window Deadline

Districts can order paper test materials for ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS in WIDA AMS until **this Friday, April 9**. Please contact DRC at 855-787-8615 or WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com with any questions about ordering additional materials. Orders should be completed at the district level and not for individual school sites.

Required Demographic Information

If you did not receive a preprinted label for a student, a District/School label must be used with the student's demographic information indicated on the test booklet. Both the front and back of the test booklet contain many student demographic information fields, but not all data fields are required. Refer to page 165 of the *Procedures Manual* for more details.

MCA/MTAS Reminders

Student Resources

When thinking about preparing students, districts should consider the following this year in regards to student resources:

- Due to limited testing last year, additional students may need to review resources in order to prepare for testing this year (e.g., both grades 3 and 4 students for MCA).

- The way student resources are typically provided may need to be adjusted depending on a student's or school's learning model (e.g., students may complete online resources independently or teachers may demonstrate functionality for students).

- If students are using different devices for testing than in the past, ensure students are familiar with how to take a test on the device they will be using.

Each district determines which resources, if any, will be used and how they will be used.

- The student tutorial is used to familiarize students and educators with the general functionality of the online test and includes several components—Navigation, Tools, and Item Types—each accompanied by a teacher guide. In addition, for students taking the Science MCA, the Science MCA-IV tutorial and teacher guide are available on the same page and provide information specific to the Science MCA-IV item formats and item types that will be field tested this year.

- The item samplers are used to familiarize students and educators with how the content is presented in the test. Item samplers are available in every grade and subject for the MCA and MTAS, as well as for applicable accommodations and linguistic supports.

MCA Testing Directions

Test Monitors are required to use testing directions to ensure test administrations are standardized across the state as much as possible. There are two versions of the *MCA Testing Directions* depending on how the test is being administered: *Testing Directions: Online* and *Testing Directions: Paper*. It is imperative that Test Monitors are familiar with the relevant testing directions and that they use them during testing.

Two sections of the *Testing Directions* must be provided to Test Monitors and used for every test administration: *Script to Read to Students* and *Answering Questions and Providing Assistance*. These sections must be supplied in their entirety and cannot be modified (i.e., portions of the script removed). Districts and schools may work with Test Monitors prior to testing to determine what will be said for the fields that districts fill in (e.g., how testing is scheduled), and which other sections they will provide.

Districts and schools may also determine if they will allow Test Monitors to access the directions electronically during test sessions rather than using a printed copy. If accessed electronically, Test Monitors must follow MDE and district polices regarding device usage (e.g., not checking email or using the device for other work).

The scripted portion of the *Testing Directions* is available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish on the MCA Testing Directions page. A *Health and Safety Guidance for Test Monitors* resource is also posted.

Note: Hard copies of the *Testing Directions: Online* are not available this year and cannot be ordered during the additional orders window.

High School Science MCA and MTAS

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. Refer to page 28 of the *Procedures Manual* for more information.

For students who have not taken a high school science assessment, the Send Indicator in Pretest Editing for grades 9–12 students defaults to "Y" (Yes). (This includes students who would have participated in high school Science MCA and MTAS last spring and were not coded as EXC-N.)

For students who have completed their life science/biology class this school year but will not be participating because of extenuating circumstances related COVID-19, the following steps must be taken during testing in order to indicate the EXC-N test code during Posttest Editing:

- Students who would have taken the High School Science MCA must be added to a test session in PearsonAccess Next and marked complete.

- Students who would have taken the High School Science MTAS must have a blank assessment submitted in PearsonAccess Next.

Instructions for 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*, respectively. Both resources are posted on the User Guides page of PearsonAccess Next.

Note: Students who were unable to take the high school Science MCA or MTAS in 2019–20 due to COVID-19 will not take the assessment in 2020–21 (or any other year), unless they are retaking their life science/biology coursework. If districts wish to indicate the EXC-N test code for these students, districts will take the same steps described above.

Preparing and Starting Online Science MCA Test Sessions

For this year, due to the fixed forms used for the online Science MCA, it is strongly recommended that districts wait to Prepare and Start test sessions in PearsonAccess Next until 2–3 days prior to the scheduled start of testing. When test sessions are prepared, it connects the student in PearsonAccess Next with a test form in TestNav. This does not apply for science script and science data entry or online Reading and Mathematics MCA.

Entering Reimbursement Requests in GRR

Districts who have received assessment results for the college entrance exam they administered (ACT or SAT) should enter requests for reimbursements in the Graduation Requirements Records (GRR) system for eligible students. If a district has not previously received reimbursement for a grade 11 or 12 student, the following criteria applies to reimbursement requests:

- Districts will be reimbursed for students eligible for a free/reduced-priced meal (FRP) who are entered into GRR.

- Districts may also be reimbursed on a prorated basis (if necessary) for students who are unable to pay for the exam. Districts must determine the criteria for unable to pay and enter those requests into GRR.

Districts must submit eligible reimbursement requests no later than Sept. 17.

Reimbursement Reports

After districts enter reimbursement requests in GRR, they must confirm that the students for which they expect reimbursement are included in the reimbursement reports, which are refreshed each morning. It is important to confirm student information is entered correctly to avoid incorrect reimbursements made to the district. The following reports are now available:

- The *Claimed Student Detail Report* details what records will be reimbursed (or the reason records will not be reimbursed).

- The *Estimated Student Amount Report* gives an estimate of the amount that will be received.

Resources

More information is in the *[Graduation Requirements Records (GRR) User Guide](#)* and in the *MDE Graduation Requirements Records (GRR) Training*, which is posted in the [Training Management System (TMS)](#) on the District Assessment Coordinator tab under the MDE Recorded Webinars category.

Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence: Session 8 Rescheduled

Due to a registration error, MDE was unable to host this session as originally planned on March 25. We apologize for this inconvenience. This session has been rescheduled for Thursday, May 6.

Registration is required using the WebEx link below, even if you were previously registered. 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?*

  - o **Participants will gain**: An overview of the MCA and what it is designed to measure, a better understanding of individual student score interpretations, and guidance for using results to look at growth.

  - o **Presenters**: Yufeng Berry and Kendra Olsen

  - o **Date**: Thursday, May 6, 3–4 p.m.

  - o [Register for Session 8: *How should individual MCA scores be interpreted and used?*](#)

Science and English Language Arts Standards Implementation Delay

School leaders received the following information on Friday, April 2:

To provide flexibility for districts in implementing new standards as the state emerges from COVID-19, MDE will be delaying the required implementation of the Science and the English Language Arts standards to the 2024–25 and 2025–26 school years, respectively. Implementation dates for each content area are set as part of the rulemaking process to allow flexibility for implementation needs. With both of these two content areas still in the rulemaking process, MDE will use that opportunity to update the proposed rule language to reflect the new implementation date. Since the MCAs are based on the standards, the Science MCA-IV will be delayed until the spring of 2025 for grades 5, 8, and high school, and the Reading MCA-IV will be delayed until the spring of 2026 for grades 3–8 and 10. Although districts are not required to begin work to implement the standards, MDE will

continue to engage in test specifications and development to be prepared for the MCA-IVs in spring of 2025 and 2026.

Important note: Due to the fact that the Arts and Physical Education standards have already gone through rulemaking, MDE does not have the authority to delay implementation of these standards; therefore, these standards will move forward with implementation as scheduled. There is still legislation currently being considered that would delay implementation of the Arts and Physical Education standards.

Invitation to Minnesota Science Teachers

Please share this information with science teachers, and teachers and educators interested in becoming a science item writer.

MDE invites Minnesota science teachers to apply for the *Building Capacity for Science Assessment: Science MCA-IV Item Writing Workshop*. This compensated workshop will be 4.5 days total, starting with a half-day virtual training on June 25, and followed by virtual meetings on July 12–13 and July 26–27. Approximately 15–20 additional hours may be needed outside of these dates to complete the writing assignments. This workshop is focused on writing engaging grade-level phenomena tied to the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards and also generating questions for each phenomenon. The workshop goals are to generate creative thinking, engage with teachers' unique teaching approaches, and build a repository of engaging phenomena for the Science MCA-IV.

Interested science teachers can contact Jim Wood and Judi Iverson, Science Assessment Specialists at MDE for more information, or apply for the MCA-IV item writer workshop by April 23. Writers will be chosen based on grade-level and content-area writing needs, as well as experience in developing assessments. Selected writers will be contacted the week of May 3–7.

New Training Modules on Testing 1, 2, 3

Two new training modules are now available to support educators in developing a collection of assessment questions that are useful for guiding instruction: *Writing Multiple Choice Questions – Mathematics* and *Writing Multiple Choice Questions – Reading*. Each module can be launched on the Classroom Assessment page of Testing 1, 2, 3, under the blue expandable section, "Training Modules for Writing Assessment Questions."

These modules provide:

- An overview of the principles for writing multiple choice questions of varying cognitive complexity and difficulty that are reliable for a classroom math or reading assessment.

- A checklist of best practices to use for composing multiple choice questions that assist in determining whether students are exceeding, meeting, partially meeting, or not meeting the knowledge, skills, and abilities outlined in the standards.

It is recommended to set aside an hour of time to work through the module, taking time to pause and reflect individually or discuss with colleagues. Note: Although the modules are designed for multiple choice question types, the same best practices can be applied for writing or improving any question type used to gain insight about student understanding.

For more information, please contact testing123@state.mn.us about these resources.

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Odds and Ends

Virginie Sanchez, who answers the majority of the phone calls and emails districts have about testing, is out of the office April 5–9. Statewide Student Assessment staff will answer questions from districts sent to mde.testing@state.mn.us.

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Upcoming Opportunities

New DAC Q&A Webinar

The New DAC April Q&A webinar will be held on April 13, from 2–3 p.m. Register for the New DAC Q&A Webinar. Details for joining the webinar will be provided once participants register.

The April New DAC Q&A has one prerequisite as DACs prepare for the end of the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing window: Chapter 10 of the *Procedures Manual*. In addition, MDE will answer any questions related to test administration. Experienced DACs are also welcome to attend. Submit your questions for the April webinar.

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