Spring 2021 Assessment Administration Frequently Asked Questions



Contents

[**General Assessment Related Questions** 2](#_Toc66733662)

[**ACCESS for ELLs/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs** 4](#_Toc66733663)

[**Mathematics and ELA/Literacy** 6](#_Toc66733664)

[**Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA – ELA & Math]** 8](#_Toc66733665)

[**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)** 9](#_Toc66733666)

[**Science / Alternate Science** 11](#_Toc66733667)

[**Special Considerations** 12](#_Toc66733668)

At this time, although Maine did solicit public comment regarding the request for a waiver from the administration of federally mandated assessments, this waiver was not submitted to the US Department of Education.   Secretary DeVos’s [September 3rd 2020 letter](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fstatic.politico.com%2Fc1%2F2d%2F5073bcb847c988afef9355bc3e08%2Fsecretary-devos-letter-to-cssos-09-03-2020-1.pdf.pdf&data=04%7C01%7CJodi.Bossio-Smith%40maine.gov%7C8c42d156e17a45f8c0c008d88a558d14%7C413fa8ab207d4b629bcdea1a8f2f864e%7C0%7C0%7C637411447325446009%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=1xmEg8L3l0PCF3vvqx%2BLkYHaslhra5nA6JO3De21jlM%3D&reserved=0), addressed to all state education agencies and chief state school officers, clearly communicated that the Department of Education would not be approving requests from states to waive assessments for the 20/21 school year.

A subsequent [*Dear Colleague Letter*](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/US%20DOE%20Letter%20DCL%20on%20assessments%20and%20acct%20final%20%28002%29.pdf)was sent from the US Department of Education to all state chiefs on February 22nd, 2021 indicating the availability of waivers related to accountability, and information regarding assessment and reporting requirements.

This document is structured to address the more generalized assessment questions that may be applicable to the administration of assessments across all content areas, followed by assessment/content area specific questions.

Many associate the term MEA with the administration of only the math and EL.A/Literacy assessment or science assessments. For the purposes of this document, MEA references all Math, ELA/Literacy, Science, and English Language Proficiency assessments, including the alternate assessments.

The Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MeCAS) includes all MEA assessments in addition to National and International assessments.

The contact information for each assessment coordinator is provided throughout this document. Alternatively, please reach out to Janette Kirk, Chief of Learning Systems/Assessment Director, with additional questions.

## **General Assessment Related Questions**

Assessment Director:**Janette Kirk**

**Q: Are we administering MEAs this year?**

A: All MEAs remain scheduledwith the goal of an in-person administration of the assessments. Assessment administration dates are outlined in the [MEA calendar](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.maine.gov%2Fdoe%2FTesting_Accountability%2FMECAS%2Fcalendar&data=04%7C01%7CJodi.Bossio-Smith%40maine.gov%7C8c42d156e17a45f8c0c008d88a558d14%7C413fa8ab207d4b629bcdea1a8f2f864e%7C0%7C0%7C637411447325455964%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=tNx6a0SH7Fe2BgIEFByL3qE%2B4qPmliSiM5UT5ESFQaE%3D&reserved=0). The majority of assessments are designed to only be administrated in-person and are not supported through a remote administration. Because the administration of these assessments takes months of planning, we do request that schools/SAUs complete all pre-assessment activities – primarily materials ordering (ACCESS assessment only) and scheduling. The Department recognizes that the status of instruction with ME schools/SAUs continues to evolve in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and it will continue to work with schools/SAUs to support them in this process.

**Q: Why are we taking the time to assess during a global pandemic?**

A: During this unprecedented year and the impact to both instructional time and opportunities to learn, it has perhaps never been more critical to have a quantitative measure of where Maine students are with regards to academic development, so that educators – ranging from superintendents to principals to teachers to aides - can participate in data-driven planning for curriculum, instruction and assessment which will address these gaps in learning.

**ESSA requires states to test students in reading or language arts and mathematics every year in grades 3-8 and once in grades 9 through 12. ESSA requires states to test students at least three times in science, once in 3-5, once in grade 6-9, and once in grades 10-12. ESSA Section 1111(b)(2)**

**Q: We are short on technology to administer the assessments this year. How can we administer the assessment?**

A: The Department conducted five (5) iterations of a technology device and connectivity survey to support schools in obtaining additional connection options and devices. As in prior administrations of state assessments, schools may opt to have students participate using their own assigned devices or utilize devices earmarked for assessment only. Time should be allotted to ensure additional cleaning and sanitizing of devices to be used by multiple users.

**Q: The data comes back in the fall of the next school year which is too late to be useful. Why do we administer the assessment?**

A: The Department recognizes the receipt of data from the state summative assessments is not immediate. State assessments are generally summative in nature and, as such, the purpose is to examine **curriculum implementation at a systems level--** the purpose of a summative assessment is to examine student performance in relation to the content standards within the Maine Learning Results (e.g. has the student met the learning expectations for the applicable grade?). This data, used in combination with other locally administered assessments, provides a well-rounded picture of student performance and assists educators in ensuring the needs of students are addressed within classroom instruction and subsequent interventions if necessary.

**Q: What do I do if the district is remote?**

A: A large number of SAUs are implementing a hybrid approach to instruction which includes identified days engaged in remote and in-person learning. The Department has extended all assessment windows to support challenges related to scheduling. Should a school have all students within any one assessment grade, typically 3-8 and 3rd year of high school, engaged in remote learning for 100% of the time during the entire assessment window, please reach out to the assessment team. For individual students who may be engaged in 100% remote learning and are unable to attend school in-person as a direct result of COVID-19, a [special consideration request](https://neo.maine.gov/DOE/NEO/Accounts/Account/Login) may be submitted on behalf of the student.

**Q: What is a special consideration?**

A: A Special Consideration is a request for a student to be exempt from participation in a required Maine Educational Assessments (MEA) for significant medical reasons or medical reasons related to COVID-19. Special Consideration requests must be submitted within the open assessment window of each specific applicable Maine Educational Assessment.

**Q: Can my district opt out of administering assessments?**

A: Following a tradition of local responsibility within Maine, the Department defers decisions related to the administration of the assessments, SAUs capacity and the safety, health and wellbeing of students to SAU superintendents. The Department requests a good faith effort to administer the assessments. However, should the administration pose additional safety concerns for staff and students, a SAU should proceed accordingly. Non-participation may have unintended consequences in relation to the state’s ability to apply for additional waivers provided by the US Department of Education. For example, a 1% alternate assessment participation cap is imposed on States by the US Department of Education; a participation rate of less than 95% will impact the state’s ability to apply for a waiver and may impact funding received from the US Department of Education.

**Q: What happens if a school goes remote for a large portion of the assessment window, and a student has not completed all sessions within an assessment?**

A: In the event that an entire school/SAU transitions to fully remote instruction for an extended period of time with significant impact to the assessment window, please reach out to the applicable assessment coordinator.

## **ACCESS for ELLs/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs**

Assessment Coordinator:**Jodi Bossio-Smith**

The ACCESS assessment begins in January and is administered to students identified as English learners (ELs). Unlike other state administered assessments, the ACCESS provides English language proficiency data points in the domains of speaking, listening, reading and writing in addition to supporting the following:

* Establishing when multilingual learners have attained English proficiency according to state criteria/a benchmark by which to guide program exit decisions;
* Informing classroom instruction and assessment;
* Fulfilling the federal requirement, as outlined by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requiring states to standardize statewide criteria for designating students’ English learners and for reclassifying them as no longer needing extra language instruction.

The length of time to participate in the ACCESS assessment has long been and continues to be a concern, especially during this time of COVID-19 when instructional time with students is the most precious commodity.  We continue to listen, acknowledge and advocate on behalf of Maine educators and students with respect to assessment administration time and receipt of student data. The student data from ACCESS assessments provide valuable, quantitative measures of student progress toward English language proficiency. This data can be used at both the SAU and school levels to inform instructional and curricular decision making, to target necessary supports and resources and to assist in the development of [Lau Plans](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Maine%20DOE%20Lau%20Plan%20Template%20and%20Guidance.pdf). Additionally, the data can be used at the individual student level to inform instruction, establish language development goals, and develop [Individual Language Acquisition Plans](https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/englishlearners/resources).

In addition, [ESSA](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ed.gov%2Fpolicy%2Felsec%2Fleg%2Fessa%2Fessatitleiiiguidenglishlearners92016.pdf&data=04%7C01%7CJodi.Bossio-Smith%40maine.gov%7C8c42d156e17a45f8c0c008d88a558d14%7C413fa8ab207d4b629bcdea1a8f2f864e%7C0%7C0%7C637411447325450986%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=gRYQPw%2BPxqfAqszURZIQw1dOKSE0taGsfr23UKLr2C8%3D&reserved=0) is clear regarding the administration of an English language proficiency assessment on an annual basis and the participation of students who are English learners.

**Q: What happens if the school goes remote for the remainder of the assessment window, while a student has not completed all domains of the assessment?**

A: In the event that an entire school/SAU has gone fully remote for an extended period of time with impact to the assessment window, please reach out to Jodi Bossio-Smith, ACCESS for ELLs Assessment Coordinator.

**Q: Why would we administer the assessment when the data comes back late?**

A: The ACCESS for ELLs assessment is a summative assessment, and it is a common frustration that summative data is returned to schools/SAUs 2-3 months after the assessment administration. While this is an unfortunate delay, it does not render the ACCESS for ELLs data useless. The ACCESS data comes to schools/SAUs in several different formats, with multiple opportunities to inform instruction, progress monitoring, individual language acquisition planning and informing parents of student progress towards proficiency.

[*See Appendix A; Interpretive Guide for Score Reports*]

**Q: Why would we administer the assessment when we can’t use the data?**

A: The ACCESS for ELLs data can be utilized in several meaningful ways.

*Individual student reports* provide detailed information regarding a student’s proficiency in each of the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as across the four composite areas: language arts, mathematics, social studies and science. The proficiency scores are aligned to the [WIDA English Language Development Standards 2020](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/wida-english-language-development-standards-framework-2020-edition) as well as the [WIDA Can Do Descriptors,](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/can-do-descriptors-key-uses-edition-k-12-frequent-questions) providing educators with the opportunity and resources to impact student learning. These include:

* Establishing when multilingual learners have attained English language proficiency according to state criteria
* Making decisions about program entry and exit
* Informing classroom instruction and assessment, including:
	+ Which domains teachers could focus on
	+ Creation of speaking/writing rubrics which include criteria aligned to both the student’s current level of proficiency as well as the next level of proficiency
	+ What the WIDA ELD Standards say about students’ current proficiency levels, thus informing the student’s [Individual Language Acquisition Plan [ILAP]](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Maine%20DOE%20Sample%20Student%20ILAP.pdf)
	+ How teachers can scaffold using the next level up
	+ Monitoring student progress by comparing current scores to previous scores

The individual student reports should also be shared with parents as a quantitative measure of student progress towards proficiency and **one snapshot** of student progress over time. It is helpful for educators to share with parents how the data is used in instructional and programmatic decision making.

*School and SAU reports* provide the number and percentage of students in each school/SAU achieved the different proficiency levels. This data support educators and administrators in the identification of necessary supports and resources for English learners.

[*See Appendix A; Interpretive Guide for Score Reports*]

## **Mathematics and ELA/Literacy – NWEA MAP Growth**

Assessment Coordinator: **Nancy Godfrey**

**Q: Now that the NWEA assessment has been formally announced, should districts forge ahead and administer their interim assessments as planned?**

A: Yes, current NWEA SAU users should continue to administer interim assessments as planned in their regularly scheduled winter and spring interim assessment window.

**Q: Will districts who already subscribe to NWEA be reimbursed by DOE?**

A: A SAU already obtaining licenses for students in grades 3-8 and 2nd and 3rd year of high school will be reimbursed for the associated costs directly for the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, costs associated with licenses for grades 3-8 and 2nd and 3rd year of high school for the 2021-2022 school year will be paid by the Department.

**Q: When will districts who do not currently use NWEA receive the ability to administer? January/February? Not until later/spring?**

A: The Department anticipated administering the winter and spring assessments however, contract delays impacted this timeline. Current and new NWEA MAP growth users should implement the NWEA MAP growth assessment in the spring administration window which opened March 1 and extends through June 15, 2021.

**Q: When will professional development begin for districts who are new to using the NWEA?**

A: New SAUs should return the SAU user agreement as soon as possible. Once received, onboarding and applicable professional development may begin. For current users of NWEA MAP growth, there should be no interruption to availability of the assessment.

**Q: Will there be specific protocols for how the assessment should be implemented?**

A: SAUs have the flexibility to administer the NWEA MAP growth remotely or in person. Additionally, the SAUs have the option to utilize the lock-down or web-based browser for administration. It is recommended where possible to use the lock-down browser, but if administering remotely, this eliminates communication with the student during the administration.

**Q: Who will provide access to the assessment training? The vendor, DOE or both?**

A: It will be a combination of both the vendor and the DOE. The DOE will work with the vendor to ensure that training is provided for administration and use of assessment data.

**Q: Are schools required to administer the assessment three times per year like a traditional interim assessment?**

A: All students in grades 3-8 and 3rd year of high school are required to participate in the NWEA MAP growth during the spring of 2021. The NWEA MAP growth assessment can be administered to students in the 2nd year of high school should the SAU choose.

All students in grades 3-8 and 3rd year of high school will be required to participate in the NWEA MAP growth assessment in the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022. The NWEA MAP growth assessment can be administered to students in the 2nd year of high school should the SAU choose. SAUs also have the option to administer the assessment during the winter assessment administration window to students in grades 3-8, 2nd and 3rd year of high school.

## **Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA – ELA & Math]**

Assessment Coordinator:**Jodi Bossio-Smith**

**Q: Will the MSAA assessment be administered this spring?**

A: Maine assessments, including alternate assessments, remain scheduledwith the goal of an in-person administration of the assessments. Assessment administration dates are outlined in the [MEA calendar](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.maine.gov%2Fdoe%2FTesting_Accountability%2FMECAS%2Fcalendar&data=04%7C01%7CJodi.Bossio-Smith%40maine.gov%7C8c42d156e17a45f8c0c008d88a558d14%7C413fa8ab207d4b629bcdea1a8f2f864e%7C0%7C0%7C637411447325455964%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=tNx6a0SH7Fe2BgIEFByL3qE%2B4qPmliSiM5UT5ESFQaE%3D&reserved=0). The alternate assessments are designed to only be administered in-person and are not supported through a remote administration. Because the administration of these assessments takes months of planning, we do request that schools/SAUs complete all pre-assessment activities – primarily assessment training, reviewing student participation rosters, and scheduling. The Department recognizes that the status of schools/SAUs continues to evolve in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and it will continue to work with schools/SAUs to support them in this process.

**Q; What if I have a student who is remote? Do I have to administer the assessment?**

A: A large number of SAUs are implementing a combination of instructional models: in person, hybrid and fully remote. The assessment administration windows have been extended to allow for additional time to assist with assessment scheduling and associated challenges. The Department is anticipating students would be scheduled to participate in the assessment on days when they are attending in person. Should a school have all students in assessment grades, typically 3-8 and 3rd year of high school, engaged in remote learning for 100% of the time during the entire assessment window, please reach out to the applicable assessment coordinator. For individual students who may be engaged in 100% remote learning and are unable to attend school in-person as a direct result of COVID-19, a [special consideration request](https://neo.maine.gov/DOE/NEO/Accounts/Account/Login) may be submitted on behalf of the student.

**Q: When and how will there be MSAA assessment training this year?**

A: The Department has partnered with the assessment vendor to create an MSAA assessment training which was held on March 2nd. This training was a live webinar and two hours long with time built in for questions. The training covered both the ELA & mathematics [MSAA] as well as the science alternate assessment [MSAA Science], and the focus was on practical steps for getting organized, familiarizing with the MSAA platform, and an overview of the assessment. The recording of this training, along with the presentation slides, are available on the [MECAS/MSAA home page](https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/ela_math_materials/msaa).

Additionally, there are online training modules within the MSAA platform that assessment administrators must complete in order to administer the assessment. These are required. The online training modules activated in the MSAA System on March 1st, 2021.

## **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**

Assessment Contact: **Dr. Regina Lewis**

**Q: Will NAEP be administered during the Spring of 2021?**

A: Due to circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic across the country, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) with the consultation and support of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) postponed the NAEP assessments. However, this postponement did not include the associated NAEP Survey Questionnaires customarily administered to administrators and content teachers. The assessments are currently scheduled to take place during the spring of 2022.

This postponement of NAEP assessment administration was shared in a [letter to state Chiefs](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/2021%20NAEP%20Update%20Letter_112420_Final%20%28002%29.pdf) on November 24, 2020. More detailed information from NCES and Commissioner Woodworth is available on the [NCES website](https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/commissioner/remarks2020/11_25_2020.asp).

**Q: Does this mean that the NAEP Survey Questionnaires will still be administered during the Spring of 2021?**

A: With the support of Commissioner Makin, Maine DOE has decided to support the administration of this special study. Our state will receive useful data that will increase our understanding of the impact of the pandemic within Maine schools including variations in instructional practices. The administration of the survey will occur online during an administration window that is to be determined.

**Q: Why is there a NAEP Monthly School Survey during the Spring of 2021?**

 A: The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education recently [announced a national survey](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/ed-announces-national-survey-gather-critical-data-school-reopening) intended to collect data pertaining to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and educators. This project, known as the "NAEP 2021 School Survey", was created to address the requirements of [Executive Order 14000](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-01-26/pdf/2021-01864.pdf).

Maine schools originally selected for participation in NAEP for the spring of 2021 are participating in the monthly NAEP 2021 School Survey. The Department recognizes the importance of accurate and reliable data to guide decision-making and appreciates the commitment of Maine schools selected to participate. Schools and SAUs, selected for participation, were notified by the department during the latter part of February.

The National Center for Education Statistics will administer the survey monthly to gather information regarding grade 4 and 8 student instructional modes and attendance rates through the end of the 2020-21 school year. The goal of the survey is to provide data to inform policy and identify needed resources to continue to support in-person learning. This data will be collected at the national and local level(s). Please note that this study does not require student participation and involves only the schools originally selected for the postponed NAEP 2021 assessment.

The Maine Department of Education will receive a data file from each of the monthly data collection windows as well as a final cumulative data file. The Department plans to use this data to support schools as they develop ongoing instructional models and plans. A pdf copy of the NAEP 2021 School Survey is [located here for your convenience](https://docs.mynaep.com/myschool/documents/NAEP_2021_School_Survey.pdf).

 **Q: Why is NCES still proceeding with the NAEP Survey Questionnaires during the Spring of 2021?**

A: The goal of the study is to gather important contextual information from schools and teachers on student learning opportunities and experiences during times of school closures, remote instruction, and hybrid instruction. NCES plans to release national and state results in the fall of 2021.

**Q: How do I know if a school or district needs to complete the NAEP 2021 Survey Questionnaires?**

A: Superintendents and Principals of the SAUs and schools that were originally notified of selection for NAEP 2021 will receive informational notices pertaining to this special study in early February. During the spring of 2021, NAEP representatives will be contacting schools with more specific directions. School Coordinators will need to provide the names and email addresses of mathematics and reading teachers of the selected grade.

**Q: When do the NAEP 2021 Survey Questionnaires need to be completed?**

A: The administration of the survey will occur sometime during the spring of 2021 and will be completed online. The administration window has not been determined at this time.

**Q: Who needs to complete NAEP 2021 Survey Questionnaires?**

*A: Teachers of grade 4 and 8 mathematics and reading*, as well as *school administrators* at the selected schools will be completing the NAEP survey questionnaires. There are no student questionnaires for spring 2021.

**Q: Will a school identified to participate in the spring of 2021 now have to participate in the spring of 2022?**

A: A new sample of schools will be selected for the spring 2022 administration of the NAEP assessment. The same sampling procedure of proportional probability will be used to select schools. While there is no guarantee that a school will or will not be a part of the sample at this time, the complex methodology of sampling creates a greater likelihood that larger schools will be selected for participation than smaller schools.

**Additional NAEP Updates**

* NAEP will be conducted during the 2021-2022 school year
* 12th grade reading and math will be conducted during the 2023-2024
* Next biennial NAEP following 2021-2022 shall occur in the 2023-2024 school year

## **Science / Alternate Science**

Assessment Coordinators: **Nancy Godfrey**/ **Jodi Bossio-Smith**

**Q: Are we administering a science assessment in the spring of 2021?**

A: Yes. Maine Department of Education completed a request for proposals (RFP) for a general science assessment late summer 2020. The selected bidder, New Meridian, is working with the Department to provide necessary materials and training. The Maine science assessment general will be administered May 17-June 11, 2021.

**Q: Who is required to participate in the science assessment?**

A: Students in grades 5, 8 and 3rd year of high school are required to participate in the science assessment.

**Q: What’s new and different about this general science assessment?**

A: The Maine science assessment assesses what students know and can do related to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Maine adopted NGSS as part of the Maine Learning Results for science and engineering. These standards were signed into law on April 19, 2019. The 2021 administration will be the first year Maine students will be assessed using these newly adopted standards.

**Q: Will this be an online assessment?**

A: Yes. For the first time, the Maine science assessment will be administered online which, in time, will allow more opportunities for simulations, technology enhanced items, etc.

**Q: Will there be an opportunity for educators to see released items?**

A: New Meridian will provide training for educators which will include limited access to assessment items in this first year.

**Q: Will students eligible to participate in the alternate assessment participate in the New Meridian assessment?**

A: No, students participating in alternate assessments will participate in the MSAA Science. Maine is one of two states using this assessment as part of the MSAA consortium. The MSAA Science is administered within the MSAA System, similarly to the MSAA in ELA/math.

## **Special Considerations**

Contact: **Cheryl Brackett**

**Q: Where can we find the webinar power point for Special Considerations?**

A: The slide deck with notes, webinar recording, and the Q&A document are posted on the [assessment homepage.](https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS)

**Q: Should the teacher or principal be submitting Special Consideration requests during an open testing window? Is it ONLY the principals who have access to the NEO logins?**

A: The principal should be submitting the requests during the open assessment window. The individual submitting the request must have user access/login credentials to the [Special Consideration module](https://neo.maine.gov/DOE/NEO/Accounts/Account/Login). This access is determined at the SAU/administrative level. The Special Considerations module is not in the NEO public access dashboard.

**Q: If in March/ April, you check the COVID/Quarantine option for a remote student for any assessment, does that also exempt them from other tests?**

A: A separate request must be submitted for each individual assessment for which the student is eligible. If using the bulk request template for a high number of students, multiple assessments may be selected.

**Q: What if student(s) is/are totally remote this year? We have been completely remote since March and very likely will continue through the end of the year. What is the process? Is/are the student(s) exempt for all assessments based on this COVID/Quarantine definition? We will have to submit EL students who are fully remote per school.**

A: In most cases, individual exemption requests are submitted per student and per assessment. If a particular assessment cannot be administered remotely, and a SAU/school/(class) is fully remote for all students during the entire assessment window, please reach out to the applicable Assessment Coordinator:

* ACCESS/MSAA/MSAA Jodi.bossio-smith@maine.gov (207) 530-1462
* NWEA MAP growth and Maine Science nancy.godfrey@maine.gov (207) 530-1273

**Q: If granted a special considerations exemption, the assessment will simply not be given for a year until the next window?**

A: Special Consideration exemption requests are submitted and determined on an annual basis at the individual student level. A special consideration can only be submitted for an assessment for which the student is eligible.

**Q: Are there make-up windows for each assessment?**

A: Make-up windows are not established for each individual assessment. For each assessment, the window is established and can be located on the [assessment calendar webpage](https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/calendar). If a student is absent form school during the administration of an assessment, it is the school’s responsibility to reschedule and provide the student an opportunity to complete the assessment. All sessions must be completed during the applicable assessment window.

**Q: For purposes of reporting the number of ELLs in our district, we will continue to use the student’s status from last year, correct?**

A: Students who are identified as English learners with an EL start date in Synergy, and who are unable to participate in the ACCESS assessment this year due to one of the special considerations criteria, will remain in EL status.

**Q: How long will it take to get a Special Consideration determination/decision from DOE? i.e. how late in the window can we wait before submitting a request? For example, if the student is remote in early April, is that a good time to submit the form?**

A: Once spring Maine Educational Assessments begin to open, the Assessment Team/Special Consideration Review Panel meets regularly each week to review exemption requests. The Department will aim to respond to requests within three (3) business days from submission. The final determination (approved/denied) may differ depending on the length of the assessment window, and the back-and-forth MEA portal communication/comments between DOE and the requesting school/SAU.

 NOTE: The windows for each assessment vary in length (4-weeks or up to 16-weeks) therefore, a student must be unable to participate for the entire duration of the applicable assessment window.

**Q: What are schools using for alternate assessments?**

A: For students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and 3rd year of high school, Maine will continue to administer Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) for math and English Language Arts (ELA)/ Literacy. Students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 5, 8 and 3rd year of high school will be participating in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment in science which is new this year.

**Q: How do special consideration approvals impact participation rates?**

A: If a Special Consideration request is submitted and APPROVED, the student is removed from the participation calculation. If a Special Consideration request is submitted and DENIED, the student is considered a non-participant in the applicable assessment.

**Q: Is it accurate that students with multiple physical and cognitive disabilities must be given an alternate assessment?**

A: The Alternate Assessment is utilized by students with the most significant cognitive disabilities as determined by a special education team and IEP process. The student must meet all participation criteria descriptors. Please visit the following for additional information:

* [Maine Department of Education MSAA home page](https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/materials/msaa)
* [Maine Department of Education MSAA Science home page](%E2%80%A2%09https%3A/www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/materials/saa)
* Resources for Determining Eligibility - These resources are designed to support IEP teams in making data-driven decisions about eligibility and participation in the alternate assessments.
	+ [Participation Decision Flowchart](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Participation%20Decision%20Flowchart.pdf)
	+ [Alternate Assessment Participation Checklist](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Maine%20Alternate%20Assessment%20Participation%20Checklist.pdf)

**Q: Should I do a Special Consideration for a very low, non-verbal, non-responsive student.**

A: Students with significant cognitive disabilities may qualify for Alternate Assessments based on a special education team and IEP process. All students eligible for assessments should be given the opportunity to participate.

**Q: If students are receiving in-person instruction and do not have a medical emergency, can they be exempted?**

A: A student is eligible to receive a special consideration for the a spring 2021 assessment administration if they meet one of the two following criteria:

* **Significant Medical Emergency** includes long-term hospitalization without access to academics, severe trauma, mental health crisis, placement in hospice care or mental health facility. A Medical Emergency may also include medically fragile students that are not able to participate in any academic activity and/or statewide assessments due to a debilitating disease.
* **COVID/Quarantine** includes student who has positive COVID test results, is unable to participate in statewide assessment due to the condition of quarantine according to Maine DOE [COVID19 Toolkit](https://www.maine.gov/doe/covid-19/toolkit), or has elected for full remote instruction during each individual assessment window due to COVID-19 health concerns.

If an assessment can be administered remotely and the student does not have a medical emergency or COVID-related health concern, the student is expected to participate. Several federally required assessments do not have the ability to be administered remotely. If a student is receiving 100% remote instruction and is unable to come to a school facility for in-person assessment administration during the entire assessment administration window, a Special Consideration request should be submitted.

**Q: Does the Parental Consent Form that principals will print and place in a student’s cumulative file require a parent signature?**

A: Yes. Parent consent is needed to acknowledge the following:

* I have consulted with the SAU and agree with this request to exempt my child from statewide assessment. I understand that this means I will have no statewide assessment data for my child for the year of instruction being assessed
* I   **do /** I **do not** (check one) give the SAU permission to seek an exemption for my child from statewide assessment for medical or other extraordinary reasons.
* I   **do /** I **do not** (check one) give permission for the SAU to discuss the request if necessary, with a member of the Special Considerations Review Panel.

**Q: Can a parent exempt the student from taking the assessment with a letter?**

A: A parent can request that the school submit an exemption request for either of the Medical Emergency or COVID/Quarantine reasons and include any required supplemental documentation to support the request. If parents submit a letter requesting exemption from assessments for any other reason, the SAU may document this request, but the request must address one (1) of the two (2) reasons as defined in the [special considerations module](https://neo.maine.gov/DOE/NEO/Accounts/Account/Login).

**Q: Do we know the assessments so we can begin to think about accommodations that may be needed? I am wondering about the regular education assessments so I can think about accommodations as we are meeting. I heard it was changing.**

A: The NWEA MAP growth and Maine Science will be new assessments and administered in the spring of 2021. The Department is currently working with NWEA and New Meridian to ensure all necessary information and training materials are provided as soon as possible.

**Q: How do you recommend getting the parent exemption form signed if the parent is also [medically] unable to join a meeting?**

A: The consent form for requesting Special Considerations should be distributed to parents in the customary way the school sends other parental notifications and should likewise be returned to the school.