Maryland High School Assessments & *Your Child*

In June 2004, the State Board of Education ruled that, beginning with the class of 2009, Maryland students must pass the 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.

You can also visit www.HSAexam.org or call, toll-free, 1-877-HSA-EXAM for more information.

What are the Maryland High School Assessments?

The High School Assessments, or HSA, are four tests—one each in algebra/data analysis, biology, government, and English. (The English HSA tests content typically taught in 10th grade.) Your child will take each test as he or she completes the course.

What do the tests look like?

The HSA contain both multiple-choice and written-response questions. See Figure 1 (next page) for two multiple-choice biology questions from the 2005 exam.

Each test takes about three-and-a-half hours to complete. (Students get a short break mid-way through.) The highest possible score on each test is 650; the lowest is 240.

Each year, the Maryland Department of Education releases one assessment per subject to the public. To review these tests, or to take one online, visit www.HSAexam.org.

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www.HSAexam.org

open

up this newsletter for a poster showing Maryland's high school graduation requirements

Maryland State Department of Education
Achievement Matters Most

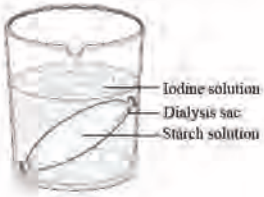
The HSA do not test everything your child learns in a course, so you should contact your child's teachers for information on complete course content.

Figure 1

Sample Question: Biology HSA

Use the information and the diagram below to answer the questions.

Starch turns blue-black in the presence of iodine solution. A selectively permeable dialysis sac containing a starch solution is placed into a beaker of iodine solution.



If the dialysis sac is permeable only to water and iodine, what will the solutions in the beaker and the sac look like after two hours?

F. The iodine solution in the beaker will turn blue-black; the starch solution will not change.
G. The starch solution in the dialysis sac will turn blue-black; the iodine solution will not change.
H. Neither solution will turn blue-black.
J. Both solutions will turn blue-black.

Which of these processes is demonstrated by the experiment shown in the diagram?

A. cellular respiration
B. active transport
C. endocytosis
D. diffusion

See page 4 for answers

Does my child have to pass the HSA in order to graduate?

Students graduating in or after 2009

Yes. Students graduating from high school in or after 2009 have to pass the HSA to graduate.

There are two ways to do this:

- Pass all four HSA. The passing scores are: algebra/data analysis, 412; government, 394; biology, 400; and English, 396.

OR

- Earn a minimum score on each test (see Table 1 below) and 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.

Table 1

High School Assessments

	Passing Score	Minimum Score
Algebra/Data Analysis	412	402
Biology	400	391
Government	394	387
English	396	386

Even if students are using the Minimum Score option, their combined score must be 1602 or higher.

Students will also be allowed to substitute passing scores on certain Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams for passing scores on the High School Assessments. More information on the HSA substitution policy will soon be available on www.HSAexam.org.

Students graduating before 2009

No. Students graduating from high school before 2009 do not have to pass the HSA to graduate. They do, however, have to take the tests.

State, school system, and school scores are posted on www.MdReportCard.org.

All students—those graduating before and after 2009—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 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 (this 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?

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

State, school system, and school scores are published on the Web at www.MdReportCard.org.

What if my child doesn't pass a test?

If your child doesn't pass an HSA, contact his or her teachers. They will explain how your child can receive extra help in that subject. Once your child has reviewed the material and received extra help, he or she may retake the test the next time it is given. Students needing to retake tests can do so three times a year—in January, May, and summer. Students may retake failed tests as many times as they need to pass them.

The state is developing several online mini-tests that school districts can use to identify students who need extra help in each subject. Districts can then provide that help to students who need it—before they fail an HSA. The state is also developing online courses that teachers can use to help prepare students for the exams. Courses in algebra and government are online now, biology is slated for fall 2006 and English for fall 2007.

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. (Your child's teacher or principal will tell you when they are.) Unless your child is sick, he or she should make every effort to come to school during testing.

Are there any other testing options for students who may not be able to pass the HSA?

Yes. The Maryland Department of Education is working on different assessments for students who may not be able to succeed on the HSA.

Continued on next page

For more information on the Maryland High School Assessments

www.HSAexam.org
1-877-HSA-EXAM

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 test earn a Certificate of Program Completion instead of a high school diploma.

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—will be based on a modified version of Maryland's curriculum. The Mod-HSA for algebra/data analysis and English should be available by spring 2008. Modified assessments for biology and government will follow. Students passing the Mod-HSA will be eligible to earn a high school diploma.

Comp-HSA: In fall 2004, a task force began exploring how the state might provide assessments for students—with and without disabilities—who have difficulty on traditional tests. While the Comparable HSA—or Comp-HSA—will be administered differently than the regular HSA, both assessments will be based on Maryland's curriculum. The task force is still determining what the Comp-HSA will look like and which students will be eligible to take them. Recommendations should be issued in 2007. Students passing the Comp-HSA will be eligible to earn a high school diploma.

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 Individualized Education Program (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. ■

Biology HSA Answers

Question 1: G Question 2: D

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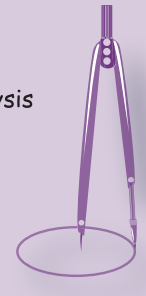
Maryland Graduation Requirements

Class of 2009 & Beyond

Math: 3 credits
- 1 in algebra/data analysis
- 1 in geometry

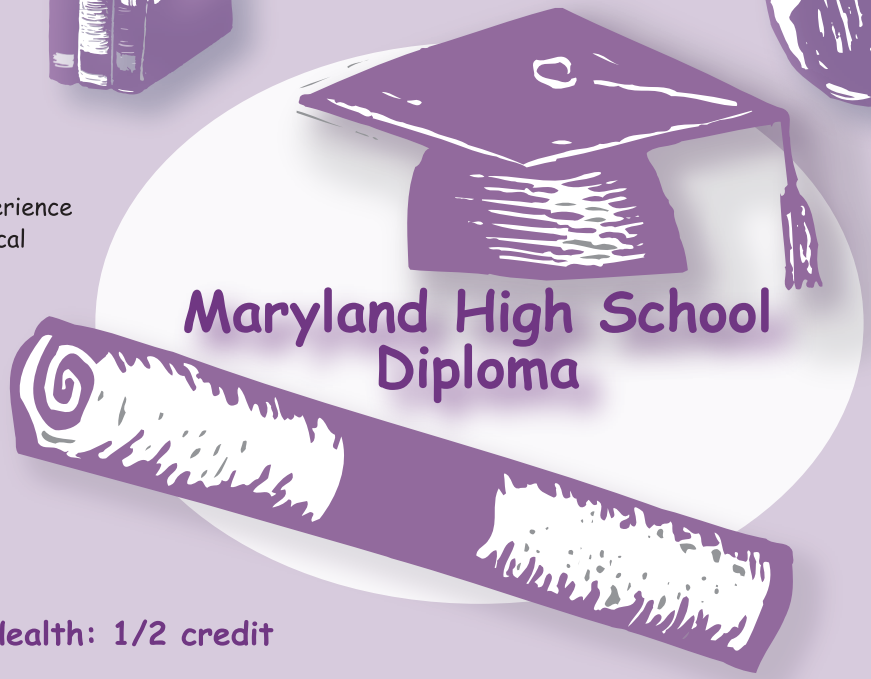


English: 4 credits

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 HSA in English, algebra, biology, and government and
- pass all four tests or
- earn a minimum score on each test and a combined score of at least 1602 or
- earn a passing score on approved substitute tests

Science: 3 credits
- 1 in biology
- 2 with laboratory experience in earth, life, or physical science



Fine Arts: 1 credit

Technology Education: 1 credit

Health: 1/2 credit

Local Requirements:
- meet all graduation requirements imposed by your school district

Physical Education: 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

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