

Best Practices for Scheduling and Administering the MAP

The Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals is pleased to present this list of “best practices” for scheduling and administering the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). Principals, counselors, and test coordinators from all regions of the state generated these suggestions for effectively managing the various tasks associated with preparing for and actually giving the MAP. While the majority of these recommendations are most pertinent for assessment in middle or high schools, several of them apply to all grade levels.

It is important to attend to the logistical aspects of the MAP, but we also need to keep in mind that successful performance is influenced by the faculty’s attitude, approach and flexibility. When principals, counselors, and teachers present the MAP in a positive light and stress that students should take the assessments seriously, scores will likely increase. Conversely, if school staff is negative about the assessment process, scores may not represent students’ real achievements.

Time Management

Meshing a MAP testing schedule with a middle school or high school schedule is a challenge, and, with the variety of school schedules in use, no single model will work for all. What fits a school best is whatever works for the staff and students (and, of course, remains in compliance with standardized testing-taking procedures).

The enrollment size of a school complicates the scheduling of tests; however, some large schools are extremely innovative in terms of making the MAP more manageable. Many schools modify the schedule to accommodate MAP test times. Schools on six-or seven-hour schedules often utilize extended periods.

Here are some strategies that principals, counselors, and coordinators use to manage time.

- ⇒ Use a testing block with no regular classes.
- ⇒ Provide alternative activities/programs for grade levels not tested.
- ⇒ Assign students to homerooms for testing; non-homeroom teachers and students not tested are reassigned.
- ⇒ Modify all classes to accommodate testing schedule.
- ⇒ Give tests in the classes corresponding to the discipline being tested.
- ⇒ Create large blocks of testing time before and after lunch to accommodate tests.
- ⇒ Turn off bells, and give breaks within test times.
- ⇒ Test all students at specific times, with seniors assigned to a study period.
- ⇒ Tests blocks are scheduled and those needing more time are allowed to finish with proctors.
- ⇒ Students are kept in the same class and dismissed when all groups are finished.
- ⇒ For three days, the entire school tests in the AM.
- ⇒ Individual teams revise their schedules to allow for testing times.

Arrangement of Students

The number of students enrolled in the school impacts on the size of the testing groups; some schools must test students in large groups, while some schools are able to assess students using small groups. Most often, students are tested with their regular classroom teachers.

Mixed Classes

In most subject areas other than math, there are few off-grade students. Because students tend to be enrolled in math classes across grade levels, decisions must be made about what to do with those off-grade students during the tenth-grade math test.

Here are some strategies that principals, counselors, and coordinators use to address the situation of mixed classes.

- ⇒ Students are tested with the same grade level.
- ⇒ Students are handled on a case-by-case basis.
- ⇒ Students who are not to be tested are reassigned or allowed to arrive late for school.
- ⇒ Students are assigned to their own teachers when possible.
- ⇒ Assigned class time is not used for tests because of this frequent problem.
- ⇒ This situation is handled within departments, with some moving of students.
- ⇒ Pull out the testing group, and assign it to a teacher for testing.
- ⇒ Arrange for movement to a class where no testing is taking place.
- ⇒ Administer locally authored assessments to non-MAP students.
- ⇒ Combine students to be tested.
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- ⇒ Students not being tested continue as usual, and others are allowed time to make up work.
- ⇒ Students are sometimes traded between teams.

Make-up Tests

Handling make-up tests for absentees presents a significant challenge for schools. Although schools have developed a wide array of systems to involve the entire staff in the regular testing period, staff members are often concerned about ensuring that students complete all sections of the test. As the enrollment numbers increase, this situation becomes more difficult to address because the number of students and test sections multiply.

Here are some strategies that principals, counselors, and coordinators use to address make-up testing situations.

- ⇒ Teachers provide a list of students needing to make up tests.
- ⇒ Testing is done by a counselor or special education teacher.
- ⇒ Regular teacher has five days to administer make up tests, then counselor takes over.
- ⇒ Extra test dates are scheduled, and students are tested in large group.
- ⇒ Teachers keep tests until all assigned students have been tested.
- ⇒ Test coordinator and department chairs reschedule students.
- ⇒ Teachers record absences, and students are tracked until sessions completed.
- ⇒ Seminar period is used for make up tests.

Incentives for Students

School administrators are concerned about students' lack of accountability regarding the tests. To that end, educators have used incentives to encourage students to take the test seriously.

Rewards that can be used *during or immediately after the testing window*:

- ⇒ Use NCR paper, and include test performance in course grade, or give vouchers that allow for a high MAP score to substitute for low class test score.
- ⇒ Give pizza and soda for lunch or open-lunch privileges to those who participate in testing.
- ⇒ Give snacks and breaks for "hard work."

Rewards that can be given *after results are available*:

- ⇒ Give individual awards to students scoring proficient or advanced.
- ⇒ Give free or reduced parking permits for proficient or advanced scores.
- ⇒ Set up a display about students who excelled.
- ⇒ Give recognition to high-scoring students at a special ceremony or at board meetings.
- ⇒ Offer a field trip for proficient and advanced students and/or to students who move up from step 1 (via retest).
- ⇒ AP and dual-credit fees are paid in full for proficient and advanced students.
- ⇒ Tie "Seal of Excellence" to MAP performance.
- ⇒ Give class rewards, such as pizza, for groups scoring above state average.

Involving Parents and Community

Parents and community members need to be aware that performance on the MAP is important—that the MAP assesses what an individual student knows and can do and that scores are a major component in the district's accreditation and school-improvement process. As more comparisons of school districts are made using MAP scores, even more emphasis will be placed on the assessment program.

Here are principals', counselors', and coordinators' suggestions for involving parents and other community members.

- ⇒ Provide written notification to parents about testing schedule and include test-taking tips.
- ⇒ Be sure that the principal's newsletter includes notes about the importance of test.
- ⇒ Provide information at open house and parent-teacher conferences.
- ⇒ Request parental support of positive attitude toward test and good attendance.
- ⇒ Insert information in district newsletters about what student performance means to district.
- ⇒ Use an intercom "announcement blitz" about attendance and readiness the week before test.
- ⇒ Share MAP results with parents at fall parent/teacher conferences.
- ⇒ Provide information about reimbursement for AP and dual-credit courses.
- ⇒ Use cable-TV programming to disseminate information about MAP.
- ⇒ Make phone calls to remind parents that students need rest and proper food during testing period.

Procedures that Worked Well

Principals, counselors, and coordinators offer these comments about what worked well in the administering and scheduling of the MAP.

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- ⇒ Teachers planned for every faculty member to proctor students or work with non-tested students.
- ⇒ Have regular classroom teachers proctor assessments.
- ⇒ Test all students at the same time.
- ⇒ Test materials are boxed and then dropped off at central location and picked up each day.
- ⇒ Teachers were provided rosters of students to be tested.
- ⇒ Start the day with regular class; then test and alternate classes with test blocks.
- ⇒ Distribute the test schedule well in advance to teachers, students, and parents.
- ⇒ Make plans through departments rather than through large faculty meetings.
- ⇒ Extend the lunch periods for students during testing period.
- ⇒ Release core teachers to move through testing sessions to show importance of MAP.
- ⇒ Communicate with staff in scheduling MAP.
- ⇒ Administrators need to provide support and emphasize importance of MAP.
- ⇒ Emphasize that students need to be accountable for their performance.
- ⇒ Test within the discipline.
- ⇒ Use a block schedule.
- ⇒ When seniors were not testing, they were involved in projects out of the building.
- ⇒ Test during the middle of the week.
- ⇒ Special-education students are tested by special-education teachers.
- ⇒ Specialists work with small groups, where modifications can be made.
- ⇒ Provide students with snacks.
- ⇒ Use NCR paper.
- ⇒ Give students vouchers to substitute MAP score for a low class-test score.
- ⇒ Promote staff agreement and “buy in” to objectives of testing program.
- ⇒ Keep staff informed, and make them part of the process.
- ⇒ Be sure that students and staff know when and where each test is administered.
- ⇒ Testing should be a priority for school staff.

Major Problems/Considerations

Principals, counselors, and coordinators offer the following comments about what did *not* work well or what needs to be *considered* in the process of administering and scheduling of MAP.

- ⇒ Grouping by subject and trying to run the regular schedule did not allow enough time.
- ⇒ Students missed the same classes too often, so we plan to rotate MAP times.
- ⇒ Begin testing at the start of the testing window to allow more time for make-up tests.
- ⇒ Have more adults available for special needs-students.
- ⇒ Plan early to work around conflicts, such as Easter or contests and activities.
- ⇒ Plan to condense testing time.
- ⇒ Plan to test students in groups with specific teachers.
- ⇒ Establish in advance where and when students will be tested.
- ⇒ Provide adequate supervision during testing.
- ⇒ Insure that all students finish all parts.
- ⇒ Plan to remove off-task students.