



Muscookee County School District  
Columbus, Georgia

David F. Lewis  
Superintendent of Education

P.O. Box 2427  
Columbus, Georgia 31902-2427

November 10, 2015

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) is a new annual test that replaced the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and the secondary level End-of-Course Test (EOCT). Georgia Milestones was given for the first time to students in grades 3 through high school this past school year. The test measures how well students have mastered the skills outlined in the state-adopted standards for language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students in grades 3 through 8 take an end-of-grade (EOG) test in each content area. Accelerated middle and all high school students take an end-of-course (EOC) test when enrolled in Algebra, American Literature, Biology, Economics, Geometry, Ninth Grade Literature and Composition, Physical Science, and U.S. History.

The Georgia Department of Education will soon be releasing district and individual student results of the Georgia Milestones Assessment taken at the end of last school year. **Districts across the state expect to see lower performance levels than in the past due to the increased difficulty of this new test.**

The State School Superintendent, Richard Woods, stated at the release of the state results, "These results show a lower level of student proficiency than Georgians are used to seeing, but that does not mean Georgia students know less or that teachers are not doing a great job – it means they've been asked to clear a higher bar."

The Muscookee County School District welcomes these higher expectations as our educators continue working hard to ensure that our students are nationally and internationally competitive.

It is important to understand the differences between previous state tests, the new state test (Georgia Milestones), and the reasons for the necessary changes. The most significant change is the increase in difficulty, which was required to match the test to our state standards and raise expectations for Georgia students. The new test includes both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, which call for a much deeper level of understanding. Some questions require students to give a reason for the answer they chose or to identify why an answer may not be correct. A writing section has also been added to the language arts portion of the Georgia Milestones at every grade level. Over fifty percent of students within the district took the assessment on-line this past school year. However, over the next four years the test will be administered completely on-line to meet state guidelines.

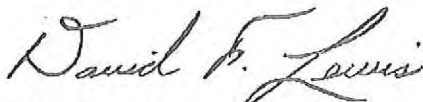
Your student's performance on each section of Georgia Milestones will be reported using four achievement levels:

- **Beginning Learners** are students that will require a significant amount of support from home and school to be successful in the next grade level.
- **Developing Learners** have shown partial mastery of their grade level standards, but will need some additional home and school support to be successful in the next grade level.
- **Proficient Learners** have strongly shown their mastery of their grade level standards and are ready to move up to the next grade level.
- **Distinguished Learners** have shown mastery beyond their grade level, which indicates readiness for advanced coursework.

Our school district staff is working hard to address the increased difficulty of the Georgia Milestones. Two years ago, the District reorganized into three regions (Central, East, and West) to provide more instructional support to teachers and administrators. In the Fall of 2014, new reading and math curriculums were implemented at the elementary level. These curriculums mirror the exact type of thinking and questioning our students will see on Georgia Milestones. At middle and high schools, the District has begun to focus on using more challenging texts to support students' ability to read for deeper understanding. At the middle and high school level, the District will be adopting English Language Arts curriculum that also aligns to the new, higher expectations. This new curriculum will begin implementation next school year.

As we move forward, the newly released scores will serve as a baseline for our students and schools. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you and your student so they can pursue any option they desire after graduation or what we term as a full-option graduate. If you have questions, please visit the Georgia Milestones information site: <http://sites.muscogee.k12.ga.us/georgiamilestones>, contact your student's school, or the district office.

Sincerely,



Dr. David F. Lewis  
Superintendent of Education