



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Spring 2010 Update

*Requirements for
the Participation of
Students with
Limited English Proficiency
in
MCAS and MEPA*

Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education



*This document was prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner*

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Commissioner's Foreword

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to present the spring 2010 update of the *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Limited English Proficiency in MCAS and MEPA*. The purpose of this publication is to provide guidelines to help you ensure that students who are designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP) participate appropriately in statewide tests.

All LEP students in grades K–12 must participate in the spring 2010 Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), including those students who took the MEPA tests in fall 2009. As a reminder, in order to receive an overall MEPA score, a student must be assessed in all four areas: reading and writing using the MEPA-R/W, and speaking and listening using the MELA-O.

MEPA-R/W tests include reading and writing tests for students in grades K–12. These tests provide valuable diagnostic information and allow schools and the Department to follow the progress of LEP students from year to year and from one grade span to the next.

Each LEP student in grades 3–8 and high school must participate in spring 2010 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests in the subjects required at the student's grade level. The only exception to this requirement applies to LEP students who first enrolled in a U.S. school after March 1, 2009, who must participate in MEPA, but *may* participate, at the school's discretion, in the MCAS ELA test.

An updated list of approved bilingual word-to-word dictionaries for use by LEP and FLEP students on MCAS tests is posted on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/lep_bilingual_dictionary.doc

I hope you will find the information in this publication helpful.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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I. Overview of Testing Requirements for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students

A. Definition of an LEP Student

A limited English proficient (LEP) student is defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as “a student whose first language is a language other than English and who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.”

A student is identified as LEP regardless of whether a parent declines a language support program or service for the student. Students identified as LEP by their districts are required to participate in statewide tests according to the guidelines included in this document.

B. Identification and Reporting of LEP Students

Districts are required to have procedures in place to assess the English proficiency of all students whose first language is not English in order to determine whether they are LEP and when they are no longer LEP (603 CMR 14.02). As part of these procedures, students should be assessed in the four domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Information on identifying new LEP students is available on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/identify_lep.html. If you have questions regarding the **identification and initial assessment of LEP students**, please contact the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at 781-338-3518.

When reporting student enrollment to the Student Information Management System (SIMS) in October, March, and June, districts must identify students who are LEP. Districts are responsible for updating LEP enrollment figures for each reporting period.

II. Participation of LEP Students in MCAS

A. MCAS Participation Requirements for LEP Students

All LEP students must participate in MCAS tests scheduled for their grades regardless of the program and services they are receiving or the amount of time they have been in the United States. The sole exception to this requirement applies to first-year LEP students (i.e., students who first enrolled in school in the United States **after March 1, 2009**). While schools have the option of testing first-year LEP students in English Language Arts (ELA), all first-year LEP students must be assessed in Mathematics and Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) as shown in the table below. Results for first-year LEP students are **not** included in MCAS school and district summary results.

Table 1
Participation Requirements for LEP Students in Spring 2010 MCAS Tests

	Content Area of Test			
	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science and Technology/Engineering	History and Social Science
Participation Requirements for First-Year LEP Students	<i>Optional*</i>	Required	Required	Will not be assessed in spring 2010
Participation Requirements for All Other LEP Students	Required	Required	Required	

* provided that the student has participated in MEPA

English/Spanish Tests

A Spanish-speaking LEP student in grade 10 who has been enrolled in school in the continental United States for **fewer than three years** may choose to take the English/Spanish edition of the grade 10 Mathematics test if he/she can read and write in Spanish at or near grade-level. English/Spanish editions of the Mathematics test are available for the grade 10 Mathematics test and retests only. The designated test administrator must be fluent in both English and Spanish.

B. Use of Word-to-Word Dictionaries on MCAS Tests

Any student who *currently* is LEP or *has been* identified as LEP in the past may use an approved bilingual word-to-word dictionary on all MCAS tests. Dictionaries permitted for this purpose are strictly limited to those that provide word-to-word translations: dictionaries that include definitions, synonyms, antonyms, phrases, and other information are strictly prohibited. Electronic dictionaries are not allowed. A list of approved bilingual dictionaries was updated in fall 2009 and is available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/lep_bilingual_dictionary.doc. To discuss the approval of other word-to-word dictionaries, please call 781-338-3625. **Please note that all dictionaries are prohibited for the MEPA administration.**

C. Participation of LEP Students with Disabilities in MCAS

LEP students with disabilities must participate in MCAS by taking either

- the standard MCAS test(s), with or without accommodations
OR
- the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt).

The LEP student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team or 504 team must determine how the student will participate in MCAS testing, including designating accommodations that are necessary and that meet all criteria for their use. This information must be documented in the student’s IEP or 504 plan.

In reporting school and district Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results, scores for LEP students with disabilities are reported with and included in the scores of both students with disabilities and LEP students.

For additional information about MCAS for students with disabilities, please refer to the *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*, which is available on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/lep_bilingual_dictionary.doc.

D. Reporting MCAS Results for LEP Students

Results for LEP students are reported with those of other students. The one exception is the reporting of results for first-year LEP students. These specifications are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Reporting Specifications for MCAS and AYP for
First-Year LEP Students

	Content Area of Test		
	English Language Arts (Testing optional)	Mathematics (Testing required)	Science and Technology/ Engineering (Testing required)
Reporting Student MCAS Results	Student item analysis (if tested); no scaled scores or performance level scores	Student item analysis only	Student item analysis only
Reporting Participation for AYP	Counted as <i>participating</i> whether tested or not. To be counted as participating, student must participate in MEPA	Counted as <i>participating</i> unless absent	Not factored into AYP
Reporting Performance and Improvement for AYP	Not included in <i>Composite Performance Index (CPI)</i> ratings or <i>Improvement</i> determinations	Not included in <i>Composite Performance Index</i> ratings or <i>Improvement</i> determinations	Not factored into AYP

E. High School Competency Determination (CD)

In order to graduate from high school, all students, including students with limited English proficiency, are required to earn a CD in ELA, mathematics, and, beginning with the class of 2010, science and technology/engineering (STE). This requirement also applies to LEP students, including those who enroll in Massachusetts schools during their junior and senior years.

To earn a CD, students must **either** earn a scaled score of at least 240 on the grade 10 MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests, **or** earn a scaled score between 220 and 238 on these tests and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP). In addition, students must earn a scaled score of at least 220 on one of the high school MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) tests: Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, or Technology/Engineering. Students must also meet all local graduation requirements.

Students eligible to take the English/Spanish edition of the MCAS grade 10 Mathematics test may meet the CD requirement in Mathematics through this test, but must also pass ELA and STE tests in English.

Since the CD requirement may present a challenge for LEP students who have recently enrolled in a U.S. school, some LEP students may need to continue their education beyond grade 12 in order to attain the requisite knowledge and skills in ELA, mathematics, and STE. After grade 12, students who need to attain the required performance level in one or more MCAS tests (i.e., ELA, Mathematics, and STE) can take the MCAS retest(s) or an STE test at the school in which they were last enrolled. In addition, students may ask school staff if they are eligible for an MCAS performance appeal.

III. Participation of LEP Students in MEPA

A. Background

The Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) measures the performance of LEP students and the progress they are making toward English proficiency. MEPA is aligned with the learning standards in the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners*, available on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/benchmark.pdf. MEPA is composed of two assessments:

- the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment–Reading/Writing (MEPA-R/W), which measures reading and writing, and
- the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O), which measures listening and speaking. The MELA-O is a locally-administered assessment.

B. Participation Requirements for MEPA-R/W and MELA-O

All enrolled LEP students in grades K–12 must participate in English proficiency assessments, regardless of the program they are enrolled in or the number of years they have been enrolled in U.S. schools. The only exceptions involve LEP students who meet certain conditions that are listed on the following page.

Table 3
Spring 2010 Participation Requirements in
the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA)

Test	LEP Students Required to Participate in the Spring 2010 MEPA
MELA-O and MEPA-R/W	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All LEP students in grades K–12• All formerly LEP (FLEP) students in grades K–12 who were reported as LEP in the October 2009 SIMS

All students who participated in the fall 2009 MEPA must also participate in the spring 2010 MEPA. This requirement includes any student whose status as an LEP student has changed (i.e., is no longer LEP) since the October SIMS report. All other **formerly LEP** students do not participate in MEPA.

A few categories of LEP students are not required to participate in the spring 2010 MEPA-R/W tests.

MEPA-R/W

Students in the following categories are not required to participate in MEPA-R/W:

- students with a medically documented absence
- students who require unavailable accommodations, such as Braille tests or an electronic text reader, unless another appropriate accommodation (i.e., reading aloud) would allow them to participate. (Note: Large print MEPA-R/W tests are available)
- students who have an IEP indicating that their primary disability is “deaf or hard of hearing” (since parts of the test are read aloud to students)
- students with significant disabilities who would participate in an alternate assessment because their IEP or 504 team has determined that they are unable to take the standard MEPA-R/W test. (However, students taking an alternate assessment must participate in MELA-O.)

MELA-O

Students in the following categories are not required to participate in MELA-O:

- students with a medically documented absence
- students who have an IEP indicating that their primary disability is deaf or hard of hearing.

C. Administering the MEPA-R/W

The MEPA-R/W test is administered to all LEP students in grades K–12. The test consists of separate Reading and Writing tests at the following grade spans: K–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, and 9–12. With the exception of students in K–2, students are administered two sessions of Reading and two sessions of Writing.

Students in grades K–2 will take either level A or B for the MEPA-R/W. It is expected that most students in kindergarten will take the Level A test and most students in grade 2 will take the Level B test. A locator survey, described on the next page, is available to assist in making this determination.

The tests for grades 3–12 consist of three sessions of Reading and three sessions of Writing. However, each LEP student will take only **two adjacent sessions** in Reading and **two adjacent sessions** in Writing. To assist schools in determining which **two** sessions of Reading and which two sessions of Writing to administer to students in grades 3–12, test administrators may use the optional locator test as well as the measures listed below:

- the student's scores on previous MEPA and MCAS ELA tests
- the student's scores on English proficiency assessments used by the district
- the student's academic course grades
- observations of staff working closely with the student based on the English Language Proficiency Level descriptors presented in the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners*

The use of bilingual and all other types of dictionaries is prohibited on all MEPA tests.

D. Locator Survey/Locator Tests

Kindergarten through Grade 2

A locator survey is available to assist school personnel in determining which reading and writing test (i.e., Level A or B) to administer to each LEP student in grades K–2, and the recommended test administration group size. The optional locator survey and instructions for its use have been posted to the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/?section=admin.

Grades 3–12

Locator tests are available to assist school personnel in determining which two test sessions (i.e., 1 and 2 or 2 and 3) of the MEPA-R/W to administer to each LEP student in grades 3–12. The optional locator tests and instructions for their use are available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/testadmin/.

E. Administering the MELA-O

A qualified MELA-O administrator (QMA) or trainer (QMT) evaluates each student’s listening and speaking skills in a classroom setting. Using the MELA-O Scoring Matrix, the QMA or QMT observes the student performing authentic classroom tasks and rates the student’s levels of comprehension (listening) and production (speaking) on a 0–5 scale. Only QMAs and QMTs are authorized to administer the MELA-O.

A list of qualified QMAs and QMTs is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/testadmin/melao_list_beyond2010.xls. Any district that does not have the capacity to administer the MELA-O to each enrolled LEP student must make arrangements with a qualified administrator or trainer in another district.

F. Recording MELA-O Scores

Following the administration of MELA-O, test administrators must record MELA-O scores on MEPA-R/W answer booklets for all LEP students in grades K–12, including the MELA-O scores for students who were not required to participate in MEPA R/W. (See page 6.)

G. Retraining Qualified MELA-O Trainers and Administrators

All QMTs and QMAs were required to pass a new qualifying test by January 31, 2010, in order to retain their status as a MELA-O trainer or administrator. After completing the training and passing the qualifying test, QMTs are authorized to conduct training/retraining sessions for QMAs in their districts. Information about additional retraining sessions for QMTs in early 2010 is posted on the Department’s website at www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5165.

IV. Available Resources

For **policy** questions regarding the assessment of LEP students, please contact Student Assessment Services at 781-338-3625 or www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/. For questions regarding the **identification and initial assessment** of LEP students, please call the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at 781-338-3518.

Resources to support educators, parents, and others who work with LEP students are available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/. The following is a brief synopsis of the information contained on each section of the website:

- *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners*, which defines the benchmarks and outcomes that will be assessed annually on MEPA, is available at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/benchmark.pdf.
- *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS* (Spring 2010 Update), which provides guidelines for the participation of students with disabilities in statewide tests and includes a list of commonly used test accommodations, is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/?section=sped.
- *Guidance on Using MEPA Results to Plan Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Instructional Programming and Make Classification Decisions for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students* is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/2009/guidance.doc
- *Guide to Interpreting the 2009 MEPA Reports for Schools and Districts* (September 2009) is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/2009/interpret.pdf.
- Information on identifying new LEP students is available at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/identify_lep.html.
- Information on professional development is available at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/profdev.
- Information on guidance and laws is available at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance_laws.html.
- Information on MEPA test administration and reports of results is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa.