



ABCA

Frequently Asked Questions

Achieving Balance in Classroom Assessment

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. At the conclusion of Year 2, progress in completing the activities in the ALIP will be evaluated in order to plan for the upcoming year. Year 3 action steps will be determined, and they will be integrated into the ALIP and included in the continuous improvement plan and funding cycle.

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: that is, some teachers in the district are now using the formative assessment process daily during instruction; interim assessments have been chosen that match the purposes the district/schools determine for these measures; and assessment results are being used for intended purposes, such as improving instruction to

students who were assessed and reviewing and improving the district and school instructional programs for future groups of students.

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. Should the district team be from just one school, from multiple schools, or from the district as a whole?

It is possible for district ABCA team members to come from more than one school, especially in smaller school districts. In larger school systems, the site team might come from just one or two schools to be used as "lighthouse" schools for others who might join the effort later.

Districts that choose to form a district-wide team representing more than one school will receive support from the learning facilitator in meeting the challenge of transferring the learning across each school represented by the district team. Inclusion of additional team members helps to build capacity through increased understanding of the initiative, as well as the planning and implementation processes, thus helping to sustain the work throughout the district.

7. 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.

Learning facilitators are familiar with the Learning Maps created to support staff learning about balanced approaches to assessment at the classroom level and the associated topics that will likely arise. They are equipped to advise about the site's between-session work during Year 1, and to assist planning site-based activities during Years 2 and 3. They can advise about independent use of the Learning Maps and the resources linked to these documents. They are also familiar with the Strategy Implementation Guides and Planning Tools that have been developed by the MAC to align this project with the MICIP continuous improvement process.

The learning facilitators likewise will be able to draw from and advise about MAC and FAME resources and events that can serve to support additional and deeper learning your site may elect to pursue. Each learning facilitator will be available for up to 24 hours of consulting time per year to support the site's planning work. (NOTE: It is beyond the scope of the learning facilitator's commitment to provide actual professional learning sessions for your site.)

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.

8. How will the learning facilitator help with implementation of our customized professional learning plan?

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.

9. 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](#)

10. 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).

However, it is strongly encouraged that ABCA sites consider use of the Smarter Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) or Smarter Focused IABs throughout the school year. These two types of standards-based interim assessments are designed to be used flexibly before, during, and after instruction, helping teachers to support and verify the learning they believe students have evidenced. Both types of Smarter Interim Assessment Blocks are available at no cost to the site, regardless of which comprehensive interim assessment it uses.

11. 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 in order 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.

12. How would we include this initiative in our MICIP plan for the 2022-23 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.

13. 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 15-year commitment to provide support in the area of assessment literacy and formative assessment, and will work to develop content needed by all districts.

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

Each site's ALIP will be used to measure the extent of the site's learning activities and to collect data on how the learning activities and implementation activities/steps have impacted instruction and student learning. We will also seek to determine the impacts of the learning facilitators on the site's professional learning program, and whether the sites used the project's structured learning resources. The project team will examine the extent to which site teams engaged in the FAME program and used either of the two Smarter interim assessments. Finally, the project will look at how each site used the project's resources in its MICIP plans.

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.

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

There is no registration cost for participating in the ABCA program. However, districts might need to reimburse participants for their 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.

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. You could state the goal and strategy more specifically as something similar to: “Staff will implement the formative assessment process in all classrooms” and designate a timeline (e.g., “...by June 2024.”). This would allow you to designate specific activities in your plan and align funding resources to those activities. 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

- Kathy Dewsbury-White at (517) 816-4520 kdwhite@michiganassessmentconsortium.org
- Ed Roeber at (517) 614-4877 roeber@msu.edu.

Questions about the **planned Year 1 structured learning activities** can be addressed to:

- Ellen Vorenkamp at (810) 923-0327 or vorenke83@gmail.com
- Terri Portice at (616) 889-7303 or terri.portice@gmail.com.

SEE PROGRAM SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE.

Get started today!

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

Sign up for a March 16, 2022 informational webinar: bit.ly/ABCA-Webinar2022

(Webinar recording will be available at bit.ly/MAC-ABCA after the event.)

ABCA Schedule for Years 1-3 (2022-2025)

YEAR 1

October
2022
through
May 2023

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

- Summer:** Site Coordinator Orientation
- October:** Assessment Literacy for Educators and the Role of Assessment in Continuous Improvement
- November:** Selecting and Assessing Priority Standards
- December:** Balanced Assessment Systems Part I
- January:** Balanced Assessment Systems Part II
- February:** Exploring and Using Interim Assessment Part I
- March:** Exploring and Using Interim Assessment Part II
([Site Coordinators](#)) Preparing Your Continuous Improvement Plan and Consolidated Grant Application Using the ALIP
- April:** Formative Assessment Process Part I
- May:** Formative Assessment Process Part II

Participating teams will meet between structured learning sessions to discuss and plan how to put the 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 2023
through
Spring 2025

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).