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Cobb 11th Graders Score High Marks On Writing Test **Key subgroups show greatest improvement**

Cobb County 11th graders increased their average scale score by four points over last year on the 2008 Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSWT), easily outperforming their peers in metro Atlanta and across the state. In addition, 95 percent of the 7,300 Cobb County students who took the test either met or exceeded standards. Perhaps most significantly, two key subgroups – Students With Disabilities (SWD) and English Language Learners (ELL) – showed remarkable improvement.

The test, which gauges writing skills considered essential for a high school diploma, was administered in early September 2008, with Cobb students attaining an average scale score of 225, two points higher than the average of metro area schools, and four points higher than the state average. The scale used to measure achievement ranges from 100 to 350, with a score of 200 as “meets expectations,” and 250 as “exceeds expectations” (See Table I).

Cobb County’s population of English Language Learners (ELL) and Students with Disabilities (SWD) performed particularly well on the writing test. Seventy-five percent of ELL students tested in Cobb County met or exceeded expectations, compared to just 65 percent across the state. In Cobb, the meeting and exceeding percentage for ELL students jumped a substantial 20 percent over last year. Meanwhile, the percentage of Cobb County Students with Disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations increased to 80 percent, up eight percentage points over last year and well above the state average of just 60 percent (see Table III). The performance of subgroups across Cobb County has been an ongoing concern, as well as a primary focus of the district’s coordinated plan to make Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Individual schools across the district also fared well on the 2008 writing test. At 15 of the district’s 17 high schools, 90 percent or more of the students met or exceeded expectations. Four district high schools – Hillgrove, Lassiter, Pope and Wheeler – led all others with 99 percent of students scoring at or above expectations, and Harrison and Walton students were close behind with 98 percent meeting or exceeding expectations (see Table I).

A passing score on the High School Graduation Test is one requirement for all students pursuing a high school diploma. The writing portion of the test was administered in September to Cobb County 11th grade

students who were required to write a persuasive paper on an assigned topic. The GHSWT is two hours in length, with 100 minutes of student writing time.

The GPS domains, or broad themes, covered by the writing test include *Ideas, Organization, Style, and Convention*. The *Ideas* domain measures the degree to which the writer establishes a controlling idea and elaborates the main points with examples, illustrations, facts or details. In the *Organization* domain, students are assessed on their ability to arrange ideas in a clear order consistent with the persuasive genre. *Style* points are awarded based on the writer's ability to control language and engage the reader. The *Conventions* domain measures the degree to which the writer demonstrates control of sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. Test scores are ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest. In each domain, Cobb 11th graders scored higher than their peers across the state (see Table II). Seven of the high schools across the district had domain scores that were consistently higher than averages for the district, metro area and state (see Table II).

"The writing test represents a critical skill for all students, so these results for Cobb County 11th graders are very encouraging," said Robert Benson, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for the District. "These improved scores likely are a reflection of the increased rigor we have worked into the curriculum. We are particularly pleased to see that the scores for our Students With Disabilities and English Language Learners showed such strong improvement."

In March, high school juniors will be tested on language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science portions of the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSWT). Students will have multiple opportunities to retake any portion(s) of the test they fail before graduation.

Cobb County School District
2008 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results
Grade 11 First Time Test Takers

TABLE I

	# Tested	Scale Score	% DNM*	% Meet*	% Exceed*	% Meets + Exceeds
Georgia	96425	221	9	83	8	91
Metro Area Districts	36254	223	7	84	9	93
Cobb	7309	225	5	84	11	95
SCHOOL RESULTS						
Allatoona	148	224	3	88	9	97
Campbell	382	221	9	81	10	91
Harrison	586	228	2	85	13	98
Hillgrove	506	224	1	91	8	99
Kell	441	224	3	89	8	97
Kennesaw Mountain	639	227	4	83	13	96
Lassiter	436	234	1	78	21	99
McEachern	497	217	8	87	4	91
North Cobb	629	222	5	87	8	95
Oakwood	23	210	17	83	0	83
Osborne	310	213	12	85	2	87
Pebblebrook	406	217	10	82	8	90
Pope	407	236	1	80	19	99
South Cobb	446	216	10	87	3	90
Sprayberry	382	223	4	86	10	96
Walton	635	235	2	77	21	98
Wheeler	434	229	1	84	15	99

* Percentage of students may not equal 100 due to rounding

ffc - Too few To count

** Data Not Available

Cobb County School District
2008 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results
Grade 11 First Time Test Takers

TABLE I

	Ideas (2)	Organization (1)	Style (1)	Conventions (1)
Georgia	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.3
Metro Area Districts	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3
Cobb	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.4
SCHOOL RESULTS				
Allatoona	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Campbell	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Harrison	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.6
Hillgrove	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.5
Kell	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.5
Kennesaw Mountain	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.5
Lassiter	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.8
McEachern	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2
North Cobb	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Oakwood	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.0
Osborne	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0
Pebblebrook	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1
Pope	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.8
South Cobb	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1
Sprayberry	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.4
Walton	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.8
Wheeler	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.6

Domains are weighted differently and range from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Weights are in parentheses.

Cobb County School District
2008 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results
Grade 11 First Time Test Takers

TABLE I

	Regular Ed		Special Ed		ELL	
	Mean SS	% Meet / Exceed	Mean SS	% Meet / Exceed	Mean SS	% Meet / Exceed
Georgia	NA**	91	NA**	60	NA**	65
Cobb	226	97	209	80	205	75
SCHOOL RESULTS						
Allatoona	226	99	211	82	NA**	NA**
Campbell	223	93	201	59	198	67
Harrison	229	99	212	86	NA**	NA**
Hillgrove	225	99	211	91	NA**	NA**
Kell	225	98	212	89	NA**	NA**
Kennesaw Mountain	229	98	204	76	NA**	NA**
Lassiter	236	99	219	95	NA**	NA**
McEachern	219	94	198	62	NA**	NA**
North Cobb	224	97	201	67	202	71
Oakwood	210	84	NA**	NA**	NA**	NA**
Osborne	215	92	198	50	209	83
Pebblebrook	218	91	205	79	203	70
Pope	238	100	221	93	NA**	NA**
South Cobb	218	92	196	66	199	46
Sprayberry	225	98	209	83	202	69
Walton	236	99	220	90	199	69
Wheeler	229	99	215	89	217	100