

# MCAS-Alt

Same Standards • High Expectations for ALL Students

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[www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt)



This newsletter is published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and will provide Massachusetts educators with information, advice, and support to teach the Massachusetts learning standards to students with significant disabilities, and to conduct the MCAS Alternate Assessment.

"Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure."

--Confucius, philosopher and teacher

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## Fall Training

Thank you to the 2,800 teachers and administrators who attended the Fall 2017 MCAS-Alt Educator and Administrator training sessions. It was wonderful to see so many of you. If you were unable to attend the fall training, all training materials are available at [www.mcas-alt.org/materials](http://www.mcas-alt.org/materials).

# Parent Notification Now Required!

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that parents/guardians be notified that their child in grades 4 and higher will take an alternate assessment instead of the standard MCAS test; and that participation in an alternate assessment may affect their child's ability to complete the requirements to receive a diploma.

A sample parent notification letter is available at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa/parentnotification](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa/parentnotification), along with translations into the top five languages spoken by Massachusetts students. The Department encourages districts or schools to photocopy this letter onto school letterhead and either send it to the home of the student with the proposed IEP; or provide it to the parent at the student's IEP team meeting if an alternate assessment is being proposed.

## MCAS-Alt Reminders

For all portfolio strands:

- The evidence and brief descriptions must reflect the skill(s) listed in the measurable outcome. (*Educator's Manual*, p. 40)

For ELA–Reading:

- Each data point and piece of primary evidence requires that the title of the published text or sample of text (if downloaded from the web; e.g., Reading A-Z) be included in the brief description. (*Educator's Manual*, p. 41)
- Each ELA–Reading strand must be based either on [informational OR literary text](#), but not both. (*Educator's Manual*, pp.14-20)

For ELA–Writing:

- A pre-scored writing rubric must be included with each ELA–Writing sample. Please insert the student's name and date the writing sample was produced on each pre-scored rubric (*Educator's Manual*, p. 22)
- Self-evaluation is included on the Work Description label, but not on the rubric. (*Educator's Manual*, p. 22)
- Writing samples that include bathroom-related activities will not be scored or included in the final writing requirements. (*Educator's Manual*, p.22)
- If a writing sample includes text provided by the teacher, please pre-score only the student's contribution to the final sample. "Text provided by the teacher" includes:
  - Teacher-created writing templates or sentence strips that are ordered by a student.
  - Students who use access skills and are only assessed on their ability to participate in the teacher-created final writing sample
- NOTE: The following are *not* considered "text provided by the teacher" when used by a student to communicate:
  - Word walls or word banks
  - Text programmed for a dynamic display on an Augmentative Alternative Communication

(AAC) device

Answers to most questions about the MCAS-Alt can be found either in the [2018 Educator's Manual](#) or in the [PowerPoint presentations](#) from the fall educator training sessions.

Mark your Calendars

Please be aware that portfolio submission materials will be ordered between January 8–19, 2018. Be sure to provide your administrator with an accurate count of the number of students taking the MCAS-Alt.

## January Portfolios-in-Progress Review Sessions

Portfolios-in-Progress review sessions will be held from 8:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. on the dates shown below. Educators should bring their students' portfolios and their questions to one of these sessions to receive feedback from an MCAS-Alt training specialist. Quiet space is also available to work on your students' portfolios.

Registration is available online at [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com). Each school, district, and educational collaborative will be faxed registration information on November 27. Plan to attend one of the regional sessions listed below.

Portfolios-in-Progress dates and locations:

| Monday,<br>January 8     | Tuesday,<br>January 9        | Wednesday,<br>January 17 | Thursday,<br>January 18 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sheraton,<br>Springfield | Best Western,<br>Marlborough | Holiday Inn,<br>Taunton  | DoubleTree,<br>Danvers  |

**The Introduction to MCAS-Alt** training session will be presented in one location only, on Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at Best Western in Marlborough for educators who were unable to attend in September or October and who are conducting the MCAS-Alt for the first time. Registration for the Introduction to MCAS-Alt is also available [online](#).

## Administrator's Corner

- Review the [MCAS-Alt Principal's Administration Manual](#) for more information and important upcoming deadlines.
- Translations of the [Parent Notification Letter](#) are now available for distribution. As you are aware, ESSA requires that parents/guardians of students who take alternate assessments in grades 4 and higher must be made aware that their child will take an alternate assessment, and that participation in the MCAS-Alt may delay or otherwise affect their child's ability to meet the requirements for a diploma.
- MCAS-Alt enrollment is January 8–19 to order submission materials for MCAS-Alt. This

process is separate from the ordering of MCAS test materials. You will need to follow the steps shown below to order materials for your school:

- Log in to the [MCAS Service Center](#); select *MCAS Alternate Assessment*.
- Click on *Enrollment Verification*.
- Log-in with new MCAS password (to be provided to principals in late-December).
- Confirm contact information by following the onscreen prompts.
- Verify school information by following the onscreen prompts.
- Order materials for students in each grade who are taking the MCAS-Alt.
- Click the *Submit* button.
- After submission, a confirmation page is available onscreen to print for your records.

We'd love to hear from you.

Please [let us know](#) if there is a topic you'd like us to address in a future MCAS-Alt newsletter.

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