

Georgia Milestones Assessment System

Fall 2017 Reading & Evidence-Based Writing (REBW) Field Test

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIELD TEST

Why is this field test necessary?

In order to sustain the Georgia Milestones item bank, new items are field-tested each year. These items are typically embedded into the assessment during a regular administration but do not count toward student scores. Field-test items that perform well are then added to the item bank and may be included on a future Georgia Milestones assessment in operational positions (meaning that they count toward student scores).

Though Georgia typically field tests items on the operational tests each spring, the Reading and Evidence Based Writing component of the ELA test involves students writing an essay in response to an extended writing prompt; therefore, it is not in students' best interest to embed this particular type of item (extended writing prompt) on an operational test. The time requirement and cognitive demand necessary of students when writing in response to multiple texts on a topic are too great to utilize an embedded field test design.

In planning the field test, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) sought to ensure the time on task required by individual students was kept to a minimum.

Is participation in the field test mandatory?

Yes. Field testing items prior to their operational use is both a critical and required step in the development and maintenance of a technically sound testing program. As such, this field test is part of the administration of the state student assessment program required by O.C.G.A. §20-2-281 and State Board of Education Rule 160-3-1-.07 (Testing Programs – Student Assessment).

Given the uses of the test results – and new legislation/policy such as House Bill 338 (First Priority Act) – ensuring the state assessment program is technically sound is of the utmost importance. It is essential that each test item that appears on our state test be reviewed by Georgia educators (content experts) to ensure alignment and appropriateness and be field tested with a representative sample of Georgia students. Field testing must occur *before* we hold students, educators, and schools accountable for performance on the items that comprise the test.

While we recognize that the scope of the field test is significant, the GaDOE has made every effort to reduce the burden on any single school. Whenever possible, the GaDOE worked to select only one grade or course for the selected schools. The field test is robust in an effort to bolster the item bank to ensure capacity for several years before another field test is needed.

Why is the REBW field test scheduled in the fall? Why can't it occur during the regularly scheduled Georgia Milestones administration in the spring?

The REBW section of the ELA test includes a paired passage set, 3 multiple-choice questions, a short constructed-response question, and a writing prompt (essay). This section is administered on a separate day and students are allowed 90 minutes to complete. Adding a field test REBW section to a regular Milestones administration would extend student testing by one day and would require that students respond to two extended writing prompts (one operational and one

field test). It is a common practice to field test extended writing prompts via ‘stand-alone’ field tests; this is not unique to Georgia.

In scheduling the field test, the GaDOE sought district input into the timing of the field test. Over 76% of district respondents to the survey preferred a fall field test rather than a spring stand-alone field test. Conducting the field test in the fall allows the test to occur outside of regular testing windows and eliminates the concern about student fatigue that would no doubt occur with writing in response to two text-based extended writing prompts.

Because the field test will occur in the fall, it is an *off-grade* field test, meaning that students are tested on content from the previous grade or course. This ensures that students have had the opportunity to learn the content being assessed.

When and how were districts notified of the field test?

In the fall of 2016 the need for the REBW field test was discussed with district Assessment Directors. On February 1, 2017, an email was sent to Assessment Directors explaining the need for the field test and requesting their feedback, via an online survey, on the timing of the field test.

Over 76% of district respondents (N = 206) to the survey preferred a fall field test given the demands of the spring. The decision for a fall field test was later communicated to Assessment Directors during the March 2017 Lunch & Learn webinar.

On May 25, 2017, an email was sent to Superintendents and Assessment Directors communicating further details of the field test, including the schools selected for participation.

What is involved in administering the field test?

The field test will involve two test sessions, administered on separate days:

Day 1:

- A set of 10 items, with associated passages, to serve as a link to previous Georgia Milestones administrations
- Testing time: approximately 30 minutes (not including reading directions)

Day 2:

- One passage set (two short passages) with associated items:
 - Three (3) multiple-choice questions
 - One (1) two-point constructed-response item
 - One (1) seven-point writing prompt
- Testing time: approximately 90 minutes (not including reading directions)

How have Georgia teachers been involved in the field test?

Committees of Georgia educators were convened in July 2017 to review the paired passages and items developed for the field test for alignment to our state content standards, bias and sensitivity, as well as general appropriateness.

After the field test, educator committees will participate in rangefinding, the process in which student responses are reviewed and scoring guidelines are determined. The scores assigned and

annotations (rationale for each score) provided by Georgia educators are used to train and qualify scorers. Student responses scored by Georgia educators are used to ensure the scorers who qualify remain calibrated to the scoring rubric and continue to score according to the expectations established by Georgia educators.

After scoring, Georgia educators will review the items once again, along with student performance data from the field test. Only items accepted by the data review committee are eligible to be placed in the item bank.

What benefits will result from the field test?

Students will gain exposure to a section of the test that is still somewhat new to them and have an opportunity early in the school year to respond to an on-demand prompt. Further, with additional prompts in our bank, we will be able to release former prompts along with scored and annotated student exemplars, something that has been frequently requested. Additionally, the GaDOE will provide qualitative feedback outlining any trends noted in student responses.

Will schools receive student scores for the field test?

No, the purpose of the field test is to evaluate the quality of the REBW item sets, not to evaluate student performance. However, the GaDOE will analyze student responses and provide qualitative feedback related to any trends that are observed.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SELECTED SCHOOLS & STUDENTS TO TEST

How were the schools selected for the field test?

Schools were selected using a stratified-random sampling approach to ensure representativeness of the state. Various demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender) were considered.

To avoid placing an undue burden on any one school, all districts across the state were included in the sample. Maximum “caps” were determined for each grade band (elementary, middle, high) so that larger schools were not burdened by testing all students in the selected grade or course.

What steps did the Department take to mitigate the interruption to instructional time?

GaDOE sought to mitigate the impact on each individual school by limiting selection to one grade or course whenever possible and capping the minimum number of students to be tested at each grade/course. To accomplish this, virtually all districts have been selected, as well as the majority of, if not all, schools in each district.

Such a design allowed GaDOE to limit the grade levels/courses at the selected schools and to field test several prompts at each grade level, thereby sustaining the item bank for several years. If a smaller field test were conducted, Georgia would have to conduct additional stand-alone field tests more frequently.

How should a school select the students to be tested?

Students should be selected to be representative of the student population in the assigned grade/course at each school. To clarify, the sample at a school should include students with various demographic backgrounds and with prior performance on Georgia Milestones along the full continuum of achievement (e.g., do not select only students who are enrolled in advanced classes).

What if my school does not have the “minimum” number of students to test?

The requested number of students to test was based on enrollment data from last school year. We understand that enrollment counts change and ask that schools with lower enrollment in the selected grade/course test as many students as possible.

Can we test *all* students in the assigned grade/course?

Yes, it is acceptable to test more than the minimum number of students assigned to each school.

If a student is absent on the day(s) of the test, do we need to schedule a make-up session?

If a student is absent during the field test, and it is possible to schedule a make-up administration, schools should do so to protect the representativeness of the sample.

It is *extremely* important that all students participate in both sessions of the field test (Day 1 and Day 2). If a student is absent on the first day, he/she can participate in the second day and then make-up the first day. As with operational testing, schools may schedule rolling make-ups that best meet their scheduling needs.

Should students with disabilities and English learners be tested?

Yes, students with disabilities and ELs should be included to the extent they are representative of the student population in the assigned grade/course.

Should students be tested if they require accommodations, including conditional accommodations?

Yes, students requiring accommodations should be included to the extent they are representative of the student population in the assigned grade/course. Note that no paper-based accommodations (such as Braille) will be provided as the field test is administered online only. Large print, however, is an available accommodation for students testing online.

Should students be tested that were not enrolled in the previous grade at a Georgia public school?

Yes, these students may be tested. It is not necessary to exclude a student who transferred into our state or public school system.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHEDULING THE FIELD TEST

When is the field test administered?

Each selected school should administer the field test during the three-week testing window: October 16 – November 3, 2017. Schools may schedule the field test administration at a time that best accommodates their local school calendar. It is not necessary that all schools within a district administer the field test during the same time period as required during an operational test administration.

Can schools within a district schedule the field test on different days?

Yes, each selected school may determine the testing schedule that best fits their local schedule during the three-week window.

Do all students in a school need to be tested on the same day?

No. Given that the field test is online, schools will likely need to schedule multiple administrations and have the flexibility to do so. It is imperative, however, that schools ensure all selected students take both sections of the field test (Day 1 and Day 2).

How much time is required for the administration of the field test?

Students are allowed 30 minutes to complete Section 1, on Day 1, and 90 minutes to complete Section 2, on Day 2. Additionally, time should be allotted for administrative procedures such as reading test directions and logging students into INSIGHT.

Students with an accommodation of extended time should be permitted the additional time needed as stipulated in their IEP, IAP, or EL/TPC.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ADMINISTERING THE FIELD TEST

Do test administrators need to be certified educators?

Yes, the field test should be administered following the same guidelines as any other test administration as stipulated in the *Student Assessment Handbook* and the State Board Rule 160-3-1-.07 (Testing Programs – Student Assessment).

Will test administrators need to be trained as they are for main administrations?

Yes, all personnel involved in the field test will need administration and test security training as is provided for test administrations per guidance in the *Student Assessment Handbook* and in State Board Rule 160-3-1-.07 (Testing Programs – Student Assessment).

The Assessment Division has scheduled pre-administration webinars the week of September 18, 2017, to outline and support the logistics of the field test. System Test Coordinators need to attend only one session, as the webinar is repeated to provide alternate dates and times to participate.

Will this field test be set up in INSIGHT as the main administrations are?

Yes, all online testing functionality will be consistent with the main Georgia Milestones administrations.

Will the same security protocols need to be followed as a main administration?

Yes, the field test must be administered as a secure test. All test administration and security protocols and procedures must be followed. Any and all testing irregularities must be reported to the GaDOE Assessment Division.

Where can I get more information about the REBW Field Test if my questions are not answered here?

For additional questions, please contact the [Georgia Milestones Assessment Specialist](#) assigned to your district.