

# MCAS Data Is Fundamental for Education Excellence and an Equitable Recovery

Objective and comparable data are required to measure Massachusetts' progress on meeting the state's goals for education equity and excellence. In Massachusetts, students in grades 3-8 and 10 take MCAS assessments in English language arts and math. Students in fifth, eighth, and ninth grade also take the MCAS in science. Taking MCAS only accounts for 1% of class time each year, but provides critical information on what students need, what instruction methods are working, and how well we are meeting goals for equity and improvement. Without Massachusetts-specific data, attainable only by MCAS assessment results, parents are not guaranteed information on whether their child is on track, while schools and districts will not know what degree of learning acceleration is needed and where the influx of federal resources should be prioritized.

## How does MCAS promote equity in education?

National civil rights groups fought to protect statewide standardized tests like MCAS because they shine a light on racial and socio-economic achievement gaps that otherwise would remain hidden. Gaps in average MCAS scores between different student groups, like the ones that currently exist by race and socio-economic status, reinforce the urgent need to increase student opportunity in Massachusetts.

## Why do we need the MCAS in 2021?

The shortened version of the MCAS that the state is administering this school year is needed because the state can use results to understand, and repair, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. Research firm McKinsey and Co. reported last December that nationwide, students are on average three months behind in their education. Students of color were up to five months behind, while white students were only one to three months behind.

Congress is sending Massachusetts billions of dollars to support K-12 schools, and MCAS data provides schools and districts the information necessary to allocate time and resources strategically to accelerate learning.

## Why is the MCAS essential?

- It measures whether **students** are on track for future college and career success: a [recent study from Brown University](#) shows that MCAS results are predictive of post-secondary degree attainment and labor market success.
- It measures **students'** critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential in the 21st century workplace.
- It identifies **students** who need extra support on specific subjects or concepts.
- It provides objective information to **parents** about whether their child is meeting grade-level expectations.
- It provides **teachers** with feedback on the impact of their instruction.
- It helps **school and district leaders** assess their progress toward student achievement goals and target resources – funding, time, and talent – based on which schools or student groups need more support.
- It helps **state education leaders** identify schools and districts that need more resources, including targeted funds, professional development, and academic or mental health supports for students.
- It shows **state legislators** if Massachusetts' investment in K-12 education is shrinking student achievement gaps.