

High School Graduation Requirements

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students earn a high school diploma based upon successful fulfillment of four requirements: Enrollment, Course Credit, High School Assessments, and Student Service Learning.

- 1. Enrollment**—Students must satisfactorily complete four years of school beyond Grade 8. With the approval of the principal, early college admission or early admission to an approved vocational, technical, or other postsecondary school may meet this requirement.
- 2. Course Credit**—A student must earn 22 credits to graduate. Each semester course is worth one half (0.5) credit.

Subject	Credits	Subject	Credits
English	4	Science	3
Fine Arts <i>Selected course in art, dance, music, or drama/theater</i>	1	<i>Biology, a physical science credit (e.g., Matter and Energy, Chemistry), and an additional credit</i>	
Health Education	0.5	Social Studies	3
Mathematics <i>Algebra, Geometry, and two additional credits; the 4-credit requirement is waived for students who pass a full year of calculus</i>	4	<i>U.S. History; Modern World History; National, State, and Local Government</i>	
Physical Education	1	Technology Education	1
		Other Courses*	4.5

***The “Other Courses” requirement may be filled by one of these three options:**

2 credits in foreign language or 2 credits in American Sign Language and 2.5 credits in general electives

2 credits in advanced technology and 2.5 credits in general electives

4 credits in a state-approved career pathway program and 0.5 credit in 2 general electives

- 3. High School Assessments (HSAs)**—Students who entered Grade 9 in the fall of 2005 or after, must pass the Maryland High School Assessments for English, algebra, and biology. For more information on the new HSA requirements, please review the other side of this card.
- 4. Student Service Learning (SSL)**—Students must complete 75 hours of approved Student Service Learning activities. Visit www.mcpsssl.org, or see your school’s Student Service Learning coordinator for more information.

For more information on graduation requirements or alternative certificates, please talk to your school counselor. Additional information is available at www.mcpscourses.org.

Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs)

Frequently Asked Questions

A Requirement for High School Graduation (2011–2012)

What is the HSA graduation requirement?

Students must either earn the passing scores on all three HSAs (algebra, biology, and English) or a combined score of 1208 or higher, or 1602 or higher, for students who have a Government HSA score. Students who fail an HSA once and retake the exam a second time are eligible to participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation (Bridge Plan). Students can work on more than one way, or path, at the same time to meet the MSDE HSA graduation requirement.

When do students take the HSAs?

Students take each test as they complete the course. For example, the HSA for Biology will be taken at the completion of the course. Students who take Algebra 1 in middle school will take that HSA in middle school when they complete the course.

Can students take the test again if they do not pass the first time?

Yes. Schools always offer assistance to students who need to take the test again. Students should speak to their school counselors about receiving extra help. Once students have received this help, they can retake the test. The tests are given five times a year—January, May, mid-summer, and October. There is a seniors-only test given in April. It takes approximately six weeks for students to get the results. Students should make sure they have met the HSA graduation requirement before Grade 12.

What scores are needed to pass the HSAs?

The passing scores are

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

*No longer required or offered.

Another way for students to meet the HSA graduation requirement is to earn a combined score on all three tests of at least 1208. Students who have a Government HSA score also have the option of meeting the requirement through the combined score of 1602.

What happens if a student does not pass an HSA on the first attempt?

Students may continue to take the HSA as many times as is necessary to meet the combined score of 1208 or 1602. In 2008, MSDE developed the Bridge Plan as another way of meeting the HSA graduation requirement. Students qualifying for the Bridge Plan will complete one or more projects that demonstrate proficiency in the content and skills of each HSA they did not pass. The criteria for Bridge Plan participation are as follows:

- Earn combined HSA scores below 1208 and 1602
- Pass the related HSA course
- Fail an HSA once and retake the exam a second time
- Maintain an attendance rate of 80 percent or higher in the previous semester (MCPS guideline)
- Earn required course credits and make adequate progress toward graduation (MCPS guideline)

Substitute Scores for Advanced Studies

MSDE 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 3 or higher on designated Advanced Placement tests
- Earn a score of 5 or higher on designated International Baccalaureate tests

For more information on HSAs, visit the MCPS website at www.mcpsghsa.org