

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

GEORGIA

*This profile was verified by the staff of the Georgia Department of Education in June/July 2000.
All information was current as of that date.*

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.

Georgia's testing programs provide a comprehensive perspective of students' educational achievement from kindergarten through high school. School law code 20-2-281 requires an assessment program that includes both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced instruments to determine educational effectiveness. As noted in the code, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests provide different types of information about student achievement.

On November 13, 1997, the State Board of Education adopted the **Quality Core Curriculum (QCC)** as revised by a committee of Georgia educators and citizens. Georgia law requires that the State Board of Education contract for the development of criterion-referenced tests based on the revised QCC. The **Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT)**, scheduled for implementation in the spring 2000, are a direct result of this mandate.

In the spring of 2000, the Georgia legislature passed **House Bill 1187**, otherwise known as the **A+ Education Reform Act**. This bill will substantially change accountability in Georgia, but also modifies the testing and reporting systems.

2. *What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:*

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)* A number of statewide assessments are administered in Georgia: The Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program-Revised (GKAP-R), Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), Writing Assessments, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT).
- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested*
 - **GKAP-R:** Kindergarten performance-based diagnostic assessment
 - **ITBS:** Grades 3, 5, and 8, with local option for additional grades. Testing in the following subjects: vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage and expression, reference materials, mathematics computation, mathematics concepts and estimation, mathematics problem solving and data interpretation, social studies, science, maps and diagrams. (Please note that as of May 2000, the NRT for 2001 administration will be the Stanford-9 not the ITBS)
 - **Writing Assessments:** Grades 3 and 5
 - **Middle Grades Writing Assessment:** Grade 8
 - **Georgia High School Writing Test:** Grade 11
 - **Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT):** Grade 11 and re-test in Grade 12, as necessary. Testing in the following areas: writing, English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, science.
 - **Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT):** Grades 4, 6, 8 in Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics (implemented in 2000); grades 3-8 in Science (to be implemented in 2002); and grades 3-8 in Social Studies (to be implemented in 2002)
- *Norm or Criterion Referenced* All assessments are criterion-referenced with the exception of the norm-referenced ITBS.
- *Matrix or Census Testing* Census. However, the pilot and field tests of the CRCTs are stratified random samples (volunteer only) – operational tests are census in public school systems.
- *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.*
 - ITBS: multiple choice
 - Writing assessments: (grade 3) representative samples of student writing, (grade 5) writing prompt
 - GHSWT: writing prompt;
 - MGWA: writing prompt

- GHSGT: multiple choice
 - CRCT: multiple choice, constructed response, performance-based, and problem simulations
- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)*
 - GKAP: 3 windows August-September, January-February, March-April
 - ITBS: mid-March and mid-April
 - Writing assessments: January
 - GHSWT: October, March/April, August
 - MGWA: January
 - GHSGT: September, November/December, March/April, August
 - CRCT: April-May
- *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)* All students in Georgia must pass the Georgia High School Graduation Tests in order to receive a high school diploma. These tests are administered in English language arts, mathematics, writing (the GHSWT), social studies, and science. Students take the graduation tests for the first time in their junior year. Students have five opportunities to take each of the tests before the end of the 12th grade. Students who do not pass all the required tests but have met all other graduation requirements may be eligible for a Certificate of Performance or a Special Education Diploma. Students who have left school with a Certificate of Performance or a Special Education Diploma may return to attempt the graduation test(s) again, as often as they need to in order to qualify for a high school diploma. Exceptions may be made for certain students identified as students with disabilities or limited English proficient.
- *Other Assessments* PSAT, NAEP, SAT, AP
 - *Transitional or Final Assessment System* Final assessment system, but modifications are anticipated.
3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state?*
- *State Department of Education*
 - *Commercial Testing Organization*
 - *State teachers and administrators*
 - *Assessment Committee*
 - *Other*

State assessments are developed by commercial testing organizations. However, Georgia educators have played a vital role in the development of the assessment program. Educators provide important input into the program intent as well as reviewing and guiding every stage of the test development process.

4. *What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?*

There are no state requirements for local assessment. However, districts may be granted a waiver for administering the CRCTs if their own assessments are aligned with the QCC and they surpass the state standards. However, the determination that local assessments surpass the QCC is not empirically derived, so this assertion must be regarded with caution.

5. Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned? Probe on:

- *Refining standards*
 - *Revamping assessments*
 - *Adding components to assessments*
- What is the timeline for completion of the alignment?*

The Georgia Department of Education crafts RFPs (Request for Proposal) to ensure that all criterion-referenced assessments directly measure the state's mandated curriculum (Quality Core Curriculum – QCC). The assessment design specifications for both the CRCT and the GHSQT were synthesized from multiple sources of data, which include, but are not limited to, broad-based input from educators, parents, Dept. of Education personnel, State Board of Education, and legislation – Georgia code (Section 20-2-281). Educators/teachers were involved in all aspects of assessment development (e.g., test blueprints, performance level descriptors, item writing and review). The Georgia Department of Education contracts with testing organizations for the development of the state's assessment programs. From the outset, and throughout the assessment development process, the Georgia Department of Education and Georgia educators worked closely with the contractors.

6. What is the state's approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?

Georgia teachers helped develop test items and reviewed them for alignment with the state curriculum.

7. How is the data included in the state assessment system used?

- *Student Grade Promotion/Retention, Graduation, Diploma Certification*
- *Teacher, School and/or District accountability*
- *Program Evaluation (Identify federal, state programs)*
- *Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.*
- *Instructional guidance to local administrators and/or teachers*
- *School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)*

The purpose of the CRCT is to measure student acquisition of the skills and knowledge described in the QCC. The assessments should yield information on academic achievement at the student, class, school, system, and state levels. This information will serve a dual purpose – diagnosis of individual student strengths and weaknesses as related to the instruction of the QCC, and program evaluation to gauge the quality of education throughout the state of Georgia.

8. *Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

The following changes are anticipated to the Georgia Assessment System:

- The Criterion Reference Competency Tests are to be administered in additional grades: English, language arts, math and reading will be assessed in grades 1-8. Science and social studies will be added for grades 3-8.
- The questions and answers for the end-of-course and criterion reference competency tests are to be released each year.
- The High School Graduation Tests will be eliminated when the end of course tests are put in place.
- Any possible funding for locally developed assessments is eliminated.
- The State Board of Education may grant waivers until FY 2003 to local school boards exempting those boards from administration of the state criterion-referenced competency tests at any or all of the subject areas and grade levels for which the local school board implements locally developed criterion referenced competency tests based on the Quality Core Curriculum which increases expectations for student achievement beyond the state criterion reference competency tests.
- Local boards of education shall have the option of allowing scores on end-of-course assessments to be counted as part of a student's grade in the course.
- The State Board may waive for a period of three years the participation of local systems which have in place a system of tests that go beyond the State mandates
- As of May 2000, the NRT for 2001 administration will be the Stanford-9 not the ITBS.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.*

Georgia officials did not identify any issues or challenges at this time.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. *What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?*

Policies concerning students with disabilities: Georgia test procedure materials note that students with disabilities, under the IDEA and Section 504, must be allowed to participate in statewide assessment activities. It also mandates that the IEP include a statement of participation and accommodations needed in the administration of state or district-wide assessments. If the IEP team determines that the student will not participate in a particular state or district-wide assessment, the team must provide a statement indicating why the assessment is not appropriate and how the student will be assessed.

For students who are receiving instruction based on Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), the IEP team should consider full participation by the student in statewide assessments. The IEP

team should also consider what accommodations, if any, are needed by the student to facilitate his/her performance on the assessment. It should also be remembered that any accommodations recommended by a student's IEP team should be consistent with the adaptations or accommodations used in the student's instructional program. For some students, the IEP team might determine that a student's participation in the statewide assessments, even with accommodations, is not appropriate. In such a case, the IEP team must document why the statewide assessment is not appropriate and identify how the student will be assessed.

Policies concerning students with limited English proficiency: Local school systems shall offer all students who have been identified as Limited English Proficient the opportunity of taking tests in order to have the test information available for diagnostic and instructional planning.

LEP students shall participate in all state assessments unless the school and the parent(s) or guardian(s) agree it is not in the best interest of the student to participate at this time. The decision to exclude an LEP student shall be stated in writing with justification.

LEP students shall participate in the graduation assessment unless the school and parent(s) or guardian(s) agree it is not in the best interest of the student to participate in the current administration. The decision not to test shall be reviewed before each administration period. The decision to exclude an LEP student shall be stated in writing with justification. When this exclusion involves the graduation assessment, the signature of a parent or legal guardian and/or the student, if 18 years old or older, shall be required. Documentation of this decision shall become a part of the student's record. However, the LEP student must pass the graduation assessment in order to be eligible for a regular high school diploma.

2. What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?

Examples of types of permissible accommodations:

Setting Accommodations:

- Individual testing
- Small-group testing
- Study carrel
- Special lighting
- Adaptive or special furniture
- Special acoustics

Timing/Scheduling Accommodations:

- Extended time
- Flexible schedule
- Frequent breaks during testing
- Frequent breaks during selected subtests
- Specific time of day
- Subtests in different sequence

Presentation Accommodations:

- Audio tape
- Braille edition of test
- Fewer items per page
- Key words or phrases in highlighted directions
- Sign language directions to student
- Read directions to student
- Provision of additional examples
- Templates to reduce visible print

Response Accommodations

- Student marking in test booklet
- Student use of Braille
- Use of word processor (not for writing assessments)
- Use of communication device (not for writing assessments)

3. Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?

No, Georgia does not provide statewide assessments in languages other than English.

4. Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?

In Georgia, the IEP Alternate Assessment is the alternate assessment procedure for the statewide assessment program. The IEP Alternate Assessment procedure provides for sampling and reporting student progress based on IEP goals and objectives. The IEP Alternate Assessment will have IEP teams identify priority objectives, monitor progress on those objectives and report end-of-year status of the selected objectives. The IEP Alternate Assessment will allow the Georgia Department of Education to count the number of students with disabilities who participate in this form of alternate assessment and to report the results.

5. Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?

Yes, Georgia guidelines reaffirm commitment to the IDEA provisions for full inclusion of all students on statewide assessments.

6. Are changes planned in the for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

The most imminent change regarding the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the full implementation of the IEP Alternate Assessment Guidelines.

Performance Standards

1. How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?

The CRCT (Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests) in Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics -- grades 4, 6, and 8 were administered for the first time in the spring of 2000. Three performance levels and 2 cut scores were set by Georgia educators for the CRCT (pending approval). It was determined that students' test performance will be described in terms of **"meeting the standard"** established for the test, **"exceeding the standard"** or **"not meeting the standard."** The performance level descriptions were written with direct input from Georgia educators and are reflective of the knowledge, skills, and performances expected of students in grades 4, 6, and 8. The descriptions were written to encompass expectations taken directly from the Quality Core Curriculum. (NOTE: The performance standards and descriptions will not be available until late summer/early fall -- pending department approval).

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures (e.g. 70% of students in Maryland pass the MSPAP)?

- *Target level*
- *Percentage of students expected to attain target level*
- *Time period in which to attain level*
- *Annual increase required*

With the exception of Title I, on which details are provided below, Georgia does not have any set acceptable levels of performance for schools, districts, or the state on any measures. However, the new accountability system, legislated by HB 1187 will alter this situation.

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

The performance level described in question 1 are based on criterion-referenced assessment data. The accountability system is under development, hence the final unit of analysis for performance standards is not yet identified.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

Not currently applicable.

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

The system of performance standards based on the CRCTs is being developed as the assessment system is phased in.

6. *What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?*

Not currently applicable

Reporting Performance Data

1. *Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:*

- *Student reports*

With regard to student reports, Georgia reporting guidelines specify: written information should be mailed to parent(s)/guardian(s) or given at a parent-teacher conference. The information should explain simply what tests are being given, how the tests differ from last year, what they measure and when the tests will be given. An explanation of the purpose of the testing program, how the test results will be used, and how the scores are interpreted should be included in this information. Use simple language – avoid jargon – to explain the results. If you use terms like stanine, percentile or grade equivalent, be sure the parent(s)/guardian(s) understand(s) what you mean.

- *School reports*

Georgia prepares two kinds of school reports: the **Public Education Report Card**, and the **Public Education Report Card for Parents**. Each report contains slightly different information, and each is accessible on the State education website.

Georgia Public Education Report Card for Parents contains the following information (most reported by both school and state):

- ✓ Student enrollment
- ✓ Faculty with Master's degree
- ✓ Student eligible to receive free/reduced lunch
- ✓ Dropout rates for Grades 9-12
- ✓ Accreditation information
- ✓ Awards/Recognition
- ✓ Graduates by Credentials (i.e. diploma seals)
- ✓ HOPE Scholarships
- ✓ Graduates attending Georgia Public Colleges
- ✓ Placement in Learning Support
- ✓ Graduates in Georgia Public Technical and Adult Schools
- ✓ Percent of Regular Program 11th Graders Passing the Georgia High School Graduation Tests First Time by school, system and state.
- ✓ SAT results by subject, school, system, state, and nation
- ✓ ACT results by school, system, state, and nation
- ✓ AP results by school, system, and state

Information on the parents' report is supplemented by explanations of the testing program, graduation requirements, and how other indicators are calculated.

The Public Education Report Card includes:

- ✓ Enrollment by race/ethnicity (Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Multi-Racial) and gender
- ✓ Enrollment in selected programs: gifted, non-vocational labs, vocational labs, alternative programs
- ✓ Enrollment in compensatory programs: special education, ESOL, remedial education, Title I
- ✓ Students eligible to receive free/reduced lunch
- ✓ Dropout rate
- ✓ Retained students by race/ethnicity and gender
- ✓ Percent of Regular program 11th graders passing the Georgia High School Graduation Tests on First Administration, by school, system, and state for past three years
- ✓ Graduates by Credentials, race/ethnicity, and gender
- ✓ HOPE scholarships
- ✓ High School Completion Rate
- ✓ SAT results by school/diploma type, subject, system, and nation
- ✓ ACT results by subject, composite, school, system, and state
- ✓ AP exams by school, system, and state
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public colleges by school and system
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public colleges requiring Learning Support
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public technical and adult schools
- ✓ Certified Personnel data
- ✓ Accreditation data
- ✓ Awards/Recognition data

- *District reports*

Districts reports include the following information:

- ✓ Enrollment by race/ethnicity (Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Multi-Racial) and gender
- ✓ Enrollment in selected programs: gifted, non-vocational labs, vocational labs, alternative programs
- ✓ Enrollment in compensatory programs: special education, ESOL, remedial education, Title I
- ✓ Students eligible to receive free/reduced lunch
- ✓ Dropout rate
- ✓ Retained students by race/ethnicity and gender
- ✓ ITBS results by grade, subject, percentile, system, and state, for three years
- ✓ Writing assessment results by grade, writing proficiency stage, system comparison group, state, for three years.
- ✓ Percent of Regular program 11th graders passing the Georgia High School Graduation Tests on First Administration, by system, and state for past three years
- ✓ Graduates by Credentials, race/ethnicity, and gender
- ✓ HOPE scholarships
- ✓ High School Completion Rate
- ✓ SAT results by diploma type, subject, system, and nation

- ✓ ACT results by subject, composite, system, and state
- ✓ AP exams by system and state
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public colleges by system and state
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public colleges requiring Learning Support
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public technical and adult schools
- ✓ Accreditation data
- ✓ Awards/Recognition data
- ✓ Community data (at-risk, unemployment, income, migrant, etc)
- ✓ K-12 revenues and expenditures
- ✓ Salaries and benefits as percentages of revenues and expenditures
- ✓ Certified Personnel data

- *State reports*

The state report includes the following data:

- ✓ Enrollment by race/ethnicity (Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Multi-Racial) and gender
- ✓ Enrollment in selected programs: gifted, non-vocational labs, vocational labs, alternative programs
- ✓ Enrollment in compensatory programs: special education, ESOL, remedial education, Title I
- ✓ Students eligible to receive free/reduced lunch
- ✓ Dropout rate
- ✓ Retained students by race/ethnicity and gender
- ✓ ITBS results by grade, subject, percentile, for three years
- ✓ Writing assessment results by grade, writing proficiency stage, state, for three years.
- ✓ Percent of Regular program 11th graders passing the Georgia High School Graduation Tests on First Administration, for past three years
- ✓ Graduates by Credentials, race/ethnicity, and gender
- ✓ HOPE scholarships
- ✓ High School Completion Rate
- ✓ SAT results by diploma type, subject, state and nation
- ✓ ACT results by subject, composite, and state
- ✓ AP exams participation and results
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public colleges by system and state
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public colleges requiring Learning Support
- ✓ Graduates entering Georgia public technical and adult schools
- ✓ Accreditation data
- ✓ Awards/Recognition data
- ✓ Community data (at-risk, unemployment, income, migrant, etc)
- ✓ K-12 revenues and expenditures
- ✓ Salaries and benefits as percentages of revenues and expenditures
- ✓ Certified Personnel data

- *Title I reports*

Georgia produces a Title I report in accordance with federal regulations with information on participating schools and students, disaggregated assessment results, etc.

2. *How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?*

The Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 has requirements with regard to the dissemination of achievement and other educational data: each local school system must annually inform the citizens residing within its area concerning the collective achievement of enrolled students by school and system. In addition, educators need to work closely with media representatives to provide the public with accurate and complete information about schools. Georgia provides guidelines for effectively communicating academic information, which include:

- ✓ Brief the news media at the beginning of the school year to explain the testing program
- ✓ Provide the media with a written report explaining the tests, what they measure, when they will be administered and to which grades.
- ✓ When results are in, hold a news conference or briefing to explain results
- ✓ When explaining your scores, avoid testing jargon

3. *At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)?*

HB 1187 requires that overall student performance data be disaggregated by ethnicity, sex, socioeconomic status, disability, language proficiency, grade level, subject area, school, and district. However, this data is not routinely included in public reports. Disaggregated information in public reports focuses on enrollment in special programs and type of diploma received.

4. *Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from “1996-97 on”)?*

Georgia reports generally contain three years of trend data. However, trend data is not available for the CRCT assessments, as they are relatively new.

5. *How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?*

If students participate in state assessments – including students with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency – their results are aggregated in performance reports. However, with regard to the High School Graduation Tests, only the performance of students enrolled in regular programs are reported. At this point, disaggregated scores for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency are not reported.

6. *What are the state’s requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?*

Currently, school and district improvement plans are not required; participation in school improvement initiatives is on a voluntary basis. Hence, there are no requirements for the use of

data in the planning process, although changes are anticipated with the implementation of HB 1187.

7. Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?

HB 1187 includes provisions with regard to performance reporting. Specifically, an Education Information Steering Committee is to be established. The steering committee shall develop a design for a statewide comprehensive education information system which will provide for the accurate, seamless, and timely flow of information from local and regional education agencies, units of the university system, and technical schools and colleges to the state. This committee will establish the specifications for a statewide student information system to be created by 2003.

8. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.

The current challenge facing Georgia is the development of performance standards as they apply to schools, in accordance with HB 1187.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.

At the moment, Georgia has a fairly minimal accountability system, limited to student accountability and voluntary school accountability. However, HB 1187, or the A+ Education Reform Act will substantially modify accountability in Georgia, implementing a system of school grades (A through F), based on school performance on statewide assessments and improvement on these assessments.

2. What are the characteristics of the state accountability system?

- *Who is held accountable (students, schools, districts)?*
- *For what are they held accountable (adequate yearly progress, student achievement, processes, multiple non-cognitive indicators, etc)?*
- *Using what criteria (state assessments, local assessments, both state and local criteria)?*
- *To what targets or performance levels?*
- *With what consequences (promotion or graduation, program improvement, additional planning, state takeover, rewards, assistance, etc.)?*

Organize the response into the following subsections:

- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

All students in Georgia must pass the Georgia High School Graduation Tests in order to receive a high school diploma. These tests are administered in English language arts, mathematics, writing (the GHSWT), social studies, and science. Students take the graduation tests for the first time in their junior year. Students have five opportunities to take each of the tests before the end of the 12th grade. Students who do not pass all the required tests but have met all other

graduation requirements may be eligible for a Certificate of Performance or a Special Education Diploma. Students who have left school with a Certificate of Performance or a Special Education Diploma may return to attempt the graduation test(s) again, as often as they need to in order to qualify for a high school diploma.

In addition, students may opt for four different diploma seals:

- 1) College Preparatory – this program of study requires 22 Carnegie units as specified by the State Board of Education
- 2) College Preparatory with Distinction – this program of study requires 24 Carnegie units and a grade-point average of 3.0 or above on a four-point scale or 80 numeric grade-point average or above as specified by the State Board of Education.
- 3) Technology/Career Preparatory Program – this program requires 22 Carnegie units as specified by the State Board of Education
- 4) Technology/Career Preparatory with Distinction – this program of study requires 24 Carnegie units and a grade point average in the Core Courses of 3.0 or above on a four-point scale or 80 numeric grade point average as specified by the State Board of Education.

- *School Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

In Georgia, there is little in the form of school accountability at present. However, when recent legislation (HB 1187) is implemented, Georgia will have an accreditation system based on the school level. Information on HB1187 is provided in the response to question 8 of this section.

Schools in Georgia are eligible for certain rewards or recognition. For example, districts may nominate three of their schools for the Schools of Excellence designation. Nominated schools must complete a self-assessment that focuses on the following categories:

- Student Focus and Support
- School Organization and Culture
- Challenging Standards and Curriculum
- Active Teaching and Learning
- Professional Community
- Leadership and Educational Vitality
- School, Family, and Community Partnerships
- Indicators of Success

In addition, schools in Georgia may be voluntarily accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, or private organization such as the Georgia Christian Schools Association. The Georgia Accrediting Commission accredits schools with the following designations:

- AWQ - Accredited With Quality
- ACC - Accredited
- PROV - Provisionally Accredited
- PREP - Preparation.

- *District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

There are no district accountability policies in place.

3. *What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?*

- *Relative growth*
- *Absolute target*
- *Narrowing the Gap between high and low achievers*

This is not currently applicable. However, Georgia's new accountability system will measure both overall performance level and relative growth.

4. *Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?*

The manner in which students with disabilities and limited English proficiency students will be included in the calculations of the new accountability system has not yet been determined.

5. *How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?*

At present, there is little in terms of state accountability in Georgia, aside from the public reporting of education data, voluntary accreditation, and self-identification as in need of improvement.

6. *Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?*

Subgroup performance results are not used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures.

7. *Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?*

Charter schools are included in the reporting system. Under HB 1187, charter schools will be subject to accountability

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

The state will establish an Office of Education Accountability that will issue annual report cards on all schools in Georgia. Each school will receive two student achievement grades each year. These will be letter grades of A, B, C, D, or F on two scales. The first scale will be a grade for a school's performance on an absolute student achievement standards (a compilation of all student test scores for that school). The second scale will be a grade for a school's improvement on student achievement from the previous year's school student achievement performance. These two grades will determine the status of the school and determine what level of financial reward is

provided to teachers or what level of intervention may be imposed on schools that receive grades of D or F.

For each A grade a school receives, each certified staff person would receive a \$1,000 annual bonus. For each B grade a school receives, each certified staff person will receive a \$500 annual bonus. Therefore, financial rewards will range from \$2,000 to \$500 for teachers and instructional personnel. The school will also receive a lump sum of \$10,000 for each A grade and \$5,000 for each B grade to be distributed by the local school council to the non-certified personnel in the school. A school that receives two A grades would receive a \$20,000 annual bonus.

The Georgia Department of Education will have school improvement teams made up of master educators, both actively employed and retired, to be assigned to low performing schools to help assess the situation, review school procedures, review the curriculum and staff performance, observe the professional and staff development plan, assist in the development of a student achievement improvement plan and work with the newly created local school council to recommend changes and strategies for improvement. These school improvement teams will be experienced and knowledgeable educators who will provide a focus on the particular problems a school is confronting, and will recommend potential improvement strategies.

After three years of failing grades, particularly on the second grade of student achievement improvement, the State Board of Education can take severe intervention actions. These actions may include appointing a school management team to oversee the daily operation of the school; closing the school and allowing parents of students to choose another school in the district with the district paying the cost of transportation; reconstitution of the school; or opening a state charter school. There will be three years of school improvement team support and assistance before these drastic measures are taken.

9. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.

Implementing the new accountability system poses the most significant challenge for Georgia: developing the school grading system, developing appropriate technical assistance, formulating guidelines, and communicating changes to education stakeholders.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?

Currently, Georgia does not formally identify low-performing schools, with the exception of Title I. However, schools may receive school improvement assistance from the state on a voluntary basis. This action is not punitive, and is solely based on self-identification of schools.

2. Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?

Low-performing schools identify themselves and request assistance from the state.

3. *What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?*

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

All of the above types of assistance are available in Georgia; for details, please see below.

4. *Who provides the state assistance?*

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*
- *SDE staff*
- *Other – Explain*

In Georgia, the Department of Education, Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) Local School Systems collaborate to facilitate school improvement.

School Improvement Teams, organized by the Department of Education and the RESAs, provide services that encourage, facilitate and assist schools and systems in designing, implementing and evaluating efforts to improve student learning. Teams can assist in directing and facilitating local improvement efforts. Upon request, School Improvement Teams will provide the following services:

- Review local schools'/systems' requests for assistance.
- Screen requests to determine the appropriate response.
- Provide School Improvement Team leaders to serve as liaisons with schools/systems.
- Determine a course of action or plan for facilitating assistance to schools/systems by coordinating communication among DOE Divisions and RESAs and aligning, maintaining and promoting resources, innovations and services to meet the needs of schools. This may include forming a team of individuals from the department of education, RESAs, colleges/universities, the community and other leaders.

An important part of Georgia's comprehensive school improvement strategy is awarding grants for school improvement to local school systems and consortia of local school systems and RESAs. These competitive grants maintain the high degree of flexibility and the concept of local decision making that is the cornerstone of Georgia's school improvement initiatives. Planning grants, professional development grants, preservice education grants and implementation grants have been awarded. This program is supported through the use of funds provided through the United States Department of Education's Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

5. *Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?*

Support services for schools in need of improvement, be they Title I or non-Title I, come from the same sources: the RESAs, the Department of Education, and school improvement teams. Title I schools benefit from some additional sources of assistance, but in general the efforts are coordinated.

6. Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?

Not currently applicable.

7. Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?

Schools that request the assistance of a school improvement team complete a school improvement plan in cooperation with this group.

8. Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

HB 1187 includes provisions that would modify the system of technical support in Georgia:

As part of the assistance provided by a regional education service agency under this code section, each regional education service agency shall provide for the establishment of **instructional care teams**. Upon determining that a school under its management and control is consistently underperforming or is otherwise educationally challenged, a local board of education may request through a regional education service agency the appointment of an instructional care team for that school. The instructional care team shall consist of such numbers of persons and with such experience as a principal, teacher, or other education personnel so as to best address the needs of the school.

Such an instructional care team shall conduct an investigation into such aspects of instruction at the school as requested by the local board, shall prepare a written evaluation of such aspects of the school, and shall make nonbinding recommendations to the local board regarding improvements at the school. Such investigations, evaluations, and recommendations shall focus on but not be limited to instruction in mathematics, science, and reading and other English courses, and social studies. Instructional care teams may also provide long- and short-term follow-up assistance, such as but not limited to instruction, instructional assistance, and professional and staff development.

Each regional education service agency shall develop a registry or listing of potential instructional care team members, together with their area of expertise, which may be available to members or non-member school systems for service on instructional care teams. Subject to appropriation by the General Assembly, regional education service agencies may be provided grants for the purpose of facilitating the development and implementation of instructional care teams.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. *What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?*

- *What measures are used (relationship between cognitive/non-cognitive data)?*
- *What targets have been established?*
- *Are local assessment systems included as criteria? If so, does the state provide guidance? Monitor their use?*
- *Is subgroup performance included in the criteria?*

The criteria that are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress in Georgia is shifting away from norm-referenced assessments to criterion-referenced tests. In the past, Georgia used the ITBS tests, the Kindergarten assessment, and the High School Graduation Tests to determine adequate yearly progress. Local assessment systems and subgroup performance were not included in the definition. The targets established varied by school level.

In the future, Georgia plans to rely on the new CRCT assessments for the purposes of determining adequate yearly progress.

2. *What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:*

- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools*
- *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools*
- *Districts*

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

During the academic year 1998-99, schools were identified as making adequate yearly progress using the ITBS scores for grades 3, 5, and 8. Adequate yearly progress was defined as an 8% “move-out” from the 1997-98 academic year low interval. The low interval was the percentage of students who performed below the 40th NPR (equivalently an NCE score of 44 or less). This interval is referred to as the "Less than Proficient" category.

For preK-2, the criteria was met if 40% of the students served met the three standards of the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Test. For high schools, the criteria was met if 85% of students served passed the English portion of the Georgia High School Graduation Test and 75% passed the math portion.

However, note that these definitions are being phased out as the new CRCT assessments are implemented and as the new accountability system is developed. Calculations for 1999-2000 data will be conducted when the new definition of adequate yearly progress is finalized at the end of the summer, 2000.

3. *What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?*

The state tabulates the assessment results at the state level and produces a list of those schools and districts that did not make adequate yearly progress and those in need of improvement.

4. What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?

The state is responsible for identifying schools and districts that are in need of improvement.

Schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress targets for two consecutive years and LEAs that have 50% or more Title I schools in need of improvement for two consecutive years are considered to be in need of improvement. Schools and LEAs must make AYP for two out of the next three years to be removed from the “in need of improvement” list.

Schools and districts in need of improvement are required to adopt plans with assistance from the Georgia Department of Education Title I staff to provide corrective action to address weaknesses identified in the evaluation.

5. What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

Georgia Title I schools may receive all of the above types of assistance. For details, please see below.

6. Who provides the assistance?

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*
- *SDE staff*

For those schools and LEAs in need of improvement, Georgia provides technical assistance with 16 regional School Improvement Specialists and 8 Title I Program Specialists. These Specialists work with local School Support Teams to assess a school's needs and develop strategies for addressing those needs. The Title I system of support overlaps a great deal with the general state system for supporting low performing schools.

The Georgia DOE also has a separate state-funded School Improvement Team that supports low-performing non-Title I schools. Also, a new state law provides for additional team support, but it is unclear how that will evolve in relation to the needs of Title I schools.

7. Have waivers played a role in this process?

There are two types of waivers available to and used by Title I schools and LEAs in Georgia. The schoolwide program waiver is submitted and granted by the U.S. Department of Education,

whereas requests for waivers of the 15% carryover rule are submitted and approved by the Georgia DOE. Neither waiver has played a significant role in the Georgia Title I Program.

8. Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

Georgia is in the process of transitioning to its final assessment system, which is due to the U.S. Department of Education in October 2000. The definition of AYP will be determined in the summer of 2000 using test data from the recently prescribed criterion-referenced competency test.

9. Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?

At the moment, the Title I system is the only manner in which Georgia measures the academic progress of students.

10. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.

Georgia officials identified compliance with the U.S. Department of Education requirements for accommodating LEP students in their Final Assessment as a significant challenge. They note that the peer review guidance is ambiguous and inconsistent with other U.S. Department of Education guidance, including other Federal laws and regulations.

They also suggest the need for better lines of communication between U.S. Department of Education and the various state offices. They note that all too often the U.S. Department of Education issues non-regulatory guidance or directives without considering feedback from the states, which are affected.

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