

The Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)

The Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA) is a key component of the Georgia Student Assessment Program. An essential tenet of both the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is the fact that states must ensure that all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, have access to a general curriculum that encompasses challenging academic standards. States must also ensure that all students are assessed for their progress toward meeting academic standards.

In order to accomplish this, states must have curricular standards that include all students and then must assess those students with statewide tests of achievement or develop an alternate assessment. Students with significant cognitive disabilities may be assessed via an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards. The US Department of Education (USDOE) defines an alternate achievement standard as one that “sets an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard.” Alternate achievement standards must be aligned to state academic content standards, although they may reflect prerequisite or entry-level skills.

The GAA is a portfolio of student work that enables the demonstration of achievement and progress relative to selected skills that are aligned to the Georgia curriculum. The portfolio is used to capture student learning and achievement/progress in four content areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. This assessment program promotes a vision of enhancing capacities and integrated life opportunities for students who experience significant cognitive disabilities. Committees of Georgia educators developed the requirements of the portfolio system including the number of required pieces of evidence of student performance of tasks aligned to content standards (i.e., student work samples), types of evidence, and the parameters/timing of the collection of student work samples.

Georgia educators also informed the development of the rubrics by which the student work samples are evaluated. The GAA portfolio entries are scored for four discrete dimensions: fidelity to standard, context, achievement/progress, and generalization. A

separate score is assigned for each dimension. The focus is on academic content and skills.

- Kindergarten and Grades 3,4,6, and 7 assemble a portfolio in English Language Arts and Mathematics
 - Grades 5, 8 and 11 assemble a portfolio in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

Teachers collect evidence of student performance of tasks aligned to content standards. This evidence shows a student's achievement/progress toward those standards.