MISSION: READINESS
MILITARY LEADERS FOR KIDS





A STRONGER AMERICA

We need Georgia's Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments to achieve a stronger military and a more productive economy

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WHO WE ARE

Mission: Readiness is the nonprofit, nonpartisan national security organization of more than 400 retired generals, admirals and other senior retired military leaders who work to ensure continued American security and prosperity into the 21st century by calling for smart investments in the upcoming generation of American children. It operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America.

For a full listing of our membership, please see our website at www.missionreadiness.org.

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SUMMARY

Poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why an estimated 75 percent of all young Americans are unable to join the military. More than a quarter of young Georgians do not graduate high school on time and even among those who graduate from high school, a quarter of those seeking to enlist in the Army cannot join because of low scores on the military's entrance exam for math, literacy and problem solving.

We need enough physically fit and well-educated men and women without serious criminal records available to serve in tomorrow's armed services. What happens in our classrooms today will determine our future military readiness. Businesses in the private sector are also seeking many of the same skill sets and running into the same challenging deficits. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) can help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state, so that all students, no matter where they live, or how often they move, are prepared for success.

For years, each state has had its own particular educational standards and tests to assess student achievement. Standards and levels of "proficiency" varied greatly across states. As a result, there has been a lot of confusion about how different students really are doing. The military, with no objective way to compare applicants from different states, has to use its own assessment, the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Also, for children in military families, frequent moves across states with different standards results in children missing some subjects and repeating others.

The CCSS were developed by teachers, researchers and other experts, including experts from Georgia who were involved from the beginning. Georgia's earlier standards were one of the models used in the development process. Led by governors and chief state school officers, the resulting standards have been voluntarily adopted by 45 states, including Georgia, and by the U.S. Department of Defense for its schools on bases around the world. The Georgia State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in July 2010.

The CCSS establish a shared, rigorous set of educational standards for English language arts and mathematics for K-12 education. In addition to core academic content, the CCSS focus on critical thinking, complex problem solving and effective communication—all essential skills for today's and tomorrow's military, as well as for many other careers. In addition to core academic content, the CCSS focus on critical thinking, complex problem solving and effective communication—all essential skills for today's and tomorrow's military, as well as for many other careers.

But standards alone are not enough. To have an impact on student outcomes, there must be accountability. Standards must be accompanied by assessments, based on the standards, and a system for reporting results, so everyone will know how students are really faring. Standards are not curriculum; each state or school can develop its own curriculum. But once we know how students are doing, we can learn from other Georgia schools and schools in other states about what is working best and use that knowledge to inform our efforts to improve our children's education.

The new educational standards and assessments will not magically turn things around overnight. But having common standards and accountability through related assessments will move us closer to all students doing well. Georgia is moving in the right direction with our implementation of the Common Core State Standards. We must continue on this course.



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SCHOOL FAILURE IS A NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

Poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why an estimated 75 percent of all young Americans are unable to join the military.[1] In Georgia, 28 percent of young people do not graduate on time and 25 percent of high school graduates seeking to enlist in the Army cannot join because of low scores on the military's entrance exam for math, literacy and problem-solving.[2] These shortcomings in our state and local education systems are a threat to our future national security. It is important to note that businesses in the private sector are also seeking young adults with many of the same skill sets needed in the military and are running into the same challenging deficits. In addition, the military cannot recruit overweight individuals or those who have a conviction for a serious crime in their past, which further narrows the eligible pool of recruits.

MOVING AHEAD BY RAISING EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

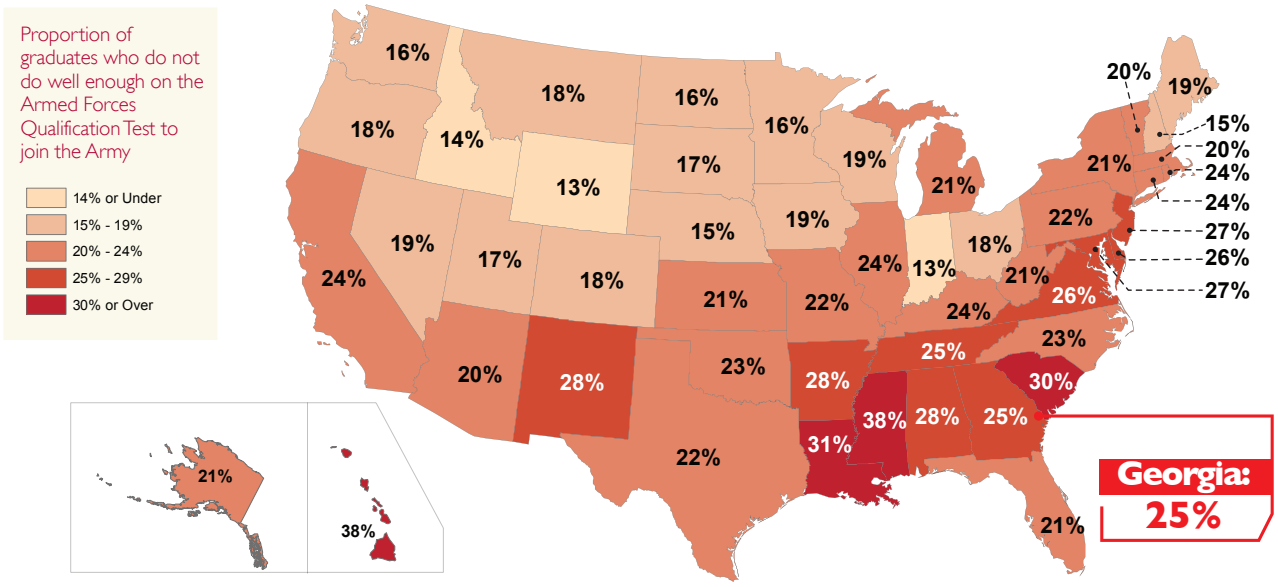
For years, each state had its own particular educational standards and tests to assess student achievement. Standards varied greatly across states. State tests also varied in content and on the level of performance deemed "proficient." As a result, a military applicant's having a high school diploma did not convey much information—a diploma from a state with high standards likely comes with a different skill set than one from a state with low standards.

Children in military families are also frequently burdened by variations in educational standards. Military children attend six to nine different schools during their elementary school years.[3] As they move between schools, they experience differences in standards and expectations, as well as different assessments, variations that can negatively impact their

INADEQUATE MILITARY ENTRANCE EXAM SCORES PREVENT YOUNG AMERICANS FROM SERVING

Proportion Who Score Too Low

Out of those who do graduate and try to join the Army, over one in five cannot join because they score too low on the military's entrance exam.



academic experience and performance. For example, a military child might take algebra for three years in different schools, but never learn geometry. Many non-military children are also mobile and can be negatively affected by variation in educational standards: more than 2.5 million children moved out of their home counties in 2011 and at-risk children (poor, those in single-parent families) are more likely to have frequent moves.[4]

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS)[5] offer a way out of these dilemmas. The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers spearheaded the development of the CCSS. A wide variety of stakeholders (teachers, academics, business leaders, etc.) participated in the development and vetting of the standards, a procedure that Ron Haskins, a former top staff member for the House Republicans on welfare reform, and other education experts called "impressive."[6] Experts from Georgia were involved in developing the standards from the beginning of the process, and Georgia's standards were one of the models that were used in the development process.[7]

Although states vary, there are some core skills all children need—reading and math as well as critical thinking, complex problem-solving and communication—wherever they live and whatever their career aspirations. The CCSS can help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state, so that all students, no matter where they live, or how often they move to a new school, are prepared for success in postsecondary education, the workforce and the military, if they choose to serve.

Forty-five states, including Georgia, as well as the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and four U.S. territories (American Samoa Islands, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and U. S. Virgin Islands), have voluntarily adopted the CCSS. Each state has its own process for adopting educational standards; in some states adoption of the standards went through the state legislature, in other states the adoption procedure was through the state board of education. The Georgia State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in July 2010 and they were implemented starting in the 2012-2013 school year.[8]

The Georgia CCSS establish a rigorous set of educational standards for K-12 education, for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. In addition to core academic content, the standards will help students develop higher-order skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and being able to comprehend and communicate complex text—skills essential for today's and tomorrow's military, as well as for many other jobs in the 21st Century workforce.

The Georgia CCSS can help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning. Given the rigor of the CCSS, it is likely that their implementation would result in more military applicants' being able to score highly enough on the ASVAB to join. Parents will also benefit from the CCSS, as they will know what their children should learn at each grade level, and can hold schools accountable.

In addition to core academic content, the CCSS focus on critical thinking, complex problem solving and effective communication — all essential skills for today's and tomorrow's military, as well as for many other careers.

The Georgia CCSS establish the content and skills that children must learn at each grade level, but they do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they specify a curriculum; these important decisions remain under teacher, local or state control. The CCSS also do not require collecting any new data on children or families.

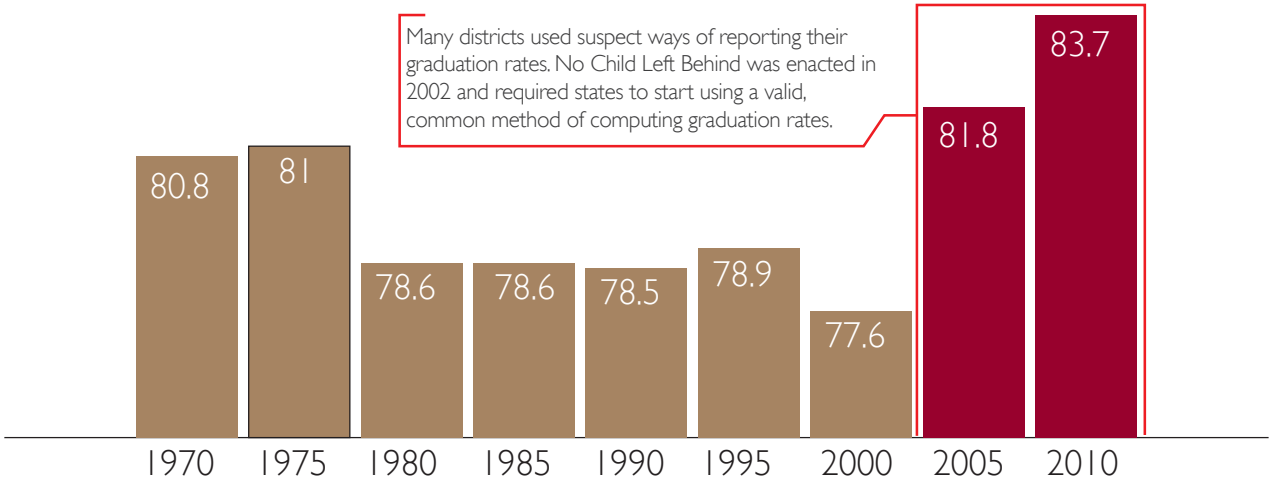
Results from Massachusetts demonstrate the importance of rigorous academic standards. In 1993, Massachusetts passed standards-based education reform legislation. Since that time, students in the Commonwealth have had dramatic academic growth, including leading the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress test (NAEP; the Nation's Report Card, a periodic assessment of what American students know and can do).[9]

ASSESSMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Education experts agree that standards alone are not enough—research has shown only weak relationships between the quality of state educational standards and achievement test scores. To have an impact on student outcomes, there must be accountability. Standards must be accompanied by assessments based on the standards, and a system for reporting results, so everyone will know how students are really faring.[10] There is currently a lot of confusion about student achievement levels, because each

WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE

Accurate, common measures of high school graduation rates spurred reforms that increased graduation rates. Similarly, common assessments implemented through Common Core can drive change.



Source: Richard Murnane

state developed its own standards and test. For example, in 2009 in Georgia, for 4th grade reading, only 29 percent of students scored proficient or higher on the NAEP, versus 87 percent on the state test.[11] If we do not know how students are really performing based on rigorous college- and career-ready standards, we do not know the scope of the problem, nor can we make informed efforts to solve it.

Results following implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) demonstrate the importance of accountability in improving outcomes, and the role of accurate, common measurement: when states were required to use a valid, common method of computing graduation rates and publicly report the results, graduation rates increased.[12] States could no longer manipulate how graduation rates were computed in order to maximize their results. Instead, they had to implement real reforms that contributed to a real change in student outcomes: more students graduating.

Rigorous assessment was also a significant component of the Massachusetts school reform effort. They developed an assessment, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), aligned to their educational standards. Results are reported for individual students, allowing both teachers and parents to see how each child is faring. The MCAS was also high stakes: after an implementation phase, students had to pass the MCAS in 10th grade in order to graduate from high school. Experts credit the combination of rigorous standards and aligned assessment for the excellent results Massachusetts has achieved in recent years.[13]

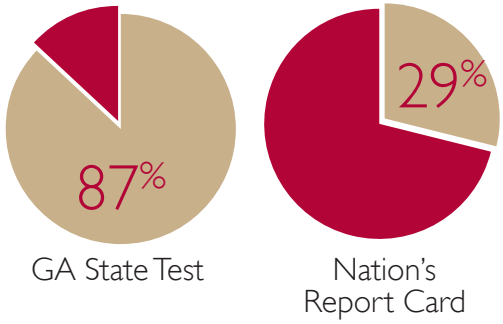
Georgia is developing assessments aligned to the CCSS, working with others in the region, with a goal of offering a regional test.[14] Common assessments will allow educators

REAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The "Nation's Report Card" currently helps just states see how they are doing, but common assessments will let individual school districts determine how well they are doing and will also let them learn from the districts that are seeing real changes.

GEORGIA STUDENTS:

4th Grade Reading Proficiency



"We've all heard that classic Willie Nelson song 'On The Road Again' right? Well this is going to sound ridiculous to most people but we are about to endure our 9th move in 18 years. Not bad when you consider we're a military family."

Blog post by Army Wife Teresa Warner

to determine how students are doing and to use this information to improve education. Short-term assessments will allow teachers to determine students' understanding of various concepts and then adjust teaching in real time to increase understanding. In the longer term, results of the "apples-to-apples" assessments of student learning, based on the standards, will produce group data that will provide educators with a basis for identifying and sharing education practices that work with other schools and districts.

In addition to standards and assessments, in order to affect student outcomes, we also need better curricula, compatible with the CCSS, as well as improved quality of teaching (including through better pre- and in-service training).[15] Teachers must also receive support to connect the standards to everyday life, develop curricula and lesson plans, and learn how to use assessment data effectively.

The new standards and assessments will not magically turn things around overnight. But having common standards and related assessments will allow states, districts and schools to share information on what works best, helping each to move closer to all students doing well. For example, different localities will use different curricula and teaching approaches. Assessments will reveal which curricula and teaching approaches work best with which groups of kids, and information can then be shared.

MOVING AHEAD

Military leaders understand that in order to get ahead, all students must be held to high standards and learn both the content and skills necessary for success. Georgia's Common Core State Standards are an important step in this direction and will also benefit children in military families who relocate to new schools frequently. Georgia is moving in the right direction by implementing the Common Core State Standards, and must continue on this course. This will ensure that students will be better prepared for postsecondary education, the workforce, and the military, if they choose to serve.

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS – GEORGIA

COUNTY	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (2010-11)	ANNUAL VIOLENT CRIMES (2008-10)	ADULT OBESITY RATE (2009)
STATE	67	42,509	28
Appling	61		33
Atkinson	78		29
Bacon	77	35	31
Baker	41	1	33
Baldwin	68	394	31
Banks	77	100	28
Barrow	64	325	29
Bartow	68	352	26
Ben Hill	65		33
Berrien	67	50	31
Bibb	51	969	30
Bleckley	72	37	29
Brantley	60	47	29
Brooks	60	149	31
Bryan	79	54	28
Bulloch	69	362	31
Burke	67	165	37
Butts	67	62	31
Calhoun	60	8	34
Camden	75	235	29
Candler	76	10	31
Carroll	71	851	31
Catoosa	76	108	33
Charlton	76	23	31
Chatham	54	1,312	29
Chattahoochee	67		32
Chattooga	75	43	31
Cherokee	75	189	28
Clarke	66	468	28
Clay		3	33
Clayton	51	1,612	35
Clinch	86	17	33
Cobb	72	2,119	24
Coffee	66	204	30
Colquitt	76		31
Columbia	76	152	26
Cook	78	52	33
Coweta	75	264	30
Crawford	42	38	30
Crisp	59	143	34
Dade	70	46	28
Dawson	74	20	27
Decatur	71	135	34
DeKalb	59	5,031	26
Dodge	69	95	36
Dooly	58	54	34
Dougherty	54	883	35
Douglas	71	373	31
Early	72	58	30
Echols	77	9	29
Effingham	80	54	32
Elbert	70	81	36
Emanuel	76	12	31

COUNTY	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (2010-11)	ANNUAL VIOLENT CRIMES (2008-10)	ADULT OBESITY RATE (2009)
Evans	65	29	32
Fannin	82	80	29
Fayette	78	84	24
Floyd	73	389	29
Forsyth	86	153	23
Franklin	75	32	28
Fulton	64	8,690	24
Gilmer	82	44	30
Glascock	80	0	27
Glynn	69	618	27
Gordon	81	156	31
Grady	73	45	33
Greene	53	53	32
Gwinnett	68	2,336	26
Habersham	68	90	27
Hall	71	361	28
Hancock	84	12	37
Haralson	68	135	31
Harris	78	24	28
Hart	72	87	30
Heard	78	25	28
Henry	72	483	28
Houston	73	484	29
Irwin	56	29	31
Jackson	81	109	26
Jasper	76	26	29
Jeff Davis	76	46	27
Jefferson	74	44	37
Jenkins	69		33
Johnson	79	35	35
Jones	72	41	30
Lamar	67	111	30
Lanier	64	11	31
Laurens	68	232	36
Lee	66	33	28
Liberty	67	262	32
Lincoln	76	18	33
Long	71	34	30
Lowndes	62	347	34
Lumpkin	81	66	28
McDuffie	77	79	30
McIntosh	77	62	32
Macon	64	40	34
Madison	77	121	31
Marion	74	35	32
Meriwether	70	58	32
Miller	83	11	33
Mitchell	69	153	34
Monroe	78	47	31
Montgomery	73		31
Morgan	86	27	29
Murray	66	57	30
Muscogee	68	1,146	35
Newton	64	387	31

COUNTY	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (2010-11)	ANNUAL VIOLENT CRIMES (2008-10)	ADULT OBESITY RATE (2009)
Oconee	92	93	26
Oglethorpe	70	49	31
Paulding	76	317	26
Peach	60	177	30
Pickens	81	51	26
Pierce	84	22	29
Pike	85	13	30
Polk	60	150	29
Pulaski	70	7	30
Putnam	63	89	29
Quitman	69	14	33
Rabun	90	13	27
Randolph	60	7	36
Richmond	55	1,112	33
Rockdale	66	397	32
Schley	76	8	31
Screven	82	42	31
Seminole	72	22	33
Spalding	59	288	32
Stephens	82	63	33
Stewart	76	25	35
Sumter	63	260	35
Talbot	45	14	35
Taliaferro	40	5	35
Tattnall	60	43	29
Taylor	51	16	34
Telfair	75	48	30
Terrell	76	46	38
Thomas	62	119	34
Tift	72	310	33
Toombs	73	139	32
Towns	88	15	27
Treutlen	79	17	35
Troup	64	241	33
Turner	71	8	34
Twiggs	59	15	33
Union	89	11	27
Upson	64	80	30
Walker	72	330	31
Walton	74	201	28
Ware	76	152	31
Warren	75		35
Washington	74	77	35
Wayne	62		32
Webster	67		32
Wheeler	88	4	30
White	86	64	29
Whitfield	67	323	29
Wilcox	65	11	33
Wilkes	67	55	31
Wilkinson	66	13	32
Worth	65	24	30

Endnotes

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