

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT — Nov. 29, 2023

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Testing Calendar Reminder • Pretest Editing in Test WES for MCA/MTAS Preparation • Preparing for the MCA and MTAS: Item Sampler Retirement and New Resources • DAC Test Administration Training: Registration • December Q&A Session: Test Administration Training • New DAC Pearson Basics Training (1–2 years) • Upcoming Opportunities • Tech Update 	<p>Nov. 27–Dec. 15: Indicate the number of ACCESS Online testers for grades 1–12 and order test materials during Materials Ordering in the WIDA Assessment Management System (WIDA AMS)</p> <p>Nov. 27: Pretest Editing opened in Test WES</p>

District Testing Calendar Reminder

Districts are required to post a comprehensive testing calendar on the district website by Oct. 1, and must update all testing information for a specific test or tests two months before the applicable testing window opens. Verify that ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS testing calendars are up to date for schools across the district. For MCA/MTAS, testing calendars must be up to date by the beginning of January. Minor changes can continue to be made to ensure calendars are accurate.

MDE reviews testing calendars and will communicate directly with the DAC if MDE determines that their district's 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 141.

[Back to Top](#)

Pretest Editing in Test WES for MCA/MTAS Preparation

The Pretest Editing window for MCA/MTAS preparation opened on Nov. 27. Pretest Editing is the process during which districts verify or enter the requested information for MCA/MTAS so that 1) correct student records (with or without the appropriate accommodations and/or universal supports) are sent to Pearson in precode, and 2) Pearson automatically sends the appropriate MCA paper test materials or MTAS test materials with the initial shipment of test materials to districts or schools in February.

DACs must also enter important information under the District Options and District Confirmations screens in Test WES. This includes verifying Individual Student Reports (ISRs) from 2023 have been delivered and indicating shipping preferences for test materials. There is no new functionality within Pretest Editing, but language has been updated to reflect that supports for MCA have been re-categorized as universal supports (instead of linguistic supports).

An updated *Pretest Editing User Guide*, with step-by-step instructions and screenshots, is posted on the [Test WES](#) page of the MDE website, and a recorded training is posted to [Learning Management System](#) (LMS) (DAC Catalog > MDE Systems tag). Note: MDE recommends downloading the user guide first to help you follow along while watching the training.

[Back to Top](#)

Preparing for the MCA and MTAS: Item Sampler Retirement and New Resources

On June 30, the item samplers and student tutorials were permanently removed from PearsonAccess Next. The [Student Readiness Tools \(SRTs\)](#) are new resources available to prepare students for MCA tests. Based on input from educators and students, MDE developed the SRTs to meet student needs. Because students already prepare for the content of statewide assessments through daily instruction aligned to the academic standards, it is essential to provide students with resources that focus exclusively on the functionality of the test and types of questions. If students are comfortable with the format of the test, they are better prepared during testing to demonstrate what they know and can do related to the academic standards.

MDE understands that educators need to be familiar with content that is aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards and to have access to resources that can be used to inform instruction. To meet this need, previously administered MCA and MTAS questions aligned to the academic standards are found in the [Minnesota Questions Tool \(MQT\)](#). The MQT was released in Summer 2022, and it contains hundreds of items to help show how questions are written to reflect the rigor and complexity of the standards.

The retirement of the item samplers and student tutorials may come as a bit of a surprise to some educators, as they have been available for a number of years. However, there are now many more questions available for educators to review in the MQT than there were in the item samplers. In addition, the new SRTs provide educators with greater flexibility in using them with their students; the information on test functionality, including navigation, tools, and item types, is easier to access and is presented in a more effective way for

students. Note: Encourage educators to remove bookmarked links to the retired item samplers and student tutorials and replace them with updated links to the SRTs.

[Back to Top](#)

DAC Test Administration Training: Registration

In December, MDE will provide the Test Administration Training for all DACs. This training will focus on new and clarified information from the [Procedures Manual](#) for the 2023–24 school year.

MDE is offering two virtual training sessions, and DACs only need to attend one session. MDE will also post a pre-recorded training to the DAC Catalog of the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS) on Dec. 15 for DACs who are unable to attend either of the virtual training sessions. MDE recommends that DACs attend a virtual session, if possible, as they will include opportunities to collaborate with other DACs from across the state.

- [Register for Virtual Session 1](#): Tuesday, Dec. 12 (9 a.m.–noon)
- [Register for Virtual Session 2](#): Wednesday, Dec. 13 (1–4 p.m.)

The Test Administration Training is required for all DACs in order to prepare for spring testing; all DACs must complete this training. Participation will be automatically indicated in the LMS following the virtual training events. For those who view the recording, their participation will appear in the LMS upon completion. Please note that participants must complete 80% of the training to get credit.

Please note: MDE aims to deliver our presentations in a way that will be accessible for our participants. If you anticipate needing accommodations, contact mde.testing@state.mn.us. MDE requests a two-week advance notice to provide accommodations and 48-hour notice to cancel them. If the request comes within two weeks of the event, MDE will still make an effort to provide the accommodation.

[Back to Top](#)

December Q&A Session: Test Administration Training

Our December Q&A Session will be on Dec. 19, from 2–3 p.m. and will focus on test administration and answering questions from the Test Administration Training. [Register for the December Q&A Session](#). Details for joining are provided once participants register.

The prerequisite for the December Q&A session is completion of the Test Administration Training, either attended virtually or completed in the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS). MDE collects questions from DACs prior to the event to help prepare and find relevant resources to share. After completing the training, [submit questions for the December Q&A Session](#). Q&A Sessions will not be recorded nor will CEUs be provided as these are an additional support rather than a training event.

[Back to Top](#)

New DAC Pearson Basics Training (1–2 years)

Pearson will provide an overview of its systems for new District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) in their first or second year. The live virtual training will focus on user management and preliminary reports in PearsonAccess Next. A recording of the training will be posted to the [Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#) on Dec. 15 (under the DAC catalog > Pearson Trainings and Webinars tag).

To prepare for the training, the *User Management in PearsonAccess Next* short video training is posted to the [Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#) for review (under the DAC catalog > Pearson Trainings and Webinar tag).

The table below contains the webinar training topic, high-level agenda, date and time, and the meeting link. No registration is required. Select the hyperlink to join the meeting.

TRAINING AND TOPIC	DATE AND TIME	MEETING LINK
New DAC Pearson Basics Training (1–2 years) Overview of Pearson’s systems, including user management and preliminary reports in PearsonAccess Next.	Thursday, Dec. 7 2–3:30 p.m.	Join the webinar on Dec. 7.

[Back to Top](#)

Upcoming Opportunities

Universal Supports and Accommodations in Statewide Assessments

MDE is hosting a webinar that will focus on how the current universal supports and accommodations available for the MCA and MTAS are helpful to students with disabilities, and ways Individual Education Program (IEP) teams can plan for successful assessment experiences for students. Special education teachers, special education directors, and District/School Assessment Coordinators are encouraged to attend.

Date: Dec. 5

Time: 3:30–4:30 p.m.

[Register for Universal Supports and Accommodations in State Assessments on ZoomGov](#)

MDE has reorganized how supports and accommodations are presented for statewide assessments. This new framework replaces the former categorization (general supports, linguistic supports, and accommodations). While there are now only two main categories—universal supports and accommodations—additional subcategories have been used to better organize and describe available supports.

We will highlight a new MDE created document, [Guidance for Universal Supports and Accommodations for Minnesota Statewide Assessments](#), and a stand-alone version of an infographic summarizing the available universal supports and accommodations for MCA. These documents can be used by district and school staff who have a role in decision-making and/or test administration with universal supports and accommodations for statewide assessments. For more information, contact alt.assessment.mde@state.mn.us.

WIDA and DRC Webinars

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

- During Testing: Managing Test Sessions for ACCESS Online, Dec. 5, 1–2 p.m.
- During Testing: Managing Test Materials for ACCESS Paper, Dec. 7, 1–2 p.m.
- During Testing: Managing Students in WIDA AMS for ACCESS Paper, Dec. 12, 1–2 p.m.
- During Testing: Technology Troubleshooting, Dec. 14, 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 Q&A Webinars are posted to the WIDA Secure Portal on the Webinars page within a week of the presentation.

[Back to Top](#)

Tech Update

Spring 2024 Infrastructure Readiness Checklist

The *Infrastructure Readiness Checklist* is now available on the [Technology](#) page to assist districts and schools with preparation for online MCA testing. This checklist provides steps to help create a successful testing experience for schools and students while administrating the online MCA. To limit test day technical issues, it is strongly recommended that technology staff perform the tasks outlined in the Infrastructure Readiness Checklist according to the recommended timelines.

While District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) are the primary recipients of information about test administration, it is important for DACs and technology staff to develop a communication plan for sharing information needed for online infrastructure setup, maintenance, and troubleshooting. If you have any questions about online testing infrastructure setup, please contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or submit a [Pearson help desk request](#). In addition to the Pearson help desk, you may also utilize Pearson's [Technology Office Hours](#) and schedule a one-on-one virtual session with a technology field engineer to talk through specific setup instructions or discuss other challenges or questions.

Proctor Cache and Secondary Save Location Recommendations

MDE and Pearson no longer recommend proctor caching or creating secondary save locations for online MCA testing. Data from Spring 2021, 2022, and 2023 test administrations showed item load time was nearly identical

for cached and non-cached tests. Data from the 2023 test administration also showed that improper setup of proctor cache machines or secondary save locations results in testing errors which delayed item load time or forced students and Test Monitors to navigate past error warnings or seek Pearson Help Desk support.

MDE and Pearson recommend deleting TestNav Configurations with proctor cache machines and secondary save locations set up. Deleting TestNav Configurations with a proctor cache machine and/or secondary save locations eliminates the need to select a precaching computer during test session creation and reduces unnecessary errors during online testing. Refer to the *Infrastructure Readiness Checklist* for more information. If you have questions or concerns, please schedule a Technology Office Hours virtual session to speak with a Pearson Field Engineering Specialist.

[Back to Top](#)

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Minnesota Department of Education

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

If you have any questions or want to unsubscribe, please send an email to mde.testing@state.mn.us.