MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D.

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SUBJECT: 2011 High School Assessment Requirements and Graduation Results

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PURPOSE:

To provide Board members with a summary and overview of the statewide results on the High School Assessment (HSA) requirement and graduation rate data for students in the Class of 2011.

BACKGROUND:

Maryland's 2011 high school graduating class is the third class for which graduation depends on meeting the High School Assessment requirement in English, Algebra/data analysis, biology, and government. The requirement is met by either passing all four High School Assessments, attaining a combined passing score of 1602 points across all four tests, or by satisfactorily completing assigned projects from the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation in lieu of passing failed tests.

In addition to serving as high school graduation requirements in Maryland, the High School Assessments fulfill federal requirements for high school assessments in mathematics, English language arts, and science as part of the school accountability plan mandated under the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Federal rules require the use of English and Algebra assessment results along with graduation rate data for determining if schools, systems, and the state are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward annual performance targets. The State Board will be briefed on the 2011 state level results in the aggregate and by race and special services subgroups (students receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals, students with disabilities, and students who are receiving English language learner services).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

HSA Development. Maryland's High School Assessments are end-of-course exams that have been under development since the mid-1990's, with some tests administered on a no-fault basis to students as early as 2000. The original Maryland plan envisioned up to three different course assessments for each of the four core academic areas, but the federal passage of the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as No Child Left Behind), helped lead state policy makers to narrow the testing plan down to one test in each of the four core academic areas—English 10, Algebra/data analysis, biology, and government. Two of the tests, English 10 and Algebra/data analysis, are required by federal law to be used along with graduation rate data to determine if a school, system, or state meets the mandated annual performance targets or achieves Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Biology results must be reported under federal rules, but they are not incorporated into AYP

determinations. The fourth test, government, is a Maryland requirement for the Class of 2011 and is reported for State purposes only.

Because the tests are end-of-course exams, the AYP determinations are based on the number of students passing the assessments by the end of their senior year, with students taking the tests as they complete the courses. In some instances, students pass the assessments as they take the courses earlier in their high school career, with those results incorporated into AYP calculations in the senior year upon graduation. Students unable to achieve passing scores on High School Assessments are permitted to retest only after they have been given an opportunity for further instruction or remediation. If such students eventually pass the failed assessments, their passing results are incorporated into the AYP determination as "passing students."

Options for Students Failing Tests. Students who are unable to pass a High School Assessment have two options. Recognizing that some students are particularly strong in some areas and weaker in others, the Combined Score Option allows students to compensate lower HSA scores with higher scores in others as long as the total number of points across the four assessments equals 1602. However, for students unable to pass all four tests or achieve 1602 points, a third mechanism is used. A student failing any HSA at least two times can meet the Maryland graduation requirement by completing extensive assignments of independent instructional work related to the course for which they failed the HSA as part of the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. A student successfully completing an assigned Bridge Plan project is deemed as meeting the HSA requirement related to the failed test. However, federal rules require Maryland to count only passing students for English and Algebra/data analysis when calculating Adequate Yearly Progress.

Annual Testing Cycle. The assessments include selected response (multiple choice) items designed to facilitate rapid scoring and turnaround of results. The tests are administered five times per school year. The three major administrations coincide with the local academic year cycle and are given at the end of the first and second semesters and during the summer term. One additional administration is also made available in the early fall of each year to accommodate students who may have failed the end of year administration and need only minor review at the beginning of the school year to demonstrate the skills to pass. Finally, an administration is available in spring of each year for seniors who have not met the requirement only to permit expedited scoring so that results can be incorporated into local graduation decisions for the relatively small number of seniors still attempting to meet the HSA requirement in the second semester of the senior year.

HSA Waiver Option. State Board regulations also permit local superintendents to grant waivers to a limited number of students not passing one or more HSAs under extraordinary circumstances. Though students who are granted waivers can receive their diplomas, they are counted as "not passing" when HSA results are reported for both state and federal purposes.

Summary of Results. Today the State Board is discussing the results received in September related to the high school graduating class of 2011, including a report on the number of students passing the assessments, students unable to pass the assessments, students meeting the requirement through the Bridge Plan Option, and students granted waivers by local superintendents. Results are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and special services. Results were previously posted at MSDE's report card website, mdreportcard.org on October 6.

ACTION:

For information only.

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