



SALEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Where belonging leads to opportunity.

Stephen K. Zrike, Jr., Ed.D.

Superintendent

29 Highland Ave. Salem, MA 01970

978-740-1212

szrike@salemk12.org

March 5, 2026

Dear Salem families,

MCAS testing will soon be underway in Salem. Students in grades 3–8 and grade 10 will participate in assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. In addition, students in grades 5 and 8 will complete the Science, Technology, and Engineering exam. Grade 8 students will also be administered the Civics assessment.

At the high school level, students enrolled in specific science courses may take an end-of-course MCAS in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or Technology/Engineering this spring, depending on their current coursework. Families should also note that MCAS exams are also available in Spanish (as bilingual, Spanish-English exams) for all grades and content areas except English Language Arts.

The MCAS is designed to provide families and teachers with valuable information about how students are performing in relation to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Salem Public Schools uses MCAS results to guide professional development, inform curriculum and instructional material purchases, and strengthen classroom instructional practices. This spring, students at all grade levels will take their ELA, mathematics, and science MCAS assessments online. **Your child’s school will share additional details about the administration process, including school-specific testing schedules.** The Spring 2026 MCAS testing windows are as follows:

Assessment	Grade Level	ELA	Math	Science Tech & Engineering	Civics
MCAS	Grade 3-8	March 23-April 17	April 27–May 22		
	Grade 5			April 27–May 22	
	Grade 8			April 27–May 22	April 27-June 5
	Grade 10	March 24, 25	May 19, 20		
	Grades 9-12			(Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Technology/Engineering) June 2, 3	
MCAS-ALT	All grades	<i>Submission Deadline: March 27</i>			

**Please note that to graduate from the Salem Public Schools (SPS), students no longer need to earn a passing score on the MCAS. Instead, they must meet our high school graduation requirements and earn



www.salemk12.org



@SalemSchoolsk12



@SalemPublicSchools



the competency determination (CD) by scoring a passing grade on the equivalency of grade 10 coursework. Please find specific details [here](#). However, participation in the MCAS is required by federal and state law and the ballot question did not change this requirement. DESE's accountability system will continue to use MCAS assessment participation rates and the resulting achievement and growth data in its annual accountability determinations.

In the fall of 2026, parents, students and staff will receive individual score reports that will provide helpful information on how to best address the academic needs of your child. The results, in aggregate, will also inform the district's ongoing improvement efforts. I encourage all families to visit the following websites for information on test design:

- General parent/guardian information: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/
- ELA: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/ela.html?section=testdesign
- Math: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/math.html?section=testdesign
- Science: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/sci.html?section=testdesign>
- Civics: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testadmin/civics/faq.html>

There are a range of opinions about standardized testing, including the MCAS. While no single assessment can fully capture a student's abilities, MCAS provides one important measure of whether students are meeting grade-level expectations. As a district, Salem Public Schools remain deeply committed to fostering a culture of high expectations and strong academic achievement for every student. Earning a Salem Public Schools diploma should open doors. Whether students choose to pursue higher education, enter the workforce, or follow another path, they must be prepared to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required for success after graduation. MCAS, though not a perfect tool, helps us monitor student progress toward that goal and identify areas where additional support may be needed. For high school students, MCAS performance determines whether they are eligible for the [John and Abigail Adams Scholarship](#). The Scholarship provides a credit toward tuition for up to eight semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts state college or university.

We ask for your partnership during this testing season. Please help your child approach these assessments with confidence and a positive mindset. Remind them that the MCAS is an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned and the skills they have developed. It is only one component of a broader picture that includes classroom performance, report cards, projects, and teacher feedback. If you have any questions about the upcoming assessments, please contact your child's teacher or school administrator. Thank you, as always, for your continued support and commitment to your child's education.

Best,

Stephen K. Zrike, Jr., Ed.D.