

MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

September 23, 2008

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Maryland High School Assessment Update

1. When did the State Board of Education first discuss High School Assessments?

Answer: In 1992 the Maryland State Board of Education received the recommendations of a State task force for end-of-course assessments for a set of core high school courses. The task force included in its recommendations an increase in the high school graduation requirements from 18 to 21 credits and added specificity to the kinds of courses required (*including algebra/data analysis and geometry plus an additional mathematics course; an additional science course, etc.*). It also suggested that high school courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies be accompanied with State-administered end-of-course tests to assure consistent minimum expectations in the content and performance for these courses. MSDE staff was charged with working on the assessments beginning in 1992.

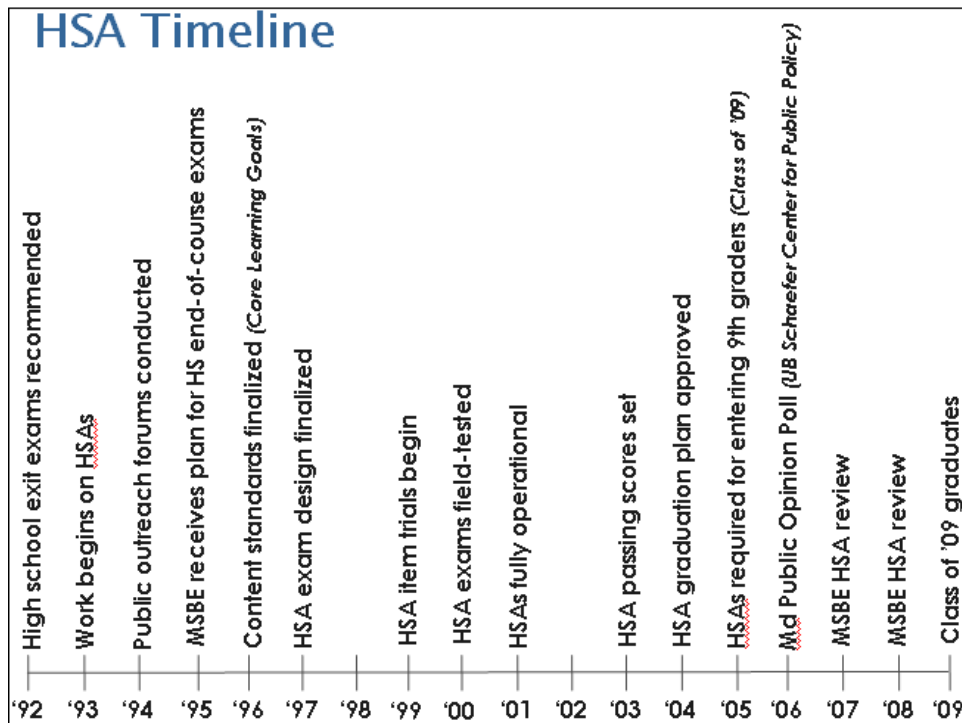
The original high school assessment plan called for 12 tests to be phased in over a period of years. Phase I would begin with students entering grade 9 in fall 2001, requiring students to take English I, algebra, geometry, government, and biology tests when they completed the appropriate courses. Students entering grade 9 in 2003 were slated to be required to take and pass the assessments to graduate. The State Board was expected to decide when additional tests should be implemented, including English II and III, earth/space science, chemistry, physics, U.S. history, and world history.

By 1994, MSDE engaged ETS to conduct public forums around the State on the proposal for High School Assessments (HSAs), with an implementation plan prepared by the following year. In 1995, the State Board received a plan to require students to pass the tests. Subsequently, in 1996, the State Board authorized the development of the exams so they could become a requirement for graduation.

During this time, Maryland continued to administer the Maryland Functional Testing (MFTs) Program under a 1977 basic skills initiative called Project Basic, with graduation assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and citizenship. Those assessments were phased out as the High School Assessments began to be administered to students. Students graduating in 2004 were deemed to be the last required to pass the MFTs. The functional tests were useful initially in assuring basic reading, writing and mathematic skills were assured for all graduates, but their expectations were admittedly very basic and did not prepare students for the challenges of work or college. In fact, over the years between 1989 and 2004, the tests became middle school assessments most students successfully passed before they entered high school.

Programs like the Maryland Functional Testing Program increasingly fell out of favor in other states through the 2000s as they searched for ways to assure that high school programs are of higher quality. Initially, many states moved into comprehensive end-of-high school examinations in language arts and mathematics as mechanisms to cover minimal content acquired over four years of high school in those key content areas. In recent years, states have begun to gravitate toward end-of-course examinations for core courses that are expected of all students. By targeting specific courses, states are in a better position to influence local

school system curriculum, and school systems are in a better position to work with teachers to improve instruction. Maryland's movement toward end-of-course exams thus preceded the national movement when the State's plan for High School Assessments was first set in 1994. In recent years, states such as Indiana, Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina have begun transitioning toward end-of-course exams, abandoning their comprehensive exam programs.



2. When were Maryland high schools and local school systems first provided with the specific content tested by the High School Assessments?

Answer: By 2009, local school systems will have been using Maryland's Core Learning Goals for 13 years (See <http://www.MdK12.org>). In 1996, MSDE sent the testing content standards to local school systems for the first time with the requirement that local school systems certify with MSDE that the Core Learning Goals, which were adopted by the State Board, were embedded into their own local curricula.

The Core Learning Goals were produced by groups of teachers and local central office content specialists as the core content that every Maryland high school graduate should know and be able to do at the conclusion of each of the High School Assessment courses. The Core Learning Goals were specifically written to reflect what was being taught in these courses statewide, not to change the content or approaches of the courses. Because the goal was to reflect existing curricula and not create new curricula, most Maryland local school systems only needed to cross reference their own curricula with the Core Learning Goals and make minor content adjustments.

Even though the implementation of the Core Learning Goals required modest changes in local programs, the State Board took a conservative approach to allow ample time for teachers and students to adjust to the changes. By placing instructional implementation of the Core Learning Goals first, the State Board intended that no student would be tested on content they were not taught. The lead time, in fact, well exceeded the lead time provided to local school systems between the implementation of the Voluntary State Curriculum and the beginning of the use of the Maryland School Assessments at the elementary and middle school level under No Child Left Behind. Again, it is important to note that the students in high school in the 2008-2009 school year and who must meet the HSA requirements for graduation were in kindergarten when the content was first used in high school classes.

At the time the Core Learning Goals were initially implemented in 1996, most biology, government, English 10, and algebra/data analysis courses in the state were not substantively changed at the point of implementation with one exception. As anticipated by the 1992 Task Force, some Maryland students continued to be offered lower level content for High School Assessment courses. While some student transcripts showed algebra/data analysis course credit, the practice in some school systems was to teach what they openly called “baby algebra” or a fundamentals of mathematics course. This practice, however, was not limited to mathematics. The State Superintendent later ended the practice by notifying local superintendents that all Core Learning Goal classes needed to cover all requisite content in order for students to be awarded graduation credit for those courses.

All local school systems have affirmed that all High School Assessment courses cover the Core Learning Goals upon which the assessments are based.

3. How long have the High School Assessments been administered in Maryland?

Answer: The High School Assessments were phased in beginning in 1999-2000 school year, when students first participated in the initial item trials for the algebra/data analysis HSA. The tests were introduced in four steps:

Item Trials- During the first phase, students participated in the item trials in which the first set of test items were field tested. The item trials, first begun in 1999, produced no student or school data, but they informed the testing vendor about which items worked well for inclusion in operational versions of the test to be administered later.

No-Fault Test Administrations- The second phase involved no-fault administrations of the tests, which began in 2000. Individual student and school scores were generated for analysis by State and local staff, but students were not required to take or pass the tests as a condition of graduation.

Taking Tests to Graduate- The third phase of test administration occurred beginning with the 2003 administrations when the State Board revised the graduation requirements and required all students to take all four of the HSAs in order to graduate. This requirement affected students entering grade 9 up through the 2004-2005 school year.

Passing Tests to Graduate- The fourth phase of test administration began with students entering grade 9 in Fall 2005 and after, who now are required to take and pass the four

high school assessments to graduate or achieve the combined score option (1602). In 2007, the State Board added the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation for students unable to achieve 1602 total points or pass all four HSAs. Originally, students entering high school in Fall 2004 were to be required to pass the exams, but in August 2003, the State Board delayed the passing requirement for one year.

4. When did the State Board decide that the HSAs would apply to the students entering high school in Fall 2005?

Answer: The High School Assessments were slated to become a graduation requirement for students as early as 2000. By that time, the State Board scaled back the number of planned assessments from 10 to four tests—one in each of the four core academic areas—English, mathematics, science, and social studies. The State Board actually voted to stage the High School Assessments into three waves. The first wave of assessments—government, biology, English 9, and geometry were to be required first. The second and third waves were slated for implementation much later and generally included more advanced course assessments.

The State Board felt school systems did not have adequate resources to assure passage of the tests by all students. Consequently, in May 2000, the State Board voted to delay requiring the first wave of the tests as a graduation requirement for two years. At that time, a resolution proposed by Board President Edward Andrews was passed by the State Board calling for the delay of the assessments until approximately \$200 million more in State aid would be available to support local efforts. At about that time, a legislated study group on school funding, chaired by Alvin Thornton, worked over a year's time to craft what is now known as the Bridge to Excellence. The 2002 Bridge to Excellence Act brought a large infusion of funds to local school systems that far exceeded the amount called for in the Andrews Resolution.

The Board decided in 2004 that students entering grade 9 in fall 2005 and later would need to take and pass the four High School Assessments to graduate with the proviso that the Board reexamine progress at least by 2008.

5. How are the High School Assessments used with No Child Left Behind?

Answer: When No Child Left Behind was signed in 2002, Maryland was already in the midst of implementing the High School Assessments. No Child Left Behind initially called for tests in grade 10 or higher in reading/language arts and mathematics in addition to the grade level assessments in those subjects in grades three through eight. The State Board of Education elected to contract for a stand-alone reading/language arts assessment to be administered in grade 10 and to use the geometry end-of-course HSA to fulfill the mathematics testing requirement. After the State Board voted to require students to take the HSAs to graduate, the option of using the end-of-course HSAs in English grade 10 and algebra/data analysis to satisfy the NCLB requirement became available to the State. The State consequently modified the stand-alone English language arts test to become an English 10 test in 2005. The Board also terminated the use of the geometry High School Assessment and decided to use the algebra/data analysis. The State Board wished to reduce the amount

of high school testing to the four required for graduation now that three of the tests fulfilled the NCLB testing requirements.

This change was critical in assuring that at the high school level, the assessments required for NCLB accountability also carried accountability at the student level. It is a well documented fact that high school students who take assessments without individual accountability will frequently not achieve at their optimum levels. Initial scores on the HSAs were generally lower than expected. Maryland, like other states that have undergone a similar transition, saw student scores rise as students were required to pass the assessments to graduate.

Beginning with 2008 HSAs, the high school Adequate Yearly Progress for each high school will be calculated using what is referred to by USDE as the “best test model.” AYP in 2008 will be computed based on the performance of students by the end of grade eleven and then will shift permanently to an end-of-grade-twelve calculation beginning in 2009. From 2003 through 2007, AYP was calculated based on the first time students take HSAs, unfortunately not crediting schools with successful retesting experienced by many students who initially failed the assessments. The AYP calculation in 2008 will be based instead on students’ highest scores. This method will provide a much better gauge of school level work with students.

6. How are the HSAs used to gauge school system and school accountability under Maryland’s Bridge to Excellence Act?

Answer: In 2002, the legislature passed the Bridge to Excellence Act, also known as the Thornton Act as it is frequently called in honor of the Commission’s chair. The Act is important in that it intentionally eliminated a number of frequently overlapping funding streams provided by the State to local school systems and replaced them with a single, less complex funding package. The change from an equity-based funding program to an adequacy-based funding program could only be successful with significant measures of local accountability. The fact that Maryland had a strong accountability program, later shaped by No Child Left Behind, made it even easier to hold local school systems accountable for assuring that spending occurred properly.

At the elementary and middle school levels, the Maryland School Assessments at grades three through eight fulfill the Bridge to Excellence need for measures of student performance as reported in the annual local school system Master Planning procedure. At the high school level, the High School Assessments fulfill the requirements for school and system measures at the high school level. The value of the HSAs in measuring high schools relies on assessments for which students are accountable. The High School Assessments form the core measures for high schools along with graduation rates and other measures, but the HSAs are the sole measures of academic performance that encompass all students. Other measures, such as Advanced Placement and SAT test data, cannot be used in Master Planning as sole measures because significant portions of students in most schools do not take these assessments.

7. What changes are in store for High School Assessments in coming years?

Answer: Beginning with the spring 2009 administration of the HSAs, Maryland will replace the constructed response items in all four tests with selected response items. This change will assure that the assessments can be scored and results returned to students more quickly. This change will help students engage in remediation work or in the Bridge Plan more readily and will help them plan next steps in a more timely fashion. The change will also facilitate the offering of future HSAs as on-line assessments, which can result in a further reduction in the scoring and reporting cycle than currently possible with the pencil-and-paper versions of the assessments. We have found that students respond well to the on-line versions of the assessments at other grades and are encouraged about the benefits and possible cost reductions associated with on-line testing as well.

Throughout these transitions, MSDE has worked with its National Psychometric Council to assure that as we revise the tests, we maintain the testing validity, reliability, and consistency with past forms of the test. We also work carefully with local school system superintendents about changes to be sure that changes are done with integrity and full understanding. Additionally, we worked with a national test vendor to change to all multiple choice items, and our tests must undergo a lengthy, rigorous peer review process conducted by the U.S. Department of Education to receive their approval before changes are made. We will use the same test maps and will cover precisely the same content as is used with the current test versions. Further, equating studies will be used to assure that the revisions will maintain the equivalent levels of rigor.

8. How much of the school year is dedicated to the teaching of High School Assessment content?

Answer: The HSAs were designed to represent the core of content that every child should know and be able to do for each of the four High School Assessment courses. The configuration permits schools to incorporate the content into the school system curriculum and to go well beyond the HSA content as the school system curriculum writers see fit.

The test items were designed as typical selected response items and constructed response items that not only cover the content covered in courses but also resemble the kinds of in-class testing students normally face. It would be accurate to estimate that the HSAs are designed to cover only about 60% of the content in the course. Further, the passing scores were set to represent a level of performance that teachers felt was attainable by all students by the time the passage of the tests would be a graduation requirement in spring 2009. Consequently, it is safe to say that students will need to know significantly less than 60% of any course content to pass it. While only 60% of the course is actually tested, the passing scores actually call for a student to know as little as one-half of the tested items to pass. That could represent as little as a third of a typical course's content to be mastered. The HSAs clarify content, and they sample from a year's content knowledge and coursework to assure a student has reached at least a minimum level of performance.

Each year's HSAs are posted on-line at www.mdk12.org for teachers and students to view and study. There was much concern that teachers and students be adequately familiarized with the kinds of items used in the assessments, and students are encouraged to use the

posted tests as practice exercises as they see fit. The test forms include correct answers and instructional and learning assists.

In short, from the onset, the High School Assessments were designed for teachers to teach the course content. By teaching the course content, they will be teaching the content in the Core Learning Goals along with all the additional content the local school systems feel should be included. A good High School Assessment course will not be simply a preparation exercise for taking the High School Assessment. Rather, it will be good teaching.

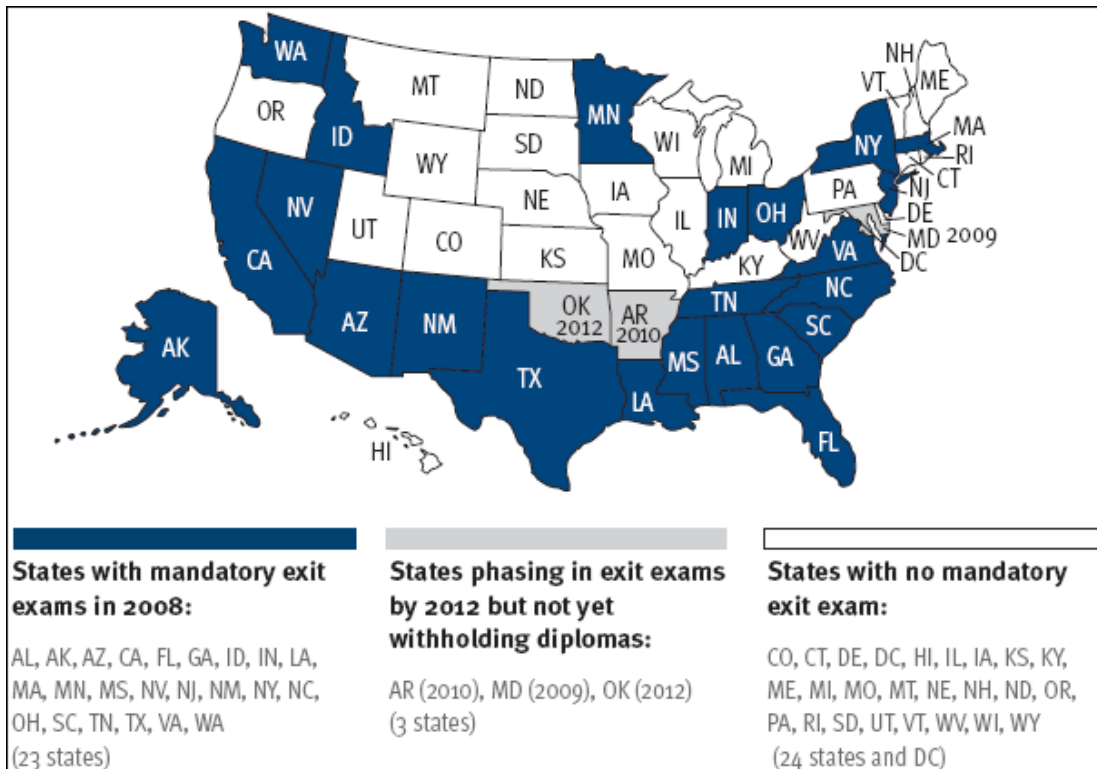
9. How does Maryland's accountability system fit into the national school reform context?

Answer: The national trend of school reform in the United States over the past 30 years has been one of a growing sense of urgency over higher standards, international competitiveness, and high school reform. It began in 1983 with the release of *A Nation at Risk*—a national warning about the state of America's schools. Since then, well-respected study results and commission reports such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) starting in 1995 and *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* in 2005 have provided the evidence necessary to push for change. The results have been national reform movements and legislation such as Goals 2000, the No Child Left Behind Act, the American Diploma Project, and many others that have continued to increase incrementally what we expect from schools and students to meet the increasing demands of the world of work and higher education.

Over this period, Maryland has moved in parallel with these national trends while forging its own path based on its work from sources such as the Governor's Commission on School Performance (also known as the Sondheim Report), the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, and the Thornton Commission. Maryland's journey has taken it from the Maryland Functional Tests to increased graduation and course requirements to one of the first standards-based accountability systems in the country to the High School Assessments and on to better alignment of high school and postsecondary education through the state's P-20 Council and membership in the American Diploma Project.

It is important to note that Maryland is not alone in moving ahead with such actions. Thirty-three states have committed themselves to the American Diploma Project's goals. Over half the states have current or planned examinations. States without such commitments to improve the quality of high school education will find themselves and their students trailing behind the rest of the country and the world.

States with Current or Planned High School Exams as Graduation Requirements*



Source: Center on Education Policy, 2008

* Any exam a student must pass to fulfill graduation requirements

Many states with comprehensive or grade level high school exams for graduation are transitioning their testing programs to end-of-course exams just as Maryland did. In 2002, only two states used end-of-course exams. During the 2007-08 school year, four states had policies requiring end-of-course exams. By 2015, 11 states will have switched to end-of-course exams with three more using both grade-level and end-of-course exams. This is an increase of 12 states over 13 years. States are making this change for a number of reasons including the ability to better assess content mastery, a clearer link from standards to assessments, and the possibility of using the exams for measuring college and work readiness.

11. What do we know about the effects of high school exams tied to graduation on student performance and graduation rates?

Answer: Beginning with the students entering grade nine in Fall 2005, the student passing rates for the four HSAs increased, as students now recognized that the granting of the high school diploma was attached to the passage of the assessments. This pattern reflects a similar rise with the Maryland Functional Testing Program in its initial years. For example, the Maryland Functional Mathematics Test had pass rates of 67.9% in the initial year. By the time it counted for graduation, approximately 85% of students were passing the test by the end of grade nine and 96% of students were passing the test by the end of grade 11.

Massachusetts and other states with high school exam programs have experienced similar patterns of improvement over time. In particular, passing rates were very low in

Massachusetts for African American students as the State began its assessment program. However, cumulative passing rates rose significantly for African American students as they approached graduation, so not only do pass rates increase over time but achievement gaps also narrow.

Virtually no students failed to graduate because they failed to pass the Maryland Functional Tests alone. Students who failed tests frequently failed to successfully complete coursework or other requirements. In fact, across the country, cumulative pass rates on high school graduation exams are significantly higher than graduation rates, sometimes over 20% higher, which shows that factors other than exams have a much larger impact on graduation than the tests do.

Similarities to other states' pass rates should not be unexpected because Maryland's expectations of students are very similar to those in other states. In fact, an Achieve review of high school exams tied to graduation in Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas found that all the exams were of similar difficulty and tested roughly ninth grade material.

12. What are the alternative mechanisms for meeting the graduation testing requirement in Maryland?

Answer: The trend among states is for high school graduation to be accompanied by a testing requirement. As states implement these testing systems, more often than not, they are creating alternative mechanisms for students to meet the exam requirements. Of the 23 states currently withholding diplomas because of exams, 18 provide all students with alternatives, and all 23 have alternative measures for students with disabilities.

The mechanisms used in other states were studied in Maryland over two years by a task force to determine appropriate mechanisms, particularly for students with disabilities and students not normally functioning well in assessments as the State crafted its Bridge Plan for Academic Validation and the other alternative mechanisms. The alternatives in Maryland include:

- a. **Combined Score Option**—A student taking the four HSAs who achieves a total of 1602 score points will have met the HSA testing requirement for graduation even if they do not pass one or more of the individual tests. Maryland is the only state with this type of alternative.
- b. **Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB)**—Students who have earned a MSDE-approved score on a HSA-related AP or IB examination may use that result to substitute for a passing score on the related HSA.
- c. **Mod-HSA**—The Mod-HSA (Modified High School Assessment) was administered in spring 2008 for the first time and is expressly designed to aid an identified sector of the special education population that is deemed to be on grade level, but which will be challenged with the complexity of some assessment instruments. Consequently, following guidelines provided by USDE, Maryland developed Mod-HSAs for each of the High School Assessments.

- d. **Mod-HSA-Plus Option**—While approximately two percent of students are eligible to take the Mod-HSA the first time, per federal rules, additional special education students not meeting eligibility criteria can meet the state testing requirement by taking the Mod-HSAs after having failed the High School Assessment the first time. This option opened up for students in the summer of 2008.
- e. **Bridge Plan for Academic Validation**—Students unable after two administrations of the HSA or the Mod-HSA to pass the assessment or who cannot achieve 1602 combined score points can meet the assessment requirements by successfully completing one or more Bridge Plan projects. The Bridge Plan was successfully piloted in several Maryland school systems in summer 2008 and will be available beginning in the 2008-2009 school year on a large-scale basis. The Bridge Plan permits students falling short of the passing score on any particular HSA or Mod-HSA to complete one or more independent projects that cover content specifically related to the testing content for that HSA.

Students and teachers are finding the projects to be of appropriate content and that they can be completed generally within eight to 12 hours of independent student work. Because the project work can be completed with some teacher direction over several days or weeks, students who normally are challenged with time-limited test situations are finding the work less stressful and more achievable. Further, the project work is generally designed to provide students with challenging, but interesting work that gives them an opportunity to show they can apply the content they have learned during their coursework.

13. What types of interventions and supports are in place for students?

Answer: As required, each local school system has developed and implemented a series of interventions and supports to help students pass the HSAs. Representatives of each system have given presentations to the State Board of Education on their supports, and steady increases in pass rates speak to the effectiveness of these programs.

In addition, MSDE has developed a number of supports that are available to all students across the state and that can be used either for preparation or remediation. Each year, MSDE has released a complete sample test in each of the four HSA subjects as well as online mini-practice tests in each HSA subject. However, the most important support is the development of free, online courses for all four HSA subjects.

The online courses are available free for teachers to use in preparation of lesson materials for their own classrooms and for working with students. Courses are also free for parents who wish to gain knowledge of the content students would need to cover for each of the High School Assessment courses. Lastly, the online courses can be provided either in whole or in part to students as a stand-alone course or in conjunction with their own course. Enrolled students have both an online teacher as well as the classroom teacher in their own school to work with them. These courses are specially designed to cover all of the content included in the High School Assessments.

14. What are the requirements for students with disabilities for participation in the High School Assessments?

Answer: The federal IDEA Amendments of 1997 and the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 require all students with disabilities to be included in all general State and district-wide assessment programs. These provisions prohibit the State from exempting any students from participation in these assessment programs. For determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB, all students, including students with disabilities, are to be assessed in reading and math during high school. The English and algebra/data analysis assessments are used for all students to satisfy the NCLB requirements. Therefore, students with disabilities not eligible for Alt-MSA must participate in the assessments for English and algebra/data analysis.

IDEA emphasizes providing students with disabilities access to the general curriculum and to educational reforms as an effective means of ensuring better results. Students with disabilities are to participate and progress in the general education curriculum. It is the responsibility of each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to consider accommodations, supplementary aids, services, and supports to enable the student to participate and progress in the general curriculum with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Each student's IEP team includes that student's parents. The student's IEP team must discuss and document:

- How the student will participate and progress in the general education curriculum with nondisabled peers;
- Performance and participation in the appropriate Statewide and district-wide assessments; and
- Status of completing graduation requirements.

15. What are the graduation and Maryland HSA expectations for students with disabilities?

ALL students, including students with disabilities, are expected to receive instruction consistent with the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC), based on the Maryland Content Standards, Core Learning Goals, and must be assessed on their attainment of grade level reading (English) and math (algebra/data analysis) content for the high school band of Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and course content of algebra/data analysis, biology, and government for the HSA. Students with disabilities are expected to have access to general education curriculum, instruction in the content, meet the same enrollment, attendance, credit, course, service learning requirements as their nondisabled peers, and participate in State assessment programs (MSA and HSA). If the student has been determined by his or her IEP team to have a significant cognitive disability, that student would be required to participate in the Alt-MSA.

- **Alt-MSA:** Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in regular testing take the Alternate Maryland School Assessment—or Alt-MSA—which has been administered since 2003. The Alt-MSA is tailored to each student's unique instructional needs, and students taking the test earn a Certificate of Program Completion instead of a high school diploma. For more information, please refer to Question #16 in this document.

- **Mod-HSA:** In May 2004, the U.S. Department of Education gave states permission to develop modified tests for a small number of students with disabilities who are able to make progress toward grade-level standards but not in the same timeframe as other students. The Modified HSA—or Mod-HSA—is available for English, algebra/data analysis, biology and government. Students with disabilities passing the Mod-HSA must be eligible to earn a high school diploma.
- **Bridge Plan:** Any student with a disability who fails the same HSA twice may use the Bridge Plan option to complete the necessary points to meet the 1602 composite score. This option takes advantage of all points accumulated by the student during their participation in the HSA and/or the Mod-HSA, reducing the numbers of modules required to be completed by the student with an IEP.
- **Mod-HSA +:** This option is available to any student with an IEP who fails the same HSA at least once but has received course credit. Due to federal requirements related to limited eligibility and participation in the Mod-HSA, the student's first HSA assessment score will be counted for the AYP results, but the student may opt to take the related course Mod-HSA for graduation purposes and meet the assessment requirements for the Maryland High School Diploma.

16. What are requirements for determining that a student with a disability will receive a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion rather than a Maryland High School Diploma?

Answer: COMAR 13A.03.02.09A(3)(d) states that, “The decision to award a student with disabilities a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion will not be made until after the beginning of the student's last year in high school unless the student is participating in the alternative Maryland School Assessment Program (Alt-MSA).”

Students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a high school diploma may be awarded a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion if they meet **one** of the following standards:

- The student is enrolled in an educational program for at least 4 years beyond eighth grade, or its age equivalency, and is determined by an IEP team, with the agreement of the parents of the student, to have developed appropriate skills for the individual to enter the world of work, to act responsibly as a citizen, and enjoy a fulfilling life, with the world of work including but not limited to: i) gainful employment, ii) work activity centers, iii) sheltered workshops, and iv) supported employment;
- OR**
- The student has been enrolled in an educational program for 4 years beyond grade 8 or its age equivalent and will have reached the age of 21 by the end of the student's current school year.

17. What are the HSA academic interventions for high school English language learners?

Answer: The progress of ELL students has been monitored since the beginning of the HSAs and pass rates among ELL students are increasing. A number of ELL students may need more than four years to graduate due to their English proficiency and thus the need for additional language support.

To increase the English proficiency and student academic achievement in the core academic subjects of limited English proficient children, language instruction for limited English Proficient and immigrant students is provided to all students who qualify in all 24 local school systems.

Strategies used by school systems and schools may include: Extra time during the regular school day; teaching content while students continue to learn English; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers providing support within the content for ELL children; content and ESOL teachers team-teaching and/or co-teaching; pull-out support from the ESOL teacher (such as, small group intensive instruction, one-on-one instruction); bilingual and/or electronic dictionaries; content glossaries in different languages; extended school day which could include before and after school sessions; evening, weekend sessions and summer school.

The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation can be particularly valuable for ELL students, as it gives them another opportunity to demonstrate their content knowledge while receiving additional instructional and individual support that enables students to pass the HSA and to reach their goal of graduating from high school.

For the HSA administration, ELL accommodation plans are created for ELL students to ensure that students have equal access to grade-level content while being provided with the identified accommodations that could include extended time, bilingual dictionary, reader and/or scribe. Teachers ensure that students work toward grade-level content standards by using a range of instructional strategies based on the varied strengths and needs of students.

During a test situation, an ELL student will frequently be working independently with the accommodations mentioned above. However, when working on the Bridge Plan, the ELL student can have the work broken down into achievable portions, and the monitor can go beyond normal test accommodations to help the student fully understand the assignment and complete it successfully.

18. What does the public think about graduation tests and requirements?

Answer: In December 2006, the Schaefer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore conducted its annual poll of over 800 Marylanders on various policy areas including education. MSDE worked with Schaefer Center researchers to construct survey questions in an effort to determine public support of the High School Assessment program. The questions were based on previous work by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy at the University of Massachusetts. The results were released in the Schaefer

Center's report "Maryland Policy Choices: 2007 Telephone Survey of Maryland Residents." The researchers found that:

- 85% of Marylanders think "high school graduates today need a higher level of skills than they did a decade ago"
- 96% of Marylanders think "high school students should be required to reach a minimum level of skill" in core subject areas before they can graduate
- 85% of Marylanders favor the idea that students should "take and pass a series of tests" in order to be eligible for a high school diploma.

These findings show strong support for the ideas undergirding the HSAs.

19. What is the timetable for the release of the 2008 High School Assessment results?

Answer: MSDE sent the results of the Spring 2008 assessments to Maryland school systems in mid July with the direction that parents and students should be notified by August 8 of their result. There was concern that students be informed of results well in advance of the school year so they could plan to take advantage of remediation, Bridge Plan options, and upcoming assessment opportunities.

MSDE is currently working with local school systems to produce a record of the status of students in terms of their performance by the end of grade 11 on the HSAs to date and to identify students who have met the assessment requirement using one of the alternative routes. This information will be compiled and provided to the State Board by the time of the October meeting.

The HSA status will be used by Maryland beginning with the 2008 HSA administration for Adequate Yearly Progress determinations. This will be a significant improvement over the previous method since it takes advantage of federal rules permitting school systems to use the student's highest score in AYP calculations rather than their first test administration.

Producing a picture of the level of student success in meeting the testing requirements requires school systems to determine what students are enrolled at the end of grade 11, the number that have accumulated enough course credits to be on-track to graduate in spring 2009, and the number that have met the testing requirement through all of the available routes from passing the tests and the combined score option to the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. MSDE will produce compiled data for the October 2008 State Board meeting, disaggregated by subgroup, by method of meeting the testing requirement, and by school system and school.

During the 2008-2009 school year, many more students will complete their requirements in time for graduation, including those doing the Bridge Plan. Consequently, the October 2008 record and all other attempts to gain a snapshot of student progress in the school year will always be short of capturing all successes. Data thus far indicate that students should be able to graduate on time in the spring of 2009 as expected.

Maryland's Accountability and Assessment System: Chronology

1977	Project Basic Approval	State Board of Education approves Project Basic identifying 5 skill areas as basis for minimum competency graduation prerequisites – basic skills, world of work, leisure time, citizenship, and survival skills.
1978	Project Basic Competencies	MSDE develops competencies in each Project Basic area; begins working with local school systems to ensure the competencies are in the curricula.
1980	Maryland Functional Reading Test	Maryland Functional Reading Test (first of the Project Basic tests) was given for the first time, followed by tests developed in math, writing and citizenship over the next 5 years.
1983	1987 Graduation Requirement Reading, Math, Writing, Citizenship	State Board approves regulation requiring students in class of 1987 to pass competency tests in reading, math, writing, and citizenship to graduate.
1986	Delay of Writing Test until 1989	State Board delays writing test requirement until Class of 1989.
1989	Full Implementation of Project Basic Functional Tests Governor's Commission Calls for Enhanced Accountability System	All Project Basic functional tests become graduation prerequisites. Governor's Commission on School Performance issues report calling for new system of school accountability and school improvement, including criterion-referenced tests in a vital core of student achievements.
1990	Maryland School Performance Program Approved	State Board approves development of Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP) and adopts Maryland Learning Outcomes for grades 3, 5 8, and 11 in reading, math, writing/language arts, science, and social studies as the basis for development of local curriculum and state assessments. State releases first annual School Performance report.
1991	Piloting of Maryland School Assessment Program – MSPAP	State pilots the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) in grades 3, 5, and 8.
1992	Enhanced Math and Science High School Graduation Requirement	State Board adopts new high school graduation requirements that include more stringent math and science content and require students to prepare for college or a career (or both), and perform service-learning. State requirements increase from 18 to 21 credits. Task Force recommends State implement end-of-course exams for core high school classes.

1993	Annual Performance Measures and Interventions for Failing Schools Adopted	State Board adopts accountability standards for the MSPAP and standards and procedures for state intervention to reconstitute schools failing to progress toward standards.
1994	First Schools Named for Reconstitution Redesign of Teacher Education Programs	Results of 1993 MSPAP find some schools meeting state standards, while two Baltimore City schools become eligible for reconstitution because of failure to progress toward standards. Joint State Department of Education and Higher Education Commission task force issues recommendations calling for the redesign of teacher education programs.
1995	School Performance Report Highlights Need for Enhanced Accountability State Board Receives Plan for End-of-Course Tests	School Performance Report finds 4 of 10 students meet state standards. State Board receives plan for requiring students to pass 10 end-of-course tests in English, math, science, and social studies as a condition of graduation.
1996	Approval of Enhanced Core Learning Goals and Development of High School Assessments General Assembly Approves Rewards	State Board approves Core Learning Goals in English, math, science and social studies and approves development of high school assessment based on goals. General Assembly approves rewards program for schools making significant progress toward meeting MSPP standards.
1997	Development of Enhanced High School Assessments Begins	State Board authorizes development of exit exams. Task force of over 35 people representing teachers, business leaders, community members, and education-related organizations develop recommendations for the tests.
1999-2000	Field Testing of High School Assessments	Field-testing of high school assessments begins during this school year with a phase-in plan that would require students entering grade nine in the fall of 2001 to pass certain end-of-course exams.
2000 2000	Passage of High School Assessments Required for Graduation for All Students Entering 9 th Grade in 2001	State Board votes to delay requiring students to pass the assessments to graduate because of concern about funding to help students who need additional assistance to pass the tests. State Board agrees to continue implementation of the

		assessments as scheduled starting with students entering grade 9 in fall of 2001. State Board wanted to continue to emphasize the importance of the tests and agreed that scores for 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years would be reported on a percentile basis for school systems, schools, and individual students and that scores would be recorded on student transcripts beginning with students entering grade 9 in the fall of 2001.
2001	Passage of Federal No Child Left Behind Act	Congress passes the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).
2002	Federal Law Requires Reporting of Student Achievement Data and Sets Proficiency Levels for Reading and Mathematics	President signs NCLB requiring MSDE to report disaggregated student achievement by subgroups, including race/ethnicity and special services for grades 3-8 and high school in reading and mathematics. NCLB requires that all students will reach proficiency levels of achievement in reading and mathematics by 2013-14.
2003	Maryland School Assessment Adopted for Students in Grades 3,5, 8; High School Students Take Reading and Geometry Assessment	Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 take the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in reading and math in spring 2003. Students in grade 10 take the reading test. High school math achievement is measured by the High School Assessment in geometry. High school students also take the biology HSA, but it is not an NCLB requirement.
2004	Expansion of MSA to All students in Grades 3 though 8; High School Students Take Reading and Geometry Tests State Board Authorizes Merger of Grade 9 English and Grade 10 Reading	Students in grades 3-8 take the MSA in reading and math in spring 2004. Students in grade 10 take the reading test. High school math achievement is measured by the High School Assessment in geometry. High school students also take the biology HSA, but it is not an NCLB requirement. State Board authorizes State Superintendent to revise English Grade 9 HSA and merge it with the reading Grade 10 NCLB test to become the English 10 (later changed to English 2) HSA.
2005	High School Assessment in Algebra/Data Analysis Replaces Geometry as Mathematics Requirement AYP Appeals Allowed Based on Modified Assessments	Maryland replaces the geometry assessment with the algebra/data analysis assessment as the NCLB high school mathematics measure, effective for 2005-06 school year. Students taking the geometry course no longer required to take the geometry HSA beginning with the 2005-06 school year. Maryland allows Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and School Improvement status appeals for schools on the basis of students with IEP's who have documented evidence that indicates the students would have qualified to take a modified assessment if one had been available.

2006	Certain Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Scores Allowed to Substitute for High School Assessment	State Board approves the use of the AP or IB as substitutes for HSA's if students receive specific scores on specific AP or IB tests, effective with the 2006-07 school year.
2007-2008	HSA Alternatives Available	State Board approves use of combined-score option and Bridge Plan for Academic Validation as alternative ways for students to meet HSA graduation requirement.