MA Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS): Access & Achievement for Students with Disabilities

Parent Training and Information Center

INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES
417-236-7210 | www.fcsn.org | fcsninfo@fcsn.org

Who We Are

The Federation for Children with Special Needs promotes quality education, parent participation and access to quality health care services for all children, especially those with disabilities.

The Parent Training and Information Center is a project of the Federation. It provides free information, support, technical assistance and affordable workshops to families who have children with disabilities and the professionals who work with them.

The contents of this workshop were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H328M140014. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of US Department of Education, you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Workshop Outline

1. Standards Based Education
2. MCAS 2.0 for the 21st Century
3. Students With Disabilities
5. MCAS: a Diploma Requirement

1. Standards Based Education

Specific skills and knowledge are targeted for instruction, and quantified so that:

- teachers know what needs to be taught, and
- tests assess each student’s gain in the measured skills and knowledge
Benefits of a Standards Based Education

- Students are taught and assessed on the same material in all classrooms within a grade
- Educators can identify a student’s strengths and challenges, to better provide support as needed
- Schools can assess whether specific skills and concepts are being effectively taught in the district, and adjust accordingly
- Specific, objective goals can be set at school, district and state levels, which can be measured, improving the education of all students

High Standards for All

High Standards for ALL:
- Students
- Teachers
- School Systems
- The Nation

Every state is required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to have high-quality, valid, reliable, and fair annual assessments and to include ALL students with disabilities.

ESSA requires annual statewide assessments in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, plus testing in science in elementary, middle and high school.

Common Core Standards

“The Common Core focuses on developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills students will need to be successful” in college or career

http://www.corestandards.org/what-parents-should-know/

- Massachusetts has adopted the Common Core Standards
- Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks implement the Common Core Standards

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

Massachusetts Curriculum is in the Frameworks

MCAS tests these framework subjects:

- English Language Arts (ELA)
  - Reading Comprehension
  - Composition
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology/Engineering

www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks
2. MCAS 2.0 for the 21st Century

- First major revision since MCAS began in 1993
- > 1/3 students in state colleges and universities require remedial classes* - MCAS 2.0 assesses college and career readiness
- Developing college and career readiness standards means that these skills will be emphasized in our children’s education

* http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/nextgen/default.html

Better Test, Better Testing

Higher Academic Standards:
- Tied to new ELA and Math Curriculum Frameworks
- Test questions focused on critical thinking and college & career readiness
- Beginning with the class of 2021

Computerized Testing: Completely phased in for Math and ELA by 2019

MCAS for All Students

- Every public school student must take and earn a minimum score on MCAS in order to graduate
- MCAS ensures that students are taught the curriculum
- As a result of participation in MCAS, student learning has improved as expectations have been raised
- MCAS testing helps determine whether, and how much students with (and without) disabilities are learning

All Public School Students must take MCAS

Every student receiving a publicly funded education, regardless of the setting, must participate in district and statewide testing:
- Students in general education
- Students with limited English proficiency
- Students receiving special education services
- Students in ANY publicly funded placement, including charter schools, collaboratives, and private sped schools
Students with Disabilities: 3 ways to Take MCAS

For students with an IEP or 504 Plan, the Team decides how the student will participate:

- without accommodations
- with accommodations
- MCAS-Alt (portfolio)

Remember: parents are members of the IEP or 504 Team

English Language Learners (ELL) and MCAS

All ELL students must participate in MCAS tests for their grade, except students who are enrolled in a US school for their first year, who may be exempt from taking English Language Arts.

MCAS Tests are in English; however a Spanish language 10th grade mathematics test is available for students who have been in US schools for less than 3 years and can read and write in Spanish at or near grade level.

ELL students must pass the MCAS to graduate.

MCAS Test By Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>3</th>
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<td>Science &amp; Tech/Engineering</td>
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* Students take one ST/E MCAS test in grade 9, 10, or 11

Types of Questions on MCAS

- Multiple-choice: Students select an answer from four options. (All subjects)
- Open-response: Students provide a brief response (up to one page) to a question. The response may be written or in the form of a chart, table, diagram, or graph, as appropriate. (All subjects)
- Short-answer: Students generate a brief response, for example, a short statement or computation leading to a numeric solution. (Math only)
- Writing prompts (essays): Students create a written composition in response to a writing prompt question. (ELA Composition only)

http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html
Sample Grade 5 questions

Ashley’s ladder is 1.85 meters high. What is the height, in centimeters, of Ashley’s ladder?

Translate your answer in the box.

In line 16 of “Museum,” what does the word fixed mean?

A. Painted
B. Repaired
C. Made ready
D. Placed securely

Sample Grade 10 Questions

The perimeter of a square is 48 inches. What is the area, in square inches, of the square?

Question 18 is an open-response question.
- Read the question carefully.
- Explain your answer.
- Add supporting details.
- Double-check your work.

Write your answer to question 18 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

IEP Helps Prepare Students for MCAS

Students must have the opportunity to achieve the learning standards in the Curriculum Frameworks in order to pass MCAS.

The IEP:
- Addresses SKILLS a student needs, to make progress in the general curriculum.
- Provides for specialized instruction, services and supports needed by the student to access and learn the general curriculum.
IEP and 504 Teams Determine MCAS Format

If student can demonstrate knowledge and skills (fully or partially) on the standard MCAS test under routine conditions: **Take Standard MCAS**

If student can demonstrate knowledge and skills (fully or partially) on the standard MCAS test with accommodations: **Determine and use necessary accommodations**

- If student cannot demonstrate knowledge and skills (fully or partially) on the standard MCAS test, even with accommodations: **Use MCAS-Alt**

See MA DESE’S Accessibility and Accommodations Manual for the Spring 2018 MCAS Grades 3–8 Tests

Universal Accessibility Features (UF)

“Routine Conditions” now include **Universal Accessibility Features (UF)**.

Many modifications to the test environment are available to all students as UFs. Examples include:

- Use of highlighters
- Repeating or clarifying instructions
- Reading aloud words or phrases on Science or Math tests
- Untimed test
- Scratch paper
- Assistance with using the computer program

http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/

Designated Accessibility Features (DF)

Routine Conditions also includes **Designated Accessibility Features (DF)**, which are available to any student **at the discretion of the Principal**. Examples include:

- Small group testing
- 1:1 testing
- Allowing student to read aloud
- Frequent breaks
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Adaptive furniture

http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/

Accommodations

State or District-Wide Assessment

Identify state or district-wide assessments planned during this IS period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Volume 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If each content area identified in the column above is also noted in the space below, the content area and description of the accommodations (above) is included on the student assessment plan.

Accommodations should be listed on an IEP (or 504 plan) if:

- Student needs and uses the accommodations routinely in the classroom
- They are not included on either the UF or DF list
What Kind of Accommodations?

1. Standard Accommodations are pre-approved if included on the IEP and used in the classroom.

2. Unique Accommodations must be approved by DESE, even if included on the IEP and used in the classroom.

3. In exceptional circumstances, an accommodation not used by the student in the classroom can be submitted to DESE for approval.

For more detailed information regarding accommodations review the current MCAS Accommodations and Accessibility Manual (2018 version: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/g3-8-manual.docx).

What is the MCAS-Alt?

The Alternate Assessment is a “portfolio” compiled during the school year.

A portfolio provides your child’s work samples, photos, audio/videotapes and data charts showing performance based on the MA Curriculum Frameworks’ learning standards.

Students requiring Alternate Assessment must participate in the same grade level and subjects as students who take the standard MCAS tests.

MCAS-Alt: Participation Guidelines for IEP Team Decision Making

Students who have:
• Significant cognitive disabilities or who are unable to maintain sufficient concentration to participate in the standard MCAS (e.g. significant emotional/behavioral disability)
  – OR
• Significant physical, medical or health-related disabilities for whom the demands of prolonged test administration would present a significant challenge, even with accommodations
  – OR
• Significant motor or communication disorder(s), who would require more time than is available to complete a single test section (i.e. one school day)

Purpose of the MCAS-Alt

1. To determine whether students with significant disabilities are receiving a program of instruction based on the state’s academic learning standards.

2. To determine how much of the academic curriculum a student has learned and has shown progress in learning.

3. To use the assessment results to provide challenging academic instruction.

4. To include difficult-to-assess students in statewide assessment and accountability systems.

5. To provide an alternative pathway for some students with disabilities to earn a Competency Determination and become eligible to receive a diploma.
Few Students take MCAS-Alt

- MCAS-Alt students are subject to the same academic standards and scoring standards as other students
- About 1.6% (roughly, 15,000) public school students take MCAS-Alt each year; MA must reduce this to 1% under ESSA
- Between from 2001 – 2016, about 300 (about 0.1%) students taking MCAS-Alt have earned a score which would permit them to graduate
- Schools must now inform parents that MCAS-Alt may affect their student’s graduation prospects

MCAS-Alt Students: Practical Help for Accessing the General Curriculum


A valuable tool for parents when envisioning how their children with disabilities can access the general curriculum.
It can assist with writing measurable goals.

http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html

MCAS Scores and the Team Meeting

Students on an IEP are entitled to a FREE and APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)

MCAS scores are one factor that the IEP Team should consider in determining if the student is receiving the services needed for FAPE

Make sure your student’s MCAS report is discussed at the team meeting.


Spring 2017 MCAS Tests Parent/Guardian Report

English Language Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
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Mathematics

<table>
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Science and Technology/Engineering

<table>
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<td>3.5</td>
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<td>10th</td>
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For Math, Science, and Technology/Engineering, students with disabilities may be allowed to use a calculator or other assistive technology.
More on MCAS Scoring

MCAS 1.0 scores

- Failing: 200 - 218
- Needs Improvement: 220 - 238
- Proficient: 240 - 258
- Advanced: 260 - 280

MCAS Science & Technology Scores

- Not Meeting Expectations: 200 - 218
- Partially Meeting Expectations: 220 - 238
- Meeting Expectations: 240 - 258
- Advanced: 260 - 280

State Supervised Scoring

Scores are based on:
- Completeness of materials submitted
- Level of difficulty and range of learning standards demonstrated
- Accuracy of student's performance
- Degree of independence by student in performing the activity
- Number of instructional approaches, methods of response and activity formats in which the activity was performed
- Level of decision making or self-evaluation by student while engaging in the task

Learn more about MCAS-Alt scoring at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/results.html
5. MCAS: a Diploma Requirement

1. Meeting or Exceeding Expectations/Advanced or Proficient on ELA and Math MCAS tests **OR**
   Partially Meeting Expectations/Needs Improvement on ELA and Math MCAS tests AND complete an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)

PLUS

2. Needs Improvement or better on one high school Science & Technology/Engineering MCAS test

All students must also meet local high school requirements in order to graduate

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MCAS Options for Graduation

All students who struggle passing MCAS can:

1. Retake the MCAS test beyond grade 10
2. Complete an EPP if scoring Needs Improvement or Partially Meeting Expectations
3. After 3 tries (ELA or Math, or once for STE), request an MCAS Appeal based on grades and/or individual academic work

http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals

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Educational Proficiency Plan EPP

ALL students receiving scores of Needs Improvement or Partially Meeting Expectations on grade 10 ELA or Math:

- Who successfully complete their EPP are treated as passing the MCAS graduation requirement
- Who do not complete their EPP cannot graduate

Special education students who are expected to stay in school until age 22 without earning a diploma are not required to have an EPP after grade 12

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EPP Contents

“A review of the student’s strengths and weaknesses based on MCAS and other assessment results, coursework, grades, and teacher input;

The courses the student will be required to take and successfully complete in grades 11 and 12 in the relevant content area(s); and

A description of the assessments the school will administer to the student annually to determine whether s/he is making progress toward proficiency.

School districts have the option of including additional EPP requirements for individual students, such as school day attendance and participation in academic support programs.”

- MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Ed

http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/epp/qa.html
**Other Options for Success**

Students who do not pass MCAS have options:
1. GED or HiSET
2. Students on IEPs may stay in school until they turn 22, or until they graduate, whichever comes first
3. Some students with disabilities will work with Ch. 688 referral agency
4. Receive a “Certificate of Completion”
5. Seek employment without a diploma: contact One Stop Career Center Initiative Centers for employment help
6. Mass Learning, Employment and Asset Program (low income)
7. Trade or apprenticeship programs
8. Non-degree community college programs

**Parent Questions to Ask ...**

1. What do my student’s scores tell us about his or her learning?
2. What do they tell us about how my student is accessing the curriculum?
3. How do these MCAS scores affect my student’s graduation prospects?
4. What steps will be taken to improve this student’s MCAS scores? Are additional services required?
5. Is she/he making progress on homework and tests?
6. What do my child’s evaluations say about his/her learning style?

**The ABC’s of Parent Participation**

Parents can participate by:

**Always Believing in your Child**
- Talk to your child’s teacher about UF’s and DF’s well before the test
- Provide a nutritious breakfast
- Make sure your child is well rested
- Provide encouragement and reassurance
- Work with your IEP Team to develop challenging goals and high expectations

**MA DESE Resources**

- MCAS Parent’s Page: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/)
- Student participation guidelines for tests and retests: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/highschool.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/highschool.html)
- Parent’s Guide to the MCAS: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/plbl/e-learning/mcas-parentguide/content/index.html?k=9j10g](http://www.doe.mass.edu/plbl/e-learning/mcas-parentguide/content/index.html?k=9j10g)
- MCAS test results for all schools and districts in the state: [http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx)
More Resources

MCAS materials and information: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas
Federation for Children with Special Needs: www.fcsn.org
ESSA Assessment Fact Sheet: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaassessmentfactsheet1207.pdf
Participation of students with limited English proficiency in MCAS and Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/lep.pdf
Requirements for the participation of students with disabilities in MCAS http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/sped.pdf
DESE MCAS Accessibility and Accommodations Page: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/accessibility/

Thank you for coming

The Parent Training & Information Center is funded by a federal grant. To continue receiving the grant, we need to collect the information in the forms below

Please complete these forms:
1. Demographic Data Collection &
2. Workshop Evaluation

Kindly return completed forms to workshop presenter

Parent Training & Information Center

CALL CENTER
FREE info about Special Education Rights
http://fcsn.org/ptic/call-center/
617-236-7210
Mon-Fri 10am-3pm

WORKSHOPS
(FREE to participants)
- A IEP For My Child
- Basic Rights in Special Ed
- Effective Communication
AND MORE!
http://fcsn.org/ptic/workshops

The PTIC provides special education training, information, and support groups to families who speak: Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Vietnamese

Parent Consultant Training Institute
An in-depth training for parents in a 54-hour tuition-based program.
http://fcsn.org/ptic/parent-consultant-training