

# Parent Overview of the MSAA

HIGH  
SCHOOL



## Parent Overview of the MSAA: High School

This overview of the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) explains:

- alternate assessment,
- importance of academic instruction,
- possible instructional supports, and
- ways to work with your child's teachers.

### Alternate Assessment

When you receive your child's test results, the report will show your child's score and performance level on the MSAA test. The scores are based on high expectations and these expectations are appropriate for students taking an alternate assessment in this grade. The test was designed using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and has built-in supports such as:

- reduced passage length in reading;
- pictures and graphics included to help students understand;
- models in reading, writing, and mathematics;
- common geometric shapes and smaller numbers on the mathematics test; and
- the option to have the entire test read aloud.

The alternate assessment is designed to work with the way your child communicates. Teachers will provide all of the accommodations included in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) as long as they are consistent with MSAA policies. The MSAA offers a full set of sample items that can be used to practice and become familiar with item types, accessibility features, accommodations, and the online platform. To view the sample items, visit: [www.msaaassessment.org/sample-items](http://www.msaaassessment.org/sample-items).

The MSAA test results, reported in the Individual Student Report (ISR), may be used to identify areas for needed improvement as well as areas of strength so that everyone can work together to help your child. Teachers may use this information to guide their teaching so that students learn the knowledge and skills of the grade-level academic content with appropriate supports.

Your child's teacher can select and use appropriate National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) curriculum and instructional resources located at [wiki.ncscpartners.org](http://wiki.ncscpartners.org). The resources provide the skills taught at each grade, explanation of curriculum, and examples of lesson plans and systematic instruction. Training on each of these resources is available for teachers. See descriptions of the resources on the NCSC wiki site.

Your child's teacher may have additional resources available through the school. Please talk with your child's teacher for more information on resources used to create lessons.

## College, Career, and Community Skills

- **Reading and writing** are important to understand books, gather and learn new information, make notes, share thoughts and stories, compare information, read schedules, etc.
- **Mathematics** is important to understand numbers, solve problems, schedule, arrange transportation, manage money, etc.
- **Communication skills** are important to advocate for self, participate in social and educational conversations, express wants and needs, access information, make requests, shop, prepare a meal, etc.
- **Age-appropriate social skills** are important to build knowledge and shared experiences with peers in school, the community, and work.
- **Independence and teamwork** are important to build problem-solving skills, understand and follow directions, complete a new task, work with others, and use provided supports.
- **Skills to access support systems** are important for academic instruction, collaborative work with peers, developing independence, requesting assistance, and using appropriate tools (e.g., calculator) to complete a task.

## Academic Instruction

Changes in our culture, our technology, and our work are happening at a fast pace. There are recognized college, career, and community skills that prepare our children for the world they will live in as adults. This preparation requires instruction that is individualized to meet your child's unique needs and is focused on skills to communicate, read, write, use mathematics, and develop work skills.

## Instructional Supports

Teachers have many tools and techniques to teach academic content. Teachers will provide the supports identified in your child's IEP. This should help your child learn the content and improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as demonstrate them on the test.

The principles of UDL provide flexible approaches for curriculum and are used throughout the MSAA to provide support and accommodations as needed for all children, including your child. Teachers can use these same strategies to support your child in learning. For example, in reading, your child may listen to the story read by someone else and answer questions using a communication system. In mathematics, your child might use counters to help solve problems and follow steps that are provided for calculations instead of having to memorize the steps. Supports will be important as your child is introduced to new content.

Additional examples of supports include providing:

- information presented in different ways (e.g., with pictures, manipulatives, and simplified text),
- access to learning materials in different ways (e.g., listening to a story while using a screen reader or a version enhanced with textures, providing word or picture choices),
- different ways to show what your child has learned (e.g., answering using a switch-activated recording, presenting using technology, using eye gaze to select words or pictures to write a story), and
- multiple options to engage your child (e.g., providing choices, using topics of personal interest).

You can find more about UDL at [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org).

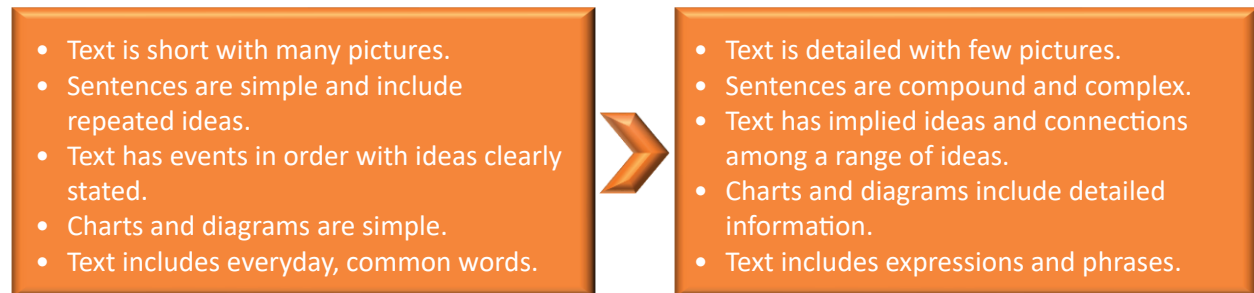
## English Language Arts – High School

In high school, your child’s instruction has a strong focus on informational texts but still includes enjoying reading or listening to and learning more about literary (non-fiction) texts. Your child will:

- read/listen to stories (e.g., *Jane Eyre*), plays, poems, and informational texts (e.g., biographies, political and economic documents, historical documents, etc.) that may be adapted;
- produce different types of writing: stories, informational, and persuasive; and
- learn communication skills (e.g., class discussions and presentations).

The complexity of the stories and informational text your child will read or listen to will increase throughout the year and as they move to the next grade. The following are a few ways that stories and text become more complex.

### Range of Text Complexity



Instructional activities should be individualized for your child as needed. For example, to teach students to evaluate multiple sources of information, the teacher has students examine techniques advertisers use. First the teacher shows students a slideshow reviewing common persuasive techniques and sample advertisements. The teacher directs students to write the purpose of each advertisement, the target audience, and the persuasive techniques used by the advertiser. Some students may use screen readers to view the slides and text-to-speech to write the purpose, target audience, and persuasive techniques. Some students may use pointing, eye gaze, or an adapted switch to scan and select possible purposes, audience, and techniques.

Teachers often pair reading and writing together. After several instructional activities about evaluating multiple sources, the teacher directs students to choose a career they are interested in pursuing, research the education and skills required for that career using multiple sources, and create a brochure enticing others to consider the career. For some students, the teacher will bookmark relevant websites or adapt resources for the students. Some students may use representative pictures or objects to create their brochure.

## ELA Sample Instructional Activities (text complexity increases in each grade)

- Learning the meaning of new academic and content words and why an author uses certain words in high school-level texts
- Finding what the two or more big ideas or central ideas of stories are and how they are developed
- Deciding how the author's choice in developing story elements (e.g., characters, details, ideas, events, etc.) affects a text
- Evaluating multiple sources of information to answer a question or solve a problem
- Understanding how the author's use of details and how the author structured parts of the text help the reader gain the meaning
- Identifying the author's point of view or claim and deciding whether the reasoning is correct and the evidence is sufficient
- Sharing ideas and information by producing persuasive pieces that include an appropriate organization of the information, relevant facts, details, and examples, and using appropriate vocabulary and phrases for the type of writing (e.g., imagery for narrative writing)
- Communicating decisions, goals, and action plans

## Mathematics – High School

In high school, the focus in mathematics is on solving problems using rational and irrational numbers; studying geometry by making accurate geometric drawings and shapes; solving problems using the Pythagorean Theorem, transformations, and linear equations; determining how one angle in a geometric figure affects other angles; calculating volume of cones, cylinders, and spheres; using data from dot plots, histograms, box plots, or scatter plots; and making observations and decisions about real-world probabilities. All of these learning activities that you can expect your child to be involved in might be individualized for your child. This allows the skills to be taught, practiced, and learned so that your child can make progress more easily. Here is a mathematics example that shows how individualization might work.

The teacher is teaching how to make conclusions about data. The teacher gives students graphs and plots of several real-world scenarios, such as the hourly wages of employees at a home improvement center. Students sort the graphs and plots into which kind of data analysis they feel gives the best way to make a conclusion about the data and give reasons why. Some students may be given graphs and plots of three kinds of data analysis, and some students may work with two kinds of data analysis. Some students may write or keyboard their reasons, and some students may choose their reasons from pre-written sticky notes.

### Mathematics Sample Instructional Activities

- Learning about exponents and scientific notation
- Solving problems with rational and irrational numbers
- Using tools to make geometric constructions
- Solving real-world geometric problems by using transformations and finding dimensions of figures
- Graphing and using linear equations to solve geometric problems
- Writing and solving variable expressions that represent word problems
- Identifying, completing, predicting, comparing, and making conclusions from data displayed in graphs and box plots
- Calculating the mean and median of a set of data
- Describing, predicting, and making conclusions about real-world probabilities

## Families Working with Teachers

Children learn well when teachers and families work together. You can help your child learn when you and their teachers share information with each other. You can share how your child learns best and what their interests are. It is also important to provide your child with learning activities suggested by their teachers. To do this, you should find out what your child's instruction looks like and what your child is expected to learn and do. For example, the activity might be to read and answer questions about a story. The teacher might say that the most important part is for your child to answer the questions, which they can do after listening to the story instead of reading it alone. Likewise, writing might include the way your child communicates their thoughts and ideas. This might be by using the computer, assistive technology, or dictation instead of using a pencil and paper.

To see examples of what these supports look like and how teachers may use these supports, go to the NCSC Resources site: [wiki.ncscpartners.org](http://wiki.ncscpartners.org). Parents can use the resources on this site to help increase their child's knowledge and skills. The site includes a "Parent Tips and Tools" section that can help parents use the resource materials. These resources help teachers and parents know what content to teach in each grade, suggestions and models for how to teach specific content, and how the content relates to the real world. Working closely with your child's teacher and these resources helps your child to develop college, career, and community skills.

## Summary

As everyone works together to support your child's learning of the college, career, and community skills, the MSAA provides guidance on the appropriate content and supports. Teachers and families working together will make individualized instruction meaningful and will help your child develop those skills. As you read through this overview and look at your child's ISR, please contact your child's teacher if you need more information.

### NCSC Curriculum and Instructional Resources for Teachers and Parents

- Content Modules (explanation of grade-level content)
- Instructional Families (skills for each grade)
- Curriculum Resource Guide (examples for teaching grade-level content)
- UDL Units (model universally designed lesson plans)
- Instructional Resource Guide (instructional strategies)
- Systematic Activities for Scripted Systematic Instruction (samples of intensive instruction: LASSIs for language arts and MASSIs for mathematics)

## Links to Transition Resources

These are activities that you need to start thinking about. If you haven't yet, please work with your school.

- [Disability Benefits 101](#)

Disability Benefits 101 gives you tools and information on health coverage, benefits, and employment. You can plan ahead and learn how work and benefits go together.

- [Future Planning Workbook](#)

This road map is designed as a tool to be used by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, family members, direct support professionals, and advocacy groups to guide the planning process.

- [Youth.gov Employment Resources](#)

Knowing how to find and keep a job is not only critical for admission to the adult world but also is an important survival skill. This website provides resources to programs and information for students as they explore employment opportunities.

- [I'm Determined](#)

This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining the silent passenger.

- [Family Guide to Transition Planning](#)

The purpose of the Family Guide to Transition Planning—Preparing Students with Disabilities for Life After High School is to assist families in understanding the transition planning process specifically from high school to life after high school. When families are knowledgeable about the transition process and invited to participate by educational organizations (EOs), students with disabilities experience improved post-school outcomes in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, and independent living.

- [Transition Resources from Raising Special Kids](#)

Transition can be a challenge. Depending on your child's disability, you may need to consider everything from post-secondary education to employment, from housing to finances. As you and your child plan for the future, consider these tips to help build a successful transition.





