

# Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

## Test Yourself: Questions from the Statewide Student Test

### Sample the Test Everyone's Talking About

#### Question 1

The minimum wage increased from \$5.25 per hour to \$5.75 per hour.

- a) What was the rate of increase of the minimum wage?
- b) Kevin was earning \$6.35 per hour at the time of the minimum wage increase. His employer raised his salary to \$7.10 per hour. Did his boss give him an increase comparable to the rate of increase given to the lower wage earners? Explain your reasoning.
- c) Allana, who also works for the same employer, was promised a raise. If she had been making \$7.40 per hour, what new hourly wage would reflect an increase comparable to that received by the minimum wage earners? Show how you arrived at her new hourly wage.

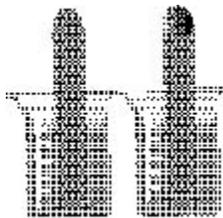
#### Question 2

What is the main clause of the following sentence?

Far from being merely fantastic or cultish, myths are a treasure of realities - a kaleidoscope which, depending upon the age and experience of the reader, reflects and illuminates his experiences, fantasies, hopes, and fears. (excerpted from the introduction to *Mythology and You*)

- A. Far from being merely fantastic or cultish...
- B. ...myths are a treasure of realities...
- C. ...- a kaleidoscope which, depending upon the age and experience of the reader...
- D. reflects and illuminates his experiences, fantasies, hopes, and fears.

### Question 3



Two identical test tubes are inverted in a beaker of water. One test tube has air inside it. The other test tube has air and a ball of moistened steel wool in it. Assuming that temperature and pressure remain constant, predict what will happen chemically and what the system will look like after being left untouched for several weeks.

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### What's This All About?

You just attempted to answer three questions that were on the new statewide tests given last May to all tenth grade students in Massachusetts public schools. The tests were very different from most standardized tests.

The new state tests are part of the state's efforts to make our schools among the best in the country and in the world. Fourth and eighth grade students are also required to take these tests, known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

### Higher Standards

Don't be surprised if the results show that many students need to improve. Why? Because we're expecting more from our students. The tests are based on new statewide learning standards that are very demanding. And the same high standards are set for all students, not just for students in the top classes. It's going to take time for teachers to adjust their curriculum and teaching techniques to rise to meet the standards. It's also going to take time for students to adjust to the rigorous type of response required on the tests.

### Higher Expectations

BUT - we can expect to see improvements after this year. This first year's results will tell us where we are now. With this information, we'll know how much work needs to be done to reach our goal of having the best-prepared students for the future.

We have set our sights high because we need to. Students today need to have a high level of skills if they are to compete in a complex global economy. And research shows that when expectations are raised, student achievement improves.

That's where you come in. As a parent, a community leader, a retiree, a person with a business, you can help to improve our schools. See the panel on the right for ways that you can make a difference.

## What Can You Do to Help Our Students?

1. Get involved! Take an interest in what is happening in your community's schools, and see how you can be a partner to help the schools to improve student learning.
2. Support the state's higher academic standards for the students of Massachusetts. The higher standards are needed to prepare students for an increasingly complex world.
3. Check your local library for copies of the state curriculum frameworks which outline what students need to know and be able to do throughout their schooling.
4. Volunteer to help in the schools. Some businesses allow their employees time off to volunteer.
5. Visit the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's web site at [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu) and learn more about the state's efforts in education.



Dear Community Member:

Thank you for being a partner with us in our efforts to help children learn. Together, we will strengthen the education of Massachusetts' students.

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

ANSWERS

Question 1:

Part A: 9.5 % ( $\$0.50 / \$5.25$ )

Part B: No, Kevin received a bigger increase.

His increase was 11.8 %, compared to the 9.5% given to the lower wage earners.

( $\$0.75 / \$6.35 = 11.8$ )

Part C: \$8.10. ( $\$7.40 \times 1.095$ )

Question 2:

B - "...myths are a treasure of realities..."

A main clause expresses a complete thought and can stand by itself.

Question 3:

A chemical reaction will occur between the iron in the steel wool and the oxygen in the air. The reaction uses up the oxygen in the test tube; therefore the water level will rise in the test tube which has the steel wool. The water level should remain about the same in the test tube without the steel wool. The steel wool will look rusted. There will be some evaporation of the water in both beakers.

Almost all of the questions from the May 1998 MCAS tests are posted on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website.

last updated: May 15, 1998