

Administrator's Overview

Fall 2023

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Important Dates for the MCAS-Alt

Important MCAS-Alt Dates

Ordering Materials for the MCAS-Alt

- Order MCAS-Alt materials (binders, etc.): **Jan. 2–12, 2024**
- Materials will be **received** in late **February**.
- Check the shipment when received and **complete Part 1** of the PCPA

Preparing for Submission

- Use the online [MCAS Service Center](#) to schedule UPS pick-up by **2:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 27**
- Assessments must be picked up from schools by **5:00 p.m., Thursday, March 28**

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Criteria and Guidelines for Determining Participation in the Assessment.

Assessment Options for Students with Disabilities

- Computer-based MCAS testing with universal accessibility features
- MCAS accommodations, including paper-based testing
- MCAS-Alt for Students with the Most Significant Disabilities (See criteria)
- Grade-level/Competency portfolios
- IEPs must list all assessment decisions, including accommodations
 - Alternate assessments require documented evidenced-based data.
 - **Reminder:** Assessments beyond grade 10 are optional, IEP teams should determine whether the student is expected to graduate.
 - If expected to graduate, students should continue to take MCAS retests, and/or submit an MCAS appeal or complete a competency portfolio.

A student should not take MCAS-Alt based solely on whether they...

- previously failed the MCAS test.
- took an alternate assessment previously (since this is an annual decision).
- have not been provided instruction in the general curriculum.
- were absent excessively.
- have a specific disability (e.g., all students with intellectual disabilities should not automatically take the MCAS-Alt).
- are enrolled a program where it is expected that students will take the MCAS-Alt.
- are an English learner (EL).
- require an alternative augmentative communication system.
- the school's accountability is affected by the decision.

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Decision-Making Guide for Assessment

Question 1: Does the student meet the Massachusetts definition and all criteria of a "student with the most significant cognitive disabilities"? (next slide)

- **If Yes:** The student is eligible for the MCAS-Alt, which is an Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards.
Note: Simply because the student is eligible does not warrant the Team recommending the MCAS-Alt. Students taking the MCAS-Alt likely will face challenges earning their high school diploma.
- **If No:** Proceed to question 2

Question 2: Does the student have a disability and require specific, allowable accommodations and accessibility features to demonstrate knowledge and skills on assessments?

- **If Yes:** The student's IEP or 504 plan should include the specific allowable accommodations and accessibility features, which should generally mirror accommodations the student receives during routine instruction. Please review the *Guidance for Selecting and Evaluating MCAS Accessibility Features and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*.
- **If No:** The student must participate in the standard MCAS assessment using available accessibility features. Accommodations may be included later if the student's needs change.

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Massachusetts defines “students with the *most* significant cognitive disabilities” as students who:

1. Have cognitive disabilities evidenced by significant delays in attaining age-level academic achievement standards, even with systematic, extensive individually designed instruction, related services, and modifications; **and**
2. Have cognitive disabilities that significantly impact their educational performance and ability to apply learning from one setting to another; **and**
3. Require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled; **and**
4. Perform significantly below average in general cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. This is defined as a student functioning **two or more standard deviations below the mean on commonly accepted norm-referenced assessments in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior** (e.g., two or more adaptive skill areas such as daily living skills, communication, self-care, social skills, and academic skills).

The *Alternate Assessment Participation Tool* is a companion document to assist IEP teams when deciding if a student is eligible to participate in the MCAS-Alt.

If eligible, the student will participate in the assessment in all content areas required for their grade.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA:		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE: <i>Consider formal and informal results</i>	
1. Students' cognitive disabilities are evidenced by significant delays in attaining age-level academic achievement standards, even with systematic, extensive individually designed instruction, related services, and modifications.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
2. Students' cognitive disabilities significantly impact their educational performance and ability to apply what they learn from one setting to another.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Classroom Observations: <input type="text"/> OTHER: <input type="text"/>	
3. Student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled; and	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Clinical/Specialists Evaluations: <input type="text"/> OTHER: <input type="text"/>	
4. Students perform significantly below average in general cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. <small>This is defined as a student functioning two or more standard deviations below the mean on commonly accepted norm-referenced assessments in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior (e.g., two or more adaptive skill areas such as daily living skills, communication, self-care, social skills, and academic skills).</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Cognitive Evaluations: <input type="text"/> Adaptive Behavior Assessment: <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes The Team has reviewed all four criteria and determined each criterion has been met, and the student is eligible for the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards. <input type="checkbox"/> No			

Participation in the alternate assessment indicates all content areas will be assessed. (ELA, Math, Science).

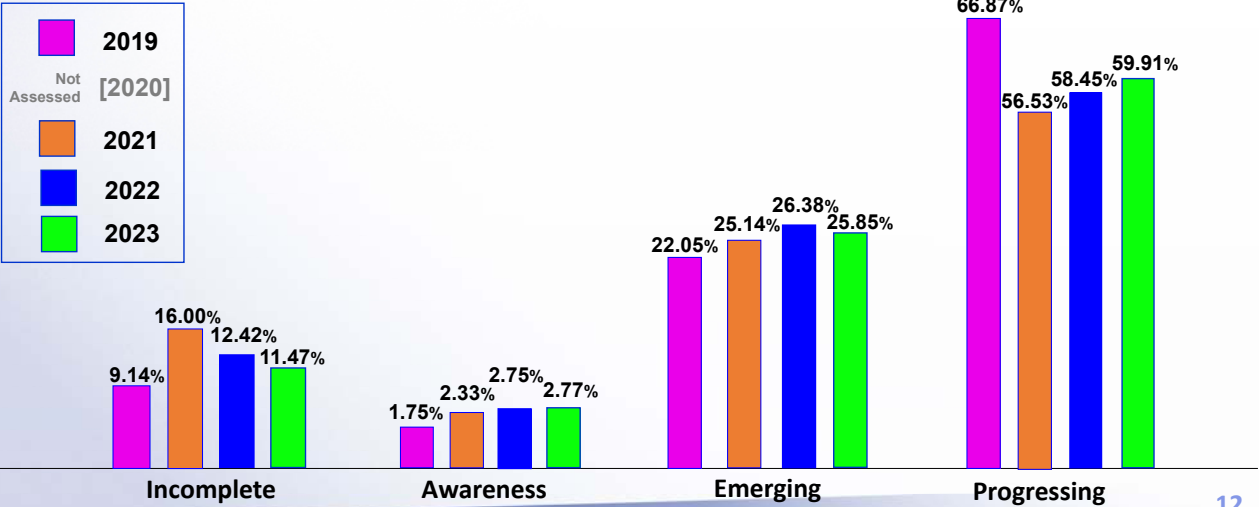
Fill out the form online, then upload it to the **MCAS-Alt File Exchange** located in the Security Portal.

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2023 MCAS Alt-Statewide Results



2019-2023 MCAS-Alt: Statewide Results (All Content Areas - All Grades)



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Supporting Teachers and Monitoring Progress for the MCAS-Alt

Administrator's Role

Principals can:

- Encourage educators to start early in the school year.
- Ask educators what supports are necessary.
- Permit educators to **attend training** and **review sessions** in October, January, and February/March.
- Support educators by:
 - allowing flexible scheduling, data entry, and planning time;
 - provide sub coverage to allow for attending training/review sessions;
- Set a date for reviewing assessments. Give yourself or a designee adequate time prior to the due date in March.

Assist Educators Conduct the MCAS-Alt

- Check in periodically with the educators. Ask to review the student work.
- Identify educators who need support and identify who will provide it.
- To ensure that assessments are **complete** and **authentic**, the principal or designee should:
 - Reviews dates and brief descriptions on the data chart.
 - Do the activities address the measurable outcome?
 - No classroom activities should be dated on non-school days.
- Send reminder of deadlines to ensure completion by the submission date.
- Verification form is not a consent form, it is an opportunity for parents to review their child's work.

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Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 1% Cap on MCAS-Alt Participation

ESSA imposes a Statewide cap of 1% of all tested students on those who can take the MCAS-Alt.

- MA must apply for a **one-year waiver** of the cap, each year that we are over 1%.
- The US DOE may grant waivers for states that have at least:
 - 95% participation of students tested in each subject,
 - progress in lowering the number; and
 - assist districts that are consistently over the 1%.
- Each year is an opportunity to **revisit** and **refine** our decision-making on which students take the alternate assessments.
 - Are IEP teams making defensible decisions and the least dangerous assumption for each student?
 - Students who continue to take the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards will not earn a diploma.

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Resources to Help Districts Meet the ESSA 1% Cap

- **Decision-making Guidelines**
- **Alternate Assessment Participation Tool** uploaded for each student participating in the MCAS-Alt
- **Sample Parent Notification Letter** for students participating in the MCAS-Alt
 - Written **notification** of parents **is required!**
- **District Data** on percent taking MCAS-Alt at elementary, middle, and secondary levels
- **Training presentation** for IEP teams on meeting ESSA provisions.
 - **Annual district training** for teams is **required**

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Grade-level and Competency Portfolios

Who Should Compile a Grade-level or Competency Portfolio?

A student with a significant disability can submit a **grade-level** or **competency** portfolio if they:

- perform classroom work **at or near grade level**;
- cannot demonstrate knowledge and skills on the MCAS test in that grade and subject; **and**
- is attempting to earn an equivalent score to a student who takes the test.
- See *Grade-Level and Competency Portfolio Manual* or visit DESE website for portfolio requirements.

Students may be well-suited for a grade-level or competency portfolio if...

...a student produces grade-level work in the classroom, but cannot demonstrate knowledge and skills on the MCAS test due to:

- a significant **emotional, behavioral, or other disability** and is unable to maintain concentration to participate in standardized testing, even with accommodations;
- a significant **health-related disability, neurological disorder, or other complex disability** and is unable to meet the demands of a prolonged test administration;
- a significant **motor, communication, or other disability** and requires more time than is reasonable or available for testing.

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How Should High Schools Approach the Task of Compiling a Competency Portfolio?

1. Determine students for whom a competency portfolio would be appropriate.
2. Principal and other adults familiar with the student decide whether to pursue this option.
3. Review submission requirements.
4. Identify staff who can collaborate (e.g., special educators, content teachers, curriculum coordinators).
5. Review MA Curriculum Frameworks, portfolio requirements, and portfolio samples posted to [MCAS-Alt](#) and [Appeals](#) web pages.
6. Instruct student on the standards required in the portfolio.
7. Collect samples of student's work for the portfolio.
8. Follow submission requirements and deadlines.

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Also, consider these options for a high school student...

- Students who previously took standard MCAS tests should consider taking MCAS **retests**, in addition to submitting a competency portfolio
 - Beyond grade 10, a student can submit (or resubmit) a portfolio and take the retest.
 - Remember: all MCAS participation after grade 10 is optional unless the student is seeking a high school diploma.
- Consider submitting a cohort **MCAS Appeal**, if a cohort exists.
 - **Cohort:** At least 6 other students at the school who took the same grades 10 and 11 courses as the appellant and scored *Partially Meeting Expectations* on the high school MCAS in the subject being appealed.

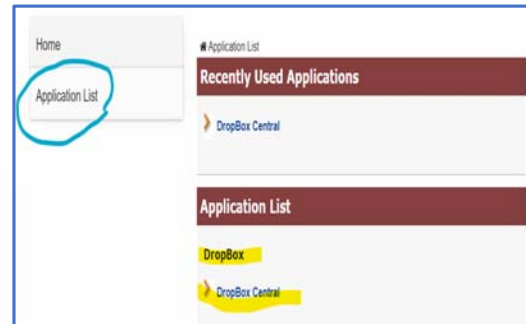
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How to locate and interpret MCAS-Alt Feedback Forms

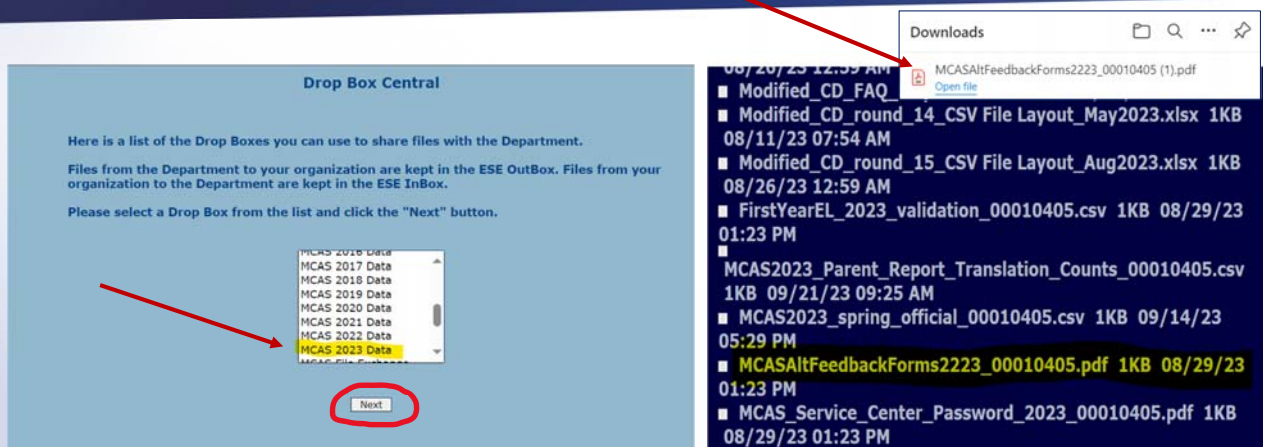
Viewing and Downloading MCAS-Alt Preliminary Results

To view the MCAS-Alt Feedback Forms (FFs), available in mid-June from the previous spring. Use the password given in January from MCAS.



For assistance logging in, see your district or organization [Directory Administrator](#).

Viewing and Downloading MCAS-Alt Preliminary Results



Instructions are also found in the *Principal's Manual for the MCAS-Alt*, the SAS Update and the MCAS-Alt Newsletter.

This is a preliminary score report with comments and is intended for review by the teacher who prepared the assessment. Printed *Parent/Guardian Reports* will be sent to districts in Fall 2023. The publication entitled *Guidelines for Scoring MCAS-Alt* is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/results.html.

Content areas assessed at this grade level: English Language Arts, Mathematics

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS						
	Strand	Level of Complexity	Demonstration of Skills	Independence	Self-Evaluation	Generalized Performance
Achievement Level Emerging	Language	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand was well-organized.				
	Reading	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand showed evidence of open-ended, creative approaches that allowed the student to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Strand was well-organized.				
Writing	3	1	3	M	2	
	Comments	Evidence of self-evaluation was not found or did not demonstrate choices or reflection by the student. Use of the student's primary mode of communication allowed the student to effectively express his or her knowledge and ideas.				
MATHEMATICS						
	Domain	Level of Complexity	Demonstration of Skills	Independence	Self-Evaluation	Generalized Performance
Achievement Level Progressing	Operations and Algebraic Thinking	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand showed evidence of open-ended, creative approaches that allowed the student to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Strand was well-organized.				
	Measurement and Data	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand showed evidence of open-ended, creative approaches that allowed the student to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Strand was well-organized.				
	Comments					
	Comments					

	1	2	3	Educator's Manual, pp. 29-34
Level of Complexity	Portfolio strand reflects little or no basis in, or is unmatched to, curriculum framework learning standard(s) required for assessment.	Student primarily addresses motor and communication "access skills" during instruction based on curriculum framework standards in this strand.	Student addresses curriculum framework standards that have been modified below grade-level expectations in this strand.	LOC 4 and 5 Not Applicable (See Grade-Level/Competency)

	M	1	2	3	4
Demonstration of Skills and Concepts (Accuracy)	The portfolio strand contains insufficient information to determine a score.	Student's performance is primarily inaccurate and demonstrates minimal understanding in this strand (0–25% accurate).	Student's performance is limited and inconsistent with regard to accuracy and demonstrates limited understanding in this strand (26–50% accurate).	Student's performance is mostly accurate and demonstrates some understanding in this strand (51–75% accurate).	Student's performance is accurate and is of consistently high quality in this strand (76–100% accurate).
Independence	The portfolio strand contains insufficient information to determine a score.	Student requires extensive verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (0–25% independent).	Student requires frequent verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (26–50% independent).	Student requires some verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (51–75% independent).	Student requires minimal verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (76–100% independent).
Self-Evaluation	Evidence of planning, self-correction, task-monitoring, goal-setting, and reflection was not found in the student's portfolio in this content area.	Student infrequently plans, self-corrects monitors, sets goals, and reflects in this content area — only one example of self-evaluation was found in this strand.	Student plans, self-corrects monitors, sets goals, and reflects in this content area — multiple examples of self-evaluation were found in this strand.		
Generalized Performance		Student demonstrates knowledge and skills in one context or uses one approach and/or method of response and participation in this strand.	Student demonstrates knowledge and skills in multiple contexts or uses multiple approaches and/or methods of response and participation in this strand.		

ELA: Demonstration of Skills and Concepts (Accuracy)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

	Strand	Level of Complexity	Demonstration of Skills	Independence	Self-Evaluation	Generalized Performance
Achievement	Language	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand showed evidence of open-ended, creative approaches that allowed student to demonstrate knowledge and skills.				

This rubric area measures the degree to which the student gave the correct or desired response(s) during a task or activity.

M	1	2	3	4
The portfolio strand contains insufficient information to determine a score.	Student's performance is primarily inaccurate and demonstrates minimal understanding in this strand (0–25% accurate) .	Student's performance is limited and inconsistent with regard to accuracy and demonstrates limited understanding in this strand (26–50% accurate) .	Student's performance is mostly accurate and demonstrates some understanding in this strand (51–75% accurate) .	Student's performance is accurate and is of consistently high quality in this strand (76–100% accurate) .

ELA: Independence

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

	Strand	Level of Complexity	Demonstration of Skills	Independence	Self-Evaluation	Generalized Performance
Achievement	Language	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand showed evidence of open-ended, creative approaches that allowed student to demonstrate knowledge and skills.				

This rubric area measures the frequency with which prompts were used to assist the student in responding to a task, activity, or assignment.

M	1	2	3	4
The portfolio strand contains insufficient information to determine a score.	Student requires extensive verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (0–25% independent) .	Student requires frequent verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (26–50% independent) .	Student requires some verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (51–75% independent) .	Student requires minimal verbal, visual, and physical assistance to demonstrate skills and concepts in this strand (76–100% independent) .

ELA: Demonstration of Skills / Independence

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS						
	Strand	Level of Complexity	Demonstration of Skills	Independence	Self-Evaluation	Generalized Performance
Achievement Level Emerging	Language	3	4	4	2	2
	Comments	Strand showed evidence of open-ended, creative approaches that allowed student to demonstrate knowledge and skills.				
	Reading	3	M	M	2	2
	Comments	All skills listed in the measurable outcome were not addressed during each activity on the data chart (all skills must be addressed in each activity). All skills listed in the measurable outcome were not addressed on at least two pieces of primary evidence (all skills must be addressed in each activity).				
	Writing	3	2	4	2	2
	Comments	Supporting documentation in the strand described how the learning occurred and was helpful in determining the score.				

A score of “M” is given when a portfolio strand contains insufficient information to be scored.

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ELA: Demonstration of Skills / Independence

Comment on MCAS-Alt Feedback Form:

- **“All** skills listed in the measurable outcome were not addressed during each activity on the data chart”
- **“All** skills listed in the measurable outcome were not addressed on at least two (2) pieces of evidence.”

Prior to submitting an appeal, the teacher needs to review the copy of the assessment:

- Does the entry point contain more than one skill?
- If yes, did the educator assess both skills, on 8 data points and in both pieces of student evidence?

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How MCAS-Alt Results are Reported

Scores used to report results of students who take the MCAS-Alt:

○ **Awareness**

- Students demonstrate **very little understanding** of standards and require extensive prompting and assistance. Their performance is mostly inaccurate.

○ **Emerging**

- Students demonstrate a very **basic understanding of a limited number of standards below grade-level expectations**. Their performance is limited and inconsistent.

○ **Progressing**

- Students demonstrate a **partial understanding of selected standards below grade-level expectations**. Steadily learning knowledge and skills. Performance is mostly accurate and requires minimal prompting and assistance.

○ **Incomplete**

- **Insufficient evidence and information** to determine an achievement level.

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How MCAS-Alt Results are Reported:

- MCAS-Alt results will be included in the accountability system, together with the results of students who took the standard MCAS tests.
- For **school accountability**, schools do receive the following MCAS Scaled Score Equivalent:

MCAS-Alt achievement level, based on alternate academic achievement standards	Assigned MCAS Scaled Score Equivalent
Incomplete (INP)	455
Awareness (AWR)	470
Emerging (EMG)	485
Progressing (PRG)	500

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A score of *Progressing* on MCAS-Alt is not “Passing”

A score of *Progressing* means the student is making progress:

- is steadily learning new knowledge, skills, and concepts
 - requires minimal prompting and assistance
 - performance is basically accurate
- ...but is still achieving below grade-level expectations.

Progressing does not mean a student has achieved the score needed for a Competency Determination in high school (i.e., Partially Meeting Expectations).

- MCAS-Alt scores are included at the Not Meeting Expectations level in school/district results

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Resources and Contacts

Resource and Contact Information

- MCAS-Alt Website:
 - www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt
- Student Assessment Update:
 - www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/updates.html
- MCAS Service Center:
 - mcas@cognia.org
- Robert Pelychaty, Manager of Inclusive Assessment
 - Robert.Pelychaty@mass.gov
- Debra Hand, MCAS-Alt Coordinator
 - Debra.D.Hand@mass.gov