

MCAS Grades 3–8 ELA 2027 Test Design Changes

The Office of Student Assessment Services

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Presenters

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Logistics for This Session

- Use the Q&A feature to ask a question.
 - Type your question at anytime and we will answer some of the more common questions during the webinar.
 - Some answers to your questions may be covered during the presentation and others may be available on our [website](#).
- This session is being recorded and will be available in about a week on the [MCAS Resource Center](#), along with the slides.
- Closed captioning has been enabled for participants who need it.
- This session is being interpreted into ASL. Our interpreting team will be onscreen with the presenters.
- Please be advised that DESE does not authorize attendees to record or to use AI transcription tools during the meeting nor does DESE endorse any unauthorized transcripts of its meetings created by third parties.

Slides for This Session

- Slides were emailed to participants before this session from MCASEvents@cognia.org.
- Slides are now being posted in the chat.
 - If you cannot access the slides in the chat, ask in the Q&A.
- In about a week, we will send the slides and a link to the recording to participants.

Today's Agenda

1. Timeline and Overview of New Tests
2. Components of the New ELA tests
3. Anticipated New Test Design
4. Resources and Updates

1. Timeline and Overview

Timeline

Timeframe	Activity
2025	Began passage finding and development of new test questions
Spring 2026	Field test passages and new items
Summer 2026	Review field test data with teacher committees
Spring 2027	First operational year of new test with new item types

Overview of Changes to the Tests

Based on feedback from educators, a goal is to reduce testing time by having:

- shorter reading passages
 - extended-response questions, in which students are expected to write less
 - stand-alone selected-response questions
 - revised selected-response questions
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- Grades 3–5 tests will no longer include essays and instead will have two extended-response questions.
 - Grades 6–8 tests will have one essay and one extended-response question.
 - Grade 10 test has no changes and is remaining the same at this time.

2. Components of the New Tests

Grades 3–8 Passage Sets

- Three types of passage sets
 - Short: will not include writing
 - Medium: will include writing (**New**)
 - Long: will include writing
- Genres will include literary and informational passages.

Stand-alone Questions (New)

- Independent questions (not associated with a passage) worth 1 point
- Assess the grade-level language standards, including Standard English grammar, mechanics, and usage.

Grade 4 Stand-alone Example

Read the sentences in the box.

The classroom's bookcase was big. The classroom's bookcase held many books.

What is the correct way to combine the sentences?

- A. The classroom's bookcase was big if held many books.
- B. The classroom's bookcase was big or held many books.
- C. The classroom's bookcase was big also held many books.
- D. The classroom's bookcase was big and held many books. ***

Grade 7 Stand-alone Example

Read the letter, which contains five numbered sentences, in the box.

To Whom It May Concern:

¹My recent purchase from your website included a new set of expensive dress shoes. ²The order was delivered ahead of schedule, but the quality of the shoes was kinda bad. ³Also, the shoes I received differ greatly from the picture on your website. ⁴I would like to be reimbursed for the shoes in a timely manner. ⁵Let's get this sorted out, OK?

Which **two** sentences in the letter contain informal language?

A. sentence 1

B. sentence 2 *

C. sentence 3

D. sentence 4

E. sentence 5 *

Note: This question is worth 1 point.

Extended Responses (New)

Passage-based questions will be worth 5 points.

- 3 points for writing (written expression)
 - Gr. 3–5: Assess **explanatory** or **opinion** writing (in medium and long passages)
 - Gr. 6–8: Assess **explanatory** or **argument** writing (in medium passages)
- 2 points for language (conventions)

Narrative writing will no longer be assessed on MCAS and should continue to be assessed locally.

Responses are expected to be one to two paragraphs.

- about **one** paragraph in length or 450 words for grade 3
- about **one to two** paragraphs in length or 450 words for grades 4–5
- about **one to two** paragraphs in length or 600 words for grades 6–8

Grade 5 Extended Response Example

Write a response that is about **one to two paragraphs** in length.

Be sure to:

- Include an opinion based on the passage.
- Use evidence from the passage to support the opinion.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on *A Crooked Kind of Perfect*, write a response that states an opinion about the character trait that **best** describes the narrator. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.

Revised Selected-Response Questions

- Can be either passage-based or stand-alone (new)
- Will be aligned to either a reading or a language standard
- Worth **one point** each
 - Note: Two-point selected response questions will no longer be on the gr. 3–8 tests*
- Includes:
 - Multiple-choice
 - Multi-select
 - Technology-enhanced (such as hot text, drag-and-drop, inline choice)

Essays

- Essays will no longer be included on the grades 3–5 tests.
- For grades 6–8, students will write one essay, instead of two.
- Essays will be passage-based questions and worth 8 points.
 - 5 points for writing (idea development)
 - 3 points for language (conventions)
- Essays will assess **explanatory** or **argument** writing.
- Narrative writing will no longer be assessed on MCAS and should continue to be assessed locally.
- Essays are expected to be about **four to five** paragraphs in length, or 1200 words.

3. Anticipated New Test Design

Grades 3–8 Anticipated Test Design

All the new grades 3–8 tests will:

- have two sessions
- be worth 50 points total
- have reading, writing, and language reporting categories

The design will include:

- 1 **long** passage set with 1 writing task
(grades 3–5: extended response; grades 6–8: essay)
- 1 **medium** passage set with 1 writing task
(all grades: 1 extended response)
- 2 **short** passage sets without writing
- Stand-alone questions

Grades 3–5 Operational Questions and Points

	Selected-Response (1 point)	Extended-Response (5 points)	Total Points
Long	12	1	17
Medium	9	1	14
Short	5	NA	5
Short	5	NA	5
Stand-alone	9	NA	9

Total: 50 points

Grades 6–8 Operational Questions and Points

	Selected-Response (1 point)	Extended-Response (5 points)	Essay (8 points)	Total Points
Long	12	NA	1	20
Medium	9	1	NA	14
Short	5	NA	NA	5
Short	5	NA	NA	5
Stand-alone	6	NA	NA	6

Total: 50 points

4. Resources and Updates

Current ELA Resources Available

The [ELA MCAS Transition page](#) includes

- timeline for new tests
- anticipated test design
- frequently asked questions

Will be updated as more resources and materials become available.

Subscribe to [Student Assessment Updates](#)

Additional Resources and Updates for 2026–27 School Year

- Late Summer/Fall 2026: ADC Recruitment Information and Application
- Fall 2026:
 - Post new practice tests with student samples at different score points
 - Post extended-response rubrics (*Note: Essay rubrics will remain the same*)
- Fall 2026/Winter 2027: Additional ELA webinars with updated resources

Questions from Q & A

- We will answer some questions now.
- If we do not answer your question, please either email adc@mass.gov or check the ELA [transition web pages](#).

THANK YOU

The Office of Student Assessment Services



<https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/ela.html>



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