

A Profile of State Assessment Programs 2009

Since 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has supported research that compares the proficiency standards of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) with those of individual states. State assessments are placed onto a common scale defined by NAEP, which allows states' proficiency standards to be compared not only to NAEP, but also to each other.¹ While the mapped NAEP equivalent scores of state standards are useful in determining the relative rigor of states' proficiency standards, the results of the studies should be interpreted with caution. Variations among states can be due to many factors, including differences in assessment frameworks, test specifications, the psychometric properties of the tests, the definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards, and the standard-setting process.

In 2007, in collaboration with the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC)—Task Force on Assessment of the Council of Chief State School Officers—NCES conducted a survey of state assessment programs to gain contextual information about the states' assessment programs in 2006–07 and to note changes in their assessments between the 2004–05 and 2006–07 school years that could affect the interpretation of the mapping results. The NAEP State Coordinator in every state was asked to provide information about the state's testing program through an online survey. After this information was verified and confirmed by the NAEP State Coordinator of each state, it was summarized in individual state profiles.² These profiles were designed in collaboration with a panel of NAEP State Coordinators.

In support of the 2009 Mapping Study, NAEP State Coordinators were asked by NCES to update the information collected on their state assessment program in 2007. Following similar verification steps, the information was summarized into profiles to provide a concise snapshot of all state assessment programs in the 2008–09 school year. Each profile presents information on the grades and subjects tested during the 2008–09 year, state performance levels and performance level descriptors, the composition of main state assessments, and changes to the state assessments between 2006–07 and 2008–09.

A sample profile is shown below. Information on the state assessment programs is presented in nine blocks. The first block combines all subjects. The remaining blocks (2–9) are presented twice, once for Reading/Language Arts and then for Mathematics. The example that follows is for Reading/Language Arts only. Some answers may have been edited for consistency or for space limitations; however, the substance of all answers is unchanged from what states provided to the NAEP State Coordinators. All web addresses in these profiles were verified on May 15, 2011. In any block, the symbol “—” indicates that a state's information was either not provided (for example, if there is no information on performance level descriptors of an alternate assessment for meeting AYP) or not applicable (for example, if the information relates to the proportion of the test score from short constructed response items, but the test does not use short constructed response items).

¹ Documents that discuss the research on NAEP and state proficiency standards are available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/>.

² The 2007 State Profiles are available at: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/profile_standards_2007.asp.

Block 1 summarizes information about each state’s testing program: the name of the program, the different tests, the type and format of each test, the grades and subjects tested, and the tests’ purpose. States were asked to enter up to four tests in Mathematics, English Language Arts, Reading, and Science. Response options for test type were: regular, alternate, modified, and portfolio assessments.³ Response options for test format were: criterion-referenced (CRT), norm-referenced (NRT), combination CRT/NRT, and other formats. Response options for test purpose were: instructional, student accountability, school accountability, staff accountability, and other. Additional information provided by NAEP State Coordinators summarizing their states’ tests and test purposes is included at the end of the block. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block1.asp>.

Block 1		Example State																			
		State Assessment and Accountability Program (SAAP)																			
Component		Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose ¹					
		Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
Language Arts																					
Comprehensive Assessments of State Students (CASS)		Regular	CRT		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√		√		
CASS - Alternate (CASS-Alt)		Alternate	CRT	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√		√		
Mathematics																					
CASS		Regular	CRT		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√		√		
CASS-Alt		Alternate	CRT	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√		√		
Science																					
CASS		Regular	CRT						√		√				√		√		√		
CASS-Alt		Alternate	CRT						√		√				√		√		√		

¹ Example purposes: Instructional: student diagnosis, student placement, instructional planning, program evaluation, improvement of instruction for groups of students, etc.
 Student Accountability: student awards/recognition, honors diploma, student promotion/retention, required remediation, exit requirement, etc.
 School Accountability: monetary awards/penalties, school accreditation, school performance reporting, high school skills guarantee, school improvement plans, etc.
 Staff Accountability: staff awards/recognition, salary increases, staff dismissal, staff evaluation or certification, staff monetary penalties, etc.

³ For reference, definitions of different types of assessments are available at the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) website, at: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/AlternateAssessments/altAssessTopic.htm>.

Block 2 summarizes information about the composition of the main state assessments in 2008–09 for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. It shows the number of items for each type of question and each type’s respective weight in the final score. If the state indicated that an item type was not used, the type’s weight is indicated by “—.” An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block2.asp> .

Block 3 includes additional information about the timing of the assessments and whether assessments measured skills acquired only in prior grades. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block3.asp>.

Block 4 summarizes information about the assessments and performance levels used by the state in 2008–09 for state accountability for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the assessments and performance levels used to determine AYP. The symbol “—” indicates that the information was not provided (e.g., if the state did not provide additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year). An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block4.asp>.

Example State		Reading/Language Arts									
Block 2	Composition of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09										
	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other		
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	
Grade 4	24	50%	0	—	3	50%	0	—	0	—	
Grade 8	24	50%	0	—	3	50%	0	—	0	—	
Block 3	Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09										
	Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall 2008?						No.				
Block 4	Performance Levels and AYP										
	Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year						Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced				
	Test used for AYP determination						Comprehensive Assessments of State Students (CASS)				
	Performance level used for AYP						Proficient				
	Other tests used for AYP determination						CASS-Alt assessments are used in AYP determination.				
	Test used for state accountability						CASS				
	Performance level used for state accountability						Proficient				
	First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments						2005–06 school year				
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year						—					

Block 5 provides the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2008–09 assessments for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The descriptors correspond to the proficient performance level as it is defined by each state. A web address is included if the state provided a link. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block5.asp>.

Block 6 lists the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2008–09 alternate assessments for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The descriptors correspond to the proficient performance level as it is defined by each state. A “—” indicates that the state did not provide performance level descriptors. A web address is included if the state provided a link. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block6.asp>.

	Example State	Reading/Language Arts
Block 5	<p>Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress</p> <p>Grade 4: Students performing at the Proficient level demonstrate a fundamental understanding of what they read by applying various strategies when reading textual/informational, functional, and literary/recreational materials. To some degree these students use various skills and strategies, including demonstrating a knowledge of sentence structure, making inferences, and distinguishing fiction from nonfiction. They recognize some literary elements and devices including characters, similes, and important details as they read literary/recreational text. As a part of understanding informational/textual and functional materials, students at this level are beginning to locate information, identify important details, use sentence structure, and distinguish fact from fiction. Their vocabulary knowledge includes recognition of some antonyms, synonyms, and some use of structural analysis skills.</p> <p>Performance level descriptors are available online at http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevelsGrade4.pdf</p>	<p>Grade 8: Students performing at the Proficient level utilize strategies to make inferences to determine bias or theme and use specific context clues to determine some word meanings. They can distinguish among characteristics of some types of poetry such as ballads, epics, haikus, limericks, and lyrics. They often identify literary elements and can describe their impact on setting, mood, characterization, or theme. These students also are able to identify the elements of plot.</p>
Block 6	<p>Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress</p> <p>Grade 4: A fourth-grade student performing at the Proficient level on the Example State Extended Standards in Reading demonstrates fundamental knowledge that meets the extended standards in multiple phoneme words, reading simple sentences, synonyms, literary elements (main characters and details), and letter blends. This knowledge might be demonstrated at different complexity levels and with varying degrees of assistance.</p> <p>Performance level descriptors are available online at: http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevels.pdf</p>	<p>Grade 8: —</p>

Block 7 presents changes to the main state assessment in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics between the 2006–07 and 2008–09 school years. Each state self-reported whether the changes to its assessment were significant or not. For many states, additional information about the changes is included in a note below the block. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block7.asp>.

Block 8 provides information about the comparability of the state assessments between 2006–07 and 2008–09. Specifically, it is the answer given to the survey question “Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 Reading or Mathematics directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?” Each state self-reported whether its 2006–07 and 2008–09 assessments were comparable or not. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block8.asp>.

Block 9 provides additional information about changes to the state assessment, inclusion policies, or administration of the state assessment between 2006–07 and 2008–09 that would have an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block9.asp>.

Example State		Reading/Language Arts										
Block 7	Changes to State Assessments Between 2006–07 and 2008–09											
		No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period of Administration	Changed Assessment Items	Used Entirely Different Assessment	Realigned To New Content Standards	Changed Proficiency Standards	Changed Accommodation Policy	Changed Re-Test Policy	Changed Test Contractors	Other Changes
	Grade 4	√									•	
	Grade 8	√									•	
Block 8	Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?											
	Yes, they can be compared. The testing contractors changed but the test and scales did not change.											
Block 9	Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?											
	None.											

Source

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Survey of State Assessment Program Characteristics.

Glossary

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
ECA	End-of-Course Assessments
ELA	English Language Arts
ELP	English Language Proficiency
EOC	End-of-Course Exams
EOG	End-of-Grade Exams
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LEA	Local Education Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NRT	Norm-Referenced Test
PLD	Performance Level Descriptor
SAT/10	Stanford Achievement Test – Tenth Edition
SEA	State Education Agency

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

Component	Test		Grades Tested													Test Purpose ¹				
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
Language Arts																				
MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Reading Comprehension [2]	Regular	CRT				√		√	√		√	√				√		√		[3]
MCAS ELA Reading Comprehension and Composition [4]	Regular	CRT					√			√			√			√	√	√		[5]
MCAS Alternate (MCAS-Alt) Reading Comprehension	Alternate	CRT				√		√	√		√					√		√		[3]
MCAS-Alt ELA Reading Comprehension and Composition [6]	Alternate	CRT					√			√			√			√	√	√		[3]
Mathematics																				
MCAS Mathematics [4]	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√		√			√	√	√		[3]
MCAS-Alt Mathematics [6]	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√		√			√	√	√		[5]

(continued)

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose ¹					
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
Science																				
MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering	Regular	CRT						√				√				√		√		
MCAS High School Science and Technology/Engineering [7]	Regular	CRT										√	√	√	√	√	√	√		[8]
MCAS-Alt Science and Technology/Engineering	Alternate	CRT						√				√				√		√		
MCAS-Alt High School Science and Technology/Engineering [7]	Alternate	CRT										√	√	√	√	√	√	√		

¹ Example purposes: Instructional: student diagnosis, student placement, instructional planning, program evaluation, improvement of instruction for groups of students, etc.
 Student Accountability: student awards/recognition, honors diploma, student promotion/retention, required remediation, exit requirement, etc.
 School Accountability: monetary awards/penalties, school accreditation, school performance reporting, high school skills guarantee, school improvement plans, etc.
 Staff Accountability: staff awards/recognition, salary increases, staff dismissal, staff evaluation or certification, staff monetary penalties, etc.

² Grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 tests do not include a composition component.
³ AYP reporting.
⁴ There are retests offered in grades 11 and 12 for students who have not met the graduation requirement.
⁵ AYP reporting, student accountability only in grade 10.
⁶ Students have opportunities to resubmit a portfolio in grades 11 and 12 if they have not met the graduation requirement.
⁷ High school students are required to pass one of four Science tests: Biology, Chemistry, Intro Physics, or Technology/Engineering in order to meet a graduation requirement.
⁸ Graduation requirement.

Composition of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09

	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other	
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score
Grade 4	36	50%	4	22%	1	28%	0	—	0	—
Grade 8	36	69%	4	31%	0	—	0	—	0	—

Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09

Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall of 2008?	No. The MCAS English Language Arts was administered in March and April 2009.
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Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year	Warning (Grades 3–8), Failing (High School), Needs Improvement, Proficient, Above Proficient (Grade 3), and Advanced (Grades 4-HS)
Test used for AYP determination	Grade 4: MCAS (and MCAS-Alt) ELA Reading Comprehension and Composition; Grade 8: MCAS (and MCAS-Alt) ELA Reading Comprehension
Performance level used for AYP	All performance levels are used in AYP determinations. Massachusetts uses the Composite Performance Index (CPI), a 100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-Alt tests based on their performance. The total points assigned to each student are added together; the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which constitutes a district, school or subgroup’s CPI for that subject and student group. CPIs are generated separately for ELA and Mathematics tests and at all levels: state, district, school, and student subgroup.
Other tests used for AYP determination	—
Test used for state accountability	Grade 4: MCAS (and MCAS-Alt) ELA Reading Comprehension and Composition; Grade 8: MCAS (and MCAS-Alt) ELA Reading Comprehension
Performance level used for state accountability	State accountability is determined using the same calculations as those used for AYP determinations.
First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments	Grade 4: 2001; Grade 8: 2006
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year	—

Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: On MCAS, a student at the Proficient level demonstrates a solid reading vocabulary and general understanding of word parts and word relationships (e.g., prefixes, roots, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms); demonstrates an understanding of many concrete ideas, and most abstract or implied ideas, in grade-appropriate texts; connects ideas within texts and provides supporting evidence; shows clear understanding of structure and elements of genre and how they support the author’s purpose or theme; identifies more subtle examples of techniques authors use in a variety of grade-appropriate texts (e.g., repetition, exaggeration, and figurative language); writes well-organized compositions with logically developed ideas, adequate detail, and clear focus; engages reader’s interest through use of a variety of language choices and sentence structures; writes compositions with solid control of the standard English conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/pld/>

Grade 8: On MCAS, a student at the Proficient level demonstrates a solid reading vocabulary and general understanding of word parts and word relationships (e.g., prefixes, roots, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms); demonstrates an understanding of many concrete ideas, and most abstract or implied ideas, in grade-appropriate texts; connects ideas within texts and provides supporting evidence; shows clear understanding of structure and elements of genre and how they support the author’s purpose or theme; identifies more subtle examples of techniques authors use in a variety of grade-appropriate texts (e.g., repetition, exaggeration, and figurative language); writes well-organized compositions with logically developed ideas, adequate detail, and clear focus; engages reader’s interest through use of a variety of language choices and sentence structures; writes compositions with solid control of the standard English conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/pld/>

Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: MCAS-Alt results are reported in one of three subcategories of Warning/Failing called Progressing, Emerging, and Awareness. They provide meaningful information to interpret the achievement of students whose performance is below grade-level expectations.

Awareness. The student demonstrates very little understanding of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in the content area (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires extensive prompting and assistance, and performance is primarily inaccurate.

Emerging. The student demonstrates a simple understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area at below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires frequent prompting and assistance, and performance is limited and inconsistent.

Progressing. The student demonstrates a partial understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area, and addresses these below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student appears to be receiving challenging instruction and is steadily learning new skills, concepts, and content. The student requires minimal prompting and assistance, and the performance is fundamentally accurate.

More information is available at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/09statesum.pdf>

Grade 8: MCAS-Alt results are reported in one of three subcategories of Warning/Failing called Progressing, Emerging, and Awareness. They provide meaningful information to interpret the achievement of students whose performance is below grade-level expectations.

Awareness. The student demonstrates very little understanding of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in the content area (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires extensive prompting and assistance, and performance is primarily inaccurate.

Emerging. The student demonstrates a simple understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area at below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires frequent prompting and assistance, and performance is limited and inconsistent.

Progressing. The student demonstrates a partial understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area, and addresses these below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student appears to be receiving challenging instruction and is steadily learning new skills, concepts, and content. The student requires minimal prompting and assistance, and the performance is fundamentally accurate.

More information is available at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/09statesum.pdf>

Changes to State Assessments Between 2007 and 2009

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period of Administration	Changed Assessment Items	Used Entirely Different Assessment	Realigned To New Content Standards	Changed Proficiency Standards	Changed Accommodation Policy	Changed Re-Test Policy	Changed Test Contractors	Other Changes
Grade 4	√										
Grade 8	√										

Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?

Yes.

Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?

None.

Composition of the Main Mathematics Test in 2008–09

	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other	
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score
Grade 4	29	54%	5	9%	5	37%	0	—	0	—
Grade 8	29	54%	5	9%	5	37%	0	—	0	—

Administration of the Main Mathematics Test in 2008–09

Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall of 2008?	No. The MCAS Mathematics was administered in May 2009.
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Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year	Warning (Grades 3–8), Failing (High School), Needs Improvement, Proficient, Above Proficient (Grade 3), and Advanced (Grades 4-HS)
Test used for AYP determination	MCAS (and MCAS-Alt) Mathematics
Performance level used for AYP	All performance levels are used in AYP determinations. Massachusetts uses the Composite Performance Index (CPI), a 100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-Alt tests based on their performance. The total points assigned to each student are added together; the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which constitutes a district, school, or subgroup’s CPI for that subject and student group. CPIs are generated separately for ELA and Mathematics tests, and at all levels: state, district, school, and student subgroup.
Other tests used for AYP determination	—
Test used for state accountability	MCAS (and MCAS-Alt) Mathematics
Performance level used for state accountability	State accountability is determined using the same calculations as those used for AYP determinations.
First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments	1998
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year	—

Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: On MCAS, a student at the Proficient level demonstrates solid understanding of the numeration system; performs most calculations and estimations; defines concepts and generates examples and counterexamples of concepts; represents data and mathematical relationships in multiple forms (e.g., equations, graphs); applies learned procedures and mathematical concepts to solve a variety of problems, including multi-step problems; uses a variety of reasoning methods to solve problems; explains steps and procedures; uses various forms of representation (e.g., text, graphs, symbols) to illustrate steps to a solution.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/pld/>

Grade 8: On MCAS, a student at the Proficient level demonstrates solid understanding of the numeration system; performs most calculations and estimations; defines concepts and generates examples and counterexamples of concepts; represents data and mathematical relationships in multiple forms (e.g., equations, graphs); applies learned procedures and mathematical concepts to solve a variety of problems, including multi-step problems; uses a variety of reasoning methods to solve problems; explains steps and procedures; uses various forms of representation (e.g., text, graphs, symbols) to illustrate steps to a solution.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/tdd/pld/>

Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: MCAS-Alt results are reported in one of three subcategories of Warning/Failing called Progressing, Emerging, and Awareness. They provide meaningful information to interpret the achievement of students whose performance is below grade-level expectations.

Awareness. The student demonstrates very little understanding of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in the content area (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires extensive prompting and assistance, and performance is primarily inaccurate.

Emerging. The student demonstrates a simple understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area at below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires frequent prompting and assistance, and performance is limited and inconsistent.

Progressing. The student demonstrates a partial understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area, and addresses these below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student appears to be receiving challenging instruction and is steadily learning new skills, concepts, and content. The student requires minimal prompting and assistance, and the performance is fundamentally accurate.

More information is available at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/09statesum.pdf>

Grade 8: MCAS-Alt results are reported in one of three subcategories of Warning/Failing called Progressing, Emerging, and Awareness. They provide meaningful information to interpret the achievement of students whose performance is below grade-level expectations.

Awareness. The student demonstrates very little understanding of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in the content area (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires extensive prompting and assistance, and performance is primarily inaccurate.

Emerging. The student demonstrates a simple understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area at below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student requires frequent prompting and assistance, and performance is limited and inconsistent.

Progressing. The student demonstrates a partial understanding of a limited number of learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in the content area, and addresses these below grade-level expectations (as indicated in the alternate assessment portfolio). The student appears to be receiving challenging instruction and is steadily learning new skills, concepts, and content. The student requires minimal prompting and assistance, and the performance is fundamentally accurate.

More information is available at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/09statesum.pdf>

Changes to State Assessments Between 2007 and 2009

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period of Administration	Changed Assessment Items	Used Entirely Different Assessment	Realigned To New Content Standards	Changed Proficiency Standards	Changed Accommodation Policy	Changed Re-Test Policy	Changed Test Contractors	Other Changes
Grade 4	√										
Grade 8	√										

Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?

Yes.

Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?

None.