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Policy Update

Reducing High-Stakes Nature of 2020-2021 Testing

On September 24, Superintendent Woods announced several actions and recommendations to reduce the high-stakes nature of 2020-2021 testing.

These actions include:

- Superintendent Woods recommended to the State Board of Education (SBOE) that the Georgia Milestones End-of-Course (EOC) percentage weight to be included in a student's final grade be reduced from 20% to .01% for the 2020-2021 school year. The SBOE did not approve this recommendation and proposed reducing the EOC percentage weight from 20% to 10%. This proposal has been posted for public comment; [click here to provide feedback](#).
- Effective September 24, it is the official directive of the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) that school districts with waivers (through Charter System or Strategic Waiver performance contracts) use input from teachers and parents, placement committees, class performance, and formative tools to determine the need to promote or retain their students at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Student promotion/retention decisions should not be based on 2020-2021 Georgia Milestones performance.
- Districts are given the flexibility to: assess students during the spring mid-month or spring administration windows, as needed, to ensure a more appropriate amount of instructional time is available prior to the administration of the EOC; request extending their local testing window later in the school day to include afternoon and possible evening sessions, where needed; and utilize a compressed testing schedule (i.e., using fewer days for testing, choosing the order of assessments, and combining sections into one day) due to the updated Georgia Milestones test design, which includes a significant decrease in student testing time.

The Assessment Division will work with districts to provide as much flexibility as possible to assist with the appropriate and safe administration of Georgia Milestones and other required assessments. Please reach out to your Assessment Specialist if needed.

Accountability for 2020-2021

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has indicated that they will provide states with an opportunity to modify and/or waive accountability requirements for the 2020-2021 school year. As soon as more information is provided, we

will seek all flexibility afforded to us. We will provide additional information as it becomes available.

AP/IB/DE Exemption Update

At its August 27 meeting, the SBOE authorized the State School Superintendent to initiate rulemaking procedures to [amend SBOE Rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessment](#) to align with Senate Bill 367 and modify the Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB)/Dual Enrollment (DE) EOC exemptions. This rule amendment is being held until the November 19 SBOE meeting, where it will be reintiated for another public comment period (minimum 30 days) to address concerns regarding the EOC requirement for students currently enrolled in AP/IB/DE American Literature.

Until the amended Testing Rule has been adopted, the current Testing Rule is still in place and includes the EOC exemption for AP/IB/DE American Literature students. **Therefore, AP/IB/DE American Literature students should not participate in the EOC until the rulemaking process is complete.** Additional guidance will be provided at that time.

Middle School Science

At its August 27 meeting, the SBOE passed a resolution selecting the following four courses to continue to include end-of-course (EOC) assessments under Senate Bill 367: Algebra I/Coordinate Algebra, American Literature and Composition, Biology, and U.S. History. As a result of this resolution, an EOC assessment for Physical Science will no longer be administered to high school students enrolled in the course.

We understand that middle school students may also be enrolled in the high school Physical Science course, and that the standards for this course differ from the 8th grade science standards. Therefore, we will continue to administer the Physical Science EOC assessment for middle school students enrolled in the high school course. This EOC assessment will be for middle school students only and will not be administered to high school students enrolled in Physical Science. This means that no changes are being made to Georgia's EOC assessments for middle school students; therefore, Georgia's middle school assessment flexibility waiver still applies to science. Middle school students enrolled

in either Physical Science or Biology will take only the EOC and will not take the EOG. Middle school students enrolled in Algebra I/Coordinate Algebra, however, are expected to take both the EOG and EOC.

In order to reduce testing and ensure students participate in the assessment most closely aligned with the instruction they received; Georgia will submit a new waiver request to ED to seek flexibility in mathematics. We will provide an opportunity for public comment on this waiver request in the coming weeks and will keep you updated on ED's decision ahead of the spring 2021 testing window.

Contact: Allison Timberlake, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent for Assessment & Accountability, atimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-463-6666.

Test Development

Pursuant to SB 367, the SBOE determined that only students enrolled in Algebra I/Coordinate Algebra, American Literature and Composition, Biology, and U.S. History will take the corresponding Georgia Milestones EOC. This change reduces the number of Georgia Milestones assessments high school students must take to fulfill course requirements. Given the results of a statewide survey conducted in September, corresponding revisions will be made to the GAA 2.0 high school assessments. During October, committees of Georgia educators will review the GAA 2.0 high school test blueprints and recommend revisions to align the blueprints to standards associated with only the remaining EOC in each content area. We will then work to apply these revisions for the assessments to be administered in spring 2022. The spring 2021 assessments will continue to align to the current test blueprints.

Contact: Jan Reyes, Ed.D., Director of Assessment Development, jreyes@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-463-6665.

DRC BEACON

Data File Uploads

Districts wishing to make use of the optional DRC BEACON Assessment resource will be required to transmit three data files directly to DRC through INSIGHT. These data files must be uploaded to

INSIGHT in this order; otherwise, you will receive error messages.

1. Batch User
2. Multiple Student Upload (MSU; same data file as the EOG Georgia Milestones MSU)
3. Student Groups

GaDOE has worked with Student Information System (SIS) vendors across the state to develop automated scripts to export these data files. **Please check with your SIS vendor to determine if these automated exports are currently available.**

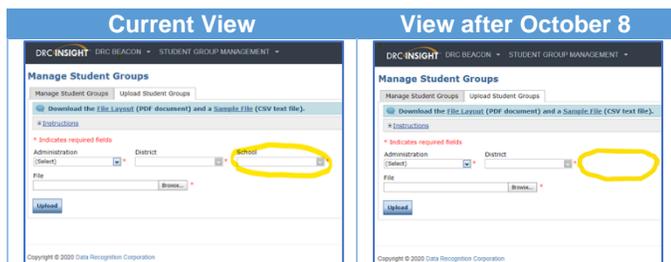
The Batch User data file is uploaded first, and the MSU data file may be uploaded immediately afterward without waiting. However, you will need to wait for the Batch User data file to fully populate in the INSIGHT portal *prior* to uploading the Student Groups data file. The Batch User data populates daily at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m., and 5 p.m. EST. If you do not wait for the Batch User data to populate and you attempt to upload the Student Groups data file, you will receive the error message “A Teacher with the ‘Teacher ID (Email)’ value does not exist in the selected ‘School.” Remember, System, School, AND Teacher Users are uploaded through the Batch User data file.

GaDOE has also developed a list of frequently asked questions to guide districts in preparing these data files. This FAQ document may be found [here](#).

Student Groups Data Upload Process

Currently, the Student Groups data must be uploaded into the INSIGHT portal one school at a time by selecting a school in the “Upload Student Groups” tab.

DRC has been working to modify the portal to allow for a single, district-wide Student Groups data upload; this **functionality will go live on the evening of Thursday, October 8.** Once this change occurs, you will not be required to select a school in the “Upload Student Groups” tab.



If your district requires assistance with the Student Groups upload process, please contact the Georgia DRC BEACON Help Desk: gahelpdesk@datarecognitioncorp.com/866-282-2249 (Option 4).

Training Resources

Training for BEACON and test setup can be found on the [DRC BEACON Training Site](#).



This site includes a variety of useful video and step-by-step guides to test setup and administration to support users.



In addition, there are many resources for educators, school and district leaders, students, and parents/guardians on the Resources page linked on the GaDOE [DRC BEACON](#) webpage.

There is a training on Using BEACON to Support Instruction on Tuesday, November 10 that will support teacher and administrator use of BEACON reports.

Links to these trainings may be found in the [Key Training Dates](#) section of this newsletter.

DRC BEACON Score Interpretation and Use

As educators begin making use of DRC BEACON, here are a couple key reminders to help you best interpret and use BEACON scores:

🔔 Reminder #1: BEACON is for formative purposes only, not for any high-stakes purposes. Thus, BEACON scores are best interpreted in the context of informing immediate classroom decisions. These outcomes are one of many factors Georgia educators may use to easily assess their students’ learning and make informed decisions about the varied needs in their classrooms.

🔔 Reminder #2: BEACON scores are reported on a vertical scale, and in practical terms, this means scores from any grade may be interpreted in the context of another grade’s performance levels. For example, if a 5th grade student receives a Mathematics score of 450,

meaning they are at the Support Needed performance level for 5th grade, this can be compared to the 4th grade performance level cut points to further see that the student is performing as Near Target on 4th grade standards. At the beginning of the school year, educators may be interested in understanding how their students are performing in relation to the previous grade's standards, and towards the end of the school year, educators may likewise wish to see how students are performing in advance as compared to the following grade's standards. BEACON scores are reported on a scale that supports these comparisons *without requiring an additional off-grade test*.

🔔 Reminder #3: Students who are assigned testlets aligned to their enrolled grade will move as intended through the adaptive test to receive content at the difficulty level most appropriate based on their performance. For example, if a high-performing 4th grader is assigned 4th grade testlets, they may be presented 5th or 6th grade content as the test progresses, if their performance indicates readiness. Subsequent starting points will be informed by their past performance, so a 4th grade student who previously performed well and was moved to more difficult content within a testlet will likewise start on higher-level content on subsequent 4th grade testlets. It is important to note that if a student is assigned a testlet above or below their enrolled grade, performance will not contribute to composite scores and will not inform their subsequent testlet adaptations.

Additional information on using BEACON to support Georgia students' learning is available on the [GaDOE website](#).

Contacts:

- Sandy Greene, Ed.D., Director of Assessment Administration, sgreene@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-656-0478.
- Taiesha Adams, Ed.D., Assessment Specialist, taadams@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-656-5975.
- Joe Blessing, Program Manager, jblessing@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-232-1208.

Formative Instructional Practices (FIP)

FIP Considerations and Upcoming Webinar

There are many decisions to make during the planning stage when a district or school decides to implement Formative Instructional Practices Online Professional Learning and apply the processes from the courses. Thinking should include determining who would be best as FIP lead learners or deciding the exact need for FIP, such as a knowledge-building implementation with optional use, implementation targeted to a group of schools because of the need to improve teaching and learning, or transformative improvement districtwide. Other considerations include, but are not limited to, the development of a timeline for implementation with intentional planning for completion of each course with online monitoring of course completion. Additionally, planning includes study of the Facilitation Guides and Participant materials for each course to run effective PLCs. Planning also needs to include time within the PLC to evolve consensus about which FIP processes educators will employ in classrooms, how they will be supported as they learn, offering debriefing opportunities about the practice and the provision of more time to refine use of practice *until the intended improvement in student learning becomes visible*.

Invite your colleagues from Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Learning to join our Thursday, October 22 FIP webinar. The link to register for this session is found in the Key Training Dates section of this newsletter. The topic will be *Leading Teachers to Help Students Revise Their Thinking Using Formative Assessment*. The main purpose of lesson-based formative assessment is to use the results to help students revise their thinking when needed. This webinar will assist leaders with considerations to note during classroom observations when students exhibit misconceptions in their understanding. Key and actionable suggestions will be provided for leaders to share with teachers so they can help students revise their thinking and work more accurately toward mastery.

Contact: Kelli Harris-Wright, Assessment Specialist, kharris-wright@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-463-5047.

GKIDS 2.0 and GKIDS Readiness Check

Reminders

- Updates have been made to the GKIDS platform for the 2020-2021 school year and the platform is open.
- A platform user activation request has been sent, via email, to all System Test Coordinators (STCs).
- STCs should set up accounts for school coordinators, and the school coordinators will set up accounts for their teachers.
- The Readiness Check window has been extended to **Wednesday, October 28 for all districts.**

GKIDS 2.0 and Readiness Check in Virtual Environments

- Use the resource materials that are included in the Optional Resource Guide, as needed
- Create a list of readily available materials that parents might have at home to use with their students
- Encourage parents to become familiar with the assessment through the parent website and the parent flyer
- Activities which cannot be observed and assessed remotely should be marked “Not Yet Assessed”
- Attempt to have some visual contact with the students to check progress
- The Readiness Check checklist can be completed by parents and used by teachers to update student performance in the platform

Training Support

Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3 pre-administration webinars were held on July 30, August 13, and October 1. Please review the webinar recordings if you were unable to attend in person. Information about administering GKIDS and Readiness Check in a virtual environment was covered.

Additionally, the Administration Manual defines and gives examples of universal allowances which may be used, as needed, with all students for all performance tasks. A new feature for this year that teachers will see is a description of comprehensive supports which may be used for students who need support beyond that available through universal allowances.

Returning teachers are only required to view the new and revised training modules for the 2020-2021 school year. A training checklist for returning teachers and a checklist for new teachers have been developed and are located [here](#). All modules are now available. Please answer ALL the questions at the end of the course related to being a new or returning teacher to receive the course certificate.

Contact: Bobbie Bable, Assessment Specialist,
bbable@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-657-6168.

Keenville



As teachers are preparing virtual lessons, remember that Keenville can be included as a formative assessment to help determine next steps in instruction. Games should be assigned that align to the current instructional plan for a whole class, small groups, or to meet the needs of individual learners. In Keenville, teachers can assign and unassign games as needed to best meet the needs of each learner, based on performance data or standard/skill being taught. Student performance data is generated in real time, allowing teachers to easily monitor student progress in a virtual environment.

Navigating Keenville is intuitive for students; built-in tutorials as well as immediate feedback encourage students throughout the games. And, Keenville motivates students to do their best by providing rewards and incentives as result of playing.

This year we have released a new free-play, fluency game called, “Get Those Beans!” This free-play game is located in the Keen avatar’s home and promotes foundational reading skills and mental math strategies, in a fun and exciting way. So, even when games are not assigned, students may practice important literacy and numeracy skills and earn more beans!

[Keenville Parent Resources](#) are also available this year! Parents may find these resources helpful as they support their students in a virtual learning environment.

For questions regarding Keenville rosters, please contact your SLDS trainer. Also, visit keenville.gadoe.org for more information regarding device and browser requirements!

Contact: Lisa Hardman, Assessment Specialist,
lhardman@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-651-9405.

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0

Test Demonstrations

Resources on test demos for ACCESS Online and ACCESS Paper for grades 1-12 have been moved to a new webpage for [ACCESS Test Practice and Sample Items](#). Teachers who will administer paper tests for grades 1-12 can also find an extensive selection of sample items and a guide on using the sample items with students.

2020-21 ACCESS Technology Webinars for Technology Coordinators

WIDA will host Q&A webinars focused on technology in October and November. Links to these WIDA webinars and other WIDA webinars may be found [here](#).

- Software Updates & Technology Readiness Checklist Tuesday, October 6 from 2 – 3 p.m. ET
- Technology Installations Thursday, October 8 from 2 – 3:30 p.m. ET
- Technology Coordinator Support for Test Administrators Tuesday, November 10 from 2 – 3 p.m. ET

The Assessment team will host one webinar in October.

- ACCESS for ELLs Test Integrity Tuesday, October 27, from 10 – 11 a.m.

Alternate ACCESS

EL students with significant cognitive disabilities must meet GAA 2.0 eligibility criteria in all grade levels, *including non-GAA tested grade levels*, through the IEP process to be found eligible to take Alternate ACCESS.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR STUDENTS IN 1-12:

1. The student has been classified as an EL.
2. The student has been classified as a special education student and is receiving special education services.
3. The student has a significant cognitive disability.
4. The student is eligible for the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0).

Contact: Mary Nesbit-McBride, Ph.D., Assessment Specialist, mnesbit@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-232-1207.

Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0

Upcoming Training Session

Topic: Test Administration Procedures

When: Thursday, October 8 from 1 – 3 p.m.

Summary: Topics to be covered include use of manipulatives and handling of materials during testing

Intended Audience: STCs

The Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA) 2.0 is a standardized assessment that covers Grades 3 through high school. The GAA 2.0 is designed to measure the degree to which students with significant cognitive disabilities have achieved the Extended Content Standards in the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Content Areas Assessed by the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0

Content Area	Grade						
	3	4	5	6	7	8	High School
English Language Arts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science			✓			✓	✓
Social Studies						✓	✓

Students in non-GAA tested grades with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the GAA 2.0 eligibility criteria must be coded as GAA 2.0 participants during the October FTE Count. While this code does not impact assessment placement decisions for these students, it does indicate they meet the assessment eligibility criteria and receive an alternate curriculum. For the first time, this requirement applies to kindergarten students who have been identified as having a significant cognitive disability since they will take GKIDS this year instead of an alternate assessment.

Contact: Mary Nesbit-McBride, Ph.D., Assessment Specialist, mnesbit@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-232-1207.

Georgia Milestones Assessment System

Fall Mid-Month 2020 EOC Preliminary Reports

Fall Mid-Month 2020 EOC preliminary reports have begun posting in INSIGHT. School Test Coordinators (SchTCs) and STCs should (1) continue monitoring student progress in INSIGHT to verify that all tests are submitted and (2) assign corrected invalidation/irregularity codes for any students listed on the LCE roster.

Winter 2020 EOC Post-Equating

To ensure that scores from different versions of a test are comparable, we use a statistical procedure called *equating*. This process ensures tests within a course are of equal difficulty within a single administration (e.g. Forms A and B) and across different administrations (e.g. 2019 and 2020).

Test forms can be scored based on a pre-equated or post-equated approach. Pre-equating uses information from previous administrations to produce scale score tables prior to an administration, thereby allowing for a quick delivery of test results. Post-equating is based on data from the current administration.

Given this year's changes to the test design, as well as potential effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, a post-equating approach will be used for the Winter 2020 EOC. Therefore, a representative sample of students testing from across the state must be obtained to produce scoring tables. After analyzing Winter 2020 enrollment counts and system test dates, the earliest projected date for the availability of preliminary data is anticipated to be Wednesday, December 30.

To maintain this timetable, it is important that districts follow their testing schedule as closely as possible while prioritizing the health and well-being of students and staff. It is also important to test graduating seniors early in the window, where possible.

Test Administration Manuals

As a reminder, beginning 2020-2021, Test Administration Manuals (TAMs) will be available in digital, PDF format only. Districts will need to consider

options for using digital versions to train Examiners and for use during test administration. We recognize the difficulty districts may have in not receiving TAMs this year; therefore, we have provided some ideas and options that may be considered:

- STCs and/or SchTCs may choose to present the TAM digitally during training for review by coordinators and examiners prior to testing.
- STCs and/or SchTCs may ask examiners to bring a laptop or iPad with the TAM downloaded for review and discussion during the training meeting.
- Schools and districts can print the test examiner script by content area only.
- Test examiners can use devices such as laptops, tables, and interactive boards to read scripts.
- **Personal cell phones may not be used for this purpose and are not allowed.**

Scheduling Flexibility Options

The Assessment Administration Division aims to provide as much flexibility as possible to support you as you fulfill testing requirements this year. For the Georgia Milestones Assessment, we have offered increased flexibility in developing local testing calendars as well as in scheduling the order of content areas, scheduling multiple sections or content areas in one day, and scheduling the ELA sections across two consecutive weeks (i.e., Section 1 on Friday and Sections 2 and 3 on Monday). These flexibility options were designed to allow more instructional time and reduce the amount of time testing while still providing meaningful results.

For more information on allowable flexibility in scheduling, please see the SAH or call your Assessment Specialist.

Contacts:

- Taiesha Adams, Ed.D., Assessment Specialist, taadams@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-656-5975.
- Joe Blessing, Program Manager, jblessing@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-232-1208.

NAEP/NCES

The 2021 administration window is January 25 to March 19, 2021. Grades 4 and 8 will be tested in math and reading for state results. The 2021 sampled districts have been notified of their selection.

The pre-administration webinar was rescheduled to Thursday, October 15, and the registration link is on the training page of this newsletter.

Contact: Bobbie Bable, Assessment Specialist, bbable@doe.k12.ga.us, 404-657-6168.

Accountability Update

If you have questions about the CCRPI, please contact the GaDOE [accountability specialist](#) assigned to work with your district or consult the [accountability](#) and [CCRPI Resources for Educators](#) webpages.

Key Training Dates for October-December 2020

*Please note: for all GoToWebinar meeting links below, if the meeting date has passed, the meeting link will take you to the recording. Meeting links are embedded within the title.

Assessment Training

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/16/2020	October 2020 Lunch and Learn	12 – 1 p.m.	STC
11/13/2020	November 2020 Lunch and Learn	12 – 1 p.m.	STC

ACCESS for ELLs* **WIDA Webinars indicate Central Time. Note Eastern Times below.**

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/22/2020	Alternate ACCESS for ELLS Pre-Administration Training	10 – 11:30 a.m.	STC
10/27/2020	Test Integrity	10 – 11 a.m.	STC

DRC BEACON

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
11/10/2020	Using BEACON to Inform Instruction	10 – 11:30 a.m.	STC, SchTC

Formative Instructional Practices (FIP)

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/22/2020	FIP #5 – Leading Teachers to Help Students Revise Their Thinking Using Formative Assessment	10 – 11 a.m.	STC, District-level Leadership
12/3/2020	FIP #6 – Organizing to Help Teachers Facilitate Student Ownership of Learning	10 – 11 a.m.	STC, District-level Leadership

GAA

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/8/2020	GAA 2.0 Test Administration Procedures	1 – 3 p.m.	STC

GKIDS 2.0

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/1/2020	GKIDS 2.0 & Readiness Check Training – Reporting – Part 3	10 – 11:30 a.m.	STC

Georgia Milestones

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/13/2020	End of Course Winter 2020/Spring 2021 Mid-Month Pre-Administration and Test Set-up	10 – 11:30 a.m.	STC
12/1/2020	Georgia Milestones Interactive Reporting Overview and Training	10 – 11:30 a.m.	STC

NAEP

Date	Title	Time	Intended Audience
10/15/2020	NAEP Pre-Administration Training	1 – 2 p.m.	STC

Key Assessment Tasks and Reminders**ACCESS for ELLs**

Dates	Assessment Tasks and Reminders
10/7/2020 – 11/23/2020	Order Test materials in WIDA AMS
10/7/2020 – 11/23/2020	Load pre-ID File into WIDA AMS
12/3/2020 – 3/5/2021	WIDA AMS Test Set-up Window

DRC BEACON

Dates	Assessment Tasks and Reminders
9/8/2020 – 6/30/2021	DRC BEACON Administration Window

GAA

Dates	Assessment Tasks and Reminders
11/2/2020 – 11/6/2020	GAA 2.0 Braille Materials Survey Window

GKIDS 2.0

Dates	Assessment Tasks and Reminders
7/6/2020 – 10/28/2020	GKIDS 2.0 Readiness Check Window (Revised close date)
7/6/2020 – 5/17/2021	GKIDS 2.0 Administration Window
7/6/2020 – 6/11/2021	GKIDS 2.0 Platform Open

Georgia Milestones

Dates	Assessment Tasks and Reminders
7/20/2020 – 11/25/2020	INSIGHT Test Set-up Window Fall 2020 EOC MM
10/5/2020 – 5/7/2021	Secure Practice Test Window
10/12/2020 – 10/23/2020	October 2020 EOC Mid-Month Test Administration
10/13/2020 – 1/15/2021	INSIGHT Test Set-up Window Winter 2020
11/9/2020 – 11/20/2020	November 2020 EOC Mid-Month Test Administration
11/30/2020 – 1/6/2021	EOC Winter 2020 Main Administration

PSAT

Dates	Assessment Tasks and Reminders
10/14/2020	PSAT Test Date
10/28/2020	PSAT Alternate Testing Date