



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Jeff Wulfson  
Acting Commissioner

January 2018

Dear Members of the Class of 2021 (Current Ninth Graders) and Parents/Guardians of the Class of 2021:

This year's ninth graders have entered high school at a time when the state is transitioning to a new statewide assessment called the next-generation MCAS. I hope this letter will help clarify the graduation requirement for your class.

Massachusetts high school students are required to pass MCAS tests in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science and technology/engineering in order to graduate from high school. For ELA and mathematics, the current state requirements for earning a high school diploma are:

- a score of at least 240 on the existing grade 10 ELA and mathematics MCAS tests, **or**
- a score of between 220 and 238 on those tests **and** fulfilling the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan, which outlines how the student will become proficient in that particular subject.

Members of the class of 2021 will fulfill the MCAS part of their graduation requirements in ELA and mathematics by taking the next-generation, computer-based version of the MCAS tests in those subjects in spring 2019. The tests will be similar in design to the tests that they took as eighth graders in spring 2017 if they were in a Massachusetts public school.

The next-generation grade 10 MCAS tests will have different achievement levels and scores than the previous versions of the grade 10 tests, but for the class of 2021, I am recommending to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that we require students to reach the score corresponding to 240 (or 220 plus the fulfillment of an Educational Proficiency Plan) on the ELA and mathematics tests in order to qualify for a high school diploma. In other words, **I am recommending that the passing standard remain the same for your class** as the state introduces the new assessments in those subjects. The standard could rise for future classes, but that is something the Board will discuss at a later date.

The transition to a next-generation science MCAS is happening on a different timetable, and the existing science MCAS and requirement will not change for the class of 2021. Students will still have to earn a score of at least 220 on one of the existing high school MCAS science and technology/engineering tests: biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering.

Students will continue to have retest opportunities on high school MCAS tests and will have the opportunity to qualify for scholarship programs through the high school MCAS tests.

If you have questions about graduation requirements, please contact your school guidance counselor or principal or visit [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html) for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Wulfson".

Jeff Wulfson  
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education