

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

January 11, 2006

The following information contains answers to the most frequently asked questions related to high school graduation in Maryland. Questions are categorized by topic as much as possible; however, some questions may be related to more than one topic. Answers will be updated as new information becomes available and new regulations are adopted.

Maryland Requirements for Graduation From High School

1. Can a local school system have local graduation requirements beyond the minimum requirements established by the state?

Yes. For specific graduation requirements, contact the appropriate school system personnel listed at the end of this document. See COMAR 13A.03.02.01C.

2. How does a student meet both the Maryland and the NCLB high school reading requirement for graduation?

For Graduating Classes of 2005 through 2008

To fulfill the Maryland High School Assessment requirement for graduation, the student must ***take*** the English assessment. The English course is defined as the second year of high school English, typically taken after the student completes the grade 9 English course. Care should be taken to ensure such students meet test requirements.

For Students Entering Grade 9 in 2005 and Beyond

To fulfill the Maryland High School Assessment requirement for graduation, the student must ***take and pass*** the English assessment. The English course is defined as the second year of high school English, typically taken after the student completes the grade 9 English course. Care should be taken to ensure such students meet test requirements.

For All Students

Taking the English assessment satisfies the NCLB reading requirement.

3. What are the graduation credit requirements for students with disabilities who are placed in non-public schools?

The answer to this question was the subject of a memo to local school superintendents from Dr. Grasmick dated November 14, 2005 regarding Graduation Requirements for Students in Non-Public Placements. State regulations address disparities between local school system graduation requirements and those of non-public special education schools. COMAR 13A.03.02.08B requires students in a non-public special education school to meet the graduation requirements of the placing local school system. COMAR 13A.02.11 Alternatives for Structuring Programs provides local school systems with an opportunity to develop “alternative ways for individuals or groups of students to fulfill graduation requirements.”

Local school systems should work with the non-public school to agree on a curricular program that meets the instructional needs of the student and addresses the normal content specified generally in

the local school system's graduation requirements. The curricular program for these students can include fewer than the requisite number of credits in the local school system graduation requirements, but no fewer than the State minimum of 21 credits as identified in COMAR 13A.03.02-04A. The student must also meet the service learning requirement and must take and pass the Maryland High School Assessments as appropriate to the date of entry into grade 9.

Graduation Credits: Defined/Earning

1. How are units of high school credit defined?

A credit means successful demonstration of a specified unit of study. See COMAR 13A.03.02.02.B2.

2. Can high school credits be earned in ways other than going to school during regular days/year?

Yes. See COMAR 13A.03.02.05 Other Provisions for Earning Credit.

3. Can a local school system award high school credit to a middle school student who completes a high school course?

Yes. See COMAR 13A.03.02.05I(2) and (3).

4. Can a student exclude from the transcript an 8th grade course for which high school credit was received?

No. If a student receives credit, the credit needs to be on the transcript.

5. What alternatives can local school systems offer/provide students so they can fulfill graduation requirements?

At the discretion of the local school superintendent an alternative plan to fulfill graduation requirements may be developed as described in COMAR 13A.03.02.11 Alternatives For Structuring Programs. In addition, graduation requirements may also be fulfilled through the Early College Admission Program or the Early Admission to Approved Vocational, Technical or Other Postsecondary School Program as described in COMAR 13A.03.02.10.

6. Can students receive credits for subjects taken previously from a school when no official transcript is available?

Yes. There are several ways as described in COMAR 13A.03.02.12B(4) Unavailability of Official Transcript. A local superintendent of schools shall determine by an evaluation of a student whether credits earned at a high school will be accepted at the public high school to which the student transfers. This evaluation may include administration of standardized tests and examinations, observation of student in a classroom setting, the use of interviews, as well as the inspection of transcripts, report cards, and other documentation.

7. Is biology required?

Yes, since 2001. Students are required to take both the biology course and the High School Assessment for biology. See COMAR 13A.03.02.04(A)(6).

8. Is algebra/data analysis required?

Yes. Students are required to take both the algebra/data analysis course and the High School Assessment for algebra/data analysis. See COMAR 13A.03.02.04(A)(3).

9. What is the Certificate of Merit?

The Certificate of Merit was awarded to a student who completed the specified core credits, participated in advanced instruction, and obtained at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale for the high school years. The regulations, adopted by the State Board of Education in June 2004, terminated the awarding of the Maryland Certificate of Merit and allowed local school systems to add endorsements to the diploma. See COMAR 13A.03.02.08D and 13A.03.02.09E. Local school systems were given the option for the Class of 2005 to award the Maryland Certificate of Merit or develop their own local certificate of endorsement. The Maryland Certificate of Merit terminated with the Class of 2005.

Graduation Records

1. How can I obtain my student records or a duplicate high school diploma?

Contact the student records department in the local school system where you attended high school to request a copy of your transcript or a copy of your diploma. There may be a fee for copies. (See the list of personnel at the end of this document.)

2. How can a foreign student receive a translated transcript?

Call World Educational Services at (212) 966-6311 for assistance.

High School Assessments

1. Do students who take “on-line” or “virtual” courses have to take the High School Assessments?

Yes. If the student receives credit and the course is one of the courses for which the high school assessment is given, the student must take the high school assessment regardless of how the student received the instruction for the course. See COMAR 13A.03.02.05J.

2. If a student moves here from another state, foreign country, or private school and is granted credits in the HSA-aligned courses, is the student required to take the High School Assessments?

Transfer students who receive credit for HSA-aligned course(s) taken prior to enrolling in a Maryland public school do not have to take the assessment for those courses. See COMAR 13A.03.02.12B(2). The Maryland public school principal makes the decision on whether or not to award credit.

3. If a student transfers from one public school to another in Maryland and the student’s record indicates the student took an HSA-aligned course but there is no record of taking the HSA, is the student required to take the HSA?

Yes. Check the roster for the names of students who took the test at the school. The school must maintain a roster of who took the HSA. Students in the graduating classes of 2005 through 2008 are only required to take the High School Assessments. Students in the graduating class of 2009 (entering freshmen in 2005) and beyond are required to *take and pass* the High School Assessments to graduate.

4. Does a public school student who takes an HSA-aligned course at a private school during the summer term still have to take the HSA?

Yes. See COMAR 13A.03.02.05J.

5. Does a foreign exchange student enrolled in an HSA-aligned course have to take the HSA?

No, as long as the student is definitely returning to his/her own country and has no expectation of receiving a Maryland diploma. If, however, the student requests a Maryland High School Diploma, the student must satisfy the applicable assessment requirements.

6. If a student is repeating an HSA-aligned course, does the student have to take the HSA again?

The high school graduation regulations passed by the State Board in June 2004 specify testing requirements affecting students entering ninth grade in the fall of 2005 and graduating in the spring of 2009. The following table summarizes the HSA requirements by grade.

Students who must:	School Year			
	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
TAKE the HSAs	7 th - 12 th grade	8 th - 12 th grade	9 th - 12 th grade	10 th - 12 th grade
PASS* the HSAs	6 th grade	6 th - 7 th grade	6 th - 8 th grade	6 th - 9 th grade

**PASS means students must pass the High School Assessments or achieve at least the combined score for all four assessments. The minimum score must be achieved for each of the tests.*

For students who only need to **take** (but not pass) the assessments as a graduation requirement, the student will have satisfied the requirement to “take” the assessment by taking it the first time. A student who passes an HSA test but fails the corresponding HSA course does *not* have to take the HSA test again.

7. What are the passing scores for the HSA?

The HSA passing scores are: Biology 400, Algebra/Data Analysis 412, English 396, and Government 394.

8. Do students in the Class of 2009 have to pass all four HSAs?

Students must obtain either a passing score on all four HSAs or obtain a minimum score on each HSA **and** an overall combined score of 1602. The minimum score for each exam is: Biology 391, Algebra/Data Analysis 402, English 386, and Government 387.

9. Can a student take an HSA multiple times in order to raise his/her score to meet the combined score passing option?

Yes, but no additional instructional assistance will be provided if the student has already passed the HSA. Additional instructional assistance must be provided to students who do not achieve the passing score on the HSA before they can retake the test.

10. If a student retakes an HSA and scores lower than the first time, which score counts toward the combined score and which score counts for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

The higher score counts toward the combined score. The first score counts toward AYP.

11. Can a student use the combined score option regardless of how many assessments the student actually passes?

Yes.

12. Is the local school system required to offer the combined score option for students?

Yes. COMAR 13A.03.02.09B(4)(b) provides the combined score option for students. All students must have access to options provided by the state.

13. Can a student who has met all other graduation requirements except passing an HSA be kept from graduation?

Yes. The Maryland regulation requires students entering grade 9 in 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, and 2004-05 school years to take the HSA as a graduation requirement. Students entering grade 9 in 2005 are required to take and *pass* the HSA.

14. Can the HSA scores go on any other card other than the student transcript SR3?

The HSA score must be placed on the transcript SR3 (the permanent record card). Local school systems may decide to put it on other documents as well. Local school systems are also expected to place the score on the student transcript.

15. Must a middle school student take the HSA even if the school system does not award credit for the course?

Any student who takes a high school course based on the Core Learning Goals must take the HSA regardless of whether or not the student receives credit for the course.

Transfer Students

1. Do students transferring to another high school have to be in attendance at the new school a certain period of time before they can receive a high school diploma from that school?

Yes. Students must attend the new school for one full semester preceding graduation to receive a high school diploma from the newly attended school. Exceptions may be made if this creates undue hardship for a transferring student or for special education students in state-approved non-public programs. See COMAR 13A.03.02.12B(1) Transfer Students. A school superintendent may arrange for students to have credits transferred back to their prior high school in order for the students to graduate from their prior high school. This option would have to be approved by the prior high school's superintendent.

2. Can students be admitted to a public high school if transcript records or report cards are not available?

Yes. A local school superintendent or the superintendent's designee shall make this determination. See COMAR 13A.03.02.12B(4) Unavailability of Official Transcript or School Report Card. See also question 6 under Graduation Credits: Defined/Earning.

3. Can a 19 year old who has not earned a diploma return to school to earn a diploma?

A person who is a bona fide resident of Maryland and under 21 years of age can return to school to earn a diploma. Persons 21 years of age or older who want to earn a diploma may enroll in the GED or Adult External Diploma programs.

4. Do transfer students who complete Algebra I in a middle school outside the Maryland Public School System or who complete Algebra I in a Maryland non-public school and who do not receive a credit have to take the Algebra High School Assessment?

Students who have completed and passed algebra in a non-public middle school or out-of-state middle school and have mastered the core learning goals as evidenced from (1) the successful completion of subsequent mathematics courses or (2) through an evaluation of the acquisition of the core learning goals are exempt from the algebra/data analysis HSA. These students may fulfill the state graduation requirements by earning three credits in subsequent mathematics courses for which Algebra I was a prerequisite.

5. If a student completes Algebra I in a middle school outside the Maryland Public School System or completes Algebra I in a Maryland non-public school, does not receive a credit and does not have to take the Algebra High School Assessment (see previous question), can the student use the combined score option to meet the graduation requirement for passing the high school assessments?

Yes. If the student chooses to use the combined score option, the student will be assigned the passing score for the Algebra High School Assessment for the purpose of calculating the combined score.

Other

1. Can a student opt for early admission to college prior to graduation?

Yes. At the discretion of a local school superintendent, students may qualify to attend college in their 4th year of high school provided all Maryland assessment and service-learning requirements have been met. See COMAR 13A.03.02.10 Alternatives to 4-Year Enrollment in a Public High School.

2. Can a non-failing student opt to spend five years in high school to gain extra credits and become better prepared for college?

No. Once a student has fulfilled all state and local credit, assessment, and service-learning requirements, the student is eligible for a high school diploma and can no longer be enrolled in high school. See COMAR 13A.03.02.01-.12.

3. Does a local school system have the authority to deny all students the ability to graduate early?

If a student has satisfied all state and local credit, assessment, and service-learning requirements, the student is entitled to graduate. A student must submit a request to the local school system to waive the fourth year. The local school system must notify the State Superintendent of Schools of the approval. See COMAR 13A.03.02.11 Alternatives for Structuring Programs.

4. Can a military veteran who withdrew from school to enlist in the armed forces obtain a high school diploma?

Maryland Code/EDUCATION/TITLE 7 § 7-206.1 permits the awarding of a high school diploma to certain individuals who were unable to complete their high school graduation requirements because they enlisted in the armed forces. An individual honorably discharged from military service may apply to obtain a diploma if the individual withdrew from a regular full-time public or private high school accredited by the State Board to enlist in the armed forces during World War II, The Korean Conflict, or The Vietnam Conflict. The individual shall apply to the county board in

the county where the individual resides or where the school from which the individual withdrew was located. Each county shall adopt rules and regulations to establish procedures for awarding diplomas under this section.

For the latest contact information go to:

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/student_services_alt/school_counseling/