

How will the writing assessments change to reflect the new curriculum, the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)?

Committees of Georgia educators met over summer 2005 to redevelop the state's Writing Assessments, in part because of the curriculum change but also because the assessments needed to be updated to ensure the topics students were asked to write about were relevant and engaging.

The newly designed Writing Assessments, in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, were field tested in selected Georgia schools during the 2005-2006 school year. The new assessments will be administered for the first time during the 2006-2007 school year (grades 3, 5, and 8) and in fall 2007 (grade 11). Until this time the current assessments, based on the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), will be given. It is important to note that the Writing and Convention components of the GPS follow standard principles for writing - content development and organization, style, sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. These are universal characteristics found in all standards for writing, including the GPS and the current writing program.

When are the Georgia Writing Assessments given?

Fall Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)
September

Grade 8 Writing Assessment - January

Grade 5 Writing Assessment - March

Spring Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)
March

Grade 3 Writing Assessment Evaluations - March

Summer Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)
July

When will the new Georgia Writing Assessments be given?

Grades 3, 5, 8 - 2006-2007 school year

Grade 11 - 2007-2008 school year

GEORGIA'S WRITING ASSESSMENTS



Questions and Answers for
Parents of Georgia Students

Georgia Department of Education

Testing Division
1554 Twin Towers East
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Tel (404) 656-2668
Tel (800) 634-4106 (GA)
FAX (404) 656-5976

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*Kathy Cox,
State Superintendent of Schools*

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Statewide Writing Assessments

Writing is an important part of Georgia's statewide curriculum. Through assessment of writing, the state is able to certify a student's individual competency, monitor the effectiveness of the statewide curriculum as it relates to writing, and ensure that all students who graduate from Georgia's high schools have basic writing competencies. Section 20-2-281 of the Quality Basic Education Act, as amended in 1991, requires that writing assessments be administered to Georgia students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 11. An individual report is prepared for each student, and the results are summarized for each school and system.

Grade 3

The assessment remains a portfolio assessment but will now include an analytic scoring guide that is aligned with the grade 3 writing GPS. Analytic scoring is different from the holistic, developmental scoring scale used on the previous Grade 3 Writing Assessment. The new analytic scoring system will provide teachers with more specific criteria for evaluating the four types of writing samples collected. The types of writing assessed in the new Grade 3 Portfolio Writing Assessment will also be different. The four types of writing will be: Writing in Response to Literature, Narrative Writing, Informational Writing, and Persuasive Writing. Although Persuasive Writing is a new genre for the Grade 3 Portfolio, Narrative Writing combines two types of writing from the previous test—*Relating a Personal Experience* and *Creating an Imaginative Story*. Informational Writing takes the place of *Responding to QCC Content Area* and will focus on research-based informational writing tied to the GPS.

Grade 5

Previously, all students had to write a narrative composition on a particular topic. Students will now be given either an informational, persuasive, or narrative writing topic. Because the test uses three different writing topics, students should be prepared to write in informational, narrative, and persuasive genres. The new Grade 5 Writing Assessment will assess informational, persuasive and narrative writing as defined by the Georgia Performance Standards. Student writing will be assessed analytically in four domains: *Ideas, Organization, Style, and Conventions*. Analytic scoring will provide detailed information on student writing including scale scores and performance levels. The new Grade 5 Writing Assessment will also be linked to a common reporting scale allowing for greater capability to compare scores over time.



Grade 8

The name has changed. The new assessment will be referred to as the Grade 8 Writing Assessment. Middle Grades Writing Assessment (MGWA) will no longer be used. Previously, all students had a choice of a narrative, persuasive, or expository genre to address a particular topic. Students will now be given either an expository topic or a persuasive topic. Because the test uses two different writing topics, students should be prepared to write in both genres. The new Grade 8 Writing Assessment will assess expository and persuasive writing as defined by the Georgia Performance Standards. Student writing will be assessed analytically in four domains: *Ideas, Organization, Style, and Conventions*. The current domain of Content & Organization will be split into two separate domains: Ideas and Organization. Sentence Formation, Usage and Mechanics, currently evaluated as separate domains, will be assessed within the Conventions domain.

Grade 11

Student writing will continue to be assessed analytically in four domains, but the domains on the new GHSWT will be *Ideas, Organization, Style, and Conventions*. The current domain of Content & Organization will be split into two separate domains: Ideas and Organization. Sentence Formation, currently evaluated as a separate domain, will be assessed within the Conventions domain. The new GHSWT will assess persuasive writing as defined in the Georgia Performance Standards. The test is administered several times a year so that students have five opportunities to take the test before the end of grade 12. Students must pass the writing test in order to graduate from high school.