

[<<Back to Georgia Education News](#)

Georgia Education News
April 2008
Copyright © 2008 Queue, Inc.

IN THIS ISSUE:

[New Computer Skill Competency Assessment for Georgia Educators](#)

[Georgia Shows Strong Gains on National Writing Test](#)

[Technology Counts 2008](#)

[State-Funded Preschool Enrollment Passes One Million Mark, Yet Most 3- and 4-Year-Olds are Denied Access to Public Preschool Programs](#)

[Decline Future Mailings](#)

New Computer Skill Competency Assessment for Georgia Educators

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) has announced the launch of a new assessment that will certify state educators in computer skill competency. Developed by Pearson's teacher licensure testing group, the new Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators® (GACE®) Computer Skill Competency Assessment is being delivered via Internet-based testing. The Computer Skill Competency Assessment was developed to help teachers meet the Georgia State Legislature's requirement that all public school teachers in the state demonstrate computer skill competency. To meet the requirement of the legislation,

the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson, in cooperation with the Georgia PSC, designed an Internet-based assessment to be administered to registered sites within school districts, Regional Educational Service Agencies, Educational Technology Training Centers, and if needed, in every Georgia school.

"Our state recognizes that today's high-quality teachers must have the skills to integrate technology into instruction," said Kelly Henson, executive secretary, Georgia PSC. "We worked with the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson to develop and deliver the new GACE Computer Skill Competency Assessment to offer teachers a way to meet this requirement."

The Evaluation Systems group of Pearson developed and manages Georgia's overall teacher certification testing program for assessing the knowledge and skills of prospective public school educators. Last fall, Georgia PSC and Pearson launched the state's first Internet-based test, the GACE Paraprofessional Assessment.

"The Georgia PSC has long been a national leader in high-quality, innovative teacher certification," said William Gorth, Ph.D., president of the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson. "We are pleased to have worked with Mr. Henson and the Commission to develop and manage this new computer skills competency teacher certification examination and deliver it across all Georgia education institutions via Internet-based testing."

For more information about the new GACE Computer Skills Competency Assessment and other Georgia teacher certification exams, visit <http://www.gace.nesinc.com>.

Georgia Shows Strong Gains on National Writing Test

Georgia's 8th graders are scoring at the national average in writing, according to test results released Thursday.

The results of the 2007 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that 88 percent of Georgia 8th graders scored at or above basic proficiency levels, one point higher than the nation. This was a six-point jump for Georgia since

2002, the last time the NAEP writing test was given.

"These NAEP results offer further proof that our new curriculum is making a big difference," said State Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox. "There is no doubt in my mind that the rigor and focus of our new standards is having a positive impact in the classroom."

Superintendent Cox said Georgia's teachers are doing a great job implementing the new curriculum, which emphasizes writing across all subject areas, the Georgia Performance Standards.

"In the 21st century, the ability to take information and ideas and relay them clearly and concisely is more important than ever," Superintendent Cox said. "Writing is not just a skill that should be used in English class. Our new curriculum demands the use of writing and communication skills in every subject area."

The NAEP is given to a representative sample of students in every state. Scores are on a scale of 0 to 300 and are broken into four categories -- below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. Georgia students in grade 8 took the NAEP writing exam last school year. The students who were tested had been taught using the state's new Reading/English Language Arts curriculum for two years.

Georgia's 8th graders scored a 153, up six points from 2002. Georgia's score was one point lower than the nation (154). But just like a public opinion poll, there is a margin of error, which makes these scores statistically equal.

Georgia's African-American and Hispanic students made significant gains on the NAEP writing test.

The scale score for Georgia's African-American students rose to 144, a jump of six points since 2002 and four points higher than the national average (140) for African-American students.

Hispanic students in Georgia scored 142 on the NAEP writing test, an increase of 31 points from 2002 and one point higher than the national average (141) for Hispanic students.

Superintendent Cox said Georgia has a strong commitment to building students' writing skills. For instance, Georgia is one of few states that tests students in writing at every level of education -- elementary (grades 3 & 5), middle (grade 8) and high

school (grade 11).

STATE RESULTS MIRROR PROGRESS

The good news in writing is further supported by the performance of 8th graders on the state writing test they took in January.

"National and state results lead to the same conclusion -- Georgia students are making tremendous progress in writing," Superintendent Cox said.

About 77 percent of students met or exceeded standards on the Grade 8 Writing Assessment -- a 10 point jump from 2007.

Georgia's African-American and Hispanic students also showed dramatic gains on the state writing test. About 69 percent of African-American students met or exceeded standards, an increase of 11 points from 2007. Also, 71 percent of Hispanic students met or exceeded standards, an increase of 15 points in one year.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses writing for three purposes identified in the NAEP framework: narrative, informative, and persuasive. The NAEP writing scale ranges from 0 to 300.

In 2007, the average scale score for eighth-grade students in Georgia was 153. This was higher than their average score in 2002 (147) and was higher than their average score in 1998 (146).¹

Georgia's average score (153) in 2007 was not significantly different from that of the nation's public schools (154).

Of the 45 states and one other jurisdiction that participated in the 2007 eighth-grade assessment, students' average scale score in Georgia was higher than those in 10 jurisdictions, not significantly different from those in 20 jurisdictions, and lower than those in 15 jurisdictions.²

The percentage of students in Georgia who performed at or above the NAEP *Proficient* level was 29 percent in 2007. This percentage was greater than that in 2002 (25 percent) and was greater than that in 1998 (23 percent).

The percentage of students in Georgia who performed at or above the NAEP *Basic* level was 88 percent in 2007. This percentage was greater than that in 2002 (82 percent) and was greater than that in 1998 (83 percent).

In 2007, male students in Georgia had an average score that was lower than that of female students by 21 points. This performance gap was not significantly different from that of 1998 (18 points).

In 2007, Black students had an average score that was lower than that of White students by 19 points. This performance gap was not significantly different from that of 1998 (24 points).

In 2007, Hispanic students had an average score that was lower than that of White students by 20 points. Data are not reported for Hispanic students in 1998, because reporting standards were not met.

In 2007, students who were eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch, an indicator of poverty, had an average score that was lower than that of students who were not eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch by 24 points. This performance gap was not significantly different from that of 1998 (25 points).

In 2007, the score gap between students at the 75th percentile and students at the 25th percentile was 46 points. This performance gap was not significantly different from that of 1998 (47 points).

Technology Counts 2008

Technology Counts is a joint project of *Education Week* and the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. As in previous years, the EPE Research Center surveyed the states to assess the status of K-12 educational technology across the nation in the areas of access, use, and capacity. The report assigns grades to the states for their technology performance overall and in those three categories. The state report assembles key findings from the survey and other sources.

Georgia's scores:

Access to technology C

Use of technology A

Capacity to use technology A

Overall grade A-

Complete Georgia report:

http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/tc/2008/30GA_STR2008.h27.pdf

State-Funded Preschool Enrollment Passes One Million Mark, Yet Most 3- and 4-Year-Olds are Denied Access to Public Preschool Programs

Survey Shows 12 States Offer No Programs, Others Falter; Gains are Threatened by Possible Recession

State-funded preschools served over one million children last year, yet public pre-K was unavailable for most 3- and 4-year-olds, according to the annual survey released by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, *The State of Preschool 2007* ranks all 50 states on the percentage of children served and spending per child. It also compares the number of quality benchmarks each state meets for the 2006-2007 school year. The survey found that enrollment, quality and state spending per child increased.

Yet, 12 states offered no state-funded preschool education and others faltered in their commitment to the quality of their early education programs. The report showed that nationally less than half of all 4-year-olds were enrolled in government-supported preschool education programs and one quarter received no preschool. For 3-year-olds the situation was worse, with only 15 percent enrolled in public

programs and 50 percent receiving no early education.

Children from wealthy families can attend expensive private preschools while the federal Head Start program and most state-funded preschool education is targeted at lower income families.

Research shows that high-quality preschool education for disadvantaged children improves later high school graduation rates and college attendance, employment opportunities and earnings, even marriage rates. It lessens future crime, delinquency and teenage pregnancy. In economic terms, high-quality preschool education returns to the individual and the public up to \$17 for each \$1 invested. New studies find educational benefits for middle-income children as well.

Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming have no state-funded programs. Serious problems also exist in four states – **California, Texas, Florida, and Ohio** – that are home to one-third of all American preschoolers."

California, Texas, Florida, and Ohio are among only seven states that meet less than half of NIEER's quality benchmarks. All four spend less than the national average per child. **Texas** and **California** do not limit class size. **Ohio, Florida** and **California** do not require preschool teachers to have education comparable to public school teachers. **Ohio** serves not even 5,000 of its nearly 150,000 4-year-olds.

On a more positive note, the yearbook reported that in 2006-2007:

- Average state spending per child was \$3,642, halting a trend of declining per-child commitments that had persisted since at least the 2002-2003 school year.
- More than one million 3- and 4-year-old children attended state-funded preschool education programs. ___
- Thirty states increased enrollment. Nationally, enrollment was up by 80,000.
- Eight states met higher quality standards. Yet, some states still require preschool education teachers to have little more than a high school diploma.
- Of the 26 states that served 3-year-olds, enrollment increased in all but five states. Overall enrollment of 3-year-olds was up 10 percent, mostly due to increases in **Illinois**, which became the first state to commit to serving all 3-year-olds.

Pre-K funding could be attached to state funding formulas for K-12 education to ensure that funds increase proportionally with enrollment as it expands and that funding per child is more dependable the authors say. They also said the federal government could play a vital role by providing an inducement to states to expand enrollment, particularly at age 3, by offering matching funds.

The 2007 *Yearbook* pointed out that one-quarter of all 4-year-olds and half of all 3s had no access to preschool education. State and federal regular preschool education, special education and Head Start combined served 39 percent of the country's 4-year-olds, and some attend private programs, leaving one-quarter of 4-year-olds with no preschool program at all. At age 3, state and federal programs combined to serve only 15 percent. Even with some others attending private programs, 50 percent of 3-year-olds had no access to a preschool education.

Other key findings in the yearbook include:

Access:

- Enrollment increases in most states tended to be modest, but some states made large gains. Enrollment increased by 52 percent in **Tennessee**, 33 percent in **Pennsylvania**, and 17 percent in **Illinois**, **Florida**, and **New York**.
- State pre-K programs served 22 percent of 4-year-olds and 3 percent of 3-year-olds nationwide.
- Three states with "Pre-K for All" served more than half of their 4-year-olds: **Oklahoma** (68 percent), **Florida** (58 percent), and **Georgia** (53 percent). When Head Start and preschool special education enrollments are taken into account, **Oklahoma** served 90 percent of all 4-year-olds; **Florida**, 71 percent; and **Georgia**, 65 percent.

Quality:

- **North Carolina** and **Alabama** once again met all 10 of the NIEER quality standard benchmarks. Eight additional states--**Arkansas**, **Illinois**, **New Jersey**, **New Mexico**, **Oklahoma**, **South Carolina**, **Tennessee**, and **Washington**--had a state-funded pre-K initiative meeting nine of the 10 benchmarks.
- Of the 38 states with preschool education programs, **Kansas** met the fewest

benchmarks, three. **Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, Ohio,** and **Texas** met only four.

- Fewer than half the 38 pre-K states required all lead teachers in their programs to hold a bachelor's degree. Eight states did not require any state preschool teachers to have bachelor's degrees -- **Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Minnesota, Ohio,** and **Washington.**

Resources:

- The average state spending per child enrolled was \$3,642. Compared to the previous year, this is an increase of \$175 per child before adjusting for inflation (and an increase of \$32 after adjusting for inflation).
- Of the 38 states with preschool education programs, state pre-K spending ranged from just over \$3 million in **Nevada**, a state with about 72,000 3- and 4-year-olds, to \$533 million in **Texas**, which has about 758,000 3- and 4-year-olds.
- States still spent much less per child on pre-K than on K-12.
- States continued to vary greatly in their per-child spending. **New Jersey** was the top ranked state, spending \$10,494 per child. Twelve states continued to spend nothing on state pre-K.

The State of Preschool 2007 is available at

<http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf>

State Profiles are available at:

<http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

Georgia profile:

<http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf#page=52>