

“Opting Out” of Standardized Tests Frequently Asked Questions

Many parents, and even many educators, are dismayed by the frequency and emphasis on standardized tests in public schools. However, these testing programs are required by state and federal law and are important for building the capacity of our teachers and support staff to improve the success of all students. Some parents object to standardized testing and are publicly discussing the idea of "opting out," either by keeping their students at home on test dates or by permitting their child to abstain from testing. While we strongly encourage all parents and guardians to allow student participation in the Georgia Milestones, we also recognize that some families may have questions or concerns about the test. It is our hope that the frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers below will help parents make an informed decision regarding "Opting Out" of standardized testing.

What is the purpose of Georgia Milestones?

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS) or Georgia Milestones is designed to provide information about how well students are mastering the state-adopted content standards in the core content areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. More importantly, Georgia Milestones is designed to provide students with critical information about their own achievement and their readiness for their next level of learning – be it the next grade, the next course, or endeavor (college or career). Informing parents, educators, and the public about how well students are learning important content is an essential aspect of any educational assessment and accountability system. Parents, the public, and policy makers, including local school districts and boards of education, use the results as a barometer of the quality of educational opportunity provided throughout the state of Georgia. As such, Georgia Milestones serves as a key component of the state’s accountability system – the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).

What content areas and grade levels are tested?

Students in grades 3 through 8 will take an end-of-grade assessment in the content areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies. These tests are administered towards the end of the school year, typically in April or early May. Each school district selects a local testing window from within the state designated timeframe to administer the end-of-grade measures.

Students at the high school level and middle school students enrolled in Honors Physical Science and/or Honors Algebra will take an end-of-course assessment in the following eight courses:

English/Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
9 th Grade Literature and Composition	Algebra I	Biology	United States History
American Literature and Composition	Geometry	Physical Science	Economics/Business/Free Enterprise

If my child does not take the Georgia Milestones, will this impact his/her opportunity to get promoted to the next grade level?

The State Board of Education Rule (SBOE) 160-4-2-.11 contains the following language that applies when students do not test in a state-designated promotion/retention grade, specifically grades 3, 5, and 8.

(3)(c) 6. ‘A student’s failure to take the state-adopted assessment in grades 3, 5, and 8 in reading and/or mathematics on any of the designated testing date(s) or an alternative assessment instrument that is appropriate for the student’s grade level as provided for by the State Board of Education and the local board of education shall result in the student being retained. The option of the parent or guardian or teacher(s) to appeal the decision to retain the student shall follow the procedure set forth in this rule.’

(3)(c) 8. ‘The decision of the placement committee may be appealed only as provided for by the local board of education.’

If my child does not take the Georgia Milestones End-of-Course tests, how will this impact his/her high school course credit and opportunity to graduate on time?

Designated high school courses require that the Georgia Milestones End of Course (EOC) measures serve as the final exam and that they comprise a defined portion of a student's final course grade. Specifically, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.13 states that:

(2)(d). 'The Georgia Milestones EOC shall be used as the final exam in the courses assessed by a Georgia Milestones EOC. Georgia Milestones EOC reports shall provide students, parents, and educators with individual scores on each EOC taken; student scores must be recorded on, in, or with the individual student report card.

(2)(e). 'For students who entered ninth grade for the first time before July 1, 2011, the numeric score on the Georgia Milestones EOC shall count for 15% of the student's final numeric grade in the course assessed by the Georgia Milestones EOC.

(2)(f). 'For students who entered ninth grade for the first time after July 1, 2011, the numeric score on the Georgia Milestones EOC shall count for 20% of the student's final numeric grade in the course assessed by the Georgia Milestones EOC.

In the absence of the EOC score, the school will lack this portion of the final course grade and would be compelled to calculate that course grade without this required component. This would result in a course grade that would not reflect the true achievement of the student.

If I do not want my child to participate in standardized testing, how do I opt out my child from testing?

Parents/Guardians who choose to disallow participation in state-mandated testing must submit a written statement to the building principal prior to the actual dates of testing, documenting their intention to have their child not participate in the Georgia Milestones. In order to plan accordingly, we ask that the written statement be delivered to the **principal or school counselor no later than March 30, 2017. For your convenience, a standard "GMAS opt-out form" is available at your child's school. Letters/Forms will not be accepted during the week of testing.** Please keep a copy of the written statement for your records. If you choose to disallow participation in the testing, please send your child to school each day on time, unless you would have kept your child home for a valid reason such as illness, doctor's appointment, etc. Compulsory attendance guidelines will be enforced during testing as they would be on any other school day.

What will my child do during testing if I send him/her to school?

Students whose families have submitted a written statement disallowing participation in the Georgia Milestones are expected to come to school on the days of testing, where they will be marked present and located in an area that is separate from the testing environment. Adult supervision will be provided, and planned instructional activities will take place. However, iPads, cell phones, or other electronic devices cannot be used during the testing period. This is due to the need to limit the amount of computer network traffic for security purposes during testing. Students will be asked to complete assignments and work quietly during the testing period. At the end of test, students will rejoin their classmates.

What if my child has a written statement on file and is absent on the day of testing?

Students whose families have submitted a written statement for non-participation and who do not attend school during testing will be marked absent. However, they will not be expected to participate in the test make-ups.

What if my child has a written statement on file and is tardy on the day of testing?

Students whose families have submitted a written statement for non-participation and who are late to school during testing will be marked tardy. However, they will not be expected to participate in the test make-ups.

What if my child does not have a written statement on file and is absent on the day of testing?

Students whose families have not submitted a written statement of non-participation and who are not present on the day of the test will be marked absent and will take the Georgia Milestones make-up tests as scheduled.

What if my child does not have a written statement on file and is tardy on the day of testing?

Students whose families have not written a statement of non-participation and arrive late to school on testing days will be marked tardy and are expected to participate in the test make-ups.