

What can you do to support your child and his/her teacher in developing the portfolio?

The assessment team encourages you as the parent/guardian to review your child's Mastery Objectives on the Test Documents. Active parent/guardian involvement will support your child in learning the selected reading and mathematics and, in the applicable grades, science objectives. Students' opportunities to learn are broadened when the parent/guardian is a full participant in his or her child's education. Families provide additional opportunities to practice at home and in community settings what is learned in school.

How will my son/daughter participate in the Alt-MSA?

Your child's teachers will provide instruction in the reading and mathematics and, in the applicable grades, science Mastery Objectives. When they determine that your child has mastered an objective, they will place an artifact, such as your child's work, a data collection chart, videotape, or audiotape that shows your child has mastered the objective, in the Alt-MSA portfolio.

Participation in the Alt-MSA means that your son's or daughter's education is important in determining whether your child's school is successful. With a strong partnership among the school, the student, and the family, we can take full advantage of this opportunity to create a truly world-class educational system for all of our children!

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The Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA)

What It Means
for Your **Child's Program**



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Alt-MSA
Alternate Maryland School Assessment



What is the Alt-MSA?

The Alternate-Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA), designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities, assesses a student's attainment of reading and mathematics Mastery Objectives in grades 3 through 8 and grade 10. In addition, the Alt-MSA measures a student's attainment of science Mastery Objectives in grades 5, 8, and 10. The Mastery Objectives for all content areas are selected from an online item bank and are aligned with grade level Maryland Content Standards. Levels of performance for students participating in Alt-MSA are based on Alternate achievement standards that reflect the learning characteristics of this group of students.

Students with disabilities who are unable to participate with accommodations in the Maryland School Assessment (MSA), the High School Assessment (HSA), the Alternate Maryland School Assessment based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards (Mod-MSA), or the Modified High School Assessment (Mod-HSA) participate in the Alt-MSA. The Alt-MSA allows participation in Maryland's state assessment program and school accountability system as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Who developed the Alt-MSA?

Alt-MSA was developed in close collaboration with experts in reading, mathematics, and science content, psychometrics, and portfolio assessments for students receiving special education. Stakeholder advisory committee members including, consultants with a national perspective, special education teachers and administrators, and parents and teachers of students who will participate in the Alt-MSA also contributed to the development of the Alt-MSA.

How are students selected for the Alt-MSA?

The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines how the student will participate in Maryland's assessment program. The IEP team reviews a comprehensive set of criteria to determine whether a student should participate in the Alt-MSA or the MSA. As a member of the IEP team, you play a key role in the assessment decision.

What is the assessment format?

Your child's assessment team selects Mastery Objectives in reading and mathematics that are challenging and that the student can be expected to attain with at least 80% accuracy by the end of the test administration. The Mastery Objectives selected by the Test Examiner Team may include reading and mathematics objectives in the student's IEP that have not yet been achieved that are aligned with Maryland Content Standards. Science Mastery Objectives for students in grades 5, 8, and 10 are selected using the same process.

Your child's Test Examiner Team constructs a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates the attainment of the target Mastery Objectives that were selected by his/her Test Examiner Team. Scorers review the portfolios to determine if the submitted evidence substantiates that the Mastery Objectives have been attained by your child.

Who scores my child's Alt-MSA Portfolio?

The portfolios are scored by professional scoring staff selected by the MSDE vendor. Maryland teachers are actively involved in the selection of scorer training materials. MSDE staff is present at all times during the entire scoring process and is the final judge when a scoring question arises.

What is done with the score?

Your child's score is combined with the scores of all the students in your child's school to determine how well the school is doing in educating its students. It is important for teachers, administrators, and parents to know that

the school is making progress in teaching all students.

Levels of proficiency were determined for "Basic," "Proficient" and "Advanced" at a standard setting session by Maryland special education teachers. Alternate achievement standards are used to define the level of performance for students participating in Alt-MSA. For reading and mathematics, students will be assigned to "Basic" if the percent of Mastery Objectives achieved is 50% or fewer, "Proficient" if the percent of Mastery Objectives achieved is 60%-80%, and "Advanced" if the percent of Mastery Objectives achieved is 90% or greater. Students' proficiency levels are included in districts' Adequate Yearly Progress reports and sent to you as the parent/guardian in a Home Report.

For science, students in grades 5, 8, and 10 are also assigned a proficiency level of "Basic," "Proficient" or "Advanced" for their attainment of Mastery Objectives in that content area. Science proficiency levels, however, are not factored into the determination of Adequate Yearly Progress for accountability purposes.

