

# MCAS-Alt Overview

For new or returning Administrators  
and Special Education Supervisors  
Fall 2024

# 1. Welcome

# Presenters

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Assessment

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dese



# EDUCATIONAL VISION

All students

- Are known and valued

Learning experiences

- Are relevant, real-world and interactive

Individualized supports

- Enable students to excel at grade level and beyond

dese

MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education

# Logistics for This Session

- Use the Q&A feature to ask a question.
  - We will answer some questions aloud at specified times during this training session, and we will email the Q&A afterwards.
  - Type your questions anytime, but we may not answer them in real time as some questions may be covered during the presentation.
  - Email student-specific questions to [mcas@mass.gov](mailto:mcas@mass.gov) instead of asking here.
- This session is being recorded and will be available with closed captioning on the [DESE YouTube site](#) within a few weeks.

# 2. Participation Requirements and eligibility for the MCAS-Alt

# Assessment Options

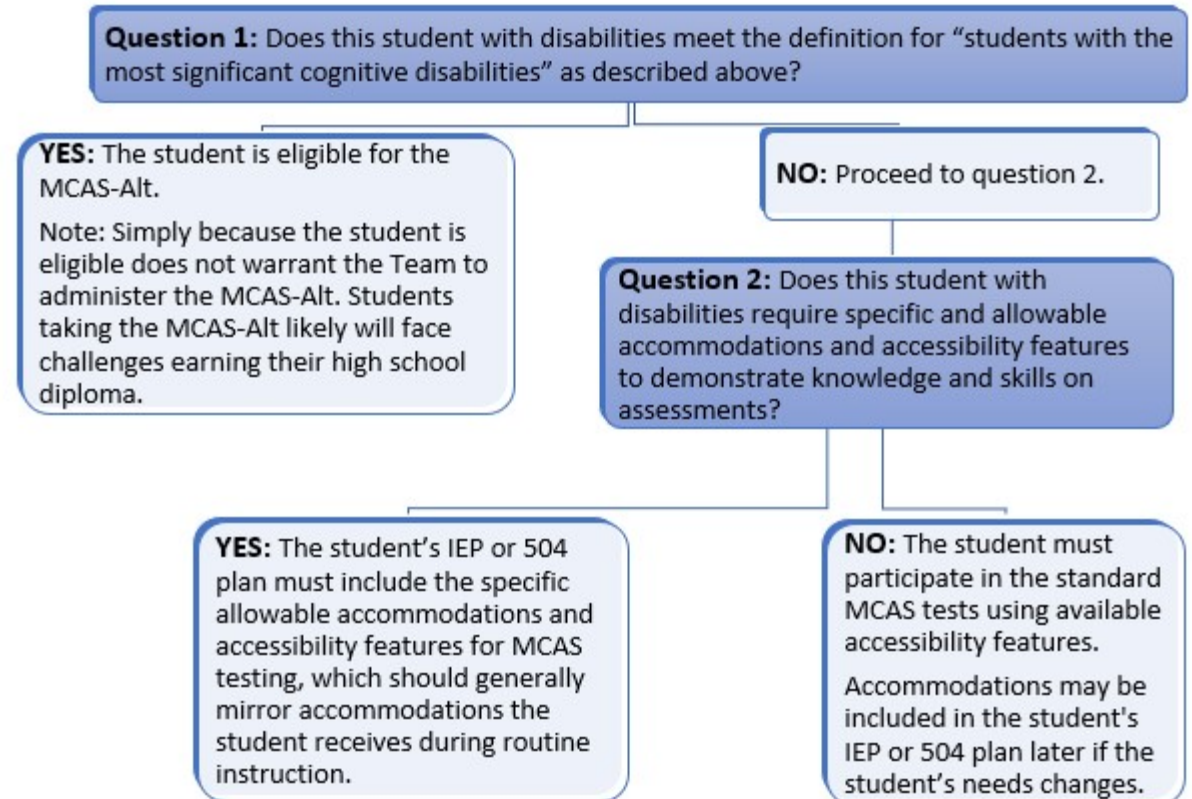
- As required by state and federal law, all students must participate in the [state-wide assessments](#).
  - Not a question of whether, but how the student will participate.
- Available assessment options:
  - Standard MCAS tests computer-based test using accessibility features
  - Standard MCAS tests with Accommodations (including special access accommodations)
  - MCAS-Alt for only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (see [eligibility criteria](#)).
- The Student's IEP Team determines and documents the how the student will participate in the required state-wide assessments.

# Decision Making Tool and Participation Tool

Massachusetts defines “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities” as those who meet **all** of the following criteria:

- 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
- have cognitive disabilities that significantly impact their educational performance and ability to apply learning from one setting to another
- require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled
- perform significantly below average in general cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior.

Note: “**Significantly below average**” 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).





# Decision Making Tool and Participation Tool

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. <i>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).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Cognitive Evaluations: <input type="text"/> Adaptive Behavior Assessment: <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>The Team has reviewed <i>all</i> four criteria and determined <i>each</i> criterion has been met, and the student is eligible for the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards.</b>	
<i>Participation in the alternate assessment indicates all content areas will be assessed. (ELA, Math, Science, Civics).</i>		

# New and Important Tasks for the 2024–2025 School Year

- Civics Alternate Assessment in Grade 8 Only
- Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria Required:
  - Only Students that meet the eligibility definition for students with the [Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities should participate in the MCAS-Alt](#)
- Students should not participate in the MCAS-Alt in only one subject area.
  - (e.g., A student with skills closer to grade-level in math, but below grade-level in ELA should participate in the standard MCAS tests.).
- [Alternate Assessment Participation Tool](#) is a required document to be maintained by schools ([SE 5](#)).

# Important Information and Tasks

- Results for MCAS Appeal were mailed to schools in July 2024.
  - Check with the school's administrators/principals to review appeal decisions.
- Educators must register (i.e., create a new account) each year in the [MCAS-Alt Forms and Graphs](#)
- Use the Forms/Graphs program to spiral back in Mathematics
- Updated manuals and materials are now available:
  - [Educator's Manual for the MCAS-Alt](#)
  - [Resource Guides \(Alternate Academic Achievement Standards\)](#)
- Collecting evidence and work samples for Science may require educators to begin administering the MCAS-Alt early in the school year.

# 3. Ordering Materials for the MCAS-Alt

# MCAS-Alt Ordering Materials Dates

- **Order MCAS-Alt materials** between **January 2 and 17**, according to the number of students in each grade participating in the alternate assessment.
- **Materials** will be shipped the **week after the February vacation**. Be sure to open the box and review the *Materials Summary*
- **Inventory the materials** and **complete the Materials Summary** to indicate the quantity of materials received.
- **Administrator complete the PCPA (Part 1 only)** online and certify that the quantity of materials received is accurate. Check with teachers to see if any additional materials are needed due to late enrollments.
- The **deadline to order additional materials** is **Tuesday, March 25, 2025**.
  - To order additional material, locate the **Ship Code** on the Materials Summary and visit [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com). Select “**MCAS Alternate Assessment**,” then select “Additional Materials” to place your order.

# Materials Summary

Item	Quantity Provided
Materials Summary	1 per school
Three-ring Binder	1 per student
Student Identification Booklet (SIB)	1 per student
SIB Instruction Sheet	1 per school
Labeled MCAS-Alt Envelope	1 per student; the information on the label must be completed before submitting the binder.
UPS Shipping Instructions and pre-printed UPS Shipping Label(s)	1 label per 10 binders
Pre-printed Student ID Label	1 per student in grades 4–8 who participated in the MCAS-Alt previously at the school (complete bubble information if no label is provided)
MCAS-Alt Score Appeal FAQ	1 per school

# 4. Preparation and Submission of MCAS-Alts

# Preparing for Submission of the MCAS-Alt

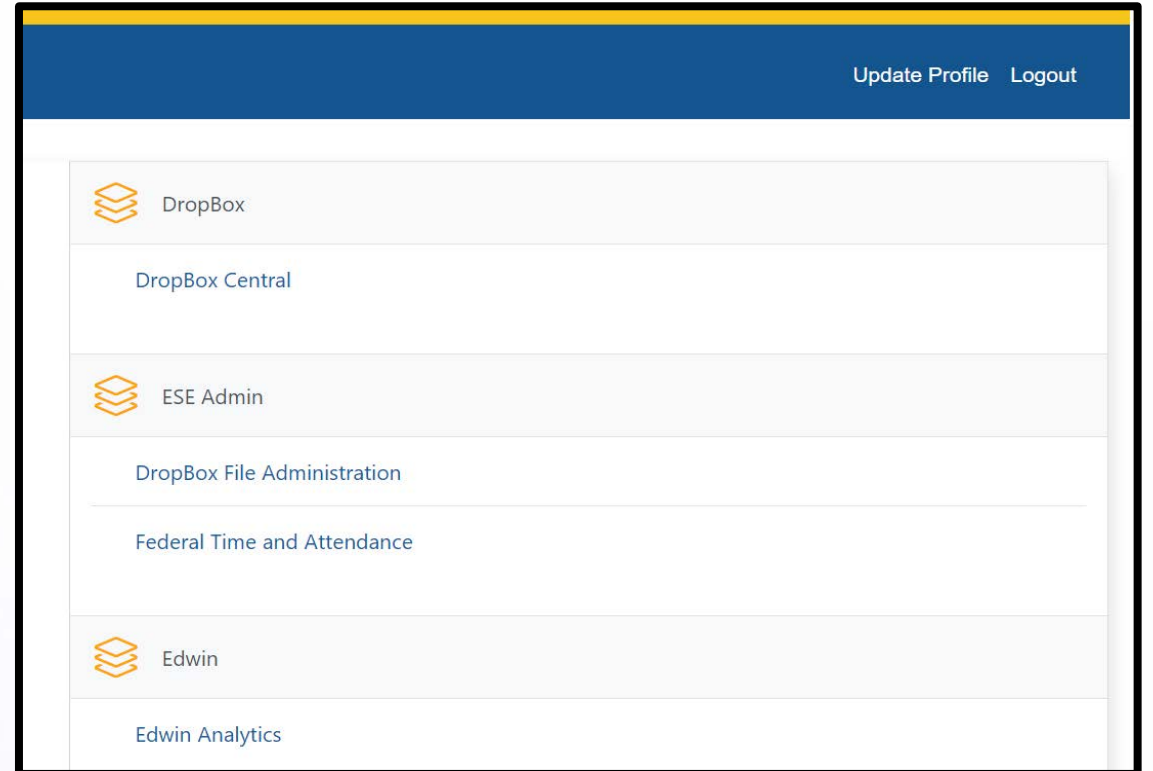
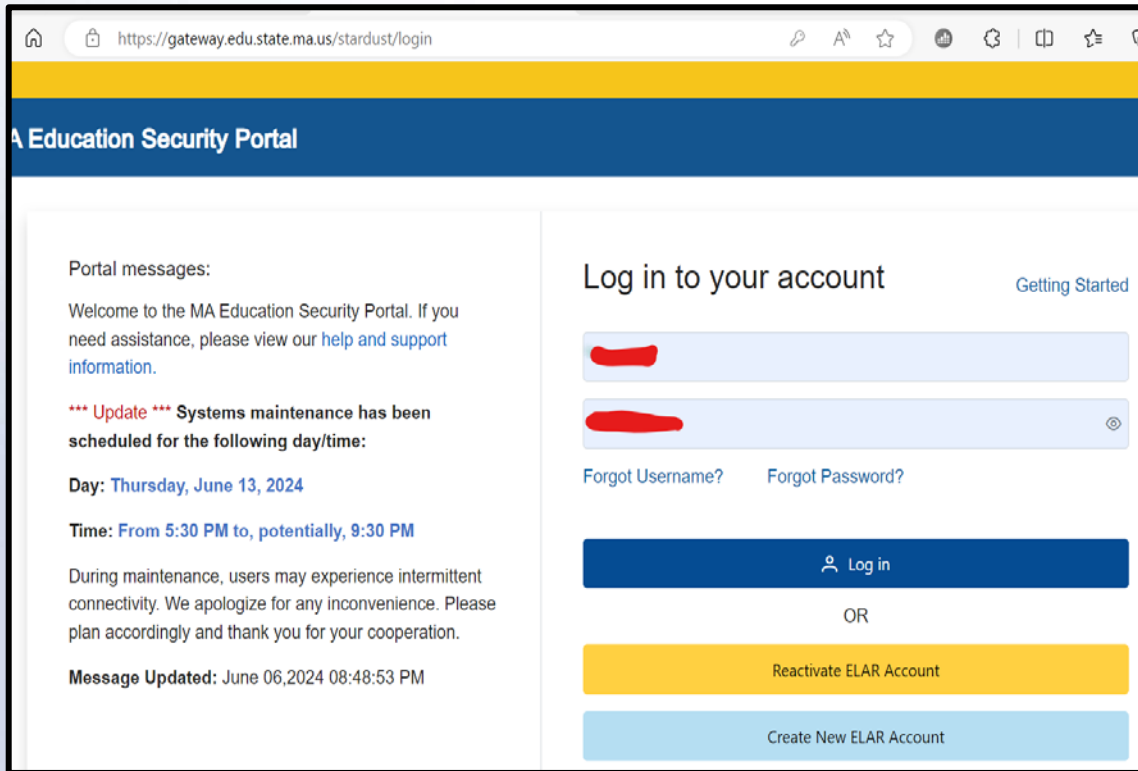
1. Place the student's binder in the large plastic bag (provided). **DO NOT SEAL** the large plastic envelope.
2. Complete the demographic label on each large plastic envelope.
3. Return unused binders and SIBs.
  - Further instructions on how to pack unused material are available with shipment.
4. Use the online [MCAS Service Center](#) to schedule UPS pick-up by **2:30 p.m., Thursday, March 27.**
5. Assessments must be picked up from schools by **5:00 p.m., Friday, March 28**



# 5. How to locate MCAS-Alt Feedback Forms

# Viewing and Downloading MCA-Alt Preliminary Results

View the MCAS-Alt Feedback Forms, available in mid-June from the DESE Security Portal



# Viewing and Downloading MCA-Alt Preliminary Results (continued)

Instructions are described in the [Principal's Manual for the MCAS-Alt](#).

Wed Jun 12 13:06:19 EDT 2024 V:1.0.2 Home Security Portal

## Drop Box Central

Here is a list of the Drop Boxes you can use to share files with the Department.

Files from the Department to your organization are kept in the ESE OutBox. Files from your organization to the Department are kept in the ESE InBox.

Please select a Drop Box from the list and click the "Next" button.

- MCAS 2019 Data
- MCAS 2020 Data
- MCAS 2021 Data
- MCAS 2022 Data
- MCAS 2023 Data
- MCAS 2024 Data**
- MCAS-ALT File Exchange
- MCAS File Exchange

Next

- Modified\_CD\_round\_17\_CSV File Layout\_Feb2024.xlsx  
64.1KB 02/21/24 04:39 PM
- Modified\_CD\_round\_18\_CSV File Layout\_May2024.xlsx  
64.0KB 05/30/24 04:26 PM
- MCAS2024\_Alt\_02120305.csv 1.7KB 06/06/24 09:33 AM
- **MCASAlt\_FeedbackForms2024\_02120305.pdf 164.1KB  
06/05/24 02:22 PM**
- MCAS\_Service\_Center\_Password\_2024\_02120305.pdf  
130.8KB 12/27/23 01:27 PM

# Score Appeal Process for MCAS-Alt

- In June, after schools receive Feedback Forms an administrator may submit a [score appeal](#) if there is evidence that an assessment was scored incorrectly. The school must have kept a copy of the student's evidence for review.
- The following materials must be reviewed by the principal, director, or superintendent prior to submitting a score appeal:
  - the MCAS-Alt Feedback Form, including the scores in each rubric area
  - The scorers' comments on the Feedback Form for each strand
- To submit an MCAS-Alt score appeal, go to the MCAS-Alt score appeal form located on the MCAS-Alt website between **June 9–20**.
- Notification of appeal results will be sent to schools by the end of July.

# **6. MCAS-Alt 1% Cap on Participation Required by Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

# Participation Cap for Alternate Assessments

"The total number of students assessed in a subject using an alternate assessment aligned with *alternate academic achievement standards*...may not exceed 1 percent of the total number of students in the state who are assessed in that subject."

- Defines 1% based on total number of students assessed in a subject
- **Districts may exceed 1% of all assessed students if justification is provided.**
  - Districts must address any disproportional representation of students from all subgroups taking the MCAS-Alt.
- **States** may exceed 1%, if a one-year waiver was granted based on assessing 95% of students and other factors

# ESSA Requires Parental Notification for Participation in Alternate Assessments

**Parents** must be informed as part of the IEP process that:

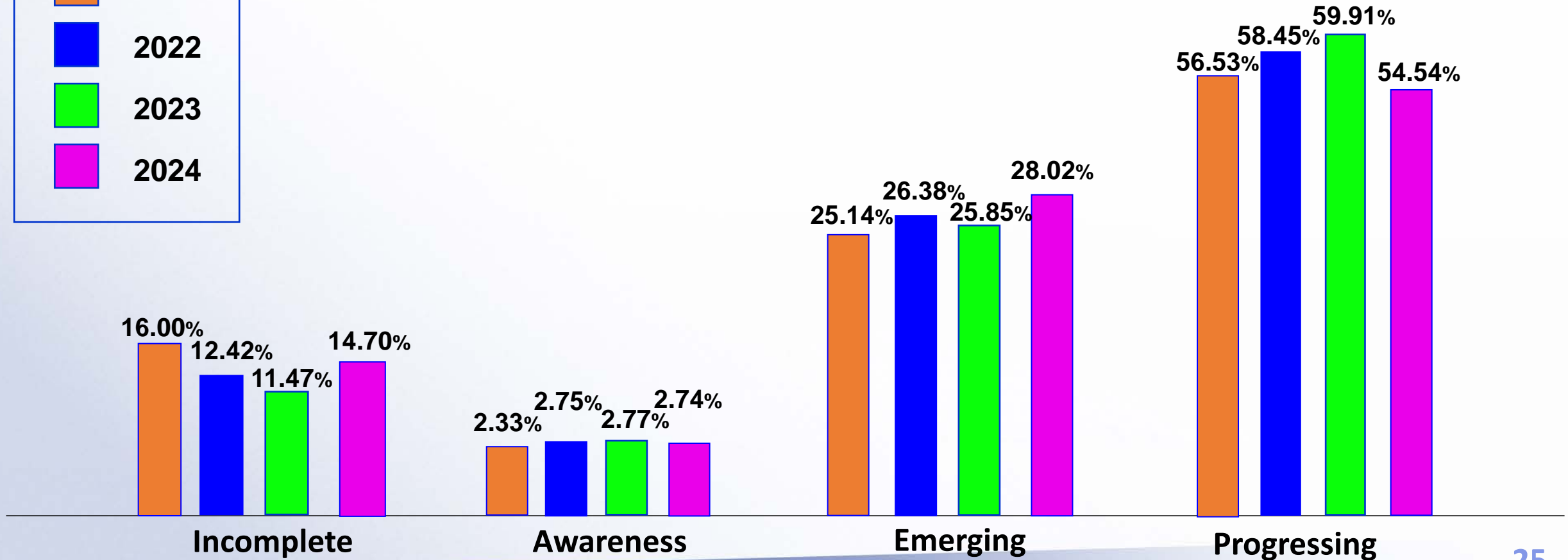
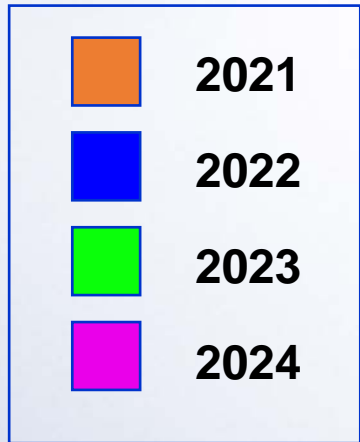
- their child’s academic achievement will be measured based on “alternate achievement standards” that reflect lower expectations than those for other students; and
- participation in an alternate assessment may eventually delay or otherwise affect completion of the requirements for a diploma.

A [\*\*Sample Parent Notification Letter\*\*](#), translated in five languages, may be copied onto school/district stationery and must either be sent or provided at the IEP meeting.

# 7. 2024 MCAS-Alt Results



# 2021-2024 MCAS-Alt: Statewide Results (All Content Areas - All Grades)



# 8. Support Educators and Monitoring MCAS-Alt

# Administrator's Role

- Encourage educators to start early in the school year, and complete the Skills Surveys early in the year
- Ask educators what supports are necessary.
- Permit educators to **attend fall 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 before the due date in March.

# Assist Educators Conducting the MCAS-Alt

- Check in periodically with the educators. Ask to review the student's work.
- Identify educators who need support and who can provide it.
- To ensure that assessments are **complete** and **authentic**, the principal *or* designee should:
  - Review dates and brief descriptions on the data chart.
  - No classroom activities should be dated on non-school days.
- Send reminders 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.

# 9. Interpreting MCAS-Alt Results

# How MCAS-Alt Results are Reported

- Achievement levels below are 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.

# 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	Assigned MCAS Equivalent Scaled Score
Incomplete (INP)	455
Awareness (AWR)	470
Emerging (EMG)	485
Progressing (PRG)	500

# A score of Progressing on MCAS-Alt is not Passing

- A score of Progressing means the student is making progress.
  - 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



# Email and Phone Support

## MCAS-Alt Service Center

- **Web:**  
[www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com)
- **Email:** [mcas@cognia.org](mailto:mcas@cognia.org)
- **Phone:** 800-737-5103

## DESE Student Assessment Services

- Policy questions (e.g., student participation, accommodations)
- **Web:**  
[www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/resources.html)
- **Email:** [mcas@mass.gov](mailto:mcas@mass.gov)
- **Phone:** 781-338-3625