



GEORGIA

EDUCATION

Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent Cox Issues Statement on CRCT Results

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May 19, 2008 -- **State Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox released the following information about 2008 Criterion-Referenced Competency Test Scores:**

This afternoon, I spoke to superintendents around the state about the results of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Some systems have received unofficial results and have raised concerns about low scores in Grade 8 Mathematics and Grades 6 and 7 Social Studies.

For the past three years, the state has been implementing a new curriculum -- the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). The GPS is more rigorous in all areas. As we have implemented the curriculum, we have created new CRCTs that set higher standards for our students, as well.

We do not have statewide or system-level numbers on the 2008 CRCTs yet and will not for a few weeks. However, I wanted to address some of the concerns raised by superintendents, educators and parents.

MATHEMATICS

While we do not have statewide results yet, it appears that the pass rate on the 8th grade mathematics test will be around 60 percent.

The 8th Grade Mathematics GPS -- and the CRCT -- are very rigorous. For instance, up until last year, only a small number of students were exposed to Algebra in grade 8. This year, every 8th grader is taking Algebra, as well as Statistics and Geometry.

When you raise standards and expectations, it is not unusual to see a temporary dip in the percent of students who are meeting those expectations. We have seen this in other grades and other areas of the curriculum. The numbers we are seeing in Grade 8 Mathematics are generally what we expected.

We know that our mathematics teachers have worked hard to implement our new curriculum. And we know our students are working hard and are challenged by the new content. We also know that some teachers, parents and students are frustrated by these first results.

Additionally, we realize these results have a big impact on the number of students who must retest under the state's promotion and retention policy (students in grades 5 and 8 must pass the reading and mathematics CRCTs in order to be automatically promoted to the next grade). These results could also affect the status of schools under No Child Left Behind. We are working on some policy and budgetary flexibility to assist systems:

- Money will be available for systems to use to offset increased summer school costs.



- We are asking systems to keep detailed records on the costs of remediation and retesting so we can champion for additional funds, if needed.

- In regards to NCLB, we asked earlier this year for an adjustment to the annual academic goals in math to adjust for the rigor of the curriculum. These goals -- called Annual Measurable Objectives -- were set before the new curriculum was written. We will continue to pursue this flexibility.

But as Georgians, it is imperative that we are honest about our mathematics achievement. For too long we have had a vast majority of our students performing well on state tests, only to be poorly prepared for national assessments. The result has been low national test scores and, ultimately, students who are not college or work ready.

I know in future years, we will see improved scores in 8th Grade Mathematics, just like we are seeing in other areas of the new curriculum. And it's important to note that this year's 8th graders are better prepared for high school mathematics than ever before and will be more competitive in the 21st century.

SOCIAL STUDIES

While, again, we do not have statewide or system results, we are fairly certain that a substantial majority of our 6th and 7th grade students did not meet standards on the Social Studies exam. Preliminary reports put the pass rate on these two exams at 20-30 percent. The dip in the pass rate from previous years is far more dramatic than we have seen in other areas when we have transitioned to the new curriculum. It is cause for concern.

In the next week, I will empanel a group of Georgia teachers and curriculum specialists to review the first-year implementation of our new standards in social studies to figure out what may have caused such poor performance. One area that will be looked at is whether these middle grade social studies standards were clear enough. It appears that the specificity of the test questions may have caught some students off guard. We have to do better with this.

We know our social studies teachers care deeply and are working hard. These results are not reflective of their instruction or their effort.

It is my hope we can work together to determine where changes must be made so we can truly reflect the learning that's going on in our classrooms.