

For Immediate Release
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97 Percent of Cobb 11th Graders Meet or Exceed Expectations On State Writing Test

Ninety-seven percent of Cobb County 11th graders met or exceeded standards on the 2011 Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT), which gauges writing skills considered essential for a high school diploma. Cobb students' average scale score of 230 improves upon 2010 results and remains ahead of averages for the state (224) and metro Atlanta area (226). The scale used to measure achievement ranges from 100 to 350, with a score of 200 considered "meets expectations," and 250 considered "exceeds expectations." Fourteen percent of Cobb students exceeded expectations on the test, an increase of 4 percent over 2010 scores.

Cobb's population of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English Language Learners (ELL) also performed well on the writing test. The percentage of SWD meeting or exceeding standards was 84 percent, compared to just 66 percent of their peers statewide (see Table III). The percentage of ELL students in the district passing the writing test was 3 percent higher than in 2010, while the state average declined by 9 percent. Eighty-six percent of ELL students tested in the district met or exceeded expectations, compared to just 70 percent statewide. English Language Learners were the only student program group in the district to post a gain on the GHSWT.

All 16 Cobb high schools saw 90 percent or more of their students meet or exceed expectations; Allatoona, Harrison, Hillgrove, Lassiter, McEachern, Pope, Sprayberry, and Walton high schools each had 98 percent or more (see Table I). McEachern High School posted the largest gains of any school in the district, including a 2-percent increase in students achieving the "meets or exceeds" status in 2011.

A passing score on the High School Graduation Test is one requirement for all students pursuing a high school diploma. The two-hour GHSWT was administered in late September to 6,661 Cobb juniors and required students to write a persuasive paper on an assigned topic.

The Georgia Performance Standards (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

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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. Domain scores are ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest.

In each domain, Cobb students scored higher than their peers across the state (see Table II). Four of Cobb's high schools including Kell, Lassiter, Pope and Walton, had domain scores consistently higher than averages for the district, metro area and state (see Table II).

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COBB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

TESTING BRIEF

Georgia High School Writing Test
Fall 2011

Georgia law (O.C.G.A., Section 20-2-281) requires that writing assessments be administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven. The State Writing Assessment Core Development and Advisory Committees assisted the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) in developing the writing component of the student assessment program. The committees comprised of educators with expertise in the instruction of writing skills and writing assessments, consist of eight committees—a Core Development and Advisory Committee for each grade level (3, 5, 8, and 11). The goal of the Writing Assessment Core Development and Advisory Committees and the GaDOE is to create developmentally appropriate assessment procedures to enhance statewide instruction in the language arts. Statewide writing assessments serve the purpose of improving writing and writing instruction.

Students in the eleventh grade participate in the Georgia High School Writing Test and must pass the GHSWT to earn a regular education diploma. Students are asked to produce a response to one on-demand persuasive writing prompt.

The writing test requires students to produce a composition of no more than two pages on an assigned topic. The two-hour test administration includes 100 minutes of student writing time. The test is administered three times a year so that students have multiple opportunities to take the test before the end of the twelfth grade. The main administration of the GHSWT takes place in the fall of the eleventh grade year.

Results of the GHSWT are used to identify students who may need additional instruction in academic content and skills considered essential for a high school diploma.

At the district level, the percentage of students passing the test declined from 98% in 2010 to 97% this year. Ninety-eight (98) percent of Regular Education students scored at or above the expected level of proficiency, compared to 99% last year. Eighty-four percent of Special Education students taking the test scored at or above the expected level of proficiency, compared to 90% percent in the prior school year. English Language Learners tested increased from 83% passing to 86% in the current school year.

Although the percentage of students passing in the district dropped, scores statewide were down as well. The percentage of regular education students across the state passing the test declined by 2%, and scores for special education students statewide dropped 8%. The percentage of English Language Learners statewide scoring at or above proficiency dropped 9%, compared to the 3% increase in Cobb.

KEY FINDINGS

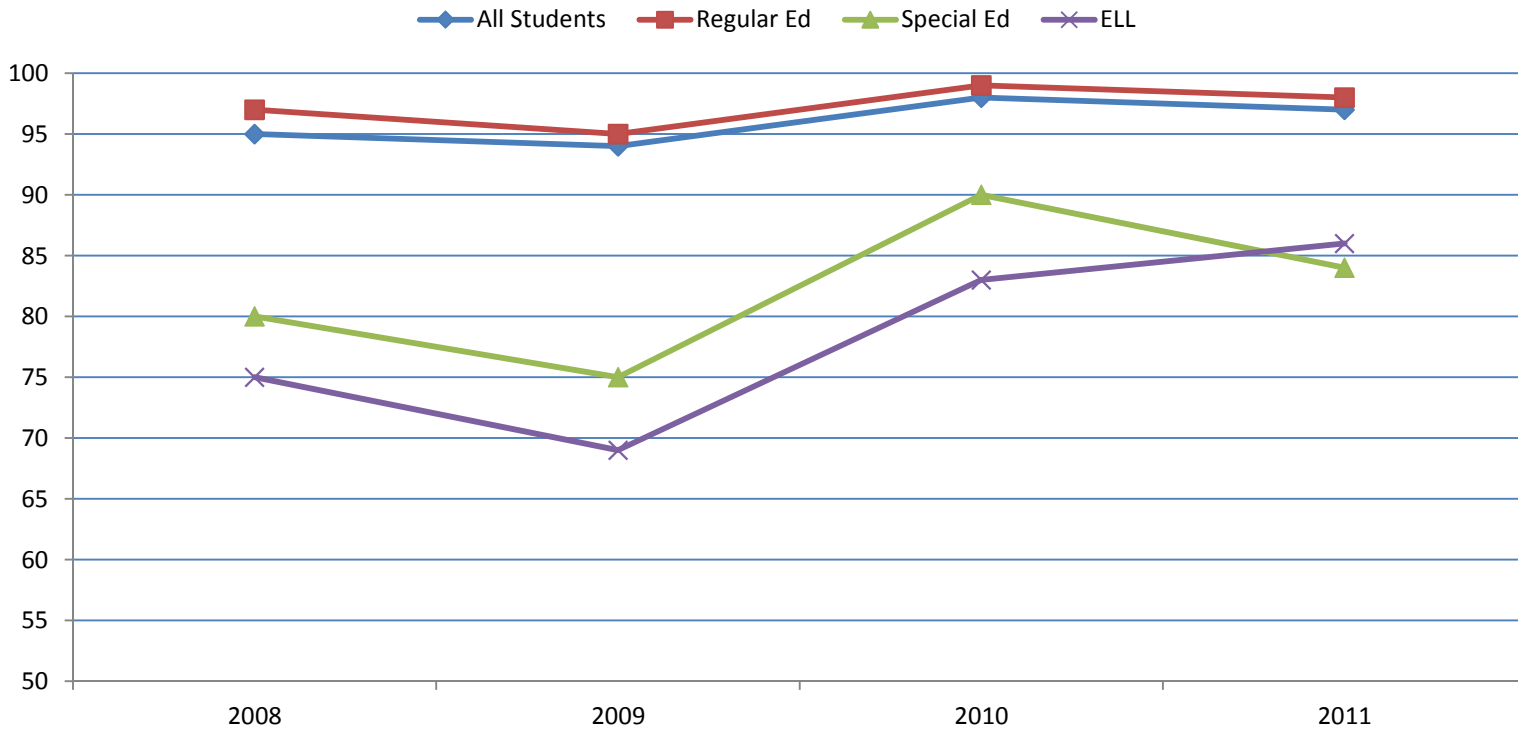
District Results

- A total of 6,661 first-time test takers took the writing test. Ninety-seven (97) percent met the passing standard with a mean scale score of 230. This is slightly higher than the previous year's scale score of 228.
- A total of 6,199 Regular Program Grade 11 students were first-time test takers, with 98% passing and a mean scale score of 231. The average scale score for 2010 among regular program students was 229.
- A total of 462 Special Education Grade 11 first-time test takers participated in the writing test. Eighty-four (84) percent met the passing standard with a mean scale score of 213. The percent of Special Education students passing in 2010 was 90%, with a scale score of 214.
- A total of 112 English Language Learner Grade 11 first-time test takers were tested. Eighty-six (86) percent met the passing standard with a mean scale score of 210. Last year, 83% of the English language learners met the passing standard with a scale score of 209.

School Results

- Sixteen of the district's seventeen high schools had a pass rate of 90% or better. Oakwood had too few to count.
- Eight high schools had 98% or more students passing. They were Allatoona, Harrison, Hillgrove, Lassiter, McEachern, Pope, Sprayberry and Walton.
- Kell, Pope, Walton and Wheeler had an increase in scale score of more than five points.
- The percentage of students meeting or exceeding performance expectations at McEachern grew by 2% over last year, the biggest gain district-wide.

Georgia High School Writing Test Percent Meeting and Exceeding Standards



Cobb County School District
2011 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results
Grade 11 First Time Test Takers

TABLE I

	# Tested	Scale Score	% DNM*	% Meet*	% Exceed*	% Meets + Exceeds
Georgia	97,212	224	7	84	9	93
Metro Area Districts	35,664	226	6	83	11	94
Cobb	6,661	230	3	83	14	97
SCHOOL RESULTS						
Allatoona	375	229	2	89	10	99
Campbell	418	224	5	89	6	95
Harrison	471	229	2	86	12	98
Hillgrove	475	229	1	88	11	99
Kell	325	232	4	80	17	97
Kennesaw Mountain	399	233	4	78	18	96
Lassiter	454	239	0	76	24	100
McEachern	434	223	2	93	5	98
North Cobb	497	227	3	86	11	97
Oakwood	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC
Osborne	283	213	10	89	2	91
Pebblebrook	288	222	4	92	3	95
Pope	429	243	1	71	28	99
South Cobb	417	218	10	87	4	91
Sprayberry	410	225	2	93	5	98
Walton	617	242	0	69	30	99
Wheeler	361	233	4	78	19	97

* Percentage of students may not equal 100 due to rounding

tfc - Too few To count

** Data Not Available

Cobb County School District
2011 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test
Domain Results for 11th Grade First Time Test Takers

TABLE II

	Ideas (2)	Organization (1)	Style (1)	Conventions (1)
Georgia	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.2
Metro Area Districts	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3
Cobb	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4
SCHOOL RESULTS				
Allatoona	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5
Campbell	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.1
Harrison	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.5
Hillgrove	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5
Kell	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5
Kennesaw Mountain	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.5
Lassiter	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.7
McEachern	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.2
North Cobb	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4
Oakwood	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC
Osborne	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.8
Pebblebrook	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.1
Pope	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.8
South Cobb	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0
Sprayberry	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3
Walton	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.9
Wheeler	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.5

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

Cobb County School District
2011 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results
by Student Group

TABLE III

	Regular Ed		Special Ed		ELL	
	Mean SS	% Meet / Exceed	Mean SS	% Meet / Exceed	Mean SS	% Meet / Exceed
Georgia	NA**	95	NA**	66	NA**	70
Cobb	231	98	213	84	210	86
SCHOOL RESULTS						
Allatoona	230	98	218	100	NA**	NA**
Campbell	226	98	205	73	NA**	NA**
Harrison	229	98	216	89	NA**	NA**
Hillgrove	230	100	214	86	NA**	NA**
Kell	234	97	212	88	NA**	NA**
Kennesaw Mountain	234	98	208	73	NA**	NA**
Lassiter	241	100	217	92	NA**	NA**
McEachern	224	99	211	79	NA**	NA**
North Cobb	228	98	217	73	NA**	NA**
Oakwood	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC
Osborne	215	94	203	64	204	82
Pebblebrook	222	96	214	85	NA**	NA**
Pope	246	100	216	91	NA**	NA**
South Cobb	219	93	202	63	NA**	NA**
Sprayberry	226	99	216	94	214	94
Walton	243	100	228	98	NA**	NA**
Wheeler	234	97	212	88	210	83

Mean SS: Scale score based on 100-350 scale

tfc: too few to count

NA** not reported