

What scores do students get on the GAA?

Georgia's statewide content standards set specific academic expectations for all students in Georgia's public schools. The GAA measures how well a student has acquired knowledge and skills based on alternate achievement standards for their grade level. Each student's work is scored for the following dimensions:

- Fidelity to Standard—the degree to which the student's work addresses the grade-level standard to which it is aligned;
- Context—the degree to which the student work exhibits the use of grade-appropriate materials in a purposeful and natural/real-world application;
- Achievement/Progress—assesses the increase in the student's proficiency of skill across the two collection periods; and
- Generalization—assesses the student's opportunity to apply the learned skill in other settings and/or with various individuals in addition to the teacher or paraprofessional.

When do students receive GAA scores?

Your student's school will receive scores for your child in early June of each year. Parent reports are provided.

How are the assessment results used?

Teachers, administrators, and parents use assessment results to gauge the effectiveness of the instructional opportunities provided to all students in the school. As with any other statewide assessment, the GAA is a reflection of the educational program provided to the student as well as the student's progress toward achievement of curriculum standards. Results on the GAA are used to maximize opportunities for students to be better prepared for their next step in the education and career planning process.

Where can I find out more about the GAA?

Talk with your student's teacher or school principal. You may also check the Georgia Department of Education's Web site (www.gadoe.org) for information.

Contact Information

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2015–2016

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Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)



Questions and Answers for Parents of Georgia Students



www.gadoe.org



QA114716

What is the Georgia Alternate Assessment?

The GAA is a portfolio-based assessment for students in grades Kindergarten, 3–8, and High School who have been identified as having the most significant cognitive disabilities and cannot participate in the general assessment program even with maximum accommodations. All students in these grades are assessed in the subjects of English Language Arts and Mathematics; students in grades 3–8 and High School are also assessed in Science and Social Studies. Students participating in the GAA are assessed on the same content standards as their peers; however, teachers may adjust the achievement expectations to reflect the learning characteristics of this group of students. Please note that if local districts mandate an assessment in grades other than Kindergarten, 3–8, and High School, an alternate assessment must be provided for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

What is a portfolio assessment?

A portfolio assessment consists of samples of student work used to capture student learning and progress of skills found in the state curriculum. It is not a traditional paper-and-pencil test, but a collection of student work that allows participants the opportunity to demonstrate the progress they have made throughout the school year.

What is the purpose of the GAA?

Under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), states must ensure that all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, have access to a curriculum that encompasses challenging academic standards. The GAA helps ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn.

When do students take the GAA?

Student work samples are collected from September through March of each school year. Teachers will compile the portfolios and submit them for scoring in March.

To whom does this portfolio assessment apply?

In general, the GAA is appropriate only for a small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities—those who cannot participate in the general state assessments even with maximum accommodations. This generally includes students who have significant cognitive disabilities, who participate in the curriculum based on alternate achievement standards due to their unique learning needs. Each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team reviews a comprehensive set of criteria to determine whether the student should participate in the general assessment program or the GAA. As a member of the IEP team, the student's parent/guardian plays an important role in the assessment decision.

Why must students with significant cognitive disabilities be assessed?

It is important that all students be given the opportunity to show what they have learned. To meet the instructional needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities, the Georgia Department of Education has trained thousands of special education teachers to access and select grade-level standards that are meaningful for the student. Functional and life skills are still important, and academic skill instruction can be designed to support these critical skills—the two are not mutually exclusive. Although the focus of student work in the GAA should be on academic content and skills, the GAA has been uniquely designed to allow student work to be meaningful to the individual student and support functional/life skills.

How was the GAA developed?

The GAA was developed through a series of committee meetings with Georgia special and general education teachers and administrators. Georgia educators assisted the Georgia Department of Education in determining the content to be assessed, the types of student work appropriate for inclusion in the portfolio, and the criteria by which the student work will be scored.