Cobb high school students show gains, continue to top state and metro area on graduation test

Cobb County 11th graders increased their average score in three of four content areas on the 2009 Georgia High School Graduation test. Recently released GHSGT results show that Cobb County students also once again surpassed statewide average scores in all four subject areas, as well as the average score of a comparison group of metro Atlanta districts.

In fact, 85 percent of Cobb students passed all four content area tests this spring – English/Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science – compared to just 80 percent statewide. Cobb’s passing rate increased by one (1) percentage point in each content area except for Science, where it remained unchanged from 2008 (see Table I). Cobb County as a district has outperformed the state in each of the four subject areas for five consecutive years (See Table I).

Earlier this school year, district administrators outlined an aggressive plan to improve high school performance; results from this spring’s GHSGT seem to indicate that the plan is having an impact. The 2009 results include several noteworthy areas of gain, especially among subgroups of students whose performance is a critical component of whether schools make Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. Almost all district schools increased their average scale score on the English Language Arts test, and two out every three students district-wide scored at an advanced proficiency level. The English Language Arts scale scores for Wheeler students increased 12 points, while Kell and Pope High Schools scored 10 points higher than last year. “It is a tribute to the efforts of the English Language Arts teachers across the District, guiding their students to an understanding of the standards being taught,” said Carolyn Waters, supervisor for high school English Language Arts. “This is the second year of testing under the statewide Georgia Performance Standards curriculum. Clearly our instruction is aligning with state expectations.”

Math performance also increased this year with 97 percent of Cobb students meeting or exceeding standards, a 1 percent gain from 2008. A noteworthy achievement in Math is that English Language Learners increased their passing score by 13 points over last year. Another subgroup, Students With Disabilities, saw 84 percent of students meet or exceed standards this year, an increase of 7 percent. Nearly two thirds of all students exceeded the basic
proficiency levels in Math on this year’s test. At Lassiter, Pope and Walton high schools, 100 percent of students passed the Mathematics section.

On the Social Studies test, critical subgroups have steadily increased their passing rate for the last five years. For example, the percentage of English Language Learners passing has increased from 44 percent in 2005 to 59 percent this year. Other significant increases have occurred for Hispanic students (from 63 percent to 74 percent for the same period); Black students (from 70 percent to 79 percent); and Multi-Ethnic students (from 78 percent to 88 percent). Science scores also showed consistent gains over the five-year period for all student subgroups, with most notable gains by Hispanic students (35 percent) and Black students (31 percent). Scores for students qualifying as “English Language Learners” increased thirty-two (32) percent over the same five-year period.

Three Cobb schools saw more than 95 percent of students pass all portions of the GHSGT (see Table IV). At Walton High School, more than 80 percent of the students reached the more advanced Pass Plus proficiency level in all four content areas. Lassiter and Pope high schools both had more than 75 percent of their students achieve the Pass Plus level in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. And 77 percent of students at Harrison achieved Pass Plus status in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. (See Table II).

Students take the GHSGT for the first time in the spring of the 11th grade. Schools use the results to identify students who need additional instruction in the academic content determined by Georgia educators as necessary for a high school diploma. Students who do not succeed on their first attempt have four additional opportunities to meet the standards prior to completing 12th grade.

The English/Language Arts and Science portions of GHSGT are based on the new Georgia Performance Standards curriculum rather than the previous Quality Core Curriculum. As with any new assessment, a period of adjustment is often reflected in the mean scale scores and passing rates. The GPS assessments are of a higher caliber and are based on performance standards.

As part of the statewide testing program, 11th grade students are administered the GHSGT each spring. They are tested in four subject areas — English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science — and must pass each section to earn a Georgia high school diploma. In Mathematics and Social Studies, scores range from 400-600, with 500 as a passing score; in English/Language Arts and Science scores range from 100 to 300 with 200 as a passing score. Results for the system, state, metro area (RESA— Regional Educational Service Agencies) and individual schools are listed in Table I.

The English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science portions of the Georgia High School Graduation Test were administered to all 11th graders in March. Students have four opportunities to pass each section of the test before graduation.

Tables IIIA - IIID provide program summary data for each content area tested.

###
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*New school 2008-2009

** RESA (Regional Educational Service Agencies): Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Atlanta City, Buford City, Decatur City and Marietta City.
# COBB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION TESTS

### GRADE 11 1ST-TIME TEST TAKERS

**PERCENTAGES FOR PASS PLUS (Math and Social Studies), ADVANCED PROFICIENT AND HONORS (English and Science)**

**SPRING 2009**

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**RESA (Regional Educational Service Agencies):** Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Atlanta City, Buford City, Decatur City and Marietta City

Data Source: Content Area Summary Reports

Prepared by the Office of Accountability
## Table III A

### Georgia High School Graduation Test Program Summary

#### Spring 2009

#### Grade 11 1st-time Test Takers

#### English/Language Arts

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TFC = fewer than 10 students tested

Data Source: Student Classification Reports
Prepared by the Office of Accountability
## Mathematics

### Table III B

#### Grade 11 1st-time Test Takers

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TFC = fewer than 10 students tested

Data Source: Student Classification Reports

Prepared by the Office of Accountability
# Social Studies

## Grade 11 1st-time Test Takers

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**Data Source:** Student Classification Reports  
**Prepared by the Office of Accountability**
### Program Summary
**Spring 2009**
**Grade 11 1st-time Test Takers**

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**TFC = fewer than 10 students tested**

Data Source: Student Classification Report
Prepared by the Office of Accountability
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TFC = fewer than 10 students tested

Data Source: Student Classification Reports
Prepared by the Office of Accountability
Georgia law (O.C.G.A. §20-2-281 G, (a) mandates that a “curriculum-based assessment be administered in grade 11 for graduation purposes” and (c) “that the State Board of Education shall have the authority to condition the awarding of a high school diploma to a student upon achievement of satisfactory scores on instruments or tests adopted and administered by the State board pursuant to (a) of this code.” The law further provides opportunities for students with disabilities “to take any test adopted by the State Board as a condition for awarding of a high school diploma” and to receive accommodations specified in their IEP as necessary for participation.

The Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) assesses only a sample of the knowledge and skills that educators agree comprise a complete high school education. Georgia students have opportunities to learn – and are expected to master – much more than the tests address. The state adopted curriculum is the source of the knowledge and skills assessed on the graduation tests.

Students take the GHSGT for the first time in the spring of the 11th grade. Schools use the results to identify students who need additional instruction in the academic content determined by Georgia educators as necessary for a high school diploma. Students who do not succeed on their first attempt have four additional opportunities to meet the standards prior to completing 12th grade.

Tests based solely on the Georgia Performance standards (GPS) were administered in English Language Arts and Science to grade 11 first time test takers in the Spring 2009 Administration. New cut scores, new scale scores, and new performance descriptions were established for these tests. Comparisons cannot be drawn between ELA and Science GPS scores and older QCC scores.

Grade 11 first time test takers also took a Social Studies test dually aligned to the GPS and the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) and a Math test based on the older QCC. Both Social Studies and Math were scored and equated to the QCC score scale. These tests can be compared to tests from previous years.

The percentage of students passing the Mathematics portion of the 2009 GHSGT administration increased by seven (7) percentage points from the previous year for Special Education students. Regular Program students’ scores increased by 1 percentage point, and scores for English Language Learners was thirteen (13) percentage points higher than the previous year. The Math mean scale score for Regular Program students (544) reflects an increase of one (1) point. Special Education students and English Language learners each scored an average 520, an increase of five (5) points for both subgroups from 2008. Over the last five years, the percentage passing for Multi Ethnic students increased by 6 percentage points; for Native Americans students the percent passing decreased by 5 percentage points; and for African-American and Hispanic students the percent passing increased by 4 percentage point and 7 percentage points respectively.

In Social Studies the percentage of Regular Program students passing decreased from 2008 to 2009, (-1%), Special Education students (+5) and for English Language Learners (+7). The percent passing for all ethnic groups remained constant or increased by seven percentage points (+7) from 2008 to this year. Native Americans students showed the biggest gain among ethnic subgroups taking the Social Studies test, with a year-to-year increase of 7%.
KEY FINDINGS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

- A total of 6,756 Regular Program Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the ELA test. **Ninety-four (94) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **246**. This is **higher than the previous year’s scale score of 242**.

- A total of 575 Special Education Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the ELA test. **Seventy-six (76) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **218**. The percent of **special education students passing in 2008 was 75%, with a scale score of 216**.

- A total of 174 English Language Learner Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the ELA test. **Sixty-three (63) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **205**. Last year, **59% of the English language learners met the passing standard** with a scale score of **202**.

**MATHEMATICS**

- A total of 6,777 Regular Program Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Mathematics test. **Ninety-eight (98) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **544**. This number reflects a **higher scale score than achieved in 2008 by one point, as well as an increase of one percentage point in the number of students passing**.

- A total of 576 Special Education Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Mathematics test. **Eighty-four (84) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **520**. The percentage of students passing **increased seven percent** and the scale score was **five points higher than the 2008 score of 515**.

- A total of 180 English Language Learner Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Mathematics test. **Eighty-eight percent met the passing standard** with a mean scale score of **520**. The percentage of students passing **increased by thirteen percentage points** while the mean scale score **increased by five points from the previous year**.

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

- A total of 6,749 Regular Program Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Social Studies test. **Ninety-two (92) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **527**. The percentage of students passing **decreased by 1 percentage point** from the previous year, although the mean scale score showed an **increase from 2008 of 1 point**.

- A total of 569 Special Education Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Social Studies test. **Seventy-one (71) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **512**. The percentage of students passing **increase by 5 percentage points** from the previous year and the mean scale score showed an **increase from 2008 of 3 points**.

- A total of 175 English Language Learner Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Social Studies test. **Fifty-nine (59) percent** met the passing standard with a mean scale score of **504**. The percentage of students passing **increased by 7 percentage points** from the previous year while the mean scale score **increased from 2008 of 3 points**.
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<td>o A total <strong>6,761</strong> of Regular Program Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Science test. <strong>Ninty-three (93) percent</strong> met the passing standard with a mean scale score of <strong>243</strong>. The average scale score remained unchanged from 2008.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o A total of <strong>575</strong> Special Education Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Science test. <strong>Seventy-one (71) percent</strong> met the passing standard with a mean scale score of <strong>219</strong>. The <strong>percentage of students passing increased by 2 points</strong> over the previous year, and the average <strong>scale score increased by 5 points</strong>.</td>
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<td>o A total of <strong>182</strong> English Language Learner Grade 11 First-time Test Takers took the Science test. <strong>Fifty-seven (57) percent</strong> met the passing standard with a mean scale score of <strong>208</strong>. The average <strong>scale score is 3 points higher</strong> than last year, and the number of students meeting passing standards is <strong>7 points higher than last year</strong>.</td>
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Table 1
GHSGT English Language Arts, Percent Passing and Five Year Gain Scores by Group, 2005 - 2009

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<td>99%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Ethnic</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gain Score is calculated as [Percent Passing for 2009 – Percent Passing for 2005] and is reported as percentage point increase.
Figure 2
Percent Grade 11 First-time Test Takers Passing GHSGT Mathematics, Spring Administration 2005 - 2009

Table 2
GHSGT Mathematics, Percent Passing and Five Year Gain Scores by Group, 2005 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Category</th>
<th>Test Year</th>
<th>Gain Scores*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Regular Program, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>97% 97% 97% 97% 98%</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Special Education, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>75% 75% 77% 77% 84%</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 ELL, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>77% 72% 74% 75% 88%</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Test Takers by Ethnic Group:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>98% 98% 98% 98% 98%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>86% 85% 86% 87% 90%</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>84% 85% 85% 86% 91%</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>91% 86% 80% 85% 86%</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>97% 97% 97% 97% 99%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Ethnic</td>
<td>92% 91% 92% 98% 98%</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gain Score is calculated as [Percent Passing for 2009 – Percent Passing for 2005] and is reported as percentage point increase.
Figure 3
Percent Grade 11 First-time Test Takers Passing GHSGT Social Studies, Spring Administration 2005-2009

![Bar chart showing percent grade 11 first-time test takers passing GHSGT Social Studies, Spring Administration 2005-2009.](chart)

Table 3
GHSGT Social Studies, Percent Passing and Five Year Gain Scores by Group, 2005-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Category</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>Gain Scores*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Regular Program, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Special Education, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 ELL, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Test Takers by Ethnic Group:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Ethnic</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gain Score is calculated as [Percent Passing for 2009 – Percent Passing for 2005] and is reported as percentage point increase.
Table 4
GHSGT Science, Percent Passing and Five Year Gain Scores by Group, 2005 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Category</th>
<th>Test Year</th>
<th>Gain Scores*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Regular Program, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Special Education, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 ELL, First-time Test Takers</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Test Takers by Ethnic Group:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Ethnic</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gain Score is calculated as [Percent Passing for 2009 – Percent Passing for 2005] and is reported as percentage point increase.