![Minnesota Department of Education logo] **Assessment Update**

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# Precode File for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS: Deadline Today

It is important to ensure that all English Learners (ELs) are indicated correctly in MARSS (and uploaded to MDE by today). MDE will send the student precode file for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS to DRC tomorrow. This file is used to load student information in WIDA AMS for online testing and to create student labels for all paper test materials since MDE pulls the information from MARSS for the precode file.

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# Continued Clarification for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Test Administration

Note: This article was sent to DACs on Friday. It is being repeated here for the wider *Assessment Update* audience.

As communicated in previous updates, Minnesota Assessments are required by both federal and state statute, and the U.S. Department of Education does not anticipate granting waivers to states this year, as they did in the 2019–20 school year. As MDE continues planning for test administrations, there are many details yet to be determined and communicated.

The following are some additional points of clarification:

- For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, the assessments must be administered in person.

  o For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, Minnesota is part of the WIDA Consortium with 40 other states and territories. While WIDA researched options for a remote administration that included remote monitoring for 2020–21, the decision was made not to move forward for this year.

- Due to the unique circumstances districts are facing, MDE is planning that the EXC (extenuating circumstances) test codes used last spring will be available again this year.

  o Using the EXC test codes provides consistency with data/indications from 2019–20, and also differentiates the situation from a decision by parent or student to refuse participation in statewide assessments.

  o Utilizing these test codes again this year provides additional flexibility for not including those students in accountability determinations; however, implications for accountability are still pending based on state and federal conversations and decisions.

  o Applying the EXC test codes will be a district decision that is made at a student level. MDE expects that districts will be making the best decisions at the time of testing based on their professional judgement for the health and safety of their staff, students, and families.

  o Until detailed guidance is provided, MDE recommends that districts do not begin collecting documentation for specific test codes (e.g., medical excuse or parent refusals). If you have already received documentation, please hold it until detailed information is provided on what code should be applied.

As additional information is available, it will continue to be provided in the weekly *Assessment Update* and at the upcoming DAC Test Administration Trainings.

## *Continued Clarification for MCA and MTAS*

Last week, MDE communicated some information to DACs to prepare for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS administrations, which must be administered in person (this article, *Continued Clarification for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS,* is included above). Like ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, the MCA and MTAS are required by both federal and state statute, and the U.S. Department of Education does not anticipate granting waivers to states this year, as they did in the 2019–20 school year. The following are some additional points of clarification specific to MCA and MTAS:

- For MTAS and MCA paper accommodations (regular print, large print, and braille test books and script), the assessments must be administered in person (i.e., at school).

- For MCA online administrations, the assessment can be administered in-person, and MDE is continuing to explore the options of administering remotely (i.e., at a location other than at school, like at home).

  o A remote administration could be available for online Reading MCA (grades 3–8 and 10), online Mathematics MCA (grades 3–8 and 11), and online Science MCA (grades 5, 8 and high school).

  o For a remote administration, the functionality will NOT be available for the Test Monitor to remotely monitor the student taking the test (i.e., the Test Monitor cannot visually monitor the student taking the test). While this functionality is being investigated in a pilot study this fall, it will not be available for spring 2021 test administrations.

  o While MDE continues to explore a remote administration option, MDE is preparing additional guidance regarding what would need to be considered in terms of test administration (e.g., *Testing Directions* and student directions), training, technology preparation and support, and test security, as these areas would be different than they are for in-person test administrations. This additional guidance would be provided to give districts the most information to help in their planning and preparation.

  o MDE anticipates announcing whether remote administration will be available for spring 2021 MCA administrations by early February.

- Note: The same considerations for the EXC test codes referenced in *the Continued Clarification for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS* article also applies to MCA and MTAS.

# Test Security Training and Test Monitor Courses

The *Test Security Training* is now available in the Training Management System (TMS). The *Test Security Checklist*, which is the paper option that includes the same content and may be used for staff in place of the *Test Security Training*, is also available on PearsonAccess Next. Translated versions of the *Test Security Checklist* in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish will be available in early January.

All staff involved in any aspect of testing are required to complete the *Test Security Training*. This year, some requirements in the *Test Security Training* and the *Assurance of Test Security and Non-Disclosure* will not be able to be implemented or maintained in the same manner for MCA remote administrations, if a remote administration option is available. MDE has included this acknowledgement in the training (and checklist) as well as the *Assurance*. Additional guidance about remote administration policies and procedures will be provided in separate resources and trainings.

## Active Monitoring

The *Active Monitoring for Statewide Tests* training is also now available in the TMS.

## Administering the MCA

The *Administering the MCA* training, which is the third training in the *MCA Test Monitor – in person* course will be available by early January. The content of this training is specific to in-person administrations and includes the options for Test Monitors administering tests online, on paper, or both.

## Additional Test Monitor Training Courses for Remote Test Monitors

MDE is designing a new course that is specifically for Test Monitors administering the MCA remotely, if a remote administration will be available. The title of the course has also been added to the TMS and appear as: *MCA Test Monitor – remote*. Once the trainings are finalized, this course will contain the following trainings:

- *Test Security Training* (same training for all staff)

- *Administering the Remote MCA* (will include information specific to the administration of the remote MCA; anticipated to be available in February)

The following information is based on a remote administration being available. Test Monitors who will be administering multiple assessments must complete all applicable courses. For example, a Test Monitor administering the MCA in person and remotely would complete both MCA Test Monitor courses.

## Training Management System (TMS) Enhancements

As communicated in the Dec. 9 *Assessment Update*, trainings posted to multiple tabs, categories, and courses (i.e., *Test Security Training* and *Active Monitoring*) will show as completed across all locations when completed in TMS once the enhancement goes in to place on Dec. 21. If a user completes one of these trainings on Dec. 16 or Dec. 17, a completion will only appear on the user transcript and district/school-level reports for the training completed. Once the enhancement is in place on Dec. 21, all instances of the training will appear as complete on the user transcript and district/school-level reports. The TMS will be unavailable on Friday, Dec. 18 to implement the enhancements.

# *Virtual DAC Test Administration Training: Registration*

MDE will provide the DAC Test Administration Training virtually on Jan. 12 from 8:30–11:30 a.m. MDE will record the session for DACs who are unable to join the live webinar. During this training, MDE will provide information and detailed guidance on preparing for 2021 test administrations. MDE will also address new and clarified information from the [*Procedures Manual*](#), focusing on the most applicable changes for test administration this year.

[Register for the Jan. 12 DAC Test Administration Training](#). Details for joining the webinar will be provided once participants register, and the presentation handout will be provided on [MDE & Pearson DAC Trainings site](#) closer to the training. Contact [mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us) to request a reasonable accommodation to participate in this

event. Note: MDE requires a two-week advance notice to provide accommodations and 48-hour notice to cancel the request.

## *Alternate Assessment: ARC Process for 2020–21*

District leaders (Special Ed Directors, DACs, and Superintendents/Directors) were contacted in January 2020 to respond to the Assurance, Rationale and Context (ARC) process for the 2019–20 school year. About 92% of districts responded, and results will be included in a report to the US Department of Education (USDOE) to meet the requirements of MDE's action plan outlined in August 2019. This report will be available on the MDE website when complete. If a district was not able to respond in 2019–20, MDE will be reaching out in the next few weeks to assist in the completion of this process.

For 2020–21, MDE will again contact district leaders with details about how to participate in this year's process. This communication will go out the week of Jan. 11; the deadline to respond will be March 5. If a district has no participation data from spring 2020, only the assurance step will need to be completed.

For more information about the federal requirements and the work Minnesota has done pertaining to alternate assessment participation, refer to the *Overview of the One Percent Cap and Alternate Assessment Participation in Minnesota* on the Minnesota Tests webpage.

## *Updates to Data and Availability of Reports*

There are several updates to data on MDE's Data Reports and Analytics page and one update for ACCESS data on the WIDA Data Dashboard.

On the Data Reports and Analytics page:

- ACT Data: The ACT data for the 2020 graduating class is now available under the Student Data heading. This data file gives ACT information for the last 5 years by district and school.

- Subscore Report: The Subscore Report will be removed on Jan. 21. Subscore data can still be found in the publicly available Assessment and Growth Files for all applicable statewide assessments, in the Test Results Summary (under the Assessment Secure Reports heading) on the Secure Reports page, or in the Longitudinal Reports in PearsonAccess Next (sign in required).

- Assessment and Growth Files: Within the Test dropdown menu, the option for "Growth" will be removed Jan. 1, and the webpage will be renamed to Assessment Files.

  o MDE is no longer required to report growth as high, medium, and low, also known as Minnesota Growth, for the MCA. Because of this change in legislation, MDE is removing the z-score growth calculations that use MCA scale scores from all assessment and accountability reporting as they

inappropriately emphasize the use of statewide assessment scores at the individual student level and are often misinterpreted.

  o Moving forward, the only growth calculation that MDE will provide for the MCA/MTAS is the academic progress indicator, which is part of the North Star Accountability System.

On the WIDA Data Dashboard:

On June 30, 2021, the ACCESS Percentile Growth information will be removed from the WIDA Data Dashboard. The ACCESS is a criterion-referenced assessment, which means it measures performance against a fixed set of criteria: the WIDA English Language Development Standards. Criterion-referenced assessments are used to determine mastery of concepts and skills and to measure progress toward goals and objectives.

The percentile growth calculations focus on how much students improved on ACCESS compared to other students. A growth measure that relies on comparisons to other students is not appropriate for a criterion-referenced test. Therefore, to encourage the most appropriate analyses of the data provided by ACCESS, the growth percentile information is being removed.

MDE recommends using a progress calculation that looks at the change in scale scores between years and the associated change in proficiency level as that is a more appropriate measure to use. Please refer to the *Guidebook: Exploring ACCESS for ELLs Data* document (under the Test Score Interpretation Resources expandable heading) on the District Resources page for additional information on using ACCESS results in your district.

Note: The WIDA Data Dashboard is a component within the framework of the WIDA Data Warehouse. It is an interactive site used by WIDA researchers, staff members, and WIDA Consortium member state educational agencies to view aggregated analytical information for ACCESS. Districts can log in to the WIDA State Dashboard using their WIDA Secure Portal information to analyze data at the consortium and state levels.

# *Tech Update*

## Key Technology Information for ACCESS

- **Testing Window**: Jan. 25–March 19

- **Service Provider and Website**: Data Recognition Corporation (DRC); wida-ams.us

- **System Requirements**: Technology Requirements for WIDA assessments

- **Customer Support**: 855-787-9615 or WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com

- **Key Technology Resources**: *Technology User Guide, Technology Readiness Checklist for WIDA Online Assessments*, *WIDA AMS User Guide*, and other related resources are available in WIDA AMS. In order to access technical resources, log in to WIDA AMS > My Applications > General Information > Documents; leave filters at All and select "Show Documents" to see the resources.

- **Training Opportunities**: Live and recorded webinars are included in the *2020–21 Q&A Webinar Schedule for Technology Coordinators* document, which is included in the list of technology resources in WIDA AMS, referenced in the previous bullet.

## Key Technology Information for MCA

- **Testing Window**: Reading/Mathematics MCA from March 8–May 7; Science MCA from March 8–May 14

- **Service Provider and Website:** Pearson; minnesota.pearsonaccessnext.com

- **System Requirements**: TestNav system requirements for MCA administration

- **Customer Support**: 888-817-8659 or submit a Pearson help desk request; in addition to the Pearson help desk, you may also utilize Pearson's Technology Office Hours and schedule a one-on-one virtual meeting with a technology field engineer to talk through edge cases, specific setup instructions, or discuss other challenges.

- **Key Technology Resources**: The *Infrastructure Readiness Checklist* is now available on the Technology page (PearsonAccess Next > Technology > Online Testing Infrastructure Readiness) to assist districts and schools with preparation for online in-person MCA testing.

  o This checklist provides steps to help create a successful testing experience for schools and students while administrating the online MCA in person. To limit test day technical issues, technology staff should perform the tasks outlined in the *Infrastructure Readiness Checklist* according to the recommended timelines.
  o MDE is continuing to explore the options for online MCA being administered remotely (i.e., at a location other than at school, like at home). In that situation, additional resources will be created to address technology infrastructure set-up for remote administration.

- **Training Opportunities**: The *New Technology Coordinator Training (1–2 years)* recording and PowerPoint is now available on the Training Management System (TMS) under the Technology Staff role in the Pearson Recorded Webinars category. This recorded webinar provides an overview of technology systems and resources for new technology staff in preparation for the 2021 MCA online test administration. Additional live webinars will be held this winter and will address technology infrastructure set-up. If remote administrations become available, the webinars will also answer questions related to remote administrations for online MCAs.

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