

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT — FEB. 12, 2025

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Administration • Initial Shipment of MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA Test Materials • PearsonAccess Next Setup and Preparation • Learning Management System (LMS): Updated Self-Registration Page • After Hours Testing • 2024–25 College Entrance Exam FRP Reimbursement (repeat) • Paper-Based Math Accommodation Code Conflicts in Test WES • Translated Versions of MCA Testing Directions • Odds and Ends 	<p>Nov. 25–May 1: Complete Pretest Editing in Test WES</p> <p>Jan. 6–March 21: Complete administration tasks in WIDA AMS</p> <p>Jan. 27–March 21: ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS testing window</p> <p>Feb. 17: Start completing administration tasks in PearsonAccess Next (including entering LCI data for MTAS/Alt MCA)</p> <p>Feb. 18: Additional materials ordering window opens in PearsonAccess Next</p> <p>Feb. 18–20 or Feb. 25–27: Receive paper MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA test materials</p>

ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Administration

ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS testing is well underway and will continue until March 21. Please consider the following reminders as these assessments are administered in your districts.

Common Irregularities

The following irregularities are common across the state. Consider reminding your Test Administrators to prevent these situations:

- Students are logging in with the wrong test ticket. Ensure Test Administrators distribute the correct test tickets to students and that all students confirm they are logging in with the correct information. A

check of test tickets is part of the *Test Administrator's Script* that is required to be read before students begin testing.

- Students are taking the wrong test (such as ACCESS instead of WIDA Alternate ACCESS), the wrong mode of the test (such as ACCESS Online instead of ACCESS Paper), or are taking the test with either missing required accommodations or inappropriate accommodations not indicated in a student's IEP/504 plan. Ensure that Test Administrators know which supports and/or accommodations are required for each student and any related specific test administration procedures prior to each testing session.

As a reminder, the *ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS Irregularities* document is a helpful resource that outlines common misadministration scenarios and includes likely steps districts will need to take to resolve the issue, as well as possible outcomes. This document is available on [Minnesota's WIDA page](#) under the Manuals, Guides and Test Materials expandable header.

SPD Codes

English learners with disabilities should participate in as many domains of the ACCESS or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS as possible. The decision to use the Special Education Deferred (SPD) code can only be made by an IEP team after considering all the characteristics of an individual student. An SPD code indicates the IEP team has determined it is impossible for the student to participate in a given domain due to a disability. In most cases, appropriate supports and/or accommodations will allow a student's participation in all domains of the ACCESS. In some cases, it may be determined that the WIDA Alternate ACCESS is a more appropriate assessment that will enable the student to fully demonstrate their English language proficiency.

SPD cannot be used to exempt a student from taking a test. If the IEP team determines the SPD code is appropriate for more than two domains, contact MDE at mde.testing@state.mn.us for approval. Refer to Test Codes in Chapter 9 of the [Procedures Manual](#) for more information.

Note: MDE will provide an alternate composite score calculation for English Learners with Disabilities (ELSWD) who are not able to participate in one or more domains of the ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS due to the student's disability and who meet all the following criteria:

- The student must have received a valid score for each completed domain.
- The domain(s) in which the student cannot participate must have a test code of SPD.
- The student must have completed (received a valid score) on at least two domains.

Alternate composite scores provide a pathway to exit for students who complete fewer than four domains of the ACCESS/WIDA Alternate ACCESS. More information on exit pathways can be found under Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures on the [English Learner Education webpage](#).

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Initial Shipment of MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA Test Materials

The initial quantities of paper test materials for MCA and MTAS/Alt MCA are based on information entered in Pretest Editing by the Jan. 17 deadline. The test materials shipment will arrive at the district office or schools on either Feb. 18–20 or Feb. 25–27, depending on the shipping location and dates selected in Test WES. If no changes were indicated in Test WES, the default option was “ship to district” with a delivery window of Feb. 18–20.

Districts must have staff available to receive the materials. District and School Assessment Coordinators must ensure there is a plan for receiving the shipments and keeping the test materials secure upon delivery following the district’s procedure.

Districts can track the shipment status in PearsonAccess Next 2–3 days prior to the arrival date. For more information, refer to *Viewing Test Material Reports and Tracking Information* guide posted on the [User Guides](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website.

Receiving and Inventorying Test Materials

MCA paper test materials and MTAS/Alt MCA test materials will be boxed separately and have different packing lists and security checklists. Use these materials to inventory all materials received; electronic copies of each school’s security checklists are also available on PearsonAccess Next. For more information, refer to the *Receiving Secure Test Materials* guide posted on the [User Guides](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website. A copy is also included in the test materials shipment.

Test materials security must be maintained when inventorying and organizing, and all secure test materials must be kept in a secure, locked location until testing. The *Handling Secure Paper Test Materials* training is an optional training for staff who will handle paper test materials for any statewide assessments, and it provides information about keeping materials secure and maintaining the chain of custody. This training is available as an optional, standalone training in the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS).

Preparing for the MTAS/Alt MCA

To allow sufficient time to prepare for test administration, District and School Assessment Coordinators should distribute MTAS/Alt MCA test materials to Test Administrators upon delivery. These materials must be kept in a secure location until testing begins. However, once test materials are delivered, Test Administrators may review and prepare all MTAS/Alt MCA materials that may be used during test administration including:

- Reviewing all scripted tasks and passages in the Task Administration Manual, Presentation Pages, Passages and/or Scenarios Book, Phenomena Book, and Response Option Cards. The separate Passages and/or Scenarios Book and Phenomena Book are spiral-bound books by grade and contain the reading passages and mathematics scenarios for the MTAS field test tasks and science phenomena for the Alt MCA. These materials are used in conjunction with the Presentation Pages so the student can view both the reading passage, mathematics scenario, or science phenomenon and associated item together.

- Preparing and making adaptations (such as enlarging materials or incorporating texture) to Presentation Pages, Passages and/or Scenarios Book, Phenomena Book, and Response Option Cards to individual student needs.
- Determining any objects or manipulatives that may be needed for the presentation of the task to the student. Refer to the printed Task Administration Manuals for optional mathematics and science object lists.

Placing Additional Orders in PearsonAccess Next

The window for placing additional orders in PearsonAccess Next for MCA paper test materials and MTAS/Alt MCA test materials opens on Feb. 18. Additional test materials can be ordered until noon on the Tuesday before the last day of the testing windows to ensure there is enough time for districts to receive the requested materials. Additional orders may be placed for the following reasons:

- Students have newly enrolled or there were changes in accommodations/universal supports or test assignments after Jan. 17.
- The district decided not to receive MTAS/Alt MCA test materials in the initial test materials shipment (a decision made during Pretest Editing).

For step-by-step instructions on placing an additional order, refer to *Ordering Additional Test Materials* guide, posted on the [User Guides](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website. For any questions about placing additional orders, contact the Pearson help desk at 888-817-8659 or [submit a Pearson help desk request online](#).

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PearsonAccess Next Setup and Preparation

Starting Feb. 17, districts will be able to set up MCA/Alt MCA test sessions, assign student tests to MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrator user roles, enter Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI) data (MTAS and Alt MCA), and create reporting groups in PearsonAccess Next. The *MCA Data Entry User Guide* is now available on the [User Guides](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website.

Note: The following sections of the *MCA Online Testing User Guide* and *MTAS/Alt MCA Data Entry and Online Testing User Guide* are being updated:

- Manually Create a Test Session (MCA)
- Verify Assistive Technology (AT) Online Forms Accommodations (MCA) and Alt MCA: Verify Assistive Technology (AT) Accommodation (MTAS/Alt MCA)

Revised versions of the guides will be posted by Friday, Feb. 14. MDE recommends downloading the updated versions.

Setting up MCA and Alt MCA Test Sessions

Step-by-step instructions for setting up test sessions are available in the *MCA Online Testing User Guide* and *MTAS/Alt MCA Data Entry and Online Testing User Guide*. **New for 2024–25:** Test sessions will need to be created in PearsonAccess Next for students taking the Science Alt MCA. Students will enter their responses directly in TestNav (with Test Administrator support) or, if testing using paper materials, responses from the Data Collection Form must be entered into TestNav by district or school staff for scoring. Starting Feb. 17, test sessions can be created and prepared in PearsonAccess Next for the MCA and Science Alt MCA. Test sessions cannot be started until the first day of the testing window, and it is recommended that test sessions are not started until the actual day of test administration.

The *MCA Data Entry User Guide* provides information and instructions for test preparation and guidance for data entry for students taking a paper MCA.

Assistive Technology Online Form Custom Groups

MDE recommends that districts create custom groups in Pretest Editing in Test WES for students with the assistive technology screen reader (AT-S) and assistive technology non-screen reader (AT-N) accommodations for Science MCAs. This will allow districts to quickly add students with these accommodations to test sessions in PearsonAccess Next with the correct AT form group type. Custom groups cannot be entered for MTAS/Alt MCA. Creating custom groups is covered beginning on page 25 of the [Test WES Pretest Editing User Guide](#).

Note: When setting up test sessions for AT-S and AT-N forms, select the applicable grade and subject test (for example, Grade 08 Science MCA), not a data entry or script test, in the Test Assigned dropdown. Once that is selected, you will have the option to select AT Screen Reader or AT Non-Screen Reader under the Form Group Type dropdown.

Alternate MCA Testing Tickets

For the new Science Alternate MCA, all student responses—regardless of administration mode (online, paper, or hybrid)—must be entered in TestNav for scoring. In order for the student and/or Test Administrator to access the student’s test in TestNav, they must be provided a testing ticket. To generate a testing ticket for a student, the District or School Assessment Coordinator, or other staff as assigned, must create a test session in PearsonAccess Next and add the student. Once the session has been prepared, testing tickets can be printed. Refer to the *MTAS/Alt MCA Data Entry and Online Testing User Guide* for step-by-step instructions for administrative tasks in PearsonAccess Next.

Districts need to consider how student testing tickets are provided to staff, especially if electronic copies are shared. Because student testing tickets provide access to secure test content and include private student data, districts should first consider their district policies for how private student data is shared, and whether sharing electronically is allowed.

Testing tickets must be provided to Test Administrators for the test to be accessed in TestNav, or to district staff assigned for data entry for paper administrations. Test Administrators will then use the login information indicated on the testing ticket to access the student's test—either to administer the test in an online or hybrid format, or to complete data entry for a paper administration. Staff must keep testing tickets secure until test administration and between test sessions, as applicable.

Assign Student Tests to MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrators for MTAS Data Entry

District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) and Assessment Administrators (AAs) user roles must assign students with Reading and Mathematics MTAS test assignments to staff with the MTAS/Alt MCA Test Administrator user role in PearsonAccess Next before those users can enter MTAS/Alt MCA data in PearsonAccess Next. For step-by-step instructions on assigning MTAS/Alt MCA Test Admin. users in PearsonAccess Next, refer to *MTAS/Alt MCA Data Entry and Online Testing User Guide*.

Additional Training

The following trainings will be available in the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS) on Friday, Feb. 14. These are optional trainings posted within the Test Administration catalog.

- *Managing MCA and Alt MCA Test Sessions in PearsonAccess Next* is a training for staff who manage MCA or Science Alt MCA test sessions in PearsonAccess Next; it provides information about using the system before and during testing.
- *Entering MTAS Data in PearsonAccess Next* is a training for staff who enter the Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI) data and Reading and Mathematics MTAS scores/responses in PearsonAccess Next.

Reporting Groups

DACs and AAs can create reporting groups in PearsonAccess Next for staff to access student results, including On-Demand Reports and Historical Student Data. There are three options for creating reporting groups—manually, importing a file, or creating a reporting group from a test session. For more information, refer to the *Reporting Groups User Guide*, posted on the [Additional Reporting Resources](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website or the *Reporting Groups in PearsonAccess Next* short video training in the LMS (DAC catalog). Note: Due to 2024–25 being the first operational administration of the new Science MCA and Science Alt MCA, preliminary On-Demand Reports will not be available for these assessments this year.

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Learning Management System (LMS): Updated Self-Registration Page

An updated self-registration page is now available for the LMS. Users without an LMS account, or who do not have accounts automatically imported from PearsonAccess Next, will select [Register an LMS Account](#) to self-register a new LMS account. The updated self-registration page requires users to select both a district and a school before registering an account and contains a built-in search feature to find the correct district and school(s). Error messages let users know when they have not completed the registration fields correctly. For more information, refer to the [Self-Registering a Learning Management System \(LMS\) Account](#) guide.

The following resources were updated for 2024–25 and are available on the [Training page](#) of the PearsonAccess Next website under the “LMS Resources” heading:

- *Signing in to the LMS*
- *Self-Registering an LMS Account*
- *LMS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*

Additional trainings are posted to the LMS:

- *Learning Management System Overview (2024–25)* (DAC catalog)
- *Learning Management System Manager Role Training (2024–25)* (DAC catalog)
- *Learning Management System Learner Role Training (2024–25)* (Test Administration catalog)

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After Hours Testing

To provide districts and schools the most flexibility for scheduling (for students who are homebound or attending an online program), District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) may request testing times outside of regular school hours or on weekends. As noted in Chapter 8 of the [Procedures Manual](#), the DAC must email mde.testing@state.mn.us at least two business days in advance and provide the following:

- The district and school name
- Grade and subject/domain
- Name of test session(s)
- Planned dates and times to begin and end testing
- Rationale for after-hours testing or data entry need

Note: Service provider help desks have set customer service hours and may not be available during after-hours testing sessions.

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2024–25 College Entrance Exam FRP Reimbursement (repeat)

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.

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Paper-Based Math Accommodation Code Conflicts in Test WES

If a student requires multiple paper-based supports or accommodations for the Mathematics MCA, such as handheld calculator (HC), script/human reader (HR), and/or regular print test book (12), only one accommodation code must be indicated in Test WES. Any paper test materials needed for a student must then be ordered during the additional orders window, since indicating codes in Test WES that require the use of paper test materials after the Jan. 17 pretest editing deadline does not automatically generate a materials order (refer to the *Placing Additional Orders in PearsonAccess Next* article above for additional details) Refer to pages 112 and 116–119 of the [Procedures Manual](#) or page 35 of the [Test WES Pretest Editing User Guide](#) for more information about accommodation/universal support codes and code conflicts.

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Translated Versions of MCA Testing Directions

For MCA, there are two versions of the *MCA Testing Directions*, *Testing Directions: Online* for online administrations and *Testing Directions: Paper* for paper administrations. Translated versions in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish are now posted on the [Testing Directions](#) page of the PearsonAccess Next website for Test Monitors to provide translated directions to students who need this universal support. Only the portions read aloud to the student are translated.

Note: Audio versions of translated directions in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish will also be available this year on PearsonAccess Next in addition to the written version that may be provided by the Test Monitor. The audio

versions are anticipated to be available by the end of February, and their availability will be announced in an upcoming *Assessment Update*.

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Odds and Ends

MDE Closed for Presidents' Day

In observance of Presidents' Day, MDE offices will be closed on Monday, Feb. 17. Responses to emails and phone calls will be delayed to Tuesday, Feb. 18.

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ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

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