

Parent Overview of the MSAA

GRADE

3

Parent Overview of the MSAA: Grade 3

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. These scores and performance levels reflect appropriate academic expectations and were developed specifically for students who participate in this alternate assessment. 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. The MSAA is designed to work with the supports your child needs as identified in their IEP. 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.

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 planning and teaching so that students learn the knowledge and skills of the grade-level academic content with appropriate supports.

Parent and teacher resources are available at www.msaastates.com. Please talk with your child’s teacher for more information on the resources they use 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.

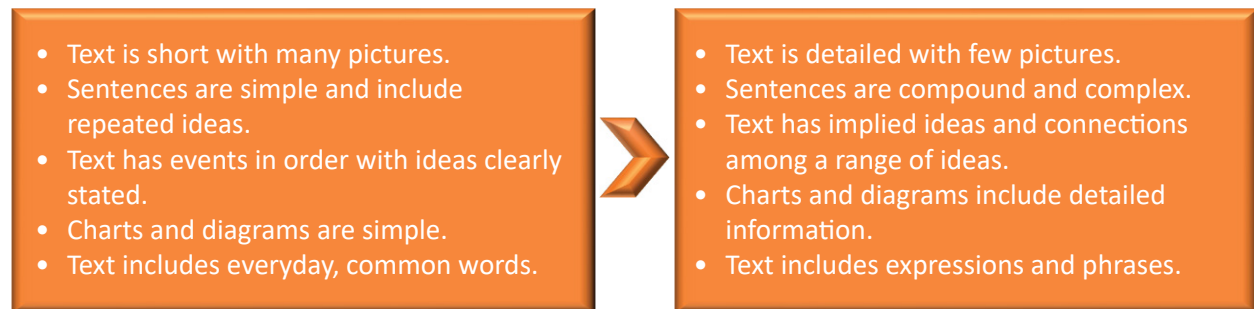
English Language Arts – Grade 3

In the primary grades, the focus of your child’s instruction is on learning to read (e.g., matching letters and sounds to read words and recognizing sight words) and learning from, and enjoying, reading or listening to text read aloud. Your child will:

- read/listen to stories (e.g., *Charlotte’s Web*), poems, plays, and informational texts (e.g., science, history, geography, directions, 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 the main idea of an article about penguins living in the Antarctic, the teacher uses a graphic organizer to help students understand the concept of main idea. The teacher provides picture choices with labels for some students to complete the graphic organizer. The teacher reads the article and then asks for one word to tell what the article is mostly about. The students may choose their answer from the picture choices and place the selected pictures on the graphic organizer. The teacher helps the students find the correct answer if needed. Next, the teacher asks students to tell more about the penguins. The students may choose from the picture choices and place the selected pictures on the graphic organizer. When finished, the teacher reminds students that the most important idea of the text is the main idea. The teacher then asks students to complete the sentence “The main idea is _____.”

Teachers often pair reading and writing together. The teacher has students write a short article on a class pet to share with visitors to the classroom. For all students, the teacher provides a graphic organizer with columns labeled *Facts*, *Describe*, and *Important to Know* to help them plan for the article. For some students, the teacher writes the labels on chart paper and has students talk about what would go in each section as the teacher records on the smaller graphic organizer. For some students, the teacher provides choices on sticky notes for the students to select and place in the desired sections. When finished, some students may dictate the final information to the teacher using the completed chart. Some students may place the sticky notes in order on paper to create their article.

ELA Sample Instructional Strategies (text complexity increases in each grade)

Grade 3

- Reading new words using foundational skills (e.g., phonics, sight words, and word relationships)
- Learning new words and their meaning from third-grade stories or informational texts
- Finding the important ideas, details, and answers to questions by reading or listening to stories or informational texts
- Learning the meaning of illustrations and the purpose of text features (e.g., heading)
- Learning that their point of view may be different from the author's point of view
- Sharing ideas and information by producing opinion pieces, informational pieces, and stories using words that show order
- Communicating with classmates in discussions

Grade 4 Preview

- Reading new multisyllable words using foundational skills (e.g., phonics, sight words, and word relationships)
- Learning new words and their meaning from fourth-grade stories or informational texts
- Finding details and examples that help make inferences and understanding important ideas in stories or informational texts
- Comparing and contrasting the point of view in two different stories
- Comparing and contrasting how the same event can be told differently in separate informational texts
- Using text features (e.g., heading, glossary, photographs) to help find information
- Sharing ideas and information by producing opinion pieces, informational pieces, and stories using precise language and a variety of transitional words (e.g., because)
- Communicating with classmates in discussions

Mathematics – Grade 3

In the primary grades, the focus in mathematics is on learning about numbers, solving problems, studying two- and three-dimensional shapes, and getting information from graphs. 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 begins teaching graphing by talking about things that students are familiar with, such as pets. The teacher shows them how to group pets into categories such as dogs, cats, birds, fish, and others. Then the teacher has the students sort pets into those same categories. Some students might sort pictures; others might sort miniature toy animals. Next, the teacher shows how to place the pet representations on a grid to make a graph. When it is time for the students to practice graphing, some students might use a grid with one-inch squares and color the boxes or cells; others might use a larger grid and draw animals in the boxes or cells; others might glue pictures onto the grid; and still others might place the miniature toy animals on the grid. Then the teacher talks about different things the graph shows them about pets. The students then describe something they know about pets based on the information shown in the graphs they created.

Mathematics Sample Instructional Strategies

Grade 3

- Learning about numbers by rounding to the ones, tens, and hundreds places
- Using addition, subtraction, and multiplication to solve problems
- Using objects to model multiplication and division situations
- Learning about the different parts of fractions, such as denominators and numerators
- Working with shapes by identifying their characteristics (e.g., number of sides and degrees of angles)
- Using measurement to find the volume of liquids, determining perimeter and area, telling time, and using money
- Giving and getting information using picture graphs, bar graphs, and line graphs

Grade 4 Preview

- Learning about numbers by rounding to any place (i.e., ones, tens, hundreds, thousands), and reading, writing, and comparing decimals to tenths or hundredths
- Using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve problems with whole numbers
- Adding and subtracting fractions with denominators that are the same (e.g., $1/4 + 3/4$)
- Working with shapes by identifying and classifying them using angles and their names (e.g., right angles) and lines (e.g., parallel and perpendicular lines)
- Using measurement to solve problems involving mass of objects, determining length, using formulas to calculate area and perimeter of rectangles, and converting measurements (e.g., 2 feet = 24 inches)
- Making, describing, and extending patterns
- Collecting, organizing, and explaining data in picture graphs, line graphs, and bar graphs

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.

For more information, please visit www.msaastates.com. Parents are encouraged to review their child's Individual Student Report (ISR), which provides detailed information about their child's performance. The Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) can help you understand the skills your child is demonstrating during instruction, while the "What's Next" section offers guidance on skills to focus on for the upcoming grade. The included questions can also help guide conversations with your child's teacher. Using these resources and working closely with your child's teacher can help support your child's development of 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.

MSAA Resources for Teachers and Parents

- Content Modules (explanation of grade-level content)
- Instructional Families (skills for each grade)
- Curriculum Resource Guides (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)

