



# Ayer Shirley Regional School District

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*Our vision is to connect, engage, and inspire all students in the Ayer Shirley Regional School District to reach academic excellence. We, the educators of the Ayer Shirley Regional School District, will instill habits of reflection and inquiry to challenge our students in setting ambitious academic and personal goals. Students will develop a strong voice to express thoughts and ideas in the community and the confidence to showcase their talents and successes in preparation for entry into college and the world of work.*

March 18, 2019

Dear Parent,

In addition to the flowers blooming, the birds chirping, and the snow melting, the spring marks the start of the standardized testing season for all public schools in Massachusetts. As a means of measuring the understanding of state determined educational standards in our students, schools, and school districts, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) adopted the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The MCAS is administered each year in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics (Math), and Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) to our students in grades three through eight, and our tenth graders.

Over the next few weeks, you will be receiving testing schedules and updates from the school or schools your child, or children, attends/attend. In general, the first testing session opens at the end of March, and closes at the beginning of June. The purpose of the MCAS is ultimately to measure our students understanding of the grade-level, curriculum standards that have been established for each of the core, tested academic disciplines - namely ELA, Math, and STE. As much as your student will earn a score which will show how well your child is making progress toward the grade level standards in each of these disciplines, the scores are also used by the Commonwealth as a means of measuring the relative success of schools and school districts. The MCAS is something that we as a district take very seriously, and as part of our commitment to educating the whole child, expect that our students will demonstrate their success through this assessment.

As a reminder, this is the first year that all of our tested students, including those in grade 10, will be participating in the "Next Generation MCAS." This revised assessment has been fully adopted by the DESE, is completely computer-based, and is designed to better meet the rigorous demands of the new learning standards adopted in the past 3 years.

In preparation for the upcoming testing, please talk to your child(ren) about the assessment, and encourage them, as we have, to take the tests seriously, and to answer every question as well as they

can. Make sure on the days of testing that students get a good night's rest the night before, and start the day with a good breakfast to keep them energized throughout the test sessions (typically 1 - 2 hours in duration). Feel free to send them in with an extra snack and some water, a book to read, and feel free to send in a note of encouragement as well. For the days of testing, students are not to use personal, hand-held technology in the testing environment; so please encourage your children to leave their smart watches at home on the days of testing. Smartphones are also not to be used in the testing environment, and should be powered off, stowed in a locker, backpack, or collected by the teacher during the testing period. Technology violations, even accidental rings or noises, can invalidate an entire classroom's testing results.

If you would like to learn more about the state testing process, or would like to explore some additional resources, please feel free to follow the links included below. If you have specific questions about the testing process and/or your child's participation, please contact your child's teacher or counselor directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Caliri". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dash at the end.

Charlie Caliri  
Asst. Superintendent

[Parent's Guide to MCAS](#): A summary of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), including details about the development of the assessment, the importance of the assessment to families and schools, and a summary of the recent changes to the assessment.

[Pearson Student Practice Site](#): Pearson, the test developer for the MCAS, has provided a practice site for schools and families to use to become familiar with the testing tools students can use during the test, as well as the types of questions that are asked. Schools have been using these practice tests periodically to help acclimate students to the testing environment.

[Parent's Guide to the Curriculum Frameworks](#): This is a link to the grade level family guides for the curriculum standards in each subject area. The guides are organized by grade level to provide parents with a sense of the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn each year. The questions on the MCAS are developed to measure students' understanding of these concepts.