



MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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March 29, 2019

Dear Malden K-8 Families,

It is difficult to believe that we are already at the end of March and that spring is beginning to make its return. Next week the window for MCAS opens for students in our K-8 schools. Our building administrators and staff work diligently throughout the year to ensure that students have access to rigorous curricula, targeted instruction, and the social-emotional support they need to be successful not only on these yearly assessments, but in their daily life at school.

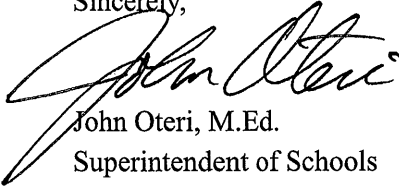
As our powerful partners in your child's education, we ask that you continue to support your child as you do throughout the year by ensuring your child receives adequate rest and encouraging a healthy breakfast each day. As always, our schools offer a free, nutritious breakfast each morning.

Each year, questions come up about MCAS participation requirements. Back in 2017, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided the following guidance:

"...Testing is a mandatory part of the curriculum, the same as a spelling test or math test, and statewide assessments are most useful when all students take them. Neither the Commonwealth nor Congress provides an opt-out provision. Tenth graders who refuse to take MCAS jeopardize their high school diploma. In addition, refusals to test can impact a school's accountability rating. The accountability system is set up to encourage high participation rates (if it weren't, results would not be reflective of school-wide achievement). The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires a 95 percent participation rate. Schools with a lower participation rate run the risk of having their accountability rating lowered. Under draft regulations that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education sent out for public comment on February 28, 2017, schools and districts that fall below a 90 percent participation rate will have their accountability status set to Level 3 (out of 5). Further, the 2016-17 and 2017-18 participation rates will be combined to determine participation rates for the 2017-18 accountability levels. In other words, refusals to test in spring 2017 could impact a school's accountability rating for two years. Students who refuse to take the MCAS test may remain in the testing room as long as they are sitting quietly and are not interfering with other students. If a student becomes disruptive, they should be removed from the testing room and placed in a safe location until testing is completed and regular classroom instruction resumes. Given that statewide standardized tests are a legal requirement, it is my department's expectation that all students will participate..." (For the complete text, please visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=24254>).

School leaders will continue to share MCAS schedule information specific to your school. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your building principal. We thank you for your continued support and are grateful for the privilege of working with your amazing children each day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Oteri". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "O".

John Oteri, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools