

Understanding State and Local Testing

UNDERSTANDING STATEWIDE AND LOCAL STANDARDIZED TESTING

What Standardized Testing is required for students in Georgia?

In Georgia, if you have a child in elementary, middle, or high school, he/she is required to participate in standardized and local testing. In order to comply with the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), 1st through 8th grade students take the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). (Please note that grades 1 and 2 will not be assessed in 2012-2013 due to financial constraints.) The CRCT is given to all students of the same grade level, and it is based on content that is required by the state for that grade level.

For eleven high school courses, students are given End of Course Tests or EOCTs. These are based on content that is required for certain subjects, such as Mathematics I and II, Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) Algebra or GPS Geometry, or Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) Coordinate Algebra; Social Studies, U.S. History and Economics/Business/Free Enterprise; Science, Biology and Physical Science; and Language Arts, 9th grade Literature and Composition and American Literature and Composition.

Does Georgia require other testing beyond that required by ESEA?

Most states require students to take additional tests beyond the requirements of ESEA. In Georgia, students are also given the following tests:

- Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS)
- Georgia Writing Assessment (for Grades 3, 5, and 8)
- Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)

Students may also be given the following tests based on their individual needs:

- PSAT: 10th grade; optional in 11th grade
- Advanced Placement Tests: partially funded by the state
- ACCESS for ELLs (English Learners) or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs: Used to assess English language proficiency. Also used to diagnose student strengths and determine placement/exit for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities may be given an alternative test in place of the ESEA required testing. In Georgia, this may include the *Georgia Alternative Assessment (GAA)*. The GAA must be listed in the student's Individual Education Program (IEP).

Some local school districts may require even more testing beyond the statewide tests. For example, local districts might require additional testing in the areas of subject content or writing.

What do the CRCT and Other Standardized Test Scores Mean?

In Georgia, the CRCT test scores do not determine if a student will be promoted to the next grade or held back in grades 4, 6, and 7. In grades 3, 5, and 8, promotion to the next grade is related to a student's CRCT scores. Students who receive a low score on any standardized test can get additional instruction and retake the test.

What is needed to graduate from high school?

In April 2011, the *Secondary Assessment Transition Plan* was approved by the State Board of Education. This plan included phasing-out the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) as well as increasing how much the End of Course Tests (EOCT) count in the overall course grade for students. Specific changes in that plan include:

For students enrolled in grade nine for the first time on or after July 1, 2011:

- The Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) is no longer required to earn a high school diploma. These students will not take and are not required to pass the GHSGT.
- These students will be required to pass each course. The End of Course Test (EOCT) for each course will count for 20% of the course grade.

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- These students are still required to earn a passing score on the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT).

For students who enrolled in grade nine for the first time between July 1, 2008, and June 30, 2011:

- In order to earn a high school diploma, testing requirements can be met if a student passes one of the two EOCTs in each content area (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) or if the student passes the same content area on the GHSWT.
- For these students, the EOCT will count for 15% of the course grade.
- If a student cannot pass the EOCT in any content area, he or she may take the GHSWT instead.
- These students are still required to earn a passing score on the GHSWT.

My child has an IEP. Does he/she still need to take these tests?

Yes, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) states, “*ALL* children with disabilities are included in *all* general State and district wide assessments . . . with appropriate accommodations, where necessary and as indicated in their respective individualized education programs (IEP).” Annual testing provides valuable information to IEP teams that can help them make decisions about educational programs and placement for your child. These tests can identify strengths and weaknesses that help teachers develop lessons that ensure all students meet or exceed state standards.

My child has an IEP. What if he/she fails the CRCT?

Both state law and State Board of Education Rules require that each student “shall” be retested in grades 3, 5, and 8, if he or she does not meet state standards on the CRCT. Failure to pass the CRCT does not determine if your child will be retained or promoted.

Will my child be able to graduate without passing all required graduation tests?

Students who do not pass all the required tests but have met all other graduation requirements may be eligible for a High School Certificate or a Special Education Diploma. Any student with an IEP is eligible to continue to receive educational services from his or her school district until age 22 or until he or she has earned the regular High School Diploma. Any student or adult may retake the high school graduation test as often as needed to qualify for a high school diploma. Students who want to retest should contact their local high school well in advance of the date of the test administration.

What accommodations are allowed on standardized testing?

In Georgia, there are three groups of students that are eligible for accommodations:

1. Students who have an IEP
2. Students who have a Section 504 Plan, and English Language Learners with a Test Participation Plan (TPP).

Allowed accommodations must be:

1. Based on student need.
2. Justified and documented in the IEP or 504 Plan.
3. Aligned with and part of daily instruction.
4. Designed to promote student independence.
5. Approved and listed in the Georgia Student Assessment Handbook.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038
www.p2pga.org

Georgia Department of Education, Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports
404 656-3963 or 800-311-3627 and ask to be transferred to Special Education
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx

Additional resources: Contact the **Special Education Director** for your school system.