AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT — JAN. 8, 2025

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
- Preparing for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS - Verifying Shipping Addresses in MDE-ORG - Verify District Testing Calendar (repeat) - Test Security Checklist Translated Versions - Applications for Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA Standard Setting (repeat) - Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptors - Science Alt MCA Administration Modes - Upcoming Opportunities - Tech Update	**Nov. 25–May 1:** *Complete Pretest Editing in Test WES* **Jan. 6–March 21:** *Complete administration tasks in WIDA AMS* **Jan. 17:** *Test WES deadline to make changes affecting initial MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA test materials shipment, confirm ISR delivery, indicate test material delivery options* **Jan. 27–March 21:** *ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS testing window*

Preparing for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS

WIDA AMS Test Setup

Districts can now complete administration tasks in WIDA AMS in preparation for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS testing. WIDA AMS administration tasks include viewing students in the system and ensuring they appear in the appropriate test sessions. Note: While WIDA AMS refers to "test sessions" as "registrations," these terms are interchangeable. For clarity, the *Procedures Manual* and the *Assessment Update* continue to refer to test sessions.

Students who were indicated as English Learners (ELs) in student enrollment (MARSS/Ed-Fi) data prior to the December deadline were included in the precode file sent from MDE to DRC, which DRC used to place students into generic test sessions based on grade cluster and domain. If there are EL students who do not appear in WIDA AMS, check the Sent Precode file in Test WES (under the File Transfer heading in the menu on the left).

Students who are not included in the Sent Precode file were not indicated as EL in student enrollment data by the December deadline.

Work with your MARSS Coordinator to make sure all eligible students are indicated correctly as ELs in enrollment data. These students must also be manually added in WIDA AMS, and any paper test materials (for example, a writing response booklet) must be used from overage materials included with your initial shipment from DRC or ordered in WIDA AMS during the additional orders window. Any paper test materials for these students must be hand-bubbled because there will not be a pre-populated student label available for students who are manually added to WIDA AMS. When adding students to WIDA AMS and hand-bubbling paper test materials, carefully ensure that all student information entered exactly matches student enrollment data submitted to MDE.

Detailed instructions on how to complete administration tasks are available on WIDA AMS in both the *WIDA AMS User Guide* and the Online Help Articles. Access these resources by logging in and scrolling down to the "Get Help" tab on the landing page. Contact DRC Customer Support with questions at WIDA@DataRecognitionCorp.com or 855-787-9615.

ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Materials Delivery

ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS paper materials will arrive in districts on either Jan. 17 or Jan. 21. Districts are required to have staff available to receive the materials. DACs must ensure there is a plan for receiving the shipments and keeping the test materials secure upon delivery following the district's procedure.

Student Resources for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS

Districts should develop a plan to determine which student resources are most applicable to prepare their students for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS test administration. More specific information is available on the Student Resources page.

Selecting Test Administrators and Training Requirements for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS

The requirements for who can be a Test Administrator are outlined in Chapter 7 of the *Procedures Manual*. This may be especially important for ACCESS Online in order to ensure that EL instruction can continue to be provided during testing. The administration of the ACCESS Online is similar to the administration of the online MCA and is not required to be administered by EL staff. As a reminder, due to test security and increased incidents of plagiarism, MDE requires districts to follow WIDA's recommendations for group sizes for Writing (no more than 15 students per test administrator) and Speaking (no more than 5 students per test administrator). For ACCESS Listening and Reading, the guidance is to maintain a ratio of one Test Administrator for every 30 students.

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 the *Test Security Training*, assessment-specific trainings, and district policies and procedures for test administration specific to that district.

All ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Test Administrators must complete required MDE trainings in the [Learning Management System (LMS)](#) each school year. They must also complete the applicable online WIDA Training Courses and certification quizzes in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) prior to administration of any assessment. Refer to Pages 199–210 of the *Procedures Manual* for more detailed information.

Special Education Deferred (SPD)

English learners with disabilities should participate in as many domains of the ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS as possible. If it is impossible to administer one or two domains of the assessment due to the student's disability (for example, the Listening domain for a deaf student), the Special Education Deferred (SPD) test code is used to document the situation. SPD can be indicated during the testing window or during Posttest Editing.

SPD cannot be used to exempt a student from taking a test. If the student's disability is such that they cannot participate in any domains of ACCESS with accommodations, the EL staff and IEP or 504 plan team should consider the WIDA Alternate ACCESS. If the EL staff and the IEP or 504 plan team determine that the SPD code is appropriate for more than two domains, contact MDE at mde.testing@state.mn.us for approval.

Verifying Shipping Addresses in MDE-ORG

For MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA, districts choose whether test materials will be shipped to the district or individual schools under District Options during Pretest Editing in Test WES. All addresses used to ship test materials will be pulled from [MDE-ORG](#), so districts must verify their shipping addresses in MDE-ORG by Jan. 17.

- The "Assessment Shipping address" is a separate field in MDE-ORG that allows districts and schools to indicate a specific address where they would like test materials shipped at both the district and school levels.

- If there is no "Assessment Shipping address" present in MDE-ORG, the "Location: Physical address" will be used; if no "Location: Physical address" exists, the "Mailing address" will be used (but updates may be required as test materials cannot be shipped to P.O. boxes).

- If the "Location: Physical address" is the correct address to ship test materials, then a separate "Assessment Shipping address" does not need to be added for the district and/or each school.

If updates are needed in MDE-ORG, the district's Site Verification Coordinator must make changes in the [MDE District and School Site Verification system](#).

Verify District Testing Calendar (repeat)

Districts are required to post a comprehensive testing calendar on the district website by Oct. 1. MDE recommends that District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) verify that specific testing schedules by grade and subject are indicated on the calendars by Jan. 1. Minor changes can continue to be made to ensure calendars are accurate, but keep in mind that some districts and schools may not be able to immediately publish updated calendars due to internal policies and procedures.

MDE reviews testing calendars and will communicate directly with the DAC if MDE determines a district's calendar is not available or is incomplete. Detailed information on the core requirements for district testing calendars can be found in the *Procedures Manual* starting on page 158.

Test Security Checklist Translated Versions

The *Test Security Checklist* has been translated into the three most populous languages in Minnesota: Hmong, Somali, and Spanish. The translated versions and the English version are posted on the Policies and Procedures page of the PearsonAccess Next website. Districts can provide the translated versions of the *Test Security Checklist* to staff who need the information in those languages.

Note: If you do not see the update, Pearson recommends refreshing your browser and/or clearing your browser's cache.

Applications for Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA Standard Setting (repeat)

After the first administration for a new series of assessments aligned to revised academic standards, a committee of educators and community members define the performance levels on the new assessment. The Standard Setting Committee will use the Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptors to determine what it means for students to demonstrate proficiency on the Academic Standards in Science.

We are looking for a diverse group of classroom educators representing science education throughout the state. This committee will balance grade-level and content-area knowledge of the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards, geographic distribution, and the diversity of our student population. Participants will contribute their instructional expertise and knowledge of the 2019 Science standards and collaborate with peers from across Minnesota while earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and an honorarium.

Please encourage science, special education, and multilingual learner educators in your district to apply to be part of one of these in-person committees next summer:

- Application for Science MCA-IV Standard Setting on July 8–10.

- [Application](#) for Science Alternate MCA Standard Setting on July 14–16.

Applications will be open until this Friday, Jan. 10. Committee members will be chosen based on grade-level and content-area needs, as well as experience with the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards.

Another way to be involved in MCA and Alt MCA development is to [register to participate in Educator Review Committees](#). Educator and community member input is vital in the development of questions assessing the Academic Standards in Science. This opportunity is open to science, math, language arts, EL, and special education teachers. Please contact mde.testing@state.mn.us for more information.

Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) for the Science MCA-IV and Science Alternate MCA (Alt MCA) are now available on the MDE website. The Science MCA-IV PLDs (previously named Achievement Level Descriptors) describe phenomenon-based learning of the grade-level expectations set by multidimensional benchmarks in the [2019 Academic Standards in Science](#). The purpose of PLDs are to:

- Provide the criteria for establishing performance levels (or cut scores) for the MCA-IV tests at standard setting in the summer of 2025.

- Provide parents, teachers, and other educational partners with a description of student performance that can support instruction and assessment.

- Serve as a basis to develop summaries in student score reports to help with the interpretation of test results.

Student performance on the Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA is differentiated into four performance levels: Beginning, Intermediate, Meets, and Advanced. Students performing at the "Meets" and "Advanced" levels are considered proficient in the knowledge and skills described in the academic standards.

The Science MCA and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptors can be found on the [Performance Level Descriptors page](#) of the MDE website.

Science Alt MCA Administration Modes

In preparing for Science Alternate MCA administrations, the Individual Education Program (IEP) team plans the administration mode the team feels is best for the student.

Online, paper, or hybrid (any combination of online and paper) modes are available to meet student needs (refer to the *Science Alt MCA Administration Modes* table below):

- An online administration is one where the student interacts either independently with the online test questions and materials or with the Test Administrator guiding interactions and supporting the student's use of the online test form. Note: Using objects or manipulatives to support the student's use of the online test form is still considered an online administration.

- A paper administration is one where the student and test administrator use only paper materials for testing. The test administrator or district staff then enters the student responses into the TestNav form online.

- A hybrid administration is one where both paper test materials and the online test form are used to support the student during test administration. The following scenarios are examples of a hybrid administration:

  - A student uses the paper Response Option Cards to indicate their response to the Test Administrator while the Test Administrator presents and reads the phenomena and items from a device showing the online test form.

  - The Test Administrator presents the phenomena and items to the student using the paper materials and the student responds on a device (such as a tablet) with their answers.

  - A student begins using the online test form, but the Test Administrator observes that they need to change to the paper test materials part of the way through testing based on the student's needs during testing. In this case, the Test Administrator continues the administration with the student using paper test materials and enters the student responses online.

When deciding the best mode of administration for a student, two areas must be considered: how the student engages with the presentation of materials and how they communicate their responses in their daily instruction.

- If most of the student's daily instruction is presented online or technology based and they communicate responses in a way that can be shown in the online test form, an online administration may be chosen. If choosing an online mode of administration, decide if the student is able to more independently interact with online or technology-based content or if they need assistance to navigate their instruction, so you can prepare for the support the student will need during an online administration.

- If most of the student's daily instruction is presented with paper materials, and the student communicates responses in a way that needs a paper material, a paper administration may be chosen.

- If the student's daily instruction is presented with a combination of paper materials and online or technology-based and the student communicates responses in a way that can be shown in the online test form or with paper materials meaning they need a combination of online and paper materials, then a hybrid administration may be chosen.

The administration mode can be changed at any point during the administration based on student needs. If changing modes of administration after items have been presented, the new mode can be used starting with the items that have not been answered. Once a student gives a response to an item, the item cannot be presented again.

Science Alt MCA Administration Modes

	Online	Paper	Hybrid
Administration	Student independently interacts with online test questions and materials. Or Test Administrator guides interactions and supports the student's use of the online test form.	Test Administrator uses only paper materials for testing.	Both paper test materials and the online test form are used to support the student.
Student Responses	Student responses are entered into the online test form in TestNav by the Test Administrator and/or student.	Student responses are entered into the online test form in TestNav by the Test Administrator.	Student responses are entered into the online test form in TestNav by the Test Administrator and/or student.

Upcoming Opportunities

January Q&A Session: Preparing for the Administration of Statewide Assessments (repeat)

MDE will host a virtual Q&A session for DACs on Jan. 14, from 2–3 p.m. that will focus on test administration and student participation. New and experienced DACs are welcome to attend. Register for the January Q&A Session. Details for joining are provided once participants register. Please note that registration will close 24 hours in advance of the Q&A session.

The prerequisites for the January Q&A session are Chapter 8: Test Administration and Chapter 9: Student Participation and Student in Special Circumstances and Situations of the *Procedures Manual*. MDE collects questions from DACs prior to the event to help prepare and find relevant resources to share. After reading the chapters, submit questions for the January DAC Q&A Session. Q&A sessions will not be recorded nor will CEUs be provided as these are considered additional supports rather than training events.

Alternate Assessment January Chat and Connect

The Academic Standards, Instruction, and Assessment Division will host a series of virtual Chat and Connect sessions for MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrators and special education staff. This will be an informal time for you to ask any questions around alternate assessment, share your feedback, and connect with other special education staff from across the state.

Join us via Zoom for the January Chat and Connect on Tuesday, Jan. 21, from 4–5 p.m. Please register for the Alt Assessment Chat and Connect. This month we will be discussing MTAS/Alt MCA supports and accommodations and alternate assessment Test Administrator trainings.

We will be meeting the third Tuesday of each month during the school year. You only need to register once to join any of the monthly Chat and Connects that work for you. The upcoming Alternate Assessment Chat and Connect dates for this year are Feb. 18, March 18, April 15, and May 20 at 4 p.m. For more information, contact Alt.Assessment.MDE@state.mn.us.

Pearson DAC Test Administration Training (repeat)

Pearson will provide a live *Pearson DAC Test Administration* virtual training for all District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) on Thursday, Jan. 9 from 9–11:30 a.m. This virtual training will provide an overview of changes to its systems, including PearsonAccess Next, TestNav, Learning Management System (LMS), reporting, Student Readiness Tools (SRTs), and MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA 2025 test administrations. Register for the Jan. 9 training.

Note: Registration closes 24 hours before the event, and participants will be approved by Pearson/MDE on Wednesday, Jan. 8. Once approved, you will receive an email with the meeting passcode and link to join the meeting. If you are unable to attend the virtual training, a recording of the training will be posted to the Learning Management System (LMS) on Jan. 17 (under the DAC catalog).

Meaningful Access to Standards for Students with Disabilities Webinar

The Special Education and Alternate Assessment teams at MDE will provide a webinar opportunity for general educators, special education educators, and staff administering alternate assessments to students with disabilities on Tuesday, Jan. 28 from 3:30–4:30 p.m.

Register for the Meaningful Access to Standards for Students with Disabilities Webinar.

This webinar will focus on examining best practices associated with providing all students meaningful access to academic standards throughout their educational career. This webinar is the first in a series which will provide foundational knowledge; future dates will include exemplars from teachers currently in the field.

In addition to the current webinar offerings, MDE has posted previous webinars that would be helpful for Special Education teams to review. All recordings are closed captioned and include links to accessible slide shows and other materials. Access webinar recordings on the Special Education Training page on MDE's website.

Tech Update

DRC Apple iPad Technology Updates

As communicated by DRC on Jan. 2, Apple recently updated iPad technology that has the potential to impact online testing in DRC INSIGHT. This update summarizes the changes that are necessary to eliminate any potential impacts. If your site does not use iPad devices for online testing, please disregard this update.

iPad Secure Application – Version 15.2

On Jan. 2, DRC released version 15.2 of the secure application for iPads. The update will be required and must be installed on iPad devices before testing.

- For iPad devices managed by Mobile Device Management (MDM), technology coordinators must update to the new version and push out the change to all managed devices.

- For devices not using an MDM, technology coordinators must update the new version manually.

- No additional action is needed for tests previously completed on iPad devices prior to the update.

Details for updating the secure application on iPad devices can be found in the *DRC INSIGHT Technology User Guide* located in WIDA AMS under My Applications > General Information > Documents.

Cross-Website Tracking and Device Supervision

For sites using iPadOS 16.2 or higher, an additional app id needs to be added to the provisioning profile. The new app id is: com.drc.wbte-ipad.drc.

For detailed instructions, refer to the *Tech Bulletin: Cross-Website Tracking iPads Update* located in WIDA AMS under My Applications > General Information > Documents.

Please contact DRC Customer Service with any questions at WIDA@DataRecognitionCorp.com or call 1-855-787-9615 (TTY: 763-268-2889).

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Minnesota Department of Education

education.mn.gov > District, Schools and Educators > Teaching and Learning > Statewide Testing

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