

MCAS-Alt

Same Standards · High Expectations for ALL Students

Back-to-Teaching Edition

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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 cognitive disabilities, and to conduct the MCAS Alternate Assessment.

Quote of the Day:

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

—Confucius, philosopher, and teacher

Challenging times call for creativity, resourcefulness, and perseverance.

We wish you a healthy and successful school year!

The MCAS-Alt **will** be administered during school year 2020-2021, though under different circumstances for many students and teachers.

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Reminders for the 2021 MCAS-Alt

- 2021 MCAS-Alt submission date: **Thursday, April 1, 2021**
 - See the **recommended timeline** on page 2 of the *2021 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* (available

for download [here](#)) for a list of important dates projected for the MCAS-Alt in the coming school year.

- See the New and Notable section on pages 3–5 of the *2021 Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt* for a summary of changes for the 2021 MCAS-Alt.
- The [2021 Educators Manual for MCAS-Alt](#), the [2021 Principal's MCAS-Alt Administration Manual](#), and the [Fall 2020 Resource Guides](#) are now available.
- The [MCAS-Alt Skills Survey](#) is a required component for each strand submitted in the MCAS-Alt.
- Formats for the **2021 Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) MCAS-Alt** are described below:
 - The MCAS-Alt for grades **5 and 8 STE** and the high school **Biology** and **Introductory Physics** will use the next-generation STE format described in the Educator's Manual and will be based on the 2016 STE curriculum framework, including the Science Practices.
 - The high school **Chemistry** and **Technology/Engineering** MCAS-Alt will be based on the "legacy" (2001/2006) STE curriculum framework and will use the previous "core set of evidence" format, also described in the Educator's Manual.
- The [Decision-making Tool for MCAS Participation](#) is recommended for use by IEP teams to make annual MCAS participation determinations in each subject for students with disabilities.
- **NEW for 2020–2021:** the [MCAS Grade-Level and Competency Portfolio Manual](#) is now available as a separate publication. This information is no longer included in the *Educator's Manual for MCAS-Alt*. Required forms for these portfolios are available in the new manual and can also be downloaded individually [here](#).
- **STUDENTS IN GRADE 10 WHO DID NOT SUBMIT MCAS-ALT LAST SPRING:** High school students who were scheduled to take the MCAS-Alt in grade 10 last spring (2019–2020), but were unable to submit their MCAS-Alt materials due to COVID-related school closures and cancellation of the MCAS program, *may* participate once more in the high school MCAS-Alt **at the discretion of their IEP team** any time before their 22nd birthday. Although participation in MCAS-Alt beyond grade 10 is strictly discretionary (i.e., not required), there may be certain benefits to formally participating in a statewide assessment at least once in high school. If teams decide that a student will participate in the MCAS-Alt beyond grade 10, the MCAS-Alt must be based on the current school years' skills survey, evidence, and data, as described in the Educator's Manual for a student in high school. If submitted, these assessments will be reviewed, scored, and the results will be reported. Questions about this may be addressed to mcas@doe.mass.edu.
- **Coming Soon:** [Online Forms and Graphs](#), the password-protected application used by educators to complete the MCAS-Alt, will be available for use by the end of September. Teachers must register for a new account for the 2020–2021 school year.

Fall Educator Training Sessions

Training sessions for the MCAS-Alt will be conducted **remotely** this school year, rather than in person, due to the need to observe social distancing. We encourage teachers who are conducting the MCAS-Alt to attend virtual training sessions throughout the year to receive important information. Administrators and teachers will receive flyers and registration links via email. All training sessions will include closed captioning. The flyer for fall educator and administrator training sessions will be available [here](#).

[REGISTRATION](#) for the following virtual sessions will be available September 15:

- **Introduction to MCAS-Alt** for those conducting the MCAS-Alt for the first-time. Due to the breadth and

duration of these sessions, the Introduction will be in three parts.

1. **Core Concepts** (Parts a and b) will be conducted on the same day, one session in the morning and one in the afternoon. Sessions will include guidelines for conducting the MCAS-Alt Skills Survey, creating a portfolio strand, acceptable evidence, data collection using the available data charts, examples of how to input data on the Online Forms and Graphs program, and more;
2. The **ELA–Writing** session will describe the unique requirements for ELA–Writing in all grades;
3. The **Next-Generation Science and Technology/Engineering (STE)** session will describe the requirements for STE in grades 5, 8, and high school.

Introduction to the MCAS-Alt	
Core Concepts (choose one)	
Date	Time(s)
Monday, October 26	Part a: 9:00–10:30 a.m. Part b: 1:30–3:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 5	Part a: 9:00–10:30 a.m. Part b: 1:30–3:00 p.m.
ELA–Writing (choose one)	
Date	Time
Wednesday, October 28	10:00–11:00 a.m.
Friday, November 6	1:00–2:00 p.m.
Next-Gen STE (Grades 5, 8, and High School) (choose one)	
Date	Time
Thursday, October 29	10:00–11:00 a.m.
Monday, November 9	1:00–2:00 p.m.

See the schedule below for these other Fall 2020 training sessions:

- **MCAS-Alt Update—What's New and Notable?** for educators with prior experience conducting the MCAS-Alt.
- **MCAS Competency and Grade-Level Portfolios** for educators working with students with disabilities *at or near grade level* who cannot demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations. Special educators may also wish to invite their general education colleagues to attend this session.
- **Administrators Overview of MCAS and MCAS-Alt** for student with disabilities, for leaders who oversee the work of teachers conducting the MCAS-Alt.

All training sessions will be recorded and will be available at a later date.

[Register here](#) for a session listed below:

MCAS-Alt Update: What's New and Notable?	
Date	Time

Thursday, October 15	9:30–11:00 a.m.
Tuesday, October 20	9:30–11:00 a.m.
Thursday, October 22	9:30–11:00 a.m.
Friday, October 23	9:30–11:00 a.m.
MCAS Competency and Grade-Level Portfolios	
Date	Time
Thursday, October 15	11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Tuesday, October 20	11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Administrator's Corner

The [2021 Principal's Manual for MCAS-Alt](#) supports administrators who oversee the submission of the MCAS-Alt in their school, program, or district. This manual highlights the critical dates, activities, and oversight procedures for providing effective teacher support to conduct the MCAS-Alt.

Administrators Overview Sessions

The Department will conduct information sessions for administrators and special education leaders according to the schedule below on a range of topics concerning the statewide assessment of students with disabilities, including:

- MCAS and MCAS-Alt assessments for students with disabilities under current conditions
- MCAS accessibility and accommodations policies for spring 2021, including new computer-based testing accommodations
- Participation by high school students in MCAS, including retests, submission of competency portfolios, competency determination requirements, and submission of MCAS performance appeals
- What's new for MCAS-Alt, including program updates and status of the "one percent" cap on alternate assessment participation

[Register here](#) for a session listed below:

Administrators Overview Sessions	
Date	Time
Friday, October 16	9:30–10:30 a.m.
Wednesday, October 21	9:30–10:30 a.m.

Thank you for your attention to this important information.

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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