

AN UPDATE FROM STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYTICS—AUGUST 5, 2020

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2020–21 Assessment Guidance • District Testing Calendar • Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence Webinar Series • Upcoming Opportunities 	<p>Aug. 20: Individual Student Reports (ISRs) arrive in districts for students who participated</p> <p>Aug. 20: ISRs available on vendor websites (WIDA AMS and PearsonAccess Next)</p>

Spring 2020–21 Assessment Guidance

On Thursday, July 30, MDE posted additional guidance in the *Safe Learning Plan for the 2020–21 School Year*, located on the [COVID-19 Updates page](#) under “Guidance for Districts and Schools.” In regards to statewide assessments (ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS), the information outlined in the *2020–21 Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools* (also available on the COVID-19 Updates page) on pages 64–65 is still applicable, including whether assessments would be administered based on the district’s learning model during the testing window.

Statewide assessments must be administered in a standardized manner and environment. As of now, MDE is preparing for 2020–21 statewide assessments to be administered in-person in school buildings in the spring. However, we are also aware of the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic which may impact schools’ ability to safely administer assessments in person. We will continue to update you as we learn more. At this time, the [2020–21 testing calendar dates](#) will be as planned.

Additional information will be communicated in the *Assessment Update* as needed, including more guidance for districts who may be in a distance learning model during the testing windows.

2020 Extended ACCESS Testing Window

In regards to the extended ACCESS testing window opportunity, the ACCESS administration for eligible students must be done in person. Depending on the local public health situation during the extended ACCESS testing window from Aug. 3–Sept. 25, this may not be an option for all school districts or charter schools. The federal guidance for services to English learners (ELs) says that states may not exit a student from EL status unless the student has demonstrated proficiency on a valid and reliable assessment that includes the four domains of

listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Refer to the *2020 Extended ACCESS Testing Window* on the [Minnesota page of the WIDA website](#) for more information about participation and administration.

Frequently Asked Questions for Spring 2021 Test Administrations

Since the *Safe Learning Plan for the 2020–21 School Year* was announced last Thursday, we have received questions regarding statewide test administration and what it will look like this upcoming year. These questions summarize what we know, to date, and further information will be communicated as it is available.

- *Are we still required to administer the ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS?* Yes. Statewide assessments are required under both state and federal legislation. As of now, those federal and state requirements have not changed.
- *Will there be a waiver from administering statewide assessments?* Currently, the United States Department of Education (USDE) is not offering states a waiver from statewide assessments for spring 2021.
- *How will students test?* Statewide assessments are planned to be administered in person, in school buildings, for spring 2021.
- *What if our school is in a distance learning model during part or all of the testing windows?* Further guidance for these situations will be provided as it is determined.
- *How will districts learn about changes?* The majority of resources being prepared for 2020–21, like the *Procedures Manual* and training modules, are being written to provide the information for a typical test administration. Any changes to these policies and procedures will be communicated through the *Assessment Update* and additional resources, as needed.

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District Testing Calendar

Districts are required to post a comprehensive testing calendar on the district website before the first day of the school year; this information may also be posted on school-level websites if the district chooses. Districts may choose how to display the information (e.g., in a chart, a calendar format), but it should be presented in a way that is as easy to access as possible. Core requirements for the district testing calendar have not changed and are detailed in the [2019–20 Procedures Manual](#), starting on page 137.

The posting of a district testing calendar is a requirement of both the state legislature and ESSA, and it is required to be posted for the 2020–21 school year, even though MDE knows that plans for spring may be very fluid. If a district has not yet established specific dates when students will be testing, MDE recommends using last year's planned dates as a starting place and then updating them as schedules are known or changed.

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Teaching and Learning Led by Evidence Webinar Series

This series of webinars is for any teacher or school leader who wants to center instruction on evidence of student learning. MDE's Outreach Specialist in Student Assessment and Data Analytics, Kendra Olsen, will facilitate each session to engage teachers and school leaders in making sense of assessment and data, so that it can be used to build trust and collaboration and develop fluency in decision making to help close gaps in instruction and learning.

Registration is required for each WebEx session, using the links in the table below for the first two sessions; links for the remaining sessions will be provided in a future *Assessment Update*. Participants will earn one continuing education unit for each session. All sessions will be recorded and posted for future reference.

SESSION #	DATE AND TIME	TOPIC AND DETAILS	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1	Wednesday, Aug. 19, 1:30–2:30 p.m.	Reimagining Assessment and Data to Guide Learning for All Students – Considerations for Fall 2020 Register for Session 1	Participants will gain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for utilizing existing assessment structures to strengthen students' Social Emotional Learning (SEL) • Tips for using evidence to guide instructional decisions in remote learning (expanded in sessions 3 and 4) • Examples of formative 'checks for understanding' that can be easily embedded in existing structures
2	Thursday, August 27, 11 a.m.–noon	Balancing Your Assessment System to Reflect Your Students Register for Session 2	Participants will gain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the purpose of various assessment types, and their recommended frequency of use • A framework for facilitating a team discussion to choose/use assessments for their intended purpose, and determining the right balance of assessment types for your school or district

SESSION #	DATE AND TIME	TOPIC AND DETAILS	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
3	Thursday, Sept. 24, 4–5 p.m.	Leading Instructional Decisions with Evidence <i>Registration coming soon</i>	Participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use or modify an ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional) framework to facilitate staff discussions about student learning led by evidence • Understand how data use cycles can influence systems in schools, which impact student achievement
4	Thursday, Oct. 22, 4–5 p.m.	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning – How do we know what our students really know? <i>Registration coming soon</i>	Participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate simple, frequent “checks for understanding” into existing instructional plans that elicit an accurate picture of the depth of what students know • Improve rigor and alignment of formative assessment to the standards • Define success criteria for students

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Upcoming Opportunities

Additional Q&A Webinars for the Extended ACCESS Testing Window

MDE will host Q&A webinars for questions districts have as they plan for this extended test administration. Use the links below to join the webinars; no registration is required:

- [Q&A Webinar #2: Wednesday, Aug 12, 1–2 p.m.](#)
- [Q&A Webinar #3: Thursday, Sept. 10, 9–10 a.m.](#)

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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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