dese MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

PRE-ADMINISTRATION GUIDE

Tasks for the 2023–24 MCAS Tests

dese MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

Important Contact Information and Resources

Contact	MCAS Service Center

For questions on:	• general test administration support
	• PearsonAccess^next and TestNav such as
	   › user accounts
	   › technology support and readiness
	   › Infrastructure Trials and ProctorCache
	   › viewing student records and organizations
	   › the SR/PNP process and loading files
	• logistical support, including filling out the Materials Summary and the PCPA
	• locating resources
	• shipments of materials

Hours	7:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday
Web	**mcas.pearsonsupport.com** Use this website to access training modules and other materials to support test administration, including a link to the MCAS Service Center website (mcasservicecenter.com) where schools will access the PCPA and order additional materials.
Email	**mcas@cognia.org**
Telephone	1-800-737-5103

Contact	DESE Office of Student Assessment Services

For questions on:	• policy, such as assigning accessibility features and accommodations
	• student participation
	• testing irregularities, including test security incidents and technology irregularities/failures
	• voiding a test
	• student data and SIMS, call your district SIMS contact
	  (Go to profiles.doe.mass.edu/search/search.aspx?leftNavID=11239, select **SIMS Contact** from the Function menu, and click **Get Results**.)
	• unsubmitting a test, call your district MCAS test coordinator
	  (Go to profiles.doe.mass.edu/search/search.aspx?leftNavID=11239, select **MCAS Test Coordinator** from the Function menu, and click **Get Results**.)

Hours	8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday Schools that need logistical support between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. should call the MCAS Service Center at 1-800-737-5103.
Web	**www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/retest**
Email	**mcas@doe.mass.edu**
Telephone	781-338-3625

Table of Contents

A. Using This Document

This document provides instructions and roles/responsibilities for the tasks that schools need to complete prior to MCAS test administration. This document is meant to supplement the manuals and resources posted on each administration-specific page by describing the activities that should be completed in the fall and winter.

Tasks in this document are organized by timeframe and are listed first for the principal/test coordinator in sections A–F, followed by tasks for the technology coordinator in sections G and H. Principals/test coordinators are encouraged to review the entire document, and then meet with the technology coordinator for their school to discuss the steps in sections G and H.

The list below contains acronyms that are used in this document and other MCAS resources.

- **CBT:** Computer-based testing
- **PBT:** Paper-based testing
- **PAN:** PearsonAccess Next
- **SR/PNP:** Student Registration/Personal Needs Profile
- **SIMS:** Student Information Management System
- **SIF:** School Interoperability Framework
- **EL:** English learner
- **ELA:** English Language Arts
- **STE:** Science and Technology/Engineering

B. General Timelines of Tasks

The table below describes the tasks for principals and test coordinators to complete prior to test administration.

General Timeline for MCAS CBT Pre-Administration Tasks

September and October	At least 2 months before testing	At least 2 weeks before testing
• (Ongoing) Read bi-weekly Student Assessment Updates. • Become familiar with CBT components. • Identify the school test administration team. • Establish a communication plan with the test administration team. • Update contact information with DESE.	• Update contact information in PAN and create additional accounts. • Plan for accessibility features and accommodations. • View online modules and participate in training sessions. • Meet with the technology coordinator, who will review the tech specs and prepare the school's infrastructure. • Complete the SR/PNP.	• Run App Check and conduct an Infrastructure Trial and/or Preliminary System Test (recommended). • Train test administrators in protocols and security requirements. • Prepare devices and materials. • Prepare students for online testing. • Review instructions in the *Principal's Administration Manual.* (See section F.2 of this document for details.)

The following table describes the general timeline for tasks to be completed in PearsonAccess Next (PAN) by all staff. (A description of PAN can be found on page 3.)

Timeline of Tasks in PearsonAccess Next (PAN)

Timeline	Tasks	Staff Responsible
Approximately 2 months prior to testing	• Submit the Student Registration/Personal Needs Profile (SR/PNP)	Principals/test coordinators
Approximately 2 months prior to testing (after the initial SR/PNP submission, through the testing window as needed)	• Continue to update student information in PAN (SR/PNP) • Enrollment Transfer Work Requests (as needed)	Principals/test coordinators
At least 2 weeks before testing	• Run App Check and conduct a Preliminary System Test and/or an Infrastructure Trial	Principals/test coordinators and technology coordinators
2 weeks before testing	• Create PAN Sessions and add students • Verify accommodations in PAN	Principals/test coordinators (recommended), but can also be done by district or school test coordinator or technology coordinator

C. Tasks for <u>New</u> Principals/Test Coordinators   Fall 2023

1. **Familiarize yourself with these resources, and bookmark these web pages.**
   - **General resources**
     - o **Student Assessment Update newsletter**, sent biweekly throughout the school year.
       - ▪ Principals, MCAS test coordinators, special education directors, and EL program directors automatically receive the Update based on contact information submitted to the Department. See the instructions at the top of the newsletter page (linked above) to change your email address, add another staff member who serves in one of these roles, and subscribe.
     - o **Test designs** (underneath the "Simplified Review Process of an MCAS Question" infographic, click on the subject area, and then click on "Test Design").
     - o **Test administration resources**, for a running list of updates for the school year, and for each test administration window, links to manuals, sample forms, training resources, and other guidance documents.
     - o **MCAS Resource Center**, which provides a link to PAN and PAN guidance documents, training modules and recordings of previous trainings, a link to the MCAS Service Center, resources for the technology coordinator for technology set-up, the student tutorial and subject-specific practice tests, test administration guidance, and released test items.

   - **Secure websites**
     Note: These websites provide access to confidential student data, so be sure to file the MCAS Service Center password memorandum and other passwords in a secure location.
     - o **MCAS Service Center secure website**, used during test administration to order additional materials, complete the Principal's Certification of Proper Test Administration (PCPA) form, schedule a UPS pickup request (for paper-based testing), and report discrepancies in results.

- If your predecessor did not leave the password for you, call the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103 to request it. You will need to provide your school's name and your 8-digit school code (found on your School and District Profile).
  - **PearsonAccess Next**
    - New principals and school test coordinators should contact their district test coordinator to create a new account.
    - District test coordinators can contact another district test coordinator within their district in order to create a new account.
    - If you are the only district test coordinator in your district and need a PAN account, please contact the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103. Prior to calling, please be sure your contact information has been updated in School and District Profiles.
  - **Edwin Analytics**, which provides authorized district and school personnel with access to students' test results, information, and reports that support improvements in teaching, learning, and educational outcomes. New users can review these resources to ensure they have Security Portal access and the security role needed to view student data.

2. **Find contact information for certain district/school staff members and save for later use.**
   You should know how to contact the following people:
   - the district-level Directory Administrator
     - Confirm with your district-level Directory Administrator whether you are listed in the Department's Directory Administration application in your new role, and confirm whether your school's mailing address and email address are correct.
     - Test sites, adult education programs, out-of-state schools, SEIS-DYS programs: Email your updates to ESEDirectoryAdministrator@mass.gov (be sure to include your 8-digit school code and school name).
   - the district test coordinator (found at profiles.doe.mass.edu; submit any updates to your district-level Directory Administrator)
   - the district technology coordinator (found at profiles.doe.mass.edu; submit any updates to your district-level Directory Administrator)
   - the district-level SIMS contact, who submits data for the entire district to the Department's Student Information Management System (SIMS)
     - To find your district's SIMS contact, go to the School and District Profiles people search page, select **SIMS Contact** from the **Function** menu, and click **Get Results**.

3. **Become familiar with the components of computer-based testing (CBT).**

Component	What is it used for?	Resources
PearsonAccess Next (PAN): The online test management system for principals, test coordinators, technology coordinators, and test administrators	- Managing user accounts - Completing the Student registration (SR/PNP) - Managing computer-based test sessions	- PAN overview video - PAN online support - User Role Matrix (Click on the "PearsonAccess Next" dropdown)
TestNav: The online testing platform used by students	Used by students for taking computer-based MCAS tests	- TestNav8 Online Support - Set up and Use TestNav - Troubleshooting

Become familiar with the components for computer-based testing (CBT), continued

Component	What is it used for?	Resources
App Check: Confirms that the student device can connect to TestNav and will start TestNav in kiosk mode.	• Ensures that student devices and networks are set up correctly. • Technology coordinators should run App Check on student devices. • All schools should run App Check.	• [Infrastructure Trial Readiness Guide](#) (Click on the "PearsonAccess Next" drop-down) • [Infrastructure Trial for Test Coordinators and Test Administrators module](#) • [Fall/Winter training sessions](#) (dates to be announced in fall 2023) • TestNav User Guide: [Set up and use TestNav](#)
Preliminary System Test: A small-scale infrastructure trial during which staff members log in and click through practice tests (instead of students doing so).	• Ensures that test content can be accessed on student devices on the school network. • Schools that do not conduct an Infrastructure Trial are strongly recommended to conduct a Preliminary System Test.	
Infrastructure Trial: An opportunity for schools to prepare for computer-based testing by simulating test-day network use If your organization has previously successfully administered school-wide CBT, and you are able to confirm the five bulleted items in the second column, your organization may not need to conduct an Infrastructure Trial. If one or more items in this list cannot be confirmed, or if your technology set-up has significantly changed since the last CBT administration (including using Bring Your Own Device for the first time), an Infrastructure Trial is recommended.	This "dress rehearsal" will help to confirm the following: • If TestNav is configured correctly • If precaching, if the ProctorCache machine is properly configured to deliver test content to devices • If devices can successfully run TestNav • If participating staff know how to monitor and manage a computer-based MCAS test • If students are familiar with the computer-based tools and format	
ProctorCache: Software that precaches (i.e., loads) test content onto a designated machine in the school In schools with lower bandwidth, ProctorCache can reduce test delays and can provide students with a more seamless testing experience in the event of disruptions to internet connectivity.	To reduce bandwidth requirements, reduce test content load times, and provide a more seamless experience for students	• [ProctorCache Recommendation for MCAS Computer-Based Testing](#) (Click on the "PearsonAccess Next" dropdown) • [Set Up and Use ProctorCache](#) • [ProctorCache System Requirements](#) • [Features and Demos](#)

D. Tasks for Principals/Test Coordinators Fall 2023

1. **Begin determining local responsibilities, and identify which staff members will be part of your test administration team to help with the planning and management of CBT tasks including the following:**
   - Coordinating test administration, including who will create and manage the school's test administration schedule
   - Identifying which students will use accessibility features (available to all students), reviewing IEPs and 504 plans for accommodations for students with disabilities, and reviewing which accommodations are needed for English learners (ELs)
   - Completing tasks in PAN, including updating contact information and providing student information in the SR/PNP
   - Setting up the school's technology, including configuring devices and the network for testing (see tasks for technology coordinators beginning on page 8 of this document)
   - Creating a communication plan, including determining how information from the Student Assessment Update biweekly newsletter will be shared across the team (whether to sign up multiple individuals, or if one person will have the responsibility of communicating information across the team)

2. **Provide the Department with the school's correct contact information to receive important notices via email during test administration.**
   The Department provides important program updates, timely test administration-related deadlines, and links to register for trainings via the Student Assessment Update. Confirm whether you receive the update by following the instructions in step C.1.

   Review your School and District Profile, and click on the "people" tab to confirm whether the names and contact information are correct for the principal, district and school-level Test Coordinator(s), and the district Technology Director. Make sure your school's main profile page lists the principal's name and email address correctly.

3. *High schools:* **Review participation guidelines for the high school tests and retests, and determine which students in grades 11 and 12 still need to meet their MCAS Competency Determination (CD) graduation requirements.**
   Participation guidelines will be posted on the Test Administration web page for each test administration period.

   High school principals should review the Student CD Roster (report PE618 in Edwin Analytics) to confirm that students who need to earn their CD will participate in MCAS testing as appropriate. The report will be updated in mid-September with spring 2023 MCAS results.

4. **Review accessibility features (for all students) and accommodations for students with disabilities and ELs, and begin planning which ones students will use during MCAS testing.**
   Review the *Accessibility and Accommodations Manual* and the Accessibility and Accommodations module.

   Accommodations need to be listed in students' IEPs and 504 plans and noted in local records for EL students. Selected accessibility features and accommodations need to be included in PAN.

5

Test administrators who will administer accommodations to students with disabilities or EL students should receive additional training beyond that offered at the school-wide test administrator training to ensure that accommodations are correctly provided. Additional information will be provided in the *Principal's Administration Manual*.

A small number of accommodations must be designated in students' SR/PNP and require school staff to set up the student's test correctly to ensure that the student receives the correct accommodation(s). Details are provided in the *Accessibility and Accommodations Manual*; principals should designate staff to complete the SR/PNP with students' accessibility features and accommodations as well as to set up students' devices before testing so that students will receive the correct edition of their test (e.g., so that students can access the text-to-speech edition, which needs to be ordered via the SR/PNP). See section E.4 below for more information.

5. **By October 1, 2023: Provide student information to your district SIMS contact.**
   Students' data used for MCAS reporting purposes is provided by districts to the Department via the Student Information Management System (SIMS). Most districts use the School Interoperability Framework (SIF), which provides updates to student data in real time to the Department. For non-SIF districts, SIMS is updated in October, March, and June.

   Call your district's SIMS contact to confirm the accuracy of your school's data and learn how to provide updates throughout the school year to SIMS (e.g., if a student no longer has an IEP). See step C.2 for instructions on finding your district's SIMS contact.

E. Tasks for Principals/Test Coordinators   At least 2 months before testing

1. *Returning principals/test coordinators:* **Confirm whether your PearsonAccess Next account is still active.**
   School and district staff who had access to PAN during the previous school year should sign in to PAN to confirm whether their accounts are still active. If you are able to sign in to your account successfully, no further action is needed at this time. If you are unable to sign in, you should first attempt to reset your password. If you are still unable to sign in after attempting to reset your password, your account may have been disabled due to inactivity, and you will need to contact the MCAS Service Center to reinstate your account.

   As you confirm your account, you may notice some minor updates to PAN. Detailed information on new features will soon be posted to the Updates for 2023–24 web page on the DESE website.

2. **Confirm whether appropriate staff members have PearsonAccess Next accounts.**
   Principals should review the User Role Matrix to confirm that school and district staff have the appropriate PAN accounts. Principals should designate a member of their team to add/remove accounts for each administration. This task can be done manually or by uploading a file (the latter is best for creating large numbers of new accounts). For support, refer to the Guide to Managing User Accounts in PearsonAccess Next. Contact the MCAS Service Center with questions.

3. **Participate in training sessions on MCAS test administration and test security topics, view online training modules, and plan to train test administrators.**
All principals and test coordinators, especially those who are new, are encouraged to participate in a training session on MCAS test security protocols in the winter. In addition, sessions will be offered on topics such as an introduction to computer-based testing, an overview of accessibility and accommodations, and tasks to complete for testing. These sessions will be offered in early 2024, and additional sessions will be offered in fall 2023 for new high school principals and test coordinators in preparation for the November retests. Details will be provided in fall editions of the Student Assessment Update, and schools will be able to register on the DESE website for sessions as they become available.

Online training modules providing guidance on completing tasks before, during, and after testing are available. In addition, an administration-specific slide template that principals are encouraged to use to train their test administrators will be posted (the availability of the slides will be announced in future Student Assessment Updates). New principals, test coordinators, and test administrators may also find the PAN overview video to be helpful.

4. **Provide student information in PAN during the Student Registration/Personal Needs Profile (SR/PNP) window.**
The SR/PNP is a collection of student-level data that includes student demographic data, test registration information, and information on selected accessibility features and/or accommodations that a student will use during testing. The accuracy of the SR/PNP is important because it provides a record after testing of certain accessibility features and accommodations used by students. In addition, for CBT, the SR/PNP determines the test form that students will take (e.g., text-to-speech). Form-dependent accommodations **must** be assigned correctly in the SR/PNP before testing for CBT. If not assigned correctly, a student's test will need to be stopped, a new test will need to be set up, and the student may need to retake a portion of the test. See Appendix A of the Guide to the SR/PNP Process for a list of form-dependent accommodations.

For PBT, the SR/PNP provides the basis for the initial shipment of test materials to schools (e.g., Student ID Labels, test booklets, answer booklets, large-print booklets). The SR/PNP process is also the basis for schools' orders for test administration manuals for both CBT and PBT.

On the first day of each SR/PNP window for each administration, the Department posts a pre-populated file in DropBox Central in the DESE Security Portal containing information on students, based on the most recent SIMS or SIF data.

Review the dates for the SR/PNP windows for each test administration period (see the schedule for testing and administration deadlines) and add them to your calendar. Designate an individual to complete the SR/PNP during these timeframes.

DESE will hold training sessions on the SR/PNP (registration will be announced in the Student Assessment Update). An updated Guide to the SR/PNP Process covering all the 2023–24 administrations will be posted on the MCAS Resource Center (under PearsonAccess Next Guidance) by September 18. For additional support, view the SR/PNP module.

5. *If your school has extenuating circumstances:* **Request a waiver from the MCAS CBT expectation.**
   Schools are expected to administer the MCAS tests on a computer (except for students who meet the criteria in the *Accessibility and Accommodations Manual* for a paper-based test). Schools with unique, extenuating circumstances may apply to administer paper-based testing instead if technology constraints or related issues make computer-based testing unfeasible. Instructions on how to apply for a waiver will be provided in upcoming Student Assessment Updates. Requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

6. **Prepare students for online testing.**
   - Ensure the curriculum incorporates digital learning; review the DLCS Curriculum Framework.
   - Resources for preparing students for computer-based testing:
     - Student Tutorial (updated for 2023–24)
       - Demonstration of the navigation, tools, and features for CBT
       - Students complete it independently (no audio).
     - Practice tests
       - Simulation of the tools and features for CBT
       - Tests include accessibility features and special edition text-to-speech accommodated test forms
   - Additional resources for students
     - Sample student work and scoring guides
     - Released items
     - Answer keys and scoring rubrics for practice tests
       - Click on the subject, and then click on the grade.
     - Equation editor guides and symbol keys for Math and STE
     - Reference sheets for Math and STE (for all students)
   - Resources for parents/guardians

F. Tasks for Principals/Test Coordinators   Winter 2023–24

1. **Receive the 2024 password for the MCAS Service Center secure website.**
   School and district passwords for the MCAS Service Center are changed at the close of each calendar year to maintain the site's security.

   Memos containing passwords for use in 2024 will be posted in early January 2024 in the Department's Security Portal. Passwords are provided for school principals, and district superintendents will receive a list of passwords for all the schools in their district.

   Additional details will be provided in a winter edition of the Student Assessment Update.

2. **Plan for the receipt of test administration manuals.**
   Paper copies of the spring *Principal's Administration Manual* (PAM) and *Test Administrator's Manuals* (separate manuals for CBT and PBT) are shipped for receipt prior to test administration according to the detailed schedule to be posted this fall. In addition, the manuals are planned for posting on the Department's website prior to the delivery of manuals. Manuals are posted in PDF format, and PDFs will be provided of the full documents, as well as excerpts of different portions, which may be

distributed to different staff members as appropriate (e.g., ELA scripts for an ELA test administrator, the security requirements for a hallway monitor).

Each school receives one copy of the *Principal's Administration Manual*. Each school also receives one copy of each *Test Administrator's Manual* for every 15 students, based on the school's SR/PNP. Additional copies of manuals can be downloaded from the website linked above or, alternatively, a school may contact the MCAS Service Center to request additional copies.

G. Tasks for Technology Coordinators   Fall 2023

1. **Review the technology specifications, and prepare the school's infrastructure.**
    - The CBT technology specifications provide security requirements, minimum and recommended specifications for computer hardware and devices, and suggest recommended levels of bandwidth that will support schools' instructional and assessment needs. Schools should review the system requirements linked above and update operating systems as necessary.
    - The Network Requirements and Guidelines provide instructions for configuring the school network to allow for student devices to access secure test content through TestNav.
    - Identify any gaps in technology capacity (e.g., test-taking devices that do not meet technology specifications, potentially insufficient bandwidth), and address those gaps.
    - If the school will use Chromebooks, review these special instructions.
    - Plan to have enough devices for test administrators and students, including back-up devices that can be used if needed.
        - Schools may want to use this device planner to determine the number of devices needed at a time.

2. **Review cybersecurity guidance and establish a cybersecurity plan for your school.**
    The Department's Center for School and District Partnership team suggests that technology teams review resources for cybersecurity planning to avoid issues that could arise during MCAS testing. Resources include:
    - MassCyberCenter
    - Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program
    - U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology
    - Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
    - SETDA K-12 Cybersecurity Landscape Plan
    - COSN Cybersecurity publications
    - K12 SIX Cybersecurity Essentials Series

    Schools and districts should consider information as it relates to their technology infrastructure for MCAS testing and overall district plans, and email the Department's Center for School and District Partnership team at k12edtech@mass.gov with any questions.

3. **Determine whether your school will participate in "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) for MCAS testing.**
    A BYOD policy allows students to use their own devices for instruction. Schools with students using their own devices for instruction that would also like to use these devices for MCAS testing will need to inform the Department of this decision because there may be additional steps to complete in

preparation for MCAS testing. Look for announcements in the Student Assessment Update for more information.

H. Tasks for Technology Coordinators   At least 2 months before testing

1. **Verify access to PearsonAccess Next and the PearsonAccess Next training site.**
   If you are new to your role, or if you are unable to sign in to your account, contact your principal or test coordinator.

2. **Ensure that all testing devices have been updated to version 1.12 of the TestNav app and familiarize yourself with updates to TestNav and PAN.**
   - The latest annual TestNav release became available in summer 2023. Districts that did not install this version of TestNav over the summer must install it prior to testing. Once complete, schools will not need to update TestNav again prior to testing.
   - Updates to PAN and TestNav for this school year will be posted soon.

3. **View online training modules, and attend additional training sessions.** The ones below will be particularly helpful for technology coordinators.
   - Module: **Infrastructure Trial for Technology Coordinators**
   - Training sessions:
     - **Pre-Administration Tasks for Technology Staff** (late January/early February)
     - **Overview of Infrastructure Trials for Technology Coordinators** (early February)