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MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

Fact Sheet

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What are the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA)?

The HSA are tests in four core subjects: English, government, algebra/data analysis, and biology. Students take each test whenever they complete the course. For example, some students may take algebra in seventh grade while others may not take it until tenth grade.

The tests contain multiple-choice questions and questions requiring written responses. These questions are based on the content outlined in Maryland's Core Learning Goals. More information on the Core Learning Goals and sample test questions are available on the Web at mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/.

Must students pass the HSA in order to graduate from high school?

Beginning with the graduating class of 2009 (students entering grade 9 in fall 2005), students are required to earn a satisfactory score on the HSA in order to earn a Maryland High School Diploma. Students have several options in fulfilling this requirement:

- Pass all four HSA. The passing scores are: algebra/data analysis (412), government (394), biology (400), and English (396).
OR
- Earn at least the minimum score on each HSA **and** earn a combined score of 1602. The minimum HSA scale scores are algebra/data analysis (402), biology (391), government (387), and English (386). This combined-score option benefits students because it allows higher performance on one test to offset lower performance on another test.
OR
- Earn passing scores on state-approved substitute tests and substitute one or more of those scores for passing scores on the HSA. The state has not yet named acceptable substitute tests, but possibilities include the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests.

To earn a Maryland High School Diploma, students must still meet all credit, service-learning, and attendance requirements as well as any local school system requirements. A summary of state graduation requirements is available on the Maryland State Department of Education Web site at www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/testing/hsa/.

How and when are scores reported?

Within nine weeks after testing, the scoring company sends students' scores to the local school system. The local school system then sends the scores to parents. Scores for schools, school systems, and the state are published annually in mid-August on the Web at www.mdreportcard.org.

Students' scores are reported as scale scores. Maryland uses a scale score to provide a more precise measurement of a student's achievement and to assure that tests given at different times are comparable. Students' scores can range from 240 to 650 on the scale. Local school systems place students' HSA performance on the students' official records.

What happens if a student does not pass a test?

Students who do not pass an assessment will receive academic assistance from the local school system. After completing an academic assistance program, students can retake the assessment during the next administration of the test.

To help with intervention and remediation, the state has created a series of online courses in HSA subject areas. Teachers may use the courses with students as an intervention strategy, and students may take the courses themselves to review tested material.

How were the HSA developed?

Teachers and other educators, parents, business leaders, community members, and educational and professional organizations from across Maryland collaborated on the development of the HSA. Each test item undergoes a comprehensive review process before it is included in an assessment. Learn more about test development and scoring on the Web at mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/.

The State Board of Education set HSA passing scores for algebra, biology, and government in August 2003 and for English in October 2005. MSDE recommended these scores to the Board after conducting thorough standard-setting activities that involved more than 100 teachers, administrators, instructional supervisors, parents, and testing experts.

How do the HSA relate to the Maryland School Assessment?

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) fulfills the elementary and middle school testing requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The content and format of the MSA help prepare students for success on the HSA. Both tests contain a mixture of multiple-choice questions and questions requiring written responses. Together, the two testing programs provide schools, teachers, and parents a good picture of student performance.

The English and algebra HSA are used to fulfill the high school testing requirements of No Child Left Behind, which requires states to report the number of students performing at proficient and advanced levels. The cutoff score for proficiency is 412 for algebra and 396 for English. The cutoff score for advanced is 450 for algebra and 429 for English.

What are the Modified and Comparable HSA?

Maryland is developing Modified HSA in at least two subjects (algebra and English) to be offered as early as 2007 to students with disabilities that meet certain eligibility criteria. Maryland has also convened a committee to recommend a design for a Comparable HSA for students unable to demonstrate their knowledge on the traditional HSA. Both the Modified and Comparable HSA could be used to fulfill the HSA graduation requirement. An implementation schedule and eligibility criteria are being developed this year for both tests. Once these decisions are made, students will take the assessment appropriate for them. More information is expected to be available in the coming year.