



Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

# Maryland High School Assessments

Message from the State Superintendent  
December 2002

Dear Parent/Guardian of a Maryland Middle or High School Student:

I know that you want your child to graduate from high school prepared for new opportunities and the brightest of futures. **One way Maryland public schools help prepare students for life after high school is through the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA)** — a series of tests covering English, mathematics, science, and social studies. These tests will help raise academic standards in schools and add to the value of a Maryland high school diploma.

**Your child will take the HSA in English I, algebra/data analysis, geometry, government, and biology after he or she completes each course.** (This includes middle school students taking high-school level courses.) **Right now, taking the tests is required, but passing them is not.**

**Students are currently required to take and pass the Maryland Functional Tests in reading, writing, and mathematics.** The Maryland Functional Tests measure basic skills and are less challenging than the HSA. Most students pass the Maryland Functional Tests while still in middle school. As passing the HSA becomes a graduation requirement, the Maryland Functional Tests will be phased out.

**The HSA are given in May each school year.** Schools following a four-period schedule will also offer the tests in January. Feedback on how your child performed on the HSA will be made available to you. Scores from the January and May 2002 test administrations should be available by the end of this calendar year. Scores from the January and May 2003 test administrations will be available before the start of the 2003-2004 school year.

**Depending on what grade students are in, their HSA scores may be printed on their high school transcripts.** The state requires local school systems to print HSA scores on transcripts for students who entered grade 9 in or after fall 2001. Local school systems are not required to print scores on the transcripts of students preceding this group, but they may do so if they choose.

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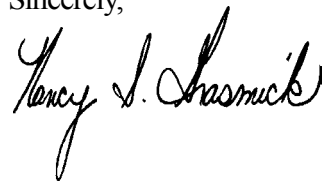
**Beginning in March 2003, tenth-graders will also take a reading test.** This is separate from the HSA program. The tenth-grade reading test will fulfill the high school reading test requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Scores from this test should be available by late summer 2003. In the future, we plan to have your child's score on this test returned to you before the school year ends. NCLB also requires that high-school students be tested in mathematics. The HSA in geometry fulfills this requirement.

**Children with disabilities will participate in testing,** unless their Individualized Education Program (IEP) states that they are not pursuing the Maryland High School Core Learning Goals. Accommodations will be consistent with those provided during classroom instruction and testing and designated in the IEP for a student with a disability or in the plans for eligible 504 or limited English proficient students.

**The following Fact Sheet contains more information about the HSA.** If you have questions about the HSA, tenth-grade reading test, Maryland Functional Tests, or any aspect of your child's education, please contact the principal or a guidance counselor at your child's school. Information is also available on the Maryland State Department of Education Web site, [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org).

The Maryland State Department of Education will continue to work with school systems, schools, and parents to help Maryland children be successful in school and in future endeavors. Thank you for your support in raising standards for Maryland schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy S. Grasmick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "N".

Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools



200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

# MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

Fact Sheet

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Revised January 2003

## ***What are the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA)?***

The HSA are tests of a student's knowledge in core subject areas. Phase 1 of the HSA program includes the English I, government, algebra/data analysis, and biology assessments. Phase 2 of the HSA program includes the geometry assessment. More tests may be added in the future. The HSA are referred to as "end-of-course" tests because students take each test as they complete the appropriate courses. The HSA contain multiple-choice questions and questions requiring written responses. These questions are based on the content outlined in Maryland's Core Learning Goals. More information on the Core Learning Goals and sample test questions are available on the Web at [mdk12.org/mspp/high\\_school/](http://mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/).

## ***Must students pass the tests in order to graduate from high school?***

**Right now, taking the tests is required, but passing them is not.** All students—including middle school students taking high-school level courses—must take the HSA after they complete the appropriate courses. Eventually, students will have to pass the Phase 1 HSA as a graduation requirement. The State Board of Education still must establish passing scores and vote to make passing the tests a graduation requirement. The earliest group of students for whom passing the Phase 1 HSA might be required for graduation is those students entering grade 9 in fall 2003—the class of 2007. Once passing the HSA becomes a graduation requirement, students who do not pass a test the first time they take it will receive assistance from the local school system and may retake the test.

## ***Will students receive scores on the HSA?***

**All students will receive a score.** Scores will also be reported for schools, school systems, and the state.

**The state requires local school systems to print the Phase 1 HSA scores on transcripts for students who entered grade 9 in or after fall 2001.** Local school systems are not required to print scores on the transcripts of students preceding this group, but they may do so if they choose. Local school systems also are not required to print geometry scores on students' transcripts, but they may do so if they choose.

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***How will scores be reported?***

Because passing scores have not yet been established, scores from HSA taken during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years will be reported as percentile ranks. For example, if a student earns a percentile rank of 60 on the biology test, it means that he or she performed as well as or better than 60 percent of all Maryland students who took the biology test.

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***How do the HSA relate to the Maryland School Assessment?***

The Maryland School Assessment is the state's measure of students' reading, math, and science achievement in grades 3–8 and reading achievement in grade 10. The HSA and the Maryland School Assessment are based on the Maryland Content Standards, which outline what students should know and be able to do in grades preK through 12. Also, both tests contain a mixture of multiple-choice questions and questions requiring written responses.

Together, the two testing programs will provide schools, teachers, and parents a good picture of student performance, and will help identify students' strengths and areas for improvement. For more information on the Maryland School Assessment, visit the Maryland State Department of Education on the Web at [marylandpublicschools.org](http://marylandpublicschools.org).

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***How do the HSA relate to the Maryland Functional Tests?***

The Maryland Functional Tests were developed in the 1980s to ensure that Maryland's high school graduates were competent in basic skills. These tests were designed to measure basic skills and functional knowledge. The HSA are more challenging than the Maryland Functional Tests. As passing the HSA becomes a graduation requirement, the HSA will replace the Maryland Functional Tests. The HSA will better prepare students for the variety of challenges they will encounter in life and in their careers. It is important for students to take the HSA seriously because high school transcripts are used by businesses and colleges to make decisions about hiring and admissions.

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***How were the HSA developed?***

Teachers and other educators, parents, business leaders, community members, and educational and professional organizations and associations from across Maryland collaborated on the development of the HSA. Each test item undergoes a comprehensive review process before it is included in an assessment. Learn more about test development and scoring on the Web at [mdk12.org/mspp/high\\_school/](http://mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/).