

AN UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT — MARCH 26, 2025

QUICK LINKS	IMPORTANT DATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Shipping Deadline • Manually Adding Students in Test WES • MTAS/Alt MCA Administration Reminders • The Minnesota Questions Tool – New Location • MDE Seeking Public Feedback on reading MCA-IV and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptors • Invitation for Science Item Writers 2025 	<p>March 3–May 2 (May 9 Science MCA only): <i>MCA/MTAS/Alt MCA testing window</i></p> <p>March 28: <i>Deadline to ship paper ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS test materials to DRC</i></p>

ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Shipping Deadline

The deadline for shipping all ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS test materials back to DRC is this Friday.

If you do not have a regular UPS pickup, you must contact UPS to arrange shipping at 866-857-1501 at least one day before you want a pickup scheduled. Scheduling pickup for the same day will result in UPS asking the school to pay an additional charge. Refer to the Returning Test Materials section of the *ACCESS for ELLs District and School Test Coordinator Manual*, which can be found under Resources of the [WIDA Secure Portal](#), for instructions on returning materials.

Note: ACCESS Online grades 4–12 *Test Administrator Scripts*, *Test Administrator Manuals*, and *District and School Test Coordinator Manuals* are considered non-secure test materials and do not need to be returned. They can be recycled.

Preparing Materials for Shipping

Confirm that every test booklet containing student responses has a Pre-ID or District/School label in the upper right corner of the front cover. Any test booklet that does not have a label with a barcode in the correct place will not be processed and the student will not receive a score.

If using a District/School label, you will need to bubble in the following information with a Number 2 pencil:

- Last Name
- First Name
- Middle Initial
- District Name
- School Name
- State Name Abbreviation
- Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
- Grade Level
- Gender
- State Student ID Number (MARSS/SSID number)

The District Student ID Number (MARSS local use number) is available as an option for districts that use them. The Date of Testing field is also optional; the date the test was completed for the student may be indicated in situations where the student has left the district and did not complete all four domains.

Note: Confirm there are no additional markings or bubbled information inside the test booklets or on the back cover. Inadvertent markings and/or incorrect bubbling by students can affect how the test booklet is scanned and scored (for example, if the incorrect grade or a Do Not Score code is bubbled in, the student's test may not be scored correctly). Having incorrect hand-bubbled student information may result in a split ACCESS record and no cumulative score.

Implications of Returning Materials Late

Any materials returned to DRC after March 28 will be processed as a late return. Late returns will not be scored before test results are provided to MDE, and the following will be unavailable or incomplete for any domain taken on paper (such as writing booklets for students in grade 1–5 and all domains in Kindergarten):

- Early student-level results (used by EL staff to make decisions about instruction or placement).
- Assessment records for Posttest Editing in Test WES.
- Embargoed and final release of data.
- All accountability calculations.
- Score appeal, transcription request or test booklet search.
- Individual Student Reports (ISRs)—delayed until the straggler file is provided in late fall.

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Manually Adding Students in Test WES

In general, manually adding a student in Precode Student Eligibility should not be used in place of student enrollment data submissions to add students for testing. This is because if a student record is manually added or changed in Test WES, then that student information will be used instead of the information submitted to MDE. Any additional updates in enrollment information, like a change in grade or school, will no longer be automatically sent in precode for that student. Because of this, districts should ensure that the manually entered records are free of data entry errors.

However, there may be cases where a record needs to be manually added or changed (for example, when student enrollment data will not be submitted before testing or a student needs to test the next day or a home-schooled student has requested to test with the district). Ensure any student information manually added or changed matches student enrollment data submitted to MDE. Manual changes should be considered as a workaround for adding students for testing and not a routine practice. Detailed instructions on how to add a student manually to precode records are available in the *Test WES Precode User Guide*, posted on the [Test WES](#) page of the MDE website, starting on page 14.

Any records you manually add or change in Test WES affect only how a student is sent in precode to PearsonAccess Next for testing. It does not edit or change district student enrollment data.

In order for students to be loaded in PearsonAccess Next for online testing or data entry, any student enrollment updates must be submitted at least **two business days in advance**. Once data is submitted to MDE, it is gathered overnight and is available the next business day in Test WES for districts to make edits in Precode Student Eligibility (such as, changing schools) or Pretest Editing (such as, changing test assignments or universal supports/accommodations) before it is sent to Pearson.

Many districts use a student information system to view and manage student data. Keep in mind that this data in the district's systems is not necessarily the same information that has been submitted to MDE through MARSS A/B files. If there are discrepancies, use available comparison reports to compare the data submitted through MARSS A/B files and synced with Ed-Fi, as Ed-Fi data is synced directly from the district student information system. Additional information is available on the [Ed-Fi](#) page of the MDE website.

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MTAS/Alt MCA Administration Reminders

Documenting MTAS Reading Access Mode

For the Reading MTAS, Test Administrators need to document how students accessed each reading passage on the [Data Collection Form](#). The Access Mode on the reading section of the *Data Collection Form* needs to be entered online in PearsonAccess Next. The options to select are:

- Test Administrator read passage aloud to student

- Student read passage along with Test Administrator
- Student read passage independently

It is important to enter the Access Mode online, as it ultimately appears on each student's ISR to provide parents/guardians information on how their student accessed the Reading MTAS passages.

Reading/Mathematics MTAS Administration Reminder

When administering the Reading or Mathematics MTAS, if a student does not answer or answers incorrectly during the first presentation of the task, follow this procedure:

Present the task for 3 points, reading the bold text in the [Task Administration Manual](#) and following the instructions to present the Presentation Pages and Response Option Cards to the student. Repetition and refocusing are allowed prior to a student response. If the student answers correctly, indicate a score of 3 and move on to the next task.

If the student does not answer or answers incorrectly, present the task a second time, providing additional support as scripted in the *Task Administration Manual* and presenting the Presentation Pages and Response Option Cards. Once the additional support has been provided, the highest score the student can receive for a correct response on the task is 2.

- If the student answers correctly, indicate a score of 2 and move on to the next task.
- If the student provides an incorrect answer related to the task, indicate a score of 1 and move on to the next task. To receive a score of 1, the student response must be clearly connected to the specific task.

Science Alt MCA Reminder

When administering the Science Alt MCA, if a student answers incorrectly, record the student's response (A, B, or C) and move to the next item in the task. Items are not presented again if an incorrect response is given.

If a student does not respond to an item or if the student's response is unclear or appears unintentional (for example, the student knocks the question to the floor) follow this procedure:

- Attempt to refocus the student's attention.
- Re-present the item and/or phenomenon.
- Give the student sufficient time to respond before recording NR (No Response). Time needed for each student to respond is individual and is best determined by the Test Administrator who knows the student's typical response rate.
- Examples of unrelated or non-responses that would also be recorded this way include echolalia (for example, "ba-ba-ba-ba" or repeating the question back to the Test Administrator), random grabbing of

an answer option, saying something that is unrelated to the task (for example, “I want juice.”), or a non-communicative gesture (for example, hand flapping).

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The Minnesota Questions Tool – New Location

The Minnesota Questions Tool (MQT) link has been updated to <https://pub.education.mn.gov/mqtapp/>. Please update your bookmarks and share this updated link with your staff. The new link is live on the [Released MCA Questions page](#) of the Testing 1, 2, 3 website.

The MQT provides access to released or sample questions from past Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and MTAS/Alternate MCA across all subjects (reading, mathematics, and science) and multiple grade levels. The questions in the MQT are intended to support educators in understanding how the academic standards are assessed on the MCA and MTAS/Alternate MCA, to help identify student misconceptions, and to provide examples of questions that assess student understanding at different DOK (Depth of Knowledge) levels.

While the MQT has been an educator resource for several years, MDE has recently updated this tool to distinguish between MCA-III and MCA-IV aligned questions during the transition to a new series of assessments. Users will now be able to select the assessment you are interested in (MCA or Alt MCA), and then select the subject area (Mathematics, Science, Reading) and grade level. MTAS released questions are still available using a direct link at the bottom of the tool’s screen.

Released or sample questions are aligned to benchmarks in the relevant [Minnesota Academic Standards](#) in Mathematics, English Language Arts, or Science. Currently, the questions in MQT are aligned to the following tests and academic standards:

Test Series	Standards Alignment
Science MCA-IV and Alternate MCA	2019 Minnesota Academic Standards in Science
Reading MCA-III and MTAS	2010 Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts
Reading Alternate MCA	2020 Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts
Mathematics MCA-III and MTAS	2007 Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics
Mathematics Alternate MCA	2022 Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics

MDE is working towards releasing questions aligned to standards assessed on the Reading MCA-IV for the 2025–2026 school year.

If you have questions about the MQT, contact mde.testing@state.mn.us.

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MDE Seeking Public Feedback on Reading MCA-IV and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptors

MDE is currently finalizing the Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) that describe learning of the grade-level expectations set by benchmarks or extended benchmarks in the Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts. In addition to describing what it means to be proficient on the Reading MCA-IV and Reading Alternate MCA following the first administration in Spring 2026, PLDs have several purposes or uses, including:

- Facilitating interpretation of student test scores by educators and families
- Identifying classroom instructional changes that best support a student’s learning progression
- Supporting educators in the implementation of new standards and their analysis of the depth of their curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessments

As part of the drafting process, MDE is holding a public review period to collect feedback from district staff, educators, and community members on the latest draft of the Reading MCA/Alt MCA PLDs. This feedback will ensure that multiple perspectives throughout Minnesota are considered in the development of the final version of the documents.

Draft versions of the Reading MCA-IV and Alt MCA Performance Level Descriptor documents are located on the [Performance Level Descriptors page](#) of MDE’s website.

Please note any feedback in one or both surveys:

- [Reading Alt MCA PLDs survey](#)
- [Reading MCA-IV PLDs survey](#)

MDE will be accepting feedback until Sept. 8, 2025. If you have any questions, contact Dawn Cameron at dawn.cameron@state.mn.us.

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Invitation for Science Item Writers 2025

MDE is inviting science educators to apply to be part of the Science MCA-IV Item Writer Training in Summer 2025. The training will be 4.5 days total, with approximately 15–20 additional hours independently needed to complete the writing assignments. The 2025 item writer training will be focused on writing engaging grade-level phenomena and questions tied to the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards, with the goal to generate creative thinking and to engage unique teaching approaches to build a repository of phenomena and questions for the Science MCA-IV.

Schedule and Process Details:

- Attend required training/work days:
 - June 27 (half-day, virtual)
 - July 16–17 (in person)
 - Aug. 5–6 (in person)
- Work independently to complete two phenomenon-based scenarios with 7–8 questions for each phenomenon by Aug. 11.

Benefits for Educators:

- Build a robust understanding of and diverse perspectives on the 2019 Science standards.
- Offer insights to the creation of quality assessments that impact 60,000 students per grade.
- Expand creative thinking while developing engaging grade-level phenomena and item ideas.
- Learn skills and practices that support strong classroom assessment.
- Collaborate with Science colleagues from across Minnesota.
- Earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs).
- Receive monetary participation compensation.

If you are interested in being part of this Science MCA-IV Item Writer Training, please enter your information into [the interest survey](#) by April 25. Selected writers will be contacted the week of April 28–May 2. Writers will be chosen based on grade-level and content-area writing needs, as well as experience in developing assessments.

MDE encourages any teachers and educators interested in becoming a science item writer to apply. MDE seeks to increase the impact teachers have on our Science MCA-IV assessment and looks forward to engaging with more teachers around the state. If you have colleagues who might be interested in participating, please send them this information.

Another way to be involved in Science MCA development is to register to participate in [MCA Educator Review Committees](#). Your input is vital in the development of items to the new science standards. We are always looking for more educators to become involved in the review process. This opportunity is open to science, math, language arts, EL, and special education teachers. Please contact Science Assessment Specialists Jim Wood at jim.wood@state.mn.us and/or Judi Iverson at judi.iverson@state.mn.us for more information.

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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.