

***MCAS-Alt and the
Every Student Succeeds Act
(ESSA)***

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION



Agenda

- ★ ESSA and alternate assessments
 - Commissioner's Memo and attachments posted to www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa
- ★ Which students should take MCAS-Alt?
 - Clarifying the criteria for participation
 - Other assessment options
- ★ Next Steps for Districts and IEP Teams



Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The “One Percent” Rule for Statewide 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% of the total number of students in the state who are assessed in that subject.”

- **Districts** may exceed 1%, if justification is provided.
- **States** may not exceed 1%, but may request a one-year waiver, if 95% of students were assessed.



ESSA Also Requires Parental Notification of Participation in an Alternate Assessment

Parents must be clearly informed, as part of the IEP process, that

- ★ their child's academic achievement will be measured based on "alternate achievement standards;" and
- ★ participation in an alternate assessment may eventually delay or otherwise affect completing the requirements for a diploma.

(See Sample ***Parent Notification Letter***)



Outcomes of the Alternate Assessment

- ★ To include difficult-to-assess students in assessment and accountability (it's the law).
- ★ To ensure that standards-based skills and content are taught at levels that are meaningful and challenging.
- ★ To determine which knowledge and skills students have learned.
- ★ To provide information to schools and parents on the achievement of students with significant disabilities (i.e., what they *can* do).



Who Should Take MCAS-Alt?

A student with a disability who is....

- ★ Working on learning standards that have been substantially modified due to the severity of the disability, **and** is
- ★ Receiving intensive, individualized instruction in order to acquire, generalize, and demonstrate knowledge and skills, **and** is
- ★ Unable to demonstrate knowledge and skills on a standardized, on-demand paper or online test, even with accommodations,

... should take the **MCAS-Alt** in that subject.

(Teams decide annually in each content area)



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

- ★ a particular disability or placement
- ★ previous low achievement on MCAS or classwork
- ★ lack of standards-based instruction
- ★ participation in MCAS-Alt the previous year (since this is an annual decision)
- ★ ELL status
- ★ low income or child in foster care
- ★ principal's wish to earn accountability points



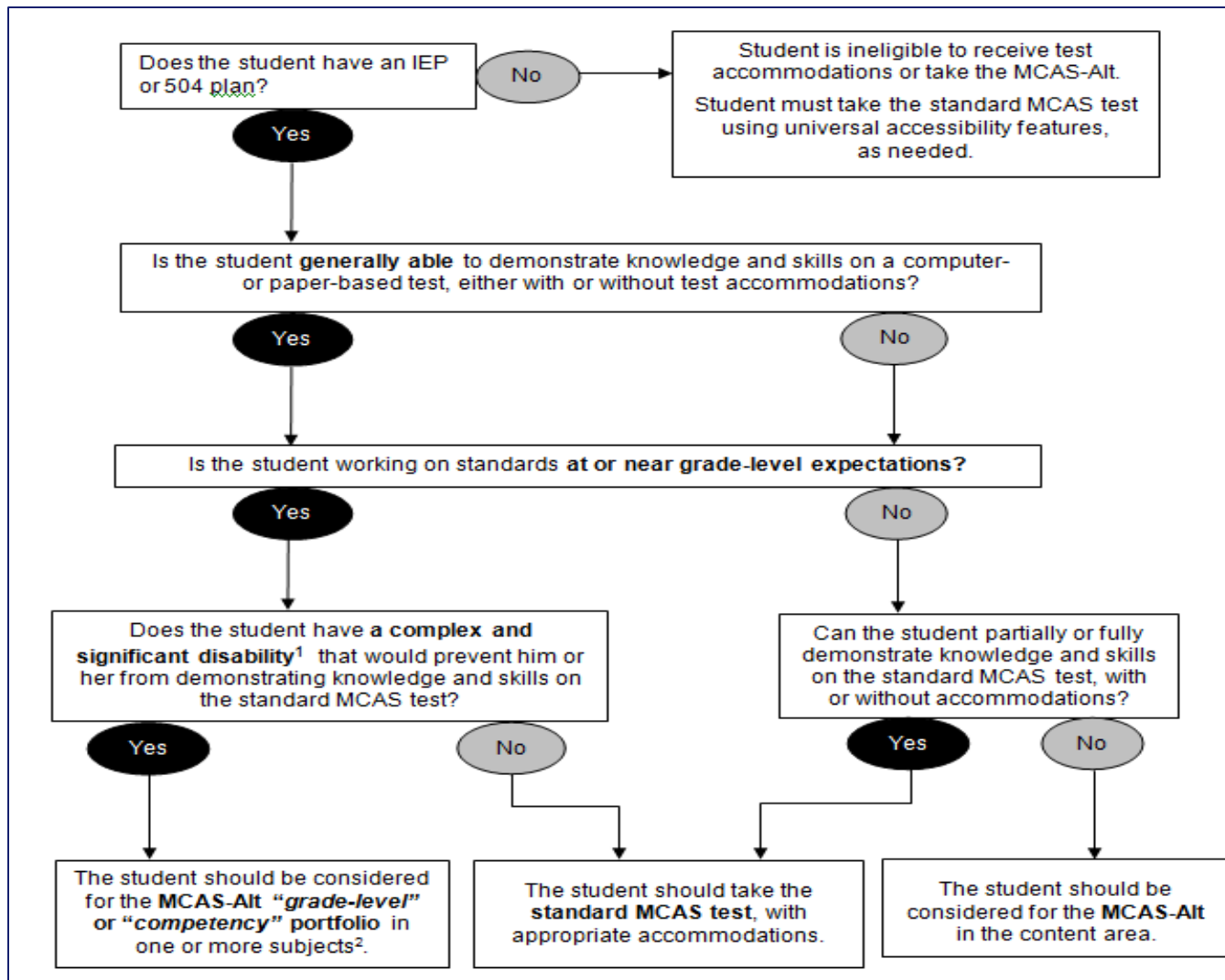
Other assessment options for students with significant disabilities

A student with a significant disability should be considered for a **grade-level** or **competency portfolio**, if he/she:

- performs classroom work **at or near grade-level**;
 - cannot demonstrate knowledge and skills on the MCAS test in that grade and subject, even with accommodations;
- and**
- is attempting to earn a score that is comparable to a student who takes and passes the MCAS test.



Decision-Making Tool to guide IEP teams in determining the appropriate assessment option



Next Steps for Districts

- ★ Review your district's 2016 rate of participation in the ELA and Mathematics MCAS-Alt
 - See new page
- ★ District provides **written justification** if likely to exceed one percent in 2017-2018.
- ★ **Retrain teams** annually on criteria to be used (and not used) in selecting students for MCAS-Alt.
- ★ **Increase awareness** of other assessment options:
 - next-generation computer-based MCAS tests (with new accessibility features), **and**
 - including grade-level and competency portfolios



Next Steps for IEP Teams

- ★ Team members review guidelines, criteria, and decision-making tool in Commissioner's memo
 - Review the IEPs of students currently taking the MCAS-Alt during annual IEP meetings.
 - Determine if students meet the criteria for MCAS-Alt.
- ★ If administering MCAS-Alt, provide parents with a notification letter.



In Conclusion...

- ★ This is not intended to “get students off the MCAS-Alt” or encourage large-scale migration away from the alternate assessment.
- ★ Instead, ESSA gives us an opportunity to refine and clarify the criteria used for team decision-making.
- ★ Ensure that students who take the MCAS-Alt really need this assessment format.



ESE Contact Information

MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – Student Assessment (781-338-3625)

- Dan Wiener (Administrator) – dwiener@doe.mass.edu
- Debra Hand (MCAS-Alt) – dhand@doe.mass.edu
- Robert Pelychaty (Accommodations) – rpelychaty@doe.mass.edu
- Rose Ellen Zakrzewski (MCAS Appeals) – rosez@doe.mass.edu
- General Inquiries – mcas@doe.mass.edu

