

Assessment Brief



Public Schools of North Carolina • State Board of Education • Howard Lee, Chairman • North Carolina Department of Public Instruction • Michael E. Ward, Superintendent

Understanding the North Carolina Pretest–Grade 3

June 1, 2004 • Vol. 9, No. 6

This brief is available on the North Carolina Department of Public Education Testing Section web site, www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing.

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North Carolina Pretest–Grade 3

The North Carolina Pretest–Grade 3 is administered to all grade 3 students during the first three weeks of school. The pretest measures the knowledge and skills specified for grade 2 from the reading and mathematics goals and objectives of the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. The pretest is used in the determination of growth in student performance during the school year for the school-by-school ABCs Accountability Program. The pretest provides pre-scores for third graders in the accountability model because there is no grade 2 test to provide the pre-data for the growth analysis. Growth is determined by comparing student performance on the grade 3 pretest with student performance on the grade 3 end-of-grade test that is administered the last three weeks of the school year. The pretest is not designed to make student placement or diagnostic decisions in isolation.

Description of the Pretest–Grade 3

The North Carolina Pretest–Grade 3 is a multiple-choice reading and mathematics test that mirrors the North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests at grade 3. Although three forms of the pretest are administered in each testing site (i.e., the classroom), all forms are equivalent.

Reading Comprehension

The grade 3 pretest of reading comprehension assesses reading by having students read both literary and informational selections and then answer questions related to the selections. Knowledge of vocabulary is assessed indirectly

through application and understanding of terms within the context of the selections and questions. The reading selections are chosen to reflect the variety of actual reading done by students in and out of the classroom and to reflect reading for various purposes such as literary experience, gaining information, and performing a task. Literary texts include fiction, poetry, drama, and literary nonfiction such as biographies, letters, journals, and essays. Informational texts include content areas (art, science, mathematics, social studies, etc.) and consumer or practical selections (pamphlets, reviews, recipes, how-to, etc.).

Reading Category Information

Four types of items (organized into categories) are on the reading comprehension test: (1) cognition; (2) interpretation; (3) critical stance; and (4) connections.

Cognition: Cognition refers to the initial strategies a reader uses to understand the selection. It is about the purpose and organization of the selection. It considers the text as a whole or in a broad perspective. Cognition requires the reader to apply strategies, such as using context clues to determine meaning, summarizing to include main points, and identifying the purpose of text features.

Interpretation: Interpretation requires the reader to develop a more complete understanding of the text. It may ask students to clarify, to explain the significance of, to extend, and/or to adapt ideas/concepts.

Interpretation requires the reader to make inferences and generalizations.

Critical Stance: Critical Stance refers to tasks that ask the reader to stand apart from the selection and consider it objectively. Critical stance requires the reader to apply processes such as comparing/contrasting and understanding the impact of literary elements.

Connections: Connections refer to connecting knowledge from the selection with other information and experiences. Connections require the reader to relate the selection to events beyond/outside the selection. In addition, the reader will make associations outside the selection and between selections.

Mathematics

The mathematics test for the North Carolina Pretest–Grade 3 is administered in two parts: calculator inactive and calculator active. Students are not allowed to use calculators during the calculator inactive part of the test. The calculator inactive part of the test measures mathematics in context to reflect the practical nature of mathematics computation. Approximately thirty percent of the test questions are calculator inactive. Students are allowed to use calculators during the calculator active part of the test. Approximately seventy percent of the test questions are calculator active. For both parts of the mathematics grade 3 pretest, students are given blank paper, graph paper, and rulers to use to answer some of the test questions.

The grade 3 pretest assesses students’ ability in four strands of the mathematics curriculum: (1) number sense, numeration, and numerical operations; (2) spatial sense, measurement, and geometry; (3) patterns, relationships, and functions; and (4) data, probability, and statistics. The mathematics tests require students to interpret information from problems in context in order to generate the appropriate responses to the test questions.

Understanding Scores for the Pretest–Grade 3

The North Carolina Pretest–Grade 3 is scanned and scored locally; therefore, reports of student scores are printed soon after scoring and sent to schools for distribution to parents. Three types of scores are reported in each subject area for the tests: (1) developmental scale scores; (2) percentiles; and (3) achievement levels.

Developmental Scale Scores

The number of questions a student answers correctly is called a raw score. For the grade 3

pretest, the raw score is converted to a developmental scale score. The developmental scale score may be used to measure growth in reading and mathematics achievement from year to year. The developmental scale score on the grade 3 pretest, given the first three weeks of school, and the developmental scale score on the end-of-grade test, given during the last three weeks of school, allows parents and teachers to measure a student’s growth in reading and mathematics.

Percentiles

The percentile compares the student’s performance on the test this year to all North Carolina students who took the test in the “norming year.” The norming year for a test is generally the first year the test was administered. The percentile indicates that the student performed at a level equal to or better than the stated percentage of students who took the test during the norming year. The higher the percentile, the better a student performed compared to other students in his or her grade. Percentiles range from 1 to 99.

Achievement Levels

Achievement levels are predetermined performance standards that allow the student’s performance to be compared to grade level expectations. Four achievement levels (I, II, III, and IV) are reported in each subject area. The description of each achievement level is as follows:

Level I: Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject area to be successful at the next grade level.

Level II: Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject area and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.

Level III: Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.

Level IV: Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work.

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