

## Georgia

### Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) and Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)

<b>Type of test</b>	Comprehensive standards-based
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The purpose of the exam is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide schools with student academic diagnostic information</li> <li>• Determine prospective high school graduates' mastery of the state curriculum</li> <li>• Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure</li> <li>• Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform educational policy decisions</li> <li>• Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards</li> <li>• Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups</li> <li>• Meet a state mandate</li> </ul>
<b>Major changes/pending changes in exit exam policy</b>	<p>The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is working on a proposal to phase out the GHSGT and replace it with a series of end-of-course tests. This plan remains in development; no final decisions have been made at this time.</p> <p>No changes for the 2009-10 school year are planned at this time.</p>
<b>Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?</b>	No. The state places the GHSGT scores on student transcripts, but there is no statewide protocol specifying how institutions of higher education will use these scores. Students who receive a certificate of attendance instead of a regular diploma because they failed the exam may be admitted to a two-year college after completing a GED.
<b>Year first administered</b>	1991
<b>Year diplomas first withheld</b>	1994
<b>Subjects tested</b>	English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing
<b>Types of questions</b>	Multiple-choice, writing prompt/essay
<b>Grade first administered</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> ; the writing assessment takes place in the fall, and the

	GHSGT in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies occurs in the spring of 11 <sup>th</sup> grade.
<b>Grade(s) exam aligned to</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12</b>	Five. Students who do not pass on the first attempt have multiple opportunities to receive additional instruction, retest, and qualify for graduation before the spring of 12 <sup>th</sup> grade.
<b>Retakes after grade 12</b>	Students who have met all other graduation requirements are allowed to retake the exit exam as many times as they need to after 12 <sup>th</sup> grade to receive a regular diploma.
<b>Does the state have reciprocity with other states?</b>	No
<b>Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind?</b>	The first administration of the exam in spring of 11 <sup>th</sup> grade is used to meet NCLB requirements.
<b>Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?</b>	No. The mathematics GHSGT has been enhanced for NCLB accountability purposes. Additional items have been added to better address the depth and breadth of the curriculum. The enhanced tests also have two additional cut scores for the "proficient" and "advanced" levels. These performance levels are used to calculate adequate yearly progress for NCLB purposes but do not affect a student's chance of earning a diploma.  Students must achieve a score of 500 to graduate and a score of 516 in mathematics to be counted as proficient for adequate yearly progress under NCLB.  Beginning in spring 2008, the new Georgia Performance Standards-based English language arts (ELA) and science tests have the same performance standard for NCLB proficiency determinations and diploma eligibility. This standard is "basic proficiency," which matches a scale score of 200 or higher.
<b>Do schools face <i>additional</i> (other than NCLB) accountability consequences linked to student performance on the exit exam?</b>	No.
<b>Evaluations of the state exit</b>	The GHSGT in English language arts and mathematics were

**exam**

externally evaluated in spring 2006 by Norman Webb, a senior research scientist with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the National Institute for Science Education. In addition, the new GHSGT in English language arts and science were externally evaluated by Ellen Forte, president of edCount, LLC, a consultancy group providing services in the areas of education assessment, evaluation, data management, reporting, and accountability. These evaluations are available from the GaDOE upon request.

**State test contractor**

Pearson Educational Measurement

**Does the state provide students with alternate paths to graduation?**

The state does have a waiver process that must be initiated by the student's home school. All students are eligible for the waiver, but the waiver request must include documentation of limitations that would account for failing the test. A waiver may be granted to a student who, due to disability, is rendered incapable of passing a section of the GHSGT or to a student who has not had a reasonable opportunity to pass a section of the GHSGT due to substantial hardship beyond the student's control, such as a significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of deprivation. Students who are granted the waiver and meet all other requirements may receive a certificate of attendance.

In addition, there is a variance process that allows an alternate means of demonstrating academic proficiency for students who have not been rendered incapable of passing a section of the GHSGT or the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT). The state board of education may, by majority vote, grant a variance to students who have satisfied all of the following requirements:

- 1) Passed any three of the five graduation tests (four content sections of the GHSGT and the GHSWT)
- 2) Met state attendance and course unit requirements for graduation
- 3) Attained a 90% or better attendance record, excluding excused absences, while enrolled in grades 9-12
- 4) Obtained a scale score that falls within one standard error of measurement of the passing score for the relevant sections of the tests
- 5) Where applicable, passed each of the state's end-of-course tests related to the sections of the graduation tests for which the variance is being sought

83 waivers and 1,398 variances were approved during FY 08

	<p>(July 1, 2007-June 30, 2008)</p> <p>No. However, English language learners may apply for the general waiver or variance described.</p> <p>There are a variety of language-responsive accommodations, such as a word-to-word translation dictionary.</p>
<p><b>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners</b></p> <p><b>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities</b></p>	<p>No. However, students with disabilities may apply for the general waiver described above; 55 students with disabilities received waivers in FY 08. A special education diploma is also available for students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their individualized education program.</p> <p>There are a variety of accommodations allowed, such as extended time, frequent breaks, and flexible schedule. More details are available online in the student assessment handbook at <a href="http://www.gadoe.org">www.gadoe.org</a></p>
<p><b>Who makes decisions on whether a student is eligible to use alternate paths?</b></p>	<p>The local school system determines eligibility based on specific criteria outlined above and submits to the state board of education for approval.</p>
<p><b>What is the process for a student to apply for alternate paths to graduate?</b></p>	<p>Local school board submits appropriate documentation to the state board of education on the student's behalf.</p>
<p><b>When calculating the graduation rate for AYP purposes, does the state count students taking alternate paths together with graduates who passed the high school exit exams?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>How many full-time equivalent staff in the state department of education are involved in implementing alternate paths?</b></p>	<p>1 full time; 1 hourly (20 hours per week); and part of the workload of 2 additional persons (division director and secretary)</p>
<p><b>Types of assistance the state provides for all districts to raise <i>initial</i> pass rates for all students on the high school</b></p>	<p>The state offers technical assistance to help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers administer the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops;</li> </ul>

**exit exam**

- All teachers prepare students for the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, a graduation coach in each high school who helps identify students who may not graduate and subsequently provides counseling and guides students in the direction of assistance;
- Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, field-based specialists, and train-the-trainer workshops;
- Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, graduation coaches, Graduation Counts guide, and data utilization guide;
- Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, and grants to districts;
- Districts improve formative uses of assessment, which includes online assistance, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, a data utilization guide, and a balanced assessment module;
- Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, and additional professional development opportunities;
- All districts improve the instructional leadership provided by administrators, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, and Georgia Performance Standards training for administrators and sessions on how to raise standards.

The state also provides:

- State-developed benchmark/formative assessments  
 Note: Georgia implements formative assessments through an application called the Online Assessment System (OAS). This is a Web-based resource that contains an item bank from which schools and systems can build customized assessments in all the grade/content areas covered by the state assessment system. This facilitates formative assessments at the school and system level. At the state level, the state also provides pre-built formative assessments within the OAS

**Types of assistance or remediation the state provides for all districts to help students who have failed their initial attempt to pass the exit exam**

- that systems and schools are able to use.
- Test items from prior years
  - Exam preparation materials for students and teachers

The state provides:

- Targeted remediation programs for students;
- Additional professional development for teachers in their content area;
- Additional professional development for teachers in meeting the specific needs of students at risk of academic failure;
- Additional professional development for teachers in the formative uses of assessment;
- Graduation coaches, leadership quality initiatives, and secondary leadership facilitators dedicated to supporting high schools and helping them increase graduation rates, in part by counseling students to enroll in more rigorous courses so they are better prepared for the GHSGT.

**Does the state provide funding for remediation?**

There is not a specific fund directed to schools for GHSGT remediation, but many of the initiatives described above are funded by the state. For example, the OAS is a bank of items available for formative assessment and remediation and is funded by the state.

**Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?**

No, although all school districts offer some form of remediation to students who fail the exam.

**Are students required to participate in remediation?**

No

**Initial pass rates, 2008**

Percentage of Students Passing on the First Try, 2008						
Student Group	English Language Arts	Writing	Math	Science	Social Studies	All Subjects
All students	91%	89%	93%	87%	87%	N/A
White	94%	93%	96%	94%	93%	N/A
African American	86%	84%	88%	78%	79%	N/A
Latino	83%	81%	91%	81%	79%	N/A
Asian	92%	92%	98%	93%	92%	N/A
Native American	93%	92%	92%	89%	92%	N/A
Multiracial	95%	93%	96%	91%	92%	N/A
English language learners	59%	56%	82%	61%	55%	N/A

Migrant	76%	77%	94%	73%	70%	N/A
Students with disabilities	56%	54%	59%	53%	53%	N/A
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	84%	83%	87%	79%	78%	N/A
<b>Passing score (scale of 400-600) (Writing is 100 to 350)</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Note: Pass rates for English language arts, math, science, social studies, and writing were gathered from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement 2007-08 State Report Card at <http://www.gadoe.org/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&StateId=ALL&T=1>

**Cumulative pass rates, 2008**

This information is not available.

**State graduation rates in 2007-08**

All students 75.4%  
 White 80.2%  
 African American 69.2%  
 Latino 65.5%  
 Asian 88.7%  
 Native American 77.1%  
 English language learners 50.2%  
 Migrant 24.5%  
 Students with disabilities 37.7%  
 Free or reduced-price lunch eligible 67%