

## Sample Question: English

**Reality Check:** In real life, we need to be able to read and write at work and at home. Whether it's writing a cover letter for a job application, reading a software manual, or reading a magazine for fun—reading and writing are fundamental to our everyday lives.

Read the prompt below. Follow the directions in the prompt for writing your essay.

Write a well-organized essay about one personal quality you most admire in a parent or another adult you know. Develop your ideas with appropriate details about the person you select and how he or she demonstrates the quality you admire. Be sure that your essay is fully developed, that it is logically organized, and that your choice of words clearly describes your thoughts.

For information on how essay questions are scored, go to [www.HSAexam.org](http://www.HSAexam.org). Click on HSA Technical Report and go to Chapter 4: Scoring.

## Sample Question: Biology

**Reality Check:** Not everyone is a scientist, but everyone does need a basic understanding of life and the world around us. Just one use of biology in everyday life is being able to talk to a doctor about our health.

Which of these body systems transports glucose and other substances in the blood to the cells of the body?

- A digestive system
- B endocrine system
- C circulatory system
- D reproductive system

## Sample Question: Government

**Reality Check:** To be informed voters and active citizens, we must understand how our government works.

An interest group is **most likely** to

- A nominate party candidates
- B veto proposed legislation
- C set government policy
- D lobby elected officials

To learn more about the HSAs, visit [www.HSAexam.org](http://www.HSAexam.org) or call 1-877-HSA-EXAM.

# Building a future for MARYLAND GRADUATES

## Getting Ready for the Future

A good education prepares students for life after high school—whether that is college, job training, or immediate entry into the workforce. Part of a good education is challenging students to do their best work. High standards help students learn more and develop confidence in their abilities, two things that are critical to future success.

## High Standards for All

It's important to remember that high standards are necessary for all students—not just high-achieving, college-bound students. Every student needs to have strong skills if he or she is to earn a decent living in the 21st century. Whether they want to be restaurant managers, lawyers, engineers, auto mechanics, or dress designers, students will need strong skills—to read, to do math, to communicate, and to solve problems.

Students content to just get by in school—doing the minimum amount of work required to pass—could find themselves struggling to get by in life *after* school. Maryland wants to make sure its graduates are well prepared for the future. That's why **Maryland requires all students to pass the Maryland High School Assessments to graduate**. This requirement begins with students who entered ninth grade in or after 2005.

## Realistic Performance Goals

The High School Assessments are end-of-course tests in English, algebra, biology, and government. While the HSAs are more challenging than the old Maryland Functional Tests, they are still minimum skills tests. The HSAs are not college-level or even college-prep tests. For the most part, they are tenth-grade-level tests.



HIGHER STANDARDS  
BUILD  
BETTER SKILLS  
CREATE  
BETTER FUTURES

Most students will go on to take high school courses that expect a higher level of performance than the HSAs. However, the Maryland educators, parents, community representatives, and testing experts involved in designing and setting passing scores for the HSAs were careful to balance higher standards with expectations that would be reasonable for all students earning a high school diploma.

Maryland High School Assessments

## Good News: Students Are Meeting the Challenge Now

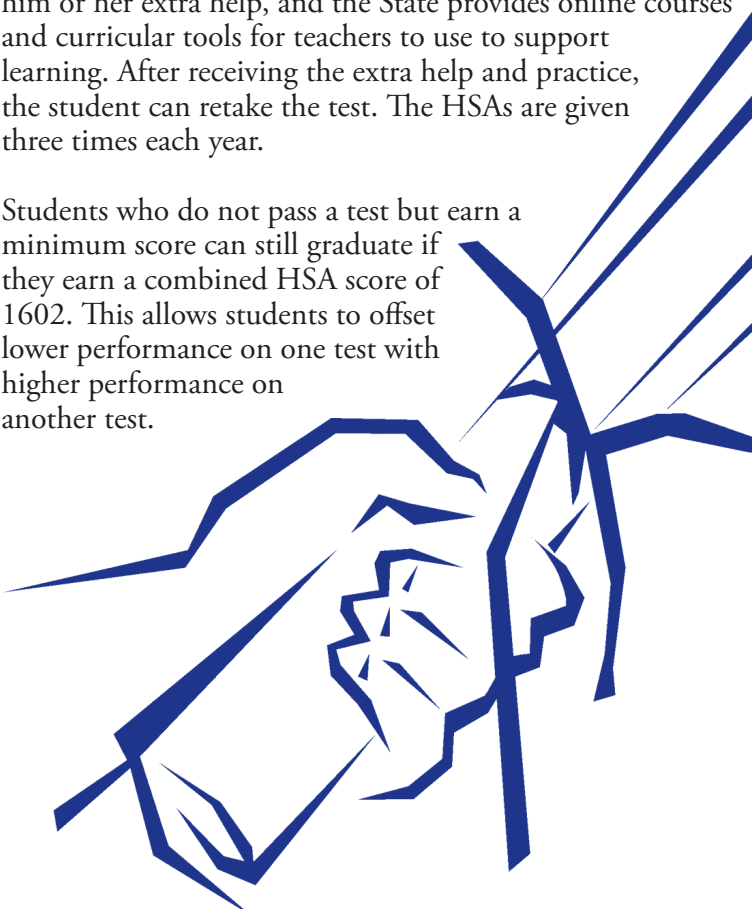
The HSA graduation requirement doesn't take effect until 2009, but thousands of students have already taken and passed the tests. In fact, 71% of ninth-graders have already met the HSA requirement in algebra; 80% have met it in biology; and 78% have met it in government.

In just one year, HSA scores have jumped dramatically. The pass rate for government improved from 66% in 2005 to 74% in 2006; for biology, from 58% to 68%; and for algebra/data analysis from 54% to 67%. These results include middle-schoolers and ninth-graders who must pass the HSAs to graduate, as well as older students who did not need a passing score for a diploma.

## Extra Help for Students Who Need It

If a student does not pass an HSA, the school will provide him or her extra help, and the State provides online courses and curricular tools for teachers to use to support learning. After receiving the extra help and practice, the student can retake the test. The HSAs are given three times each year.

Students who do not pass a test but earn a minimum score can still graduate if they earn a combined HSA score of 1602. This allows students to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another test.



Many students begin taking and passing the HSAs in middle school

## A Final Review in 2008

In 2008—one year before the HSA graduation requirement takes effect—the State Board will review the HSA scores, pass rates, and other data to ensure that the requirement is still a positive step toward strengthening the High School Diploma, and not an unfair hindrance to graduation.

## Testing Content and Skills That Matter

The HSAs are a mix of multiple-choice questions and questions that require a written answer. The questions test the content found in the Maryland Core Learning Goals.

All Maryland public high schools—and any elementary or middle schools offering high-school-level courses—are required to teach a curriculum that includes the Maryland Core Learning Goals. See the chart on the next page for a breakout of the areas tested within each HSA subject.

Higher achievement now makes a higher income possible later

By 2012, Maryland will see a 23% increase in well-paying jobs, such as computer engineers, nurses, and teachers.

The more students learn in high school, the more career options they will have in life.

## High School Assessments: Skills and Content Tested

### English

- Reading and Literature: Comprehension and Interpretation
- Reading and Literature: Making Connections and Evaluation
- Writing: Composing
- Language Usage and Conventions

### Biology

- Skills and Processes of Biology
- Structure and Function of Biological Molecules
- Structure and Function of Cells and Organisms
- Inheritance of Traits
- Mechanism of Evolutionary Change
- Interdependence of Organisms in the Biosphere

### Government

- U.S. Government Structure, Function, and Principles
- Systems of Government and Foreign Policy
- Protecting Rights and Maintaining Order
- Impact of Geography on Governmental Policy
- Economic Principles, Institutions, and Processes

### Algebra/Data Analysis

- Analyzing Patterns and Functions
- Modeling Real-World Situations
- Collecting, Organizing, and Analyzing Data
- Using Data to Make Predictions

## Sample Question: Algebra/Data Analysis

A student at West High School conducted a random survey of 200 tenth-grade students to determine their favorite season. The survey results are shown in the table below.

TENTH-GRADE STUDENTS' FAVORITE SEASON

Season	Number of Students
Winter	42
Spring	64
Summer	52
Fall	42

**Reality Check:** In real life, Americans read and interpret data every day—even if it's just the factoids on CNN or the infographics in *USA Today*.

There are 500 tenth-grade students in the school. Based on the survey results, how many of these tenth-graders would be expected to choose Spring as their favorite season?

- F 105
- G 125
- H 130
- J 160