

## **Alternative Assessment – Replace the High School MCAs with the ACT**

Bloomington Public Schools urges the Governor and Legislature to eliminate the mandatory use of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) in math and reading at the high school level and adopt the ACT as a statewide standardized test for high school students.

### **Background**

The current Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) in math and reading at the high school level are a one-size-fits-all approach that does not accurately reflect the diverse needs or interests of all students or what students should know and be able to do. Several states have already recognized the limitations of traditional state-developed standardized tests at the high school level and have moved to adopt the ACT as a more comprehensive and relevant assessment.

### **Rationale**

- **The ACT is aligned with college and career readiness standards:** The ACT measures a wider range of skills, including english, mathematics, reading, science, and writing, which are essential for college and career success.
- **The ACT is widely recognized by colleges and universities:** Many colleges and universities use ACT scores as a factor in admissions decisions, making it a valuable tool for students seeking higher education opportunities.
- **MCAs are not a reliable indicator of high school student achievement:** High school students are often more focused on other high-stakes assessments, such as the ACT and AP exams. As a result, they may not be as invested in the MCAs, leading to lower participation rates and less accurate results.
- **Participation rates in the MCAs have declined significantly since the onset of the pandemic:** The pandemic disrupted learning and exacerbated existing challenges in education. Many students have struggled to stay engaged and motivated, leading to a decline in MCA participation rates. In 2024, statewide participation rates for the MCAs in math and reading were 73% and 84%, respectively. Unfortunately, Bloomington Public Schools fared worse, with only 55% of students taking the MCA in math and 81% taking the MCA in reading.
- **Alignment between the ACT and Minnesota Academic Standards:** Bloomington Public Schools conducted research into the plausibility of using the ACT as a measure of student learning and achievement in high school. The study found strong alignment between the ACT and the Minnesota Academic Standards, particularly in mathematics where nearly all items aligned with high school standards. While some minor discrepancies in depth of knowledge (DOK) were noted, the overall alignment and distribution of items were consistent with MCA expectations. Similarly, in english language arts, all items aligned with Minnesota standards, and the coverage of substrands and skills was comprehensive. Minor exceptions in DOK and categorical concurrence were identified, but the overall alignment and item distribution were in line with MCA expectations.

### **Call to Action**

By adopting the ACT as a statewide standardized test, Minnesota can join other states that currently use the ACT to meet federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This will provide a more equitable and relevant assessment for high school students, motivating them to excel and offering an additional opportunity to showcase their knowledge and skills for college and career success, while also reducing the overall testing burden.