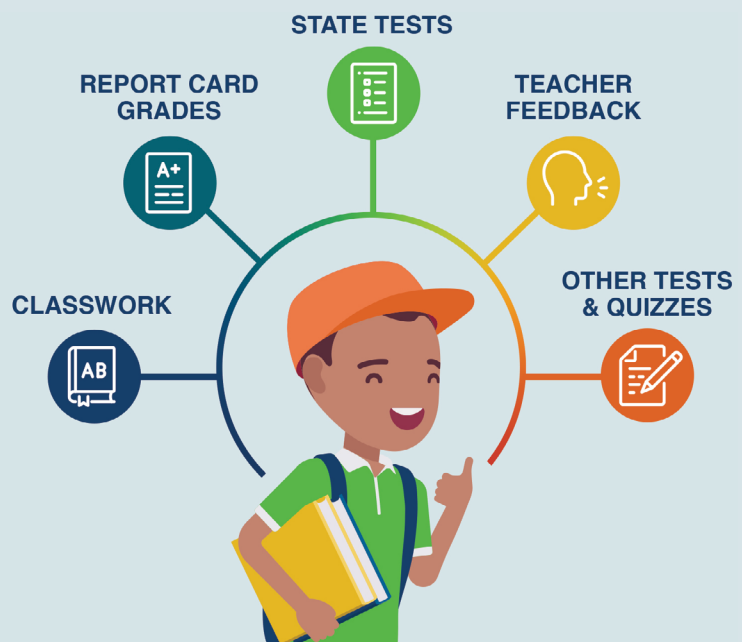




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN GEORGIA: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA, requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in third through eighth grade and once in high school. In Georgia, students in third through eighth grade take the Georgia Milestones in English language arts and math. Students in fifth and eighth grade take the Milestones in science, and those in eighth grade also take a test in social studies. High school students take the Milestones in American Literature and Composition, Algebra 1, Biology, and U.S. History.

Studies show that third grade is a critical year for students to learn fundamental reading skills that will help them understand and think critically about what they read. As a result, scores from the English language arts Milestones are one factor that is used to determine if a student is ready to move onto fourth grade. Students don't need to earn a minimum score on the test to be promoted, but when students reach the Proficient

Learner level, they are considered to be reading at grade level. If a student doesn't reach that level, the family and teachers will discuss the options and how they can best support the student.

In math, Milestones are also used in fifth and eighth grade to determine if a student is ready to move on to the next grade. Similar to reading, a score in the Proficient Learner Level means a student is at grade level. If a student does not reach that level, they may need additional support and the teacher and families will decide how to best support the student.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the Milestones are focused on grade level material and are aligned to the state standards. The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom every day throughout the year, which are the skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The Milestones tests are taken online. They include a variety of different types of questions, including open-ended questions, constructed response and interactive ones that ask students to plot points or complete tables.

Grade 6: Math

An expression is shown.

$$14a + 7 + 5b + 2a + 10b$$

Move the words into the columns to describe the parts of the expression. Not all words will be used, and each column should have at least one word to describe it.

14a	7	5	2a + 10b

sum
term

factor
product

quotient
coefficient



Grade 3: ELA

Read the paragraph from a student's report.

Have you ever heard the saying "laughter is the best medicine"? Laughing is good for you in many ways. Laughter often gets your blood flowing, which can help keep your heart strong. Laughing can help you relax and gives you energy. Laughing can also make people feel better when they are sick or upset.

Which source should be used to gather more information for the report?

- A a video titled "Why You Smile When You Are Laughing"
- B an article titled "Why Laughing Is Healthy"
- C a book titled "Funny Stories That Will Make You Laugh"
- D an interview titled "How I Make People Laugh Every Day"



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The Milestones report gives families information on how well their child performed on different sets of skills in each subject. Families can use this information to identify where their child is doing well and where they may need support or practice. This helps families better support learning at home. It can also help them to start meaningful conversations with teachers, set goals for each student's areas of improvement, and identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's Milestones Report:

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What short-term learning goals should my child meet to show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



TEACHERS: Informing Instruction

Students take different types of tests throughout the school year. Some students take benchmark or diagnostic tests, such as MAP Growth or i-Ready. These are taken several times a year and measure mastery of important concepts and skills in reading and math. Students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their “starting point” and again throughout the year to measure their progress. Benchmark tests help teachers identify and address learning gaps early on so students can stay on track to meet grade level expectations. While the Milestones are only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade level expectations.

While teachers use the Milestones results to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, the results also help teachers to improve their instruction. They can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions

Milestones results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district level test scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and indicate if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use Milestones scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use Milestones results to identify schools and districts that need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as schools with certain groups of students that performed much lower on the test than the rest of the students in that school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers or tutors or they may purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

- For more information, visit Gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Georgia-Milestones-Assessment-System.aspx
- To see a practice test, visit WBTE.DRCEDirect.com/GA/Portals/ga
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about the Georgia PTA visit GeorgiaPTA.org/

