

# Maryland High School Assessments & *Your Child*

In June, the State Board of Education ruled that, beginning with the class of 2009, all Maryland students must pass the High School Assessments to graduate. The questions and answers on this and the next few pages explain the testing program and how it affects your child. If you don't find the answers to your questions here, ask your child's teacher or principal for help. Also, the Maryland Department of Education's Web page—[www.MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org)—is a good source of information.

## What are the Maryland High School Assessments?

The High School Assessments, or HSA, are four tests—one each in English 10, algebra/data analysis, biology, and government. Your child will take each test as he or she completes the course. The tests contain both multiple-choice and written-response questions.

Because the HSA do not test everything your child learns in a course, you should contact your child's teachers for information on complete course content.



## Where can I see sample test questions?

Each year, the Maryland Department of Education releases one assessment per subject to the public. To review these tests, or to take one online, visit [www.MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org). Click on Testing/High School Assessment/HSA Test Items. (English 10 assessments should be posted in fall 2005.)

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[www.MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org)



# open

up this newsletter for a poster showing Maryland's high school graduation requirements



### Does my child have to pass the HSA in order to graduate?

The answer to this question depends on when your child will graduate.

#### Students graduating before 2009

No. Students graduating from high school before 2009 do not have to pass the HSA to graduate. However, they are required to take the tests, and their scores will be reported on their high school transcripts to help potential employers and college officials make hiring and admissions decisions.

#### Students graduating in or after 2009

Yes. Students graduating from high school in or after 2009 have to pass the HSA to graduate. There are a few ways to do this:

- Pass all four HSA. The passing scores are: algebra/data analysis, 412; government, 394; and biology, 400. The English 10 passing score will be set in fall 2005.

#### OR

- Earn passing scores on state-approved substitute tests and substitute one or more of those scores for passing scores on the HSA. The state has yet to select acceptable substitute tests, but possibilities include the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests.

#### OR

- Earn a minimum score on each test and earn a combined score that's equal to the total of the four HSA passing scores. The State Board of Education has not set the minimum scores yet, but they will be lower than the passing scores. This combined-score option allows your child to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another.

All students—those graduating before and after 2009—must meet the state's credit, service-learning, and attendance requirements **as well as all the requirements imposed by your school district**. Open up this newsletter for a poster summarizing Maryland's graduation requirements.

### My child is in middle school, but taking algebra now. Does he/she have to pass the algebra HSA to graduate?

Yes. Students take each HSA after they complete the course. If your child is in middle school but taking a high-school-level course—this happens most frequently with algebra—he or she will have to pass the appropriate HSA to graduate. Of course, the earlier a student takes an HSA, the more opportunities he or she has to pass it.

### Is my child still required to pass the Maryland Functional Tests?

No. The HSA have replaced the Maryland Functional Tests. The last group of students required to pass the Functional Tests was the graduating class of 2004. However, the Functional Tests were often administered to students in middle school, so your child may have taken one or more before they were discontinued.

The Functional Tests were created in the 1980s to measure basic skills. But it's clear that success in life requires much more than basic skills. Colleges

## The state is developing practice tests and online courses.

and employers expect students to know more and be able to do more than ever before. The public schools need to prepare graduates for these higher expectations, and the HSA are an important part of that preparation.

### When will I see my child's scores?

Approximately nine weeks after the test is given, the state will send all students' scores to their school district. The school district will then send the scores to parents.

### How should my child prepare for the HSA?

The same activities that improve grades and scores on regular classroom tests—keeping up with coursework and homework, participating in class, studying hard—will help students on the HSA. Following are some other ways students can prepare for the HSA.

#### Pay attention to organizational and study skills.

The HSA cover content from an entire course, so students should organize all their notes for the year and review the material covered in each unit.

#### Brush up on writing skills.

Portions of the HSA require a written answer. Plus, no matter what students' plans are after graduation, they'll need to know how to write well.

#### Manage time carefully.

One study found that good time-management skills predicted good grades in college better than SAT scores.

#### Take the Maryland School Assessment seriously.

The Maryland School Assessment, given in grades 3–8 and grade 10, is good practice for the HSA.

### What if my child doesn't pass one or more tests?

If your child doesn't pass an HSA, contact his or her teacher, who will explain how your child can receive extra help in that subject. Once your child has reviewed the material and received extra help, he or she may retake the test the next time it is given. (Students needing to retake tests can do so three times a year—in January, May, and summer.)

The state is developing tests that school districts can use to identify students who need extra help. Districts can then provide that help to students—before they fail an HSA. The state is also developing online courses that should help prepare

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## For more information on the Maryland High School Assessments

[www.MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org)

From the Testing menu at the top of the page, choose High School Assessment.

students for the tests. These courses will likely be available by September 2005.

### What if my child is absent during testing?

Students absent during regular HSA testing may take the test on one of the scheduled make-up days. (Your child's teacher or principal will tell you when they are.) Unless your child is sick, he or she should make every effort to come to school during testing.

### Will students with disabilities have to pass the HSA to graduate?

Beginning with the class of 2009, all students—including students in special education—must pass the HSA to graduate with a diploma. At this time, there are no alternative graduation tests for students with disabilities. However, this fall, a task force will begin exploring how the state might provide alternative assessments for students who have difficulty on traditional tests. The alternative assessments would cover the same content as the HSA, but would be particularly helpful for students with disabilities. The task force's recommendations should be issued by fall 2007.

Many special education students have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that documents their need to have accommodations during instruction and testing. The Maryland Department of Education publishes a manual to help educators make decisions about accommodations on state tests. The manual, *Requirements for Accommodating, Excusing, and Exempting Students in Maryland Assessment Programs*, is on the Web at [www.MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org). (Click on Divisions/Special Education and Early Intervention/Publications and Reports.) Your child's teacher or principal can also tell you what accommodations are allowed on state tests.

A very small number of students with severe disabilities may earn a Certificate of Program Completion instead of a diploma. The Certificate of Program Completion has been available to students with disabilities for several years and is not a result of recent revisions to Maryland's high school graduation policy.

If you have specific questions about your child and his or her program of study, contact your child's teacher or IEP team. ■

## Maryland High School Assessments & Your Child

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# Maryland Graduation Requirements

## Class of 2009 & Beyond

### Math: 3 credits

- 1 in algebra/data analysis
- 1 in geometry



### English: 4 credits



### Social Studies: 3 credits

- 1 in U.S. history
- 1 in world history
- 1 in local, state, and national government



### High School Assessments:

- take the HSA in English 10, algebra, biology, and government and
- pass all four tests or
- earn a minimum score on each test and a combined score equal to the total of the four passing scores or
- earn a passing score on approved substitute tests



### Science: 3 credits

- 1 in biology
- 2 with laboratory experience in earth, life, or physical science

## Maryland High School Diploma

### Fine Arts: 1 credit



### Technology Education: 1 credit



### Maryland School Assessment:

- take the MSA in geometry

### Health: 1/2 credit



### Local Requirements:

- meet all graduation requirements imposed by your school district



### Other:

- 2 credits in foreign language or
  - 2 credits in advanced technology education and
  - 3 credits in electives
- or
- 4 credits in a career & technology program and
  - 1 credit in an elective

### Physical Education: 1/2 credit



### Service Learning:

- complete 75 hours of student service or
- complete a locally designed program in student service approved by the State