



Springfield Public Schools

# MCAS Performance Appeal Manual 2009-2010

Increasing Competency Determinations

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## Section I

### What is a MCAS Performance Appeal?

The goal of the MCAS Performance Appeals is to establish the fact that students can perform at the grade 10 standard of Needs Improvement or the scaled score of 220 in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and thus qualify for an Education Proficiency Plan (EPP). Starting with the class of 2010 students must take one of the Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS tests and meet or exceed a scaled score of 220. You will find additional information on Science MCAS appeals for transfer students in Section III. The Assessment, Research and Accountability Department (ARA) is your partner and is dedicated to support you throughout the entire MCAS Performance Appeal process.

## Section II

### What are the Eligibility Requirements for a MCAS Performance Appeal?

There are four eligibility requirements a student must meet to be considered for a MCAS Performance Appeal.

1. With regards to ELA and Math, an appealing student must have taken the MCAS test in the subject they did not pass at least **3 times**. In Science, an appealing student must have taken the MCAS test at least **1 time and must be currently enrolled in a Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) class or have completed grade 12**.
2. An appealing student must maintain a **95% attendance rate for 2 consecutive years** (the year of the appeal and the year prior to the appealing year). This means a student cannot be absent more than 9 days during each 180-day academic year.
3. An attendance waiver may be granted for a student with extenuating circumstances such as but not limited to serious illness or hardship. The Superintendent must submit written justification for the attendance waiver to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with the student's MCAS appeal.
4. A student must have **participated in tutoring** (i.e. school sponsored or academic support services in the subject area of the appeal).

### What are the Types of MCAS Performance Appeals?

There are two types of MCAS appeals: a cohort appeal and a performance portfolio appeal. Each type of MCAS appeal is described respectively below:

## MCAS Cohort Appeals

Cohort appeals include at least six students who were enrolled in the same sequence of courses (or equivalent courses) in the subject matter as the student for whom the appeal is being filed **and** scored between 220 and 228 on the MCAS test in the subject matter of the MCAS cohort appeal. A cohort appeal is considered successful when the GPA of the appealing student is higher than cohort GPA mean.

A student who has failed the subject matter of the appeal with an "F" (which the DESE has assigned numeric value of .4) should not be considered for a cohort appeal as it is unlikely the student's GPA will exceed the cohort mean. If the student's GPA is higher than the cohort mean, ARA will prepare a cohort packet for the student.

## New for the Academic Year 2009-2010

MCAS cohort appeals can be submitted each month. Cohort appeal packets that are not submitted according to the Springfield Public Schools MCAS Appeal Timeline will be returned to your school. Only MCAS cohort appeals with completed MCAS appeal applications, attendance waivers (if appropriate) and other relevant documentation will be submitted to the DESE. For submission dates please see Springfield Public Schools MCAS Appeal Submission Timeline 2009-2010.

## MCAS Performance Portfolio Appeals

Sometimes a student does not meet the eligibility requirements for a cohort appeal. For example, the student's GPA may not have exceeded the cohort GPA mean or the student's cohort group consists of fewer than six students. In either case, an MCAS Performance Portfolio would be appropriate if the student met all other eligibility requirements previously discussed. If a student has met the eligibility requirements, a MCAS Performance Portfolio Appeal packet will be prepared for the student by ARA.

## What is a MCAS Performance Portfolio Appeal Binder?

A MCAS performance portfolio appeal binder is a collection of student work samples that is gathered over a period of time. It is vital to compile student work samples as early in the school year as possible to ensure each student has the best opportunity to complete their performance portfolio by the designated submission dates. MCAS performance portfolio binders can be submitted to DESE three times during the academic year. Please see Table 1 for details:

**Table 1**

Portfolio Submissions Dates for 2009-2010

Submission date to ARA	Submission date to the DESE
October 23, 2009	November 13, 2009
March 29, 2010	April 16, 2010
May 28, 2010	June 18, 2010

### **New for the Academic Year 2009-2010**

MCAS performance portfolios can be submitted three times a year. Performance portfolio binders that are not submitted according to the timeline will be returned to the school. Please see Table 1 on page 4 for details.

MCAS performance portfolio appeal binders will be submitted to the DESE **only** if they contain the following items: a completed MCAS appeal applications, a completed work sample sheets for each work sample, attendance waivers (if appropriate) and other relevant documentation. Portfolio appeal binders with missing or incomplete documents will be returned to the school

### **How to Organize Performance Portfolio Binders**

Please organize the performance portfolio binders in the following manner:

1. Completed MCAS Appeal Application
2. Work sample coversheet for each work sample
3. Student work sample identified by coversheet

MCAS Performance Portfolio resubmissions should be organized in a binder in the following manner:

1. **A 2009-2010** completed MCAS Appeal Application
2. **A 2009-2010** work sample coversheet
3. The student work sample as identified by coversheet
4. Please use a divider to separate new work samples from those previously reviewed by the DESE. Previously reviewed work samples are placed at the end of the portfolio appeal binder.
5. Portfolios can be resubmitted to the DESE **only if new samples are added to the work samples from subsequent submissions.**

## **Section III**

### **How Junior and Senior Transfer students meet is the Science Technology/Engineering (STE) Competency Determination Requirements<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Junior Transfer Students**

1. Must participate in either the February MCAS Biology test or one of the MCAS STE tests offered in June.

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=4837>  
Retrieval Date: 10/8/2009

2. If the junior transfer student has previously taken a high school biology course and transferred in before the February test administration, the student should participate in the February MCAS Biology test.
3. If the junior transfer student has not taken any courses relevant to the MCAS STE tests the DESE strongly recommends the school enroll the student in the appropriate courses for the MCAS STE tests so they will be prepared to participate in one of the MCAS STE tests in June of that student's junior year.

### **MCAS STE Performance Appeals for Junior Transfer Students**

MCAS STE Performance Appeals may be filed for junior transfer students if they have taken one of the MCAS STE tests **and** they are currently enrolled in Science or Technology/Engineering course.

### **Senior Transfer Students**

1. Seniors who transfer into the district before the February MCAS Biology test administration and have taken a Biology course during their high school education **must** participate in the February MCAS Biology administration.
2. Seniors who transfer into the district **after** the February MCAS Biology test administration are exempt from participating in the MCAS STE test but must earn a competency determination in Science Technology/Engineering through the MCAS Appeals Process.

### **MCAS STE Performance Appeals for Senior Transfer Students**

Schools can submit STE MCAS Performance Appeals for seniors who have transferred into the district prior to the February MCAS Biology test **if** the students have participated in that test administration.

1. The STE MCAS Performance Appeal should be submitted as a transcript appeal without a cohort sheet.
2. Students are not required to be enrolled in a Science or Technology/Engineering course.
3. The appeal must include transcripts, GPA, standardized test scores, college acceptance letters and any other relevant academic evidence. Additionally schools may include the results of the February MCAS Biology test if available.

## Section IV

### The Appeals Process from Beginning to End

1. In September, ARA will provide you with MCAS Appeal Rosters. Based on preliminary MCAS data, these rosters identify the student's probable appeal type (i.e. cohort or performance portfolio), how many times each student participated in the ELA, Math and Science MCAS tests, and each student's average daily attendance for the 2008-2009 academic year.
2. After you have had an opportunity to review your rosters, either Karen Bryant, or Denise Matuszczak from ARA will contact you to address any questions or concerns you may have about the MCAS data.
3. ARA will provide monthly training to support you through the appeal process, as well as send you monthly notices and phone calls with important dates and information.
4. ARA will review each appeal submission for completeness.
5. Completed appeal submissions will be submitted to the Superintendent for approval.
6. Appeals that are approved by the Superintendent are submitted to the DESE.

## Section V

### Frequently Asked Questions about the MCAS Appeals Process<sup>2</sup>

Q. May non-traditional courses be added on the cohort worksheet?

A. Yes, but courses such as Integrated Math or English, Resource Math or English, ESL, and other non-traditional courses must be accompanied by a course description that outlines how the courses address the standards in the grade 10 mathematics and English language arts curriculum frameworks that are covered in the grade 10 MCAS tests in these subjects. No determination will be made on appeals that do not include comprehensive course descriptions that match the titles on the cohort worksheets and/or do not provide adequate information about the course material.

Q. What is the result of an appeal that is submitted with an incomplete application, incomplete academic performance information, or both?

A. No Determination will be made on the appeal.

Q. May course GPAs for high school grades other than grade 10 and grade 11 be used in the cohort worksheet? For instance, if a student takes math only in grades 9 and 11, or in grades 9 and 10 only, or grades 10 and 12 only, may an appeal be submitted.

A. Grade 10 and 11 GPAs must be included in the cohort worksheet. GPAs for grades 9 and 12 may be added at the school's discretion. If GPAs for both grades 10 and 11 are not included in the cohort worksheet, an explanation must be submitted.

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/faq.html>  
Retrieval Date: 10/8/2009

Q. If the appeal is denied or if the student is otherwise ineligible and new information becomes available, may another appeal be filed?

A. Yes. Additionally, if appeals were previously denied due to a student's academic performance and there is new academic evidence, such as final senior year course grades, that may improve a student's chances at having the appeal granted, then another appeal may be submitted by the superintendent.

Q. Can appeals still be filed for students in the Class of 2003-2007?

A. Yes, if new information surfaces about a student, then the superintendent is encouraged to file a new appeal.

Q. Who may initiate filing an MCAS performance or portfolio appeal?

A. Anyone - a parent, guardian, and educator - may ask for an appeal to be filed. However, only the superintendent of school is allowed to file an appeal.

Q. Why must a portfolio or a collection of work samples be submitted when less than 6 other students are in a cohort group?

A. With so few students in the comparison group (cohort) there is too little data to make a definite decision to grant or deny the appeal.

Q. Can districts file more than one appeal on behalf of a student?

A. An appeal in both ELA and Mathematics may be filed on behalf of a student. A separate application must be filed for each subject.

Q. May students who participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment have appeals submitted on their behalf?

A. A student who has participated in the MCAS Alternate Assessment is eligible for a performance appeal if the student has participated in at least 2 MCAS Alternate Assessments.

Q. May we file appeals for transfer students?

A. Yes. If the student transferred into your high school after March of his senior year, please provide as much information as you can (transcripts, standardized test scores, college acceptance letters, teacher recommendations). Students who transferred to your schools in their senior year must participate in all MCAS tests available to them.