



Maine Comprehensive Assessment System Guidelines

The Maine Department of Education Assessment Team

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Glossary of Terms/Acronyms

Term	Acronym
Alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards	AA-AAAS
Maine Department of Education	Maine DOE
English Language Proficiency	ELP
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)	ESEA
Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)	ESSA
Education in Unorganized Territory	EUT
International Computer Literacy & Information Literacy Study	ICILS
Individuals with Disabilities Act (1975)	IDEA
Individualized Educational Program	IEP
Individual Student Report	ISR
Maine's Comprehensive Assessment System	MECAS
Maine Educational Assessments	MEA
Multilingual learner	ML
Multi-State Alternate Assessment	MSAA
National Assessment of Educational Progress	NAEP
Progress in International Reading Literacy	PIRLS
Program for International Student Assessment	PISA
School Administrative Unit	SAU
Schools Interoperability Framework	SIF
Student Information System	SIS
Special Purpose Private School	SPPS
Teaching and Learning International Survey	TALIS
Trends in Mathematics & Science Study	TIMSS

Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MECAS) 2025-2026

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) Assessment Team has prepared this document to provide background and reference information for educators and administrators responsible for administration of assessments to Maine students. This resource outlines the assessment and participation requirements across the Maine Educational Assessments (MEA), including the assessment registration process. This document does not replace assessment-specific resources for each of the MEA, such as Assessment Coordinator Manuals or User Guides.

Maine Educational Assessments (MEA) 2025-2026		
Assessment Name	Assessment Dates	Required Participants
English Language Proficiency (WIDA ACCESS)	1/5/26 – 3/10/26	Multilingual learners in Grades K-12
English Language Proficiency (WIDA Alternate ACCESS)	1/5/26 – 3/10/26	Multilingual learners in Grades K-12 with the most significant cognitive disabilities
Mathematics & Reading (Maine Through Year Assessment)	Fall (Required): 9/15/25 – 10/24/25 Winter (Optional): 1/5/26 – 2/13/26 Spring (Required): 4/13/26 – 5/29/26	Students in Grades 3-8, and 2 nd year of High School
Science (Maine Science Assessment)	Grades 5 & 8: 5/11/26 – 5/22/26 High School: 4/1/26 – 4/17/26	Students in Grades 5, 8, and 3 rd year of High School
Mathematics & ELA/Literacy Alternate Assessment (Multi-State Alternate Assessment or MSAA)	3/9/26 – 4/24/26	Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3-8 and 3 rd year of High School
Science Alternate Assessment (MSAA Science)	3/9/26 – 4/24/26	Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 5, 8, and 3 rd year of High School
National & International Assessments		
Assessment Name	Assessment Dates	Required Participants
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	1/26/26 – 3/20/26	Selected students in Grades 4, 8 Mathematics and Reading (operational and pilots) Selected students in Grade 12 Mathematics and Reading (pilots only) Selected students in Grade 8 Civics and U.S. History
Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)	N/A	International Survey of principals and teachers in Grades 7, 8, and 9.
Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)	N/A	Students age 15 in Math, Reading, and Science
International Computer Literacy & Information Literacy Study (ICILS)	N/A	Students in Grade 8, Computer & Information Literacy at sampled schools
Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS)	N/A	Students in Grade 4 Reading Achievement in literary experience and reading to acquire and use information at sampled schools
Trends in Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS)	N/A	Students in Grades 4 and 8 Mathematics & Reading at sampled schools

Section 1: Assessment Requirements

1.1 Federal requirements

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), a re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), all states are required to annually assess all elementary and secondary public school students in grades 3-8 and at one point in high school in mathematics and reading/ELA. States are also required to assess students in science once in the elementary, middle and high school grade levels (in Maine, this takes place in grade 5, grade 8, and third year of high school).

Additionally, students identified as multilingual learners (MLs) in grades K-12 are required to participate in an annual assessment of English language proficiency.

Public school students are eligible for and required to participate in Maine's state assessment program at state expense, whether they participate in the general assessment or an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS).

Moreover, School Administrative Units (SAUs) and schools that are biennially selected to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are required to do so under the federal ESEA.

1.2 State requirements

Expectations for assessment in Maine's legislation can be located in [Title 20-A, Chapter 222 Standards and Assessment of Student Performance](#).

These expectations apply to students in the public elementary and secondary schools, in charter and magnet schools, as defined in [section 2401, subsection 9](#), and in all private schools approved for tuition whose school enrollments include at least 60% publicly funded students.

Maine DOE includes all students in all public schools in the State in each indicator in the State's accountability system for Title I purposes, unless a Title I exception applies.

All students enrolled in Maine's public schools, Special Purpose Private Schools (SPPS), regional programs, charter schools, or private schools with at least 60% publicly funded students are required to participate in state assessments of mathematics, reading/ELA, and science content areas.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1975, Section 300.160 (a), specifies: "A State must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general State and district-wide assessment programs, including assessments described under section **1111 of the ESEA, 20 U.S.C. 6311**, with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary, as indicated in their respective Individualized Education Programs." Therefore, publicly funded Maine students attending SPPS are required to participate in state assessments.

1.3 Which of Maine's students must be assessed?

Based on federal and state requirements, students in grades 3–8 and one year of high school must participate in Maine's state assessment of mathematics and reading/ELA. Students in grades 5, 8, and third year of high school must participate in Maine's state assessment of science.

Students required to participate in Maine Educational Assessments include:

- Students who attend a Maine public school (federal and state requirement)
- Students who attend a Maine charter or magnet school (state requirement)
- Students who attend a private school with at least 60% publicly funded students (state requirement)
- Students who attend an approved Special Purpose Private School

Additionally, the following multilingual learners in grades K-12 are required to participate in an annual assessment of English language proficiency:

- All multilingual learners enrolled in Maine’s public schools, Special Purpose Private Schools (SPPS), regional programs, and charter schools
- All multilingual learners who attend a private school with at least 60% publicly funded students

Federal law includes a requirement that states provide alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) for each state required assessment. AA-AAAS are designed specifically for the small population of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, who have been found eligible for AA-AAAS participation through the IEP Team process utilizing state guidance requirements. It is important to note that students participating in the AA-AAAS are working towards rigorous academic goals with short-term objectives aligned to the alternate academic achievement standards as pathways to grade level content. For the majority of Maine students, general assessments (Maine Through Year and Maine Science) are the most appropriate, either with or without accommodations as outlined in an IEP or 504 Plan.

Section 2: Enrollment and Participation

Participation and performance of all students in the required MEA are attributed to the responsible SAU for the [purposes of accountability](#).

It is essential that SAUs maintain updated enrollment data. **Schools are responsible for regularly updating individual student enrollment in the local student information system (SIS) to ensure that Synergy reflects accurate information and the assessment rosters in NEO remain up to date.** The official student data of record, except for accommodations, will be supplied by Synergy and NEO Assessment Rosters for all 2025-2026 Maine educational assessments. To ensure that an accurate roster of students is available for assessment, schools must update and verify student enrollment daily as needed. To assist communication between schools, the Maine DOE has [posted contact information for Student Data Specialists](#). (Choose SAU Primary Contacts/By Primary Contact Type; then filter by Student Data Specialist.)

To request access to either Synergy or NEO for any staff member, superintendents must submit a request to the DOE Helpdesk. [Request access to Synergy or NEO](#)

2.1 Public program in resident or responsible School Administrative Unit (SAU)

All students attending public programs in the resident SAU are required to participate in the MEA. The public program is responsible for the administration of the assessment (either general or alternate, with or without accommodations) to all students required to participate.

2.2 Public program in non-resident SAU

2.2.1 Students attending an in-state public program utilizing publicly funded tuition must be enrolled in a grade appropriate school in their resident SAU. The attending program is responsible for the administration of the assessment (either general or alternate, with or without accommodations) to all students required to participate.

2.2.2 Students attending a public program outside of the resident SAU, utilizing publicly funded tuition, must participate in MEA. The public program is responsible for the administration of the assessment (either general or alternate, with or without accommodations) to all students required to participate.

2.3 Special Purpose Private School (SPPS) approved by the Department

The following are required for all publicly funded students attending Special Purpose Private Schools:

- Primary enrollment in the grade-level appropriate school within the resident SAU
- Secondary (concurrent/partial) enrollment in the SPPS
- Updated enrollment within Synergy (depending on the program, either the local student information system or file upload to Synergy with all student data)
- Participation in required MEA at the attending school

2.4 Residential Treatment Centers as defined in [Title 20-A§1\(24-A\) \(D\)](#)

The following are required for all publicly funded students attending Residential Treatment Centers both in and out of state:

- Primary enrollment in the grade level appropriate school within the resident or responsible SAU
- Secondary (concurrent/partial) enrollment in the Residential Treatment Center
- Updated enrollment within Synergy
- Participation in required MEA through the attending school

Students placed out of state are required to participate in MEA through the attending school. This can be with support from the resident SAU and/or Maine DOE.

Students whose placement at a residential treatment center is privately funded and for whom the resident SAU is not providing instruction, should be exited from Synergy and then re-enrolled at the time of their return to their resident SAU.

2.5 Home-instruction students

Assessment of home-instruction students is a joint parent and resident or responsible SAU decision. Per Home Instruction Law: M.R.S. 20-A §5001-A(3)(A)(4)(i), the administration of a standardized achievement test through the resident SAU must be agreed to by the school officials of the resident SAU prior to submission of the written notice of intent to provide home instruction. The resident SAU is not required to assess students enrolled in home instruction.

2.5.1 Enrollment codes: **Full Time Enrollment (FTE) 1-4, Students receiving between 1-99% of education within a Maine SAU-** If a home-instruction student is to participate in MEA and is already in the school's enrollment in Synergy with a code of FTE 1-4, due to participating in some public-school instruction, the enrollment should remain as it is. Students with an enrollment code of FTE 1-4 will automatically be included in MEA rosters, as part of their education is publicly funded; however, the participation of these students in state assessments is not required and is the joint decision of the parent/guardian and the resident or responsible SAU.

If an assessed home-schooled student is not already in Synergy, due to being 100% home instruction, they must be temporarily enrolled. Select the "Home Instruction" flag in Synergy and select "1-25% of educational time spent at school" in the FTE field. After the assessment administration window has closed, exit the student using the exit code "01918 – Transferred to Homeschooling."

2.5.2 **Home-schooled students with an enrollment code of FTE 1-4 are not included in the SAU's participation or accountability calculations.**

Home-schooled students will receive an Individual Student Report (ISR) but will not be included in the school's aggregated results.

2.6 Non-Maine resident attending Maine schools

- 2.6.1 All students in applicable grades attending Maine’s public schools, charter schools, and private schools serving at least 60% publicly funded students are required to be assessed. The public program is responsible for the administration of the assessment (either general **or** alternate, with or without accommodations) to all students required to participate. This includes non-Maine students attending Maine public schools via an inter-state agreement.
- 2.6.2 Non-Maine residents attending public schools in Maine must be enrolled in Synergy State Edition with the resident or responsible SAU as “Non-Maine SAU” and with a fiscal responsibility of “Paid by Other Source.”
- 2.6.3 Non-Maine residents attending Maine public schools are included in Maine’s accountability system. Individual student reports will be made available for distribution through the Maine public school.

2.7 Privately funded Maine students at Maine schools

- 2.7.1 All privately funded Maine students in applicable grades attending Maine’s public schools, charter schools, and private schools serving at least 60% publicly funded students are required to be assessed. The public program is responsible for the administration of the assessment (either general **or** alternate, with or without accommodations) to all students required to participate.
- 2.7.2 Privately funded students at Maine’s public schools, charter schools, and private schools serving at least 60% publicly funded students must be enrolled in Synergy with a residency status of “Paid by Other Source.”
- 2.7.3 Privately funded students attending Maine public schools are included in Maine’s accountability system. Individual student reports will be made available for distribution through the Maine public school.

2.8 Students at private schools with at least 60% publicly funded students

- 2.8.1 All students attending private schools with at least 60% publicly funded students are required to be assessed. This requirement applies to both publicly funded and privately funded students. The private school is responsible for the administration of the assessment (either general **or** alternate, with or without accommodations) to all students required to participate.
- 2.8.2 Publicly funded students attending private schools must be enrolled in Synergy State Edition with their resident or responsible SAU and town filled in appropriately and fiscal responsibility of “Paid by resident or responsible SAU or Education in Unorganized Territory (EUT).”

2.9 International students

- 2.9.1 All students in assessed grades at Maine’s public, magnet, and charter schools, as well as those at private schools serving at least 60% publicly funded students, must be assessed. Students from another country, whether their tuition is paid privately or covered by an exchange program, are required to participate in the MEA.
- 2.9.2 International students (that are not part of an exchange program) attending public schools in Maine must be enrolled in Synergy State Edition with the resident or responsible SAU as “Non-Maine SAU” and with a fiscal responsibility of “Paid by Other Source.”
- 2.9.3 Maine public schools and public SAUs are accountable for the students from other countries who attend Maine schools through privately paid tuition. They count as part of Maine’s accountability system. Individual student reports will be made available for distribution through the Maine public school.
- 2.9.4 Maine public schools and SAUs are accountable for the students from other countries who attend Maine’s schools as part of an exchange program. Exchange students should be enrolled in the local SIS by the resident SAU. Exchange program students will count within Maine’s accountability system for both participation and performance on MEA.

2.10 Special enrollment circumstances

2.10.1 Students Who Move: Per Maine statute, [MRS Title 20-A, §6001-B](#), education records must follow students who transfer to another Maine school or SAU. Students who move from one Maine public school and into another during any assessment window must complete any remaining sessions of MEA in the new resident or responsible SAU.

2.10.1.1 It is the responsibility of the student's new school/SAU to contact the previous school to request the student's records.

2.10.1.2 After the education record request is received, the former SAU must send the records as well as exit the student from their Synergy enrollment.

2.10.1.3 Students who move into a school must be enrolled in the local SIS by the new attending school immediately after the records have been received and the student has been exited from the previous school.

2.10.2 Multilingual Learners Participating in the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Assessments Who Move or are Recently Arrived at a Maine school

2.10.2.1 Students who move from out of state and enroll in a Maine school, who are subsequently identified as multilingual learners (MLs), before or on January 29, 2026 must participate in the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS. The grade level appropriate school in the resident SAU has a federal statutory requirement to identify students for potential multilingual learner (ML) status within thirty days of enrollment.

For more information regarding state protocol for ML identification, here is the link to the Maine DOE resources on ML identification, services and programming: [Multilingual Learners | Department of Education](#)

2.10.2.2 Students that were enrolled in a United States school for the first time during any school year are eligible for an exemption from the MEA reading/ELA assessment provided they participate in the applicable ELP assessment (WIDA ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS) during the administration window. The data in the local SIS field "First US Enrollment Date" as reflected in Synergy will be used to calculate eligibility for these exemptions. For additional details, please refer to Appendix A of this document.

There are no exemptions from mathematics or science assessments for MLs.

2.10.3 Expelled students are not considered to be part of a school's official enrollment. These students must be exited from the local SIS, with expulsion code of "01925 – Expelled or involuntarily withdrawn". To use this exit code, the expulsion behavior incident is recorded in the local SIS and therefore will be reflected in Synergy. Expelled students receiving special education services must then be re-enrolled in Synergy as a primary enrollment, however the FTE field must show "5 – Special Education only provided by school". **No assessment is required.**

2.10.4 Suspended students are part of a school's official enrollment and are required to participate in all MEA through a combination of regularly scheduled administration and makeup sessions.

- 2.10.5 Students adjudicated and committed to Arthur R. Gould School are enrolled and assessed in the educational program provided at that site. Students must be provided an enrollment exit date from the local SIS of the former school and enrolled by the Long Creek Youth Development Center.
- 2.10.6 Students detained by law enforcement but not committed to a Youth Development Center during the entire MEA assessment window remain enrolled in the local SIS at the school they attended prior to being detained and remain eligible for assessment.
- 2.10.7 Retained Students - All students who have been retained at a grade level will participate again at the repeated grade level, with the exception of high school students who participate in an assessment of each content area one time.
- 2.10.8 Students who are not present during assessment:
 - 2.10.8.1 Absent: All students enrolled in Maine’s public schools, magnet schools, charter schools, or private schools with at least 60% publicly funded students are required to participate in the appropriate MEA for their grade level. Students not in attendance for assessment, including those on scheduled vacations, will be considered non-participants, except for those students with Special Consideration exemptions approved by the Maine DOE.
 - 2.10.8.2 Truant: Habitually truant students who do not participate in MEA due to absences during the assessment window will be considered nonparticipants.

Section 3: Participation Exceptions

3.1 Multi-grade/Off-grade level

- 3.1.1 Students in ungraded, multi-age programs must participate in MEA at the grade level in which the student is enrolled in the local SIS.
- 3.1.2 Students at one grade level may not be assessed with material developed for a different grade level. The grade level of record is the grade level in the local SIS as reflected in Synergy. If a student participates in an MEA at the incorrect grade level, the student will be considered a nonparticipant, and the results will be invalid.

3.2 Parent/student refusal

Maine Department of Education (DOE) is required to assess public school students annually in grades 3-8 and at one point in high school in mathematics and reading/ELA. Per the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ([ESSA](#)), Maine DOE is also required to assess public school students in science at three grade levels (grade 5, grade 8, and third year high school). Maine statute does not include an opt-out provision for assessments which are required by federal and state laws. Students who are eligible for assessment, but do not participate, count as non-participants in Maine’s accountability system.

3.3 Exemption from MEA with Special Considerations for Significant Medical Emergency

Students may be exempted from MEA when a significant medical emergency has rendered the student incapable of participating in in-person instruction and assessment. This includes long-term hospitalization, severe trauma, mental health crisis (student is in danger to self or others), or placement in hospice care. A medical emergency may also include medically fragile students that are not able to be present during in-person instruction and assessment. The following protocol must be completed by the resident or responsible SAU:

- 3.3.1 Family permission must be obtained to request exemption. This request must also be authorized by the resident or responsible SAU. Requests for Special Consideration are submitted online via NEO. This

dashboard requires login credentials. Superintendents may request log-in credentials for SAU staff members here: [Request access to Synergy or NEO](#)

- 3.3.2 The resident SAU must provide documentation from a licensed medical provider as part of the special consideration request submission.
- 3.3.3 The administrator requesting the exemption will receive a notification email from the NEO system, indicating the status of the request as *Approved*, *Rejected*, or *Incomplete*. A request will be flagged as incomplete if additional documentation or information in the justification section of the request is required.
If the exemption has been approved, the student will not be included in performance or participation calculations as part of accountability.

Detailed information and instructions for submitting a Special Consideration request for exemption from assessment can be found at the following link: [Resources from the Assessment Team | Department of Education](#)

Section 4: Assessment Registration

4.1 Assessment registration

- 4.1.1 Student Registration - Student assessment rosters for the MEA are automatically generated based on Synergy enrollment data. NEO Assessment Roster data syncs with Synergy on an hourly basis. Assessment rosters in the assessment vendors’ platforms are updated via a daily change file. For this reason, it is critical that SAUs maintain accurate enrollment records in the local SIS and/or regularly upload all student enrollment files to Synergy.
 - If the SAU is using the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) agent, update records in the local SIS and changes are reflected in real time to Synergy/NEO
 - If the SAU is using student enrollment file uploads, all student records including changes and existing data are required



- 4.1.2 Student Registration for the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) - Students who have been found eligible and have alternate assessment participation identified in their IEPs must have the alternate assessment flag checked in the local SIS or indicated as a “Y” value in the special education upload to Synergy.
- 4.1.3 Student Registration for English language proficiency assessments (WIDA ACCESS) - Students who have been identified as multilingual learners using the state protocol for ML identification must be given an ML Start Date in the local SIS or has a date in the multilingual learner upload to Synergy.
- 4.1.4 Student Registration for the alternate English language proficiency assessment (WIDA Alternate ACCESS) – Students who have been identified as multilingual learners and found eligible to participate in alternate assessments by the IEP Team must be given **both** an ML Start Date as well as have the alternate assessment flag checked in the local SIS or as a “Y” value under alternate assessment on the special education upload and an ML Start Date populated in the multilingual learner upload to Synergy.

Appendix A: Multilingual Learner Exceptions Guidance

In Maine, there is no state opt-out provision for assessments which are required by both federal and state laws. However, there are potential scenarios in which a multilingual learner may be excused from participation, based on statute.

<u>Assessment</u>	<u>Statutory Reference</u>	<u>Application in School Year 2025-2026 on the Maine Educational Assessments</u>
<p>ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS</p> <p><i>English language proficiency assessment</i></p>	<p>Elementary & Secondary Education Act, or ESEA (As amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA, 2015)</p> <p>Section 3113(b)(2) Under section 3113(b)(2) of the ESEA, each SEA receiving a Title III, Part A State formula grant must establish and implement standardized statewide entrance and exit procedures for English Learners after conducting timely and meaningful consultation with local educational agencies (LEAs) representing the geographic diversity of the State. The requirement that the procedures be “statewide” means they must be consistently applied across the State. <u>The ESEA also requires that all students who may be ELs be assessed for such status within 30 days of enrollment in a school in the State.</u></p>	<p>Student is not required to participate in the annual assessment of English language proficiency if the ML Start Date falls less than 30 days within the close of the ELP assessment window, based on federal provision of up to 30 calendar days for LEAs (in Maine, SAUs) to screen students for potential ML status.</p> <p>For SY25-26, this date is after February 8, 2026.</p>
<p>Maine Through Year or MSAA</p> <p><i>Reading/ELA Assessment</i></p>	<p>ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)) includes a one-time exception to participation in the state’s summative literacy assessment being used under subparagraph 2, for recently arrived English learners (in Maine, MLs)</p>	<p>Students with an enrollment date, First US Enrollment Date, and subsequent ML Start Date within 12 months of the last day of the administration window, are excepted from participation in the state spring reading/ELA assessment one time.</p> <p>For 2025-26 school year, for MSAA, this date is on or after April 25, 2025. For Maine Through Year, this date is on or after May 29, 2025. A multilingual learner enrolling in a US School for the first time on or after these dates qualifies for exemption from the applicable Spring 2026 reading assessment.</p>

It is the recommendation of Maine DOE that this decision be made in partnership among the instructional team including the classroom teacher/s, ML service provider, special educator if applicable, and the student’s family. Implications for non-participation, such as potential applications of results data to inform instruction, should be considered as part of the discussion.