

## **Testing/Assessment**

### **Mission**

The purposes of the Georgia Student Assessment Program are to measure student achievement of the state mandated curriculum, to identify students failing to achieve mastery of content, to provide teachers with diagnostic information, and to assist school systems in identifying strengths and weaknesses in order to establish priorities in planning educational programs.

The assessment program includes customized criterion-referenced tests at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; the National Assessment of Educational Progress in grades 4, 8 and 12; and an optional norm-referenced test. These mandatory state assessments include the Primary Assessments as well as Other Assessments.

### **CRCT – Criterion Reference Competency Test**

The CRCT is designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in the state adopted curriculum including the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in reading, English/language arts, and mathematics and the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in science and social studies. The assessments yield information on academic achievement at the student, class, school, system, and state levels. This information is used to diagnose individual student strengths and weaknesses as related to the instruction of the state adopted curriculum, and to gauge the quality of education throughout Georgia.

### **CRCT-M**

The CRCT-M is a grade-level alternate assessment for eligible students who receive special education services. The program has been designed to meet federal requirements. According to federal regulations, all students, including those receiving special education services, must be assessed on grade-level content standards. States may design an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards for those students who struggle, due to their disability, to demonstrate grade-level proficiency in the same timeframe as their peers. Georgia has created the CRCT-M as an avenue for these students to demonstrate what they have learned.

## **EOCT – End of Course Test**

Improved teaching and learning are the main focus of Georgia’s education system. The EOCT align with the Georgia curriculum standards and include assessment of specific content knowledge and skills. The assessments provide diagnostic information to help students identify strengths and areas of need in learning, therefore improving performance in all high school courses and on other assessments, such as the GHSGT. The EOCT also provide data to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction at the school, system and state levels. In 2011 – 2012, the EOCT became Georgia’s high school accountability assessment as part of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).

## **GHSGT – Georgia High School Graduation Test**

Georgia’s graduation tests provide valuable information for students, educators, and parents about student strengths and areas for improvement. The tests identify students who may need additional instruction in the concepts and skills required for a diploma.

Students seeking a Georgia high school diploma, who entered high school prior to July 2011, must pass the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) in four content areas as well as the Georgia High School Writing Test.

As a result of amendments to State Board of Education rule in April 2011, the cohort of students who enrolled in high school from Fall 2008 through June 2011 must demonstrate their proficiency in the four GHSGT content areas by either passing each of the GHSGTs or by passing one of the two equivalent End of Course Tests in each corresponding content area. These students are also required to take and pass the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT) to be eligible for a diploma.

Students who enter grade nine in 2011 – 2012 and beyond will not take, and are not required to pass, the GHSGT. They are required to take and pass the Georgia High School Writing Test.

Students with disabilities and English Language Learners may receive appropriate standard accommodations based on their needs and the specifications of their Individualized Education Program, their Individual Accommodation Plan, or their ELL Testing Participation Committee Plan. Students with disabilities unable to participate in the state testing program, even with accommodations, are assessed with the Georgia Alternate Assessment.

## **GAA – Georgia Alternate Assessment**

The Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA) is a key component of the Georgia Student Assessment Program. An essential tenet of both the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is the fact that states must ensure that all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, have access to a general curriculum that encompasses challenging academic standards. States must also ensure that all students are assessed for their progress toward meeting academic standards.

In order to accomplish this, states must have curricular standards that include all students and then must assess those students with statewide tests of achievement or develop an alternate assessment. Students with significant cognitive disabilities may be assessed via an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards. The US Department of Education (USDOE) defines an alternate achievement standard as one that “sets an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard.” Alternate achievement standards must be aligned to state academic content standards, although they may reflect prerequisite or entry-level skills.

The GAA is a portfolio of student work that enables the demonstration of achievement and progress relative to selected skills that are aligned to the Georgia curriculum. The portfolio is used to capture student learning and achievement/progress in four content areas: English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. This assessment program promotes a vision of enhancing capacities and integrated life opportunities for students who experience significant cognitive disabilities. Committees of Georgia educators developed the requirements of the portfolio system including the number of required pieces of evidence of student performance of tasks aligned to content standards (i.e., student work samples), types of evidence, and the parameters/timing of the collection of student work samples.

Georgia educators also informed the development of the rubrics by which the student work samples are evaluated. The GAA portfolio entries are scored for four discrete dimensions: fidelity to standard, context, achievement/progress, and generalization. A separate score is assigned for each dimension. The focus is on academic content and skills.

- Kindergarten assembles a portfolio in English/Language Arts and Mathematics
- Grades 3-8 and 11 assemble a portfolio in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

## Portfolio Collection Periods:

1. Achievement/Progress is documented in two collection periods during a school year. The first collection period provides evidence of a student's entry-level performance (initial performance of the skill); the second collection period provides evidence of a student's achievement/progress to date.

2. The collection period window between the first collection period and the second collection period is a minimum of fourteen days to a maximum of five months.

Teachers collect evidence of student performance of tasks aligned to content standards. This evidence shows a student's achievement/progress toward those standards.

As part meeting federal requirements for state standards and assessments systems, the GAA was peer reviewed by a team of external experts in the fields of standards and assessments. This team was convened by the US Department of Education and considered evidence in the following areas: content and academic achievement standards; technical quality; alignment; inclusion; and scoring and reporting. The GAA was found to meet nationally recognized professional and technical standards for alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards.

In 2012–2013, Georgia will implement Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). The GAA will reflect the CCGPS beginning in fall of 2012. The GAA blueprint has been revised for 2012–2013 to include the CCGPS that aligned with the previous GPS-based blueprint. The curriculum standards selected for assessment on the GAA in 2012–2013 have been reviewed and approved by a committee of Georgia educators.

The high school mathematics curriculum based on the CCGPS being implemented by cohort, beginning in 2012–2013, with the 9th grade. Therefore, the GAA blueprint in high school mathematics will not change until the 2014–2015 school year when that cohort of students will be assessed for the first time.

## **Georgia Writing Assessments**

Georgia's performance-based writing assessments are administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven. Student writing samples are evaluated on an analytic scoring system in all grades to provide diagnostic feedback to teachers, students, and parents about individual performance. The writing assessments provide information to students about their writing performance and areas of strength and challenge. This information is useful for instruction and preparation for future writing assessments.

### **Description**

Georgia law (O.C.G.A., Section 20-2-281) requires that writing assessments be administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven. The State Writing Assessment Core Development and Advisory Committees assisted the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) in developing the writing component of the student assessment program. The committees, comprised of educators with expertise in the instruction of writing skills and writing assessments, consist of eight committees—a Core Development and Advisory Committee for each grade level (3, 5, 8, and 11). The goal of the Writing Assessment Core Development and Advisory Committees and the GaDOE is to create developmentally appropriate assessment procedures to enhance statewide instruction in the language arts. Statewide writing assessments serve the purpose of improving writing and writing instruction.