

ABCA

Frequently Asked Questions

Achieving Balance in Classroom Assessment (2024-25)

We're so glad you asked!

[Link to glossary of terms used in the ABCA program](#)

1. Why should we participate in the ABCA program and what will our district get out of it?

Districts that have quality balanced assessment systems within their classroom settings, implemented with fidelity, show improved student learning and increased student achievement. The structures and resources created for the Achieving Balance in Classroom Assessment (ABCA) program will encourage participants to achieve these outcomes through participation in structured professional learning and strategic planning for implementation.

2. What is involved in the ABCA professional learning and implementation program?

ABCA is a three-year program that pairs teams of educators from a local school district, led by a site coordinator, with skilled assessment learning facilitators provided by the Michigan Assessment Consortium. Participants will engage in:

- structured learning sessions,
- planning consultation, and
- use of high-quality resources.

In **Year 1**, teams engage in a structured learning program ([see schedule on back page](#)) designed to deepen understanding of how assessment *for* learning (formative assessment) and assessment *of* learning (summative assessments) can work together to improve assessment balance at the classroom level, leading to enhanced student learning and achievement.

By the end of Year 1, each site will develop an Assessment Learning and Implementation Plan (ALIP) with the assistance of the learning facilitator. The ALIP will inform the action steps and budget needed to implement the plan and connect ABCA work to the school/district continuous improvement process and cycles. This alignment and facilitator support will assist in identifying funding for the activities the site team will engage in during Years 2 and 3 of implementation of a balanced assessment system.

In **Year 2**, the site team and site coordinator, working with the learning facilitator, will review and update their ALIP and continue to move forward with action steps. The learning facilitator will work with the site coordinator to determine what external resources might meet the needs of the site and seek support for continuous improvement activities during Years 2 & 3 of their work on balance in classroom assessment. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the success of the learning and implementation will help to inform the “next steps” for the site for Year 3.

In **Year 3**, the ALIP again will be reviewed, and the learning facilitator will work with the site coordinator to continue to implement the action steps and help locate resources needed for successful implementation. By Year 3, the learning from Years 1 and 2 should now be implemented in at least some classrooms in the district.

3. What is required of participating ABCA districts?

Each district that participates in the ABCA professional learning and implementation program will complete a needs assessment during the first year of participation. This needs assessment will allow site participants the opportunity to reflect on their current level of experience in such areas as the use of the formative assessment process, quality classroom summative and interim assessment, and the combined use of these

assessment approaches to promote balanced classroom assessment. The learning facilitator then will work with participants to develop an ALIP for use in guiding the professional learning of district educators during Year 1 and beyond and help to determine action steps for implementation.

4. Who should participate in the district's ABCA team?

Participation is open to teams of educators representing one school or schools across a district. Team members should have an interest in working to improve the entire district's use of a balanced approach to assessment **in classroom settings**. We suggest that the site team include between 6 to 12 members and include district and building administrators, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers.

5. Who leads the district's ABCA team?

Each ABCA district will select one person to serve as the **site coordinator**. This individual will complete the intake survey and work with the MAC-provided learning facilitator to develop the site's ALIP.

The site coordinator will also organize the team and convene team meetings, assure team participation in the structured learning program, provide access to the learning resources developed by the project to site team members, and help monitor and evaluate the ALIP.

6. Who are the learning facilitators and what support might they provide to the ABCA sites?

MAC-provided learning facilitators are highly skilled in and knowledgeable about the components of a balanced assessment system (both assessment *for* and *of* learning). They will work in collaboration with the MAC to support integration of this assessment work into the district's overall continuous improvement process. The learning facilitator assigned to your site will be determined based on the needs indicated in your needs assessment.

The learning facilitator will meet with the site coordinator virtually or in person **six times each school year**. In addition, each site coordinator is asked to complete a brief monthly survey about site assessment learning activities from September through June.

The learning facilitator will work with the site coordinator to create the ALIP by spring of Year 1. The learning facilitator will provide consulting support to help plan successful implementation of the district's ALIP through shorter scheduled appointments. These may occur during the six required site coordinator/learning facilitator check-in meetings held at a mutually-agreed-upon times. These meetings fall within the scope of the learning facilitators' 24-hour time limit.

(NOTE: It is beyond the scope of the learning facilitator's commitment to provide actual professional learning sessions for your site.)

7. What kinds of resources will be made available to our district site team?

Participants will receive instruction and access to **Learning Maps** to support their learning and to guide ongoing learning that may occur throughout implementation of the site team's ALIP. These Learning Maps contain links to relevant learning resources and facilitation strategies ABCA participants can use to actively engage in collaborative learning throughout the project. Examples include:

- A. Creating Balance in Classroom Assessment Systems: The Foundations
- B. Bringing Balance to Classroom Assessment Systems with the Formative Assessment Process
- C. Exploring and Using Interim Assessment Information at the Classroom Level

Participants will also learn about how to support systems change and improved practice with the help of custom-designed resources aligned to the **Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP)**. These resources are available in the MiStrategy Bank and on the MAC website. Examples include:

- A. Balanced Assessment System [Strategy Implementation Guide](#) and [Planning Tool](#)
- B. Implementing Interim/Benchmark Assessment [Strategy Implementation Guide](#) and [Planning Tool](#)
- C. Strategy Implementation Guide: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) Interim Assessment and Tools for Teachers [Strategy Implementation Guide](#)
- D. Formative Assessment in the Classroom [Strategy Implementation Guide](#) and [Planning Tool](#)

8. Do we have to use a particular interim assessment to be part of the ABCA program?

No. Districts may participate in ABCA regardless of which comprehensive interim assessment the district chooses to use (e.g., SBAC, i-Ready, MAP, Star, or their own interim assessment).

9. How do we integrate ABCA into our ongoing continuous improvement initiatives such as MTSS?

One critical component of successful implementation of a comprehensive multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is the ongoing use of evidence of student learning to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction and additional interventions. This is done to determine next steps in instruction and/or intervention to support learning. Helping staff to understand that using assessment *for* and *of* learning can help support the work of implementing an effective multi-tiered system of support will be beneficial.

Other continuous improvement initiatives also require monitoring and, ultimately, evaluation of the impact on student learning as part of the continuous improvement process. Learning to use assessment *for* and *of* learning will support this monitoring throughout implementation.

10. How would we include this initiative in our MICIP plan for the 2024-25 budget? Are there additional resources in the MICIP platform to support our work?

The district's ABCA program initiative, articulated in the ALIP, can be included in your continuous improvement plan. Within the MICIP platform and the MiStrategy Bank, you will find additional resources to support your implementation efforts. MAC-developed Strategy Implementation Guides specify the critical components of a balanced assessment system in the district and schools, the use of the formative assessment process in classrooms, and the use of interim assessments.

In addition, MAC has developed related Planning Tools that suggest activities for each of the phases of implementation — Installation, Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate. Additional resources are also planned to continue to support this work.

11. What will districts experience during years 2 and 3?

Years 2 and 3 may vary from one site to the next. Generally, a site will continue to develop, implement, monitor, refine and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and activities included in the sites' ALIP. They may do this with the assistance of their Learning Facilitator during Year 2 and into Year 3. Year 2 would include 3-4 collaborative sessions where sites could reconnect with the Program Management Team, and other sites around the state, to share ideas, successes, and challenges. In addition, they would receive up to 8 hours of consultation from their Learning Facilitator. Year 3 would be a continuation of implementation, monitoring, refining, and evaluating of the ALIP supported by 8 hours of consultation from their Learning Facilitator.

12. Is there follow-up professional learning available that will help to support our team as we move toward implementation of a balanced assessment system?

As your ALIP is developed, the site coordinator and team, working with the learning facilitator, will determine the action steps for implementation during the remaining months of Year 1 and in Years 2 and 3. This may require outside additional coaching and/or professional learning, such as involvement in the Michigan FAME program. Thinking about how to identify ongoing staff involvement and a strategic plan for professional

learning will help to increase the capacity throughout the building and district to sustain changes, plus create the leadership and knowledge throughout the building and district to strengthen implementation.

It will be important to continue to include this initiative in the continuous improvement plans at the building and/or district level, and to allocate the needed funding to support implementation beyond the ABCA professional learning program. The MAC will continue its 16-year commitment to provide support in assessment literacy and formative assessment and will work to develop content needed by all districts.

13. How will the ABCA program be evaluated? What role will each site play in the evaluation of the program?

Site participants will occasionally be asked to complete surveys, and some may be invited to be interviewed on some aspect of the ABCA program or to be observed by the ABCA Program Management Team. In all cases, participation will be voluntary, active steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of participants, and an informed consent procedure will be used.

14. Is there a cost for our district to participate in the ABCA program?

Participation in ABCA costs **\$2,999* for the first year**, which covers up to 10 participants.

OPTIONAL participation during years 2 or 3 costs approximately **\$1,500** in Year 2** and **\$800.00** in Year 3**.

**These fees do not include expenses related to district reimbursement to participants for time spent in professional learning activities, such as those designated in district work agreements and articulated in the district comprehensive plans. The inclusion of the ALIP activities in the continuous improvement plan helps districts to access state and federal funds through the Consolidated Application process.*

***Costs could vary based on the level of MAC services required.*

15. How do I apply?

Apply here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B3LJXLS>

Once you have applied, you will be invited to a Welcome Meeting where next steps will be explained and discussed.

16. Is there funding to help to support work time outside of the contract day? If not, how might this be funded?


The ABCA program can be included in your continuous improvement plan as an activity within an overarching goal and strategy to implement a balanced assessment system. For example, you could state the goal and strategy more specifically as: “Staff will implement the formative assessment process in all classrooms” and designate a timeline (e.g., “...by June 2026”). This would allow you to designate specific activities in your plan and align funding resources to them. Possible funding sources might include Title I, Title II, General Fund, or other grants that have been designated to support professional learning to improve student achievement.

17. From whom can I request more information?

Questions about the **ABCA Professional Learning Program** opportunity can be directed to

- Ellen Vorenkamp at (810) 923-0327 or evorenkamp@michiganassessmentconsortium.org


SEE PROGRAM SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE



Get started today!

Visit bit.ly/MAC-ABCA to learn more.

View our recorded informational video!



Topics to be addressed

- Assessment Literacy for Educators
- Role of Assessment in Continuous Improvement
- Selecting and Assessing Priority Standards
- Balanced Assessment Systems
- Exploring and Using Interim Assessment
- Preparing your Continuous Improvement Plan and Consolidated Grant Application using ALIP
- Formative Assessment Process

ABCA Schedule for Years 1-3 (2024-2027)

YEAR 1

September 2024 through April 2027
4:00-6:00 pm

Site *teams* will engage in six virtual after-school learning sessions:

- October 15:** Balanced Assessment Systems and Assessment Literacy
- November 12:** Quality Classroom Formative and Summative Assessment
- December 17:** Digging Deeper into the Formative Assessment Process
- January 14:** The Impact of Curriculum and Instruction on Quality Assessment
- February 18:** Diving Deeper into Interim Benchmark Assessments
- March 11:** Revisiting Balanced Assessment Systems and Making Connections

Site *coordinators* will engage in five additional sessions with the ABCA PMT from 4-5:30 pm on:
Sept. 17, Dec. 3, Jan. 28, March 20, and April 29

Participating teams will meet between structured learning sessions to discuss and plan how to put their learning into practice in the district. MAC-provided learning facilitators will support participants with resources and strategies to extend the professional learning to others in their districts.

Year 1 will culminate in the creation of an Assessment Learning and Implementation Plan (ALIP) that will guide the district’s efforts to balance assessment in classrooms across the district.

YEARS 2–3

Fall 2025 through Spring 2027

ABCA participant teams will continue to work with their MAC-provided learning facilitator to plan and implement classroom assessment learning activities customized for their site. The learning facilitator will also work with the site coordinator to suggest how professional learning opportunities can be structured to improve assessment knowledge and practice across the district.

Participants will also learn about how to support systems change and improved practice with the help of custom-designed resources that align with the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP).