

Metro students taking CRCT soon

By Laura Diamond and Michelle E. Shaw
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ATLANTA — When two of Wanda Ibdapo's children go to their Fulton County schools Thursday, they'll take important state exams. If her children attended school in Gwinnett County, they would have started taking the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), a series of tests that measure mastery of the curriculum. If they went to class in Atlanta or Clayton, Cobb and DeKalb counties, they wouldn't take the tests until next week.

The Georgia Department of Education set aside April 2 through May 2 to administer the exams and allows local leaders to pick their testing dates. Fulton and Gwinnett officials say they give the test this week because students are rested from spring break and so schools can get the results back earlier. Other districts, including Cobb and DeKalb, pick the end of the testing window to give students and teachers more time to prepare.

The CRCT measures whether students are learning the state-approved curriculum. Results from some portions of the exam are used in certain grades to determine whether a student is promoted to the next grade. All third-graders must score at or above expectations in reading on the CRCT to move up to the fourth grade. Likewise, students in fifth and eighth grades who score below the standard in reading and math cannot go to the next grade level unless they attend summer school and pass make-up tests. The exam also decides whether schools meet testing goals required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Schools that fail to meet goals face sanctions.

The amount of teaching time before the CRCT is fairly consistent across the state because districts that start the school year later test later, said Christopher Domaleski, associate superintendent for assessment and accountability for the state education department. Why the system gives the test the day after kids return from spring break. She said students would benefit from the extra week of review children in other districts get. "Their brains are not in testing mode after being off for a week," Kratofil said. "Just to get them up on time and back in a school routine is hard. Why add a standardized test?"

Gwinnett tests students the day after break because they're well-rested, said Jane Stone, director of assessment for the district. She said teachers review with students before they leave for break and the Monday they return. Fulton school leaders test midweek so students have a few days to settle back into a routine after spring break.

Some parents, like Ibdapo, don't mind whether their children take the test earlier than those in neighboring counties. Earlier testing means parents will know whether their kids need summer school before they make family vacation plans, she said. "I maybe would have preferred if my kids didn't take the test right after spring break, but I don't really think this is poor timing," she said. "How much preparing can you do? Either you know it or you don't."

1. In paragraph form, identify the primary objective of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests as well as repercussions per grade level, which one might encounter assuming he or she did not perform to standard.
2. In accordance with the passage above, compare and contrast the pros and cons associated with an early and later standardized testing date.
3. In your personal opinion, is the CRCT a reliable assessment method? Explain.
4. The 2007-08 Mathematics CRCT will consist of 70 questions and is being administered on Thursday, April 24, 2008. Under the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) a *level three* score is one who exceeds expectations and scores 850 – 950; *level two* meets standards scores 800 – 849; *level one* does not meet standards at 650 – 799. Assuming a minimum passing score of 800 equates to about 60%, what would a score of 97% be? 78%?
5. Upon completion of this assignment, how far have we progressed through the 2007-08 series of *The Daughtry Times*®? Express your answer as a fraction, decimal, percentage, and pie chart.
6. Complete *The Daughtry Times*® "Writing Guidelines" checklist on all questions requiring a written response. To ensure compliance, neatly label each component adjacent to your paragraph.
7. Complete *The Daughtry Times*® "Preliminary Reading Guidelines" checklist prior to reading the passage and clearly identify each essential component of the article (title, keywords in italics, etc.).
8. Using contextual clues only, explain the meaning of the italicized words: *sanctions* and *curriculum*. Additionally, use each word in a sentence to demonstrate further comprehension.
9. In paragraph form, explain at least five legitimate and educational purposes behind *The Daughtry Times*®.