



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.  
**DATE:** October 31, 2012  
**SUBJECT:** 2012 High School Assessment, Graduation, Drop-out and School Progress Results

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**PURPOSE:**

To provide Board members with a summary and overview of the statewide results on the High School Assessments (HSA), graduation, drop-out and high school progress for 2012.

**BACKGROUND:**

Maryland's 2012 high school graduating class is the fourth class for which students are required to meet High School Assessment requirements to satisfy one state graduation prerequisite. In order to meet that prerequisite, students had to pass end of course tests in English, Algebra/Data Analysis, and Biology; earn a combined passing score of 1208 points across all three tests; or satisfactorily complete assigned projects from the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation in lieu of passing failed tests. Students who had previously taken the Government HSA could also meet the requirement with a combined passing score of 1602.

In addition to serving as high school graduation requirements in Maryland, the High School Assessments fulfill federal requirements for high school assessments in mathematics, English/language arts, and science as part of the school accountability plan mandated under the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Federal rules require the use of English and Algebra/Data Analysis assessment results along with graduation rate data for determining if schools, systems, and the State are achieving annual performance targets. In May, 2012, Maryland sought and received flexibility under ESEA, and the determination of school accountability was altered for 2012. The State Board will be briefed on the 2012 State level high school results in the aggregate and by race and special services subgroups. The computation of high school progress for 2012 will also be discussed.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

**HSA Development.** Maryland's High School Assessments are end-of-course exams that have been under development since the mid-1990's, with some tests administered on a no-fault basis to students as early as 2000. The passage of the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as No Child Left Behind), led state policy makers to narrow the testing plan down to one test in each of the four core academic areas—English 10, Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and Government. Two of the tests, English 10 and Algebra/Data Analysis, are required by federal law to be used along with graduation rate data to determine if a school, system, or state meets the mandated annual performance targets. Biology results must be reported under federal rules, but they are not incorporated into the accountability determinations. The fourth test, Government, had satisfied a State reporting requirement but was not administered in 2011-2012 and therefore was not a graduation requirement for the Class of 2012.

Because the tests are end-of-course exams, students take the tests as they complete the courses. If students pass the assessments as they take the courses earlier in their high school career, their results are reported in their senior year upon graduation. Students unable to achieve passing scores on High School Assessments are permitted to retest only after they have been given an opportunity for further instruction or remediation.

**Options for Students Failing Tests.** Students who are unable to pass a High School Assessment have two options. Recognizing that some students are particularly strong in some areas and weaker in others, the Combined Score Option allows students to compensate lower HSA scores with higher scores in others as long as the total number of points across three assessments equals 1208. Among 2012 graduates, 76.6 percent passed all three assessments. Another 13.5 percent achieved a combined score of 1208. For students unable to pass all three tests or achieve 1208 points, a third mechanism is used. A student failing any HSA at least two times can meet the Maryland graduation requirement by completing extensive assignments of independent instructional work related to the course for which they failed the HSA as part of the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. A student successfully completing an assigned Bridge Plan project is deemed as meeting the HSA requirement related to the failed test. Among 2012 graduates, 9.6 percent met the HSA requirement through the Bridge plan. Note: Students who had previously taken the Government HSA could also meet the requirement with a combined passing score of 1602.

**Annual Testing Cycle.** The assessments include selected response (multiple choice) items designed to facilitate rapid scoring and turnaround of results. The tests are administered five times per school year. The three major administrations coincide with the local academic year cycle and are given at the end of the first and second semesters and during the summer term. One additional administration is also made available in the early fall of each year to accommodate students who may have failed the end of year administration and need only minor review at the beginning of the school year to demonstrate the skills to pass. Finally, an administration is available in spring of each year for seniors who have not met the requirement only to permit expedited scoring so that results can be incorporated into local graduation decisions for the relatively small number of seniors still attempting to meet the HSA requirement in the second semester of the senior year.

**HSA Waiver Option.** State Board regulations also permit local superintendents to grant waivers to a limited number of students not passing one or more HSAs under extraordinary circumstances. Though students who are granted waivers can receive their diplomas, they are counted as “not passing” when HSA results are reported for both state and federal purposes. In 2012, just 0.2 percent of students received a waiver.

**Graduation Rate.** Federal regulations define graduation rate as a ratio of the number of students earning a diploma in a given year to their adjusted cohort, which includes all students who entered Grade 9 the same year and includes those who subsequently dropped out of school before graduating. Because graduation data is not yet available for the Class of 2012, the data reported today apply to the 2010 and 2011 graduating classes. The four-year graduation rate for students in 2011 was 82.82 percent, .85 percentage points above the 2010 rate. The five-year rate for 2010 is 2.6 points higher than the four-year rate, reflecting students who required an additional year to complete their diploma requirements. The 2011 graduation data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity and by service group.

**Drop-out Rate.** In order to be fully prepared for college and career, students must remain in school to complete their educational program. Today the State Board is receiving information concerning the percent of students who, having entered grade 9, leave school without a high school diploma and do not enroll in another school or state-approved program during that same school year. The statewide cohort drop-out rates for the Class of 2010 and 2011 are 11.93 and 11.22 percent, respectively. Drop-out rates will be provided for these cohort groups disaggregated by race/ethnicity and by service group.

**Summary.** Today the State Board is discussing the results received in September related to the high school graduating class of 2012, including a report on the number of students passing the assessments, students unable to pass the assessments, students meeting the requirement through the Bridge Plan Option, and students granted waivers by local superintendents. Results presented today are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and special services. High school graduation, drop-out and results are shown for the Class of 2010 and for the Class of 2011.

## **HIGH SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT**

**Background.** The accountability system designed to meet ESEA requirements under Maryland’s Flexibility Plan is based on three key beliefs: (1) all schools should improve the learning of all students and be judged by the progress they make towards helping all students across subgroups to learn and to close performance gaps; (2) schools have different needs and operate in different contexts, and the strategies they adopt for improvement should reflect their needs; and (3) school performance targets should reflect the school’s unique history of student performance.

**Progress Targets.** Annual performance targets for schools reflect progress towards increased achievement in English and in mathematics, participation in testing, and increased cohort graduation rates for all students and for race/ethnicity and service subgroups. Two high school assessments, English 10 and Algebra/Data Analysis, serve as measures of achievement. For high schools, the achievement targets are based on a 50 percent reduction in the percent of non-proficient students over

six years (2011 through 2017), in equal annual increments. Examples of achievement targets are included in the discussion. Graduation targets are based on a 50 percent reduction in the percent of non-graduates over nine years (2011 through 2020). Targets for reading, mathematics, participation, and cohort graduation rates were computed for students in the aggregate enrolled in the 250 public high schools in Maryland. All targets were achieved by 88.2 percent of the schools. Calculation of target attainment by the 3,102 subgroups identified across schools revealed that 91.3 percent met all targets.

**Summary.** Results describing high school attainment of achievement targets in reading and mathematics, participation, and cohort graduation based on school progress towards improvement and closing achievement gaps will be discussed.

**ACTION:**

For information only, no action required.