

## 2021 Georgia Milestones Release: Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why did Georgia students take assessments this school year during a pandemic?**

In July 2020 and again in February 2021, the Georgia Department of Education applied to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for a waiver of high-stakes testing requirements for the 2020-2021 school year. USED denied Georgia's request for a waiver, along with similar requests from other states. Because USED did not waive or exempt federally-required assessments for the 2020-2021 school year, school districts were required to offer the opportunity to test to all students for all required assessments (Georgia Milestones, Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0, ACCESS for ELLs).

### **Why did fewer students participate in Georgia's assessments?**

Overall assessment participation rates for the state are lower when compared to previous years, likely due to health and safety concerns associated with in-person testing. The percent of enrolled students tested ranges from a high of 79% in grade 4 to a low of 55% in high school. While overall state rates are lower than normal, rates also vary across systems and schools. Additional information on the percent of students tested overall in the state and by system and school can be found in the summary reports available on [the GaDOE website](#).

### **How did Georgia's students perform in 2020-2021?**

Achievement changes vary for students assessed on Georgia Milestones, ACCESS for ELLs, GAA 2.0, and GKIDS 2.0, but as a state, we observe somewhat lower achievement where longitudinal comparisons are available and appropriate. While overall state performance is slightly lower, performance varies across systems and schools. Additional information on student performance overall in the state and by system and school can be found in the summary reports and state summary available on [the GaDOE website](#).

Given the magnitude of learning disruptions experienced this school year, these decreases are not particularly large. We expect to see achievement increase at a similar rate in coming years as we return to educational environments with fewer disruptions to student learning.

### **How should parents use Georgia assessment results to support their children?**

Parents will receive an individual student report that will detail a student's performance along with summary information about aggregate performance at the school, system, and state levels. The results can provide a helpful check for where their child is excelling, as well as where they may need more support. We encourage parents to consider their child's results within the context of the variety of potential learning disruptions they may have encountered, and recommend that they



heavily weight the results of formative assessments administered throughout the years along with coursework and grades.

### **How should 2020-2021 results be interpreted?**

**Individual** student results should be interpreted as one measure of a student's mastery of the knowledge and skills outlined in Georgia's academic content standards. These scores are most meaningful when considered in the context of learning and any associated extenuating factors. For example, a student's performance on Georgia Milestones may classify them as a Developing Learner, indicating the student mastered some, but not all, of the academic content standards. However, these scores cannot indicate whether the student had the opportunity to learn *all* of the content standards or whether, due to pandemic-related learning disruptions, the student only had the opportunity to learn *some* of the content standards. In the context of the pandemic, many school districts had to prioritize which content standards could be delivered.

**Summaries** of results by student group, school, system, or 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, and varying access to instruction.**

When considering summary scores, stakeholders are encouraged to

1. 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.
2. Consider the **representativeness and prior achievement** of the tested population and take extra caution in interpretation in cases where differences indicate the students who did test this year are not representative of the total student population.
3. **Avoid punitive or accountability applications** of these outcomes.
4. Contextualize any changes in achievement with any **local complexities** systems and schools may have faced within this last year (e.g., mode of instruction, enrollment rates, attendance rates).

### **Were there any changes to Georgia's tests in 2020-2021?**

There were no modifications to Georgia Milestones or other state assessments related to the nature of the pandemic. Critical aspects of Georgia Milestones and the GAA 2.0 remain consistent despite the interruptions in learning, including: the academic content standards, the achievement standards, the administration format, and the scoring procedures and data-quality criteria. However, 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 in the past year; the contribution of EOC scores to final course grades has been reduced in weight; in many places EOG scores were not utilized for student promotion and retention decisions; and fewer students participated in this administration as compared to prior years.

### **Will there be a 2021 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)?**

No, GaDOE received a waiver of federal accountability requirements from the U.S Department of Education and will not calculate a 2021 CCRPI summary score for the state, school districts, or schools. However, some CCRPI-related data, such as achievement rates, participation rates, and graduation rates, for example, will be calculated and publicly reported. Data will be reported through data files, Georgia Insights, and the Report Card rather than the CCRPI reporting system.

**Will results be used to identify Georgia schools for CSI and TSI support?**

No, GaDOE received a waiver of federal accountability requirements from the U.S. Department of Education and schools will not be newly identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) using 2020-2021 data. The schools that were identified for support in 2019-2020 will again maintain that status in the 2021-2022 school year. The one exception is CSI schools that were identified for low graduation rate may exit if the exit criteria are met. Districts and schools will continue to receive services and supports from GaDOE's Office of School Improvement and the RESAs.

GaDOE will next identify CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools in the fall of 2022 using data from the 2021-2022 school year.

**Where can I view Georgia's assessment results?**

To view more information about the assessment results, visit [the 2020-2021 Georgia assessment results page](#).