



District Office
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Dear Parent or Guardian,

January, 2012

Federal education law* ensures all students in public schools have access to challenging instruction and are challenged to reach grade-level outcomes. One way of proving this is to make sure that all students are fully included in state accountability systems, such as the mandatory MN Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) in Reading (gr. 3-8, 10), Math (gr. 3-8, 11), Writing (gr. 9), and Science (gr. 5, 8, 10). The MCAs are intended to measure whether each student has mastered these *minimum end-of-year* outcomes at his/her grade level.

Major changes have been made this year in how the Math MCA is administered to students in grades 3-8. It will again be available online at school. In addition, this year, the assessment can be offered to each student up to three times during a school year. The purpose of this is to enable teachers to assess students' progress toward end-of-year goals and tailor instruction accordingly.

Districts around MN are responding differently to this new testing format. At the extremes, some districts are assessing students only once, while others are testing all students three times. In the spirit of making the assessment process most meaningful to teachers and students, we have developed a plan that falls between these extremes. Mahtomedi Middle School and OH Anderson Elementary School will offer the first administration of the Math MCA in February/March. Students who do not meet or partially meet the standards will have up to two additional opportunities to do so before the end of May. Students will only take the test until they demonstrate proficiency (i.e., "meets" expectations for the grade level).** Each building will send out letters letting parents know if their child passed the first time or if they will be taking it again; however, official "scores" are not released from the Minnesota Department of Education until summer.

As stated earlier, it is critical to remember the assessment measures end-of-year outcomes; thus, we would expect fewer students would be proficient in the winter than in the spring and many students will need to take the assessment at least twice. Similarly, we expect many students who, if assessed in the spring, would fall in the "exceeds" category, may fall within the "meets standards" category when assessed in the winter. This is acceptable as we will continue to measure ambitious growth beyond minimum competencies using the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), an assessment suited to show the growth of all students from season to season, and year to year.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue applying the state accountability process to best meet students' needs in Mahtomedi. If you have any questions, please contact your child's principal or Lynne Viker, Director of Teaching & Learning and Special Services at 651-407-2013.

Sincerely,

Lynne Viker
Director of Teaching & Learning and Special Services

*2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

**Accommodations per a student's IEP will not be compromised by this new assessment format and plan.