

TO: School Committee Members

FROM: Emily Parks, Superintendent

DATE: May 7, 2021

RE: MCAS Update

As with many things this school year, the state's requirements and plans for MCAS have been evolving and there has been some confusion about what testing will take place this year. MA is moving forward with MCAS testing this spring, though the state will be suspending the usual accountability system.

For this spring's administration, districts are required to administer the MCAS both to in-person students and fully remote students. Fully remote students in grades 3-8 will be testing at home, with the district providing virtual proctors. A remote testing option is not available at the high school. (More information below about virtual testing.)

Elementary: MCAS will be administered in ELA and Math in grades 3, 4, and 5. Grade 5 students will also take science. The state has reduced the number of testing sessions in each subject area from 2 sessions to 1 session. In Westwood, testing will be on May 11th, May 18th, and May 25th.

In-person students will be scheduled for testing within their classroom space, unless their IEP provides small group testing or an accommodation that necessitates an alternate space.

Fully remote third graders, who comprise 2 fully remote class sections in the Westwood Web, will also have MCAS administered by their teachers in their current class groupings.

Fully remote fourth and fifth graders, who zoom into in-person classes, will be assigned to a district-wide, grade-level cohort for the purpose of MCAS administration. In this way, they will be taking the MCAS at the same time as their in-person peers, but in a virtual format with a common proctor.

Middle School: MCAS will be administered in ELA and Math in grades 6, 7, and 8. Grade 8 students will also take science. The state has reduced the number of testing sessions in each subject area from 2 sessions to 1 session. In Westwood, testing will be on May 26th, May 27th, and June 2nd.

In-person students will be scheduled for testing in class sections, unless their IEP provides small group testing or an accommodation that necessitates an alternate space. Similar to elementary, a small number of fully remote students have opted to take the test in-person.

Generally, however, fully remote students will take the test at home on the same dates as their in-person peers.

High School:

In MA, students are required to pass the MCAS in ELA, Math, and Science in order to achieve a “competency determination” and be eligible for a diploma. Most of that testing takes place in the 9th and 10th grade. As of a couple of weeks ago, DESE has established the following plan with respect to the competency determination:

- The typical MCAS testing of 10th graders in ELA and math and 9th graders in science will take place this spring. Unlike the other levels, at the high school level, there has been no reduction in the number of testing sessions or testing time. HS MCAS will be administered on May 20th, May 21st, May 27th, May 28th, June 2nd, June 3rd, June 6th, and June 8th.
- The current 11th graders did not take MCAS last spring due to the closure. DESE had previously waived the MCAS science requirement for those students, but had not waived ELA and math. DESE recently announced that both the ELA and math MCAS also will be waived for this year’s juniors. The state will be providing other criteria by which students can demonstrate that they have met the competency determination for graduation through coursework.

At the high school level, individual MCAS results are used for additional purposes, distinct from the competency determination. For example, MCAS results are used to determine eligibility for the Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery Award and the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, both of which provide financial support for recipients who enroll in MA state colleges and universities. They are also used as one criterion for awarding the Seal of Biliteracy. Therefore, though MCAS is not required for our current juniors, members of the Class of 2022 will be given the option to participate in MCAS testing. Approximately, 85 juniors have decided to participate in at least one subject area.

The state is not providing a remote test taking option at the high school level. Students must either attend school on testing dates or defer taking the test until the regular high school retesting period next year. For ELA and Math, the retest is given in the fall. The HS Biology retest is given in February.

Remote MCAS Administration:

The virtual testing format presents some challenges. In grades 3-8, the MCAS is computer-based test. The test is taken through a special application (“TestNav”) that provides the test taker access to the online test, while also disabling access to any other Internet sites.

In a remote testing environment, however, the test taker and virtual proctor have to be connected through Zoom or Google meet. Fully remote students will need to be logged into their email account (in order to receive the unique code on their “test ticket”). They will access the test by logging in to an MCAS website with their unique code. They will simultaneously be

logged into zoom with their camera tipped at an angle that allows the proctor to view their work space. One proctor is permitted to simultaneously monitor multiple remote test takers.

Conclusion:

Between the pre-administration activities such as uploading student data into the testing portals, session and space scheduling, required infrastructure trials, proctor training, and a host of other logistics, preparation for MCAS and the days required to administer it is a significant focus in schools this spring. Given the time and resources dedicated to the process, we hope that the district will receive the results in time to meaningfully use the data for fall planning.