

Maryland Classroom

A Publication from the Maryland State Department of Education

Maryland High School Assessments & Your Students

In June 2004, 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 students. If you don't find the answers to your questions here, visit www.MarylandPublicSchools.org and click on Testing.

What are the Maryland High School Assessments?

The High School Assessments, or HSA, are four tests—one each in algebra/data analysis, government, biology, and English II. (See next column for more about the English II HSA.) Students take each test as they complete the course. The HSA contain both multiple-choice and written-response questions and test about 60% of a typical course's content.

Can I see a copy of the test?

Yes. Each year, MSDE releases one assessment per subject to the public. To review these tests, or to take one online, visit www.MarylandPublicSchools.org and click on Testing/High School Assessment/HSA Test Items. (The first English II assessment should be posted in fall 2005.)

Do students have to pass the HSA to 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 II passing score will be set in fall 2005. (Any documents mentioning an English test passing score of 407 are referring to the English I HSA, which has been discontinued.)



For more information on how passing scores were set, see *Maryland Classroom*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 2003), available on www.MarylandPublicSchools.org under News Room/Publications.

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 exams.

OR

Earn a minimum score on each test and earn a combined score that's equal to the total of the four passing scores. Minimum scores for algebra/data analysis, government, and biology will be set in early 2005; the minimum score for English will be set in fall 2005. All minimum scores will be lower than the passing scores. This combined-score option allows students to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another.

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English II HSA

The English II HSA, formerly called "English 10," will be administered for the first time in May 2005. The English II HSA, a 10th-grade-level test, replaces the English I HSA, which students typically took in 9th grade.

Because the English II HSA satisfies the federal requirement that states administer a reading test of at least 10th-grade rigor, MSDE was able to eliminate the grade 10 reading Maryland School Assessment. MSDE renamed the English 10 test because not all students will take the test during their sophomore year.

www.MarylandPublicSchools.org



open

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

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.

What if students fail a test?

Students needing to retake a failed HSA can do so three times a year—during regular test administrations in January, May, and summer. Students may retake each test as many times as they need to pass it.

What if students are absent during testing?

Students absent during regular HSA testing must take the test on one of the scheduled make-up days. The make-up schedule is set at the same time as the regular testing schedule.

I teach middle school students taking algebra now. Do they have to pass the algebra HSA to graduate?

Yes. Students take each HSA as they complete the course. If students are in middle school but taking a high-school-level course—which happens most frequently with algebra—they 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.

Do students transferring into Maryland schools have to pass the HSA?

If a student transferring into a Maryland school system has already earned high school credit for the HSA-tested subjects and the school system accepts those credits, then he or she does not have to take the HSA. However, beginning in fall 2005, any out-of-state student who transfers into a Maryland school and has not yet taken English II, algebra, government, or biology must take the course and pass the corresponding HSA.

Do students with disabilities have to pass the HSA?

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 tests for students with disabilities.

However, in fall 2004, a task force began exploring how the state might provide alternative assessments for students who have difficulty on traditional tests. The task force is examining how to develop an alternative assessment that’s comparable to the HSA in both content and rigor, and which students would be eligible for it. The task force’s recommendations should be ready by fall 2007.

A very small number of students with severe disabilities may earn a Certificate of Program Completion instead of a diploma. The

Certificate has been available to students with disabilities for several years and is not a result of revisions to Maryland’s high school graduation policy.

If you have specific questions about one of your students, consult his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

Are accommodations provided for students with special needs?

Yes. All students with disabilities must be provided the same accommodations on the HSA as are provided during daily instruction and prescribed in their IEPs.

MSDE publishes *Requirements for Accommodating, Excusing, and Exempting Students in Maryland Assessment Programs* to help teachers and administrators make decisions about accommodations on state tests. The manual is on the Web at www.MarylandPublicSchools.org under Divisions/Special Education and Early Intervention/Publications and Reports.

If you have specific questions about one of your students, consult his or her IEP team.

How is the state helping students and teachers prepare for the tests?

Online Courses

MSDE is now developing online courses to help prepare students for the HSA. You may use course modules with students as an intervention strategy, or students may take the courses themselves to review tested material. The algebra/data analysis course is being field-tested now, and the remaining courses will begin coming online in fall 2005.

Maryland Governor's Academy

MSDE has revamped the Governor’s Academy for Teachers of Science and Mathematics to focus on all four HSA-tested subjects. Content teams and coaches participating in the eight-day, regional academies study course content, pedagogy, and related technology. Follow-up sessions reinforce the material covered in the summer academies and evaluate its application in the classroom.

Public Release Test Forms

Each year, MSDE releases one test form for each HSA. (Go to www.MarylandPublicSchools.org and click on Testing/High School Assessments/HSA Test Items.) There are now five test forms per subject on the site,* along with answer keys. Users can take sample tests online, practice scoring written-response items, and link each test item to the Core Learning Goal, Expectation, and Indicator it measures.

Do students still have to pass the Maryland Functional Tests?

No. The last group of students required to pass the Maryland Functional Tests was the class of 2004. The Functional Tests have been replaced by the HSA.

How are the HSA scored and when will I see my students' results?

About nine weeks after the test is given, MSDE sends students’ scores to school systems. School systems, in turn, send the scores to schools and parents.

The multiple-choice questions are scored by machine, while each written-response item is scored by at least two trained scorers. However, new technology will soon allow written-response items to be scored electronically as well. MSDE is studying this technology—which could eventually decrease scoring time by several weeks—and hopes to use it once it’s proven reliable. ■

*The first English II test form will be posted in fall 2005.

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If you have any questions or comments about this publication, please contact Nan Mulqueen, editor, at 410.767.0475.

Maryland High School Assessments & Your Child

All teachers and parents of middle school students have received a copy of *Maryland High School Assessments & Your Child*, a publication similar to this one that explains the testing program and its implications.

The publication is posted on www.MarylandPublicSchools.org.