

**Maryland**

Maryland High School Assessment (HSA)

**Part I: Policy Trends**

<b>Type of test</b>	End-of-course exams tied to content standards
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The purpose of the exam is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine prospective high school graduates’ knowledge and skill levels relative to those needed for entry-level employment*</li> <li>• Determine prospective high school graduates’ knowledge and skill levels relative to those needed for postsecondary education*</li> <li>• Determine prospective high school graduates’ mastery of the state curriculum</li> <li>• Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure</li> <li>• Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform education policy decisions</li> <li>• Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards</li> <li>• Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups</li> <li>• Meet a state mandate</li> </ul> <p>* These tests are approximately on a 10<sup>th</sup>-grade level, and their purpose is to determine whether students are on proper trajectory to be ready by the end of grade 12 for work and postsecondary education. Skills tested are not end-of-grade-12 knowledge skills.</p>
<b>Major changes in exit exam policy since the 2007-08 school year or any pending changes</b>	<p>Starting with the spring 2009 administration, the tests will only have multiple-choice items. This change was made to expedite scoring and improve turnaround time.</p> <p>The Maryland State Board of Education decided to grant waivers to a select group of students under extenuating circumstances for the graduating classes of 2009 and 2010.</p>
<b>Status of state’s decision regarding the Common Core State Standards and impact of that decision on exit exam policies</b>	<p>The state has adopted the Common Core State Standards in both language arts and math. Maryland is working with Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers consortium to pool resources and expertise for developing assessments based on the standards. Assessment development will take a number of years to develop, validate, and pilot. Final assessments will not be available until 2014-</p>

	15.
<b>Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?</b>	No
<b>Year first administered</b>	2001
<b>Year diplomas first withheld</b>	The HSA end-of-course exams replaced the Maryland Functional Test, a minimum-competency test students were required to pass to receive a diploma between 1989 and 2004.  Beginning in 2009, Maryland required all students to meet the HSA requirement to graduate. This requirement applies to students who entered grade 9 for the first time in 2005-06.
<b>Subjects tested</b>	English 2, algebra/data analysis, biology, and government
<b>Types of questions</b>	Spring 2009 and subsequent administrations: multiple choice Other 2008-09 administrations: multiple choice, short answer, writing prompt/essay
<b>Grade first administered</b>	Students must take each exam in the year in which they complete the course in the subject being tested.
<b>Grade(s) exam aligned to</b>	Approximately 10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12</b>	There are four testing opportunities every year beginning in the year the student first takes the course: January, May, August, and October. A fifth administration is offered for seniors in April.
<b>Retakes after grade 12</b>	Students enrolled in a Maryland public school can continue to retake the HSA until they are 21.
<b>Does the state have reciprocity with other states?</b>	Transfer students may be exempted from taking the HSA if they previously passed a course equivalent to one of the courses tested and are granted credit for the respective course when they transfer into a Maryland school.
<b>Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind?</b>	The exams in algebra/data analysis and English 2 are used to satisfy NCLB accountability for mathematics and reading/English language arts. Maryland used the state's HSA in biology to satisfy the NCLB requirement for a test in science.

**Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?**

Yes

**Evaluations of state exit exam**

Achieve Inc. conducted alignment studies of the HSAs and released the results in June 2004. This report is available from the Maryland Department of Education upon request.

Maryland also participated in the American Diploma Project with Achieve, and the state's standards in math and English were reviewed and found to be aligned with standards for college and for work.

**State test contractor**

ETS and Pearson

**Does the state provide students with alternate paths to graduation?**

The state offers alternatives to passing each of the high school assessments. These alternatives include the Maryland Adult External High School Diploma (must be 18 or older) and the GED. The GED and the External High School Diploma are available for students who have exited the regular high school program and are *not* counted as high school graduates. Specific Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) course exams are acceptable substitutes for specific HSAs, provided students receive the specified MSDE-approved scores on the exams.

In November 2007 the state school board approved the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation, which allows students who repeatedly fail the HSAs to instead complete assigned projects for the assessments that they are unable to pass. It is expected that the Bridge Plan will have particular implications for students with disabilities, students with 504 plans, and English language learners by allowing them an alternate method to demonstrate content mastery.

Students qualifying for the Bridge Plan will be assigned appropriate project modules, be given an opportunity to complete the project modules assigned, and be subject to a careful review of their work based on detailed state guidelines and scoring rubrics. (Further details of the Bridge Plan can be found at [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org).)

Maryland convened a statewide task force for two years to examine alternative high school testing. Based on recommendations made by the task force, the state implemented a plan that includes:

- a. A combined-score option of 1,602 points without a required minimum score for individual assessments
- b. The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation
- c. A modified High School Assessment

The GED and the External High School Diploma are available for students who have exited the regular high school program and are not counted as high school graduates.

The combined score option is available to all students.

The AP and IB option is available to students who take the MSDE-approved courses and meet the score requirements.

In the 2008-09 school year, 9,617 students (16.3% of total completers) used the combined score option, 53 students (0.1% of total completers) used the AP or IB option, and 3,481 (5.9% of total completers) used the Bridge Plan.

### **Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners**

No, but English language learners (ELLs) are eligible for the alternate paths available to general education students.

There are no alternate paths to graduation for ELL students, however, the following accommodations are provided for instruction and for testing. English language learners have four categories of accommodations available to them:

- **Presentation accommodations** allow ELL students to access academic materials in English using alternate modes of access, which help mitigate the students' level of English language proficiency. (Example: a human reader, audio tape, or compact disk recording for verbatim reading of entire test or selected sections of the test)
- **Response accommodations** allow ELL students to complete or respond to activities, assignments, and assessments in the English language in different ways that help mitigate the students' level of English language proficiency. (Examples: a scribe, a bilingual dictionary)
- **Timing and scheduling accommodations** increase the length of time allowed to complete an assessment or assignment and perhaps change the way the time is organized for ELL students. (Examples: extended time, frequent breaks)
- **Setting accommodations** change the location in which

a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting for ELL students. (Examples: reducing distractions, change of location)

The accommodations available to a specific student should be outlined in their ELL plan.

Please see the Maryland Accommodations Manual for a discussion and examples of accommodations that are allowable on standardized assessments.

(<http://hsaexam.org/img/CD%20Content/MDAccommodationsManual.pdf>)

In the 2008-09 school year, 124 ELL students (29% of total completers) used the combined score option, 1 ELL student (0.2% of total completers) used the AP or IB option, and 65 (15.2% of total completers) used the Bridge Plan.

### **Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities**

A modified HSA, known as the “Mod-HSA” is available to students with disabilities whom the IEP team has determined eligible. The Mod-HSA is based on course level content standards and modified academic achievement standards. The Mod-HSA incorporates variation in test delivery, such as less complex language, fewer and shorter reading passages, shorter or less difficult questions, and test items with fewer answer choices, to meet the specific learning characteristics of the students in accordance with the Department of Education guidelines for Modified Academic Achievement Standards.

Also, students with disabilities who do not pass the HSA and cannot meet the requirements for a diploma may receive the Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion instead when the students exit school. To qualify, these students must have completed four years of high school past grade 8 and must meet one of the following conditions:

- The student’s parents and IEP team reach an agreement that the student has developed the appropriate skills to enter the world of work, act responsibly as a citizen, and enjoy a fulfilling life.
- The student will have turned 21 by the end of the current school year.

This option was available to students prior to implementation of the HSA.

In addition, those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities whom the IEP team has determined eligible will

participate in the Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA). The Alt-MSA is a portfolio assessment tailored to each student's unique instructional needs in reading, mathematics, and science. Students taking the Alt-MSA do not receive a high school diploma. They receive a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion.

Students with disabilities have four categories of accommodations available to them during both instruction and assessment:

- **Presentation accommodations** allow students to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access are auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual. (Examples: large print materials, human reader)
- **Response accommodations** allow students to complete activities, assignments, and assessments in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer. (Examples: scribe, Braille, calculation device)
- **Timing and scheduling accommodations** increase the allowable length of time to complete an assessment or assignment and perhaps change the way the time is organized. (Examples: extended time, multiple breaks)
- **Setting accommodations** change the location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting. (Examples: reducing distractions, change of location)

The accommodations available to a specific student are outlined in their IEP or 504 plan.

See the Maryland Accommodations Manual for a discussion and examples of accommodations that are allowable on standardized assessments.

<http://hsaexam.org/img/CD%20Content/MDAccommodationsManual.pdf>

In the 2008-09 school year, 1,365 students (2.5% of total enrollment meeting requirements) took the Mod-HSA; 698 students (1.2% of total completers) received a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion; 722 students took the Alt-MSA.

**Who makes decisions on whether a student is eligible to**

There are clear criteria for the alternate paths so that eligibility is equivalent to meeting the requirements for the alternate path.

**use alternate paths?**

For example, the only eligibility requirements for the combined score option are that the student meets the requirement of having a combined score of 1602.

The only path that requires extended monitoring, in-depth determination of eligibility, and a judgment as to passing the alternate path is the Bridge Plan.

For the Bridge Plan, local school staff members work with students to determine eligibility.

**How are students identified as eligible for alternate paths to graduate?**

Bridge Plan: For a student to satisfy the graduation requirement using the Bridge Plan, he or she must: 1) Be firmly on the path to completing graduation requirements 2) Have taken an HSA exam twice without passing or meeting the combined score option 3) Have participated in locally administered or approved assistance.

**When calculating the graduation rate for adequate yearly progress (AYP) purposes, does the state count students taking alternate paths together with graduates who passed the high school exit exams?**

Yes, but GED and External High School Diploma students are not included.

**How many full-time equivalent staff in the State Department of Education are involved in implementing alternate paths?**

Roughly three

**Types of assistance the state provides for all districts to raise *initial* pass rates for all students on the high school exit exam**

The state offers technical assistance to help:

- Teachers administer the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops;
- All teachers prepare students for the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, and grants to districts;
- Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance;

- Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency;
- Districts improve formative uses of assessment, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, and grants to districts.
- Districts improve the instructional leadership provided by administrators, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, the Principals’ Academy, and a variety of workshops on instructional leadership required to be successful on assessments.

The state also provides:

- State-developed benchmark/formative assessments
- State-developed courses specifically designed to prepare students for the exam (online courses and highly detailed curricular materials available online)
- Test items from prior years
- Exam preparation materials for teachers available online

**Types of assistance or remediation the state provides for all districts to help students who have failed to pass the exit exam**

The state provides:

- Additional professional development for teachers in their content area
- Additional professional development for teachers in meeting the specific needs of students at risk of academic failure
- Additional professional development for teachers in the formative uses of assessment
- Additional professional development for administrators
- Online courses configured to permit the use of appropriate modules, pending the student’s needs

**Does the state provide funding for remediation?**

Maryland does not provide specific funding for remediation, but Maryland school systems received significant increases in funding as the High School Assessments were first implemented, with the expectation that the funds would be



used for student performance improvement in all grades. This new funding approach has eliminated most of the traditional discretionary funding streams and consolidated them into one fund with accountability requirements.

**Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?**

Yes. Each local school system shall provide appropriate assistance (remediation) to strengthen areas of weaknesses for students who have not achieved satisfactory (passing) scores on the Maryland HSAs (COMAR 13A.03.02.07D(1)).

**Are students required to participate in remediation?**

When a student fails the exit exam and fails the related course, the student must re-take and pass the course (this serves as remediation). When the student fails the exit exam and participates in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation (an alternative route to earn the diploma), student participation in remediation is mandated by state regulation. When a student fails the exam and re-takes the exam, state regulations require each local school system to provide appropriate remedial assistance, and each local school system is responsible for adopting policies governing student preparation prior to re-taking the exam. For example: one system's Master Plan sets forth its policy requiring interventions for students who did not pass the HSAs. According to the Master Plan, "Students who did not pass the English HSA are required to be enrolled in a class entitled 'Passing the HSA'". Similarly, students who passed the Government course but failed the HSA are enrolled in a class entitled "Passing the HSA in Government." Similar courses exist for Passing the HSA Data Analysis and the HSA Biology.

**Part II: Student Performance**

**Cumulative pass rates, 2008-09**

Percentage of Students Passing by the End of 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade, 2008-09					
Student Group	English 2	Algebra	Biology	Government	All
All students	86.6%	88.8%	85.5%	93.2%	92.5%
White	92.3%	95.8%	94.1%	97.2%	97.8%
African American	77.7%	76.8%	70.9%	86.6%	83.7%
Latino	80.6%	85.7%	81.3%	90.3%	90.5%
Asian	91.7%	97.2%	94.8%	97.0%	97.6%
Native American	87.2%	90.8%	84.6%	94.7%	93.6%
English language learners	51.0%	64.5%	60.6%	66.5%	65.0%

Students with disabilities	55.6%	60.6%	62.6%	74.4%	68.8%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	75.2%	78.4%	71.5%	85.7%	83.4%

Note: Data provided by the state department of education from <http://mdreportcard.org/HSA/BarchartStatDisplay.aspx?PV=55:12:99:AAA:1:N:6:1:6:2:1:1:1:3>

**Denominator used when calculating these rates:** The number of grade 12 students who took the test at any time (not necessarily in grade 12)

State Graduation Rates		
Student Group	2008-09	2009-10
All students	85%	NA
White	90%	
African American	79%	
Latino	79%	
Asian	95%	
Native American	78%	
English language learners	82%	
Migrant	NA	
Students with disabilities	67%	
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	86%	

Note: Data provided by the state department of education

**Current state graduation rate calculation formula for AYP purposes** Maryland uses the Leaver Rate, but will use the Adjusted Cohort Rate beginning in 2011.