



## **Georgia Milestones Assessment System**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is the Georgia Milestones Assessment System?**

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System is a comprehensive assessment system spanning grades 3 through high school. Georgia Milestones measures how well students have learned the knowledge and skills outlined in the state-adopted content standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Students in grades 3 through 8 will take the End-of-Grade (EOG) measures in each content area, while high school students will take the appropriate End-of-Course (EOC) measure for the ten identified courses.

#### **Why did Georgia change assessments?**

Georgia changed assessments because the former testing programs were in existence for over a decade and no longer met the needs of students, parents, schools, and districts. Georgia Milestones replaced each of the following individual tests: the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), End of Course Tests (EOCT), and the Georgia Writing Assessments. Georgia Milestones reduces the number of state-mandated tests students take as a result. Further, Georgia Milestones includes open-ended test items in addition to multiple choice items allowing students to demonstrate more clearly what they know. The system also allows Georgia to send a signal of college and career readiness for each of our students.

#### **What value does Georgia Milestones bring to our state and its students?**

Under the former testing programs, Georgia had some of the lowest achievement expectations in the nation. Georgia's commitment to providing a truer picture of student achievement was a paramount consideration in the development of the new assessment. Historically, Georgia has been portrayed as a state with one of the largest "honesty gaps" based on the information its former testing programs provided. In short, Georgia Milestones provides a more accurate view of where we are as a state and where we need to focus our attention to ensure all students are successful and can compete with their peers from across our nation.

#### **What are some key differences between previous state tests and Georgia Milestones assessments?**

The inclusion of open-ended test items in English Language Arts and Mathematics allowing students to explain their answers is a significant change for Georgia. These items, including the assessment of

writing as part of the English Language Arts tests, provide students the opportunity to demonstrate the depth of their understanding relative to the standards being assessed. Georgia Milestones contains four Achievement Levels rather than just three as was the case with the previous CRCT, EOCT, and Writing Assessments. This allows students, parents, and schools to have a more precise indication of student achievement.

### **What are the achievement levels for Georgia Milestones?**

Georgia Milestones reports student achievement in four levels – Distinguished Learner, Proficient Learner, Developing Learner, and Beginning Learner.

- **Beginning Learners:** These students do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students need substantial academic support to be prepared for the next grade level or course and to be on track for college and career readiness.
- **Developing Learners:** These students demonstrate partial proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning, as specified by Georgia’s content standards. The students need additional academic support to ensure success in the next grade level or course and to be on track for college and career readiness.
- **Proficient Learners:** These students demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students are prepared for the next grade level or course and are on track for college and career readiness.
- **Distinguished Learners:** These students demonstrate advanced proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students are well prepared for the next grade level or course and are prepared for college and career readiness.

### **How do test scores this year compare to those of previous years?**

Scores from Georgia Milestones cannot, and should not, be compared to those provided by Georgia’s previous tests. Georgia Milestones will reflect four Achievement Levels rather than just three and will also provide English Language Arts scores that include information about reading, writing, and language skills rather than separate scores in those areas as was the case in the past. In short, scores from Georgia Milestones are different from those provided for the CRCT and EOCT.

### **I heard that the Georgia Milestones is harder than our previous tests and that state results are lower this year than in previous years. Is this true? Does this mean that students are doing worse?**

Georgia Milestones’ preliminary state-level results did, in fact, indicate that fewer students in Georgia will score as proficient. This does not mean that Georgia’s students know less, or are performing worse, than in recent years. In fact, many indicators, such as Georgia’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), SAT, and ACT scores, have shown improvement on the part of Georgia’s students. The

achievement standards (expectations) recommended by Georgia educators for Georgia Milestones simply reflect the greater demands of today's academic, college, and career settings and the stiff competition that students will face as they move into their post-secondary experiences and/or the workforce after high school.