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Students Perform Well on Graduation Tests

An overwhelming majority of Georgia's students are meeting expectations on the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), including two of the exams that are aligned to the state's more rigorous curriculum.

For the first time this year, the GHSGTs in English Language Arts and Science are fully aligned to the state's new curriculum, the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Besides testing more rigorous material, the new exams call for higher order thinking. These new exams are scored at four levels -- below proficiency, basic proficiency, advanced proficiency and honors.

About 90 percent of first-time test takers scored at basic proficiency or above on the new GHSGT in English Language Arts. Slightly more than 86 percent scored at basic proficiency or above on the new GHSGT in Science.

Mathematics and Social Studies

The results of GHSGTs in Mathematics and Social Studies remained very strong, but were essentially flat when compared to 2007.

In mathematics, 92.5 percent of first-time test takers passed the exam, a slight increase from 2007 (91.7 percent). On the social studies exam, 86.4 percent passed the exam, a slight decrease from 2007 (87.1 percent).

These exams are still aligned to the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) and are scored the same as in the past with three performance levels -- did not pass, pass and pass plus.

The Social Studies GHSGT will be GPS-based starting in 2010 and the Mathematics GHSGT will be GPS-based starting in 2011.'

Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

The mission of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education is to inform and influence Georgia leaders through research and non-partisan advocacy to impact education policies and practices for the improvement of student achievement.

Click here for the Partnership's 2007 Annual Report: [Convene - Connect - Commit.](#)

Founded in 1990 by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia Economic Developers Association, the Partnership consists of business, education, community and government leaders who share a vision of improved education. Working to be Georgia's foremost change agent in education, the non-profit, non-partisan organization takes lead roles in efforts to shape policy and reform education.

It consistently advocates a reform framework based on (1) high educational standards for all schools, (2) monitoring progress toward achieving standards, and (3) accountability for all components of the public education system.

The Partnership recognizes that the way to ensure success at the state level is to research issues and influence policy, while encouraging communities to design their own school improvement strategies at the local level. The Partnership is committed to ensuring the future prosperity of our state by giving every Georgian new options and opportunities to succeed.

Major accomplishments since the Partnership's inception include:

Leveraging \$30 million in state, private, and local matching funds to turn 51 local school systems into models of academic excellence. Each system participating in the Next Generation School Project succeeded in raising student achievement results. In 2002, the project narrowed its focus to

reform models that involve specifically adding time to the school calendar, whether it is lengthening the school day, extending the school term, or adding weekend or other special sessions for students who are at risk of failure.

Advocating successfully for such educational reforms as a lottery-funded statewide pre-kindergarten program; a constitutional amendment calling for appointed school superintendents and elected school boards; and an amendment allowing school systems to hold local referendums to establish sales tax funding for school construction purposes. The Partnership provides non-partisan information for educational policies that ultimately became law.

Raising private and public support for scholarships directed to teachers seeking national board certification. The Partnership donated \$1 million to help establish the scholarship program. This incentive along with legislated pay increases for educators earning the certification leveraged the increase in the number of Georgia teachers achieving National Board Certification from 111 teachers in 2000 to 2,115 in 2006. Georgia now ranks near the top in the nation on this important indicator of teacher quality.

Strategically enhancing education through collaboration with statewide businesses to provide advocacy, influential policy change, performance management and leadership skills, and systemic financial support.

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education continues to look for ways it can provide catalytic leadership to maintain positive momentum and instill public confidence that education in Georgia is on the right track. Its ongoing and new strategies include –

The Bus Trip Across Georgia, which began in 1993, annually showcases model schools and educational programs that result in outstanding student achievement. Business, education, government and civic leaders board buses for the tour to observe educators in action improving learning opportunities for their students.

The Georgia Partnership publishes works that focus on topical issues as a way to inform education stakeholders for their own advocacy purposes. The annual Top 10 Education Issues to Watch targets the key educational policy issues facing Georgia specifically and the nation in general. In January 2007, the Partnership released the first in a four-part Gap Analysis series of reports. The first report: Georgia's Unfinished Business in Teacher Quality, generated considerable interest and has been widely circulated within and outside the state. Work is underway on the second report which will examine Secondary Education Reform.

The Partnership is in the planning process (early 2008) for an exciting new initiative - the Education Policy Fellowship Program - a national professional development program that provides leaders with the knowledge and

networks to advance the core issues of education policy. Stay tuned for more information on EPFP as well as the recruitment of the first Georgia class of fellows.

The organization's leadership and resources are constantly being engaged in a wide-range of issues designed to reform the state's educational system. There are few more important bedrock issues than education when it comes to the quality of life for all Georgians. The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education is making a difference every day.

At its quarterly meeting this week the partnership heard two presentations:

Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps in Georgia

The Education Trust, a well-regarded Washington D.C. based organization, collects, analyzes, and uses data to make the case that all students will learn to high levels when they are taught at high levels. The good news coming from The Education Trust is that after more than a decade of fairly flat achievement and stagnant or growing gaps, we appear to be turning the corner, at least in the early grades. The challenge is that we're not really building on these successes in our high schools. Available evidence suggests that even as better-prepared students are moving into high schools, academic growth in our high schools is declining.

Daria Hall, Assistant Director for K-12 Policy Development at the Education Trust, will join the Partnership for the May quarterly meeting to challenge us to think about the choices made by policymakers and educators that exacerbate the problem. We will also learn about the characteristics and practices of schools that are especially effective at improving the academic performance of previously low-performing students. A provocative discussion involving the Partnership's board members will follow and promises to lay the groundwork to lead us to strategies for making sure that all students at all grade levels are well prepared for the future, especially the ones who are farthest behind.

Urban School Students Score at Highest Levels Ever On State and Federal Tests

Report Includes City-by-City Profiles of Big-City School District Trends

On Math and Reading Assessments

Atlanta Public Schools

<http://www.cgcs.org/BTO8/Atlanta.pdf>

Students in the nation's major city public school districts continue to advance in reading and math on state tests and on the more rigorous federal test– the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

A new report analyzing academic progress in 66 urban school systems in 37 states and the District of Columbia shows substantially higher test scores in 2007 than in 2003 in fourth and eighth-grade mathematics and reading on state assessments. It indicates that the state and national test scores are at their highest levels since academic proficiency data have been collected for urban schools.

Beating the Odds: An Analysis of Student Performance and Achievement Gaps on State Assessments by the Council of the Great City Schools compares this past school year's state test scores with those reported a year after the federal *No Child Left Behind* law was implemented in 2002, requiring school districts to report performance levels based on state tests and show the percentage of students who score at the "proficient" level.

The *Beating the Odds* findings for the 2006- 2007 school year show that 63 percent of urban school students scored at or above the proficient level in fourth-grade math on their respective state assessments, a whopping 14 percentage point gain from 49 percent in 2003. For eighth-graders, the percentage climbed to 55 percent, compared with 42 percent in 2003, a 13 percentage point rise.

In reading, urban schoolchildren also posted gains over the past four years. From 2003 to 2007, the percentage of fourth-graders scoring at or above the proficient level in reading on state tests rose to 60 percent from 51 percent – a 9 percentage point hike. For eighth-graders, the percentage increased to 51 percent from 43 percent in 2003, an 8 percentage point gain.

National Test Assessments

The report also reveals that the state-test trends coincide with NAEP gains by urban students, but with lower percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level on what is generally considered a more rigorous exam than most state tests.

Students in big-city public schools have made faster math and reading gains than the nation on the NAEP over the past few years, according to

The Nation's Report Card for 2007 released by the U.S. Department of Education. The report last November marked the first time that the nation could see four- or five-year trends on NAEP for the country's major urban public school systems since the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) was launched in reading in 2002 and math in 2003.

Some 28 percent of urban fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level in math in 2007 on NAEP, an 8 percentage point hike from 20 percent in 2003. In reading, 22 percent of urban schoolchildren in fourth grade reached or went beyond the proficient level in 2007, a 5 percentage point increase from 17 percent in 2002.

Beating the Odds also includes how student test scores in 11 big-city school districts that volunteered for the trial urban NAEP compare with scores on their respective state tests. Among the 11 cities are New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, the nation's three largest school systems.

Although urban schools show gains in math and reading performance, the districts still generally lag behind state and national averages in fourth and eighth grades, and acknowledge that they still have a long way to go to reach proficiency levels. But there are exceptions.

State Math Achievement

In the report's eighth annual analysis, data show that 22 percent of urban school districts now score as high as or higher than their respective states in fourth-grade math, and 16 percent score as high or higher at the eighth-grade level in 2007.

The school districts with both fourth- and eighth-grade math scores equal to or greater than their respective states are Anchorage, Broward County (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), Charleston, New Orleans, Palm Beach and Portland, Ore.

State Reading Progress

In 2007, 16 percent of urban school districts scored at or above their respective states in fourth-grade reading, and 14 percent at the eighth-grade level. The school districts with both fourth- and eighth-grade reading scores equal to or greater than their respective states are Anchorage, Broward County (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), Charleston, New Orleans, Portland, Ore., San Diego and San Francisco.

Achievement Gaps

Beating the Odds VIII also indicates that racial achievement gaps in urban schools narrowed in math between 2003 and 2007, although they remain wide. Some 66 percent of bigcity school districts narrowed the gap

between their fourth-grade African-American students and white counterparts statewide in math proficiency – 63 percent in eighth-grade math.

Among Hispanic students, 63 percent of the urban school districts narrowed the gap with white fourth-graders statewide – 58 percent in eighth-grade.

In reading, between 2003 and 2007, 64 percent of major city school systems narrowed the achievement gap between fourth-grade African-American students and white counterparts statewide in reading proficiency – 67 percent at the eighth-grade level. Among Hispanic students, 57 percent of urban school districts narrowed the gap with white fourth-graders statewide – 63 percent in eighth grade.

Urban Environment America's big-city school systems enroll about one-quarter, or 26 percent, of all students of color in the nation, and a disproportionately high number of English language learners and poor students.

The report attributes the standards movement as the catalyst that triggered change in urban schools. It gave urban school administrators direction on what they were being held responsible for delivering.

Beating the Odds analyzed two assessments – state and national – because the nation does not have a single system to measure progress relative to the same standard across school districts in all states.

Georgia High School Student Named 2008 Ron Brown Scholar

Raymond D. Grissom of Austell Joins 19 Other Students Nationwide in Prestigious African American Scholarship Program

The Ron Brown Scholar Program, the nation's leading scholarship program for African American youth, today announced that Austell resident Raymond D. Grissom of Campbell High School has been selected as a 2008 Ron Brown Scholar. Chosen from more than 5,600 high school students, Grissom is one of only 20 African American students awarded this honor.

Grissom has proven himself a dedicated student and leader in his class. A

member of the Math Team, his dedication to leadership is exemplified by his many diverse extra-curricular activities from serving as vice-president of the Model United Nations club to being captain of the Rugby Football Club. In addition to being selected a Ron Brown Scholar, he has been awarded many academic honors, including the Questbridge Scholarship, a program which helps high-achieving, low-income high school seniors gain admission and full four-year scholarships to some of the nation's most selective colleges.

"I am continually impressed by the thousands of students who apply to become Ron Brown Scholars," said Michael Mallory, executive director of the Ron Brown Scholar Program. "Raymond's passion and drive to succeed makes him exceptional. He is one of a tremendous group of gifted young people who all bring their unique backgrounds and personal experiences to benefit themselves, the Ron Brown Scholar Program, and their communities as a whole."

Founded in 1996 and named in honor of the first African American Secretary of Commerce, the Ron Brown Scholar Program provides students with the financial resources to attend some of the finest colleges and universities in the country, in addition to promoting outstanding service opportunities for the next generation of promising African American leaders.

Ron Brown Scholars are selected on the basis of demonstrated academic excellence, leadership potential, social commitment and financial need. Some key highlights of the program include:

- More than half of Ron Brown Scholars attend Ivy League universities;
- Two Ron Brown Scholars were elected to be the First Marshals of their Harvard University graduating classes, considered the highest honor bestowed upon an undergraduate;
- One Ron Brown Scholar has been selected as a Truman Scholar and two Ron Brown Scholars have been selected as finalists for the Rhodes Scholarship;
- Ron Brown Scholars dedicate themselves to enriching lives in their local communities and worldwide. For example, nine Ron Brown Scholars have conducted AIDS research and community service with the Institute of Human Virology;
- With a 100% graduation rate, Ron Brown Scholars go on to succeed in a variety of leadership positions. From finance executives and top lawyers, to award-winning playwrights and Supreme Court Justice clerks, they have published books and documentaries, appeared as expert guests on radio and television, and been invited as speakers to numerous international conferences.

Applicants must proceed through a highly competitive selection process

against thousands of other qualified candidates, culminating in an invitation to spend a weekend in Washington, D.C. for the final round of interviews. Up to twenty winners are chosen at the conclusion of this weekend where they are formally introduced as lifelong members of the Ron Brown Scholar Program family.

Grissom is only the 13th Georgia student admitted to the Ron Brown Scholar Program since its inception in 1996. For biographical information on Raymond Grissom or all 20 Scholars or more information about the Ron Brown Scholar Program, visit **www.ronbrown.org**.

About the Ron Brown Scholar Program

Named for the late Secretary of Commerce and inspired by his dedication to public service, the Ron Brown Scholar Program was established in 1996 to provide academic scholarships, service opportunities and leadership experiences for young African Americans of outstanding promise. The Program seeks to accelerate their progress into the mainstream of leadership positions in business, education, government and a wide spectrum of professions, while instilling a dedication to leadership and service.