

MCAP Social Studies 8: Frequently Asked Questions

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Purpose of Document:

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document is updated yearly to provide answers to questions that arise as the MCAP Social Studies 8 assessment is implemented.

General Assessment Background

What is Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP)?

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) encompasses all state and federally mandated assessments in English Language Arts/Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Kindergarten Readiness. It provides information to educators, parents, and the public on student progress toward proficiency on the Maryland state content standards.

Why is there 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, county curriculum specialists in social studies, middle school social studies teachers, and academics with expertise in social studies education.” It further defines 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 Structure and Administration

How is the middle school social studies assessment structured?

The assessment will be divided into four sections of 40 minutes each. Two sections consist of Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS), selected response items, and technology enhanced items. The remaining two sections consist of selected response items, technology enhanced items, and four-point constructed response items that measure student understanding of U.S. History content.

What types of items will be on the assessment?

Similar to the other assessments in MCAP, this assessment includes selected response items, technology-enhanced items, constructed response items, and Evidence Based Argument Sets (EBAS). A description of these item types can be found on page two of the [Middle School United States History Framework](#). Field test items will be integrated throughout the assessment.

Will one unit of study in the Middle School United States History course get more

The content indicated in the state framework will be assessed equally across Units 2-6. Unit 1 (Colonization) and Unit 7 (Growth of Industrial America) are bridge units from Social Studies Framework: Grade 5 and to the High School United States History Framework and are not assessed on MCAP.

What content and skills will be assessed?

Standards 1.0 – 5.0 are content standards in social studies. A full description of each can be found on page one of the [Middle School United States History Framework](#). The five content standards are:

- Standard 1.0 – Civics
- Standard 2.0 – Peoples of the Nations and World
- Standard 3.0 – Geography
- Standard 4.0 – Economics
- Standard 5.0 – History

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

- evaluate the credibility of sources by considering the authority, origin, type, context, and corroborative value of each source;
- identify credible, relevant information contained in the sources; and
- 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 important details regarding the sourcing information. Using this information, students will answer two-point and four-point constructed response items.

Should assessed 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 Social Studies 8 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 middle school social studies program, not just grade 8.

Are there accommodated assessments?

Yes, assessments are available in braille, American Sign Language, text-to-speech, screen reader, Spanish, print, and large print. As always, testing accommodations found in a student’s Individualized Education Program, 504 Plan, and/or EL plan must be followed.

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 sections or as multiple sections in one day.

When will the middle school assessment be administered?

The MCAP Social Studies 8 will be administered in May beginning in 2022. 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 valid and reliable assessment is given, it is administered as a field test. This allows 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 from a field test is not reported. The May 2022 administration of MCAP Social Studies 8 will be a full field test. The first operational assessment from which scores will be reported will be May 2023.

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

The assessment limits are outlined in the [Middle School United States History Framework](#) which was released in December 2018.

Assessment Support Tools

Is a practice test available online?

Yes, a full [practice test](#) is available. This practice test allows students to interact with the same testing platform and associated tools that will be available on the actual test. The practice test includes selected responses, technology-enhanced items, constructed response items, and Evidence Based Argument Sets (EBAS). Answers will be provided for all selected response and technology enhanced items. A portion of the practice test is refreshed periodically. Practice tests are also available for all accommodated formats.

What tools are available to students on the test?

All students have access to:

- a magnifier (to enlarge images and/or text),
- a highlighter,
- an answer eliminator (available on selected response items only),
- a review menu with a bookmarking feature,
- answer masking,
- line reader masking,
- background color contrast, and
- a notepad.

Are scoring rubrics available?

Yes, DRAFT rubrics for the MCAP Social Studies 8 are available on the MCAP Social Studies 8 Assessment Resources [website](#). Additionally, the rubrics are provided for students to access while they are in the testing platform.

These rubrics will not be finalized until after rangefinding in the summer of 2022, but they can be used to guide instruction. The final rubrics will be posted in 2023.

Are sample student responses available for constructed response items?

Yes, scored anchor papers for the Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS) are available at [iTem/Pra](#), the MSDE item banking system.

How can students use the notepad tool on the platform?

The notepad tool is available for all items on the testing platform. It allows students to open a blank window and type information to use as reference. Within the EBAS items, the notepad will retain all of the information entered throughout the entire set. This will allow a student to navigate through the sources and items within the EBAS and keep the information typed as a reference. Students also have the ability to use scratch paper and pencil during the assessment.

Can students use the copy and paste feature on the assessment?

Yes, student created text can be copied from the notepad into the answer space. However, students cannot copy and paste text from provided sources into the notepad or into the answer space.

Assessment Development Process

Who writes the MCAP Social Studies 8 items?

All of the assessment items are written by trained Maryland teachers who are recommended by the LSS social studies supervisors. This work is done with the support of the testing vendor and the Maryland State Department of Education. The items are written to align with the assessment limits as outlined in the [Middle School United States History Framework](#).

How are the items reviewed prior to being placed on the assessment?

Prior to any items being written, a content review committee of Maryland educators review and approve stimuli that will be attached to some items. After the items are written, another group of Maryland educators review each of the items and provide feedback. To be a part of the social studies content committee, a teacher must be recommended by the LSS social studies supervisor. Bias, Sensitivity, and Fairness reviews are also conducted by a group of trained educators. After an item has been approved by Maryland educators and the Maryland State Department of Education, it is then ready to be field tested.

Are there field tested items?

In order to make sure items perform well, all items are field tested prior to being used operationally. A small percentage of field test items are dispersed throughout the testing form, however, these items do not count toward the students' overall score.

How long does it take for an item to be placed on the assessment?

It takes an item about two years from initial development to be placed on an operational test. In Maryland, there are many stages with direct teacher involvement, including item writing and review, which gives greater validity to the process.

Reporting and Accountability

What type of reports are available?

Different reports are available to different stakeholders. Reports are available at the student, school, district, and state levels. Students will receive an Individual Student Report (ISR) to indicate their MCAP Social Studies 8 score. The ISR also provides comparative data on the state, district, and school level. Finally the ISR will show students how they performed by the Maryland State Social Studies standards and content units that are assessed. This data will be available for students and teachers once the assessment becomes operational in 2023.

How do the scores impact students? Teachers? Schools?

Scores will help middle school teams determine the strength of their instruction on social studies skills and processes and the content of Middle School United States History. Teachers will be able to use the data to inform planning and instruction. Students and parents will gain a measurement of the child's progress in the content and skills related to social studies as they enter high school.