



200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

# MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT (MSA)

Fact Sheet  
**78**

*Revised March 2009*

---

## ***What is the Maryland School Assessment (MSA)?***

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is a statewide test of reading, mathematics and science achievement which measures basic as well as higher level skills. The MSA meets the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires each state to test how well its students do in reading, mathematics and science.

---

## ***Which students take the MSA?***

Students in grades 3-8 take the MSA in reading and mathematics; students in grades 5 and 8 take the science test. Students take the tests each year in March. Three tests are required at the high school level to measure reading, mathematics and science achievement. Students enrolled in the second year of high school English take the English assessment. Students who take the algebra/data analysis course and the biology course take the assessment for each after they complete the course (this includes middle school students who take the high school level course). The English test is used as the measure for reading, the algebra/data analysis test for mathematics, and biology for science.

All students, including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency, are included in testing. Most take the MSA. Students with disabilities may take the Mod-MSA if they meet all eligibility criteria for participation in the Mod-MSA. Students who may be eligible for the Mod-MSA may require a test format designed to meet the need of the student's specific instructional characteristics, such as the need for test items with fewer and shorter reading passages, shorter or less complex questions, and test items with fewer answer choices. A small percentage of students with severe disabilities take the Alt-MSA.

---

## ***What are the tests like?***

Students in each grade take each test over two days. The amount of time students spend in testing varies by subject and grade. The test includes multiple-choice questions and questions that require the student to write a short response. Information about the MSA, along with sample test questions, are available on the Web at [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org).

---

## ***Do individual students receive scores on the MSA?***

Parents receive their child's scores from the local school system. The scores show how well the child learned the subject matter. The score report also shows how the school, school system, and state performed on the tests.

---

## ***How are scores reported?***

Scores are reported in terms of basic, proficient, and advanced performance. Basic is the lowest level of performance. Proficient is the middle level and Advanced is the highest level. The goal is to have all students perform at the Proficient or Advanced level.