

Looking for more information on the Maryland High School Assessments?

Visit **HSAexam.org** Call **1-877-HSA-EXAM**

Do students with disabilities have to take the HSAs?

Most students with disabilities will take and pass all four HSAs, use the combined-score option, or take advantage of the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. However, there are alternative tests for a small number of students with disabilities who may not be able to satisfy the testing requirement any of these ways.

Alt-MSA:

Students with *significant* cognitive disabilities who are unable to take the regular HSAs and who meet specific eligibility criteria may participate in the Alternate Maryland School Assessment—or Alt-MSA—a portfolio assessment administered in grades 3–8 and **grade 10**. The Alt-MSA is tailored to each student's unique instructional needs. Students taking the Alt-MSA do not receive a high school diploma, but rather a Certificate of Program Completion.

Mod-HSA:

A small number of students with disabilities who are able to make progress toward course standards but not in the same timeframe as non-disabled students may be eligible to take the Modified HSAs—or Mod-HSAs—instead of the regular exams. The Mod-HSAs cover the same course content as the HSAs, but test format has been altered to meet the needs of eligible students. The modified assessments are administered at the same time as the regular HSAs, and students taking the tests may earn a high school diploma.

Some students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who take a regular HSA and fail it may be eligible to take the Mod-HSA upon retesting. To find out whether your

child is eligible for the Mod-HSAs, contact his or her IEP team.

Accommodations:

All students with disabilities—regardless of the test they take—are entitled to the instructional and testing accommodations indicated in their IEPs.

If you have a child with disabilities and have questions about his or her program of study, participation on state tests, services, accommodations, or supports, contact your child's teacher or IEP team.



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High School Assessments & Your Child

Any child who entered 9th grade in or after 2005 must meet Maryland's high school testing requirement to graduate. The questions and answers on this and the next few pages explain the testing program and how it affects your child. If you don't find the answers to your questions here, ask your child's teacher or principal for help, or go to **HSAexam.org**.

What are the Maryland High School Assessments?

The High School Assessments, or HSAs, are four multiple-choice tests—one each in Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, Government, and English. Your child will take each test as he or she completes the related course.

The tests are based on the Core Learning Goals, a part of Maryland's curriculum that outlines high school course content and learning objectives. To review Maryland's Core Learning Goals, go to **HSAexam.org** and click on **About HSAs**.

Each year, the state releases one assessment per subject to the public. To look at these tests, or to take one online, visit **HSAexam.org** and click on **Test Support**.

Each HSA tests students' knowledge of different topic areas. However, the HSAs don't test everything your child learns in a course, so you should contact your child's teachers for information on complete course content.

When are the HSAs given?

The HSAs are given in October, January, May, and July/August. A special seniors-only administration in April helps 12th-graders struggling on the tests to graduate on time.

Students needing to retake an HSA may do so the next time the test is given. Students may retake failed tests as many times as they need to meet the requirement.

For a full exam calendar through 2011–12—including make-up days for students who are absent during testing—go to **HSAexam.org** and click on **Calendar**.



Does my child have to pass the HSAs in order to graduate?

Students who started 9th grade in or after 2005 must meet the state's high school testing requirement to graduate. Passing all four HSAs is one way to do that. The passing scores are: Algebra/Data Analysis, **412**; Government, **394**; Biology, **400**; and English, **396**. Scores on an HSA that's taken more than once are not averaged; only the student's highest score counts.

Students are allowed to substitute passing scores on certain Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams for passing scores on the HSAs. For a list of approved exams and acceptable scores, go to **HSAexam.org** and click on **About HSAs**.

If your child's total score on all four HSAs is at least 1602—the sum of the four passing scores—he or she has met the testing requirement. This combined-score option allows students to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another.

Ways to meet the HSA requirement

1. Pass all four tests.

OR

2. Earn a combined score of at least 1602.

OR

3. Complete the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

To graduate, students must also meet the state's credit, service-learning, and attendance requirements as well as all the requirements imposed by your school district. Ask your school administrators or counselors about all local graduation requirements.

In very limited circumstances, students may be eligible for a waiver from the HSA graduation requirement. This waiver opportunity must be approved by the local superintendent. Eligible students will have completed all other graduation requirements and have failed to meet the HSA graduation requirement because of specific scheduling problems or extenuating circumstances. The circumstance must directly affect the student's ability to meet the HSA requirement, such as a destructive house fire, pregnancy with complications or other serious events in a student's life. More about the waiver is available at [HSAexam.org](https://www.hsaexam.org).

What if my child fails an HSA?

Schools are required to offer assistance to students who fail an HSA. Contact your child's school, and administrators there will be able to tell you what kind of extra help your child will receive. Your child may retake the failed HSA as many times as he or she needs to meet the requirement.

Students who fail an HSA at least twice may be allowed to satisfy the HSA testing requirement through the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

All students with disabilities—regardless of the test they take—are entitled to accommodations during instruction and testing. The accommodations your child needs are indicated in his or her IEP. If you have a child with disabilities and have questions about his or her program of study or participation on state tests, contact your child's teacher or IEP team.

What is the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation?

The Bridge Plan is a series of challenging projects linked to the Core Learning Goals tested by each HSA. The

number of projects assigned to your child will depend on the highest score he or she earned on the failed HSA; the higher the score, the fewer the projects assigned. For a chart indicating the number of projects assigned by score range, go to [HSAexam.org](https://www.hsaexam.org) and click on [About the HSAs/Testing Options](#).

To be eligible for the Bridge Plan, students must have failed an HSA at least twice,* have passed the HSA-related course, and be participating in an assistance program offered by their school or school system—for example, tutoring or after-school instruction. Students must also have an acceptable attendance record and be making satisfactory progress toward graduation.

Students completing Bridge Plan projects may not use the combined-score option to satisfy the HSA requirement. That is, they must pass the remaining HSAs or complete Bridge Plan projects for every test failed.

Local school systems will determine when students may begin work on the Bridge Plan. A local review panel, established by your school district, will evaluate the project(s) at the end of the assigned work period, and your superintendent will give final approval.

For more information about the Bridge Plan, and for sample Bridge Plan projects, go to [HSAexam.org](https://www.hsaexam.org) and click on [About the HSAs/Testing Options](#).

*If your child is in jeopardy of not graduating on time, your school system may allow him or her to begin one or more Bridge Projects after taking an HSA a second time. If the student fails the second testing, he or she can submit the completed Bridge Plan project for scoring.

My child is in middle school, but taking algebra now. Does he/she have to pass the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA to graduate?

Yes. Students take each HSA as they complete the course. If your child is in middle school but taking a high-school-level course—which happens most frequently with algebra—he or she will have to pass the appropriate HSA to graduate. Of course, the earlier a student takes an HSA, the more opportunities he or she has to pass it.

When will I see my child's scores?

About seven weeks after the test is given, the state sends all students' scores to their school district. The school district then sends the scores to parents.

Every fall, HSA pass rates for schools, school districts, and the state are posted on the Web at [MdReportCard.org](https://www.mdreportcard.org).

What do the scores mean?

The HSA passing scores (see page 1) were set by Maryland teachers and subject specialists at a level they determined almost *all* students could achieve. The highest possible score on each test is 650; the lowest is 240.

The HSAs *cannot* determine a student's letter-grade performance because the tests must produce the most valid and reliable information at the passing standard—which means most of the questions must be set at the difficulty level of that standard. A test designed to identify both passing and letter-grade performance would take students much more time to complete and the state more time to score.

What can I do to help my child on the HSAs?

Online Courses

The state has created online courses that students can take in whole or in part—either in preparation for an upcoming exam, or for review if he or she has failed one. Go to [HSAexam.org](https://www.hsaexam.org) and click on [HSA Online Courses](#). At the login screen, enter **online.course** as the username and **parent** as the password. The New Users section on the right will steer you toward tutorials on using the courses. Teachers use these same courses with students as part of regular instruction or as a supplement for students who need extra practice or extended learning time.

Sample Tests

Each year, the state releases one sample HSA per subject to the public. These are actual tests that students have taken and that have since been retired. The tests can be taken on paper or online, and each is accompanied by an answer key, so that students can check their work. Online, every question is linked to the specific curricular goal and expectation it measures. To download a sample test or to take one online, go to [HSAexam.org](https://www.hsaexam.org) and click on [Test Support](#).

Practice Tests

Each year, the state posts mini-assessments in each subject—short, online quizzes that are broken down by topic area. When students complete the quiz, they can see their answers, the correct answers, and which curricular goal and expectation were tested by the question. To take a practice test, go to [HSAexam.org](https://www.hsaexam.org) and click on [Test Support](#).

