

Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) Middle School Social Studies Assessment (MS-SS) Frequently Asked Questions

Background

What is MCAP?

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) encompasses all state and federally-mandated assessments in English Language Arts/Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Government, and Kindergarten Readiness. MCAP also includes Alternate Assessments for select students. It provides information to educators, parents and the public on student progress towards proficiency on the Maryland state content standards.

Why do we have a middle school social studies assessment?

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly amended Md. Ed. Art §7-203 Education Accountability Program. The amendment called for the creation of a middle school grade band assessment in social studies. The law states that the assessment shall be developed in collaboration with county boards, curriculum specialists, teachers, and academics with expertise in social studies education. It further defined the assessment by stating that it should, “Consist to the greatest extent possible, of criterion-referenced, performance-based tasks that require students to utilize critical and historical thinking skills and analyze primary sources.”

Assessment Format

How is the middle school social studies assessment structured?

The assessment will be divided into four forty-minute sessions. Two of those sessions will be dedicated to an Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS). The remaining two sessions will be comprised of selected response, technology enhanced, and four-point constructed response items that measure student understanding of United States History content.

Where can I find out more about what is included on the assessment?

The assessment limits are delineated in the State Framework for Middle School United States History which was released in December, 2018. The framework is located at:
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SocialStudies/8thGrade/MiddleSchoolUnitedStatesHistoryFramework.pdf>.

Will one time period between the years 1763-1890 in the Middle School United States History course get more coverage than another?

No, the content in the state framework will be assessed equally across all time periods ensuring a chronological balance to the test questions.



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What skills will be assessed?

Standard 6.0: Social Studies Skills and Processes will be assessed on the Evidence-Based Argument Set (EBAS). The EBAS will measure a student's ability to:

- Evaluate the relevance and utility of a historical source, based on information such as authority, origin, type, context, and corroborative value of each source.
- Identify credible, relevant information contained in the sources.
- Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.

How will these skills be assessed?

The Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS) will assess the student's historical thinking skills and processes. These items will provide students with an overarching compelling question, background information, and source-based evidence including pertinent details regarding the sourcing information. Using this information, students will answer two point constructed response questions and one four point constructed response item.

Should these skills be taught only in Grade 8?

No, the grade band nature of the middle school social studies assessment requires that the skills assessed on the MCAP MS-SS assessment be introduced in grade 6, expanded on in grade 7 and refined in grade 8. The data from the skills portion of the assessment should help inform the entire middle school social studies program, not just grade 8.

Assessment Administration

How should the middle school social studies assessment be administered in schools?

The assessment is designed to be administered sequentially, however local school systems will determine if it is given as individual sessions or with multiple sessions in one day.

When will the middle school assessment be administered?

The MCAP MS-SS will be administered in May beginning in 2020. Decisions regarding the days and times of test administration will be determined by the school system's Local Accountability Coordinator and the school based administrators.

What is a field test?

The first time any assessment is administered it is done as a field test. This allows the test items to be evaluated for validity and reliability. Data generated from a field test is only used to test the assessment items. Student, school, district, or state data is reported from a field test. The May 2020 administration of MCAP MS-SS will be a field test. The first operational assessment - from which scores will be reported - will be in May 2021.

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Assessment Support Tools

Will scoring rubrics be provided?

Yes, DRAFT rubrics for the Grade 8 Social Studies Assessment will be available in August 2020 at: <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/Social-Studies/8GradeUSH.aspx>.

These rubrics will not be finalized until after range finding in the summer of 2020, but they can be used in the 2019-2020 school year to guide instruction. The final rubrics will be posted by September 1, 2020.

Will a practice test be available online?

Yes, a full four session practice test will be available in March 2020. This practice test will allow students to interact with the same testing platform that will be utilized for the actual test they take in May. The practice test will include selected response, technology-enhanced, constructed response items, and Evidence Based Argument Sets. Answers will be provided for all selected response and technology-enhanced items.

Will anchor papers be made available?

Yes, scored anchor papers for the Evidence-based Argument Set (EBAS) will be available in early fall, 2019. These papers will be linked to an EBAS that will be released at the same time.

When will districts receive data on student performance?

Data will be available for parents, schools, and local school systems once the assessment becomes operational in 2021. No data will be provided from the field test in May 2020.