



Georgia Milestones for Spring 2021

Dear Furlow Charter School Parents,

Thank you for your flexibility and partnership over the last year as we have all strived to keep children learning during the COVID-19 pandemic! This school year has been different than any other, and you may have questions about Georgia Milestones assessments. Georgia WILL HOLD Milestones for grades 3-8 and end-of-course exams for some high school level courses this spring. Please see the questions and answers below to learn more about the Georgia Milestones assessments for Spring 2021.

Why are we still testing scholars when they have experienced learning disruptions?

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) requested a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) from federal assessment requirements, but the request was denied for Georgia and **all** other U.S. states. In a recent letter to states regarding the decision, USED said, "To be successful once schools have reopened, we need to understand the impact COVID-19 has had on learning and identify what resources and supports students need."

What does this decision mean for Furlow Charter School?

In Georgia, the Milestones assessment system is used to fulfill federal requirements. Furlow Charter School is finishing up our plans for administering the Milestones assessments now. We will use the results to help us see how your child and our school are doing after a challenging school year. The dates and times for these tests are published to our school calendar at www.furlowcharter.org. They were also sent out on the parent promotion/retention letter.

Is anything different for Milestones this year?

Yes! Many things are different for Milestones this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Total testing time has been reduced by several hours, and tests may be conducted after the normal school day is over to give more opportunity for social distancing.
- State Schools Superintendent Woods has encouraged charter schools not to use Milestones results when making promotion and retention decisions this year. Our policy aligns with that suggestion.
- The federal government is expected to remove the requirement that 95% of scholars must take Milestones. State Schools Superintendent Woods has stated that scholars who are learning virtually (and typically learn in person) should not be required to come to school only to take the Milestones assessments. However, we still plan to test virtual scholars who would like to receive their data on their progress. They will test on their assigned days in the gym using a socially-distanced format. You must complete the required form if you wish for your virtual scholar to participate in this testing.

- The State Board of Education has reduced the weight of end-of-course tests for high school courses to at least 0.01% of scholars' final grades. This means that results from these tests will probably count much less than they normally do. Scholars are required to take the end-of-course test in Algebra I, Biology, American Literature, and US History.

Can my child “opt out” of Milestones?

Georgia is required to hold Milestones assessments by the federal government. Please notify us to complete our required form if you are refusing for your child to participate in Milestones so that we can plan. This form must be completed and returned no later than Wednesday, April 14th.

What happens if my child does not take the Milestones assessments?

Scholars who do not participate in Milestones assessments on the scheduled dates will be given the opportunity to attend a make-up session. If your child does not take an end-of-course assessment for a required high school course, he/she will receive an “incomplete” for the course until the child takes it at another time. As a reminder, the score on an end-of-course assessment will be a part of your child's final grade, with a 0.01% grade weight.

Where can I find more information and resources?

Please visit GaDOE's website for more information and resources about Georgia Milestones: <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Georgia-Milestones-Assessment-System.aspx>

We understand that this has been a difficult school year for everyone, and you and your child may be concerned about Milestones. We will work with all scholars to make sure that they feel ready and prepared. All results will only be used to help us provide the support that scholars need. We appreciate your continued partnership!

Sincerely,

Dr. Lezley B. Anderson
Executive Director