

**Resource Guide**  
**to the Massachusetts**  
***Curriculum Frameworks***  
**for Students with Disabilities**

*Fall 2006*



## Massachusetts Department of Education

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This document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Education.  
Dr. David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

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## Introduction

The 2006 version of the *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities* includes learning standards from four Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*:

- English Language Arts (June 2001)
- Mathematics (November 2000)
- Science and Technology/Engineering (May 2001; High School standards-January 2006)
- History and Social Science (August 2003)

The Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* contain learning standards that define the concepts, skills, and content that should be taught and learned by the end of each grade from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. *Curriculum Framework* learning standards are the basis for Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) assessments (tests and alternate assessments) given at prescribed grade levels.

The No Child Left Behind law requires each state to align the curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities who take alternate assessments with the curriculum of other students in that grade. In its non-regulatory guidance to states (August 2005), the U. S. Department of Education permitted states to list academic outcomes for these students in grade spans or clusters (e.g., preK-grade 2; 3-4; 5-6; 7-8; and 9-10), rather than at individual grade levels, as is required for all other students. The Resource Guide lists this information accordingly.

As you use the Resource Guide, please also refer to the *Curriculum Framework* in the subject being assessed for additional assistance in developing standards-based goals and instruction for students with disabilities.

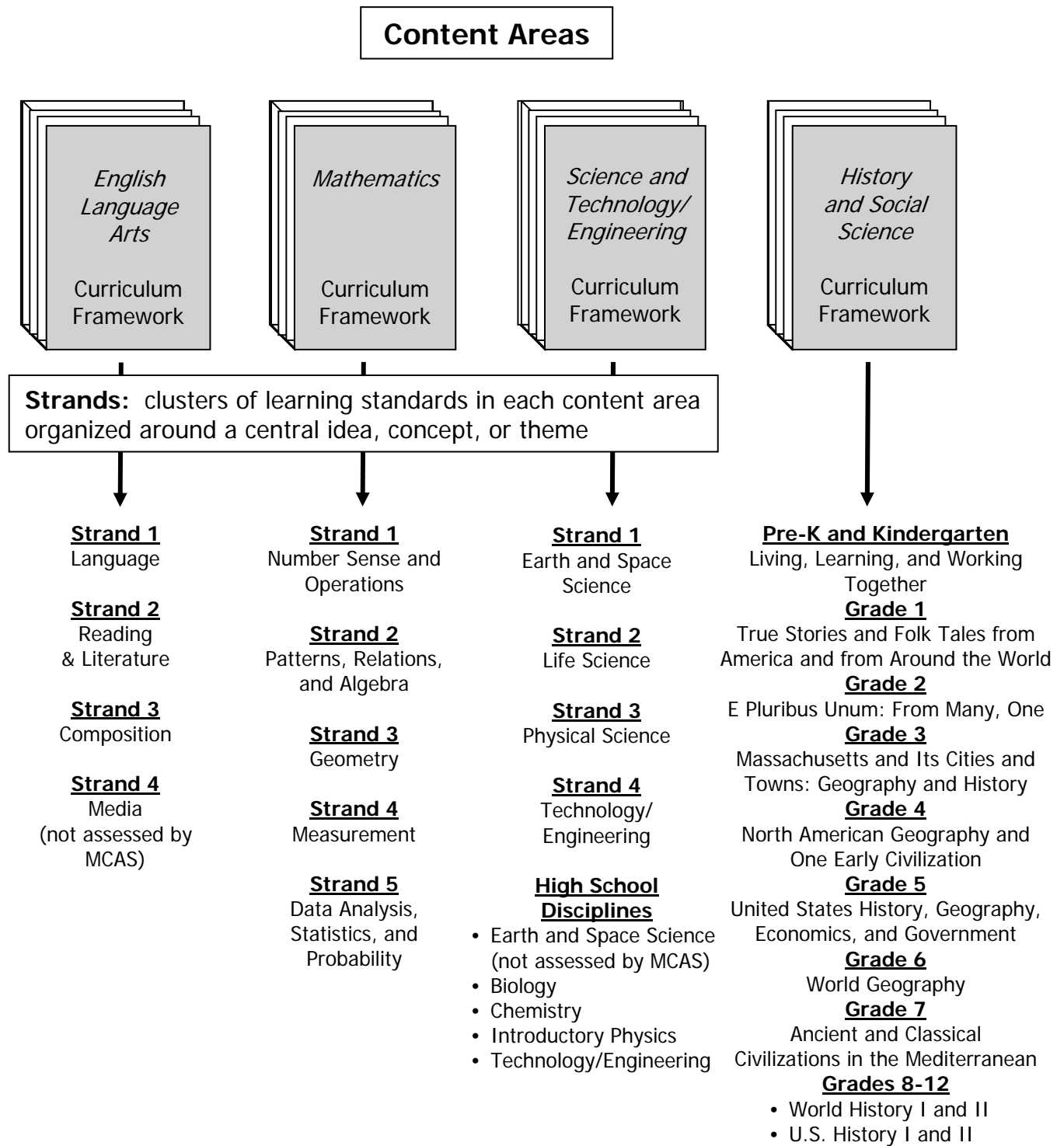
## Purpose of the Resource Guide

This guide is intended for use by educators to align and develop instruction based on the state's learning standards for students who perform below the grade-level expectations of peers, and particularly for those students who cannot, in the judgment of their IEP or 504 team, participate in standard MCAS tests, even with the use of test accommodations. These students are required instead to participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt).

When routinely applied, the strategies for instruction and assessment described in this guide provide students with disabilities opportunities to learn the same standards as non-disabled students, as required by law.

Educators can use the Resource Guide to set realistic and challenging academic goals for students with disabilities based on the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* by identifying the appropriate "level of complexity" at which students address and achieve the state's learning standards.

# How the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* Are Organized



**Learning Standards:** Learning standards are included within each strand that identify the skills, concepts, and content that a student should know and be able to do by the end of each grade, or grade cluster.

## Definition of Terms Used in the Resource Guide

This Resource Guide lists the Massachusetts *Curriculum Framework* learning standards in each content area, along with supplemental guidance for the development of instruction and assessment for students with significant disabilities who will participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment.

The following terms are used to describe the information listed in the guide:

### Strand

A strand is a cluster of learning standards in the content area organized around a central idea, concept, or theme.

### Learning Standard

Learning standards identify what students should know and be able to do within a specific grade span. Each learning standard is listed precisely as it appears in the Massachusetts *Curriculum Framework* in that content area. Refer to the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* for further clarification of the learning standards and how they are intended for use in the classroom.

### Essence

The essence is a summary of the essential components of each learning standard, including key ideas, skills, and content to be learned.

### Entry Points

Entry points are suggested academic outcomes that are aligned with each learning standard as written for a student in that grade. Entry points have been modified below grade level expectations, and list outcomes at progressively lower levels of complexity, difficulty, and sophistication. Entry points describe the progression of skills and knowledge that allows a student to address each learning standard **at a challenging level of complexity** while making progress toward learning the standard as written for a student in that grade.

In the Resource Guide, entry points are listed along a continuum of complexity and difficulty from **less to more complex**. More complex entry points are those that approach grade level expectations, while less complex entry points are substantially below the expectations for a student in that grade. Educators must identify targeted skills and outcomes for each student that are meaningful and measurable, based on the entry points for the standards required for assessment in the student's MCAS-Alt portfolio.

### Access Skills

Some students may be unable, due to the severity of their disabilities, to address curriculum content, even at lower levels of complexity. These students must still participate in standards-based instruction by addressing the social, motor, and communication skills identified in their IEPs. These non-academic skills must be addressed

as part of an instructional activity based on the learning standards being assessed. *For example*, a student may participate in a science activity by addressing the access skill of grasping and releasing objects or materials in the lesson, or by hitting a switch that activates an electronic communication device when it is his or her turn to participate. Other examples of access skills can be found throughout the Resource Guide.

Practicing access skills in the context of academic instruction benefits students in the following ways:

- Provides exposure to the general education curriculum for students with the most significant disabilities
- Prepares many of these students to address academic skills and content in the future
- Exposes these students to challenging new ideas, content, skills, and materials
- Provides additional opportunities for students to practice targeted skills in a variety of settings and using a range of instructional approaches

### **Instructional Ideas**

Instructional ideas describe classroom activities in which students with a range of abilities can participate together. While one student may be able to address a learning standard at or near grade-level expectations, another may need to participate at a lower level of complexity by addressing an entry point to the standard. Still other students may be able to participate only by addressing social, communication, and motor (i.e., access) skills embedded within the instructional activity.

Instructional ideas are provided for a sample of learning standards in each content area. Educators are encouraged to develop other instructional ideas based on those listed in this Resource Guide, and by referring to the *Curriculum Framework* in that content area.

### **Assessment Strategies and Portfolio Products**

Suggested assessment strategies and portfolio products are included with each instructional idea that will meet submission requirements for MCAS-Alt and may be included as evidence in the student's portfolio. Teachers are encouraged to design instruction, and select the strategies and products, that best reflect the challenging nature of the instruction and that show the student's progress in learning the targeted skills.

# Figure 1

## How to Use this *Resource Guide* to Identify Challenging Instructional Goals

### Steps 1 and 2

- Determine the grade in which the student is enrolled
- Determine the subject(s) required for assessment in that grade
- Answer the questions below

### Step 3

Can the student address learning standards at grade-level expectations in the subject being assessed?

If no...

If yes...

### Step 4

Can the student address entry points at this grade level that are "more complex?"

If no...

If yes...

### Step 5

Can the student address entry points at this grade level that are "less complex?"

If no...

If yes...

### Step 6

Can the student address entry points at lower grade levels based on the grade-level standard?

If no...

If yes...

Design  
challenging  
instruction  
for the student  
based on  
grade-level  
learning  
standards  
in the subject  
being assessed.

When repeated trials indicate that the student cannot address learning standards even at the lowest level of complexity, the student should address access skills integrated with instruction based on grade-level learning standards.