



Maine Comprehensive Assessment System Guidelines

The Maine Department of Education Assessment Team

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Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MECAS) 2024-2025

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 general information, including participation requirements, across the Maine Educational Assessments (MEA). This document does not replace assessment-specific resources for each of the MEA, such as Test Coordinator Manuals or User Guides.

Maine Educational Assessments (MEA) 2024-2025		
Assessment Name	Assessment Dates	Required Participants
English Language Proficiency (ACCESS for ELLs)	1/6/25 – 2/28/25	English learners K-12
English Language Proficiency (Alternate ACCESS for ELLs)	1/6/25 – 2/28/25	English learners in Grades 1-12 with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
Mathematics & Reading (Maine Through Year Assessment)	Fall (Required): 9/16/2024 – 10/25/2024 Winter (Optional): 1/6/25 – 2/14/25 Spring (Required): 4/14/25 – 5/30/25	Student in Grades 3-8, & 2 nd year of High School
Maine Science Assessment	Grades 5 & 8: 5/12/25 – 5/23/25 High School: 4/2/25 – 4/17/25	Grades 5, 8, & 3 rd year of High School
Mathematics & ELA/Literacy Alternate Assessment (MSAA)	3/10/25 – 4/25/25	Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities; Grades 3-8, and 3 rd year of High School
Science Alternate Assessment (MSAA Science)	3/10/25 – 4/25/25	Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities; 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)	1/2026 – 3/2026	Mathematics and Reading Grades 4, 8, & 12 Science Grade 8
Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)	N/A	International Survey of principals and teachers at grades 7, 8, and 9.
Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2025	3/17/2025 - 5/9/2025	Math, Reading, and Science age 15
International Computer Literacy & Information Literacy Study (ICILS)	N/A	Grade 8, Computer & Information Literacy at sampled schools
Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS)	Spring 2026	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	Grades 4 & 8 Mathematics & Reading at sampled schools

Section 1: Assessment Requirements

Maine’s publicly funded students at specific grade levels must be annually assessed in specific content areas as required by both federal and state law.

1.1 Federal requirements

Under the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 \(ESSA\)](#), a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the Maine DOE is required to annually assess public students in grades 3-8 and at one point in high school in mathematics and reading/language arts (R/LA). Maine DOE is also required to assess students in science at three grade levels (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.

These requirements apply to all students whose education is paid through Maine’s public-school funds, even if those students are attending a private school. Publicly funded 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.

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 assessments apply to students in the public elementary and secondary schools, in public, 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 the state assessments of mathematics, R/LA and science content areas.

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 R/LA. 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 (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 supported by Maine public funding, regardless of where they attend school (federal requirement)

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
- All multilingual learners whose tuition is publicly funded to attend a private school

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 and school maintain updated enrollment data in Synergy State Edition. **Schools are responsible for regularly updating individual student enrollment information in Synergy State Edition to ensure that MEA reports reflect accurate information.** The official student data of record, except for accommodations, will be supplied by Synergy State Edition and NEO Assessment Rosters for all 2023-2024 MEA 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 District Data Specialists](#). (Choose SAU Primary Contacts/By Primary Contact Type; then filter by 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 responsible or 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 who are publicly tuitioned to an in-state public program must be enrolled in a grade appropriate school in their resident, or fiscally responsible, SAU.

2.2.2 Students who are publicly tuitioned to a public program outside of the resident or responsible SAU 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 appropriate school within the resident or responsible SAU
- Secondary (concurrent/partial) enrollment in the SPPS
- Updated enrollment within Synergy State Edition
- Participation in the required MEA in 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 appropriate school within the resident or responsible SAU
- Secondary (concurrent/partial) enrollment in the Residential Treatment Center
- Updated enrollment within Synergy State Edition
- Participation in the required MEA in 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 responsible SAU and/or Maine DOE.

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 **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 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 the joint decision of the parent/guardian and the resident or responsible SAU.

If an assessed home-schooled student is not already in the school's Synergy State Edition enrollment, due to being 100% home instruction, they must be temporarily enrolled. Select the "Homeschool" checkbox 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 public 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 public 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 or 60% schools must be enrolled in Synergy State Edition with a fiscal responsibility 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 Publicly funded Maine students at private schools

2.8.1 All students whose education is paid through Maine public funding in applicable grades attending private schools are required to be assessed. 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).”
- 2.8.3 The resident or responsible Maine SAU is accountable for the publicly funded students that are tuitioned to private schools. These students will be included in the resident or responsible SAUs accountability for participation and for performance.

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 do count in 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 Synergy State Edition with the resident or responsible SAU. Exchange program students will count in 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 Synergy State Edition 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 Proficiency Assessments Who Move or are Recently Arrived to 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, before January 31, 2024 must participate in the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessments. The grade appropriate school in the resident or responsible SAU has a federal statutory requirement to identify students for potential ML

status within thirty days of enrollment. For more information regarding state protocol for ML identification, see the [Maine DOE resource on ML Identification and Placement](#).

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 R/LA assessment, provided that they participate in the applicable English Language Proficiency assessment during the administration window. The data in Synergy State Edition “US School Entry Date” will be used to calculate eligibility for these exemptions. For specific eligibility dates in SY 23-24, please refer to Appendix A of this document.

There is no exemption from the mathematics or science assessments for multilingual learners.

2.10.3 Expelled students are not considered to be part of a school’s official enrollment. These students must be exited from Synergy State Edition, with expulsion code of “01925 – Expelled or involuntarily withdrawn”. In order to use this exit code, there must be an expulsion behavior incident recorded in the Behavior Module of Synergy State Edition. Expelled students receiving special education services must then be re-enrolled in Synergy State Edition 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 considered to be 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 exited from the Synergy State Edition enrollment of the former school and enrolled in Synergy State Edition 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 Synergy State Edition 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 Considerations 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 non-participants.

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 Synergy State Edition.
- 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 Synergy State Edition. If a student participates in an MEA at another grade level, the student will be considered a non-participant and the results will be invalid.

3.2 Parent/student refusal

Maine Department of Education (DOE) is required to annually assess public school students in grades 3-8 and at one point in high school in mathematics and R/LA, 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 an 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 participate in 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 of responsible SAU must provide documentation from a licensed medical provider as part of the special consideration request submission.
- 3.3.3 The Maine DOE Assessment Team will review the documentation and contact the administrator requesting the exemption, via email, stating the decision of the committee or indicating if additional documentation is needed. If the exemption has been approved, the student will not be included in performance or participation calculations as part of accountability.

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 State Edition enrollment data. NEO Assessment Roster data syncs with Synergy State Edition enrollment data every hour. 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, regularly uploaded to Synergy.

Synergy State Edition ➡ NEO Assessment Rosters ➡ Assessment Platform Rosters

- 4.1.2 Student Registration for the Multi State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) - Students who have been found eligible and have alternate assessment participation identified in their IEPs must have the alternate assessment flag checked in Synergy, under the special education record.
- 4.1.3 Student Registration for ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs - Students who have been identified as multilingual learners using the state protocol for ML identification must be given an ML

Start Date in Synergy, under demographics. (Synergy updated for SY 23-24 as **ML Start Date**, formerly **EL Start Date**)

- 4.1.4 Student Registration for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs – 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 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 AY 24-25 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 ESSA, 2015)</p> <p>Section 3113(b)(2)</p> <p>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 ELs 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 ACCESS 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 SY24-25, this date is on or after January 29th 2025.</p>
<p>Maine Through Year or MSAA</p> <p><i>Reading/ELA Assessment</i></p>	<p>The Elementary & Secondary Education Act of 1967, or ESEA (As amended by ESSA, 2015)</p> <p>ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A) includes a one-time exception to participation in the state’s literacy assessment being used under subparagraph 2, for recently arrived English learners (in Maine, MLs)</p>	<p>Students with an enrollment date, US School Start Date, and subsequent ML Start Date within 12 months of the last day of the administration window, are excepted from participation in the state reading/ELA assessment one time.</p> <p>For SY24-25, for MSAA, this date is on or after April 26, 2024. For Maine Through Year, this date is on or after May 31, 2024. A multilingual learner enrolling in a US School for the first time on or after these dates qualifies for exemption from the applicable Spring 2025 reading assessment.</p>

it is the recommendation of Maine DOE that this decision be made in partnership among the SAU, the instructional team, and the student’s family. Implications for non-participation, such as potential applications of results data to inform instruction, allocate resources, and monitor trends should be considered as part of the discussion with the team.