

2021 Accountability Data Files Interpretation Guide

This is a general guide to use with the 2021 accountability data files to contextualize information in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. For further information on accountability (CCRPI) calculations, refer to the [CCRPI FAQs](#).

Overview

- On March 26, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) approved Georgia's waiver of several accountability, school identification, and report card requirements. Thus, there are no CCRPI summary scores for the state, school districts, or schools. In order to provide stakeholders with data that can assist in understanding the impact of the pandemic on student learning and support student learning in the future, available CCRPI-related data are reported in the 2021 data files.
- During the 2020-2021 school year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided School Food Authorities operating the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs waiver flexibilities to offer school meals to all students at no cost. As a result, the response rate for Free and Reduced Meal Applications may show a decrease in submissions that resulted in a lower rate of students identified as economically disadvantaged where school meal applications are utilized for this purpose. Thus, the ED (Economically Disadvantaged) subgroup may not be comparable to previous years.
- *NA/No Data* means there were no students in a particular group included in the indicator calculation at the respective school/system.
- *TFS/Too Few Students* means that fewer than 15 students in a particular group were included in the indicator calculation at the respective school/system.

Content Mastery

Georgia's 2020-2021 assessment results can be used as one of several strategies to better understand how students are performing academically as part of Georgia's COVID-19 academic recovery efforts. This year's results meet the rigorous **reliability** standards of the state's assessment program and are **valid** when interpreted in context: as one measure of students' achievement toward mastery of the state's academic content standards in the face of unprecedented challenges. With the context outlined below, assessment results from 2020-2021 provide an opportunity to inform the type of supports students, educators, and schools need to be successful as Georgia continues its academic recovery efforts.

- There were no modifications to the state's assessments related to the nature of the pandemic. Critical aspects of these assessments including the academic content standards, the achievement standards, the administration format, the scoring procedures, and the data-quality criteria remain **consistent** despite pandemic-related disruptions.
- Some key factors have **changed**, which necessitates caution and context when interpreting individual or summary scores: many students received virtual instruction following interruptions and closures; opportunity to learn has been variably reduced due to health and safety measures implemented; the contribution of Georgia Milestones EOC scores to final course grades was reduced in weight; in many places Georgia Milestones EOG scores were not utilized for student promotion and retention decisions; and fewer students participated in these administrations as compared to prior years.

- Individual student results should be interpreted as one measure of a student's mastery of the knowledge and skills outlined in Georgia's academic standards. These scores are most meaningful when considered in the context of learning and any associated extenuating factors.
- Summaries of scores by student group, school, system, and state should likewise be interpreted as one measure of mastery of the knowledge and skills outlined in the state's academic content standards. These scores should not be used as a part of a longitudinal trend analysis without including context of this year's pandemic and associated learning disruptions, proportion and representativeness of the tested population, and varying access to instruction.
- When interpreting summary scores, district and school leaders and other stakeholders using these data are encouraged to:
 - Consider the percentage of the total population tested and take extra caution in interpretation in cases where a low percentage of the enrolled student population was tested at a given school or district;
 - Consider the representativeness and prior achievement of the tested population and take extra caution in interpretation of cases where differences indicate the students who did test this year may not be representative of your total student population;
 - Avoid punitive or accountability applications of these outcomes; and
 - Contextualize any changes in achievement with any local complexities your districts and schools may have faced within this last year (e.g., mode of instruction, enrollment rates, attendance rates).
- *Participation Rate* represents the percentage of students expected to take a content area assessment in a given school or system that actually participated in the assessment. The rate corresponds to the participation rate calculation required annually by the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) and differs from the *tested rate* reported in August 2021 with the initial release of assessment results. Note that penalties resulting from a participation rate below 95% were waived by US ED for the 2020-2021 school year.

Progress

Though the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of statewide assessments in spring 2020, these cancellations occurred after the ACCESS testing window had closed. As such, 2020 ACCESS testing numbers can be considered as 'historically typical.' Nevertheless, calculations of Progress Towards English Language Proficiency (ELP) outcomes require individual students to have two consecutive years of test results. Given lower participation this school year, many schools and school systems may not have enough students meeting these criteria to generate an ELP progress score. Even when such scores are available, it is important to keep in mind that students testing in 2021 likely experienced different learning conditions than in 2019.

Readiness

- **Literacy:** Literacy scores are based on student performance on Georgia Milestones ELA assessments; refer to Content Mastery for additional information.
- **Attendance:** There was variation across the state in modality of instruction and definition of “present” or “absent”.
- **Beyond the Core (BTC):** Some LEAs may have seen dramatic changes due to constraints that emerged from COVID-19 that limited their ability to deliver BTC courses.
- **Accelerated Enrollment:** Changes in higher education practices and policies may have disrupted students’ ability to participate and/or succeed in these classes.
- **Pathway Completion:** Changes in instructional modality and other limitations at the local level may have affected students’ ability to complete the necessary pathway requirements.
- **College and Career Readiness:** This indicator is calculated using lagging (prior school year) data. The sub-indicator results in this report are based on data from 2019-2020, which saw unprecedented interruptions and changes at the end of the school year. These changes include (but are not limited to) the following:
 - ACT/SAT/AP/IB: Testing may have been impacted.
 - EOPA: End of Pathway Assessment data were not collected for 2020.
 - Work-Based-Learning: Pandemic related disruptions may have interrupted or canceled student work-based learning opportunities.

Graduation Rate

Both four- and five-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR) are calculated following [US Department of Education guidance](#). Though the COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to the school year, individual ACGR calculations were not affected.