



## Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities: FAQ for Parents

1. *What is the purpose of state assessments?*

The purpose of state assessments is to provide chances for students to show what they know and can do regarding grade-level academic standards. State assessments are part of an accountability system that aims to improve outcomes for students. State assessments also meet federal assessment requirements.

2. *What is the purpose of the MSAA?*

The Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) is part of a system created to help students with significant cognitive disabilities (mild, moderate, or severe intellectual disabilities) prepare for opportunities after high school. Research shows that students who learn academic skills are better prepared for postsecondary options. Results of the MSAA can help teachers and parents to identify how students are doing academically. It is an opportunity for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to show what they know and can do in math, English Language Arts (reading and writing), and science. The MSAA does not provide information on life skills or detailed information on academic skills.

3. *How is the MSAA different from other state assessments?*

The MSAA was created with items at three levels of difficulty (low, medium, and high). Items may start with “reminder statements” to focus the student on the topic (“*We are going to read about ratios. Remember, ratios are part of a whole.*”) The test uses simplified language. Alternate Assessments are given to individual students by a teacher familiar to them. The test also includes built-in supports such as a read-aloud option, visual supports, and two or three answer options.

4. *How is the MSAA related to what my child does during lessons with the teacher?*

Before the MSAA was created, academic standards were broken down to be appropriate and accessible for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These standards are known as *Core Content Connectors*, entry points, or focus skills. The connectors help teachers to focus on smaller parts of the standards for instruction. Many other resources were created to support teachers with lesson planning. Some districts also use specific lessons from a purchased curriculum.



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Please talk with your child's teacher about how your child is learning English language arts, math, and science.

## 5. What does the test look like?

The test is given online, using a tablet or computer. Parents may not observe test administration. The test administrator, who is usually the child's teacher, works individually with the child to provide directions, encouragement, and reinforcement. However, parents can see what a typical administration looks like by viewing the "[Best Practice Videos](#)." Remember that additional supports and accommodations may be provided for your child depending on their needs. The IEP documents any features and accommodations that your child will use on the test. Please talk with your child's teacher about how additional supports and accommodations will be used for test administration.

## 6. Where can I see test questions?

Parents can see MSAA Sample Items. These sample items are available in the MSAA system.. These items are similar to items students see in their tests..

**Sample Items**

[Click here](#) to download electronic braille cards that can be embossed and used with ELA items, in grades 3 and 4, that can not be read aloud.

Use the "Actions" dropdown in the table below to start the full set of sample items.

Assessment	Actions
ELA G3 Sample Items	Actions
Math G3 Sample Items	Actions
ELA G4 Sample Items	Actions
Math G4 Sample Items	Actions
ELA G5 Sample Items	Actions
Math G5 Sample Items	Actions
Science Gr 5 Sample Items	Actions
FLA G5 Sample Items	Actions

**Teacher Guides Download**

The Sample Items Teacher Guides can help teachers use a subset of the current sample items as a formative assessment tool, allowing teachers to understand what the student may be able to know and do based on these items, and how teachers can respond to this information through instruction. All documents needed to use this tool can be found in the links below.

- [Grades 3-5](#)
- [Grades 6-7](#)
- [Grades 8 & High School](#)

The full set of sample items can be used to practice and become familiar with item types, accessibility features, accommodations, and the online platform. The full set of sample items can be accessed using the "Actions" drop down menu for the respective grade and content.

**Best Practice Videos**

- [How to Administer an Item](#)
- [How to Administer the SRC and Implement the ESB](#)
- [How to Administer a Level 2 Writing Prompt](#)
- [How to Administer a Level 3 Writing Prompt](#)

**Writing Rubrics**

- [Grade 3 Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [Grade 4 Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [Grade 5 Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [Grade 6 Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [Grade 7 Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [Grade 8 Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [High School Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)

## 7. What help is available for my child to participate in alternate assessments?

The MSAA is created for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (mild, moderate, or severe intellectual disabilities). Students can usually use the type or types of communication that they use in the classroom during instruction on this test. Students can take breaks at any time and as often as needed. The test uses simplified language, "remember statements" to direct the student to the topic, and either two or three answer choices are given to the student to choose



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from. Students have access to many built in supports, such as using manipulatives, objects, answer masking (covers up other answer choices so only one choice is seen at a time), read aloud (for all parts of the test), and increasing the size of the text, in addition to many others. When identified by the IEP team, students can use assistive technology, sign language, paper test, and a scribe (someone who can select the answer choices the student chooses).

Assistive Technology can include any low- or high-tech devices that a child needs to support their learning. Some examples include augmentative communication devices, pencil grips, CCTVs, FM audio devices, and headphones. Note: some assistive technology used during instruction is not allowable on statewide assessments. [Allowable accommodations for MSAA are listed in the Statewide Accessibility Manuals.](#)

For students with no meaningful and observable communication, the Early Stopping Rule may be used. Please talk with your child's teacher about the supports or the Early Stopping Rule your child will use for the assessment.

**8. *What are the impacts of my child participating in alternate assessments?***

Parents and schools should be working together to have discussions about this topic. Taking an alternate assessment does not prevent a student from receiving the state diploma. However, courses developed at the district or charter may have an impact for a student receiving the state diploma. This should be addressed in the student's IEP meeting. Please talk with your child's teacher about the impact of participating in alternate assessments in your child's district or charter.

Here is a link to [the Parent's Guide for Graduation.](#)

**9. *What is my responsibility as a parent?***

Parents must participate in IEP meetings to make assessment participation and accommodation decisions for your child each year. You can ask your child's teacher for more specific ways you can support learning at home by providing opportunities to practice what your child is learning at school. Parents must also make sure that their child is brought to school for testing. In the case of homebound students, parents and teachers work together to arrange a time and place for the child to take the test. Arizona state law does not allow parents to opt out of state testing.

**10. *What reports are available to me? What can I do with those reports?***

Parents will receive an "Individual Student Report" in the late summer or early fall. Parents can review the reports by looking at the scores and level for their child and should talk with their child's teacher or school. Remember that this test



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is one piece of data about how the child performed on one test. How the student did on this assessment should be considered with other information about the student's skills. The student report lists academic skills that a student at this grade would likely be able to do. The report also lists skills likely to be taught next and that are expected at the next grade level. The bottom of the report lists guiding questions that you can ask your child's teacher about what instruction looks like for your child to continue to learn math and English skills. The teacher may also have information about your child's testing experience.


MSAA Parent Resources can be found on [the Assessment Parent Resource web page](#) under the MSAA Parent Resource Tab.



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## Samples of the MSAA Individual Student Report

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**msaa**  
Multi-State Alternate Assessment

**Name:** FirstName1 LastName1  
**ID:** 42382348  
**School:** Demonstration School 1  
**Test Date:** Spring 2022  
**Grade:** 05

**What is In This Report?**


**Page 1:** Contains a summary of your child's performance on this year's test.  
**Page 2:** Contains an introductory letter from MSAA and next steps to support your child.

**Performance Summary**

FirstName1's performance in English Language Arts and Mathematics is described below.

### English Language Arts

Performance Level	Score
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>1235</b>



Meets Expectations


A student's test score can vary. If your child were to be tested again, it is likely that they would receive a score between 1232 and 1248.

English Language Arts consists of Reading and Writing. See below for percent of possible points earned in each area.

**Reading 42%      Writing 44%**

### Mathematics

Performance Level	Score
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>1249</b>



Meets Expectations

A student's test score can vary. If your child were to be tested again, it is likely that they would receive a score between 1245 and 1253.

**Performance Level Descriptors**

The scale score and performance level for each content area above summarize FirstName1's performance on the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics tests. The performance level descriptors below describe the knowledge and skills that children who perform at this level generally demonstrate.

#### English Language Arts

- ✓ use brief literary texts to identify the central idea and supporting details, answer questions about the text, and describe the relationship between characters and character and setting
- ✓ use brief informational texts to identify the purpose of and use information presented in charts, graphs, diagrams, or timelines to answer questions, and identify and support the main idea of a text with details
- ✓ use context to define multiple meaning words
- ✓ identify simple words (i.e., CVC words)
- ✓ identify elements of a narrative text to include beginning, middle, and end
- ✓ identify the category related to a set of facts
- ✓ write a narrative with limited command of organization, idea development and/or conventions

#### Mathematics

- ✓ solve addition, subtraction, and multiplication problems using mathematical language and symbolic representations (e.g., <, >, =)
- ✓ check the correctness of an answer
- ✓ find the missing term in a list of numbers that follow a pattern
- ✓ round numbers
- ✓ identify figures divided into equal parts
- ✓ compare fraction models
- ✓ count unit squares to total the area of a rectangle
- ✓ complete a bar graph

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2022 Results for FirstName1 LastName1 (42382348) | Grade 05 | Demonstration School 1

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This report summarizes your child's performance on the online 2022 Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA). This report shows the scaled score and performance levels in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science. Also shown is the percent of possible points earned in Reading and Writing. The performance level descriptors describe the knowledge and skills that children who perform at this level generally demonstrate.

The MSAA is designed to assess students in grades 3-8 and 11 with significant cognitive disabilities and measures academic content that is aligned to and derived from your state's content standards. The test contains many built-in supports that allow students to take the test using materials they are most familiar with and to communicate what they know and can do. These are some of the built-in supports found in the MSAA:

- shortened ELA reading passages
- pictures, charts, tables, and maps to help students understand the reading passages
- models and examples that explain important ideas and concepts
- smaller numbers on the mathematics tests

To support communication independence to the greatest extent possible, the MSAA is designed to work with different communication modes and systems. Please discuss the supports your child used on the MSAA with your child's teacher.

More information and resources for helping your child are available at your state's alternate assessment web page or by talking with your child's teacher. If you require this letter or your child's report in a different format, please contact your state's department of education.

## What skills can be worked on next?

### English Language Arts

- + Determine the main idea and supporting details of text
- + Use information from charts, graphs, diagrams to answer questions
- + Use general academic words in reading and writing
- + Produce writing that expresses real or imaginary experiences and ideas

### Mathematics

- + Use mathematical terms and symbols (<, >, =)
- + Round numbers to the nearest ten, hundred, or thousand
- + Solve single digit multiplication problems including arrays, models, and word problems
- + Compare fractions with different denominators; identify equivalent fractions
- + Identify perimeter of a rectangle
- + Analyze data in bar graphs
- + Sort two-dimensional shapes

## What now?

Bring this report to your next conference with FirstName1's teachers.

You can ask FirstName1's teachers:

- What is FirstName1 learning in ELA and Mathematics this year?
- How is FirstName1 doing?
- How can I use this information to work with FirstName1 this year?
- What resources should I use to support FirstName1?