

TESTING BRIEF
Grade 8 Writing Assessment
January 19, 2011

Georgia law (O.C.G.A. §20-2-281) states, “writing assessments shall be administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven.” The purpose of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment is to assess student achievement on the Georgia Performance Standards in writing and to improve student writing skill and writing instruction. The Grade 8 Writing Assessment provides predictive information to eighth graders about their future writing performance in advance of taking the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT). The assessment consists of an evaluation of each student response to an assigned prompt. Students are assigned a topic from a prompt bank representing two genres: expository and persuasive. Students are allowed 100 minutes to write their essays.

Administration of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment supports Goal 5 of the Superintendent’s Strategic Plan: Improve the SAT, ACT, and achievement scores of Georgia students. This goal is achieved through providing an effective curriculum and assessment system designed to improve student achievement.

The scale score range for the Grade 8 Writing Assessment is 100 to 350. Writing scores are also reported in the following performance levels: Does Not Meet (100-199), Meets (200-249), and Exceeds (250-350).

KEY FINDINGS: ALL STUDENTS

- Eighty-three (83) percent of all students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard set for writing, a four (4) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of all students achieving the Meets or Exceeds standard set for writing has increased by sixteen (16) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group for the current administration was 213, a six (6) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.
- The 2010-2011 Strategic Plan target for eighth grade writing was 83 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards. The 2010 target was met.

KEY FINDINGS: BY RACE/ETHNICITY GROUPS

Asian Students

- Ninety (90) percent of Asian students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a one (1) percentage point increase over the 2010 assessment.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Asian students meeting or exceeding has increased by nine (9) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 228, a seven (7) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

Black Students

- Seventy-seven (77) percent of Black students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a six (6) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Black students meeting or exceeding has increased by nineteen (19) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 208, a two (2) scale score point increase over the 2010 administration, and an eight (8) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

Hispanic Students

- Eighty (80) percent of Hispanic students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a five (5) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Hispanic students meeting or exceeding has increased by twenty-four (24) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 210, a one (1) scale score point increase over the 2010 administration, and a thirteen (13) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

White Students

- Eighty-seven (87) percent of White students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a two (2) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of White students meeting or exceeding has increased by eleven (11) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 217, a one (1) scale score point decrease from the 2010 administration, and a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

KEY FINDINGS: BY PROGRAM

Regular Program Students

- Eighty-six (86) percent of Regular Program students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a three (3) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of regular program students meeting or exceeding has increased by fourteen (14).
- The mean scale score for this group was 216, a five (5) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

Special Education Students

- Forty-eight (48) percent of Special Education students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a five (5) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Special Education students meeting or exceeding has increased by twenty-one (21).
- The mean scale score for this group was 191, a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2010 administration, and a fourteen (14) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

English Language Learners

- Fifty (50) percent of English Language Learners achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a one (1) percentage point increase over 2010.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of English Language Learner students meeting or exceeding has increased by twenty-five (25).
- The mean scale score for this group was 191, a two (2) scale score point decrease from the 2010 administration, and a seventeen (17) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

KEY FINDINGS: CLOSING THE GAP

- While increases were made in all student groups, accelerated growth has occurred in the achievement levels of minority and special population students on the 8th Grade Writing Assessment. When comparing the 2011 results to 2007:
 - The achievement gap between Black and White students has narrowed from eighteen (18) percentage points in 2007 to ten (10) percentage points in 2011, in terms of the number of students meeting or exceeding the passing standard. This trend can be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing, wherein gains were made by both groups, but gains made by Black students exceeded those made by White students.
 - The achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has narrowed from twenty (20) percentage points in 2007 to seven (7) percentage points in 2011, in terms of the number of students meeting or exceeding the passing standard. This trend can also be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing.
 - The achievement gap between English Language Learners (ELL) and All students has narrowed from forty-two (42) percentage points in 2007 to thirty-three (33) percentage points in 2011, in terms of the number of students meeting or exceeding the passing standard. Similarly, this trend can be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing, wherein gains were made by both groups, but gains made by ELL students exceeded those made by All students.
 - The achievement gap between Special Education and All students has narrowed from forty (40) percentage points in 2007 to thirty-five (35) percentage points in 2011, in terms of the number of students meeting or exceeding the passing standard. As with the highlights above, this trend can be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing.
- Similar comparisons can be made between the mean scale score of various groups:
 - Black: White Students – The achievement gap between Black and White students has decreased from fourteen (14) scale score points in 2007 to nine (9) scale score points in 2011.
 - Hispanic: White Students – The achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has decreased from seventeen (17) scale score points in 2007 to seven (7) scale score points in 2011.
 - English Language Learners (ELL): All Students – The achievement gap between ELL and All students has decreased from thirty-three (33) scale score points in 2007 to twenty-two (22) scale score points in 2011.
 - Special Education Students: All Students – The achievement gap between Special Education and All students has decreased from thirty (30) scale score points in 2007 to twenty-two (22) scale score points in 2010.

Table 1. Percentage of Students Meeting and Exceeding Passing Standard

Student Groups	Combined Percentage of Students Meeting and Exceeding the Standard for Grade 8 Writing					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change from 2007-2011
	Meets and Exceeds	Meets and Exceeds	Meets and Exceeds	Meets and Exceeds	Meets and Exceeds	
All Students Tested	67	77	75	79	83	+16
Regular Program	72	82	79	83	86	+14
Special Education	27	41	38	43	48	+21
English Language Learner	25	40	40	49	50	+25
Asian	81	89	89	89	90	+9
Black	58	69	66	71	77	+19
Hispanic	56	71	70	75	80	+24
Native American/Alaskan	63	76	77	77	80	+17
White	76	85	82	85	87	+11
Multi Ethnic	74	83	79	84	86	+12
Female	76	84	83	86	89	+13
Male	58	72	67	72	77	+19

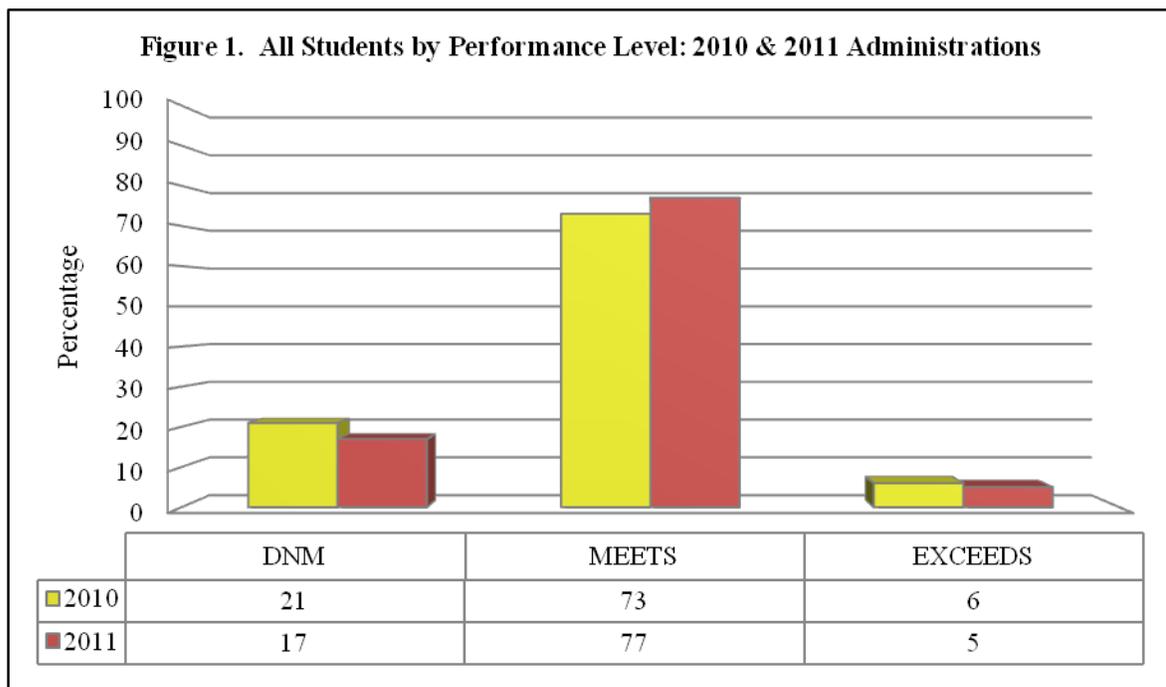
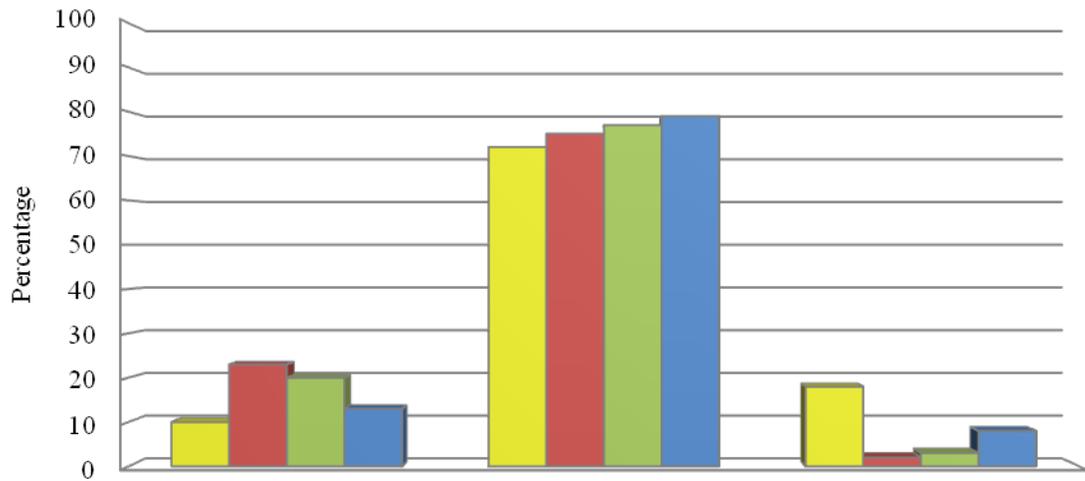
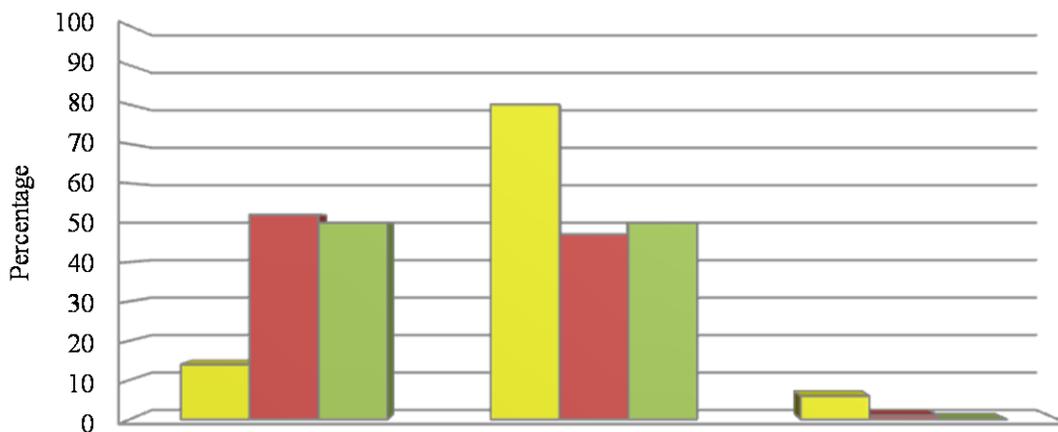


Figure 2. Performance Level by Race / Ethnicity: 2011 Administration



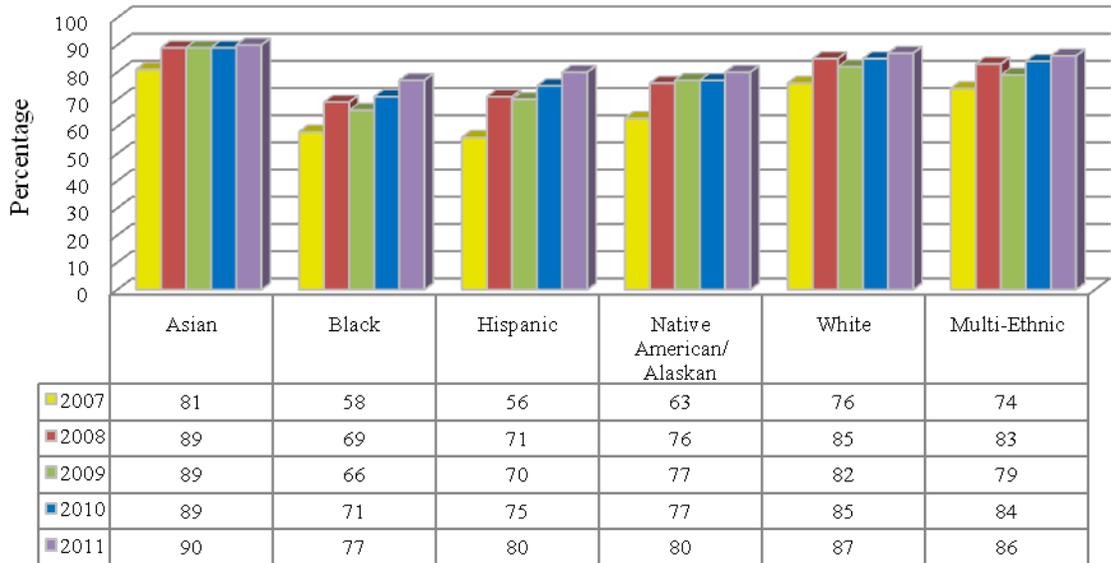
	DNM	MEETS	EXCEEDS
Asian	10	72	18
Black	23	75	2
Hispanic	20	77	3
White	13	79	8

Figure 3. Performance Level by Student Group: 2011 Administration



	DNM	MEETS	EXCEEDS
Regular Program	14	80	6
Special Education	52	47	1
ELL	50	50	0

**Figure 4: Students Meeting and Exceeding Standard
by Race/Ethnicity: 2007-2011**



**Figure 5: Students Meeting and Exceeding Standard
by Student Group: 2007-2011**

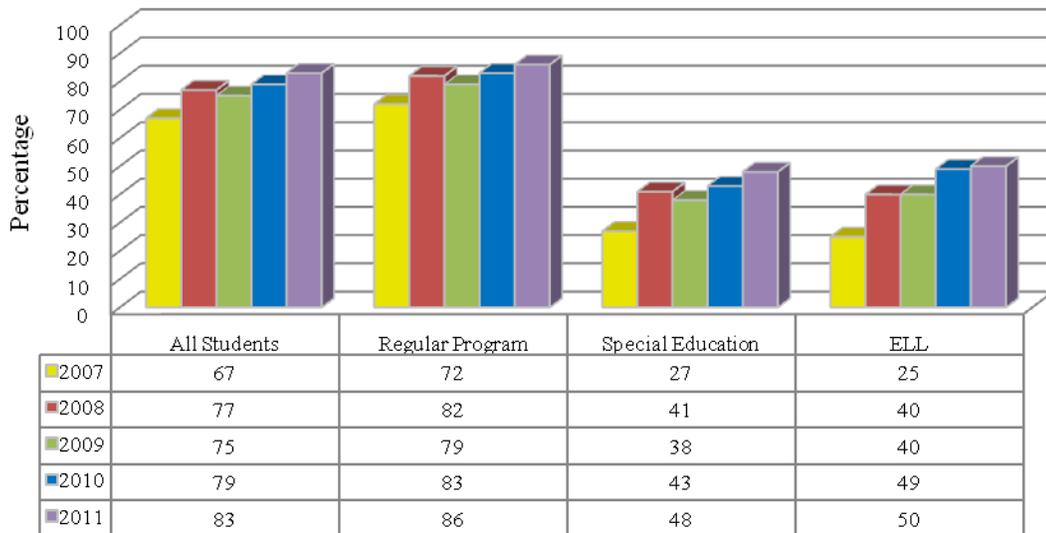
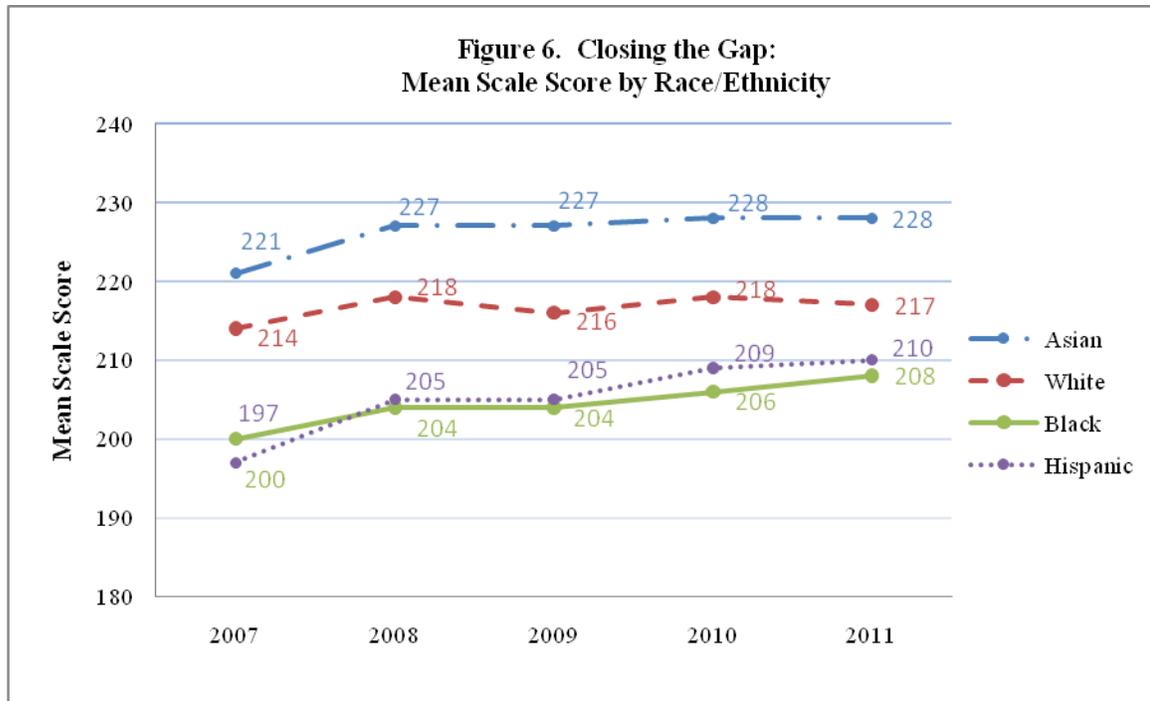


Table 2. Mean Scale Scores for the Grade 8 Writing Assessment: 2007-2011

Student Groups	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change from 2007 to 2011
All Students Tested	207	212	210	213	213	+6
Regular Program	211	215	213	216	216	+5
Special Education	177	185	184	188	191	+14
English Language Learner	174	184	187	193	191	+17
Asian	221	227	227	228	228	+7
Black	200	204	204	206	208	+8
Hispanic	197	205	205	209	210	+13
Native American/Alaskan	205	211	210	213	213	+8
White	214	218	216	218	217	+3
Multi Ethnic	211	215	213	217	216	+5
Female	213	217	216	218	218	+5
Male	201	207	205	208	209	+8



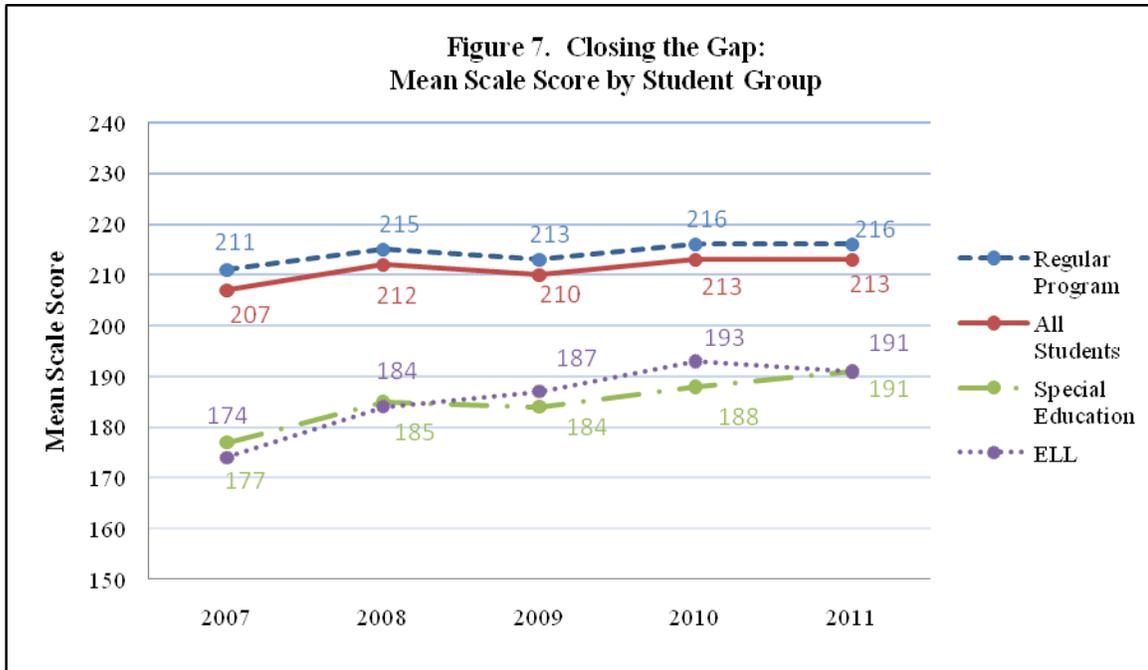


Table 3. Number of Students Tested by Program: 2007-2011

Year	All Students	Regular Program	Special Education	English Language Learner
2007	121,429	108,284	13,145	2,865
2008	119,716	107,099	12,617	2,604
2009	119,435	107,249	12,186	2,457
2010	119,816	107,662	12,154	2,297
2011	119,761	108,315	11,446	2,518

Table 4: Number of Students Tested by Race/Ethnicity: 2007-2011

Year	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American / Alaskan	White	Multi-Ethnic
2007	3,336	48,530	9,698	176	56,681	2,744
2008	3,615	47,091	10,099	202	55,361	3,062
2009	3,735	46,198	10,582	196	55,114	3,354
2010	3,976	45,544	12,325	307	54,482	3,033
2011	4,082	45,336	12,582	286	54,096	3,216