TESTING 123

Updates for teachers from the MDE Statewide Testing Division

March 14, 2022

Test Administration Dates

- **March 25:** End of the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing window

- **March 7–May 6:** Reading and Mathematics MCA, and Reading, Mathematics, and Science MTAS testing window

- **March 7–May 13:** Science MCA testing window

Check your school or district's testing calendar for more specific testing dates in your building.

MCA and MTAS Student Resources

Student resources for MCA and MTAS are available on the [PearsonAccess Next](#) website under Preparing for Testing. MDE requires districts to ensure that all students are familiar with the test(s) they will be taking. Each district

determines which resources will be used and how they will be used. MDE does not require all students to use all resources; districts must determine the resources to use, which may vary by school, grade, or student.

The student tutorial and item samplers are two student resources that have different purposes:

- The student tutorial is used to familiarize students and educators with the general functionality of the online test, including navigation, tools, and test item types. The student tutorial is available only for the online MCA.

- The item samplers are used to familiarize students and educators with how the content is presented in the test. Item samplers are available for the online MCA (with and without available accommodations and linguistic supports), MCA paper test materials, and MTAS.

Both the student tutorial and item samplers have Teacher Guides with additional information for educators. Refer to the *Purpose of Student Resources* document posted on the Student Resources page of the MDE website for more information, including frequently asked questions. Stand-alone calculators and formula sheets are also available to allow students to practice using them outside of the tests.

New Educator Resources for Science MCA-IV

The Testing 1, 2, 3 MCA Content Resources webpage under Science Resources now has released examples of Science MCA-IV items and Educator Guides. The purpose of these resources is to give Minnesota education professionals a few examples of phenomenon-based, multidimensional items aligned to the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards. The guides include information on benchmark alignment and student response data, to provide context for the online released items.

Invitation for Minnesota Science Teachers

We would like to invite you to apply to be part of Building Capacity for Science Assessment: Science MCA-IV Item Writing Workshop in the summer of 2022. The workshop will be 4 1/2 days total, starting with a half-day virtual training on June 24, followed by virtual meetings on July 11–12 and Aug. 1–2. Approximately 15–20 additional hours may be needed outside of these dates to complete the writing assignments. This summer, we are focused on writing engaging grade-level phenomena tied to the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards and also generating questions for each phenomenon. We hope that the summer 2022 workshop goals generate creative thinking, engage with your unique teaching approaches, and build a repository of engaging phenomena for the Science MCA-IV.

If you are interested in being part of this MCA-IV item writer workshop this year, contact us for more information or enter your information here by April 22, 2022.

We encourage any teachers and educators interested in becoming a Science item writer to apply. We want to grow the impact teachers have on our Science MCA-IV assessment and look forward to engaging with more teachers around the state. If you have colleagues that might be interested in participating, please share this information. For more information, contact Jim Wood or Judi Iverson.

ESSA State Plan Update

The following article was shared with superintendents and charter leaders.

On March 2, 2022, MDE submitted to the U.S. Department of Education an amendment to Minnesota's state plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The amendment includes multiple changes to the state's accountability system. Some of these are temporary changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the availability and quality of data, and some are changes that community members, educators and school and district leaders have been requesting since the initial approval of Minnesota's ESSA state plan in 2018.

A cover letter summarizing the amendment's changes and the complete redlined amendment submitted to the U.S. Department of Education are available on MDE's website. The proposed changes were developed after engaging with community organizations, educators and school and district leaders followed by a public comment period.

The U.S. Department of Education must approve these changes before they can take effect.

2021–22 Assessment and Accountability Results Release Timeline

An updated *2021–22 Important Dates* document has been finalized with assessment and accountability reporting dates for all statewide assessments (ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS). It is posted on the Districts, Schools and Educators Statewide Testing page of the MDE website, under the Testing Calendars expandable header.

MDE on the Move

The information below was shared in a press release on Monday, Feb. 28.

After 23 years in Roseville, the Minnesota Department of Education is excited to announce it will be moving offices to Minneapolis beginning March 1. The department's lease in Roseville ended in February 2022. The new location will provide MDE with the space to carry out its work on behalf of Minnesota students, families, educators, and school and library communities. The State of Minnesota has signed a 10-year lease for the Minneapolis location, which is owned and managed by Artis REIT.

The new location is currently under construction, and MDE staff will continue to telework. Minnesotans are encouraged to continue contacting MDE staff by phone or email at 651-582-8200 and mde.contactus@state.mn.us. Physical mail can be sent to the new address at **400 NE Stinson Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55413** effective immediately. Once construction is complete, MDE staff will welcome students, educators, families, and Minnesotans from across the state to the new location.

Student Data Privacy When Communicating with MDE

When emailing MDE with a question about a specific student's test or situation, only use the MARSS/SSID number. For student privacy, do not send student names in the email, including screenshots or attachments.

Assessment Resources for Families

MDE has prepared information about Spring 2022 statewide test administrations that districts can provide to families. There is one document for ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS and one for MCA/MTAS on the Students and Families Statewide Testing page. Translations of these documents are available under the Translated Documents expandable header). Providing these documents is not required, and districts may use any of the information in their communications as needed.

New Educator Resources for Alternate MCA

Minnesota's alternate assessment for the MCA, the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), is the standards-based accountability assessment designed for, and limited to, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Students who receive special education services and meet the eligibility criteria may take the MTAS.

The MTAS will be transitioning over to a redesigned alternate assessment in each subject area as new academic standards are implemented. The Alternate MCA will replace the MTAS. The timeline for the first administration of the Science Alternate MCA is school year 2024–25, Reading Alternate MCA is school year 2025–26, and Mathematics Alternate MCA is still to be determined based on the standards revision schedule.

The Testing 1, 2, 3 Alternate Assessment webpage now has several resources to support educators in understanding the changes with the transition from the MTAS to the Alternate MCA, including a recorded presentation describing some of the changes to the format of the assessment and a sample task.

Test Administration Reminders

Cell Phone and Device Policy

For all statewide test administrations (MCA/MTAS and ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS), 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.

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.

Required District Test Security Procedure

While the *Test Security Training* addresses MDE policies and procedures for testing, each district has additional policies and procedures for test administration that must be communicated and followed. Each district determines how to communicate this information to staff as appropriate for their role. This may be through a district or school training or in writing (e.g., email, handout, etc.). Contact your District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) for more information specific to your district's policies and procedures.

Guidelines for Administration of Accommodations

The *Guidelines for Administration of Accommodations* are available on PearsonAccess Next. These guidelines provide information for the administration of the MCA with a scribe, mathematics or science script, and signed interpretation;

the signed interpretation section includes additional guidance on how to interpret specific academic terms on the math and science tests for American Sign Language (ASL).

Timelines for Providing Materials to Testing Staff

For staff administering a braille test or a sign language interpreter administering a Mathematics or Science MCA script, your District or School Assessment Coordinators should provide you with applicable test materials up to five business days prior to the scheduled administration. This includes the Mathematics or Science MCA script, as well as the braille test book. The same timeline applies for a sign language interpreter for MTAS (if not the Test Administrator). Staff must keep materials secure as they prepare for testing.

In addition, for paper ACCESS, Kindergarten ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, and MTAS, Test Administrators may be provided materials ahead of time to prepare, and there are no specific timelines for when materials may be provided as long as they are kept secure throughout preparation.

Upcoming Opportunities

The COMPASS team is excited to announce upcoming related learning opportunities in math and literacy.

COMPASS Math Webinar

The COMPASS Math team is partnering with Quantile® Teacher Assistant to provide three free webinars for Minnesota educators. The webinars will demonstrate how to use the Quantile program to support learning with data. Each webinar will have the same content modified with examples for specific grade bands. Registration is required.

- Tuesday, March 22 at 3:45 p.m. (Grades K-5 examples)
- Tuesday, March 29 at 3:45 p.m. (Grades 6-8 examples)
- Tuesday, April 5 at 3:45 p.m. (Grades 9-12 examples)

Ensure that relevant EL and Special Education staff are aware of the policies and available resources when making decisions about student participation and accommodations.

COMPASS Science of Reading Webinar

The COMPASS Literacy team is partnering with Dr. Kim Gibbons from the University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) to host a webinar on the Science of Reading within the Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework. The webinar will be held on **March 31, 2022 from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.** More details and registration information will be shared soon. Sign up for updates on the MDE COMPASS page to be notified when registration links are available.

Summer 2022 MCA and Alternate MCA Review Committees

Every year, through Educator and Community Review Committees, Minnesota educators and community members across the state bring invaluable classroom experience, perspectives from teaching diverse students, and engagement with Minnesota Academic Standards to the test development process. This committee participation ensures that the content and question type align closely with the Minnesota Content Standards and best practices in classroom instruction. Each committee is a separate entity that meets for two to four days. When the committee completes their specific review task, a new committee is formed for the next task in the test development process.

As MDE starts to prepare invitations for virtual Educator Review Committees this summer, please encourage your district's math, reading, science, English learner, and special education staff to consider registering in order to be considered for one of these future meetings. Share the flyers for MCA and Alternate MCA Educator Review Committees posted on the Educator Review Committee page of the MDE website with the educators in your district to provide more information on these committees.

Important Ideas and Research

Feedback for Teachers: What Evidence Do Teachers Find Most Useful?

In the winter 2022 AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice, a study was shared about teacher perception of evidence used to guide instructional improvements. K-12 teachers in a suburban Midwestern district implemented classroom formative assessments that addressing the current unit's learning goals and engaged students in specific corrective and enrichment activities. In the study, teachers were required to implement this structure of mastery learning in only three instructional units, but most teachers chose to use the strategies in the majority of the remaining instructional units.

"An equally important but often neglected use of formative assessments," say Guskey and Link, "is the feedback they offer teachers." In this 'just-in-time' use of formative assessment, the mistakes students make reflect directly on the instruction teachers just conducted. Teachers were asked to record three types of evidence about their student results (see pp. 14 and 15 for graphics of each type in the article linked below):

- A running tally of the number of errors made on each question, with special attention to items that 1/3 or more of the class answered incorrectly;

- Mastery charts of class progress on initial and follow-up formative assessments across multiple units;

- Summative unit assessments comparing current students with previous years' classes taught the same content using previous instructional methods.

The researchers then gathered teachers' opinions on the three types of evidence collected using a survey. Across grade levels, teachers said they found the item analysis of formative assessments the most useful for improving instruction. "With these data," the researchers say "teachers could determine precisely which concepts and skills had been taught and learned well, and which required a different approach." The second and third data reports looked at students' performance at a more general level, which was interesting feedback on how the mastery learning process was working but not as important to improving teaching in real time. Another interesting finding was that elementary teachers were better at predicting how well their students' would do on formative assessments.

When asked about ways to improve quality of the feedback from students, teachers shared two additional insights:

- Teachers said they needed more time for team meetings to develop common assessments with grade-level colleagues – both to improve the quality of assessment questions and to tap their colleagues' ideas on crafting better corrective activities.

- Teachers said their principals needed to play a more active role in getting teachers to routinely establish mastery-level criteria for formative assessments and more consistently implement mastery learning across the school.

"Feedback for Teachers: What Evidence Do Teachers Find Most Useful?" by Thomas Guskey and Laura Link in AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice, Winter 2022 (Vol. 18, #4, pp. 9-20).

Why Retrieval Practice Works So Well

In this Learning Agency Lab article, the research on retrieving information from our brains by quizzes or self-testing is summarized as follows:

- Actively trying to remember something improves long-term memory better than just reading and other conventional study methods. This is true from preschool through adult learning.

- Retrieval provides immediate feedback on whether we've forgotten something we thought we knew.

- Retrieval practice encourages higher-order learning by challenging our memories and deepening understanding. "Encouraging yourself to overcome difficult obstacles or dissect complex issues," says Boser, "helps the brain retain more information in the long run. This is because practicing your ability to solve problems teaches you to apply the knowledge already in your brain that is waiting to be put to use, thus aiding in its permanence."

- Retrieval practice is active and keeps us focused. If we're re-reading a textbook, our mind tends to wander, but checking on a memory keeps us focused on the task at hand.

- Repeated retrieval practice spaced over time, with pauses in between, is more than twice as effective as simple retrieval, which itself is orders of magnitude more effective than simply studying information.

- The best way to incorporate retrieval practice is through low-stakes tests or quizzes – always understanding that it's not testing in the typical high-stakes context; these assessments are part of the learning process. Other ways to use retrieval practice include:

    - Brain dumps – Learners write down everything they can think of on a topic.
    - Concept maps – Learners fill out a diagram with information on a topic, relating the big picture to the details.
    - Flashcards – The best technique is to answer each problem verbally before turning the card over to check, and keeping cards in the deck until they have been answered correctly three times.
    - Repeat-backs – When we're given directions, immediately saying them back in our own words to check for accuracy and completeness.
    - Think-pair-share – Learners think about a topic, write down what they've learned, and share it with a partner, each thinking independently.

"Retrieval Practice" by Ulrich Boser, The Learning Agency Lab, February 3, 2022

Academic Standards, Instruction and Assessment