

Board of Education

Effective: November 5, 2020

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I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring that each student in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) meets rigorous academic standards and is prepared to enter postsecondary education or employment. The Board further recognizes that fulfilling this commitment requires effective instruction and flexible programming that address the unique needs and interests of students. Within the high school program, students will have access to a wide variety of course offerings, including work-based learning experiences that meet and supplement academic requirements, to prepare them to be responsible members of a global society.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish requirements for graduation from high school in the HCPSS that are consistent with the regulations of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

III. Standards

- A. Graduation Requirements
 - 1. Enrollment Requirement

The student will satisfactorily complete four years of approved study beyond the eighth grade unless one of the alternatives in Section D. is satisfied.

2. Credit Requirements

- a. To be awarded a diploma, a student will have earned a minimum of twenty-one credits.
- b. A student will earn the following specified core credits as part of the twenty-one credits requirement:
 - i. English Language Arts – 4 credits, including one credit that addresses standards tested by the HSA/PARCC assessment for English.
 - ii. Fine Arts – 1 credit in visual arts, music, theater, and/or dance.
 - iii. Technology Education – 1 credit that includes the application of knowledge, tools, and skills to solve practical problems and extend human capabilities.
 - iv. Mathematics – 3 credits, including one credit of Algebra I (aligned with the PARCC assessment for Algebra I), one credit of Geometry, and one or more credits in courses such as Algebra II and subsequent mathematics courses that utilize algebra in a substantive way, so that the student does not lose the algebraic and numerical skills achieved in earlier courses. Beginning with the freshman class of 2014–2015, students must be enrolled in a mathematics course in each year of high school that the student attends in the HCPSS, for a maximum of four years attendance, unless in the 5th or 6th year a mathematics course is needed to meet graduation requirements.
 - v. Physical Education – 1/2 credit.
 - vi. Health – 1/2 credit.
 - vii. Science – 3 credits of organized instruction that integrate laboratory components in each. Each credit engages students in the application of the science and engineering practices, the crosscutting concepts, and the disciplinary core ideas of Earth/space science, life science, physical science (chemistry and physics), engineering, and technology; and align to the Maryland High School Assessment for science.
 - viii. Social Studies – 3 credits including one credit in U. S. history, one credit in world history, and one credit in local, state, and national government aligned with the HSA for government.
- c. A student will also earn one of the following as part of the twenty-one credits requirement:
 - i. World Language or American Sign Language – 2 credits.
 - ii. Advanced Technology Education – 2 credits.
 - iii. State-approved Career and Technology Completer Program – 3 or more credits as determined by the specific program.

- d. Students must complete a locally designed high school program of environmental literacy.
- e. Students may also earn credits from other available elective courses published in the HCPSS Catalog of Approved High School Courses.

3. State Assessment Requirements

- a. Each student must take the HSA/PARCC assessments for English, Algebra I, biology/science and government. Additionally, per the table below, each student that completes Algebra I, English 10, biology, and government and meets certain criteria, must also meet the related assessment requirement to graduate:

Course	Criteria	Assessment Requirement
Algebra I	First time Algebra I test taker prior to the 2016–2017 school year	Score for Algebra PARCC or Algebra I HSA*
	First time Algebra I test taker during or after the 2016–2017 school year	Pass Algebra I PARCC
English 10	First time English 10 test taker prior to the 2016–2017 school year	Score for English 10 PARCC or English 10 HSA*
	First time English 10 test taker during or after the 2016–2017 school year	Pass English 10 PARCC
Biology	Completed Biology course during or prior to the 2016–2017 school year	Pass Biology HSA or participate during the 2016-2017 school year
	Completed Biology course after the 2016–2017 school year	Score for the High School Assessment for Science**
Government	Entered Grade 9 prior to the 2013–2014 school year	None
	Entered Grade 9 in or after the 2013–2014 school year	Pass Government HSA

* Algebra I HSA and English 10 HSA no longer administered, as of July 20, 2015.

**A passing score for the High School Assessment for science will be required for first time test taker in 2020 and beyond.

- b. Students who do not achieve a passing score on an HSA/PARCC assessment will be provided the opportunity to retake the appropriate assessment in accordance with the testing schedule issued by the MSDE. In order to participate in a retake, students must utilize an approved assistance program to strengthen areas of weakness.

c. Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

A student may participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation if the student has met all of the requirements set forth by the MSDE.

4. Student Service Learning Requirement

Students will complete one of the following programs which include preparation, action, and reflection components:

- a. A locally designed program in student service learning that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools and is usually completed in middle school.
- b. 75 hours of student service learning which may begin during the middle school years.

5. Career Preparation Requirement

A student must participate in an approved program of career preparation.

B. Elective Programs

HCPSS will provide elective courses in a variety of areas which are open to enrollment for all students and which focus on in-depth study in required subject areas, exploration, or application/integration of what has been learned.

C. Alternative Sources of Credit

1. HCPSS may provide summer school programs as determined by the needs of students for either original or review credit. Original credit courses will meet the requirements specified for regular school year courses. Requirements for review credit will be developed for individual students after determining the student's proficiency in the subject.
2. Credit may be given for acceptable summer study offered by approved public and nonpublic institutions in or outside of Maryland, provided the principal of the student's home school authorizes the study in advance.
3. HCPSS may provide evening school programs as an extension of the regular school day for original or review credit as determined by the needs of students. Requirements for those subjects being used by students for diploma credit will be the same as those listed in III.A.2. and III.A.3. above.
4. Extenuating circumstances may necessitate the assistance of tutors for certain students. However, tutoring should be considered only after all the resources of the

school system have been fully used and when it is felt definitively that the best interests of the students are being served. If tutoring is recommended by the school and approved by the HCPSS for credit to be applied toward minimum graduation requirements, then the tutor, the program of study, and examination will be financed by the HCPSS.

5. Work and experience outside the school are recognized as valid ways of learning. Time spent in such activities may be counted as a portion of the requirements for credit when identified as an integrated part of a planned program. No more than nine elective credits toward meeting graduation requirements may be granted to a student for approved and supervised work or experience.
6. Credit may be earned in grades 9–12 for independent study or internships in which students successfully demonstrate locally established curricular objectives.
7. With prior approval of the Superintendent/designee, credit may be given for courses taken at accredited colleges and other accredited institutions and counted toward the requirements for a diploma.
8. Courses will be identified for which students in grades 9–12 may earn credit toward graduation by passing an examination that assesses student demonstration of locally established curricular objectives.
9. Credits may be earned for designated high school level courses taken at the middle school level after an exam is passed that assesses student demonstration of locally established curricular objectives.

D. Alternatives to 4-Year Enrollment

In recognition of the fact that four-year enrollment in a public high school may not serve the best interests of some students, the following alternatives are made available:

1. Early College Admission Program

A student may receive a diploma by meeting COMAR requirements of an early college admission program.

2. Early Admission to Approved Vocational, Technical, or other Postsecondary School Program

A student may receive a diploma by meeting COMAR requirements of an early admission program to an approved vocational, technical, or other postsecondary school program.

3. Request for Early Graduation Option

Students have the option to graduate after three years of attendance provided all state assessment, credit, student service learning, and career preparation requirements have been met. This option is subject to approval by the Superintendent/designee. An approval process will be developed and published in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses.

E. Transfer Students

1. Awarding of Credit

The principal will ascertain whether or not the school or schools previously attended by the student are accredited. This includes home instruction programs under the supervision of accredited schools or institutions which award high school credit. If there is any doubt on this point, an official inquiry should be addressed to the State Department of Education in the state in which the school or schools are located.

a. Accredited Schools

- i. If the school or schools are approved by that state, credits may be awarded to the student in the subjects which the student has completed successfully. See paragraph 2 in this section for courses which are part of the Maryland State Assessment Program.
- ii. Credits for Advanced Placement (AP) courses which have been awarded by accredited schools will be counted toward the requirements for diploma endorsements.

b. Nonaccredited Schools

If an official transcript from an accredited school is not available or a student is enrolling from a nonaccredited school, the Superintendent/designee will determine placement within the high school program and credits to be awarded by an evaluation of the student. This evaluation will include one or more of the following: administration of standardized tests and examinations; the use of interviews that are focused around the student's demonstration of course content knowledge and performance levels; and the inspection of transcripts, report cards, and other documentation. The student will be notified in writing of the reasons for any denial of transfer credits from nonaccredited schools.

2. Maryland State Assessment Requirements

- a. To award credit for Algebra I, English 10, government, and science, a principal will determine through the following considerations whether the

transfer student demonstrates subject matter knowledge aligned with the content standards for the subject: administration of standardized tests and examinations; observation of the student in the classroom; use of interviews that are focused around the student's demonstration of course content knowledge and performance levels; and inspection of transcripts, report cards, and other documentation.

- b. A student who transfers from a nonpublic school or a school out of state and who has been awarded credit for Algebra I, English 10, government, or two or more credits of science, is exempt from the HSA or PARCC assessment in the associated course(s).
- c. A student who transfers from a nonpublic school or from a school out of state into the HCPSS after the first semester of his or her senior year is exempt from the HSA or PARCC assessment requirements. This exemption does not apply to a student with disabilities in a state-approved nonpublic program.

3. Awarding of a Diploma

- a. To receive a diploma, a student will be in attendance at a Maryland public high school one full semester immediately preceding graduation in addition to meeting the other diploma requirements. In cases where this requirement creates an undue hardship for a student transferring to or from a Maryland nonpublic school or from an out-of-state school and wishing to receive a Maryland high school diploma, the Superintendent may waive the one full semester attendance requirement.
- b. Students transferring from one Maryland public high school to another during the second semester of their senior year, and meeting all requirements for graduation, will be given the option of graduating from either high school by agreement of the Superintendent/designee or the respective local superintendents when more than one school system is involved.

F. Diplomas and Certificates

1. Maryland High School Diploma

A Maryland high school diploma will be awarded to any student who fulfills the minimum enrollment, credit, state assessment, student service learning, and career preparation requirements.

2. Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion

This certificate will be awarded only to students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a diploma but who meet one of the following standards:

- a. The student is enrolled in an education program for at least four years beyond grade 8 or its age equivalent and is determined by an IEP Team, with the agreement of the parents of the student, to have developed appropriate skills for the individual to enter the world of work, act responsibly as a citizen, and enjoy a fulfilling life. The world of work will include but not be limited to gainful employment, work activity centers, sheltered workshops, and supported employment.
- b. The student has been enrolled in an educational program for four years beyond grade 8 or its age equivalent and has reached the age of 21 by the end of the student's current school year.
- c. The decision to award a student with disabilities a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion will not be made until after the beginning of the student's last year in high school unless the student is participating in the Alternative Maryland School Assessment Program (ALT-MSA).

IV. Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/designee will ensure that the curriculum meets state standards for graduation.
- B. The principal will ensure that the approved curriculum is implemented.
- C. The principal/designee will monitor student schedules to provide feedback to students and parents regarding progress toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements.
- D. The principal/designee will review student records to determine eligibility for graduation.

V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VI. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Bridge Plan for Academic Validation (Bridge Plan) – An alternative pathway to meeting Maryland assessments for graduation requirements. Regulations and procedures governing the Bridge Plan are determined by the MSDE.
- B. Credit – Unit of achievement awarded for the completion of a course and/or the successful demonstration of established learning goals. Course credits will be published in the Catalog of Approved High School Courses.

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- C. Diploma – See Maryland High School Diploma.
- D. Home Instruction – A program under which students are provided regular, thorough instruction, by their parent(s) during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to students of the same age.
- E. Individualized Education Program Team (IEP Team) – A group of individuals responsible for identifying and evaluating students with disabilities. The IEP Team develops, reviews, and/or revises an IEP for a student with a disability and determines placement.
- F. Maryland High School Assessments (HSA) – Culminating tests in science and government required by the MSDE that are aligned with content standards and measure a student's skills and knowledge.
- G. Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion – The official state document issued to students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a diploma but who have completed the identified standards in a special education program.
- H. Maryland High School Diploma – The official state document issued to a student indicating fulfillment of the minimum enrollment, credit, state assessment, student service learning, and career preparation requirements.
- I. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
1. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 2. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 3. Custodian – A person or an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody or control over the student, but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101 (c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.

6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- J. Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Assessments – Culminating tests in English and mathematics required by the MSDE that are aligned with content standards and measure a student’s skills and knowledge.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - COMAR 13A.03.02, Graduation Requirements for Public High Schools in Maryland
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.03, Enrollment and Credit Requirements
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.04, Other Provisions for Earning Credit
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.05, Student Service
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.06, Maryland High School Assessments
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.09, Diplomas and Certificates
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.10, Alternatives to 4-year Enrollment Requirement
 - COMAR 13A.03.02.12, General Provisions (Transfer Students)
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 8010 Grading and Reporting: Prekindergarten Through Grade 5
 - Policy 8020 Grading and Reporting: Middle and High School
 - Policy 9010 Attendance
 - Policy 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extracurricular Activities
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other
 - HCPSS Catalog of Approved High School Courses

VIII. History¹

ADOPTED: February 13, 1986

REVIEWED:

MODIFIED: April 12, 2007

April 10, 2008

March 13, 2014

April 10, 2018

¹ Key: *Adopted*-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; *Reviewed*-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent’s Standing Policy Group; *Modified*-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; *Revised*-The date the Board took action on a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; *Effective*-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.

REVISSED: November 5, 2020
October 26, 1989
June 27, 1996
May 26, 2005
February 12, 2015
May 12, 2016
EFFECTIVE: November 5, 2020