

Why Bilingual MCAS in Massachusetts?



Multistate Association for
Bilingual Education - Northeast

ALTERNATIVES TO MONOLINGUAL TESTING

Other Languages

Provide MCAS tests in languages other than English



Language Choice

Allow students to alternate between languages while taking the test



Rethink Proficiency Benchmarks

Consider that English proficiency benchmarks in bilingual programs may need to be different than for English-only programs



It's a Matter of Equity

1. Most students in bilingual programs are from racially and/or linguistically marginalized backgrounds;
2. MCAS is supposed to tell us about students' reading, math, science, and social studies knowledge; BUT
3. English-only assessments don't accurately measure student knowledge in bilingual programs because students are learning in two languages; SO
4. As a matter of equity, we need bilingual MCAS tests that will tell us more about what *all* students know!

It's a Matter of Policy

State and federal educational policies support bilingual assessments for equity!

LOOK Act

- State guidance to districts emphasizes importance of assessment in target language.
- "Districts should be flexible in their interpretations of summative assessments that were designed for monolingual populations and programs" ¹

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- ESSA requires states to accurately measure student progress toward meeting standards. An English-only assessment does not fulfill this requirement.
- ESSA requires that a state's accountability plan be valid, reliable and comparable across all districts. The current English-only system is not valid and reliable for districts with bilingual schools and programs

Massachusetts ESSA Plan

- Because the LOOK Act passed in 2017 the state must "gather meaningful input on the need for assessment in other languages" ²

Migration Policy Institute Policy Brief

- "At the foundation of any assessment system is the assumption that tests give students a fair chance to show what they know and can do" ³. Assessments in English-only do not give students in bilingual programs that chance

¹ LOOK Act: Retrieved from: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H4032>

² Massachusetts ESSA Plan: Retrieved from: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/federalgrants/essa/stateplan/>

³ Migration Policy Institute: Retrieved from: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/native-language-assessments-english-learners>