MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING IN 2021: What will be Different in Georgia?

Since COVID-19 first led to sudden school closures in 2020, families have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support learning at home as students began learning remotely. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to put plans in place to ensure students are safe, offering students across Georgia different learning models—remote, hybrid and in-person, with some school districts transitioning between them as circumstances demanded. But the unprecedented changes in learning have impacted students in many ways, from their relationships with peers and social emotional growth to academics.

This year, it is more important than ever to measure student learning to understand the impact that COVID-19 and different learning models have had on students. This is especially important for families, who need objective information about how well their child learned grade-level skills so they can better support learning at home. While state tests are only one of many ways to measure student learning, families, schools and leaders need the objective and actionable information they provide to identify any learning gaps to best support students and fully recover from the pandemic. While Georgia students may not take the state test this spring, families should talk with teachers before summer to discuss results from other measures that may be available and whether their child met the expectations of the grade level.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has deeply affected students, teachers and schools, the state tests will be different than in the past. Georgia has asked the U.S. Department of Education to cancel the state test for 2021. If this is not approved, students will be required to take the tests. As of March 2021, the following changes have been made:

- To reduce stress for teachers and students in an already challenging year, the state is considering not using results from the Milestones to rate schools or districts as they have in the past.
- Scores from the high school End-of-Course tests will only count for 10% of a student’s final grade instead of 20%. Students in fifth and eighth grade will no longer have to reach the Proficient Learner Level on the test to move on to the next grade.
- While students will be required to take the test in-person, many districts will have plans to test students learning remotely separately from classmates learning in person. Schools may also use staggered schedules and spaces outside the classroom, such as gyms or cafeterias to allow for more social distance.

For the most recent information on the 2021 state tests in Georgia, visit GADOE.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/default.aspx