

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS (MCA)

What are the MCAs?

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) are the state tests in reading, mathematics and science that meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. These tests are given every year to measure student performance on the Minnesota Academic Standards, which define what our students should know and do in a particular grade. The Reading and Mathematics MCA-IIs began in 2006 and the Science MCA-II began in 2008.

Who must take these tests?

Minnesota's rules for testing and the federal NCLB Act require that mathematics and reading tests be given in grades 3–8. In addition, students in grade 10 take the Reading MCA, and students in grade 11 take the Mathematics MCA. With very few exceptions, all public school students in grades 3–8 take the Reading and Mathematics MCAs. In some cases, English Language Learners (ELL) will take the Mathematics Test for English Language Learners (MTELL). Students with severe cognitive disabilities can take the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS). The Science MCA is given to students in grades 5 and 8 and once in high school, depending on when students complete their life science curriculum.

What does it take to pass the tests?

Students do not pass or fail these tests. Each student receives a score that falls in one of four achievement levels – Does Not Meet the Standards, Partially Meets the Standards, Meets the Standards and Exceeds the Standards.

How can I see the MCA results for my child, school and district?

All test results are sent to the school district. The district will deliver your child's results to you. You can see the results for all schools and districts at the MDE Website. Go to <http://education.state.mn.us>, select Academic Excellence and then School Report Cards.

Where can I find more information about the MCAs?

For more information on the MCAs, go to the MCA section of the MDE Website.

(<http://education.state.mn.us>)– Select Accountability Programs > Assessment and Testing > Assessments > MCA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: GRADUATION-REQUIRED ASSESSMENT FOR DIPLOMA (GRAD)

What does GRAD mean?

Students who first entered grade 8 in the 2005–06 school year or later must meet the requirements of the Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma (GRAD) in reading, mathematics and writing in order to graduate from a Minnesota public high school. These tests will measure proficiency on the Minnesota Academic Standards and other essential skills.

What is the Written Composition GRAD?

It is a writing test that requires students to write to a prompt, and their essay is given a score between 1 and 6 using a holistic rubric. A score of 3 or more is required to receive a diploma.

What are the Reading GRAD and Mathematics GRAD?

The Reading GRAD consists of several passages that students must read and then use to answer multiple-choice questions. The Mathematics GRAD requires students to solve a variety of problems through answering multiple-choice questions.

What happens if a student does not pass?

Students who do not pass the Reading GRAD or Mathematics GRAD will have multiple opportunities to take the GRAD retest on a computer during retest windows. Students who do not pass the Written Composition GRAD will be able to take the test during subsequent years retest opportunities. Please check with your student's school for the options available in your district.

Where can I find more information about the GRAD?

Go to the GRAD section of the Assessment and Testing area of the Minnesota Department of Education Website, found at:

http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/GRAD