



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

2012–2013 Update

*Requirements for
the Participation of
English Language Learners
in
ACCESS for ELLs
and MCAS*

A Guide for Educators and Parents/Guardians



*This document was prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation. Inquiries regarding the Department's compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148 – 781-338-6105.

© 2012 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
*Permission is hereby granted to copy for non-commercial educational purposes any or all parts of this document.
Please credit the "Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."*

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370
www.doe.mass.edu



Commissioner's Foreword

September 2012

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to present this publication which supports the participation of English language learners (ELL) in statewide assessments. The Department's recent membership in the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) consortium and the adoption of new English language development standards and assessments in the 2012–2013 school year are part of a larger initiative called RETELL (Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners) that provides a comprehensive blueprint for transforming ELL education in Massachusetts.

This year, the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) tests will replace the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA). Participation requirements have been updated accordingly. Therefore, it is important that you review this manual carefully.

With increasing numbers of English language learners entering our public schools every day, providing quality instruction and assessment becomes even more critical. As English language learners strengthen their English skills, they are likely to become more successful academically. Therefore, it is important to teach these skills as rapidly and efficiently as possible. It is my hope that a focus on academic language will accelerate your ELL students' ability to learn core academic subject matter.

I appreciate and value the work you perform with English language learners.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table of Contents

Commissioner’s Foreword

I. Overview of Statewide Testing Requirements for English Language Learner (ELL)

Students.....	1
A. Background.....	1
B. Definition of an ELL Student.....	1
C. Identification and Reporting of ELL Students.....	1

II. Participation of ELL Students in ACCESS for ELLs Tests..... 3

A. General Participation Requirements.....	3
B. Participation in Grade-Level Clusters and Testing Tiers.....	3
C. Accommodations for ELLs with Disabilities.....	4
D. Planning for Test Administration.....	5
E. Assigning Testing Spaces for ELL Students.....	5
F. Authorizing Test Administrators.....	6
G. Test Administrator Training and Certification.....	6
H. Milestones for 2012–2013.....	7

III. Participation of ELL Students in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)..... 8

A. Participation Requirements.....	8
B. Participation Requirements for ELL Students with Disabilities.....	9
C. Use of Bilingual Word-to-Word Dictionaries and Glossaries by ELL Students on MCAS Tests.....	9
D. Reporting MCAS Results for ELL Students.....	9
E. High School Competency Determination (CD).....	10

IV. Available Resources.....11

I. Overview of Statewide Testing Requirements for English Language Learner (ELL) Students

A. Background

State and federal laws require that ELL students participate in statewide testing. Massachusetts students will meet the testing requirements by participating in both the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and the ACCESS for ELLs tests.

Massachusetts joined the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) consortium for English language development and academic achievement, based at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, in June 2012. New WIDA English language development standards have replaced the Massachusetts *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes* (ELPBO) standards, and the new ACCESS for ELLs tests will replace the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) tests in the 2012–2013 school year.

The transition from the MEPA to ACCESS for ELLs assessments results in some policy and test administration changes. New training and certification procedures for test administrators will be necessary, as well as schedule changes for ordering test materials and test administration. Additional information can be found on the WIDA website, at wida.us, including a Massachusetts state web page at wida.us/membership/states/Massachusetts.aspx. Information will also be available soon on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access.

ACCESS for ELLs tests are administered once annually in January/February to all ELL students in grades K–12, as described in Table 1. There will be no fall test administration, as there was with MEPA tests.

B. Definition of an ELL Student

An ELL student is defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as “a student whose first language is a language other than English and who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.”

When a student meets the above criteria, he or she is considered an English language learner regardless of whether the student’s parent or guardian has declined a program of language support or services. ELL students are required to participate in statewide tests according to the guidelines provided in this document.

C. Identification and Reporting of ELL Students

Districts are required to have a procedure in place to evaluate the English proficiency of all students whose home language is not English to determine whether they are ELLs. Students must be evaluated in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (603 CMR 14.02). In addition, districts must have a procedure in place for determining when a student is no longer an ELL.

Questions regarding the **identification and initial assessment of ELL students** should be directed the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at 781-338-3518 or via

email at ell@doe.mass.edu. Information on identifying ELL students is available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/identify_lep.html.

As the Department uses data submitted by districts through the Student Information Management System (SIMS) as the source for student information when reporting results for assessment and accountability purposes, districts must report a student's LEP (ELL) status in SIMS in October, March, and June and remove the designation when the student is no longer identified as an ELL.

Questions regarding Student Information Management System (SIMS) data should be directed to the district's SIMS contact (go to <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/search/search.aspx?leftNavID=11239>, select SIMS Contact from the Function menu, and click Get Results).

II. Participation of ELL Students in ACCESS for ELLs Tests

A. General Participation Requirements

ELL students must be assessed annually to measure their English language proficiency and progress in learning English in the four domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students who are identified as ELL before the beginning of the testing window (i.e., before January 10, 2013) **must participate** in ACCESS for ELLs testing for their grade, as follows:

- ELL students who were reported as LEP in October 2012 SIMS
- AND
- ELL students who enroll in school after the October 2012 SIMS submission

Students Not Required to Participate in ACCESS for ELLs tests

Students reported as LEP in October 2012 SIMS who have exited ELL status before the beginning of the testing window (i.e., before January 10, 2013) are **not** required to participate in ACCESS for ELLs testing. The LEP designation for students who exit ELL status prior to testing must be removed in the district's March 2013 SIMS submission.

A very small number of ELL students are *not* required to participate in ACCESS for ELLs tests, as follows:

- Students with a medically documented absence who are unable to participate in make-up testing
- Students who have an IEP indicating that their primary disability is “deaf or hard of hearing”
- Students in kindergarten with significant disabilities who would be designated for alternate assessments
- Foreign exchange students who are coded #11 under “Reason for Enrollment” in SIMS

The following students *are* required to participate in **ACCESS for ELLs Listening and Speaking tests (Grades 1-12)**, but *not* **Reading and Writing tests (Grades 1-12)**:

- Students with disabilities who require unavailable accommodations (see list on page 5)
- Students with disabilities who have nonstandard accommodation 26 (Test Administrator Reads Aloud the MCAS ELA Reading Comprehension test) listed in an approved IEP
- Students with significant disabilities who require an alternate assessment, as determined by their IEP or 504 team

B. Participation in Grade-Level Clusters and Testing Tiers

Students participate in ACCESS for ELLs tests according to the following **grade-level clusters**: kindergarten, grades 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. These grade-level groupings are different from those used in MEPA.

For grades 1–12, ACCESS for ELLs tests are divided into three tiers of test forms—A, B, and C—for each grade-level cluster's tests (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking combined). Each tier assesses students with different levels of language proficiency in that grade cluster. To ensure an appropriate testing experience for each student and the most meaningful results, it is necessary to select the testing tier for each student that best matches his or her proficiency level

(similar to the selection of test sessions 1 and 2, or 2 and 3, for students taking MEPA in the past). Note that there are no testing tiers for kindergarten students.

Tier A, for beginning ELLs, is appropriate for students who:

- have enrolled in schools in the U.S. during the current academic school year without previous instruction in English
- currently receive literacy instruction **ONLY** in their native language
- received a score of Level 1 or Level 2 Low on the 2012 MEPA test

Tier B is appropriate for *most* ELL students who:

- have social language proficiency and some, but not extensive, academic language proficiency in English
- have acquired some literacy in English though have not yet reached grade level literacy
- received a score of Level 2 High or Level 3 on the 2012 MEPA test

Tier C, for students who are close to exiting ELL status and who:

- are approaching grade-level proficiency in literacy and academic language in the core content areas
- will likely meet the exit criteria for support services by the end of the academic year
- received a score of high Level 4 or Level 5 on the 2012 MEPA test

Additional criteria to consider in determining a student's testing tier include:

- scores from the WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), described on the following page
- scores on English proficiency assessments used by the district
- observations by staff working closely with the student

W-APT Screener and Placement Test

In addition to the above criteria, the Department recommends the use of the **W-APT**, an optional screener and placement test, to identify and place incoming ELL students, and to determine the most appropriate ACCESS for ELLs testing tier to administer.

The W-APT, along with materials to assist educators in administering the test and interpreting results, is available on the WIDA website at wida.us/assessment/w-apt/ in the "Downloads and Products" section. The **user name and password** needed to access these materials were sent in June to ELL directors in each district for distribution to staff who will use the W-APT materials.

C. Accommodations for ELL Students with Disabilities

The right of an ELL student with a disability to receive allowable accommodations on MCAS tests is protected by both federal and state laws. The student's IEP or 504 plan must specify precisely which test accommodation(s) he or she will receive. In cases where a 504 plan is under development, the school personnel responsible for writing the plan must have already met and agreed upon the necessary test accommodation(s) *before* a student may be provided the accommodation(s).

The ELL student's IEP or 504 team must determine how the student will participate in ACCESS for ELLs testing and document this information in the student's IEP or 504 plan.

Accommodations listed in the *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS* (posted on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/sped.pdf) are available for ACCESS for ELLs testing, with the following **exceptions**.

- Accommodation 12 (Braille)
- Accommodation 18 (Electronic Text Reader [except ELA Reading Comprehension test, which is nonstandard accommodation 28])
- Nonstandard accommodation 26 (Test Administrator Reads Aloud the MCAS ELA Reading Comprehension Test). This accommodation is **not available** for use on the Reading portion of the ACCESS for ELLs test, per WIDA consortium policy. Students may attempt the test without the accommodation to receive an overall score.
- Nonstandard accommodation 28 (Electronic Text Reader for the ELA Reading Comprehension Test)

D. Planning for Test Administration

To prepare for testing, the principal should consider the following:

Grades 1–12 Listening, Reading, and Writing Tests

- Listening, Reading, and Writing tests may be administered in groups of up to 22 students.
- Listening and Reading sections consist of multiple-choice questions, and be administered either separately or together in one session of approximately 75 minutes, with a break between tests.
- The Writing test prompts students for a constructed response and should be scheduled in one session of 75 minutes, including a break.
- Students in different grade clusters or testing tiers must be tested in separate test administration sessions.

Grades 1–12 Speaking Test

- Individually administered in about 15 minutes.
- All students in the same grade-level cluster take the same test (no testing tiers).
- Each item must be scored by the test administrator before moving to the next item.
- Test questions are presented until the student reaches his or her performance "ceiling."

Kindergarten Test

- Individually administered in about 30 minutes.
- All students take the same form of the test (no testing tiers).
- Each component ends once the student reaches his or her “ceiling.”
- Speaking and Listening are presented together, alternating between a listening task and a speaking task.
- The test administrator scores all components as test is administered.

E. Assigning Testing Spaces for ELL Students

It is the responsibility of the principal to designate testing spaces that are free from noise and distractions and are adequately lit, ventilated, and furnished so that students can work comfortably and without disruption. The Department recommends that large, open areas (e.g., cafeterias) not be used. Principals must ensure that each student assigned to the testing space will

have adequate work space and be sufficiently separated from other students to support a secure testing environment.

Principals must identify appropriate testing spaces for ELL students with disabilities using accommodations that require changes in the test setting, presentation, or mode of response that prevent these students from taking the test in a classroom with a large group.

Principals should prepare for test administration according to the details below:

- Group administration: Listening, Reading, and Writing tests (grades 1–12)
- Individual administration: Speaking test (grades 1–12)
- Individual administration: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (kindergarten)

For the group administration, WIDA recommends a maximum of 22 students in each group and one adult for every 10–12 students.

While students are generally tested in their regular classrooms, the principal has the authority to schedule ELL students in testing spaces other than classrooms, as long as all requirements for testing conditions are met as set forth in the *Principal's Administration Manual* for MCAS and the *Test Administrator's Manuals* for ACCESS for ELLs tests.

F. Authorizing Test Administrators

It is the responsibility of the principal to authorize individuals to serve as test administrators, and to ensure that test administrators have completed the relevant training and certification described below. Test administrators' responsibilities are stated in the ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration Manual. To the extent possible, test administrators should be licensed classroom teachers working in the school. When necessary, other education professionals, such as administrators employed by the district may be authorized to serve as test administrators. Individuals prohibited from being test administrators include anyone not employed by the district and anyone who has not completed the relevant training and certification.

G. Test Administrator Training and Certification

Between October 1, 2012, and February 8, 2013, educators will be required to complete an online training course and pass a certification quiz in order to be authorized to administer the ACCESS for ELLs tests. In order to access the online training modules, individual educators must set up a personal training account on the WIDA website through the WIDA [Account Creator](#). Interested Massachusetts educators may contact their ELL director, principal, or superintendent to obtain the Massachusetts statewide user name and password to access the Account Creator. The Account Creator will guide educators through the steps in creating a personal training account. Contact WIDA Help at 866-276-7735 or help@wida.us for assistance in setting up your personal account.

Three training/certification modules are available, each requiring approximately 1½–2 hours. The following ACCESS for ELLs test administration training modules are posted online at www.wida.us/downloadLibrary.aspx under “Training Toolkit.”

- Administering ACCESS for ELLs, Grades 1-12 (Listening, Reading, and Writing tests)
- Administering the Speaking test
- Administering the Kindergarten test

The online training and certification quiz may be completed in one sitting or in multiple sessions as needed. A score of **80 percent or higher** on the certification quiz is required in order to be authorized to administer a specific test. Each certification quiz may be taken multiple times until the minimum required score is attained. A database will be maintained with the names of educators in each district who have been certified in each training module.

H. Milestones for 2012–2013

Activity	Start Date	End Date
• W-APT screener test user names and passwords received by district ELL directors	7/8/12	
• Face-to-face and web-based orientation sessions for test administration logistics	9/19/12	
• Test administrator online training and certification window	10/1/12	2/8/13
• Schools order test materials online through secure website	10/29/12	11/16/12
• Schools receive test materials	1/3/13	
• Deadline for schools to order additional materials	1/3/13	1/8/13
• ACCESS for ELLs test administration window	1/10/13	2/13/13
• Deadline for schools to pack and schedule UPS pickup	2/13/13	2/14/13
• Deadline for UPS pickup		2/15/13
• Data validation window (districts correct student demographic information)	3/18/13	3/28/13
• Schools receive printed reports of results	4/15/13	4/18/13
• Printed report correction period (discrepancy window)	4/18/13	5/3/13
• Department reports final statewide test results		5/4/13

III. Participation of ELL Students in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

A. Participation Requirements

ELL students must participate in *all* MCAS tests scheduled for their grades regardless of the program and services they are receiving or the amount of time they have been in the United States. The only exception applies to first-year ELL students who enrolled in U.S. schools **after March 1, 2012**. Schools have the option of administering ELA tests to first-year ELL students, provided that they have participated in ACCESS for ELLs testing. First-year ELL students *must* participate in MCAS Mathematics and Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) tests for diagnostic purposes. Their results are not included in school and district summary results, or in state and federal accountability reporting.

Table 3
ELL Participation Requirements for Spring 2013 MCAS Tests

	Content Area Test		
	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science and Technology/Engineering
First-Year ELL Students ¹	<i>Optional</i> ²	Required	Required
All Other Students	Required	Required	Required

¹ Results for first-year ELL students are **not** included in MCAS school and district summary results.

² ELA testing is optional provided that the student has participated in ACCESS for ELLs.

High School English/Spanish Tests

Grade 10 Spanish-speaking ELL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for **fewer than three** years may choose to take the English/Spanish edition of the grade 10 Mathematics test if they can read and write in Spanish at or near grade level. English/Spanish editions of the Mathematics test are available for the grade 10 Mathematics test and high school Mathematics retests only. Students who are eligible for an English/Spanish MCAS test take the test during the same time period in which the English edition of the test is administered. The designated test administrator must be fluent in both English and Spanish. Students may respond to test questions in English or in Spanish.

Foreign Exchange Students

Foreign exchange students who are coded as #11 under “Reason for Enrollment” in SIMS are not required to participate in MCAS tests.

B. Participation Requirements for ELL Students with Disabilities

ELL students with disabilities must participate in MCAS by taking either

- MCAS test(s), with or without accommodations
- OR
- MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt)

The ELL student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team or 504 team must determine how the student will participate in MCAS testing and must document this information in the student’s IEP or 504 plan. Additional information is available in the *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS (2012–2013 Update)*, which is posted on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/sped.doc.

C. Use of Bilingual Word-to-Word Dictionaries and Glossaries by ELL Students on MCAS Tests

Any ELL student, including students who have been identified as ELL in the past, may use an authorized bilingual word-to-word dictionary and/or glossary on the following MCAS tests:

- ELA—authorized word-to-word dictionary (if available)
- Mathematics—authorized word-to-word dictionary and glossary (if available)
- Science and Technology/Engineering—authorized word-to-word dictionary and glossary (if available)

Dictionary use for MCAS tests is strictly limited to those that provide word-to-word translations. Dictionaries that include definitions, synonyms, antonyms, phrases, and other information are strictly prohibited. Electronic dictionaries are not allowed. Note: The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries and glossaries is prohibited on all ACCESS for ELLs tests.

A list of authorized bilingual dictionaries and glossaries, updated in 2012, is available on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/?section=ell. To discuss the approval of a word-to-word dictionary not included in the list, please call 781-338-3625.

D. Reporting MCAS Results for ELL Students

Results for ELL students are reported with those of other students, and separately in the ELL subgroup. The one exception is the reporting of results for first-year ELL students as shown in Table 4. In reporting results for state and federal accountability, scores for ELL students with disabilities are included in two categories: students with disabilities and ELL students.

Table 4
MCAS/State and Federal Accountability Reporting for First-Year ELL Students

	How Results are Reported for Each Content Area Test		
	English Language Arts (Testing optional)	Mathematics (Testing required)	Science and Technology/Engineering (Testing required)
Student-level MCAS Results	Student item analysis roster report (if tested)	Student item analysis roster report	Student item analysis roster report

Participation for Accountability	Counted as <i>participating</i> whether tested or not, provided that student participated in ACCESS for ELLs	Counted as <i>participating</i> unless absent	Counted as <i>participating</i> unless absent
Achievement and Growth for Accountability	Not included in state and federal accountability calculations	Not included in state and federal accountability calculations	Not included in state and federal accountability calculations

E. High School Competency Determination (CD)

All Massachusetts students, including English language learners, are required to meet the CD standard in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (STE) in order to graduate.

To earn a CD, students must **either** earn a scaled score of at least 240 on both the grade 10 MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests, **or** earn a scaled score between 220 and 238 on both tests and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP). Students must also earn a scaled score of at least 220 on one of the high school STE tests in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, or Technology/Engineering. In addition to passing MCAS tests, students must meet all local graduation requirements. Students who transfer to a Massachusetts high school during their senior year must take and pass tests in ELA, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering in order to graduate from high school.

Students eligible to take the English/Spanish edition of the MCAS grade 10 Mathematics test may meet the CD requirement in Mathematics through this test but must also pass ELA and STE tests in English.

Since the CD requirement may present a challenge for ELL students who have recently enrolled in a U.S. school, some ELL students may need to continue their education beyond grade 12 in order to attain the requisite knowledge and skills in ELA, mathematics, and STE. After grade 12, students who still need to pass one or more of the required MCAS tests may take the MCAS retest(s) at the school in which they were last enrolled. Some students may also be eligible for an MCAS performance appeal.

For more information on meeting the graduation requirement, please refer to the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html.

IV. Available Resources

For **policy** questions regarding the assessment of ELL students, please contact Student Assessment Services at 781-338-3625 or by email at mcas@doe.mass.edu. For questions regarding the **identification and initial assessment** of English language learners, please call the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at 781-338-6220

Resources to support educators, parents, and others who work with ELL students are available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/ell. Specific resources are listed below:

- Test administration resources are available at www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS/ and www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access
- *Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries Authorized for Use by English Language Learners* is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/?section=ell.
- Information on identifying new ELL students upon their enrollment in a school district is available at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/identify_lep.html
- *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS* (2012–2013 Update) provides guidelines for the participation of students with disabilities in MCAS and includes a list of MCAS test accommodations. The document is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/sped.doc.
- The WIDA standards that are assessed on ACCESS for ELLs tests are available at wida.us/downloadLibrary.aspx
- The 2012 ACCESS for ELL *Interpretive Guide for Score Reports* is available at wida.us/assessment/ACCESS/#scores., under “Downloads and Products”
- ACCESS for ELLs Performance Definitions are available at wida.us/get.aspx?id=5.
- WIDA information specific to Massachusetts is available at wida.us/membership/states/Massachusetts.aspx