
Section 3: Maryland Assessment Summary

Overview

Maryland currently operates the following state testing programs:

- Maryland School Assessment in Reading and Mathematics (MSA)
- Maryland School Assessment in Science (MSA Science)
- Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA) in Reading, Mathematics and Science for students with significant cognitive disabilities
- High School Assessments (HSA) in Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, English, and Government
- The Alternate High School Assessments based on End-of-Course On-level Academic Content Standards and Modified Academic Achievement Standards (Mod-HSAs) for students with disabilities who meet specific criteria and who are identified by their IEP teams as takers of the Mod-HSA. The Mod-HSAs consist of modified assessments in Algebra/Data Analysis (Mod-Algebra/Data Analysis), Biology (Mod-Biology), English (Mod-English), Government (Mod-Government) and are scheduled for implementation beginning with the May 2008 administration.
- The State-approved English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) for assessment of English language learners.

Maryland is currently developing additional modified assessments:

- The Alternate Maryland School Assessment based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards (Mod-MSA) for students with disabilities who meet specific criteria and are identified by their IEP teams as takers of the Mod-MSA. The Mod-MSA is currently scheduled for implementation beginning in 2009.

In addition, Maryland formerly had a series of tests as high school graduation requirements known as the Maryland Functional Testing Program (MFTP). This testing program was in effect for students who had attained status as a high school senior no later than the opening of the 2003-2004 school year. This program is briefly described in this section, as a small number of students in Maryland are still under the graduation requirements of this program, through the end of the 2007-2008 school year. The MFTP will have its last administration in Summer 2008 and will be discontinued after that time.

The following pages provide brief summaries of Maryland's State testing programs and outline specific policies with regard to the accommodating, exempting, and excusing of students who participate in the programs.

MSA

Maryland School Assessment in Reading and Mathematics

The Maryland School Assessment Program in Reading and Mathematics (MSA) measures higher order thinking processes in (1) Reading (grades 3 through 8) or English/language arts (the end-of course High School Assessment [HSA] in English) and (2) Mathematics (grades 3 through 8) or (Algebra/Data Analysis the end-of-course HSA in Mathematics). The MSA is a tool for school improvement and an overall measure of students' knowledge accumulated over several years of schooling. The MSA provides student, school, school system, and state results and assesses students' performance against state standards in Reading and Mathematics. The MSA tests are typically administered in late March of each year (although in 2008, the testing window falls in April, due to religious holidays), except for the end-of-course tests in English and Algebra/Data Analysis, which are administered in October, January, April [special senior administration, beginning in 2009], May, and summer each year.

MSA Science

Maryland School Assessment in Science

The Maryland School Assessment Program in Science (MSA Science) measures higher order thinking processes in Science in grades 5 and 8. Science achievement at the high school level is measured by the end-of-course assessment in Biology (also a part of the High School Assessment Program [HSA]; see page 3-9). The MSA Science is a tool for school improvement and an overall measure of students' knowledge accumulated over several years of schooling. The MSA Science provides student, school, school system, and state results and assesses the student's performance against state Science standards. The grade 5 assessment measures content covered in grades 4 and 5, and the grade 8 assessment measures content covered in grades 6, 7, and 8. The MSA Science test is administered in April/May of each year, except for the end-of-course test in Biology, which is administered in October, January, April [special senior administration, beginning in 2009], May, and summer each year. Students in grades 5 and 8 take the assessment through either online or on a paper and pencil test form. The MSA Science tests and the end-of-course test in Biology are part of Maryland's Education Accountability Program as required by NCLB, but these tests are not included as measures of AYP, in accordance with NCLB requirements.

Mod-MSA

Modified Maryland School Assessment based on Grade-Level Academic Content Standards and Modified Academic Achievement Standards

Maryland is currently developing the Modified Maryland School Assessment based on Grade-Level Academic Content Standards and Modified Academic Achievement Standards (Mod-MSA). The Mod-MSA is an alternate assessment to the Maryland School Assessment Program (MSA) for students with disabilities who meet particular eligibility criteria and who are unable to participate in the MSA, even with accommodations. These students, through the IEP process, must meet the participation criteria as described below. The Mod-MSA will assess and report student attainment of modified indicators and objectives from the Reading and/or Mathematics Content Standards. The test will be administered concurrently with the MSA, and students will participate in the Mod-MSA in grades 3 through 8. The Mod-MSA will be implemented first with the upper grades and then with lower grades.

Mod-MSA results will be reported in three proficiency levels (Basic, Proficient, and Advanced) as part of the State Education Accountability program. Results from the Mod-MSA will be aggregated with those from the MSA for accountability purposes.

For the 2007-2008 school year, schools and IEP teams must identify (using the participation guidelines on the following page) students for whom the Mod-MSA would be the appropriate assessment. This information will be used by the Local Education Agency (LEA) in 2007-2008 to prepare AYP appeals information, and will lay the groundwork for appropriate student participation in the Mod-MSA in future years.

The criteria on the following page MUST be used for identifying students with disabilities for participation in the Mod-MSA in Reading, Mathematics, and/or Science.

Criteria for Identifying Students with Disabilities for Participation in Mod-MSA

A student who would have been eligible for the Mod-MSA would be identified based on his/her individual evaluation information and the instructional and service information on his/her IEP. The student would be identified as appropriate for instruction and assessment using modified academic achievement standards aligned with the student's grade-level academic Content Standards (refer to page 4-5). Students pursuing the Mod-MSA are not precluded from completing the requirements for the regular high school diploma. The student would have been identified as meeting **each** of the following criteria:

- The student is learning based on the State's approved grade-level Academic Content Standards for the grade for which the student is enrolled. There must be sufficient objective evidence demonstrating that the student is not likely to achieve grade-level proficiency within the school year covered by his/her IEP.

AND

- The student requires and receives modified academic achievement standards aligned with the Maryland Academic Content Standards for the student's grade level during instruction and assessments. In addition, specific accommodations implemented in these instructional and assessment settings may include: less complex test items, fewer and shorter reading passages, shorter or less difficult questions, and test items with fewer answer choices.

AND

- The student has had consecutive years of individualized intensive instruction in Reading and/or Mathematics and/or Science consistent with his/her IEP, and although progress toward grade-level standards was made, he/she is not yet making progress at grade level.

AND

- The student demonstrates that he/she cannot attain proficiency on the actual grade-level MSA, even with the provision of accommodations based on documented multiple valid and objective measures of student's progress (or lack of progress). Examples include State assessments, district-wide assessments, data gathered from classroom assessments, and other formative assessments that can validate documented academic achievement in response to appropriate instruction. There must be enough time to document the progress (or lack of progress) in response to appropriate instruction.

Alt-MSA

Alternate Maryland School Assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards

The Alternate Maryland School Assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (Alt-MSA) is the assessment in which students with significant cognitive disabilities participate instead of the MSA. Such students participate in the Alt-MSA if, through the IEP process, it has been determined that they meet the specific participation criteria on the following page. The Alt-MSA assesses and reports student attainment of individually selected indicators and objectives from the Reading, Mathematics, and Science Content Standards as outlined in the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum. A portfolio for the Alt-MSA is constructed of artifacts (such as student work samples) that document individual student mastery of the assessed Reading, Mathematics, and Science objectives. Students participate in the Alt-MSA in grades 3 through 8, and grade 10. The term “Alternate Academic Achievement Standards” has a specific meaning in the content of Maryland’s State Assessment System as approved by the U.S. Department of Education. “Alternate Academic Achievement Standards” are performance standards which are based on a very limited sample of content that is linked to grade-level Content Standards. This content, however, may not fully represent grade-level content and may include content which is substantially simplified.

Alt-MSA results are reported in three proficiency levels (Basic, Proficient, and Advanced) as part of the State accountability program. Results from the Alt-MSA for Reading and Mathematics are aggregated with those from the MSA for accountability purposes and for measurement of AYP. Results from the Science portion of the Alt-MSA are not currently part of AYP under NCLB.

The criteria on the following page MUST be used for identifying students with disabilities for participation in the Alt-MSA in Reading, Mathematics, and/or Science.

Criteria for Identifying Students with Disabilities for Participation in Alt-MSA

As noted previously, students with disabilities in grades 3-8 and 10 must participate in either MSA or Alt-MSA. The decision for which assessment is appropriate for an individual student is made by each student's IEP Team. A student with a significant cognitive disability will participate in Alt-MSA if he or she meets **each** of the following criteria:

- The student is learning (at emerging, readiness, or functional literacy levels) extended Maryland Reading and extended Maryland Mathematics Content Standards objectives.

AND

- The student requires explicit and ongoing instruction in functional skills.

AND

- The student requires extensive and substantial modification (e.g., reduced complexity of objectives and learning materials, and more time to learn) of the general education curriculum. The curriculum differs significantly from that of their non-disabled peers. They learn different objectives, may use different materials, and may participate in different learning activities.

AND

- The student requires intensive instruction and may require extensive supports, including physical prompts, to learn, apply, and transfer or generalize knowledge and skills to multiple settings.

AND

- The student requires extensive support to perform and participate meaningfully and productively in daily activities in school, home, community, and work environments.

AND

- The student cannot participate in the MSA even with accommodations.

Alt-MSA Prompt Types

Students participating in the Alt-MSA may be provided with an appropriate level of prompt (i.e., gesture, verbal, model, physical) in order to demonstrate the mastery objective being assessed. The following prompt types are applicable to instruction of these students and to the Alt-MSA assessment:

- **Gesture Prompt:** this level of prompt requires the teacher to move his/her finger, hand, arm, or make a facial expression that communicates to the student specific information (e.g., teacher taps scanner switch button).
- **Verbal Prompt:** this level of prompt requires the teacher to give a specific verbal direction in addition to the task direction. Given a task direction, the student is unable to perform correctly until another more specific verbal prompt is provided (e.g., after the teacher gives the task direction and latency period, the teacher then says, “push the button to turn on the scanner”).

NOTE: The task direction to the student is not considered a prompt; rather, it is simply the instruction describing what the teacher is asking the student to demonstrate.

- **Model Prompt:** this level of prompt requires the teacher to demonstrate the correct response for the student, and the student imitates the teacher’s model (e.g., the teacher demonstrates how to push the switch and then asks the student to repeat).
- **Partial Physical Prompt:** this level of prompt requires the teacher to touch the student to elicit a response (e.g., teacher touches the student’s hand closest to the scanner switch button).
- **Full Physical Prompt:** this level of prompt requires the teacher to place his/her hand over the student’s hand and move it toward the response (e.g., teacher places hand over student’s hand and places it on the scanner switch button).

HSA

High School Assessments

The Maryland High School Assessments (HSA) are a series of end-of-course tests that extend the expectations of the Maryland School Assessments into high school. The program currently consists of four core examinations: Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, English, and Government. All students taking a core learning goals course in one of these subject areas must take the relevant High School Assessment examination. Students who first entered grade 9 in the 2005-2006 school year or later must pass the HSA tests to obtain a high school diploma. See the MSDE web site <http://www.HSAexam.org> for more details on the HSA program. The end-of-course tests in Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and English are also part of the State's Education Accountability Program under NCLB.

BPAV

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation (BPAV) grew out of the work of Task Force on Comparable Testing Methods for the Maryland High School Assessment (HSA) and the Task Force for Review of High School Assessment (HSA) Options. The BPAV is not an assessment; rather it is an academic intervention designed to provide qualifying students with an alternate route to attaining a high school diploma. The BPAV provides a path to graduation that is meaningful, rigorous, and clearly tied to State standards. Participation in the BPAV is earned by students as they work toward their high school diploma. To participate, students must: (1) be firmly on the path to completing other graduation requirements; and (2) have been unsuccessful in other attempts to meet the HSA requirement through the current testing system and intervention options. Qualifying students may then take part in the Bridge Plan, which includes the assignment of appropriate components of the student's Academic Validation Project, an opportunity for the student to complete the requirements assigned, and a careful review of the Project based on detailed State guidelines and scoring rubrics. Students requiring accommodations in conjunction with an IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Plan would receive any accommodations normally permitted for instruction while completing the BPAV projects. In addition, if a SWD qualifies to participate in one or more project areas under the BPAV and if the student's IEP addresses goals in those areas, those particular goals on the IEP must be considered when structuring the student's BPAV projects.

Mod-HSA

Modified High School Assessment based on End-Of-Course On-Level Academic Content Standards and Modified Academic Achievement Standards

The Mod-HSA, an alternate assessment to the High School Assessment Program (HSA) for students with disabilities who, based on their IEP process, meet the specific participation criteria outlined on the following page. The Mod-HSA will assess and report student attainment in Algebra/Data Analysis (Mod-Algebra/Data Analysis), Biology (Mod-Biology), English (Mod-English), and Government (Mod-Government). The modified tests in Algebra/Data Analysis and English are part of the State's Education Accountability program under NCLB and contribute towards measurement of AYP. The modified Biology assessment also meets the requirements of NCLB but is not a part of AYP determination.

The criteria on the following page MUST be used for identifying SWD for participation in the Mod-HSA in Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, English and Government.

Criteria for Identifying Students with Disabilities for Participation in a Mod-HSA

A student eligible for the Mod-HSA is identified based on his or her individual evaluation information and the instructional and service information on his or her IEP. The student is identified as appropriate for instruction and assessment using modified academic achievement standards aligned with the student's academic Content Standards (the Maryland Core Learning Goals) in one or more of the following content areas: Algebra/Data Analysis, English, Biology, and/or Government. Students pursuing the Mod-HSA are not precluded from completing the requirements for the regular high school diploma. The student would have been identified as meeting **each** of the following criteria:

- The student is learning based on the State's approved academic Content Standards/Core Learning Goals in the appropriate content area being considered: Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, English, and/or Government. There must be sufficient objective evidence demonstrating that the student is not likely to achieve grade-level proficiency within the school year covered by his/her IEP.

AND

- The student requires and receives Modified Academic Achievement Standards aligned with the Maryland Academic Content Standards/Core Learning Goals in the relevant content area(s) for the student's grade level during instruction and assessment. In addition, specific accommodations implemented in these instructional and assessment settings may include: less complex test items, fewer and shorter reading passages, shorter or less difficult questions, and test items with fewer answer choices.

AND

- The student has had consecutive years of individualized intensive instruction in the relevant content area(s) consistent with his/her IEP, and although progress toward grade-level standards was made, he/she is not yet making progress at grade level.

AND

- The student demonstrates that he/she cannot attain proficiency on Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, English, and/or Government HSA tests, even with the provision of accommodations based on documented multiple valid and objective measures of student's progress (or lack of progress). Examples include the end-of-course assessments, other State assessments, district-wide assessments, data gathered from classroom assessments, and other formative assessments that can validate documented academic achievement in response to appropriate instruction. There must be enough time to document the progress (or lack of progress) in response to appropriate instruction.

ELPT

English Language Proficiency Test

The English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) is an assessment administered to English language learners upon their entry into the school system and annually during a testing window in the spring. The test measures a student's English language proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, Reading, writing, and comprehension. ELPT results are reported in five proficiency levels: Low Beginner, High Beginner, Low Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced.

Assessment results are used by the local school systems to make decisions as to each student's participation in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs. The State uses ELPT assessment results when reporting information related to the English Language Proficiency Performance Targets/ Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), the AMAO for progress in learning English, and the AMAO for attainment of English proficiency.

Some students with disabilities, such as those who participate in the Alt-MSA, may be unable to demonstrate their English language proficiency on the ELPT, even with accommodations. In such cases, the IEP team and the ELL Team must collaborate to jointly determine the student's English language proficiency test participation.

MFTP

Maryland Functional Testing Program

The Maryland Functional Testing Program (MFTP) includes tests in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. The MFTP is a high school graduation requirement for students who had attained senior status by the opening of the 2003-2004 school year or prior. For students who did not complete the testing requirements during a prior school year, the MFTP will be administered as long as those students continue to attend public schools, or for SWD until the end of the school year during which the student turns 21. The 2007-2008 will be the final school year for administration of the MFTP.

The purpose of the MFTP is to ensure that students have acquired minimum levels of competency in basic skills or “functional” areas prior to leaving public education. Each student must pass all three tests as one condition for graduation from high school.

All accommodations are permissible unless otherwise noted on Accommodations Fact Sheets SWD-1 through SWD-4 for students with disabilities (MAM Section 5) or on Accommodations Fact Sheets ELL-1 through ELL-4 for English language learners (MAM Section 8).

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