



Maryland High School Assessments  
Algebra/Data Analysis • Government • Biology • English

# High School Assessments & Your Child

**A**ny child who entered 9th grade in or after 2005 must pass the Maryland 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, or go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org).

## What are the Maryland High School Assessments?

The High School Assessments, or HSAs, are four tests—one each in Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, Government, and English 2. (The English 2 exam tests material usually taught in a 10th-grade English class). Your child will take each test as he or she completes the related course.

The tests are based on the Core Learning Goals, a part of Maryland's curriculum that outlines high school course content and learning objectives. To review Maryland's Core Learning Goals, go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) and click on **About HSAs**.

Each HSA tests students' knowledge of different topic areas (see chart on page 2).

## What do the tests look like?

The HSAs contain both multiple-choice and written-response questions. They take about 2½ hours to complete. The English 2 exam is the longest, at nearly 3 hours. Students are given one or more short breaks between test sessions. (In May 2009, written-response questions will be eliminated from the HSAs, which means the tests will take less time to complete and to score.)

Each year, the state releases one assessment per subject to the public. To look at these tests, or to take one online, visit [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) and click on **Test Support**.

The HSAs don't test everything your child learns in a course, so you should contact your child's teachers for information on complete course content.



## When are the HSAs given?

The HSAs are given in October, January, May, and July/August. Beginning next school year, a special seniors-only HSA administration in April will help 12th-graders struggling on the tests to graduate on time. *Students needing to retake an HSA may do so the next time the test is given, and students may retake failed tests as many times as they need to pass them.*

For a full testing calendar through 2009–10, go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) and click on **Calendar**.

## What if my child is absent during testing?

Students absent during regular HSA testing must take the test on one of the scheduled make-up days. (For testing make-up days, go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) and click on **Calendar**, or ask your child's teacher or principal when they are.) Unless your child is sick, he or she should make every effort to come to school during testing.

## Look inside

for a poster showing Maryland's high school graduation requirements.

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

Students who started 9th grade in or after 2005 must pass the HSAs to graduate. (Students who started 9th grade *before* 2005 must take the tests, but not pass them.)

### There are two ways to pass the HSAs.

1. Pass all four tests. The passing scores are: Algebra/Data Analysis, **412**; Government, **394**; Biology, **400**; and English, **396**.
- OR**
2. Earn a combined score of at least **1602** (the total of the four passing scores). This combined-score option allows your child to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another.

Scores on an HSA that's taken more than once are not averaged; only the student's highest score counts.

Students are allowed to substitute passing scores on certain Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams for passing scores on the HSAs. For a list of approved exams and acceptable scores, go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) and click on **About HSAs**.

In addition to passing the HSAs, students 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, and ask school administrators or counselors about local ones.

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

Yes. Students take each HSA as they complete the course. If your child is in middle school but taking a high-school-level course—which 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.

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

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

Every August, HSA pass rates for schools, school districts, and the state are posted on the Web at [MdReportCard.org](http://MdReportCard.org).

## What do the scores mean?

The HSA passing scores were set by Maryland teachers and subject specialists at a level they determined almost *all* students could achieve. The highest possible score on each test is 650; the lowest is 240.

The HSAs cannot determine a student's letter-grade performance because the tests must produce the most valid and reliable information at the passing standard, which means most of the questions must be set at the difficulty level of that standard. A test designed to identify both passing and letter-grade performance would take students much more time to complete and the state more time to score.

### HSA Topic Areas

<b>Algebra/Data Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyzing Patterns and Functions</li><li>• Modeling Real-World Situations</li><li>• Collecting, Organizing, and Analyzing Data</li><li>• Using Data to Make Predictions</li></ul>
<b>Biology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skills and Processes of Biology</li><li>• Structure and Function of Biological Molecules</li><li>• Structure and Function of Cells and Organisms</li><li>• Inheritance of Traits</li><li>• Mechanism of Evolutionary Change</li><li>• Interdependence of Organisms in the Biosphere</li></ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• U.S. Government Structure, Function, and Principles</li><li>• Systems of Government and U.S. Foreign Policy</li><li>• Protecting Rights and Maintaining Order</li><li>• Impact of Geography on Governmental Policy</li><li>• Economic Principles, Institutions, and Processes</li></ul>
<b>English 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading Comprehension and Interpretation</li><li>• Making Connections and Evaluations in Reading and Literature</li><li>• Composing in a Variety of Modes</li><li>• Controlling Written Language by Applying the Conventions of Standard English</li></ul>

## What can I do to help my child on the HSAs?

### Online Courses

The state has created online courses that students can take in whole or in part—either in preparation for an upcoming exam, or for review if he or she has failed one. Go to [HSAexam.org](https://HSAexam.org) and click on [HSA Online Courses](#). At the login screen, enter **online.course** as the username and **parent** as the password. The “New Users” section on the right will steer you toward tutorials on using the courses. Teachers use these same courses with students as part of regular instruction or as a supplement for students who need extra practice or extended learning time.

### Sample Tests

Each year, the state releases one sample HSA per subject to the public. These are actual tests that students have taken and that have since been retired. The tests can be taken on paper or online, and each is accompanied by an answer key, so that students can check their work. Online, every question is linked to the specific curricular goal and expectation it measures. To download a sample test or to take one online, go to [HSAexam.org](https://HSAexam.org) and click on [Test Support](#).

### Practice Tests

Each year, the state posts mini-assessments in each subject—short, online quizzes that are broken down by topic area. When the quiz concludes, students can see their answers, the correct answers, and which curricular goal and expectation were tested by the question. To take a practice test, go to [HSAexam.org](https://HSAexam.org) and click on [Test Support](#).

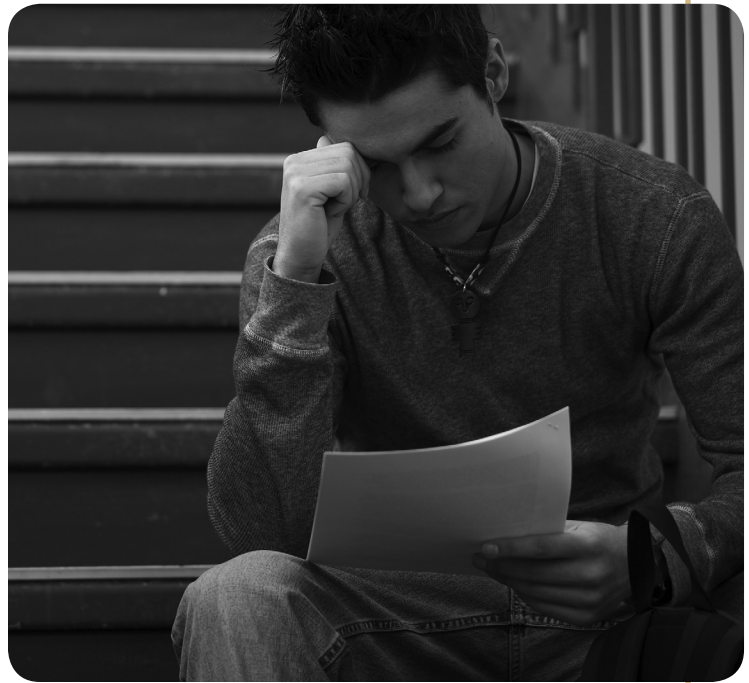
## What if my child fails an HSA?

Schools are required to offer assistance to students who fail an HSA. Contact your child’s school, and administrators there will be able to tell you what kind of extra help your child will receive. Your child may retake the failed HSA the next time it’s given.

## What if he/she fails it again?

Students who have failed an exam *at least twice* may be allowed to satisfy the HSA testing requirement through the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. The Bridge Plan is a series of challenging projects linked to the Core Learning Goals tested by each HSA.

Students taking advantage of the Bridge Plan must complete one or more projects (worth different point values) to make up the difference between their highest score on the failed HSA and the HSA passing score.



For example, if your child is struggling on the Biology HSA, he or she might be assigned a project examining the Structure and Function of Biological Molecules, worth 20 points. If your child missed the Biology passing score of 400 by 16 points, successfully completing that project alone would be sufficient to fulfill the testing requirement. If your child missed the passing score by 27 points, he or she would have to complete another project as well, like one on the Mechanism of Evolutionary Change. (The number of points earned on any project or combination of projects cannot exceed the HSA passing score; any excess points are forfeited.)

*Students completing Bridge Plan projects may not use the combined-score option to satisfy the HSA requirement. That is, they must pass the remaining HSAs or use the Bridge Plan to make up the point deficiency on each of those exams.*

To be eligible for the Bridge Plan, students must have failed an HSA at least twice, passed the HSA-related course, and completed an assistance program offered by their school or school system—for example, tutoring or after-school instruction. Students must also have an acceptable attendance record and be making satisfactory progress toward graduation.

Local school systems will determine when a student may begin work on the Bridge Plan. A local review panel, established by your school district, will evaluate the Academic Validation Project(s) at the end of the assigned work period, and your local superintendent will give final approval.

For more information about the Bridge Plan, go to [HSAexam.org](https://HSAexam.org) and click on the [Maryland Bridge Plan](#) link on the left-hand side (or go directly to [MdBridgePlan.org](https://MdBridgePlan.org)).

Looking for more information on the Maryland High School Assessments?

Visit **HSAexam.org** Call **1-877-HSA-EXAM**

### Do students with disabilities have to take the HSAs?

Most students with disabilities will take and pass all four HSAs, use the combined-score option, or take advantage of the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. However, there are alternative tests for a small number of students with disabilities who may not be able to satisfy the HSA requirement any of these ways.

#### Alt-MSA

Students with *significant* 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. Students taking the Alt-MSA do not receive a high school diploma.

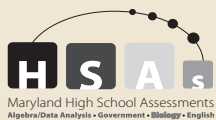
#### Mod-HSA

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 may be eligible to take the Modified HSAs—or Mod-HSAs.

The Mod-HSAs are based on the same course content as the HSAs, but the question format may be altered. The Mod-HSAs, which will be given for the first time in May 2008, will be administered alongside the regular HSAs. Students taking the tests may earn a high school diploma. To find out whether your child is eligible for the Mod-HSAs, contact his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

### Accommodations

All students with disabilities—regardless of the test they take—are entitled to accommodations during instruction and testing. The accommodations your child needs are indicated in his or her IEP. If you have a child with disabilities and have questions about his or her program of study or participation on state tests, contact your child's teacher or IEP team.



**High School Assessments**  
& *Your Child*

**Maryland State Department of Education**  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595  
Phone: 410.767.0600 or 888.246.0016  
TTY/TTD: 410.333.3045  
Fax: 410.333.2275  
[www.MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org)

**Ronald A. Peiffer**  
*Deputy State Superintendent*  
Office of Academic Policy

**Dunbar Brooks**  
*President*  
State Board of Education

**Nancy S. Grasmick**  
*Secretary-Treasurer of the Board*  
State Superintendent of Schools

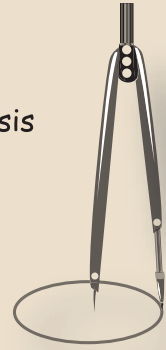
**Martin O'Malley**  
*Governor*

# Maryland Graduation Requirements

for students entering 9th grade in or after 2005

## 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

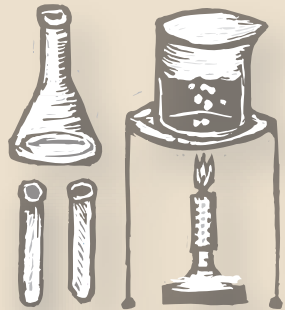


## High School Assessments:

- take the HSAs in English 2, Algebra, Biology, and Government and
- pass all four tests or
- earn a combined score of at least 1602 or
- earn passing scores on approved substitute tests or
- use the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation to make up point deficiencies

## Science: 3 credits

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



## Maryland High School Diploma



## Technology Education: 1 credit



## Fine Arts: 1 credit



## Health: 1/2 credit

## 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



## Local Requirements:

- meet all graduation requirements imposed by your school district

## Service Learning:

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

