

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT — DEC. 4, 2024

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Additional Assessment Data Available</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Verify District Testing Calendar</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ACCESS Materials Ordering Closes Dec. 13</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Important Date for ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Precode File</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Learning Management System</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">MTAS Participation Documentation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessment Security Records (ASR) System (Update)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Upcoming Opportunities</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Tech Update</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Nov. 25–Dec. 13:</b> <i>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)</i></p> <p><b>Dec. 12:</b> <i>Deadline for updating student enrollment data for EL students</i></p>

## ***Additional Assessment Data Available***

Straggler data (that is “late” assessment records) for 2025 MCA/MTAS and ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS have now been added to the District and School Student Results (DSR & SSR) and Student Assessment History Report in [Secure Reports](#). This data comes from tests that were not included or available during Posttest Editing.

For MCA and MTAS, this is typically due to a district making a late-score entry request after the initial deadline.

For ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS, this is typically due to later returns of paper test materials (for example, Kindergarten ACCESS or test booklets for the writing domain) or any score appeals, test booklet searches, or transcription requests.

Note: Updated DSR/SSR files with straggler data are not provided to the Student Information System (SIS) and data warehouse vendors who received this data from MDE this summer and fall. Districts must provide updated files to their vendors directly, as needed.

[Back to Top](#)

## ***Verify District Testing Calendar***

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.

[Back to Top](#)

## ***ACCESS Materials Ordering Closes Dec. 13***

It is very important that districts complete materials ordering in WIDA AMS by Friday, Dec. 13. Districts must indicate the following by school:

- The number of Kindergarten ACCESS testers.
- The number of WIDA Alternate ACCESS testers by grade cluster.
- The number of large print and braille test booklets by grade cluster and tier or format.
- The number of ACCESS Paper testers by grade cluster and tier. Note: ACCESS Paper can be ordered either as accommodations for students with IEPs or 504 plans or for students enrolled in U.S. schools for less than a year. Refer to *Test Administration Considerations for ACCESS* in Chapter 8 of the [Procedures Manual](#) for additional information.
- The number of ACCESS Online testers for each grade cluster.
  - Even though the majority of ACCESS tests are administered online, paper test materials are needed for the grade-level clusters 1, 2–3 and 4–5 Writing tests. Paper test materials will be sent automatically for the indicated number of ACCESS Online testers in these grade-level clusters.
  - Note: While a keyboarding option exists for the grade cluster 4–5 Writing test, the default response mode in Minnesota for the grade cluster 4–5 Writing test is handwriting.

More information on Materials Ordering for the ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS can be found in Chapter 7 of the [Procedures Manual](#). Detailed instructions on using WIDA AMS are available in the *WIDA AMS User Guide*. The *WIDA AMS User Guide* can be accessed from the link within the Get Help section of the [WIDA AMS landing page](#) or by logging into WIDA AMS and selecting My Applications > General Information > Documents. Additionally, both the *Online ACCESS for ELLs: Administration* and the *Paper ACCESS for ELLs: Administration* assessment training courses include modules on planning and logistics that cover materials ordering. Access WIDA assessment trainings on the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) (login required).

## ***Important Date for ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Precode File***

In December, MDE will send the student precode file for ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS to DRC. This file is used to load student information into WIDA AMS for ACCESS Online testing and to create student labels for all paper test materials (Kindergarten ACCESS, WIDA Alternate ACCESS, certain accommodations, and applicable paper test materials for the Writing domain).

It is important to ensure that all English learners are accurately indicated as EL in your student enrollment (MARSS/Ed-Fi) data, as MDE uses this data to create the precode file. **Districts must confirm that accurate enrollment information has been submitted to MDE by Dec. 12.**

Note: This date may be earlier if your district uses a student information service provider for submitting enrollment data. If this is the case, check with your provider for their timeline in order for information to be submitted to MDE by Dec. 12.

## ***Learning Management System***

### **LMS Learner User Role in PearsonAccess Next**

Users can access the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS) by either self-registering an account or being uploaded from PearsonAccess Next. The LMS Learner is a new user role available in [PearsonAccess Next](#) and is intended to be used for school staff who do not need access to PearsonAccess Next for test administration, but need to complete trainings in the LMS. By creating PearsonAccess Next accounts for these staff and assigning them the LMS Learner role, DACs and AAs can manage which organizations staff are registered to, create new LMS accounts for staff to ensure all staff are registered to the LMS correctly, and delete LMS accounts for staff no longer at their district. A few notes:

- The LMS Learner role in PearsonAccess Next has limited access to PearsonAccess Next and no access to student-level information.
- Newly created users will still receive an email notification to create a PearsonAccess Next password; however, these users do not need to create a password or log into PearsonAccess Next in order to be uploaded into the LMS.
- For staff that have already self-registered an LMS account, creating a PearsonAccess Next account will update that user's LMS registration information.
- Users assigned to other roles in PearsonAccess Next (for example, Test Monitor/Data Entry, MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrator) do not need to be assigned the LMS Learner role. All PearsonAccess Next users are imported nightly into the LMS.

- If an LMS Learner account is disabled or deleted in PearsonAccess Next, the Learner is deleted from the LMS. Restoring or enabling the account in PearsonAccess Next restores the Learner in the LMS.
- Updates to PearsonAccess Next user accounts are loaded into LMS the following business day.

Note: Staff can still self-register LMS accounts. Please note that improvements to the self-registration page are in progress and will be communicated in a future *Assessment Update*. Regardless of how Learners first access the LMS, an Adobe account must also be established.

For more information on PearsonAccess Next user account management and the LMS Learner role, refer the [PearsonAccess Next User Accounts Guide \(2024-25\)](#) (PearsonAccess Next > Resources & Training > User Guides).

## Available Learning Paths and Posting Dates

Pearson and MDE review and update all trainings each year prior to test administration. Once these trainings have been updated and posted to the LMS, Learners can enroll in the Learning Path and complete the required trainings. Below is a timeline for when Learning Paths will be available in the LMS:

Learning Path	Date Available
ACCESS Test Administrator—Grades 1–12	Nov. 8
ACCESS Test Administrator—Kindergarten/WIDA Alternate ACCESS	Nov. 8
Test Security	Nov. 8
Technology Coordinators	Nov. 8
MCA Test Monitor	Nov. 15
District Assessment Coordinators	Dec. 13
MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrator	Jan. 17

For a complete list of all the required and optional courses and the posting date for each learning path, please see the *LMS Test Administration Learning Paths, Courses and Posting Dates (2024–25)* document under the LMS Resources and How-To Guides section on the [PearsonAccess Next Training page](#).

Note: Once a new LMS Learner User Account is created, that user will automatically be enrolled in Test Security Training, which is a required course for anyone who is involved in administering statewide assessments and/or

has access to secure statewide testing materials. The Test Security course is available as part of the required courses for other learning paths. Learners can enroll in other learning paths to complete this course. Once completed, the Test Security course will show as completed in all other learning paths that the learner is enrolled in.

Learners will need an LMS account before enrolling and completing learning paths or individual courses in the LMS. Resources for logging in and using the LMS are available on the [PearsonAccess Next Training page](#). The Pearson help desk with any questions at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request online](#).

[Back to Top](#)

## ***MTAS Participation Documentation***

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.

On Dec. 9 from 3:30–4:30 p.m., MDE will host a Q&A session that you can attend to ask any questions you have about the ARC process. Please [register for the Q&A session](#). We recommend that district leaders watch the [video tutorial](#) from the email before attending the webinar, if possible. Many initial 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](#).

[Back to Top](#)

## ***Assessment Security Records (ASR) System (Update)***

Enhancements to the search function of the Assessment Security Records (ASR) system planned for last week were not implemented as expected. While these changes were not put in place, the ASR system remains functional and is ready for the testing window.

## Upcoming Opportunities

### DAC Test Administration Training (Repeat)

In December, MDE will provide the *Test Administration Training* for all District Assessment Coordinators (DACs). This training will focus on new and clarified information from the [Procedures Manual](#) for the 2024–25 school year.

MDE is offering two virtual training sessions, and DACs only need to attend one session. A pre-recorded training will be posted to the DAC Catalog of the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS) on Dec. 13 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. 10 (9 a.m.–noon)
- [Register for Virtual Session 2](#): Wednesday, Dec. 11 (1–4 p.m.)

Please note that registration must be completed 24 hours in advance of the start of each training.

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.

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](mailto: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.

### December Q&A Session: Test Administration Training

Our December Q&A Session will be on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 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. Please note that automatic registration will close 24 hours prior to the start of this training.

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. The survey to submit questions for the December Q&A Session will be shared during the *Test Administration Training*. Q&A Sessions will not be recorded nor will CEUs be provided as these are an additional support rather than a training event.

## Alternate Assessment December 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 December Chat and Connect on Tuesday, Dec. 17, from 4–5 p.m. Please [register for the Alt Assessment Chat and Connect](#). This month we will be discussing the WIDA Alternate ACCESS with Dean Reasoner, our EL Assessment Specialist, and the Science Alternate MCA test materials available for Spring 2025.

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 Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 18, April 15, and May 20 at 4 p.m. For more information, contact [Alt.Assessment.MDE@state.mn.us](mailto:Alt.Assessment.MDE@state.mn.us).

[Back to Top](#)

## Tech Update

### TestNav Configuration Purge in PearsonAccess Next

TestNav Configurations are used to designate proctor cache machines and secondary save locations for online testing. However, MDE and Pearson no longer recommend proctor caching or creating secondary save locations. Data from Spring 2021–24 test administrations showed item load time was nearly identical for cached and non-cached tests. Additional data from the 2024 test administration showed that improper setup of proctor cache machines or secondary save locations resulted in testing errors that delayed item load time, forced students and Test Monitors to navigate past error warnings, or caused staff to seek Pearson Help Desk support.

On Friday, Dec. 13, Pearson will purge all TestNav Configurations from PearsonAccess Next and the Training Center. Prior to Pearson purging TestNav Configurations, consider exporting the configuration and saving locally to reference later, if needed; once deleted, configurations cannot otherwise be retrieved.

- To export a TestNav configuration from PearsonAccess Next, under Setup, select TestNav Configurations.
- Use the filters to find a TestNav Configuration for your organization and then select the checkbox to the left of the configuration name.
- In the dropdown menu to the right of the Start button, select Import/Export TestNav Configurations. Under Action, select Export.
- Then select the Export button.

If you have questions or concerns about online testing without proctor caching, 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 district-specific cases, testing without proctor cache, specific setup instructions, or discuss other challenges.

For additional questions, please contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659, or [submit a help desk request](#).

[Back to Top](#)

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Minnesota Department of Education

[education.mn.gov](http://education.mn.gov) > District, Schools and Educators > Teaching and Learning > Statewide Testing

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