

SEVEN HILLS CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Krista Piazza, Superintendent
www.sevenhillscharter.org

51 Gage Street
Worcester, MA 01605
508-799-7500

March 14, 2011

Dear Families,

It is MCAS season once again! All students in grades 3-8 will participate in the (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). Our schedule is as follows:

Grades 4 & 7: March 22 ELA Long Composition Exam

Grades 3-8: March 29,30 ELA and May 17,18 Math

Grades 5 & 8: May 23,24 Science

It is important to support your children throughout the year. Some ways that you can help your children:

- Make sure your children get enough sleep, eat properly, and get to school on time.
- Regular attendance is one predictor of academic success. During test time, make attendance a special effort. All absences on MCAS days will need to be documented by a doctor.
- Encourage your children to read. Parents, guardians, and siblings can share good books and discuss events to reinforce positive reading habits. Read with your child for a fun activity.
- Set times each day for study and homework.
- Provide your children with a quiet, well-lit comfortable space to study which includes important supplies like paper, pens, pencils, calculators, rulers, a dictionary and a thesaurus.
- Encourage your children to record assignments and due dates in their agenda book.
- Check your children's homework to make sure it is done completely and to the best of their ability.
- On the test day, encourage your children to do the best work possible and to have a positive attitude, remind your children to listen to and read carefully all test taking directions. Ask questions if any directions are unclear.
- It is important to reduce test anxiety for your children. Remember to talk about the test in a positive way and let your children know that you have confidence in their ability by focusing on their strengths.

Your children will take many MCAS tests over the course of their educational careers. Below are answers to questions that are frequently asked by parents and ideas for helping your children find success as they take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests. Additional information can also be found in the *Guide to the MCAS for Parents/Guardians* brochure that was mailed home with MCAS scores.

What are the MCAS tests?

The MCAS tests are part of the *Massachusetts Education Reform Act* and of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*. They test students' knowledge in Reading, English Language Arts (ELA), and Mathematics. Some students, depending on their grade level, also take History/Social Sciences and Science/Technology/Engineering (STE). The tests are a mixture of questions that are multiple choice and open-ended (written) answers. The tests were developed in alignment with the State's *Curriculum Frameworks*, which are standards that define what students should know in core subject areas at various grade levels.

Who will take the MCAS?

Students in grades 3 through 10 will take one or more sections of the MCAS test. Students in grades 11 & 12 who have not yet passed the grade 10 test in both English Language Arts and Mathematics will take retests.

Why are these tests important?

MCAS tests measure how well students have learned the academic standards set by the state. The results help us measure how much your children are learning and identify areas where extra help is needed. In Massachusetts, students must pass both the grade 10 ELA and Mathematics sections in order to earn a high school diploma. Students who do not pass these sections in grade 10 will receive additional supports and be retested in grade 11 and 12 (if necessary). Beginning with the Class of 2010, students also will have to pass a Science or Technology/Engineering test in order to graduate.

What if my child has unique learning needs?

During the year prior to the MCAS tests, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 team meets to determine how an individual student with a disability will participate in MCAS testing. Special education students are required to take the tests, but accommodations can be implemented to match your children's learning needs. More detailed information about testing requirements and procedures for special education students is available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation.

What if my child is an English Language Learner (ELL)?

All LEP students must participate in MCAS tests given at their grade level in Mathematics and Science and Technology/Engineering. For Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in their first year of enrollment in U.S. public schools, the district has the option of having students participate in the ELA test at their grade level. The results for first-year LEP students are used for diagnostic purposes only. Therefore, these students do not receive scaled scores or performance levels. More information regarding the guidelines for LEP students may be found on the Department of Education (DOE) website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation.

Where can I get more information?

Ongoing contact with your children's teacher and talking with your children about school are important all year long. Parent-Teacher Conferences, report cards, progress reports, and grades on assignments all help form an idea of how your children are doing at school. The Massachusetts Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC) www.pplace.org is another resource along with the Massachusetts Department of Education www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/ to help answer questions you may have regarding MCAS.

Sincerely,

Krista Piazza
Superintendent