



# A Parent's Guide to School Testing

March 2009

Cannon Falls  
Area Schools  
District 252

## MCA's (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments)

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### What are the MCA-IIs?

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments – Series II (MCA-IIs) are the state tests in reading, mathematics and science that meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. These tests are given every year to measure student performance on the Minnesota Academic Standards, which define what your students should know and do in a particular grade. The Reading and Mathematics MCA-IIs began in 2006 and the Science MCA-II begins in 2008.

### Why do we give these tests?

We use the MCA-IIs to find out how well students can apply the Minnesota Academic Standards in mathematics, reading and science. The mathematics and reading tests are also used to determine whether schools and districts have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward all students being proficient for NCLB. After your child takes one of these tests, your school district sends you an individual student report that explains your



Spring is in the air!

child's results. This report gives you information on your child's reading, mathematics and science

skills and shows our child's performance compared to that of other students in the state. Schools use the information from these tests to improve classroom teaching and learning.

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## Check Out The Cannon Falls Schools Webpage

<http://www.cannonfallsschools.com>

The Cannon Falls Schools webpage has a link that will take you to Parent Resources for Minnesota State testing. The website has numerous activities to help prepare your student for the state tests, guides on how to read the results of the state tests and other information that you might find helpful. You will need your students "Learner Locator

number" which you can find on the student report that you receive from the school.

**Did you know that 58% of our parents use the online access to student grades?**

This will give you numerous activities that will enable you to help your student improve in the

areas that they need. You will also find on the website numerous other helpful items. Under community you will find the parent access grade book where you can keep track of your students progress online.

## MCA's continued

Teachers and principals look for areas where students do well so they can reinforce the ways they teach these skills. They also look for topics that need improvement so they can alter the ways they teach them or increase the instructional time they give them.

### Who must take these tests?

Minnesota's rules for testing and the federal NCLB Act require that mathematics and reading tests be



given in grades 3-8. In addition, students in grade 10 take the Reading MCA-II, and students in grade 11 take the Mathematics MCA-II. With very few exceptions, all public school students in grades 3-8 take the Reading and Mathematics MCA-

II's. In some cases, English Language Learners (ELL) will take the Mathematics Test for English Language Learners (MTELL). Students with severe cognitive disabilities can take the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS). The Science MCA-II is given to students in grades 5 and 8 and once in high school, depending on when students complete their life sci-

Did you know that 54% of our teachers in the CF district have Master's Degrees?

## A Word About AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)

By Todd Sesker

What is AYP? AYP stands for adequate yearly progress and is part of a federal mandate that attempts to measure how well a high school, elementary school, or an entire school district is doing based on a set of standardized tests called the MCA II's.

Students in grades 2-11 are required to take these tests each year. The results are then analyzed by a testing company and the results are sent to the Minnesota Department of Education.

The Department of Education then sends the results to the School District to analyze and check for errors. Once the District has made their final check, the scores become public. If enough students in a district score below a designated percentile, established by the Minnesota Department of Education, in Reading or Math, the District goes on the AYP list.

Schools that are on AYP must get off the list for two consecutive years or stand to lose funding. Various subgroups are designated for the test. These subgroups include minority students, special education students, low income students, etc...

Cannon Falls is on the AYP list for the second consecutive year for Special

Education Reading. To make it more confusing, Cannon Falls passed the MCA II's in Elementary and Secondary Special Education Reading but failed to pass the Special Education reading test when you combine both the Elementary and Secondary students. There are statistical reasons for this, but it is complicated.

As a result, Cannon Falls Area Schools must create a plan to boost the scores for both elementary and secondary special education students in the area of reading. The district has formed a plan that was sent to and approved by the State of Minnesota.

Hopefully, the District will find itself off the AYP list next fall. The District can only get off the list if 90% of the students of ISD #252 pass both the Reading and Math MCA II's.

The real challenge to the federal law, known as No Child Left Behind, will be in 2014. At that time, 100% of the students in all categories must pass the tests or the school will be placed on AYP. This presents a significant challenge, especially in Special Education where we are bound by a federal mandate called IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. By federal law, we must follow an IEP

that may or may not dictate how we address the challenge of being on the Adequate Yearly Progress list.

### For More Information Contact

Minnesota Department of  
Education  
Research and Assessment  
[mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us)

1500 Highway 36 West  
Roseville, MN 55113-4266



(651) 582-8200

## The Day of the Test!

The assessment is un-timed in reading and math, and is administered at the beginning of the school day in various classrooms. Students will be notified the day prior to the test of the location for their test.

High School students on office release will need to report to school at 8:05AM on their testing day.

We anticipate and expect our students to do well on these tests.

A few suggestions that may help are:

- Be sure that the night before your student gets a good nights sleep. At least 8 hours
- Eat a good breakfast– Remember you can eat breakfast at school for only a \$1.20 beginning at 7:30 a.m.



We are asking that parents support this effort, by encouraging their student to participate and do their best.

Any questions regarding the assessment can be directed to Kay Sabin by calling (507) 263-6800, extension 1461 or by

E Mail:

Sabin.kay@cannonfallsschools.com

## Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD)

GRAD refers to three tests (written composition, reading and mathematics) that students who entered grade 8 in 2005-06 or later must pass in order to graduate from a Minnesota public high school. These tests will measure proficiency on the Minnesota Academic Standards and other essential skills. Students who entered

grade 8 2004-05 or earlier must pass the Basic Skills Tests (BST) to receive a diploma.

There are a number of ways to meet the diploma requirement, including

- Receiving a proficient score on the MCA-II
- Receiving a passing score on

the GRAD

- Receiving a Pass Individual (for students on IEP or 504 plans)
- Receiving a passing score on a GRAD retest.

## Help Prepare Your Child For Tests

There are lots you can do to help your child do his or her best on a test.

- Encourage your child to participate in practice sessions at school and home.
- Read to your child and encourage him or her to read to you.
- Encourage your child to try crossword puzzles and news quizzes in your local newspaper.
- Encourage your child to use math everyday. Have your child practice by creating a grocery budget, explaining charts and graphs from newspaper articles and measuring for a recipe.
- Play games that involve numbers or computation.
- Provide your student with a study area and encourage good study habits
- Encourage your child to read the daily newspaper and general interest magazines.

Cannon Falls  
Area Schools  
District 252

820 East Minnesota Street  
Cannon Falls, MN 55009

Phone: 507-263-6800  
Fax: 507-263-2515

<http://www.cannonfallsschools.com>

**Professional Development Committee Vision:**

**...to provide the teaching and non-teaching staff with support and time for research based professional growth to increase student success and achievement**

CF Staff Development  
Committee

## 2009 Testing Schedule

DATE	TEST	GRADE LEVEL
March 3, 2009	GRAD Reading Re-test	11
April 14, 2009	<b>MCA II's</b>	
	Math Segments 1 & 2	11
	Reading Segments 1 & 2	3,4,5,6,10
	Reading all segments	7,8
	Written Comp.	9
April 15, 2009	Math Segments 3 & 4	11
	Reading Segments 3 & 4	3,4,5,6,10
	Math all Segments	7,8
April 21, 2009	Math Segments 1 & 2	3,4,5,6
April 22, 2009	Math Segments 3 & 4	3,4,5,6
May 18, 2009	MCA II Science	8
May date to be determined	MCA II Science	5, 10