



Maryland High School Assessments

# The High School Assessments: Myth vs. Fact

Marylanders want it Teachers built it Students can do it!

**MYTH:** The High School Assessments (HSAs) determine whether a student graduates.

**FACT:** The testing requirement is only one of several requirements needed in order to graduate from a Maryland public high school. Students must also meet all state course and service learning requirements, and have fulfilled all local school system requirements.

**MYTH:** It's not fair to require students to pass four "State" tests to receive a high school diploma.

**FACT 1:** From 1989 to 2003 Maryland students had to pass four State "functional" tests (middle-school level) to receive a high school diploma. The High School Assessments (HSAs) raise the bar slightly and test courses that most students take in the 9th and 10th grade.

**FACT 2:** Currently, 65% of the nation's high school students must pass some sort of high school graduation exam to receive a diploma.

**MYTH:** A student will not graduate if he/she fails even one of the four High School Assessments (HSAs), although he/she passed the related course.

**FACT:** No student will fail to graduate because he/she did not pass one test. Students have other alternatives to meeting the testing requirement, as follows:

**Combined-Score Option** - A student can earn a combined total of 1602 points across the four exams to meet the testing requirement. This approach allows students to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another. (Maryland is the only state that has this option.)

**Bridge Plan for Academic Validation** - A student who has not passed an HSA after taking the test twice and meets eligibility criteria, including participating in locally-administered or approved assistance and making progress toward graduation, can complete one or more project modules in the content area. Once a student is eligible for participation, school staff meet with the student to begin planning the student's Academic Validation Project Package.

**MYTH:** There are no High School Assessment (HSA) options for special education students.

**FACT 1:** The Modified HSAs with altered test items are available for a small portion of students with disabilities.

**FACT 2:** The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation is also an alternative for these students.

**MYTH:** Students who do not meet the testing requirement for graduation will receive a high school certificate of completion.

**FACT:** The Maryland Certificate of Completion is only awarded to students with significant cognitive disabilities who have met the required criteria for and have participated in the Alternate Maryland School Assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards.

