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# **A Family's Guide to the MCAS Assessment**

— Welcome! —  
Thanks for joining us!

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# Background

1993: Massachusetts education reform law directed the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop and administer a statewide assessment system to measure the academic achievement and progress of districts, schools, and individual students. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) was developed, and has been administered annually since 1998.

2011: Massachusetts joined the Partnership for the Advancement of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a multi-state consortium formed to develop a new set of assessments for English Language Arts and Mathematics reflecting the updated standards.

2013: Two-year “test-drive” of PARCC assessments. Districts were given the choice of administering either the MCAS or the PARCC assessments. Webster was part of the PARCC cohort. Park Avenue Elementary was the first school in the district to administer the PARCC electronically.

2015: The Board voted to adopt Next-Generation MCAS for all Massachusetts students in grades 3-8 to be administered Spring 2017. “MCAS 2.0” will incorporate elements of MCAS and PARCC, along with questions unique to the new assessment.

# Why do students take MCAS?

- \*Gives families and teachers a **snapshot** of a student's progress to date as measured by one consistent assessment.
- \*Provides standardized evidence to determine the **progress** individual students have made in acquiring the knowledge and skills as outlined in Massachusetts Common Core Curriculum.
- \*Provides **accountable data** to the state, which monitors district performance.
- \*Data allows school administration and teachers the opportunity to **reflect** on current practices and develop future **goals**.

It has been said that these assessments serve as an "**educational GPS system,**" assessing students' current performance, and pointing the way to what students need to learn to be **ready for the next grade level** and, by high school graduation, **for college and/or a career.**

# In a teacher's words...



# What ELA skills are tested by MCAS?

- Reading closely to find **main ideas** and **supporting details** in a story.
- Describing the **logical connection** between parts of stories (ex. first, second, third; cause and effect).
- **Comparing and contrasting** the most important points presented in two passages on the same topic.
- Writing **opinions** or explanations that develop topics with facts and details .
- Writing stories, or other forms of **narrative writing**, using evidence from given text to show understanding of characters, settings, theme, plot, and point of view.
- Short **research writing** about topics from given text.
- Reading and understanding a **variety of different kinds of texts**, both fiction and non-fiction...stories, poems, fables, fantasy, folk tales, diaries, historical, biographies, plays



# What math skills are tested by MCAS?

\***Multiplying and dividing** up to  $10 \times 10$  accurately

\***Solving word problems** using **addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division**, in addition to **time, money, and measurement**.

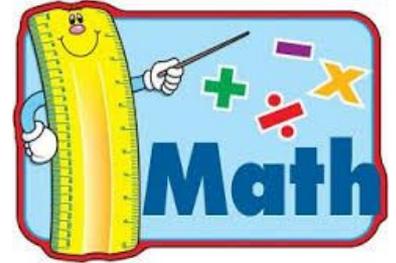
\***Beginning to multiply numbers** with more than one digit (e.g., multiplying  $9 \times 80$ )

\***Understanding fractions** and relating them to the familiar system of whole numbers (e.g., recognizing that  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{2}{6}$  are the same number)

\***Measuring and estimating weights and liquid volumes**, and solving word problems involving these quantities

\***Reasoning about shapes** (e.g., all squares are rectangles but not all rectangles are squares)

\***Finding areas** of shapes, and relating area to multiplication (ex. the number of square feet for a 9-foot by 7-foot room can be found by the product  $9 \times 7$ )



# **MCAS SESSIONS**

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

Administered in April

Three sessions

Narrative

Literary Analysis

Research Simulation

## **MATHEMATICS**

Administered in May

Two sessions

# MCAS Question Types

## Multiple Choice

*Students select one correct answer from among several answer options.*

## Multiple Select

*Students select more than one correct answer from among several answer options.*

## Short Answer/Fill-in-the-Blank

*Students construct a short written (typed) response, typically only a word or a number.*

## Technology Enhanced

*Students answer questions using technology (on the computer based test only).*

- *Drag and Drop*
- *Drop downs*
- *Equation Editor*

## Open Response

*Students write (type) a response to a multi-part item that includes answers and explanations to all parts.*

## ***Universal Accessibility Features Available to All Students***

Highlight tool

Alternative font/background color

Magnifier/Zoom tool

Line reader tool

Answer Masking

Answer Eliminator

Item flag/bookmark

Audio aids

Notepad

Test Administrator may... clarify/repeat test directions, redirect student to task, read aloud selected words on Mathematics Sections.

**Let's take a look at some  
examples...**

[Practice Tests](#)

# And remember...no test defines your amazing child!

Written by an Indiana third-grade teacher to her students before standardized testing...we couldn't have said it better ourselves!

Dearest Students,

Next week you will take your XXXXXX test for math and reading, and two weeks after that you will take your YYYYYY test. I know how hard you have worked, but there is something very important you must know.

The XXXXXX and YYYYYY tests do not assess all of what makes you special and unique. The people who create these tests and score them do not know each of you like I do, and certainly not the way your families do.

They do not know that some of you speak two languages, or that you love to sing or draw. They have not seen your natural talent for dancing. They do not know that your friends count on you to be there for them, that your laughter can brighten the darkest day, or that your face turns red when you feel shy. They do not know that you participate in sports, wonder about the future, or sometimes you help with your little brother or little sister after school. They do not know that you are kind, trustworthy, and thoughtful... and every day you try your very best.

The scores you will get from these tests will tell you something, but they will not tell you everything. These tests do not define you. There are many ways of being smart. YOU are smart! You are enough! You are the light that brightens my day and the reason I am happy to come to work each day. So, in the midst of all of these tests, remember that there is no way to "test" all of the amazing and awesome things that make you, YOU.

All I ask is that you do your personal best and do not give up. You have been working for this since Kindergarten and are ready! I believe in you!

# How can I best help my child prepare?

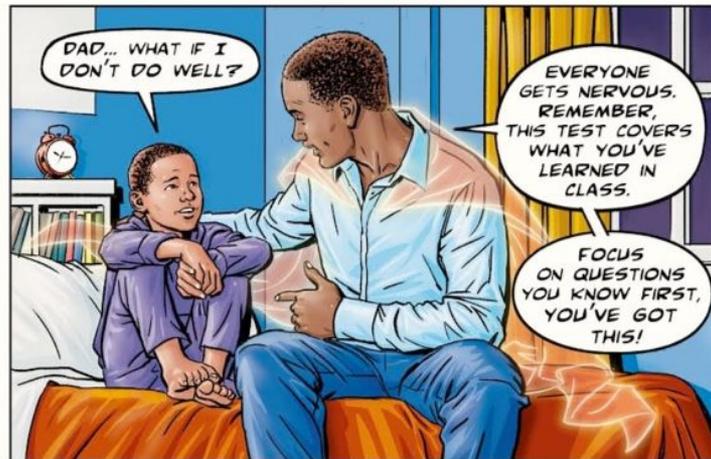
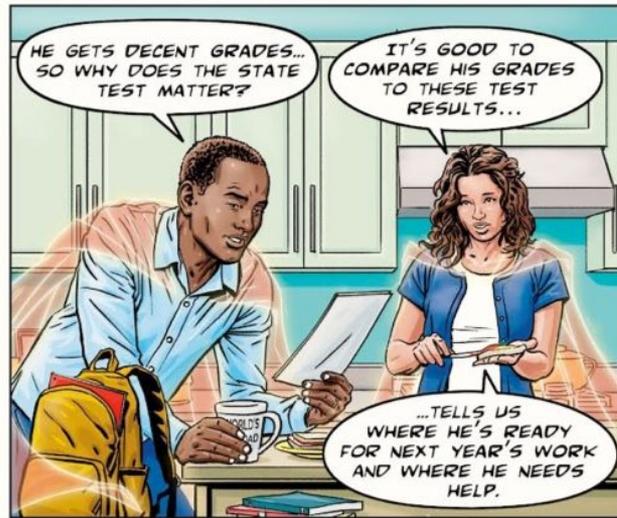
Since MCAS assesses your child's ability to apply the knowledge they have been learning day by day, there is **no need to study** or prepare for any specific content.

To encourage your child's success we suggest...

- Make **reading, writing, and solving real-world problems** (like telling time and counting money) a part of your everyday routine.
- Have **conversations** about what your child is learning in school and share your own experiences.

During the assessment period your child will benefit from...

- A good night's **sleep**
- **Get to school on time**
- A hearty **breakfast** (we will serve breakfast as usual each day), and a healthy **snack**
- Words of **encouragement**...Remind your child of how hard he/she has worked this year, how much he/she has learned, and how proud you are of him/her.



# Questions? Comments?

Thank you for coming this evening!

Your commitment and support are the most valuable tools to encourage your child's success!

Working together we all make a difference!

[Be A Learning Hero](#)