



MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING IN 2021: What will be Different in Massachusetts?

Since COVID-19 first led to sudden school closures in 2020, families have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support learning at home as students began learning remotely. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to put plans in place to ensure students are safe, offering students across Massachusetts different learning models—remote, hybrid and in-person, with some school districts transitioning between them as circumstances demanded. But the unprecedented changes in learning have impacted students in many ways, from their relationships with peers and social emotional growth to academics.

This year, it is more important than ever to measure student learning to understand the impact that COVID-19 and different learning models have had on students. This is especially important for families, who need objective information about how well their child learned grade-level skills so they can better support learning at home. To measure learning, students will take the MCAS this spring. While state tests are only one of many ways to measure student learning, families, schools and leaders need the objective and actionable information the MCAS provides to identify any learning gaps to best support students and fully recover from the pandemic.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has deeply affected students, teachers and schools, the state tests will be different than in the past. The results will be used for learning purposes only in 2021. As of March 31, the following changes have been made:

- **To reduce stress for teachers and students in an already challenging year, the state will not use results from the MCAS to rate schools or districts.**
- **Students will take the test later in the school year. This will allow teachers additional time to cover content and for students across the state to return to in-person instruction. Students in third through fifth grade will test between May 10 and June 11, and high school students are expected to test from May 3 to June 4. Dates for students in sixth through eighth grade are still being determined.**
- **Students may be required to take the test in-person, but the state is also exploring remote options for the test. Schools may use staggered schedules and spaces in the school other than the classroom like gyms, cafeterias or libraries, to make sure students are socially distanced.**