![Minnesota Department of Education logo] **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** | Assessment Update

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2024–25 College Entrance Exam FRP Reimbursement

Districts are required to offer a nationally recognized college entrance exam (ACT or SAT) to grades 11 and 12 students during a 2024–25 school day. Districts must enter into a contract directly with the test vendor. While a district may offer other assessment options to students at their discretion (for example, ASVAB or ACCUPLACER), a college entrance exam must still be offered. The requirements for offering a college entrance exam have not changed and are detailed in Chapter 2 of the *Procedures Manual* beginning on page 35.

MDE reimburses districts for students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FRP) (in addition to students who are determined to be unable to pay). To be eligible for reimbursement under FRP, the student must have been identified in student enrollment data as eligible for FRP at some point during the school year the exam is administered. The reimbursement criteria has not changed with the passing of the Free School

Meals for Kids Program. Refer to the [Free School Meals for Kids Program](#) for more information, including an FAQ that includes information about collecting Applications for Educational Benefits.

Test Security Desk Audits

The MDE Test Security and Data Integrity (TSDI) program is currently conducting desk audits of the district test security procedure (now referred to as the District Policies and Procedures for Statewide Assessments); usage of the medical excuse (ME) test code during the 2024 spring administrations; and district testing calendars posted to district websites. These desk audits are one way that TSDI works with districts to ensure requirements found in statute and/or the *[Procedures Manual](#)* are being carried out. The audits also identify opportunities where improvements can be made.

Desk audits are created by TSDI as a new Assessment Security Record in Test WES, and emails are sent to the DAC and Superintendent/Director to notify the district that TSDI is requesting an action. Documentation, feedback, and other communication related to the desk audits will be attached to the record.

Send Indicator for High School Science MCA/Alt MCA

High school students who have previously taken a high school science assessment (Science MCA-III or MTAS) should have the Precode Indicator set to "N" (No) as the default in Pretest Editing in Test WES, which means they will not be loaded for science testing in PearsonAccess Next (but they will be included for all other subjects for which they are eligible).

With the transition to the new science assessments (Science MCA-IV and Alt MCA), all high school students had the Send Indicator set to "Y" (Yes) — regardless of high school assessment history — at the beginning of the Pretest Editing window. This issue has now been resolved and students now only have the Send Indicator set to "Y" if they have not yet taken the high school science assessment. Refer to the *Pretest Editing User Guide*, posted on the [Test WES](#) page of the MDE website, for guidance on changing the Send Indicator on an individual student record or through Precode Download/Upload. Contact mde.testing@state.mn.us with any questions.

MTAS Participation Documentation (repeat)

Districts and charter schools should have received an email on Nov. 20 regarding the Assurance, Rationale, and Context (ARC) process. The ARC response must be completed and submitted to MDE by Dec. 20 via an online survey. To complete this task, districts and schools should use the Alternate Assessment Participation District Report, which is available in [Secure Reports](#) under Assessment Secure Reports, and the *Alternate Assessment Participation and Assurance, Rationale and Context (ARC) User Guide*, which is available on the [Alternate Assessment Participation page](#).

The ARC survey is broken into five sections in which the district will provide information about data, assurances, and where appropriate, narratives regarding alternate assessment participation rates. The questions in the survey can be found in the Assurance, Rationale, and Context (ARC) Response Survey Questions section of the *ARC User Guide* to guide district staff conversations in the ARC process. Special Education Directors, District Assessment Coordinators, Special Education case managers, and other key district staff should be included in conversations about alternate assessment participation, as reflected by the district's report, in order to complete the ARC response. Once the district has prepared to answer the questions, complete the online ARC survey by Dec. 20.

We recommend that district leaders watch the video tutorial from the Nov. 20 email. Many questions district leaders have will likely be answered in the tutorial.

For more information about the federal requirements and the work Minnesota has done pertaining to alternate assessment participation, refer to the Alternate Assessment Participation page.

MCA Testing Directions

In order to ensure fairness and equity, and for assessment results to reflect what Minnesota students know and can do, the administration of the statewide assessments should be as standardized as possible, both between schools within districts and between districts throughout the state. For this reason, it is imperative that all Test Monitors are familiar with and use the applicable directions throughout test administration, especially any scripted instruction that must be read to students.

For MCA, there are two versions of the MCA Testing Directions, *Testing Directions: Online* for online administrations and *Testing Directions: Paper* for paper administrations. Both versions have been posted on the Testing Directions page of the PearsonAccess Next website. The *Testing Directions: Paper* is also included along with the initial test materials shipment (if paper test materials are sent) and available in additional orders. The *Testing Directions: Online* are only available in additional orders (at a quantity of one copy per every 30 students).

The *Testing Directions* for online and paper administrations will also be available in Hmong, Spanish, and Somali in January for Test Monitors to read aloud the translated directions and/or provide a written copy for students who need this universal support. Note: Only the portions of the *Testing Directions* that are read aloud to students are translated. New for 2024–25: In addition to the written version of translated directions, recorded translated *Testing Directions* in Hmong, Spanish, and Somali will be posted on PearsonAccess Next in February along with a guidance document to be used by the Test Monitor in conjunction with this universal support.

The *Testing Schedules* section of each *Testing Directions* provides the number of items in each group/section that can be used for scheduling testing across multiple days so Test Monitors know where students should stop testing. This information is not available in the *Procedures Manual* as it is not available until after the manual is published. Note: Estimated test administration times are not included in the *Testing Directions* as testing schedules are set by each district. This information is available in the *Procedures Manual* (beginning on page

175), along with the estimated time to impact performance information so that DACs have the flexibility to use and communicate information on test administration time as needed based on how testing schedules are set.

Science Alternate MCA Kickoff Meeting Recording Available

MDE has posted the Nov. 7 recording of the Science Alternate Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (Alt MCA) Kickoff Meeting to the Alternate Assessments page of the Testing 1, 2, 3 website. The kickoff meeting focuses on:

- Preparation and administration for the new Spring 2025 Science Alt MCA operational assessment

- Tools for making decisions about test administration modes (online, paper or hybrid)

- Revised Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI)

- Revised Alternate Assessment Eligibility Requirements

- Test design and alignment to extended benchmarks

DACs should provide the recording to MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrators, Special Education Directors/Coordinators, and any district staff involved in administering alternate assessments.

MDE Employment Opportunity: Minnesota Kindergarten Fall Assessment (MnKFA) Specialist

The Early Education Division is looking for an Education Consultant 1: Minnesota Kindergarten Fall Assessment (MnKFA) Specialist to join the MnKFA team. This position will provide support to the Early Education Division and the MnKFA team through the process of design, development, implementation, and administration of the MnKFA.

If you are interested (or know someone who may be interested) in a new and challenging opportunity, consult the position description and application instructions on the State of Minnesota Careers website. The job ID is 82211, and the posting closes Jan. 2. Visit the State of Minnesota Careers website for more information and to apply. Contact mai.n.vang@state.mn.us with any questions.

Upcoming Opportunities

January WIDA and DRC Webinars

WIDA and DRC will be hosting the following webinars in January:

- Returning ACCESS Test Materials, Jan. 21, 1–2 p.m.

- Monitoring ACCESS Completion for Test Coordinators, Jan. 23, 1–2 p.m.

More information, including the webinar link, can be found in the WIDA Secure Portal on the Webinars page. The recordings for WIDA Webinars are posted on the Webinars page within a week of the presentation.

Pearson DAC Test Administration Training

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).

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

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.

Technology Coordinator Training

Refer to the *Tech Update* for information on the Pearson *Technology Coordinator Training* for District Technology and District Assessment Coordinators.

Odds & Ends

Due to the holidays, MDE will be closed on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

There will be no *Assessment Update* on either Dec. 25 or Jan. 1. The next *Assessment Update* newsletter will be sent on Jan. 8.

There will be limited staff available to monitor the mde.testing@state.mn.us mailbox from Dec. 23–Jan. 1. There may be a delayed response to your email.

Tech Update

Technology Coordinator Training

Pearson will provide a live virtual *Technology Coordinator Training* on Tuesday, Jan. 7 from 1–2:30 p.m. to support District Technology Coordinators and District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) in preparation for the 2025 online test administration. The training will review infrastructure readiness steps and resources, TestNav overview and updates, hardware and software requirements for testing devices, and tips for troubleshooting issues. Register for the Jan. 7 training.

Note: Registration closes 24 hours before the event, and participants will be approved by Pearson/MDE on Monday, Jan. 6. 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 and Test Administration catalogs).