

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 586 (Senator Britt)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Secondary School - Graduation Requirements - Weighted Numerical Assessment System

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This bill requires the State Board of Education to establish a weighted numerical assessment system to calculate a passing score that a student must achieve to graduate from a public high school. The system must include a category for examinations, but examinations may not count for more than 25% of the total score required for graduation.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2007.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Assuming the State Board of Education adopts an assessment system that includes readily available student information such as high school coursework and credits, grade point averages, and attendance, the bill would not materially affect State finances. The State board could develop and adopt regulations for a weighted numerical assessment system with existing personnel and resources.

**Local Effect:** Administrative responsibilities for local school systems would increase to track student progress across variables used for the weighted numerical assessment system established by the State Board of Education. It is assumed that any additional costs could be absorbed within the budgets of local school systems.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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## Analysis

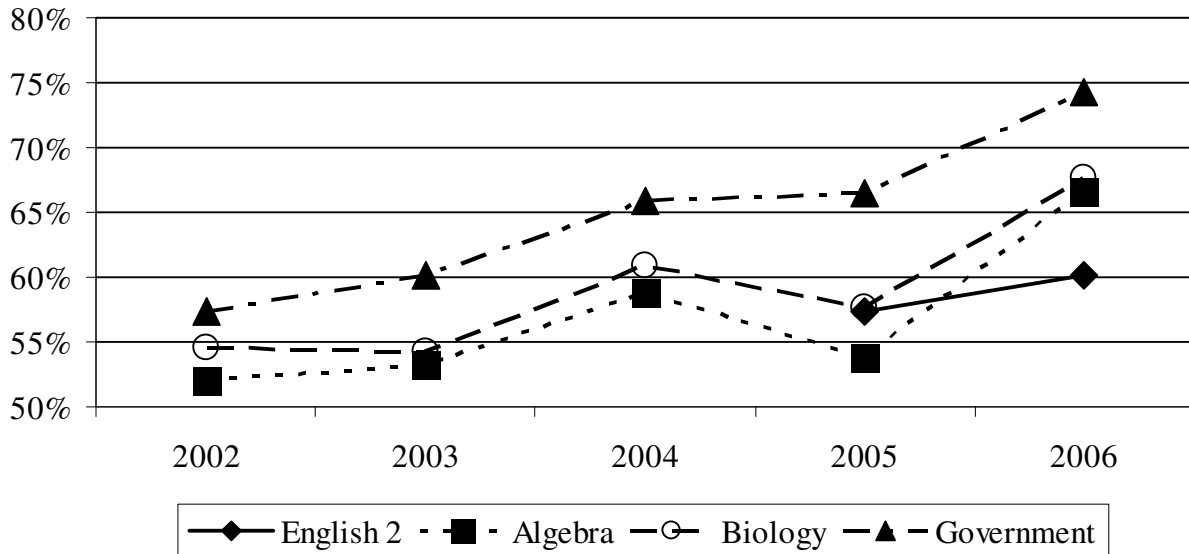
**Current Law:** Policies, rules, and regulations for the graduation of students from Maryland public schools are established by local boards of education and the State Board of Education.

By regulation, a student must complete the credit requirements established by the State Board of Education, a student service requirement, and any local school system requirements to qualify for graduation from a public high school in Maryland. Beginning with the cohort of students who entered grade 9 in the 2005-2006 school year, each student will also be required to pass the Maryland high school assessments (HSAs) or achieve a combined total score on the assessments in order to qualify for a Maryland high school diploma. The State Board of Education is required to review this requirement before the end of 2008. The State board recently approved the use of qualifying scores on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests as acceptable substitutes for HSAs.

**Background:** After many years of consideration, the State Board of Education decided in 2004 to make passage of the HSAs mandatory for high school graduation beginning with the class of 2009. HSAs are end-of-course tests taken in four subject areas: algebra, biology, government, and English. Students take each HSA after completing the applicable course and may subsequently take the test up to three times per year until a passing score is achieved.

Students who are sophomores in the current school year will be the first cohort required to pass the HSAs. Last year, when many of these students took the HSAs for the first time, scores improved in all four subjects. **Exhibit 1** shows the percent of students passing the HSAs in each of the years that HSA results have been reported. MSDE advises that last year's freshmen did even better on the HSAs than the student population as a whole, with 71.5% of freshmen passing the algebra test, 79.4% passing the biology test, and 77.8% passing the government test.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Percent of Students Passing the High School Assessments**  
**2002 to 2006**

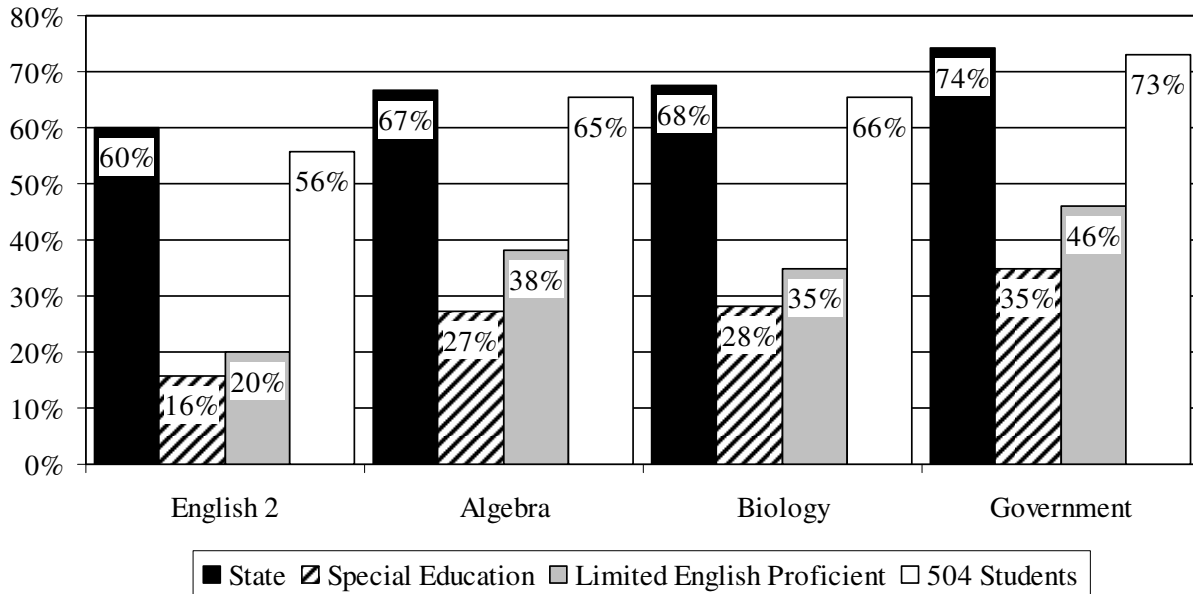


Note: The English 2 test was only administered in 2005 and 2006.

Source: Maryland State Department of Education

On February 28, 2007, the State Superintendent of Schools announced that she intends to recommend to the State Board of Education that the HSA requirements be adjusted for special education students, limited English proficient students, and students who have physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities (“504 students”). The MSDE press release notes that many of the students in these subgroups may not be prepared to pass the HSAs by 2009 without “extraordinary intervention on the part of local school systems.” The State superintendent will make a recommendation to the State board in August 2007 after seeing the results of the 2007 test administration. **Exhibit 2** compares the percentages of special education students, limited English proficient students, and 504 students passing the HSAs in 2006 to the statewide passing percentages. The chart shows that the percentages of special education students and English language learners who passed the tests were well below the statewide percentages, but the passing rates for 504 students were closer to the statewide rates.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Percent of Student Subgroups Passing the High School Assessments**  
**2006**



Source: Maryland State Department of Education

**Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 923 (Delegate Kullen, *et al.*) – Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 5, 2007  
 mll/rhh

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