

Public Notice on ESSA Waiver for the Expansion of the Middle School Assessment Exception

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is seeking comments on the following waiver request for the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. A survey with an opportunity for comments is provided at this [link](#) until 11:59 p.m. **November 29, 2020**. Questions should be submitted to Allison Timberlake, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, at atimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us.

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, states are provided the option of exempting eighth-grade students from their end-of-grade mathematics assessment provided a) those students have completed a high school mathematics course and are administered the end-of-course assessment associated with that course, b) their performance on the assessment is used in the year the student takes the assessment to measure academic achievement, and c) in high school the student takes a more advanced high school mathematics assessment. State officials in Georgia, however, believe the exception is not adequately broad or inclusive. As such, Georgia is submitting a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education for one year (2020-2021 school year), asking that this exception in mathematics for eighth grade be applied also to sixth and seventh grade students completing high school mathematics courses. Additionally, due to the reduction in testing in Georgia Senate Bill 367 which eliminates Geometry/Analytic Geometry assessments, Georgia is requesting to waive the requirement that when a student reaches high school, the student must take a more advanced high school mathematics assessment.

In submitting this ESSA waiver, the State is seeking flexibility from the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that Georgia is promoting the expansion of advanced learning in mathematics for middle school students. In 2019, there were 27,288 mathematics (Algebra/Coordinate Algebra) end-of-course tests administered to middle school students. Eighth-grade students accounted for 26,869 (98.5%) of those tests. The remaining 419 tests were taken by sixth and seventh grade students and would not have been covered currently under ESSA's middle school exception. The application of this exception across all middle school grades will further the State's commitment to providing accelerated learning opportunities for all students while eliminating the burden of double testing. Should this waiver be denied, we anticipate that the more than 30,000 middle school students in Georgia that are taking an Algebra or Coordinate Algebra course during the 2020-2021 school year will be expected to take the corresponding end-of-course exam, as well as an end-of-grade exam aligned to standards that are written for a course they did not take.

Prior to submitting this ESSA waiver request, public notice is being provided to education stakeholders across Georgia. GaDOE is providing notification by posting an intent to request a waiver on the GaDOE website. In addition, the State has emailed information pertaining to the waiver to all district superintendents, assessment directors, curriculum directors, and Title I directors. Copies of all comments that GaDOE may receive from stakeholders in response to this notice will be attached to the waiver request sent to the U.S. Department of Education.
