

Parent Overview of the MSAA

GRADE

6

Parent Overview of the MSAA: Grade 6

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.

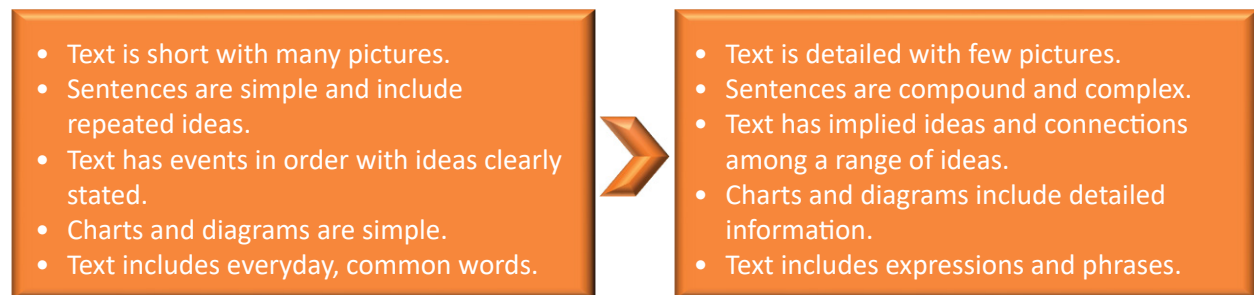
English Language Arts – Grade 6

In middle school, your child’s instruction has an increased 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., *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*) and informational texts (e.g., science, geography, history, technical) 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 summarizing an informational text without including opinions, the teacher has students read an informational text that includes personal opinion by the author. The teacher has the students identify and mark out the sentences that are the author’s personal opinion (e.g., it was the best city for pizza). For some students, the teacher reads the text aloud and has the students point to the personal opinion sentences. For other students, the teacher provides a few sentences from the text, reads each, and asks if it is the author’s opinion or a fact. Some students may use a “yes/no” switch to answer the questions. The teacher then has the students read and summarize a short informational article using the following steps: 1) identify the main idea in the first sentence, 2) write the information from the article to understand the main idea in 20 words or fewer, 3) write a concluding sentence. Some students may use text-to-speech to read the article and may copy and paste information from the article to create their summary. Some students may dictate their summary.

Teachers often pair reading and writing together. The teacher has the students write about what it is like to live where they live in the U.S. (e.g., city, small town, etc.) to share with class pen pals from another country. The teacher has students use a writing planning sheet using the same steps as used for summarizing (see above). The teacher has students use their completed planning sheets to write the letter, adding details to build understanding. Some students may use a word prediction program, some students may complete sentences using writing software that includes pictures with the words/phrases, and some students may dictate their letter. Some students may choose from provided sentences using eye gaze to create their letter.

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

Grade 6

- Learning the meaning of multiple-meaning words (e.g., tackle) and figurative language (e.g., busy as a bee) from reading sixth-grade stories or informational texts
- Using details from a story or informational text to explain what the text clearly states or implies
- Comparing the big idea(s) and information of two stories (e.g., both themes are “making friends takes work”)
- Summarizing a story or informational text without including any personal opinions
- Understanding how an author’s point of view affects how the reader understands a story and how an author uses evidence to try to convince the reader of a claim in an informational text
- Sharing ideas and information by producing persuasive pieces that include reasons and evidence, informational pieces using a conclusion that summarizes the information, and stories that use words and phrases to signal time (e.g., yesterday)
- Communicating with classmates in discussions; understanding others’ views

Grade 7 Preview

- Learning the meaning of new words, and how they affect seventh-grade-level stories or informational texts
- Determining the big idea or central meaning of stories and informational text
- Understanding how characters, individuals, settings, ideas, and events affect each other (e.g., characters’ choices might be different in the city than the country)
- Comparing texts in two different books or mediums (e.g., book and a video) to see how the information is presented
- Finding evidence in an informational text to support the claim the author is trying to convince the reader
- Sharing ideas and information by producing persuasive pieces that include claims, relevant ideas, and evidence; informational pieces using a conclusion that summarizes the information; and stories with sequenced events and details to show experiences
- Communicating with classmates in discussions; changing own views when appropriate
- Reporting on a topic using multimedia (e.g., slideshow) and using relevant information to support main ideas

Mathematics – Grade 6

In grade 6, the focus in mathematics is on solving word problems with larger numbers, decimals, and fractions; learning about positive and negative numbers; studying perimeter, area, and volume of shapes; and getting detailed information from different types of 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 has been teaching about unit rate. The students practice working with unit rate (e.g., 4 tickets cost \$20, so each ticket costs \$5). Students work on several real-world problems about shopping, preparing recipes, travel time, earnings, and others. Students do not have to work on every problem but can choose those that are interesting to them. Students are allowed to use multiple ways to calculate solutions to the problems. Some students may calculate using mental math, some students may use paper and pencil, some students may use calculators, some students may use number lines, and some students may use counters.

Mathematics Sample Instructional Strategies

Grade 6

- Using number lines to locate and compare positive and negative numbers
- Locating positive and negative numbers on a coordinate grid
- Solving word problems by adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing numbers up to three digits
- Solving word problems with fractions and decimals
- Writing and solving expressions and equations with variables and parentheses; writing and solving expressions with exponents; solving linear equations
- Understanding unit rate (e.g., 4 tickets cost \$20, so each ticket costs \$5)
- Calculating areas of four-sided shapes and triangles; making decisions about when to use formulas for perimeter, area, and volume
- Planning for, collecting, and organizing data on line plots, graphs, histograms, and dot plots
- Describing data using mean, median, range, and spread

Grade 7 Preview

- Multiplying and dividing positive and negative numbers
- Creating and solving equations about real-world problems
- Using ratios and proportions on grids or line graphs to show proportional relationships
- Solving percent problems and word problems that have a combination of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals
- Using formulas to solve area, surface area, and volume problems; solving problems about the area and circumference of circles
- Connecting proportionality to geometry to show the effect of scale change on distance, area, and volume
- Solving real-world problems with equations and expressions that are not equal
- Collecting and analyzing data; identifying range, median, mean, and mode; comparing data
- Determining probability based on data

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)

