

## Q: What is MCAS Prep?

<http://mcas.info>  
Winter 2004

**A:** An orchestrated set of instructional and planning elements that effectively support opportunities for students to achieve and make progress.

Elements include:

*Align instruction* with content and achievement standards indicated within the *Massachusetts Curriculum frameworks* and the *Supplement to the English Language Arts and Math Curriculum Frameworks*;

*Prepare limited english proficient students (LEP)* to participate in English Proficiency Assessments including the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral for speaking and listening, (MELA-O) the Language Assessment Scales-Reading, (LAS-R) the Language Assessment Scales-Writing, (LAS-W) and the MEPA question tryouts;

*Identify eligible standard and non-standard accommodations* that represent routine instructional practice and language within students IEP to facilitate and extend achievement of students with special needs;

*Use \*data* within MCAS Item Analysis Reports in conjunction with MCAS release items and student work samples to diagnose student error and target areas for development; \*scorer comments, thinking skills, reading skills, problem solving skills, content strand areas, item type etc.

*Require students to read*, think about, discuss, and write on literature representing a range of genre including: poetry, fable, myth, play, memoir, editorial, autobiography, fiction, advertisement, etc.

*Utilize Open Response* and Long Composition \*exemplars to communicate elements of effective writing; \*(OR: Level 3 & Level 4) Long Compositions earning 9-12pts for Topic development (CT) and 6-8 points for composition Conventions (CC);

*Model the elements* of the writing process: (Seed, Preparation, Drafting, Revising, Editing, Publishing) and assess writing using rubrics that include criteria for a range of writing elements including: *topic development*, organization, accurate detail, *voice, tone, style*, structure and *grammar*;

*Employ graphic organizers* to scaffold and facilitate student writing in prep for Open response questions and Long Composition;

*Design class assignments* that include/replicate language, and formatting requirements used on MCAS assessment items;

*Establish an inventory* of content specific vocabulary embedded within MCAS test items and incorporate within daily classroom discourse, questioning and future teacher generated assessments;

*Increase student confidence* and decrease apprehension toward the MCAS assessments;

*Allocate resources* including time, space, material (prep books, word to word \*dictionaries, pencils, paper etc.) and professional development to extend faculty and administrator capacity to effectively implement MCAS assessment program. \*translations only no definitions;

*Development and implementation* of Process and Opportunity to Learn Standards; and importantly

*Access to technology* and online resources including <http://mcas.info> and/or <http://schoolchildren.com>

**The primary purposes of MCAS are:**

- to measure the performance of individual students, schools, and districts based on the state standards outlined in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*
- to raise student achievement
- to improve classroom instruction
- to determine competency in English Language Arts and Mathematics as one condition for awarding a high school diploma.

**MCAS Participation Requirements for LEP Students**

The provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* Law and the *Question 2* ballot initiative now require *all* LEP students enrolled in Massachusetts public schools, and in private schools at public expense, to participate in MCAS tests. Department policy has been changed in order to comply with these new laws.

LEP students must participate in all MCAS tests given at their grade level, regardless of their years in the U.S. or planned enrollment in regular instructional programs the following year, as well as in new state tests of English proficiency.