



Office of the Superintendent

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To: Mayor Christenson and Members of the School Committee
From: Timothy Sippel, Ed.L.D.
Superintendent of Schools
RE: Proposed Assessments for Competency Determination (Demonstration of Mastery)
Date: April 29, 2026

School Committee [Policy IKF: Graduation Requirements and Competency Determination](#), revised December 8, 2025, states that,

The School Committee will approve and communicate the specific assessments or portfolio requirements for each content area required by state regulations no later than May 4, 2026. These assessments and/or portfolios will be piloted in spring 2027 with students. After a thorough administrative review of assessment results, revisions to the definitions of mastery will be presented for School Committee approval no later than 8/1/2027.

The assessments referred to in this section of the policy are the assessments of Mastery students must satisfactorily complete as part of the district’s Competency Determination (CD). These assessments must be completed in grade 10 English Language Arts, Math, Science, and U.S. History.

In compliance with this policy, we are proposing the assessment types for each content area to be piloted in 2026-2027 and submit them for your consideration and approval.

Assessment Development Process

In February of 2026, Malden High School educators were invited to apply for a stipend to complete up to 20 hours of work towards developing proposed assessments. Educators who received the stipend were teamed up on CD lead teams by content area to complete the work. Prior to beginning work on developing the assessment for their own content area, all educators involved in the work created a set of criteria for what a successful assessment would look like regardless of content area.

Criteria For Success	
Must Have	Nice to Have
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to the required skills, competencies, and knowledge by content area, as specified in DESE guidelines. • Learning & Assessment alignment: The assessment is closely aligned to the curricular activities and tasks that students experience in learning • Scoring system that is consistent across educators for the same course • Include at least some educator scored component (i.e. a constructed response, an essay, a performative component, a lab) • Implementable (i.e. not overly cumbersome) • Accommodated versions available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally includes <u>more than one</u> measure (avoid high stakes and single test determination) • Assesses more than one domain (Reading, Writing, Speaking, and/or Listening) • Designed for 60-90 minutes

After establishing the criteria for success each content area CD lead team considered the pros, cons, and possible mitigations for a variety of assessment types including but not limited to final exams, portfolios, interim assessments, and hybrids of these options.

Additionally, in fall 2025, Malden High School educators were surveyed about the types of assessments they would recommend for their respective content areas. Families and specific groups (such as ELPAC, School Councils) were also surveyed. This survey data was reviewed by the educators on the CD lead team as they began their work to ensure educator and family voice was incorporated into the planning of these assessments. The teams then developed an initial proposal of an assessment type for their content area.

Prior to drafting the assessment, educators on the content area CD lead team brought their proposed assessment type to the rest of the educators in their department for input. In full department meetings, educators considered how well the proposed assessment met the criteria for success and gave suggestions to better meet these criteria. After department meetings, each content area CD lead team revised the proposal ahead of a joint meeting of CD lead teams. At the joint meeting, each content area CD lead team gave feedback on the proposed assessments for the other content areas. At this meeting, Directors of instruction also gave feedback on their content area. After these multiple rounds of educator feedback, each content area CD lead team has recommended the below proposed assessment types for their content area.

Throughout this process, there was also a team of educators working on an accommodations guide for students with disabilities and multilingual learners. All accommodations for students are dependent on individual student need, but the guide created resources and expectations for how to do so so that the assessments can be accommodated or modified as needed once implemented. More information on this is available in the “Next Steps” section below.

Proposed Assessments by Content Area

English Language Arts

In English 10, students will compile a **portfolio** of their work throughout the school year to demonstrate **mastery**. Students will need to create and select work for the portfolio that meets multiple, specific state-aligned standards. Upon submission of their portfolio, students will also need to complete a timed writing task, reflecting on their portfolio and the knowledge and skills it demonstrates.

Math

In Math I and Math II, students will take **mid-term and final exams**. At the end of Math II, students' mastery of skills will be based on the results of the interim and cumulative assessments for these two courses.

Science

In CD-qualifying science courses students will take the course's **final exam** to demonstrate mastery ([see list of courses in Policy IKE](#)).

U.S. History

Students in U.S. History II or AP U.S. History will demonstrate mastery by successfully completing four quarterly **document-based writing tasks** and taking **midterm and final exams** that assess historical

content. The writing tasks demonstrate the skills of a historian while the exams demonstrate content knowledge for the course.

Implementation Timeline

Policy IKF prescribes a timeline for the implementation of Mastery Assessments by school and graduation year. The assessment types proposed above will, if approved, be piloted with the class of 2029 in their sophomore year of SY27. The pilot means that the assessments will not be used to determine the class of 2029’s Competency Determination. Rather course passing will still be used as an equivalent for mastery through the class of 2029.

	SY25-26	SY26-27	SY27-28
Key Milestones	Course passing = mastery	Course passing = mastery Pilot Assessments in Grade 10	Mastery Assessments Fully Operational for Grade 10
Grade*	SY25-26	SY26-27	SY27-28
Grade 12	Class of 2026	Class of 2027	Class of 2028
Grade 11	Class of 2027	Class of 2028	Class of 2029
Grade 10	Class of 2028	Class of 2029	Class of 2030

Following the pilot in spring of 2027, as per Policy IKF, “After a thorough administrative review of assessment results, revisions to the definitions of mastery will be presented for School Committee approval no later than 8/1/2027.”

Beginning with SY28 and the Class of 2030, the proposed assessments will be used, alongside course passing, to determine if a student has satisfactorily met the Competency Determination. The class of 2030 will take the finalized versions of these assessments in their sophomore year in spring of 2028.

Next Steps

Pending the School Committee’s approval of the assessment types for each content area, educators will continue the work of finalizing the assessments for the SY27 pilot. This work will include finalizing assessment content, drafting implementation and grading guides for teachers, developing appropriate accommodations for each assessment, and finalizing rubrics and model-responses (“exemplars”) for student reference.

All final assessments of mastery will follow the established MHS procedure for providing accommodations for assessments:

- Accommodations will be student-specific based on an IEP or level of language-acquisition
- Students with disabilities will only have their testing accommodations apply to testing within the student academic areas impacted by the student’s disability. Multilingual learners will receive their student-specific accommodations in all subject areas.

- In an inclusion class, the general educator and the special educator are jointly responsible for testing accommodations and modifications.
- Each student on an IEP is assigned to a special education liaison. If there are any questions about a student please reach out to the student's special education liaison.

Additionally, the district will develop a communications plan to educate families and students in the class of 2029 about the pilot of assessments and the class of 2030 and beyond about the mastery component of their graduation requirements.

The district has invested in Pear Assessment as a platform to house, organize, and in some cases securely administer the mastery assessments. This will support data governance of these assessments across multiple stakeholders to streamline sharing, analyzing, and reporting results.

Thank you for your consideration of this assessment proposal to confirm the mastery of our students for their competency determination. We are grateful for the collaboration of multiple stakeholders in bringing this proposal to this point and welcome your feedback.