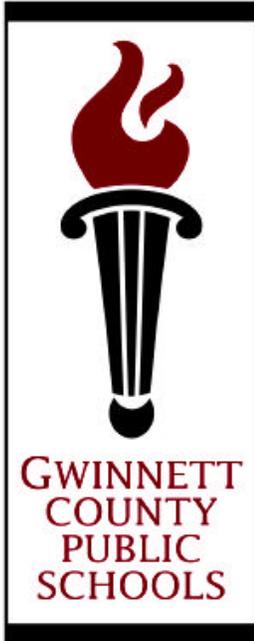


NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Community and Media Relations, (770) 822-6508



5th and 8th Graders Post High Passing Rates on Georgia Writing Assessment/Gateway

Gwinnett County Public Schools' (GCPS) 5th and 8th graders posted passing rates of 98.0 percent and 94.6 percent, respectively, on the Grade 5 and Grade 8 Georgia Writing Assessment/Gateway. These tests, administered by the state in January, serve as Gateway assessments for local students. GCPS set a minimum passing score or "cut score" that students must meet to be promoted. In addition, 5th and 8th graders must have passing grades to earn promotion.

Grade 5 Writing Assessment/Gateway

Of the 9,563 total test-takers in 5th grade, 98.0 percent passed the January test, compared to 96.1 percent last year. These results show Gwinnett students passing at the highest-ever percentage rate since the test began to count for promotion in 2000. 5th grade results also showed an increase of 6.2 percent in the top performance level, with 18.2 percent of students scoring in the "Excellent" range. The percent of students scoring in the "Effective" range also increased.

- 18.2 percent scored in the "Excellent" range this year, compared to 12.0 percent in 2002.
- 42.0 percent scored in the "Effective" range in 2003, compared to 33.7 percent in 2002.
- 37.8 percent scored in the "Minimal" range, compared to 50.5 percent in 2002.
- 2.0 percent (188 students) failed in 2003, compared to 3.9 percent (354 students) in 2002.

Grade 8 Writing Assessment/Gateway

On the 8th grade writing test, the passing rate decreased slightly from 95.5 percent in 2002 to 94.6% in 2003. Of the 9,286 students who took the 8th grade test this past January, 500 did not pass on the first attempt.

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**5th and 8th Grade
2003 Gateway
Results**

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The slightly lower passing rate on the 8th grade test could be attributed to a higher cut score., a score that increased from 24 to 27 for this year's test-takers. The cut score will continue to increase until 2004, when it reaches the cut score of 30 proposed by a team of Gwinnett teachers and adopted by the Gwinnett County Board of Education. The percentage of Gwinnett 8th graders scoring in the "Excellent" performance level increased by more than 3 percent.

- 14.4 percent scored in the "Excellent" range this year, compared to 11.1 percent in 2002.
- 41.9 percent scored in the "Effective" range, compared to 39.5 percent in 2002.
- 38.3 percent scored in the "Minimal" range, compared to 44.9 percent in 2002.
- 5.4 percent failed in 2003, compared to 4.5 percent in 2002.

The 5th and 8th grade students who did not pass the first administration of the writing tests were notified in late April/early May. These students were offered the opportunity to receive extra help in preparation for a mid-May retest. The results from the retest will be available prior to the beginning of summer school. If a student is not successful on the retest, he or she could attend summer school to improve their writing skills in preparation for another retest at the end of summer school.

The state writing assessments for grades 5 and 8 measure a student's ability to communicate in writing, using a prompt about a real or imaginary incident. Students must demonstrate effective word choice; proper sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics; and good organization of ideas. The skills reflected in the content of the test are included in the GCPS Academic Knowledge and Skills curriculum and are supported by Gwinnett's Literacy Standards in Writing.

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***See attached charts: Grade 5 Writing Results 2003 (January Administration) and
Grade 8 Writing Results 2003 (January Administration).***