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To: Members of the State Board of Education

From: Nancy S. Grasmick 

Date: August 25, 2003

Re: Establishing Standards for High School Assessments

Purpose

To determine the minimum passing scores that students will be expected to achieve on High School Assessments.

Background

In 1993, the Maryland State Board of Education received Task Force recommendations for the institution of statewide high school end-of-course exams. By 1996, core learning goals were in place for the end-of-course exams in every high school in the state of Maryland. Field tests for the High School Assessment (HSA) were administered in 2000 and 2001, and in 2002 the assessments were administered in operational form in Algebra/Data Analysis, Geometry, English I, Government, and Biology.

At the June Board meeting, I proposed delaying for one year (until school year 2004-2005) the effective date of passing scores to allow further examination of HSA performance standards. The State Board approved procedures for the work of HSA standard setting groups this summer. During the week of July 13, 2003, the Maryland State Department of Education convened approximately 300 Maryland educators, stakeholders, public officials, and testing experts, including approximately 200 who assisted in making recommendations associated with the NCLB required assessments. Approximately 100 educators and experts also worked on recommended standards for the High School Assessments, which went through additional reviews before coming to the State Board this month.

The groups participating in the Maryland studies include the following:

Content and Preliminary Recommendations

HSA Content Reviewers - Four groups of content experts met for three days in Annapolis, Maryland to study each of the High School Assessments (HSA) – Algebra/Data Analysis, English I, Government, and Biology. The groups worked to reach a consensus on the level of performance that they felt should be expected of all Maryland high schools on these tests by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The Standards Setting unit of CTB/McGraw-Hill provided technical oversight for the content reviews and conducted the reviews using the Bookmaking Standard Setting Procedure. The procedure is used throughout the



nation in establishing standards in other state and commercially produced assessment programs.

Psychometric Review

On July 18-19, 2003, a panel of nationally recognized testing experts reviewed all of the recommendations of the content review teams. The psychometric panel determined that the standard setting process was a valid one and provided guidance that would assist in the next steps of the review to ensure that any adjustments to the content team recommendations were appropriate.

Review and Articulation

On Tuesday, August 12, 2003, the Department convened a broadly representative group of school system leaders, educators, and stakeholders to review the recommendations of the nine content study groups and the graduation rate study group. Their charge was to make recommendations to the State Superintendent of Schools on possible adjustments to the content team recommendations. This team looked at the recommendations of the content teams and the psychometric review panel and suggested adjustments for consistency both within each content area and across grades and content areas.

State Superintendent's Review

On Monday, August 18, 2003, MSDE staff met with the State Superintendent of Schools to assist her in a review of the recommendations of the content teams, the psychometric panel, and the review and articulation panel. The recommendations of the State Superintendent of Schools for standards reflect the composite of information accumulated during the week of study and deliberations. The State Superintendent's final recommendations are included in this memo.

Following analysis of HSA performance standards, involving more than 100 Maryland educators, and subsequent validation this summer, we are now prepared to bring to you proposed passing scores for the HSA. In establishing these passing scores, the Board will determine the minimum scores that students will be expected to achieve on each of the following high school assessments: English I, Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and Government. These standards will establish academic expectations for Maryland's high school students and permit us to further engage in discussions about the tying of these tests to the Maryland high school diploma.

Action

The Maryland State Board of Education is requested to:

1. **Delay the effective date of the passing scores for one additional year - until school year 2005-06 for students entering ninth grade - in the event that a decision is made to require passage of the HSA for high school graduation.** This delay will permit local systems the opportunity to receive student subgroup data beginning with the January 2004 HSA administration, which will enhance their ability to diagnose deficits in their programs. By the time the test is required for students entering ninth grade in fall 2005, the systems will have made additional improvements in instruction based on subgroup score data.

2. **Delay the discussion on whether passage of the high school assessment should be required for high school graduation until the December 2003 Board meeting.** At that time, the State Board will have the following additional information to consider in making this decision:
 - % of students passing HSA in 2002 (recalculated after the August 2003 Board meeting)
 - % of students passing HSA in 2003 (released by November 1, 2003)

3. **Discontinue the administration of the Maryland Functional Tests beginning in school year 2004-05 (for students entering ninth grade in school year 2004-05 and after).** This will allow systems to more closely focus instruction on HSAs in light of a possible 2005 implementation date for the tie of the HSA to the diploma. This action will be contingent on the State Board action to make HSA a graduation requirement beginning in the 2005-06 school year. Current students will continue to be tested.

4. **Establish a stepped system of achievement targets, whereby students must meet minimum passing scores according to the following schedule:**
 - Students entering grade 9 in fall 2005 (graduating class of 2009) would be expected to achieve the following minimum passing scores:
 - Algebra Passing Score = 412 (52% of students met this score in 2002)
 - English I Passing Score=407 (45% of students met this score in 2002)
 - Government Passing Score= 394 (57% of students met this score in 2002)
 - Biology Passing Score=400 (54% of students met this score in 2002)

 - Students entering grade 9 in fall 2008 (graduating class of 2012) would be expected to achieve the following minimum passing scores:
 - Algebra Passing Score = 421
 - English I Passing Score=413
 - Government Passing Score= 402
 - Biology Passing Score=415

 - Students entering grade 9 in fall 2011 (graduating class of 2015) would be expected to achieve the following minimum passing scores:
 - Algebra Passing Score = 430 (34% of students met this score in 2002)
 - English I Passing Score=419 (32% of students met this score in 2002)
 - Government Passing Score= 410 (41% of students met this score in 2002)
 - Biology Passing Score=429 (25% of students met this score in 2002)