

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Improved High School Writing Test Results Reflect District Focus On Writing Skills**

*[Release amended Jan. 4, 2013 to correct passing percentage for North Cobb High School from 97 to 98 percent. Twelve of Cobb's 16 high schools had 98 percent or more students pass the GHSWT.]*

Cobb County 11th graders have posted increases in both the average score and percentage of students passing on the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT), a statewide assessment of core writing skills required for students to earn a high school diploma.

The District's average scale score of 231 increased by one point from 2011 and continued to best the improved state (224) and metro Atlanta district (226) averages (see Table I). Cobb's percentage of first-time test takers passing the GHSWT also increased from 97 to 98 percent for 2012. Since 2009, the scale score on the writing test for Cobb students has increased from 224 to 231 and the percentage passing from 94 percent to 98 percent, reflecting the District's focus on developing writing skills across the curriculum.

All 16 traditional Cobb County high schools posted pass rates of at least 90 percent on the GHSWT; at twelve schools, 98 percent or more students passed the test (see Table I). Kennesaw Mountain and South Cobb high schools posted the District's largest increases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards, each improving by more than four percent over 2011. Three high schools - Campbell, Pebblebrook and Sprayberry - each posted scale score increases of five or more points.

Performance of specific student groups identified by the state were mixed (see Table II). The average scale score for Special Education students is 214, a two-point increase over last year, while the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards dipped a single percentage point. English Language Learners maintained an identical scale score of 209, while four percent fewer students met or surpassed standards on the GHSWT. The 2012 passing percentages for both student groups remain higher than the state percentage.

"The state writing test is an important gauge of our students' communications skills and lets our teachers know which students may need additional support prior to graduation," said Superintendent Dr. Michael

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Hinojosa. “I’m proud to see that our District-wide efforts to incorporate writing in all academic areas, including math and science, are resulting in improved performance and a higher passing rate on the GHSWT for Cobb County.”

The two-hour GHSWT was administered in late September to 6,678 Cobb juniors, requiring students to write a persuasive paper on an assigned topic. The essay is assessed based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) domains of 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. Domain scores are ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest (see Table II).

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# **COBB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## **TESTING BRIEF**

### **Georgia High School Writing Test Fall 2012**

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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 first time test takers passing the test increased from 97% in 2011 to 98% this year. Ninety-nine (99) percent of Regular Education students scored at or above the expected level of proficiency, which is up one percent from last year. Eighty-nine (89) percent of Special Education students taking the test scored at or above the expected level of proficiency, compared to 84% percent in the prior school year. Scores for English Language Learners remained declined from 86% last year to 79% in the current school year.

While the percentage of students passing in the district increased by one percentage point, scores for the students statewide improved by two percent over last year. Statewide, the percentage of regular education students that passed the test increased by 2%. The percentage of special education students passing at the state level increased 6%. The percentage of English Language Learners statewide scoring at or above proficiency was unchanged.

## KEY FINDINGS

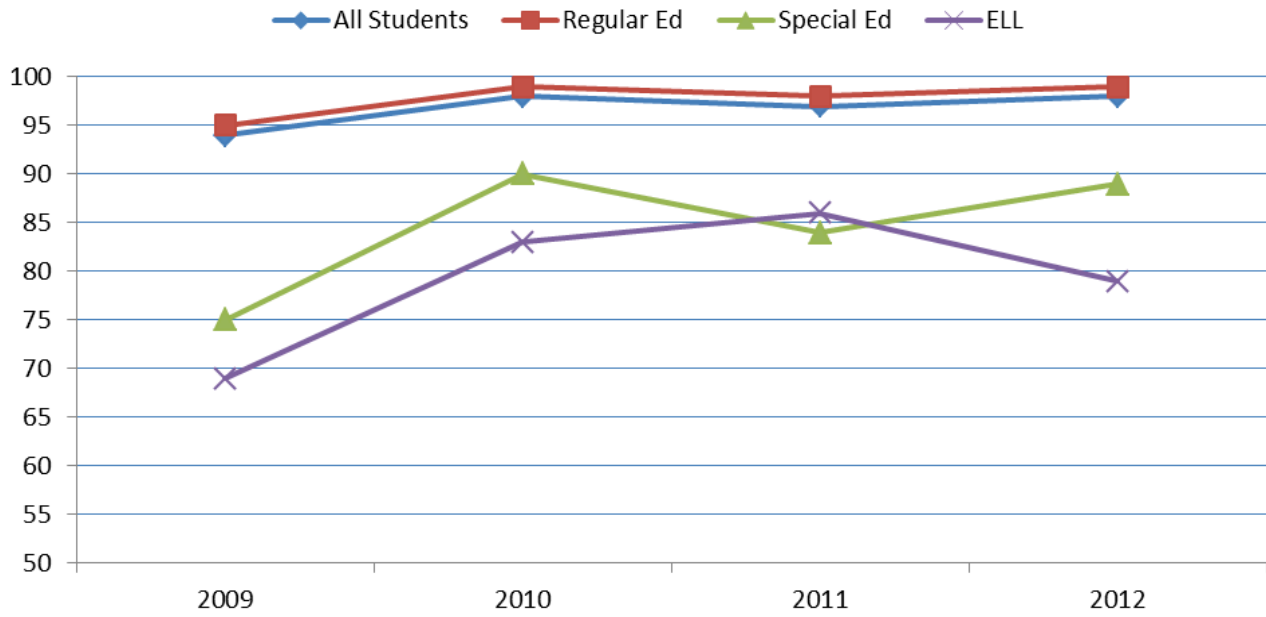
### ***District Results***

- A total of 6,678 first-time test takers took the writing test. Ninety-eight (98) percent met the passing standard with a mean scale score of 231. This reflects a 1 point increase over previous year's scale score of 230.
- A total of 6,185 Regular Program Grade 11 students were first-time test takers, with 99% passing and a mean scale score of 233. The percent of Regular Program students passing in 2011 was 98%, with an average scale score of 231.
- A total of 493 Special Education Grade 11 first-time test takers participated in the writing test. Eighty-nine (89) percent met the passing standard with a mean scale score of 216. The percent of Special Education students passing in 2011 was 84%, with a scale score of 213.
- A total of 82 English Language Learner Grade 11 first-time test takers were tested. Seventy-nine (79) percent met the passing standard with a mean scale score of 209. Last year, 86% of the English language learners met the passing standard with a scale score of 210.

### ***School Results***

- All sixteen traditional high schools had a pass rate of 90% or better.
- Eleven high schools had 98% or more students passing. They were Allatoona, Harrison, Hillgrove, Kell, Kennesaw Mountain, Lassiter, Pebblebrook, Pope, Sprayberry, Walton and Wheeler.
- Three schools had an increase in scale score of five or more points. They were Campbell (5), Pebblebrook (7) and Sprayberry (7).
- The percentage of students meeting or exceeding performance expectations at Kennesaw Mountain and South Cobb both grew by 4% over last year, the biggest gain district-wide.

## Georgia High School Writing Test Percent of First Time Test Takers Meeting and Exceeding Standards



**Cobb County School District  
2012 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results  
Grade 11 First Time Test Takers**

TABLE I

	# Tested	Scale Score	% DNM*	% Meet*	% Exceed*	% Meets + Exceeds
Georgia	98,754	226	5	85	10	95
Metro Area Districts	36,561	229	4	83	13	96
Cobb	6,678	231	2	84	14	98
<b>SCHOOL RESULTS</b>						
Allatoona	334	227	2	89	9	98
Campbell	433	229	5	81	14	95
Harrison	468	232	1	84	15	99
Hillgrove	495	232	1	87	12	99
Kell	322	231	2	84	14	98
Kennesaw Mountain	416	232	1	89	11	100
Lassiter	470	240	0	76	24	100
McEachern	441	225	2	91	6	97
North Cobb	540	227	2	89	8	98
Oakwood	11	209	27	73	0	73
Osborne	299	217	7	91	2	93
Pebblebrook	344	229	2	85	13	98
Pope	372	243	0	74	26	100
South Cobb	363	222	5	90	5	95
Sprayberry	348	232	2	84	15	99
Walton	653	242	1	74	25	99
Wheeler	368	230	2	84	14	98

\* Percentage of students may not equal 100 due to rounding

tfc - Too few To count

\*\* Data Not Available

**Cobb County School District  
2012 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test  
Domain Results for 11th Grade First Time Test Takers**

TABLE II

	<b>Ideas (2)</b>	<b>Organization (1)</b>	<b>Style (1)</b>	<b>Conventions (1)</b>
Georgia	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3
Metro Area Districts	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.3
Cobb	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5
<b>SCHOOL RESULTS</b>				
Allatoona	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4
Campbell	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3
Harrison	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6
Hillgrove	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.6
Kell	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5
Kennesaw Mountain	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.5
Lassiter	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8
McEachern	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.3
North Cobb	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3
Oakwood	2.5	2.6	2.9	2.7
Osborne	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9
Pebblebrook	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.3
Pope	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.8
South Cobb	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.1
Sprayberry	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5
Walton	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8
Wheeler	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.5

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

**Cobb County School District  
2012 Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test Results  
Special Populations**

TABLE III

	Regular Ed		Special Ed		ELL	
	Mean SS	% Pass	Mean SS	% Pass	Mean SS	% Pass
Georgia	NA**	97	NA**	72	NA**	70
Cobb	233	99	216	89	209	79
<b>SCHOOL RESULTS</b>						
Allatoona	227	98	215	88	NA**	NA**
Campbell	232	98	200	56	211	86
Harrison	233	100	219	90	NA**	NA**
Hillgrove	233	99	217	93	NA**	NA**
Kell	233	99	216	88	NA**	NA**
Kennesaw Mountain	233	99	218	96	NA**	NA**
Lassiter	241	100	224	94	NA**	NA**
McEachern	226	98	216	93	NA**	NA**
North Cobb	228	99	212	88	NA**	NA**
Oakwood	208	70	TFC	TFC	TFC	TFC
Osborne	218	94	208	80	210	84
Pebblebrook	229	98	217	94	NA**	NA**
Pope	245	100	228	100	NA**	NA**
South Cobb	223	96	210	90	200	42
Sprayberry	233	99	221	90	NA**	NA**
Walton	244	100	222	93	NA**	NA**
Wheeler	231	98	214	88	212	90

Mean SS: Scale score based on 100-350 scale  
tfc: too few to count  
NA\*\* not reported