

# Georgia

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## Introduction

### Overview of Education System

Education in Georgia is based on principles of each citizen's freedom of choice and collaboration, fair competition and equal opportunity, civil unity, and respect for cultural identity. Education that is offered in Georgia encourages people to acquire and develop the knowledge and skills necessary for social accomplishment and self-realization. The government of Georgia defines the broad goals of basic education, attainable results, strategies for action, and curricula. Education is regulated by the Law of Georgia on General Education (adopted in 2005).<sup>1</sup>

According to the Law of Georgia on General Education, the education system consists of three levels: primary education (Grades 1 to 6), basic education (Grades 7 to 9), and secondary education (Grades 10 to 12). After completing basic education, students can continue to a vocational education institution or pursue an undergraduate education. To receive a bachelor's degree, a student must complete secondary education or vocational education programs in which secondary education learning outcomes are integrated.<sup>2</sup>

Georgia has 2,223 schools (2,004 public and 219 private), educating 591,850 students at all levels; 529,300 students are enrolled in public schools, and 62,550 students are enrolled in private schools. There are 63,700 teachers in Georgia; 55,900 teach in public schools, and 7,800 teach in private schools.<sup>3</sup>

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia launched the General Education Reform Support Program in more than 100 schools.<sup>4</sup> The program introduces constructive principles (active learning and teaching, knowledge building, learning to learn, interconnecting and organizing knowledge, and emphasizing comprehension rather than memorization), assessment oriented toward student development, and teamwork practices based on responsibility and collaboration. The program will be implemented gradually in every public school, with full implementation in 2023.

According to the constitution, the official language of Georgia is Georgian, and Abkhazian is the official language in the territory of Abkhazia (currently occupied by Russia). The majority of general education institutions provide instruction in Georgian. The Georgian language belongs to the Caucasian language group, which has its own unique alphabet. Considering the multiethnic population of the country, comprising Azeri, Armenian, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Greek,

Jewish, Kurdish, and Ukrainian communities, the law stipulates those students have the right to receive general education in their native language. According to the Law of Georgia on General Education, the Georgian government encourages ethnic minorities to receive general education in their native language and simultaneously improve their official language knowledge skills. This approach contributes to ethnic minorities' integration into Georgian society.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has also implemented the Teach Georgia program; Teach Georgia consultant teachers are selected via a contest and assigned to various regions in non-Georgian language schools. Additional services and scholarships are available for students who pass a national entrance examination and decide to continue their education at higher education institutions.

### Use and Impact of PIRLS

Georgia participated in the 2006, 2011, and 2016 cycles of PIRLS. The National Assessment and Examinations Center prepared and disseminated national reports, which are available on the center's website. Recommendations from the *PIRLS 2016 National Report* were discussed among the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, invited experts, nongovernment organizations, and a national curriculum group. The report was also reviewed by employers and other interested individuals, who made suggestions about how PIRLS results could be used to improve education.

### The Language/Reading Curriculum in Primary Grades<sup>5</sup>

Schools in Georgia do not use a reading curriculum at the national level, as reading instruction is incorporated in the subject of Language and Literature. The subject Language and Literature is regarded as one of the most important subjects and has received significant attention from policymakers and schools. This belief is reflected in various aspects of national policy.

The introduction to the national curriculum states that the curriculum's main purpose is to support every group involved in general education—including teachers, students, parents, textbook authors, and education managers—in planning and implementing the learning process effectively. The national curriculum describes requirements that students must fulfill for the successful completion of every grade and presents them in the form of outcomes and relevant indicators.

Since the adoption of the Law of Georgia on General Education in 2005, the curriculum has been changed several times, with the most recent revision effective from 2018 to 2024.<sup>6</sup> The national curriculum is based on “the assertion of National Purposes for General Education,” which determines how the education system of Georgia should support the development of national and universal values. It is one of the main means of achieving the National Goals of General Education.

The aim of teaching the state languages (Georgian/Abkhazian) is to develop free and creative individuals with national and universal values who will be able to engage actively in the public life

of the country, contribute to the development of the country, and further development of civil society.

Based on the educational goals, the curriculum specifies the following tasks for students:

- Acquire and deepen language skills and develop linguistic skills
- Express clear, fluent, and firm opinions
- Develop discussion skills
- Develop analytical skills (analysis, comparison, generalization) founded on a linguistic (textual) basis
- Establish the ability to study and comprehend varied texts by function and content
- Develop a creative (free) attitude toward texts
- Take part in discussions, establishing monologue and dialogue speech skills
- Develop the skills used in speech etiquette norms
- Develop writing and speech skills appropriate to the style of the objective task
- Develop the skills of creation and comprehension of texts of different types, styles, and genres
- Develop the ability to understand the writer's creation by subjective (important facts and moments in the writer's life) and objective (general context of the epoch) factors
- Develop the skill of expression of his/her own attitude toward the problems depicted in fiction and nonfiction texts, establishing personal position and working out argumentative skills
- Develop skills of aesthetic perception and evaluation of literary work
- Develop the ability to perceive values outlined in literary works and the ability to express one's own attitude toward them
- Develop the ability to understand the interaction of literary processes with the universal topics of national and world literature
- Develop a sense of respect for cultural heritage
- Develop and establish different types of attitudes (recognition and respect for personal differences, feeling of linguistic-cultural origin, desire to learn languages, etc.)
- Develop appreciation and respect for the sociocultural peculiarities of the different ethnic groups living in the state, and develop a positive attitude toward sociocultural diversity
- Develop understanding of a foreign culture
- Develop the ability to enhance the knowledge of the state language/languages
- Develop language learning skills (learn to study)
- Develop the ability to use digital technologies for education purposes
- Develop vital skills (cooperation, free choice, problem solving, creativity, etc.)
- Develop and work out a sense of citizenship of one's own country

Teaching the native language at the primary level develops linguistic skills in speaking, reading, and writing.

### Speech (Speaking)

Speech (listening and speaking) plays an important role in developing knowledge and linguistic skills in a systemic and consistent way. To speak about something after it was heard or narrated and to express an opinion or personal attitude toward it facilitates the comprehension process. By using the linguistic means of studying textual material and learning words (vocabulary) in the teaching process, the speech of the students is gradually enriched and refined.

### Reading

The primary aim of reading at the basic level is to decode written text (similar to encryption) by converting the graphical depiction of a word into an acoustic unit (sound). This is done by recognizing letters and connecting them with the appropriate sounds. This enables students to develop their fluent reading skills; at the same time, they should be able to master the skill of understanding what they are reading. This gives them the opportunity to acquire knowledge and get information from texts of different types and with different purposes.

### Writing

Most students study writing in the first year of their schooling. In order to progress in writing, students often must write purposefully. The teacher initially guides student writing, sometimes using models, to instruct students on how to write different types of texts. By fulfilling varied and meaningful written assignments, students will gradually refine their calligraphy, writing manner, and process of writing, which involves active participation in all three stages of writing: before writing, the process of writing, and after writing.

Exhibit 1 shows the standard of the subject Georgian Language and Literature.

#### Exhibit 1: Standard of Georgian Language and Literature (Grades 1 to 4)

Standard of Georgian Language and Literature (Grades 1–4)	
Speech	
The student should be able to do the following:	
<b>Geo. Primary.(I).1*</b>	Identify proper speech behavior in a familiar communication situation
<b>Geo. Primary.(I).2</b>	Listen to, understand, and convey the various types of texts defined by the standard
<b>Geo. Primary.(I).3</b>	Express personal attitude toward the topic of the text and the issues discussed in it; evaluate the behavior of the character(s) in a fiction text(s) and explain own view
<b>Geo. Primary.(I).4</b>	Use relevant vocabulary and linguistic syntactic constructions; demonstrate the basic norms of fluent speech etiquette
<b>Geo. Primary.(I).5</b>	Use the known strategies of a speech in accordance with its purpose

## Standard of Georgian Language and Literature (Grades 1–4)

### Reading

The student should be able to do the following:

**Geo. Primary.(I).6** Read fluently

**Geo. Primary.(I).7** Read and understand the different types of texts defined by the standard (connect verbal and nonverbal information [e.g., illustration and text] in the text)

**Geo. Primary.(I).8** Interpret small fiction texts in a verbal and nonverbal way; visually transform the verbal information and/or do the opposite

**Geo. Primary.(I).9** Express and explain personal attitude toward the read text; assess the theme and/or specific topics discussed in the text

**Geo. Primary.(I).10** Identify elements such as structural and compositional characteristics of different types of texts

**Geo. Primary.(I).11** Observe the linguistic and semantic side of various types of texts defined by the standard

**Geo. Primary.(I).12** Use familiar strategies of reading in accordance with the purpose

### Writing

The student should be able to do the following:

**Geo. Primary.(I).13** Create different types of simple texts on familiar topics that are defined by the standard

**Geo. Primary.(I).14** Use appropriate familiar vocabulary, linguistic syntactic constructions, and structural elements; demonstrate the basic norms of calligraphy and spelling

**Geo. Primary.(I).15** Use familiar strategies of reading in accordance with the purpose

\* The Georgian National Curriculum includes a syllabus for various subjects called **standards**. Each standard consists of **outcomes** that describe knowledge and skills that students should learn at the completion of the corresponding level. Each result written in the elementary level standards is preceded by an **index** (label) indicating the subject, the level, and the standard result number. For example, in **Geo. Primary.(I).1**, **Geo** indicates the subject Georgian Language and Literature, **Primary.(I)** indicates the standard of Grades 1 to 4, and **1** indicates the standard result number.

## Content

### Language Knowledge and Skills

- Language and lexicology: Supplying the active lexical fund (active vocabulary); enriching the verbal stock with subjective lexical units; identifying and using words with semantic and lexical links (synonyms, antonyms, the words of one semantic group); word-building at the elementary level; simple phraseology, observation of the word meaning
- Grammar: Recognizing and using affirmative, interrogative, negative, and exclamatory sentences; recognizing and using punctuation marks in the learned context (e.g., list, dialogue); learning the rules of how words change (e.g., the verb declension, the noun case, singular and plural numbers); recognizing and using linguistic-grammatical means expressing place, time, condition, and purpose; demonstrating the basic norms of fluent speech and spelling

### Concepts and Terms

- Word structure: sounds, vowels, consonants; letters, syllables
- Text structure: word, sentence, line, paragraph, text, title, chapter, address, signature
- Punctuation marks: point, comma, interrogative mark, exclamatory mark, dash, semicolon, ellipses

- Basic concepts of literary studies: story, fairy tale, fable, poem, legend, folktale/legend, author, character/hero (time of action, place; prologue of the story, middle part, epilogue); the theme of the composition, the bottom idea (the main idea), the epithet, the comparison

### Types of Reading Texts

- Fiction: prose and poetic compositions, folklore samples: poems, fairy tales, folktales, legends, myths, language breaking, riddles, stories, proverbs, etc.; comics
- Nonfiction
  - Pragmatic texts: advertising, recipe, schedule, TV program, invitation card, list, memorable rules, timetable, plan, instruction, warning inscription/signboard, open card, interview, application (e.g., in a children’s magazine), letter (e.g., friendly)
  - Information and texts of age-appropriate complexity: articles from children’s encyclopedia, journal, newspaper, and others
  - Didactic texts (alphabetical and colloquial texts, etc.)
- Multimedia: cartoon, children’s song, film, educational-cognitive film, different types of audiovisual materials (advertisements, announcements, reports, slideshows), children’s play; articles from a children’s website, web portal, mimicry, etc.

## Professional Development Requirements and Programs

A teacher has the right to advance his or her status through professional development. Teachers must meet several requirements to achieve the following:

- To obtain the status of senior teacher, a practitioner teacher must prove competency in a subject and a profession by earning the maximum number of credits set by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.
- To obtain the status of lead and mentor teacher, a senior or lead teacher must go through a complex evaluation process that includes a written examination in general professional skills that corresponds to the intended status-level advancement, and an assessment of teaching practice (classroom observation, portfolio assessment, interviewing school society).<sup>7</sup>

The National Center for Teacher Professional Development in Georgia offers teachers both general professional and subject-oriented trainings to ensure their continual professional development. Training programs are differentiated to meet the needs of beginning teachers and teachers who hold a higher status.<sup>8</sup>

## Monitoring Student Progress in Reading

Since 2006, the scale used to assess students in Georgia ranges from 1 to 10 (changed from 2 to 5). Teachers are required to develop assessment methods themselves to measure their students' progress. The national curriculum provides regulations on student assessment as well as recommendations on assessment strategies.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia introduced school leaving examinations. To obtain a school diploma, students in twelfth grade were required to pass computer adaptive standardized examinations in all school subjects. The National Assessment and Examinations Center administered the examinations online in every school. Those examinations were abolished in 2019.

In 2019, the National Assessment and Examinations Center presented a new National Assessment Project to the Georgian government.<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the new project, assessments will be conducted at the end of fourth, sixth, and tenth grades. The tests will be administered electronically across all of Georgia, and results will be provided electronically to students, teachers, and school principals. Schools will use these results to improve the quality of learning and teaching, the school climate, and student achievement. Schools have the right to introduce their own examinations at the end of the academic year.

## Special Reading Initiatives

In 2020, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia developed a new Basic Education Program: a four-year initiative to promote student-centered education in primary grades across the country and help young people gain the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking needed to grow into successful professionals and engaged, responsible citizens. Over the next four years, the trainers of the program will work with school administrators and primary grade teachers in the public schools across Georgia, helping to design and deliver interactive curricula focused on literacy, numeracy, problem solving, and critical thinking skills.<sup>10</sup>

## Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

### Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In mid-March 2020, Georgia went into a total lockdown. The government of Georgia closed all educational institutions, including public and private schools, in all major cities. Regional and rural schools were partly open depending on the current epidemiological situation. The 2020–2021 academic year started two weeks late in Georgia, on October 1 instead of September 15. Due to a significant reduction in COVID-19 cases, the government lifted restrictions, and schools opened all around the country. However, about two weeks later, Georgia faced a second wave of the

coronavirus and as a result all schools went back to total closure that lasted until mid-February 2021. Starting on February 15, the Georgian government decided to ease restrictions gradually, allowing schools to reopen with special precautions. Schools have shifted to a blended model of learning: Students are given options to attend classes in person or stay online. They are allowed to change their decision weekly.

During lockdown all schools in Georgia continued remote learning by providing online instruction for students at every level of schooling. According to the recommendations released by the Ministry of Health of Georgia, time allocated for ordinary lessons for primary school has been reduced to 20 minutes.

Georgia used different available platforms with government support, such as online portals, TV school, and Microsoft Teams for public schools. Private schools facilitated and enriched the learning process with alternatives like Zoom, Slack, Google Meet, and the EduPage platform, among others.

### Impact of the Pandemic on Student Learning

The main challenge of online instruction appeared to be the low rate of internet access among schoolchildren. According to research conducted by UNICEF, 15 percent of Georgia's school-age children have no internet access at home.<sup>11</sup>

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is piloting national assessments in fourth and sixth grades in the subjects of Language and Mathematics. The first large-scale study will be conducted at the end of the 2021–2022 academic year.

### Impact of the Pandemic on PIRLS 2021

Since 2006, the test administration period for all international studies in Georgia has been the end of May. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this schedule in Georgia, and the difficult decision was made to postpone PIRLS test administration to the autumn. This alone could affect student achievement, and combined with the gap in knowledge resulting from the long closure of schools, student achievement is predicted to be lower than expected.

## Suggested Readings

National Assessment and Examinations Center. (2019). *PIRLS 2016 National Report*. Retrieved from <https://naec.ge/uploads/postData/KVLEVEBI/PIRLS%202016%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%95%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%20%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98.pdf>

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