



## **Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MeCAS) and the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)**

### **Understanding the MeCAS and NECAP**

All states are required to assess the progress of children who are educated in their public schools. In Maine, students take yearly assessments in core subjects starting in grade 3 and continuing through high school. The purposes of these tests are many; assessing student progress, determining areas where there needs increased instructional focus, and monitoring school progress at meeting yearly adequate progress in educating all students to the standards of learning set forth in the statewide curriculum.

The names of the assessments that students in Maine take are changing frequently; however the overall content and purpose of the assessment remains the same. The content of the tests is aligned to the standards of learning developed in the statewide curriculum for all academic subjects. When the curricular framework used shifts, the assessments shift as well.

Starting in 1996, Maine used the “Learning Results” as the framework for instruction. In 2009, Maine partnered with Vermont, New Hampshire and Rhode Island to use the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) assessment and corresponding Grade Level/Grade Span Expectations (GLEs/GSEs) that map out necessary curriculum for proficiency in the academic subjects.

Beginning in 2014-2015, Maine will begin to utilize the Common Core Standards which is a multi-state initiative providing both a framework for learning and assessment tools to verify that students are learning proficiently.

At present, students in Maine are assessed by the Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MeCAS). Initially, students in grades 3-8 take the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) tests in Reading and Mathematics. In grades 5 and 8, the NECAP also provides a Writing portion to the assessment. In grades 5 and 8 they take the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) in Science as well.

In grade 11, students in the public schools take the Maine High School Assessment (MHSA) in Reading, Writing, Math and Science. High schools in Maine are working on the Maine SAT Initiative. During students 11<sup>th</sup> grade (or third year) in high school all students are required to take SAT tests in Critical Reading, Writing and Mathematics. The Science Assessment is not a part of this SAT series, but developed based on the standards of learning in science.

For all students who require testing accommodations per an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), those are made available. Additionally, there are alternative assessments for students with significant disabilities.

### **Format of the MeCAS and NECAP**

The NECAP Assessment in Reading and Mathematics in grades 3 and 4 is a multiple-choice and constructed-response format test. On the NECAP in Reading and Mathematics for grades 5 -8 there are multiple-choice, constructed-response and written answers required. These assessments are given in October; they are a measure of student performance on longer-term measures than what has been taught during the school year.

The SAT tests given in high school have multiple-choice and written response questions. This test is designed to see that a student can apply the knowledge they are gaining; on the Mathematics section formulas are given so that students may show their skills in application. The Reading section calls on

student to make inferences about the material. The Writing Assessment asks students to create an argument, requiring the use and application of critical thinking skills.

The Maine High School Assessment (MHSA) in Science is given in late March/early April and the SAT assessments in Critical Reading, Writing and Mathematics for third year students are given in May.

### **Taking the MeCAS and NECAP**

The Grade Level/Span Expectations (GLE/GSE) is a framework for the skills and knowledge necessary to gain proficiency in a subject. The assessments are based upon the expectations and learning objectives that the GLE/GSE's provide.

In Reading, students are expected to develop competency in reading strategies, fluency and accuracy, word identification and vocabulary, literary texts and informational texts. In Writing, students need to become proficient in structure, connections and habits of writing and be able to communicate in informational and expressive writing using proper conventions.

In Mathematics, students need to demonstrate proficiency in: numbers and operations, geometry and measurement, functions and algebra, data, statistics and probability, problem solving and reasoning, and communicating and connecting this knowledge. In the Sciences, students are expected to become knowledgeable in Life, Physical, and Earth and Space Science.

### **Taking the MeCAS and NECAP**

The Grade Level/Span Expectations (GLE/GSE) is a framework for the skills and knowledge necessary to gain proficiency in a subject. The NECAP is based upon the expectations and learning objectives that the GLE/GSE's provide.

In Reading, students need to build competency in reading strategies, fluency and accuracy, word identification and vocabulary, literary texts and informational texts. In Writing, students need to be able to master structure, connections and habits of writing and be able to communicate in informational and expressive writing using proper conventions.

In Mathematics, in order to gain proficiency in the subject, students will need to be able to show what they can do in the areas of: numbers and operations, geometry and measurement, functions and algebra, data, statistics and probability, problem solving and reasoning, and communicating and connecting this knowledge. In the Sciences, students are expected to be proficient in the areas of Life, Physical, and Earth and Space Science.

Students will receive scores and proficiency level reports. The levels of proficiency a student may achieve are: Proficient with Distinction, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Substantially Below Proficient. Scores on the two lower levels of proficiency will necessitate action in terms of locating areas where additional instruction is needed.

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