

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT—MAY 5, 2021

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Accountability Waiver Update • Considerations for Use of Assessment Results • Training Management System Excel Report Issue • Additional Orders Window • May Q&A Webinar for New DACs: Save the Date • Test WES Reminders • Cell Phone and Device Policy Reminder • Training Requirements Reminder • Student Testing Tickets • MCA/MTAS Reminders • Public Feedback on the Current Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards and Benchmarks in Mathematics • Upcoming Opportunities 	<p>May 19 (noon): Last day to order test materials for MCA and MTAS</p> <p>May 20: Last day to complete Pretest Editing</p> <p>May 21: Testing window closes for MCA and MTAS</p> <p>May 21: Deadline to confirm in Test WES that all staff have completed required trainings and all students taking MTAS are eligible</p> <p>May 24: Deadline to ship MCA and MTAS secure materials back to Pearson</p> <p>June 7: Early student-level results for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS available in Test WES</p> <p>June 7–25: Posttest Editing in Test WES</p>

Federal Accountability Waiver Update

The information below was shared with superintendents and school leaders on April 22.

Earlier this month, Minnesota submitted a waiver for the accountability sections of its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan in response to an opportunity from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). On Wednesday, April 21, we received notification from ED that our waiver has been approved. 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.

This means that for the next round of identification of schools for support and improvement under ESSA, which under the waiver will now be delayed until fall 2022, we will use statewide assessment results from only

the 2018–19 and 2021–22 school years. For graduation and attendance data, we will use data from 2017–18 and 2020–21.

[Back to Top](#)

Considerations for Use of Assessment Results

Statewide assessments provide a snapshot of information on where Minnesota’s students are at in their learning of the standards, and can be used to identify inequities and inform decision making, including ensuring supports get to the students who need them. This is critical this year as Minnesota begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is always important to use these results in context, especially this year where educators and students experienced significant and profound changes in teaching and learning, as well as social and emotional well-being. For individual student-level results, statewide assessment results should only be used as one part of a body of evidence when making educational decisions about individuals. Page 104 of the [Procedures Manual](#) includes information on ethical practices for using results as one part of determining a student’s grade in a course or grade promotion/retention. However, schools and districts are encouraged to further consider how these individual student results are used this year, such as excluding statewide assessment results from students’ final grades or grade promotion decisions.

Additional information about appropriate and inappropriate uses of MCA and ACCESS results and use of preliminary results are available on the [District Resources page](#) under Test Score Interpretation Resources. An upcoming *2020–21 Reporting Guideline Resource* will be posted as well.

[Back to Top](#)

Training Management System Excel Report Issue

A small number of districts have been unable to download the Excel report available under the Admin feature in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) that is used to verify that staff have completed training. If you are unable to download this report, please contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#) so that a report can be provided to you.

As a reminder, May 21 is the deadline to confirm in Test WES that all staff have completed required trainings. If you are responsible for monitoring staff completion of trainings, please confirm you have access to the available reports under the Admin Feature in TMS.

[Back to Top](#)

Additional Orders Window

Currently, districts are not able to order additional materials in PearsonAccess Next for Reading and Mathematics MCA and all subjects of MTAS.

Pearson has identified a solution and anticipate that districts will be able to order additional materials for Reading and Mathematics MCA and MTAS tomorrow morning, Thursday, May 6.

Note that additional orders for Science MCA are still available.

If you have any questions, please contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#)

[Back to Top](#)

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

The May New DAC Q&A webinar will be held on Tuesday, May 25, from 2–3 p.m. It will focus on entering and verifying reimbursement requests in the Graduation Requirements Records (GRR) system and wrapping up test administration. The following are the prerequisites:

- GRR: [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
- After test administration information: Chapter 10 of the [Procedures Manual](#)

Registration and a link to submit questions will be available in next week's *Assessment Update*.

[Back to Top](#)

Test WES Reminders

Confirmations and Options in Test WES

Districts use the District Confirmations page in Test WES to confirm the following statements; the deadline for checking the box next to these confirmations in Test WES is May 21.

- All staff involved with statewide testing have completed required trainings prior to test administration, including the DAC.
- All students in the district being administered the MTAS will meet all eligibility requirements at the time of testing.

Districts use the District Options page to indicate the following about the shipment of Individual Student Reports (ISRs) for MCA and MTAS by June 11:

- Whether they want to receive individual student results labels to place in cumulative folders; the default option is that labels are not provided.

- **New for 2020–21:** Whether they want to receive paper copies of ISRs to send home to families. The default is that paper copies of ISRs are provided; if districts decide not to receive paper copies, they must instead provide the electronic ISRs from PearsonAccess Next.

Posttest Editing in Test WES Opens June 7

With extended testing windows this year, Posttest Editing in Test WES is scheduled for June 7–25. This later timeframe introduces some additional considerations:

- MARSS WES will be unavailable on Friday, June 11, following a statewide MARSS submission deadline. District Assessment Coordinators can complete Posttest Editing on this date, but no MARSS files can be submitted.
- With the later Posttest Editing window, there will not be an additional MARSS deadline one day before the last day of Posttest Editing; MARSS data can be submitted through June 25. It is critical that District Assessment Coordinators and MARSS Coordinators work closely during the final days of Posttest Editing to ensure that MARSS records and assessment records are in alignment through the last day of the window.

Posttest Editing is a very important window that gives districts the opportunity to update assessment records, correct demographic errors (e.g., wrong MARSS number or birth date), and enter test codes as needed. The people in the best position to make these edits are the District Assessment Coordinator and the MARSS Coordinator.

A Posttest Editing webinar will be held on June 7, and registration information and links will be shared in a later *Assessment Update*. A *Posttest Editing User Guide* will be available on the [Test WES page](#) of the MDE website when Posttest Editing opens.

EXC Test Codes

For all assessments (except high school Science MCA and MTAS – see below), **no action** is needed during the testing window for students who will have the EXC-N (extenuating circumstances– not attempted) test code applied because they are not testing due to extenuating circumstances related to COVID-19. During Posttest Editing, MDE will automatically apply the EXC-N test code to all enrolled students without a test record for all assessments.

In addition, MDE will automatically apply the EXC-A (extenuating circumstances–attempted) test code in Posttest Editing to document students who were not able to finish their test whether it was COVID-19 related or not. Additional details will be provided to districts ahead of Posttest Editing.

Exception for High School Science

The exception to the information above is for high school Science MCA and MTAS. Because MDE does not know which students enrolled in grades 9–12 would be taking the high school science assessment this year, EXC-N test codes cannot be automatically added in Posttest Editing based on enrollment alone. In order for MDE to indicate the EXC-N test code, the following steps must be taken during the testing window:

- 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.

[Back to Top](#)

Cell Phone and Device Policy Reminder

Students may **not** use or access cell phones, wearable technology, or other devices at any time during testing, including during breaks or when testing is completed. District and School Assessment Coordinators must develop and train staff on school-specific policies and procedures, including the cell phone and device policy, prior to test administration. The full policy is included in Chapter 8 of the [Procedures Manual](#), starting on page 171.

Note: Use of a device is allowed if it is used as a medical monitor, as long as the use is officially documented by a medical professional. The Test Monitor must ensure the device is not accessed for other purposes.

[Back to Top](#)

Training Requirements Reminder

The DAC is responsible for ensuring that all individuals who may be associated with any aspect of test administration or test content receive training on test administration and test security policies and procedures **each year** prior to testing. This includes technology staff who set up online tests, office staff who receive shipments of test materials, and all staff who have keys to areas where secure test materials are stored. Minimally, all staff are required to complete the *Test Security Training* and be aware of district-specific testing procedures.

Training requirements are described in the [Procedures Manual](#), starting on page 152. In addition to the trainings specified by role in the *Procedures Manual*, remember that districts must also ensure they are providing information or training on their district- or school-specific policies and procedures for testing. MDE requires the DAC to complete certain training requirements, which are described in the *Procedures Manual*.

The DAC must also confirm by May 21 on Test WES that all staff involved with statewide testing have completed required trainings prior to test administration, including themselves. Refer to the [Confirmations and Options in Test WES](#) article above for more information.

[Back to Top](#)

Student Testing Tickets

Student testing tickets are secure testing materials because they provide access to online tests and contain private student data. In order to maintain test security and student data privacy, districts need to establish a chain of custody before, during, and after testing.

- Districts must consider how student testing tickets are provided to staff, especially if electronic copies are shared. Refer to the *Tracking Secure Test Materials Provided to Students* section on page 163 of the [Procedures Manual](#) for more information.
- Testing tickets must be kept in a locked secure location before testing and between testing sessions.
- Test Monitors must collect student testing tickets and any materials used as scratch paper at the end of each testing session before students leave the testing room and keep these materials secure.
- Testing tickets must be securely disposed of after testing.

[Back to Top](#)

MCA/MTAS Reminders

Data Entry for MCA Paper Test Materials

Student responses in MCA paper test materials must be entered exactly as the student responded, without edits or changes. The test items include specific instructions for students on how the item should be answered, and the student's answers cannot be modified if they did not follow these instructions.

- If not answered, leave the item blank.
- If there is more than one answer selected for a multiple-choice item, leave the item blank.
- If characters that are not allowed were indicated, enter only characters that can be entered for fill-in-the-blank items.
 - For all grades of mathematics data entry, the digits 0–9, a forward slash (/) for a fraction bar, and a period (.) for decimals may be entered; for items with an answer greater than or equal to 1,000, the answer must be entered without a comma.
 - In addition, for grades 7, 8, and 11 mathematics data entry, the hyphen (-) may be entered to show negative numbers.
 - For science data entry, only numbers may be entered.
- In addition, for fill-in-the-blank items for mathematics, if a student left their answer as a mixed number, you cannot change it to an improper fraction or decimal during data entry. For example, if the student wrote their answer as $1\frac{1}{2}$, you cannot enter 1.5 or $\frac{3}{2}$; you must instead enter it as written ($11/2$).
- For science, even if an item indicates there are a certain number of responses, enter what the student provided (e.g., if the item specifies three responses and a student indicates two, enter the two).

- If you accidentally enter a response to a multiple-choice question that was left unanswered by the student, use the answer eliminator tool to remove the response. For science, if an answer cannot be removed from another item type, the DAC must contact Pearson to have the test reset.

More information is available in the [MCA Data Entry User Guide](#).

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, action must be taken during testing in order to indicate the EXC-N test code during Posttest Editing. Refer to the [EXC Test Codes](#) article above.

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.

Science MCA-IV

The Science MCA-IV, based on the *2019 Minnesota Academic Standards*, will first be administered in 2024–25. A new test design and new item type are being field tested this spring for MCA-IV including:

- Presentation of information on multiple tabs on the same page
- Constructed-response items where students answer the question by writing a response

Field testing is the process MDE uses to develop and construct tests for future years. This spring’s field test data will play an important role in evaluating the new tab element and exploring the use of combined human and artificial intelligence (AI) scoring processes for constructed response items. The data will also aid in identifying exemplary phenomena and items for release to show MCA-IV style and alignment to standards.

Field test items do not count toward a student’s score, but it is critical that students are familiar with these new elements and complete them to the best of their abilities. A *Science MCA-IV New Items Tutorial* and *Science MCA-IV New Items Teacher Guide* are available on the [Student Tutorial page](#) of PearsonAccess Next to familiarize students and educators with the new test design (information presented on tabs) and new item type (constructed response).

Public Feedback on the Current Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards and Benchmarks in Mathematics

Public input is an important part of the standards review process. Currently, Minnesota is scheduled to start the review for the K–12 Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics during the 2021–22 school year. To prepare for that review, MDE is collecting information from stakeholders on the current standards for mathematics developed in 2007. There are three parts to this initial request for public input regarding the current mathematics standards and benchmarks:

- Provide information about a specific standard or benchmark;
- Provide general information about the standards or benchmarks; and
- Provide recommendations of current research or publications for the review committee to consider when addressing concerns about mathematics standards.

Please refer to the [current mathematics standards](#) (2007) (also available in an Excel spreadsheet) when responding to questions regarding the standards.

This survey will remain open during the summer and you are welcome to submit multiple responses. Pursuant to state law, all information submitted on this form is public information. Your comments are not submitted until the end and you will be reminded to hit submit.

Upcoming Opportunities

Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence: Session 8 Rescheduled

This session has been rescheduled for Thursday, May 6 (previously planned for March 25). 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?*
 - **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.
 - **Presenters:** Yufeng Berry and Kendra Olsen
 - **Date:** Thursday, May 6, 3–4 p.m.

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

[Back to Top](#)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

Minnesota Department of Education

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.