

TESTING 123

Updates for teachers from the MDE Statewide Testing Division

October 14, 2019

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New Benchmark Reports and Resources are Available

The MCA Benchmark Reports are available. Contact your District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) to access your school's reports. Over the past year, MDE and Pearson worked with various stakeholders to redesign the reports to make them easier to understand and allow them to be used more effectively. The following resources are available for the benchmark reports:

- The *Benchmark Report Interpretive Guide*, *Benchmark Report "How To" Quick Guides*, and *Understanding the MCA Benchmark Report* video guide are available on the [Additional Reporting Resources page](#).
- The *Benchmark Report Calculation Resource* is available on the [Technical Reports page](#) (posted under the Other Students heading at the bottom of the webpage).
- A recording of the Benchmark Report webinar held in September is posted in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) under the Data and Reporting tab.

If you have questions about the benchmark reports or would like in-person or online training about using the benchmark reports, please contact Kendra Olsen at kendra.olsen@state.mn.us or 651-582-8542. If DACs or AAs have questions about accessing the benchmark reports, contact Pearson at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request](#).

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Additional Released MCA Passages and Questions

MDE has released six more Reading MCA passages and sets of items (test questions) for educators. MDE releases MCA items and passages for educators to have a sampling of how content assessed is aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards and to have models for how to write classroom test items aligned to the standards at a variety of cognitive and difficulty levels. These items and passages are statistically valid and reliable and have been previously used on the MCA.

For more information, access the *Released Item and Data Table User Guide*, available on the [Released Items and Passage Sets page](#).

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Minnesota Assessment Life Cycle Training Course

The Minnesota Assessment Life Cycle Course is available in the [Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) on the Assessment Literacy tab. These trainings are designed for educators to increase understanding about Minnesota Assessments. The course includes the following trainings:

- Minnesota Assessments Overview
- MCA Achievement Level Descriptors & Standard Setting Process
- Test Development
- Test Construction
- Scoring and Reporting
- Test Specifications

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Procedures Manual for 2019–20

The *2019–20 Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments* is now available on the [Policies and Procedures page](#) of PearsonAccess Next. The *Procedures Manual* has been prepared for DACs, administrators, and others with a role in administering Minnesota Assessments. It provides the Minnesota policies and procedures for implementing statewide assessments and using the results in your district or charter school.

Note: The MCA Structure documents on Testing 1, 2, 3 might be more relevant to educators because they break down information from the *Procedures Manual* and Test Specifications by grade level and subject. These documents have also been updated in October to reflect any changes made in the *Procedures Manual*.

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ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS: Resources and Considerations

IEP and 504 plan teams that are discussing general supports and accommodations for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS testing must use the [Accessibility and Accommodations Supplement](#) when considering the needs of each student. The *Accessibility and Accommodations Supplement* is available under the Key Resources heading within each training course in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#). Contact your DAC if you need access to the WIDA Secure Portal.

For EL students with significant cognitive disabilities, EL staff and IEP teams should use the *Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Participation Criteria Decision Tree*—available on the [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs page](#)—when determining the most appropriate test for each student.

English learners with disabilities should participate in as many domains of the ACCESS or the Alternate ACCESS as possible. If it is impossible to administer the test in a given domain due to the student's disability (e.g., the listening domain for a student who is deaf), indicate Special Education Deferred (SPD) for that domain. **New for 2019–20:** If the EL staff and the IEP team determine that the SPD code is appropriate for more than two domains, the DAC needs to work with MDE for guidance.

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ACCESS Speaking Domain Webinar

In order to help with understanding ACCESS scores for the Speaking domain and how it is scored, WIDA has recorded a webinar called *ACCESS for ELLs: Speaking Domain*. WIDA presenters provide an overview of the test structure, tier placement process, task design, and how sample speaking responses differ by score point. The webinar may help educators gain a better understanding of how student responses are scored and what the speaking scores mean. View the recording on the [ACCESS for ELLs Webinar Recordings pages](#) (logging in to the WIDA Secure Portal is required).

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WIDA eLearning Workshops

MDE continues the partnership with WIDA to offer on-demand, self-paced eLearning content at no charge to K–12 educators and administrators in Minnesota through Aug. 31, 2020. The self-paced online courses allow any educator in Minnesota with a WIDA eLearning account to access the content for individual learning. The courses can be used as part of in-school professional learning communities focused on improving opportunities and outcomes for multilingual learners with English learner status.

Those completing courses may print a certificate of completion to present to local continuing education committees for CEUs.

If you would like details about sessions or information on accessing the eLearning Center, visit [English Language Development Standards](#) or contact the District Coordinator for WIDA eLearning Accounts (District Learning Coordinator) for your district. For further questions about WIDA eLearning Accounts, please contact mde.el@state.mn.us.

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Featured Resource of the Month

Achievement Level Descriptor Maps

Achievement Level Descriptor Maps are supplementary materials to be used in conjunction with the MCA ALDs. The ALD maps align the descriptors horizontally by strands (Mathematics and Science) or standards (Reading) and are helpful for comparing performance across proficiency levels. The ALD maps can be useful in articulating learning goals and developing more specific success criteria for classroom assessment aligned to the standards. More information about the map documents and how to use them effectively can be found on [Testing 1, 2, 3](https://testing123.education.mn.gov) (testing123.education.mn.gov > MCA Test Structure > Plan and Teach > Success Criteria > Achievement Level Descriptor Maps).

Example: **Grade 3 Mathematics Achievement Level Descriptors**

Strand	Does Not Meet	Partially Meets	Meets	Exceeds
Number & Operation	<p>A student at this level of mathematics succeeds at few of the most fundamental mathematics skills of the Minnesota Academic Standards. Some of the skills demonstrated may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represents whole numbers with words• Adds multi-digit whole numbers• Matches fractions with correct area model	<p>A student at this level of mathematics partially meets the mathematics skills of the Minnesota Academic Standards. Some of the skills demonstrated may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represents whole numbers up to 1,000 using expanded notations• Compares whole numbers up to 100,000• Subtracts multi-digit whole numbers without regrouping• Knows common multiplication and division facts (2s, 5s, 10s)• Writes fractions for a given representation, including number line	<p>A student at this level of mathematics meets the mathematics skills of the Minnesota Academic Standards. Some of the skills demonstrated may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compares and represents whole numbers up to 100,000• Solves real-world and mathematical problems using addition and subtraction• Represents multiplication and division in various ways (reference MN Academic Standards 3.1.2.3)• Compares and orders fractions with common denominators	<p>A student at this level of mathematics exceeds the mathematics skills of the Minnesota Academic Standards. Some of the skills demonstrated very consistently may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solves real-world and mathematical problems using addition, subtraction, and multiplication• Understands that the size of a fractional part is relative to the size of the whole

Important Ideas and Research in School Assessment and Data

This section of the newsletter is designed to keep educators well-informed on current research and best practices related to assessment and data use in the classroom. In each issue, 2–4 articles will be featured that have relevant ideas to improve teaching, leadership, and learning.

Assess Each Student’s Understanding: Avoid the Siren call of the “Q and A”

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Mark Wise and Beth Pandolpho (West Windsor-Plainsboro School District, New Jersey) list several “Siren calls” that often tempt teachers to move on too quickly. One example is resisting the urge to ask broad questions to the class, like “Does anyone have any questions?” or ask students to give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down, which does not give a teacher a good sense of student mastery.

The authors suggest to imbed real-time checks for understanding that elicit a response from *all* students throughout the lesson. “Imagine a football team down by 20 points at halftime with a coach who doesn’t offer any new ideas,” they say, “or a violin tutor who does not provide feedback when a measure is played sharply out of tune... Timely feedback can be just as powerful a tool for classroom educators as it is for coaches and music instructors.” Educators must develop a sense of urgency around checks for understanding on-the spot,

followed promptly by encouragement and direct feedback. The goal is to get information about all students' learning, and address misconceptions and mistakes in real time.

[“Tips for New Teachers: Avoiding the Siren Calls”](#) by Mark Wise and Beth Pandolpho in *Educational Leadership*, September 2019.

Leading High-Quality Class Discussions

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* “advice guide,” Jay Howard (Butler University) remembers the struggles of starting a good class discussion. The author suggests four ways to ask questions that spark good discussions and challenge students to do some “intellectual heavy lifting”:

- Ask questions that elicit a variety of responses, like *Why did Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation in the fall of 1862 but make it effective in the fall of 1863?*
- Ask students to apply a variety of theories or perspectives, for example, *Which of the five theories of why people commit crimes explains the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme?*
- After teaching a concept, ask students to provide a new example in a different context, like: “We’ve just covered social-learning theory, and I provided you with an illustration. Give me a different example of someone learning new behaviors through observing and imitating others. Where and when have you have observed this in your experience?”
- Ask about the process, not the content. For example, *Here’s a new differential equation. What is a good first step in solving this equation? Where do we begin?*

[“How to Hold a Better Class Discussion - Advice Guide”](#) by Jay Howard in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 26, 2019.

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Statewide Testing's Mission

To design, develop, and implement a system of assessment so Minnesota students, parents, teachers, administrators, legislators and taxpayers will have access to valid and reliable data to support and improve education in Minnesota.

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