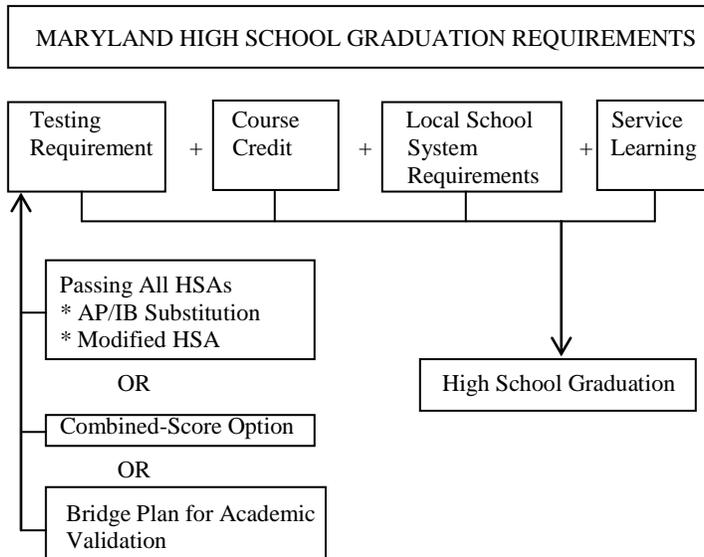


SECTION 1: STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Maryland High School Graduation Requirements

For a student to graduate from high school with a Maryland High School Diploma, he/she must meet the following graduation requirements [Figure 1]:

Figure 1: Maryland Graduation Requirements



- **Complete all State course requirements** -- 21 specified credits
- **Complete all local graduation requirements.** Local school systems frequently add course and other requirements beyond the State’s minimum requirements.
- **Complete State service–learning requirements** -- 75 hours or equivalent
- **Complete all State testing requirements.** Students entering grade 9 in or after fall 2005 must meet the testing requirement using one of the three options below. Each of the three options is a separate path for meeting the testing requirement for graduation. Students can be working on more than one option at any given time. This is referred to as working on parallel paths (*see Step 2: Participate in High School Assessments – Parallel Paths*).

Option 1: Pass each of the High School Assessments (HSAs) Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Tests – For students who have earned a score approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on the HSA-related AP or IB test. Scores on HSA-related AP exams must be 3 or above; scores on HSA-related IB exams must be 5 or above.

- Modified HSA (Mod-HSA) – An alternative test for students with disabilities who meet the specific participation criteria based on their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Option 2: Achieve the Combined Score – Earn the MSDE-required combined score on the HSA tests. Students do **not** have to earn a minimum score on any of the tests.

Option 3: Use the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation – Meet the eligibility criteria and successfully complete the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation for the HSA content-related course. This option is to be used only when a student is not successful passing the tests and will likely be unable to use the Combined-Score Option. The Bridge program is an academic intervention which provides an alternative means for eligible students to secure a high school diploma.

The Bridge Plan has particular implications for students with disabilities, students with 504 Plans, and English Language Learners (ELL) by allowing a student to demonstrate content mastery using a method other than a traditional test. The Bridge Plan can also have significant value for students who experience test anxiety or who do not perform well on a traditional test.

The Bridge Plan does **not** change the Maryland graduation requirements. The Bridge Plan does provide a path to graduation that is meaningful, rigorous, and clearly tied to State standards. Expecting any less would give students a route around meeting the testing requirement. Expecting any more would prevent students who can legitimately meet the standards from having an opportunity to do so through alternate means. Successfully completing a Bridge Plan is not meant to indicate that the student has passed the related content HSA exam.

In order for a student to be eligible to participate in the Bridge Plan, he/she must:

- 1) Be firmly on the path to completing the requirements for graduation,
- 2) Have taken the same HSA exam TWICE without passing or meeting the Combined-Score Option, and
- 3) Have participated in locally-administered or approved assistance.

(Note: A student may begin work on a Bridge Plan project while awaiting the results of his/her second attempt to pass the exam.)

In collaboration with parents and other appropriate persons, students who qualify for the Bridge Plan will be assigned project modules, be given an opportunity to complete the project modules assigned, and be subject to a careful review of his/her work based on detailed State guidelines and scoring rubrics. In some instances, it may be to a student's advantage to make an oral presentation about the work done to complete the project modules.

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation Steps

The Bridge Plan is comprised of four steps:

- Step 1: Progress toward Meeting Graduation Requirements
- Step 2: Participate in High School Assessments
- Step 3: Meet Eligibility Criteria
- Step 4: Participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

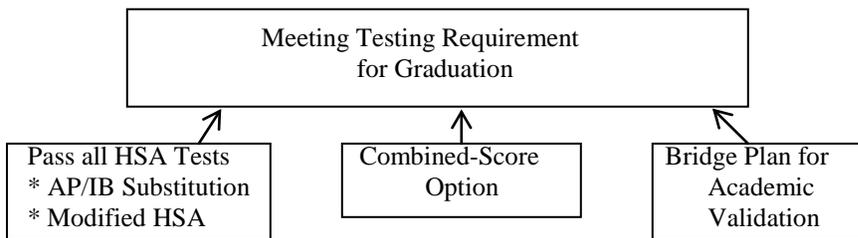
Step 1: Progress toward Meeting Graduation Requirements

The Bridge Plan does **not** replace other graduation requirements. A student cannot use the Bridge Plan unless he/she is clearly on the path to successfully meeting all other graduation requirements – State and local course credits, service-learning requirements, and other local requirements – and is clearly not finding success with the HSAs, Combined-Score Option, or, if eligible, the modified HSAs.

Step 2: Participate in High School Assessments

Students entering grade 9 in or after fall 2005 must meet the testing requirement for graduation using one of three options: Pass the HSA tests, use the Combined-Score Option, or use the Bridge Plan [Figure 2].

Figure 2: Graduation Testing Options



Students must take each HSA test upon successful completion of the corresponding HSA course (i.e. algebra/data analysis, biology, and English 2). Students with 504, IEP, or ELL Plans must receive the same accommodations prescribed within his/her plan when taking the HSAs.

Passing the HSAs

Students who meet or exceed the passing score on each of the HSAs will have fulfilled the testing requirement for graduation.

| Passing Scores for HSAs | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Assessment | Passing Score |
| Algebra/data analysis | 412 |
| English | 396 |
| Biology | 400 |
| Government | 394 |

Students who do not pass one or more HSAs or Mod-HSAs must be offered locally-administered or approved assistance. *The student is responsible for taking advantage of the assistance to help prepare for retesting.* A student who is considering the Bridge Plan for a specific HSA content area is required to retake the test a second time as well as participate in locally-administered or approved assistance.

- **Locally-administered or approved assistance.** Each local school system has developed strategies for providing content-specific assistance to students who have not passed one or more HSAs or Mod-HSAs. These opportunities could include sample test reviews, tutoring, or after-school or Saturday instruction. The school will determine what type(s) of assistance will be provided to students.

The student is responsible for taking advantage of the assistance to help prepare for retesting. A student considering using the Bridge Plan is required to participate in locally-administered or approved assistance.

- **Retesting.** A student who does not pass an HSA or Mod-HSA the first time should retake the test at least once more. Students are encouraged to retake the assessments multiple times. There is no limit to the number of times a student can take the test. Retesting opportunities are available in October, January, May, and in the summer, with a fifth test administration available for seniors in April.

Combined-Score Option

Students who do not pass one or more HSAs or Mod-HSAs may meet the testing requirement using the Combined-Score Option.

Starting with the administration of the Government HSA in the 2012-2013 school year, the following rules apply: Students entering 9th grade in the 2012-2013 school year or in a prior year (*including students who entered 9th grade in 2011-2012, 2010-2011, or 2009-2010*) do not need to pass the government HSA for graduation but may choose to apply the score toward a combined score. These students have two options to meet the combined score option.

1. Students **MAY** achieve a combined score of 1602 on the English, Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and Government HSAs. **OR**
2. Students **MAY** achieve a combined score of 1208 on the English, Algebra/Data Analysis, and Biology

To use the Combined-Score Option, a student must earn the combined score when all HSA test scores are added together. The Combined-Score Option allows a student to offset a low HSA score in one content area with a higher HSA score in another content area [*Figure 3*].

Figure 3: Combined-Score Option

| HSA Content Area | Passing Score | Combined-Score Sample |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Algebra/Data Analysis | 412 | 407 |
| Biology | 400 | 405 |
| English | 396 | 406 |
| Government | 394 | 384 |
| Combined Total | | 1602 |

↓

| |
|---|
| Meets Testing Requirement for Graduation |
|---|

The Combined-Score Option does not require a student to achieve a minimum score on any of the HSAs.

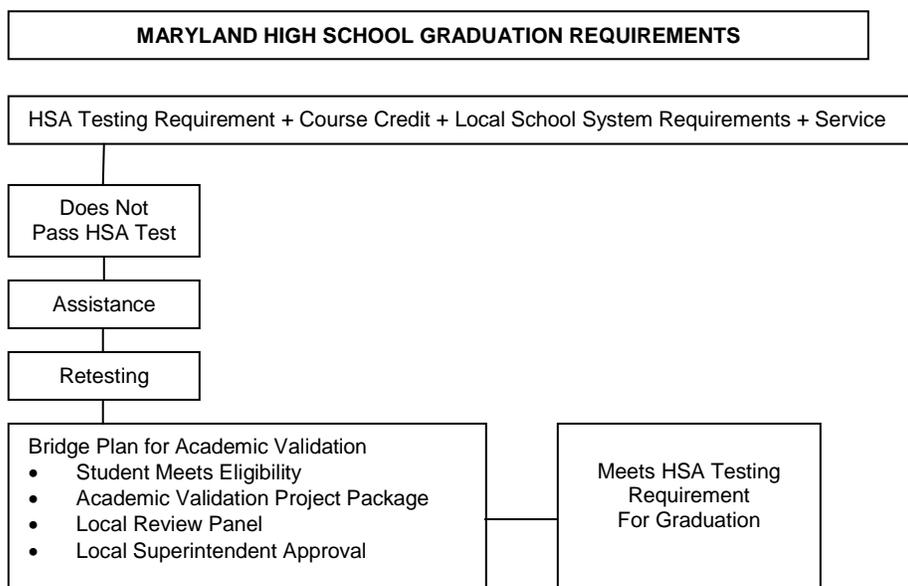
Note that students entering 9th grade in the 2012-2013 school year or in a prior year (*including students who entered 9th grade in 2011-2012, 2010-2011, or 2009-2010*) do not need to pass the government HSA for graduation and may meet a combined score of 1208 on Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and English. However, these students may *choose* to take and apply the Government HSA score toward a combined score of 1602.

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

The Bridge Plan is **not** a shortcut around the testing requirement for graduation. The Bridge program is an academic intervention which provides an alternative means for eligible students to secure a high school diploma. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in appropriate locally-administered or approved assistance and continue retesting to meet the Combined-Score Option. However, if a student's highest score for any specific HSA is significantly lower than the passing score for that test and/or the student does not do well on traditional tests, he/she may choose to explore the Bridge Plan with a designated school staff member. Successfully completing a Bridge Plan is not meant to indicate that the student has passed the related content HSA exam.

If the Bridge Plan is chosen, the student must meet the eligibility criteria [Figure 4] before being assigned one or more rigorous project modules. The number of project modules a student must complete is determined by the student's highest score earned on the specific HSA test (*see Section 2: Project Content Expectations -- Assigning Project Modules*)

Figure 4: Bridge Plan for Academic Validation



The local school system will determine the year a student may begin work on a Bridge Plan.

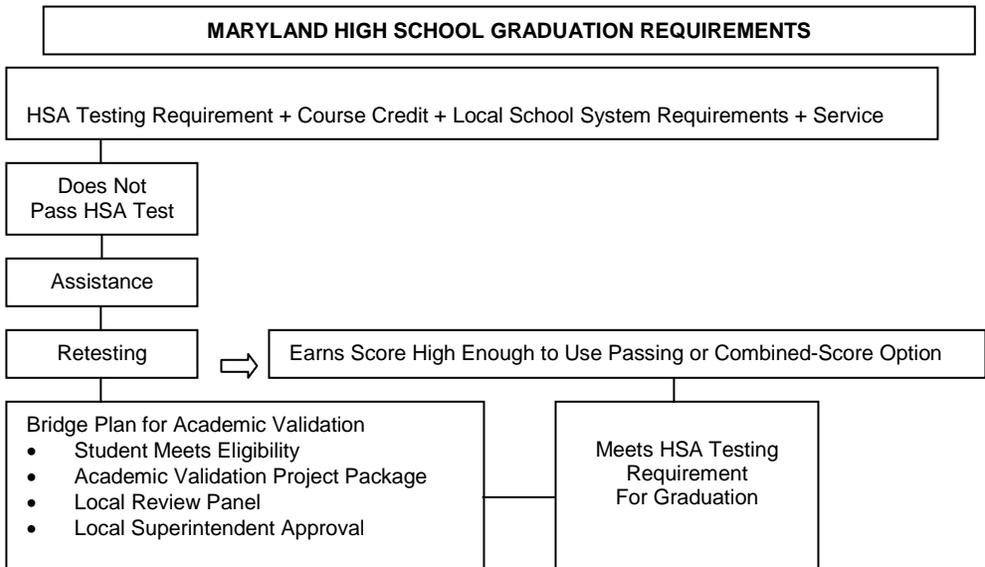
Parallel Paths

Each of the three options — passing the HSAs, Combined-Score, or Bridge Plan — is a separate path. Students can be working on more than one of the three options at any given time. This is known as working on a parallel path.

Example: A student working on a parallel path could be participating in locally-administered or approved assistance and continuing to retake the HSAs in order to earn a passing score or a score that will allow the student to use the Combined-Score Option.

Example: A student working on the Bridge Plan could continue to take the HSAs in order to earn a passing score or a score that will allow the student to use the Combined-Score Option [Figure 5].

Figure 5: Parallel Path



Step 3: Meet Eligibility Criteria

The three eligibility criteria for participating in the Bridge Plan are described in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) adopted by the State Board of Education. A brief explanation of the regulation follows.

- **Test Performance.** *Two or more unsuccessful attempts to earn at least the passing score on the HSA for which the student intends to use the Bridge Plan.*

Regulation: COMAR 13A.03.02.09B(d)(2) states, “A student may participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation if the student has: (i) failed one or more High School Assessments at least twice; and (ii) received a passing grade and earned credit in the course(s) related to the assessment(s).”

Explanation: A student can only access the Bridge Plan for a specific HSA content area after he/she has passed the related course but has not passed the HSA or Mod-HSA test (even if the student has only taken the HSA one time), has participated in local intervention, and has taken the HSA for the second time . This allows students extra time to begin Bridge projects before they receive their HSA test results.

- **Assistance Participation.** *Student participation in any locally-administered or approved assistance.*

Regulation: COMAR 13A.03.02.09B(d)(2)(v) states, “A student may participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation if the student has: ...(v) participated successfully in appropriate assistance as defined in COMAR 13A.03.02.07(D) after having failed the High School Assessment(s).”

Explanation: The requirement for student participation in locally-administered or approved assistance provides evidence that the student has worked in good faith toward passing the HSA(s). The evidence of “successful participation” can be defined by the local school system and should include consideration of the student’s grades or scores, or other evidence that the student worked to be adequately prepared to retake the test.

To ensure students have access to meaningful assistance, the local school system is required to offer content-specific assistance to any student who did not pass the HSA-related test. This assistance can take many forms, such as courses, tutoring, after-school programs, and online coursework. The school system can credit the student with assistance obtained from a provider other than the school system if it has evidence that the assistance is appropriate and focused on the HSA test content.

- **Academic Progress.** *Satisfactory progress toward all other State and local graduation requirements.*

Regulation: COMAR 13A.03.02.09C(d)(2) indicates a student may participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation if the student has: ... received a passing grade and earned credit in the course related to the assessment(s); demonstrated overall satisfactory attendance in the most recent school year; demonstrated satisfactory progress toward achieving the high school diploma requirements specified in COMAR 13A.03.02.09B(1) and (2)....

Explanation: Maryland has an expectation of satisfactory progress toward the diploma as indicated in two ways:

- Satisfactory Grades – Passing HSA-related courses; and
- Satisfactory Attendance – Demonstrating satisfactory attendance in the most recent school year.

Both of these indicators will be determined according to local school system procedures and policies.

A student can participate in the Bridge Plan only if the student is demonstrating satisfactory progress toward achieving a high school diploma as determined by the local school system. The local school system may revisit the student’s eligibility to continue the Bridge Plan if the student is no longer making satisfactory progress toward graduation.

Step 4: Participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

Once a student is eligible for the Bridge Plan, the student and his/her parent/guardian will meet with designated school staff to begin planning for the Bridge Plan, using the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation Student Planner and Agreement.

This form was designed to ensure that the student, his/her parent/guardian, and designated school staff are aware of and in agreement of what the student must accomplish in order to use the Bridge Plan to meet the testing requirement for graduation. Local school systems

may also want to include additional information about the student to reflect the school system's specific procedures. Local school systems will need to include any accommodations required if the student has an IEP, ELL Plan, or 504 Plan.

The completed Bridge Plan for Academic Validation Student Planner and Agreement and information can be maintained and tracked electronically but need to be easily accessible for follow-up work and possible review.

Student Responsibilities

The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation provides eligible students an additional opportunity to meet the testing requirement that will lead to a Maryland High School Diploma. Students must demonstrate defined knowledge and skills to graduate, either through the traditional HSA testing program, which includes passing or earning a combined score, or the Bridge Plan program.

The student working on the Bridge Plan will need to progress through a series of steps in order to complete the process. The student will need to:

- Attempt to pass all HSA tests or Mod-HSA tests if appropriate
- Attempt to attain the combined score on the HSA required tests
- Retest in content areas in which a passing score has not been reached
- Participate in appropriate assistance
- Meet with an assigned school counselor/advisor to determine the status and options for the student to earn the Maryland High School Diploma
- Choose to participate in the Bridge Plan program
- Complete and sign the required Bridge Plan for Academic Validation Student Planner and Agreement
- Meet with the designated school staff person to review the assigned project modules, discuss the requirements of the project modules, and plan a schedule for completion
- Complete the project and submit it to the school Project Monitor.

Students are expected to take advantage of the instructional interventions provided by the school to help them complete project modules successfully. These may include:

- Classes scheduled during the school day
- Interventions that removes a student from elective class or classes during the day
- Extended school day programs
- Saturday programs
- Approved independent study.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents play an important role in assisting their students in their choice to participate in the Bridge Plan program. Students under 18 years of age must have parent/guardian consent to participate in the program. Students 18 years or older do not need parental consent unless the student has a disability with an applicable IEP.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to:

- Become fully aware of the student's academic status and the progress toward meeting the testing requirement in order to earn a Maryland High School Diploma
- Meet with designated school staff regarding the student's graduation status and available options to secure a Maryland High School Diploma
- Participate in the meeting with the Project Monitor to determine the project module(s) the student will complete
- Sign the required form in the Bridge Plan process* (see the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation Student Planner and Agreement)
- Monitor the student's progress toward completing the assigned project module(s).

**The school shall make every effort to have the parent/guardian sign the form. It is preferable that the parent/guardian sign the form in person. In those rare cases where every attempt has been made to have the parent/guardian sign the form without success, the student may participate in the Bridge Plan program without a parental signature if the school administration so certifies. Documentation to that effect should be noted on the Parent/Guardian signature line on the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation Student Planner and Agreement.*