



April 8, 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the most recent information from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) regarding the Maryland High School Assessment (HSA) graduation requirement. In order to earn a Maryland high school diploma, all students who entered Grade 9 in fall 2005 or after must meet the HSA graduation requirement. In most circumstances, students will meet this requirement by taking all four HSAs and successfully satisfying the HSA graduation requirement in one of three ways—

- pass each of the four HSAs, or
- achieve a combined score of 1602 or higher on the four HSAs, or
- successfully complete the appropriate project(s) of the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

Students can work on more than one way, or path, at the same time to meet the MSDE HSA graduation requirement as shown below.

Path 1: Pass All Four HSAs

The HSAs are given in four content areas: Algebra/Data Analysis, English 10, Government, and Biology. Your child will take each test as he/she completes the related course. Scores for each individual test range from 240 to 650. The chart below gives the passing scores for each of the four tests.

HSA Test	Passing Score
Algebra/Data Analysis	412
English	396
Biology	400
Government	394

Path 2: Combined Score of 1602

Students who do not pass each of the four tests may satisfy the HSA graduation requirement by earning a combined score of 1602 on all four HSAs. Students must take all four HSAs to do so; they do not need to earn a passing score on each test.

Path 3: Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

MSDE developed the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation as another way of meeting the HSA graduation requirement. Students qualifying for the Bridge Plan will complete one or more projects that demonstrate the content and skills of each HSA they did not pass. In order to participate in the Bridge Plan path, students must meet the following requirements—

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- pass the related HSA course,
- have combined HSA scores below 1602,
- fail an HSA two times,
- participate in available HSA support at the school,
- meet attendance policy requirements, and
- make adequate progress toward graduation by maintaining passing grades and earning required credits.

Substitute Scores for Advanced Studies and Transfer Credits

MSDE has approved the following specific circumstances in which students may be assigned the lowest passing score on an HSA without taking the HSA exam:

- Earn a score of three or higher on designated Advanced Placement tests
- Earn a score of five or higher on designated International Baccalaureate tests
- Receive credit for an HSA related course taken prior to enrolling in a Maryland public school.

Modified Assessments Are Available for Certain Students with Special Needs


Students with special education needs who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may be eligible to take one or more Modified HSA tests to meet the graduation requirement. School IEP teams will work with families to determine if a student can take Modified HSA tests.

Montgomery County Public Schools Provides Support for Students Who Need Help Satisfying the HSA Requirement

If students do not pass an HSA, they will be offered assistance at their school. Students may retake the HSA the next time it is given. HSAs are offered in October, January, May, and July/August. Please note that students expecting to graduate must have fulfilled the HSA requirement in time for scores to be reported before graduation. Beginning in 2009, MSDE will provide an April HSA administration for graduating seniors so that their scores are reported in time for graduation. Students may retake HSAs as many times as needed to pass them. Please contact your child's school counselor for information about student support.

For more information, please visit the MSDE HSA Web site at www.hsaexam.org.

Sincerely,


Frieda K. Lacey, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent of Schools