MPS is MCA Ready!

MCA Testing
The MCA-III testing window begins on March 9 and runs through mid-May. This year reading, math and science will be assessed in an online format.

2014-2015 MCA Testing Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Grades</th>
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<td>Math</td>
<td>Grades 3-8, 11</td>
<td>March 9-May 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Grades 3-8, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Grades 5, 8, at the completion of high school biology</td>
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**Tips for Students**

**Preparing for Tests**
- Maintain good study habits. Tell your parents about schoolwork and homework.
- Follow directions.
- Get a good night’s rest and eat a good breakfast before testing.
- Set goals. Make and follow a plan to meet the goals you have set. Share your goals with your parents and teachers.
- Take responsibility for classwork and homework.
- Ask questions at school and home to ensure you understand the material.
- Ask for additional help when needed.
- Practice strategies that will help you do well so they are automatic when you are taking tests.
- Ask your teacher to identify a particular area of focus that would help your performance.
- Think positively!

**During Tests**
- Read and pay careful attention to all directions.
- Survey the items and questions to get an idea of the task ahead.
- Reread the parts of the passages or problems that help you to select the best answer.
- Read every possible answer - the last one could be the best one!
- Decide exactly what the question is asking and find evidence in the text to support it.
- Skip difficult questions. Then, go back and use good strategies to figure out the trickier ones.
- Keep a good attitude.
- When you finish each section, take time to go back and check your work.
- Make your best educated guess if you do not know the answer.
- Try to get the correct answer by reasoning and eliminating wrong answers.

**After Tests**
- Examine your test scores; ask the teacher to explain your test scores if needed.
- Congratulate yourself on identified areas of strength.
- Identify areas that you want to improve for a better performance next time.
- Ask your teacher to suggest areas of study that will help you perform better on the next test.
- Set new goals. Make and follow a plan to meet your new goals.
- Share your goals with your parents and teachers.

**Expert Tip**

Make sure you can explain why you are choosing your answer. If you are not sure you have a good reason, make some notes and come back to it later with fresh eyes.
Tips for Parents

Preparing for Tests

• Note test dates on your home calendar; schedule appointments on non-testing days.

• Encourage your child to take responsibility for homework and class study.

• Encourage your child to ask questions at home and in class.

• Get to know your child’s teachers.

• Attend parent-teacher conferences.

• Confer with teachers on a regular basis.

• Help your child set realistic yet ambitious goals. Support your child in reaching his or her goals.

• Gather available test preparation materials and information.

• Be sure your child knows that you value a good education.

• Praise your child’s efforts.

• Recognize hard work and persistence, particularly when facing difficult tasks.

Day of Test

• Ensure your child is well rested and eats a healthy breakfast.

• Make sure your child arrives at school on time.

• Encourage your child to do his or her best work and to be persistent.

• Do not remove your child from school on test days for appointments.

• Maintain a calmness about tests. They are small portions of a child’s overall education and performance.

• Ask your child how he or she feels about the upcoming test. Do your best to calm any anxieties.

• If your child is experiencing anxiety, communicate this to the teacher so the teacher can work to alleviate test anxiety.

After Testing

• Ask your child about the test.

• Examine any reports that are sent home and share them with your child as appropriate.

• Share your child’s areas of strength and help make a plan to address any weaknesses.

• Talk with the teacher if other information is needed.

• Support your child in setting and achieving new goals.

Expert Tip

Encourage your child to work hard and do his or her best, but know this is only one way to show what your child knows. Make sure your child has a good breakfast and drinks enough water so his or her body and mind are up for the task.
### Tips for Teachers

#### Before Test Administration
- Notify students of the test dates.
- Ensure all students have had a chance to practice with the testing format and navigation.
- Be clear with students about strategies you expect them to use for success.
- Become familiar with materials and procedures to be used with the test. Students respond to adult anxiety. Being confident and calm will help students feel the same way.
- Make sure you know which students are eligible for test accommodations.
- Read the test administration manual carefully for instructions and information. Gather any needed materials, including sharpened pencils, erasers and scratch paper.
- Check in regularly with test coordinators for information and changes.
- Encourage all students to be present on test dates.
- Help students to set realistic yet ambitious goals.

#### During Test Administration
- Create a calm and focused testing environment. Reduce any distractions and interruptions.
- Expect every student to use the strategies he or she has been taught.
- Follow any administration guidelines.
- Monitor student progress and speed. Remind students not to rush or guess.
- Anticipate and eliminate test disruptions. Make sure students know procedures for acquiring additional materials, using the bathroom, taking breaks, etc.
- If a student makes eye contact, smile! A positive look goes a long way for encouraging a student to keep at it!

#### After Test Administration
- Collect and handle all test materials as outlined by the test administration requirements.
- Document any absent students and help them get scheduled for make-up sessions.
- Analyze test reports for instructional strengths and weaknesses.
- Develop a plan to modify instructional strategies to address any identified test weaknesses.
- Share individual information with parents and students to help them set new goals.

#### Expert Tip
The test is an opportunity to reinforce your classroom’s sense of community. Consider setting a classwide goal for the test in which every student can play a part.
Test Anxiety

Students may experience anxiety about tests and may experience heightened anxiety before a testing situation. A certain degree of anxiety is normal and may help students prepare more effectively, work more efficiently and remain focused during testing. Too much anxiety, however, can negatively affect performance. The following strategies may assist students, parents and teachers in reducing anxiety.

How Students Can Alleviate Test Anxiety
- Share your feelings of anxiety with parents and teachers.
- Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know.
- Review homework and materials that pertain to test topics.
- Relax, breathe deeply and stay focused on the test.
- Remember, the test is only one way your academic performance is measured.
- Think positively. Think of other times you were successful when facing a challenge.

How Parents Can Alleviate Test Anxiety
- Discuss the test openly and in a positive way.
- Have realistic expectations of your child’s performance while encouraging his or her best efforts.
- Emphasize that the test is only one measure of academic performance.
- Emphasize that test scores do not determine a person’s worth.
- Help your child identify times he or she felt anxious or faced challenges that had positive results.

How Teachers Can Alleviate Test Anxiety
- Discuss the purpose of the test and how it can help students’ academic progress.
- Have realistic expectations of students’ performance while encouraging students to do their best.
- Allow students to express their anxiety verbally or in writing.
- Be careful not to overemphasize the importance of the test.
A Process for Success

Below is a process that can help you be successful on any test, but especially on the MCA-III.

Mind and materials ready
- Breathe, stay calm and remember your goal.
- Make sure you have scratch paper, a sharpened pencil and other approved materials.

Prepare to succeed
- Think positive thoughts; remember times you were successful!
- Think about all you have learned to prepare yourself.

Survey the items and questions
- Look over the title, the items and the questions.
- Identify information that will help you be successful, such as genre, graphic features, math needed, etc.

Read and reread
- Go back to the item to identify key information.
- Use evidence from the text (reading).

Evaluate what is being asked
- Identify what the question is asking and make a plan to solve it.

Action – Use strategies and tools
- Apply good test-taking strategies such as eliminating wrong answers.
- Read and take notes.

Display persistence
- Don’t give up; keep working at it!

(Why?) Prove your answer
- Make sure you have support for your answer.
- You’ve got this!
What is the MCA-III?

- The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment III (MCA-III) measures how well students meet state standards in the areas of math, reading and science. It also measures how well school districts and schools teach students these subjects. State standards are a set of knowledge and skills that are essential to all students’ education.
- The Math MCA-III is given to students in grades 3 – 8 and 11.
- The Reading MCA-III is given to students in grades 3 – 8 and 10.
- The Science MCA-III is given in students in grades 5, 8 and again after the student completes high school biology.

How does it affect a student’s education?

The MCA-III provides a snapshot of student achievement over the course of the year. It is one piece of evidence that can help the school district, the school and the teacher determine how students are doing.

What do the scores mean?

There are four achievement levels for the MCA-III:

- E: Exceeds the Standards (score varies, maximum is 99)
- M: Meets the Standards (score 50 or above; upper limit varies)
- P: Partially Meets the Standards (score 40-49)
- D: Does Not Meet the Standards (score 1-39)

Students receive a three-digit score.

The first digit indicates the grade level (G) and the last two digits indicate the score (01 – 99). Scores between 1 and 39 are categorized as “Does Not Meet” and scores between 40 and 49 are categorized as “Partially Meets.” The scores for “Meets” and “Exceeds” vary by grade level and subject area.

When do we get the scores back?

The scores for the tests that will be taken in spring 2015 will be mailed to parents in fall 2015.

The MCA-III is an assessment of the learning that has taken place over the course of the school year. Students have been preparing for the assessment since the school year began. The test presents an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they’ve learned throughout the year. The most important thing students and families can do is to maintain a routine throughout the testing window, such as eating and sleeping regularly.