

Pataula Charter Academy/Spring Creek Charter Academy Assessment Policies/Procedures

The Purpose of the Assessment Program

Assessment is a critical part of school improvement and student learning. The school assessment program allows the school to gather information for a variety of purposes. Well-designed and appropriately used assessments provide the following benefits:

1. Teachers gain information about individual students' strengths and weaknesses.
2. Teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction.
3. Students are made aware of their skills in a variety of areas.
4. Teachers, parents, students, and policy makers make more informed decisions.
5. Programs can be evaluated for their impact on learning.
6. The school can report on academic progress.

The Assessment Program consists of a variety of assessment types and formats including norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, nationally developed tests, and locally-developed assessments in core content areas. The primary goal of the assessment program is to monitor and improve student performance and achievement. A second equally important role of assessment is to provide the necessary information to improve curriculum and instructional practices. These two goals are inextricably linked and cannot be considered apart from each other.

No single assessment or assessment type can serve all of the needs for information; therefore, the assessment program includes a wide range of instruments and procedures. Using multiple sources of assessment information can frame the answers to key student performance and school improvement questions including:

1. Is the school achieving a high level of performance?
2. Which areas of student achievement are in need of improvement?
3. Are educational programs achieving the results for which they were designed and improving learning outcomes for students?
4. Which students are in need of alternative instructional strategies?
5. How much value is being added for students?

The answers to some questions carry high stakes for individual students and schools (i.e., district, state, and national accountability). The higher the stakes, the more vital it is to ensure that assessments used to gather information are reliable and valid for the intended use and administered in a standardized manner. Lower stakes questions can be answered with frequent, informal assessments and varying assessment types because the answers to these questions do not carry such serious consequences (i.e., questions about trying a different instructional strategy). The purpose of an assessment is always considered when selecting/developing an assessment instrument and interpreting results.

Assessments

As Georgia public schools, PCA and SCCA , adhere to all applicable laws and state board rules in regards to state testing requirements and uses the Georgia Student Assessment Handbook as a guide for the

assessment plan. Therefore, the schools will assess all students using SBOE-designated assessment instruments, as required. The schools also use a balanced assessment program in order to meet the goals of assessment and individual students' needs. As such, PCA and SCCA administer the following state required assessments:

Milestone End of Grade	3 rd -8 th grade
Milestones End of Course	High School
GKIDS and GKIDS Readiness Check	Kindergarten
Universal Reading and Dyslexia Screeners	Kindergarten - 3 rd grade
WIDA Screener	Screening for English Language Learners
ACCESS	English Language Learners
GAA	Special Education (based on IEP)
CoGat/Torrance/Gifted Evaluation Scale or Gifted Rating Scale	Students referred for Gifted

PCA and SCCA also use the following assessments as part of the school's balanced assessment program and to help meet the school's mission:

PSAT	10 th grade
End of Pathway Assessment	High School
NWEA MAP Growth	1 st -8 th grade
Formative Assessments	All grade levels
Summative Assessments	All grade levels
Projects/Products	All grade levels

Assessment Calendar and Scheduling

Each year a calendar is set for all school-level testing. The DOE's testing windows are used to assist in creating the calendar. School holidays and events, technology and other logistic considerations, and students' needs are also taken into consideration when creating the testing calendar.

Scheduling of tests is in harmony with the guidelines, directions, and time limits indicated in the examiner's manual for the test being administered. Tests are scheduled in a manner that ensures test security as well as valid and reliable test results. Teachers do not allow students to complete a testing session over more than one day rather than completing the testing in one sitting as indicated in the examiner's manual, depending on the test and its administration protocol. Breaks for students during a testing session are not longer than the time indicated in the examiner's manual.

The Assessment Calendar is communicated to teachers, students, and parents through handbooks and the school website.

Assessment Preparation and Training

PCA and SCCA work to ensure that students are prepared to be successful on academic assessments. Test preparation must not significantly detract from instruction of students. Instead, test preparation activities are incorporated into regular, ongoing instructional activities, whenever possible. Appropriate

test preparation activities are those that contribute to student performing as near as possible to their true academic achievement levels. Appropriate activities include general test-taking skills and providing practice, familiarizing students with the format of the test, and teaching students how to prepare for tests.

Teachers participate in on-going, job-embedded professional development on creating and analyzing classroom assessments. An emphasis is put on balancing formative and summative assessments, as well as offering a variety of assessment methods (i.e. multiple choice tests, essay tests, projects/products, online assessments, etc.) Teachers also work with Academic Coaches and peers on using individual student portfolios to improve academic performance.

District and School Test Coordinators, Test Administrators, and Test Proctors will receive training specific to state assessments. District Test Coordinator will receive training through the state's testing webinars or other trainings offered by the state. The District Test Coordinator will ensure that School Test Coordinators are trained either through the state's trainings or will train them herself. School Test Coordinators will ensure that all Test Administrators and Proctors are trained. Training topics must include at a minimum roles and responsibilities, test security and ethics, material management, procedures for before, during, and after testing, and approved testing accommodations. Trainings should be based on state guidance from the Student Assessment Handbook, testing manuals, and/or other guidance from the state. Documentation of trainings, including agendas, handouts, and sign-in sheets must be maintained at the school level and submitted to the District Testing Coordinator.

Test Security and Ethics

Standardized testing is an integral part of the education of all students. The purpose of state assessments is to determine the achievement level of students and to measure improvement of programs and schools. PCA/SCCA wants to ensure that its achievement test results are a valid reflection of how students are performing. While high scores are a priority, this is never accomplished at the expense of the validity of those scores. Valid achievement scores are in the students' best interest and this can only be accomplished when ethical testing practices are ensured by the whole organization. In addition, testing practices must meet state and national standards for ethics in testing. As such, the following are testing violations and consequences of such.

Major Testing Violations:

- Breach of Test Security procedures
- Failure to provide or attend training
- Failure to follow directions specified in the manual
- Coach, prompt, alter or provide answers to students during the test
- Interpret, explain, or paraphrase test items (if not an approved accommodation)
- Copy or take notes on test items

Consequences of Testing Violations:

- If anyone is aware of any testing violations, they should report them to the District Testing Coordinator immediately.
- The Superintendent will report any suspected testing violations to the Georgia State Department of Education and the District Testing Coordinator Professional Standards Commission.

- The Professional Standards Commission is authorized to suspend, revoke, or deny certificates, to issue a reprimand or warning, or to monitor the educator’s conduct and performance after an investigation is held and notice and opportunity for a hearing are provided to the certificate holder.

Test Security Procedures

The school shall adhere to all written regulations and procedures relating to testing and test administration, including the distribution and collection of test materials, test security, use of test results and official testing dates established in the Student Assessment Handbook, test administration manuals such as System Coordinator’s Manual, School Test Coordinator’s Manual, and Examiner’s Manual, and assessment supplements and correspondence. Assessment guidelines shall be reviewed annually.

Testing Coordinator’s Role:

- Attend all GA DOE or local required trainings for Test Coordinators
- Create procedures for testing security
- Train test administrators on testing security
- Create a schedule for testing and provide proctors
- Receive testing materials
- Securely store testing materials when not in use
- Create and implement a process whereby testing materials are handed out and returned by teachers in a secure manner.
- Monitor all aspects of testing; receipt and return of materials and actual testing
- Return materials as instructed in manual
- Maintain all training and security procedure documentation

Test Administrator’s Roles:

Note: All Test Administrators must have a valid PSC educator certificate

- Attend training
- Ensures security of test booklets before, during, and after testing
- Follow directions
- Arrange seats to promote individual work
- Circulate about the classroom to prevent cheating and other violations
- Be familiar with allowable student accommodations
- Account for all testing materials

Before the test teachers should:

- Read your Test Examiner manual.
- Cover or take down all educational materials from your walls or off student desks.
- Prepare children for test-taking strategies and guidelines. (For example, they may bring a “just for fun” book to read after testing, but may not pull out a text book.)

Receiving materials/During Tests:

- All secure materials must be counted and signed out accurately.
- Monitor students during testing
- Follow testing directions exactly; do not alter directions unless required by student accommodations.
- **DO NOT COPY ANY STATE TEST MATERIALS!!!!**

After tests:

- Turn in all testing materials as directed.
- Teachers and administrator should count materials, check that numbers match, and sign Security Checklist, including time materials are turned in.

Testing Accommodations for Students with IEPs or 504 Plans

The schools shall ensure that all students with IEPs or Section 504 Accommodation Plans participate in the state and local assessment programs. The IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plans for these students shall identify the state- approved accommodations required to enable participation.

1. Decisions related to the participation in and identification of any needed accommodations in administration shall be made by the IEP team in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) review or by the Section 504 Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) committee in its meeting.
2. All students with disabilities shall be coded according to the primary disability for each assessment in which they participate. Student participation in and performance on all assessments shall be accurately documented within each student's IEP or IAP so that state and federal reporting guidelines can be met and so that performance outcome measures can be monitored for compliance.
3. Accommodations must be provided for students with disabilities as identified in the IEP or Section 504 IAP. Accommodation decisions made by the appropriate IEP or Section 504 IAP committee shall take into account the accommodations that are currently used in the instructional or classroom assessment process and must be part of the usual instructional practice for the student. Additionally, these committees shall consider whether the accommodation is necessary for access to the assessment process, previous experience with and the usefulness of the recommended accommodation, and whether or not the recommended accommodation impacts the integrity of the assessment. Students shall receive the accommodations they need in order to meaningfully participate in the assessment, but should not be given more than is necessary to meaningfully participate. The majority of students are expected to participate in the regular assessments with only a small percentage requiring a conditional/nonstandard administration. Only state-approved accommodations may be included in an IEP or Section 504 IAP.
4. Accommodations can result in administrations of the assessment that are either standard or conditional. Standard administration refers to testing conditions in which the procedures and directions are administered exactly as described in the test administration manual and non-altering accommodations are used. Conditional administration refers to use of more expansive accommodations utilized to provide access for a small percentage of students with more severe

disabilities who would not be able to access the assessment without such assistance. Conditional accommodations shall be used sparingly as the majority of students requiring accommodations are able to successfully demonstrate their achievement with standard accommodations. The use of conditional accommodations must be required by the student to access the test because of his or her disability and documentation substantiating the need shall be included in the student's IEP along with specific instructional goals to address the need. Assessments differ in what results in standard and conditional administrations. Specific information concerning the standard or conditional nature of an accommodation is published annually in the Student Assessment Handbook and in the respective testing administration materials that accompany each assessment (e.g., Examiner's Manual and Directions for Administration). Should an individual student need an accommodation not on the approved list for a state test, approval must be granted by the Assessment and Accountability Division of the GaDOE before the accommodation may be used.

5. When an IEP team determines that a student at any grade level is not able to participate in an administration of any local or state-mandated assessment, even with reasonable accommodations, the IEP team will document the reasons and make the necessary alternate assessment decision for that student following the state-approved participation guidelines. For the state-mandated assessments, the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards shall be the GAA. A relatively small percentage of students (approximately 1%) are expected to participate through an alternate assessment.
6. Students with significant cognitive disabilities participating in the GAA must be provided access to the state-adopted content standards. Educators may adjust the learning expectations for this group of unique students provided the instruction is based on and aligned to the grade-level content standards. Instruction may reflect pre-requisite skills but must be sufficiently challenging for the individual student.
7. All students are expected to participate in all state-mandated assessments including students pursuing a Special Education Diploma. Most students are expected to participate in standard administrations, with a small percentage (less than 3%) under conditional administrations and a small percent (approximately 1%) in the GAA.

Testing Accommodations for English Language Learner Students

Students who have been defined as English Learner (EL) shall participate in all assessment programs. These students shall be coded EL on each test answer document. If a student has exited the ESOL program or an alternative language assistance program in the past four years, the student shall be coded EL-M on each test answer document. A student who has been exited for more than four years from the ESOL program shall not be coded as EL or EL-M on test answer documents.

In certain situations, individual needs of EL and EL-M students may warrant accommodations. These accommodations shall be determined by and recorded during a documented meeting of the EL Testing Participation Committee. Those students identified as EL-M may receive, based on individual need, standard state-approved accommodations for a maximum of two years after exiting ESOL or an alternative language assistance program. At the end of the first two years of the monitoring period, EL-M students are no longer eligible for test administration accommodations. Testing accommodations shall be made only when appropriate documentation is on file for each eligible student. Administration of the assessments and use of test administration accommodations, including conditional accommodations for those students with very limited English proficiency, shall be according to

established guidelines and procedures in the test administration manual(s), Examiner's Manual and the Student Assessment Handbook. Accommodation decisions made shall take into account the accommodations that are currently used in the instructional or classroom assessment process and must be part of the usual instructional practice for the student. Additionally the EL Testing Participation Committee shall consider experience with and utility of the accommodation and whether or not the recommended accommodation impacts the integrity of the assessment. Conditional accommodations shall be used sparingly and shall not be assigned to EL-M students. The local system and DOE shall monitor participation rates for each assessment program, and the usage of accommodations, including conditional accommodations.

The EL Testing Participation Committee shall be composed of a minimum of three members, one of whom is a certified educator. The EL/ ESOL teacher/ paraprofessional/ aide currently serving the student with English language assistance is required to be a member of the committee. The remaining members shall be chosen from the following: regular language arts, reading or English teacher; student's parent or legal guardian or the student, if 18 years or older; school administrator; other content area teachers; counselor; school psychologist; and lead teacher. Documentation of each EL Testing Participation Committee shall be placed in the student's permanent record. These documents shall contain the following information: names of participants; date(s) of meeting(s); date of entry into U.S. schools; test scores proving eligibility for ESOL services; the dates of administration and the name of the tests to be administered; alternatives considered (i.e., regular administration, accommodations); final action including specific accommodations for each test/subtest consistent with current instructional accommodations; signatures of committee members, school administrator and, parent, legal guardian or student if 18 years or older. The list of tests to be administered must include all state assessments that are mandated for the student's grade level. In addition to these state assessments, students who are required to participate in language proficiency tests under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act must participate in the language proficiency test prescribed by the state.

EL students enrolling for the first time in a U.S. school may receive a one-time deferment from a content area assessment, other than mathematics or science, if their proficiency in English indicates that testing is not in the best educational interest of the student. This one-time deferment may occur during the first twelve months of enrollment in a U.S. school. This deferment requires a documented meeting of the EL Test Participation Committee. Any EL student receiving a deferment shall participate in the state adopted language proficiency assessment. No student may be deferred from any mathematics or science content area assessments, nor may any student be deferred from the Georgia Milestones end of course assessments regardless of the length of time in a US school.

Tests Communication and Records

The Georgia Department of Education requires that assessment information be communicated to all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, community members, Governing Board members, and administrators. All assessment information is communicated to the appropriate stakeholders in a timely and understandable format.

The Governing Board is informed annually of test results of large-scale assessments. All such assessment information is presented in a global and disaggregated form for the current school year and longitudinally. Results are reported for each content area and grade level and if available, growth analysis, comparative data, and trend analysis.

Parents and community members are made aware of assessment information through the district website, reports to local newspapers, and through individual assessment reports for their own children. Teachers and administrators are provided with both individual and aggregate data for instructional planning and school improvement planning purposes. All district staff are provided appropriate assessment data for creating and revising school improvement plans. This information is also used to inform program evaluations in order to best inform and support the improvement of academic programs.

The school shall ensure that individual student assessment scores become a part of students' records as soon as possible after testing and that records follow students to their new schools when requested as specified in Rule 160-5-1-.14 Transfer of Student Records.

Student participation in and performance on all state-mandated assessments, including the GAA shall be accurately documented so that state and federal reporting guidelines can be met and so that performance outcome measures can be monitored for compliance.