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State Superintendent of Schools

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**TO:** State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.  
**DATE:** January 26, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** End of Course Assessments for High School

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this presentation is to review, discuss, and request approval to move Maryland's current graduation exit assessments in algebra, English, science, and government to end of course (EOC) assessments that account for 20 percent of the student's final grade in the respective high school level algebra, English, science, and government course.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

The recommendation by the Maryland High School Graduation Task Force was to delink the assessments at the high school level because research shows that high stakes exit exams disproportionately and negatively impact minority and economically disadvantaged students, reducing their likelihood of graduation from high school. Research also shows that a student's course grade is a stronger predictor of college and career success than standardized assessments and suggests that switching to an EOC model does improve achievement for all students (Hanushek, E., & Raymond, M., 2004; Rockoff, J., & Turner, L., 2008).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Perfect alignment between standardized tests and course grades is not expected since not all students best demonstrate what they know via a standardized test. However, improved alignment between Maryland's assessments and course grades is necessary. Therefore, including a standardized EOC assessment in the final course grade can improve the alignment. Many states have recently changed their high stakes assessments to EOC assessments instead of stand-alone graduation exit requirements.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) recommends that the transition to EOC assessments be fully implemented in the 2022-2023 school year with transitional years for school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The MSDE will need time to gather data on the best methods for correlating assessment scaled scores into course grades. Data will be gathered from other states, and psychometric and educator work groups will be convened to weigh in on both the correlation and implementation. During the transitional years, the MSDE recommends that participation in the

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assessment meets the assessment requirement for graduation and students would not be required to achieve a passing score. This recommendation fulfills Maryland's accountability requirements and provides information on student understanding that can be used to inform instruction. Removing the passing requirement also acknowledges the unconventional instructional time that has occurred due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic.

**ACTION:**

Request approval to delink the high school assessments as an exit graduation requirement and move to including the EOC Assessments to account for 20 percent of the student's final grade for the respective course in algebra, English, science, and government. These specific courses are Algebra I, English 10, Life Science, and Government. The implementation of the EOC assessments will occur in the 2022-2023 school years. During the transitional school years of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, students will be required to take, yet not pass, the current assessments for these courses.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment I – End of Course (EOC) Assessments for High School, Power Point

# End of Course (EOC) Assessments for High School

## Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP)

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State Board Meeting  
January 2021



# Background

## Recommendation from the High School Graduation Task Force

- Delink the assessments at the high school level because research shows that high stakes exit exams disproportionately and negatively impact minority and economically disadvantaged students, reducing their likelihood of graduation from high school.

# Background

- Research also shows that a student's course grade is a stronger predictor of college and career success than standardized assessments.
- Currently, schools are being held directly accountable for student achievement in math and English language arts in Maryland's state accountability plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Research on accountability suggests that switching to an EOC model does improve achievement for all students.  
(Hanushek, E., & Raymond, M., 2004; Rockoff, J., & Turner, L., 2008).

# Research on Exams as Predictors of Student Success

**Research shows that success in ninth grade courses, high school GPA, and attendance are stronger predictors of student success than standardized assessments.**

Selected examples:

- A study of over 187,000 students in Chicago determined performance in ninth grade coursework predicted high school graduation, college enrollment, and college retention more strongly than standardized test scores ([Easton, Johnson, and Sartain, 2017](#)).
- Two separate studies across multiple states found no link between state high school exit exams and students' later employment status or earnings ([Warren, Grodsky, and Lee, 2008](#); [Baker and Lang, 2013](#)).

# Research on the Equity Impact of Exit Exams

**Research shows that exit exams have a disproportionately negative impact on economically disadvantaged, African American, and the lowest-achieving students.**

Selected examples:

- A Massachusetts study determined that for low-income urban students, failing the mathematics exit exam results in a significantly reduced graduation rate; the same is not true for other equally-skilled students. It also found low-income urban students are just as likely to retake the test as equally-skilled suburban students, but they have less success on retest ([Papay, Murnane, and Willett, 2010](#)).
- A study across multiple states found that exit exams increase dropout rates for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, with especially large effects for African American students ([Hemelt and Marcotte, 2013](#)).
- A California study found that the negative impacts of high school exit exams on graduation rates found in other studies are more likely a result of reduced graduation rates of very low-achieving students; exit exams do not improve either the learning nor the outcomes for these students ([Reardon et al., 2010](#)).

# Course Performance Compared to Assessment Score

- We do not expect perfect alignment between standardized tests and course grades, because not all students best demonstrate what they know via a standardized test.
- However, we *should* have better alignment than we currently observe.
- Including a standardized EOC exam in a course grade can improve the alignment.



# Course Performance Compared to Assessment Score: English language arts

*Percentage of Students at Level 1 or 2 and Levels 3 or Higher on PARCC ELA 10 by ELA 10 Course Performance in 2019*

	PARCC Level 1 or 2	PARCC Level 3+
Failed course	5.7	2.1
Passed course		

*\*The expectation would be that students who pass the course pass the assessment.*

# Course Performance Compared to Assessment Score: Algebra I

*Percentage of Students at Level 1 or 2 and Levels 3 or Higher on PARCC Algebra I by Algebra I Course Performance in 2019*

	PARCC Level 1 or 2	PARCC Level 3+
Failed course	5.7	1.2
Passed course		

*\*The expectation would be that students who pass the course pass the assessment.*

# End of Course Models in Other States

- Many states have recently changed their high stakes assessments to be end of course exams instead of graduation requirements.
- In 2019, the states that had moved to an EOC model include Hawaii, Louisiana, Nevada, Missouri, South Carolina, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Florida.
- States that kept them tied to graduation, like Oklahoma, decided to reverse course.

# End of Course (EOC) Assessments

- All EOC Assessments will be administered three times each year:
- Winter / Spring / Summer
- The current test blueprint will remain intact to ensure that we continue to assess the breadth and depth of our state content standards as well as meet federal accountability.
- The EOC Assessments will be 20% of the final grade.

# Transition to End of Course (EOC)

## Recommendation:

**The new EOC Assessments would go into effect starting in the 2022-2023 school year.**

- This transition period will allow for a work group to be convened to determine the grading and administration of the EOC Assessments.
- Allows time to work with local school systems on implementation.
- For 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, students would be required to participate only in the assessments both as a graduation requirement and for accountability.

# Transition to End-of-Course (EOC)

## ***Suggested COMAR:***

*Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, to be awarded the Maryland High School Diploma, all students, including elementary and middle school students who take high school level courses, shall take the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment for algebra, science, English, and government. The assessment shall count for 20 percent of the student's final grade in the respective algebra, science, English, and government course.*

**Questions?**