



## ACADEMIC SPOTLIGHT

Pat Cuneo, Director of Academic Affairs

[pcuneo@athensacademy.org](mailto:pcuneo@athensacademy.org)

November 19, 2020

### Students in Grades 3-8 Complete the First of Two ERB Benchmark Assessments

It's no surprise that the spring quarantine cancelled or delayed more than a few things on the school calendar. One of the annual routines that Lower and Middle School students missed in May was the administration of the ERB tests, officially known as the Educational Records Bureau Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP). To be honest, not a single student has reported that they actually *missed* taking the 2020 ERBs; however, not having test data to analyze as we concluded one school year and prepared for another left our faculty and administration with some blind spots.

Technically, there is no requirement that Athens Academy (or any other independent school) administer any standardized tests at all. Nevertheless, the school identified ERB many years ago as a program that reliably measures skills and concepts closely aligned with our curriculum and yields data with which faculty can measure individual and group progress not only against their own previous performance, but also against their peers in national and independent school norm groups.

Throughout the summer and into August when Athens Academy re-opened its doors, a common question among teachers and parents was whether students' skills had atrophied during the prolonged closure, despite the school's best efforts to provide a challenging and engaging distance education program. In response to questions like these, ERB created a shortened version of its CTP as a quick way to assess student progress at multiple points in the school year. These benchmark tests, called the ERB Milestones (no relation to the annual standardized tests administered in all Georgia public schools), are intended to measure progress in grades 3-8 through short online tests administered once in the fall and once again in the late winter. The advantages of this approach—the brevity; the ease of online testing, even for at-home learners; and the ability to gather data in real time about our new and returning students—were definitely appealing.

This week, just before a much-needed break for the Thanksgiving holiday, students in grades 3-8 have completed the first round of two 40-minute tests in reading comprehension and mathematics. With the first round of Milestone testing behind us, we look forward to analyzing the results and using that data to inform decisions in the classroom. Thanks to the flexibility of our teachers and assistants for their willingness to take a different approach to testing this year, as well to the serious (but not anxious) way in which our students approached these new tests. We are optimistic about the results and look forward to sharing more in the near future.