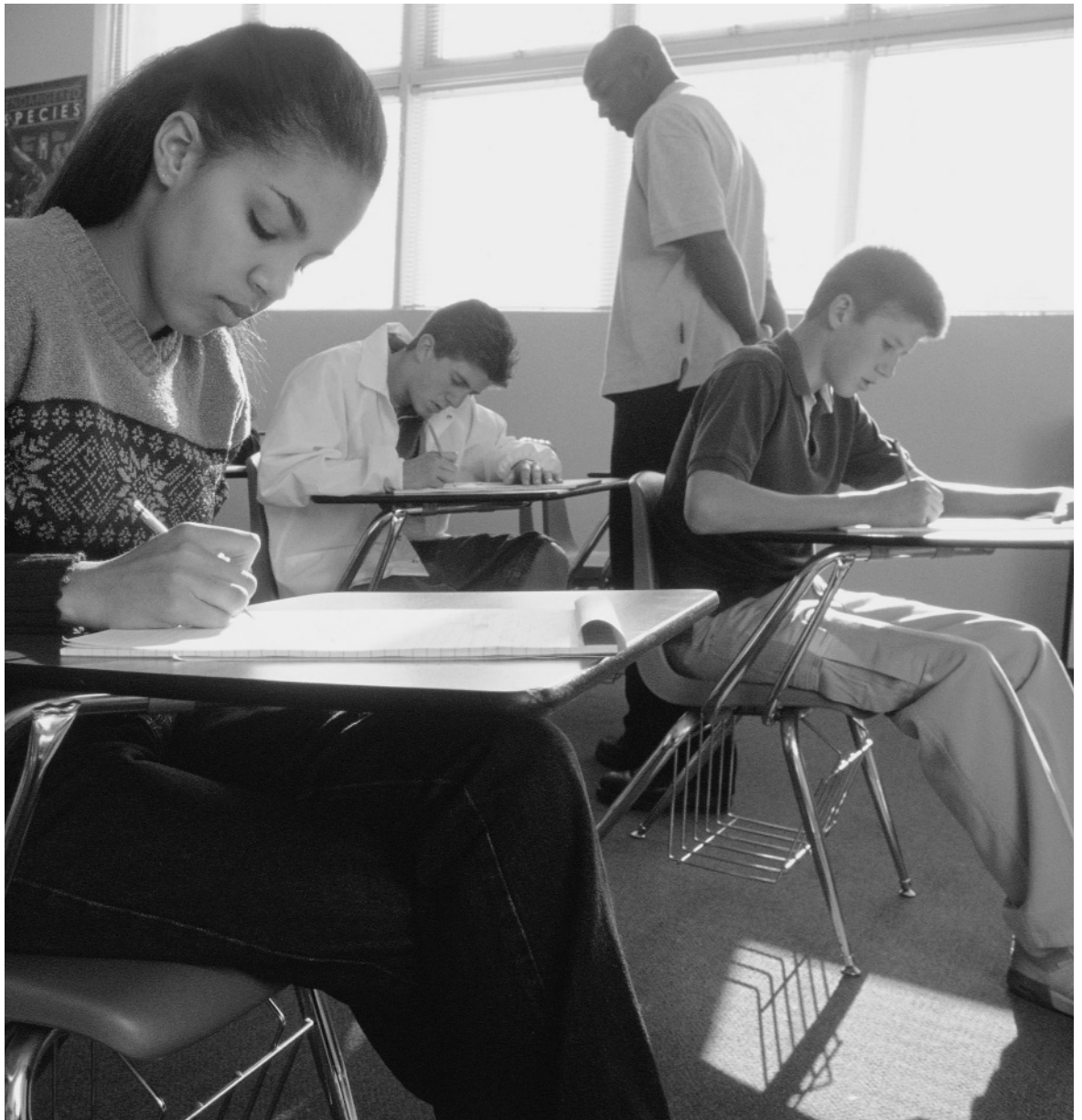




INFORMATION PACKET

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA :: State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

The North Carolina Testing Program



SPRING
2004



WHAT IS TESTED?

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

This publication outlines tests that are included in the North Carolina Testing Program. Students may, however, at the discretion of their local school system, participate in additional testing. Parents are encouraged to check with the local education agency (LEA) in which the child is enrolled to inquire about the local testing program.

End-of-grade tests in grades 3 through 8 provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned at each specified grade level. The end-of-grade tests are curriculum based multiple-choice reading comprehension and mathematics tests that measure curricular competencies described in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. These tests are administered to all eligible students within the final three weeks of school year.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT TESTING GRADES 3–8

- Students in grades 3 – 8 take end-of-grade tests in reading comprehension and mathematics in the final three weeks of school.
- Students in grade 3 take a pre-test in the first three weeks of school.
- Students in grades 4 and 7 take a one-prompt writing test in March.
- Some students in grades 4 and 8 participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The results are used for state-to-state comparisons.
- Students in grade 8 must pass the computer skills proficiency tests to receive a North Carolina high school diploma.
- Students must pass the grade 8 end-of-grade tests in order to meet the current North Carolina competency standard as a requirement to receive a high school diploma. Students who do not pass must take the North Carolina Competency Tests in Reading and Mathematics in grades 9-12.
- The state plans to include some test questions on multiple-choice tests that may become a part of the state tests but that do not count as a part of the students' score.

GRADES K–2

- Teachers in kindergarten, first and second grades use a portfolio approach based on a checklist of goals and objectives to keep track of children's progress during the year.

GRADES 3–8

Grade 3 Pretest

Basic Facts:

- During the first three weeks of school, all third graders take the North Carolina Pretest-Grade 3. The pre-test measures knowledge and skills specified for grade 2 in reading and mathematics as outlined in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- Approximately 2 1/2 hours is allotted for this test.
- A comparison of the results from the pretest and the results from the regular spring grade 3 end-of-grade administration allows schools to measure growth in achievement in reading comprehension and mathematics at the third grade level.

End of Grade Tests

Basic Facts:

- Multiple-choice tests given in the final three weeks of school.
- Reading Comprehension. Students read selections and then answer questions directly related to the reading. Selections for the reading tests are chosen to reflect reading for various purposes: literary experience, gaining information, and performing a task.
- Mathematics (with and without a calculator). Students are assessed in the four strands of the mathematics curriculum: 1) number sense, numeration, and numerical operations, 2) spatial sense, measurement and geometry, 3) patterns, relationships and function, and 4) data, probability and statistics.
- The time allotted for both the reading comprehension and mathematics tests is approximately five hours over multiple days. This includes time for test administration duties and, where appropriate, scheduled breaks.

Grade 4 and Grade 7 Writing Tests

Basic Facts:

- Students in grade 4 and grade 7 take a writing assessment the first Tuesday in March.
- The North Carolina Writing Assessment measures written expression (composition) skills, such as main idea, supportive details, organization coherence and the application of grammatical conventions.
- Scoring of the assessments will be based on content and conventions (sentence formation, usage and mechanics).
- Students in grade 4 write a narrative essay (personal or imaginative). Students in grade 7 write an argumentative response (problem/solution or evaluative) essay.
- Approximately 1 hour 15 minutes is allotted for this test.

Grade 8 Computer Skills Tests

Basic Facts:

- Eighth grade students take the North Carolina Tests of Computer Skills

Multiple-Choice and Performance, which assess the K-8 component of the computer skills curriculum.

- Students not meeting the standard by the end of grade 8 have additional opportunities to retake the test(s) throughout their high school career. Students must demonstrate computer proficiency as a requirement to receive a North Carolina high school diploma.
- Multiple choice and performance test.
- The total time allotted for these tests is approximately four hours. This includes time for test administration duties and, where appropriate, scheduled breaks.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

Basic Facts:

- North Carolina has participated voluntarily in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for more than a decade. No Child Left Behind now requires all 50 states to participate in NAEP.
- Selected fourth and eighth grade students participate in the NAEP. Results from these tests are used to compare North Carolina's student performance with other states student performance and national benchmarks.

State Language Proficiency Testing IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT)

Basic Facts:

- The home language survey is used to determine if a student is a language minority student.
- The Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) is administered to all language minority students (grades K-12) at initial enrollment and annually to all students identified as limited English proficient.
- The annual assessment window is Feb. 1 to April 30 with the exception of students who enroll after Jan. 1.
- The IPT consists of three sections that assess the student's oral, reading, and writing skills.

Grades 3-8

Continued

Alternate Assessments

North Carolina Alternate Assessment Inventory (NCAAAI)

Basic Facts:

- The NCAAAI is a checklist of Standard Course of Study objectives aligned to the specific test of a given content in a given grade.
- Students with disabilities and students identified as limited English proficient may participate in the NCAAAI.
- Students with disabilities and students identified as limited English proficient must meet specific eligibility requirements to participate in the NCAAAI.

North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP)

Basic Facts:

- The North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP) is a year-long, performance-based assessment process that involves a representative and deliberate collection of student work and information.
- The NCAAP is an assessment for students with serious cognitive deficits.
- Students with serious cognitive deficits must meet specific eligibility requirements to participate in the NCAAP.



WHAT IS TESTED?

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

High School Grades 9–12

State testing shifts at the high school level from measuring what students are to learn in a grade to testing what students are to learn in a course. These end-of-course tests are given in the final 10 days (or the equivalent for alternative schedules) of the school term when the course is taught.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT TESTING GRADES 9–12

- Students are given end-of-course tests within the final 10 days of the school year.
- All students classified as tenth graders in the school system information management system participate in the high school comprehensive test administration.
- Students following the Career Preparation, College Technical Preparation, or College/University Preparation Course of Study must meet the competency requirement through passing the grade 8 end-of-grade tests or passing the competency tests of reading and mathematics during grade 9, 10, 11, or 12. Students following the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) do not have to pass the competency tests in order to receive a high school diploma.

End-of-Course Tests

Basic Facts:

- All are multiple-choice tests (except for English II, which is essay).
- Measures the student's grasp of the curriculum for the subject.
- Approximately two hours is allotted for each test.

For the 2003–04 school year, end-of-course tests are scheduled for the following subjects:

Algebra I; Algebra II; Biology; Chemistry; Economic, Legal and Political Systems; English I; Geometry; Physical Science; and Physics.

Students generally take these courses/tests in the following grades:

- Ninth grade: English I; Algebra I; Physical Science; Economic, Legal and Political Systems
- For the 2003-04 school year, Economic, Legal and Political Systems will be available only for students who are required to retake the test due to failure or transfer.
- Tenth grade: Geometry and Biology
- Eleventh grade: Algebra II, U.S. History, and Chemistry
- Twelfth grade: Physics

High School Grades 9–12 continued

Grade 10 Writing Test

Basic Facts:

- The writing assessment measures how well a student has learned to write up to the point when the test is given.
- Students at grade 10 take a writing assessment the first Tuesday in March.
- Students write an informational response (definition, cause/effect, or problem/solution).
- The writing assessment measures written expression (composition) skills, such as main idea, supportive details, organization coherence and the application of grammatical conventions (sentence formation, usage, and mechanics). Scoring of the assessment is based on content and conventions.

Competency Tests of Reading and Mathematics

Basic Facts:

- To test competency in essential skills, students currently must achieve Level III on the eighth grade reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests. If they do not reach this level at the end of the eighth grade, they must do so through passing the competency tests before receiving a high school diploma.
- Consists of multiple-choice reading and mathematics tests.
- Approximately three and one-half hours is allotted for this test.

High School Comprehensive Test

Basic Facts:

- Students in grade 10 take the North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test of Reading and Mathematics.
- Although the test was eliminated due to budget constraints in 2001, the high school comprehensive test was reinstated during the 2002-03 school year to meet NCLB requirements.
- The multiple-choice test was originally developed to measure growth in student achievement in reading and mathematics from grade 8 to grade 10.

- The test measures a student's ability to read, understand and critically analyze printed material and assesses a student's ability to apply mathematical knowledge to solve real-world problems.
- Approximately two hours for each part is allotted for the test.

Exit Exam

Basic Facts:

- The multiple-choice test was originally intended to be required for graduation beginning with the graduating class of 2005.
- The Exit Exam is currently on hold pending legislative study.

Other High School Tests

PSAT (Pre-Scholastic Assessment Test)

According to Public School Law 115C-174.18 every student in the eighth through tenth grades who has completed Algebra I, or who is in the last month of Algebra I, shall be given the opportunity to take a version of the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) one time at state expense. The NCDPI Division of Accountability Services no longer has the responsibility of managing the PSAT or the SAT programs.

SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test)

Students who plan to attend college also take the SAT. This test is administered by the Educational Testing Service. It is not a state-required test, but most universities require it for admission. To prepare for the SAT, some students take the PSAT.

ACT (American College Testing)

A limited number of students who plan to attend college also take the ACT administered by ACT Publishing Company. It is not a state-required test, but some universities require it for admission.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) EXPANDS STATE TESTING PROGRAM

North Carolina's testing program will expand as a result of the new federal education legislation, No Child Left Behind.

- The grade 10 high school comprehensive tests of reading and mathematics, which were dropped from the state's testing program at the end of the 2001 school year, have been reinstated to fulfill the NCLB high school requirement for annual reading and math assessments.
- Students in the fifth and eighth grades will be tested in science. The end-of-course biology test is being proposed for the science assessment required at the high school level. These tests must be in place by the 2007-08 school year.
- All students are to be included in the statewide testing program including students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities. Students are assessed through either standard test administration, standard test administration with accommodations, or the state-designed alternative assessments [North Carolina Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory (NCAAAI) (a checklist) or the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP)].
- Limited English proficient students are tested annually in language proficiency. If they score below a certain level in reading based on the initial or annual testing during their first year in U.S. schools, they are not required to be assessed in reading on the end-of-grade tests, the high school comprehensive test of reading, or the NCAAAI for reading. When a student has attended school(s) in the U.S. for three consecutive years, the student must participate in the standard administration of the test with or without accommodations.
- Students with serious cognitive deficits are assessed through the use of the NCAAP.



WHY DO WE TEST?

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

Teachers in all grades in all schools in North Carolina use the curriculum that was developed by the state (with teacher involvement). This curriculum, the *Standard Course of Study*, describes what is expected to be taught in North Carolina's classrooms. The curriculum for each subject is updated as appropriate every five years.

STATE TESTS

Before 1992-93, North Carolina used a national, commercially-developed, test to measure whether students were learning what was in the curriculum. Because the test was developed for a national audience, the test did not closely match North Carolina's curriculum. During the 1992-93 school year, the state moved to a new assessment system—with state tests designed by North Carolina teachers, curriculum specialists, testing experts and Department of Public Instruction staff. Tests are revised when the curriculum is revised, a necessity since they measure the objectives outlined in the *Standard Course of Study*.

ABCs OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Schools are held responsible for ensuring that students learn the curriculum by reporting student performance results as a part of the ABCs of Public Education. The accountability part of the ABCs requires that students' scores in each school be compiled each year and released in a report card. Schools are rewarded or penalized depending on the actual performance of students and how much progress the students make in a year. Certified staff and teacher assistants can earn bonuses for their school's performance on the ABCs. Other schools may receive extra help from the state and their local system to try to improve student performance because of how their schools perform under the ABCs.

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

On April 1, 1999, the State Board of Education established Student Accountability Standards for grades 3, 5, and 8 and high school graduation. Students must demonstrate grade-level proficiency by scoring at Achievement Level III or above on the end-of-grade tests in reading and mathematics, meet local promotion requirements and demonstrate adequate progress in writing in order to be promoted to the next grade. It's important to note that local school systems may require grade-level proficiency beyond state requirements. The State Board's requirement that students must pass a Exit Exam in order to graduate and receive a diploma is currently on hold pending legislative study.

The State Board requires that scores of students on all ten end-of-course tests in high school count at least 25 percent of the final grade for those courses.

The tests in the North Carolina testing program provide yardsticks which can be used to compare the achievement of students, schools, school systems and the state. These yardsticks can be used to measure gains or losses in performance across time and to see if changes in education are working.

**Why Do
We Test?**
continued

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

North Carolina students have demonstrated significant and sustained achievement gains under the ABCs of Public Education. No Child Left Behind, signed into federal law by President George W. Bush in 2002, demands a continued emphasis on the basics and an acceleration of the performance of all students while closing gaps between students of different racial groups, income groups, students with special needs, and limited English proficient students.

Key requirements of the law include: closing achievement gaps, holding schools accountable for all students performing at a high level, having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, and increasing parental communication.

Although NCLB standards tie in well with the ABCs, changes must still be made to ensure that NCLB requirements are achieved.



HOW IS THE INFORMATION PROVIDED?

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

REPORTING BY STUDENT

The state has provided scoring equipment in each school system so local administrators can score all state-required multiple-choice tests. This scoring generally takes place within two weeks after testing so the individual score report can be given to the student and parent before the end of the school year.

Each student in grades 3-8 who takes the end-of-grade tests is given a "Parent/Teacher Report." This single sheet provides information on that student's performance on the reading and mathematics tests. A flyer titled, "Understanding Your Child's EOG Score," is provided with each "Parent/Teacher Report." This publication offers information for understanding student scores as well as suggestions on what parents and teachers can do to help students in the areas of reading and mathematics.

The student report also shows how that student's performance compared to the average scores for the school, the school system and the state.

A four-level grading scale is used for the tests:

- Achievement Level I is the lowest level and represents insufficient mastery of the subject.
- Achievement Level II is inconsistent mastery.
- Achievement Level III is consistent mastery and the minimum goal for students.
- Achievement Level IV is superior mastery. Students performing at Achievement Level III and IV are considered to be at or above grade level. Achievement Level III is the level students must score to be considered proficient and to pass to the next grade under state Student Accountability Standards for grades 3, 5 and 8.

REPORTING BY SCHOOL

Since 1997, the student performance on end-of-grade tests for each elementary and middle school has been released by the state through the ABCs. High school student performance began to be reported in 1998 in the ABCs. For each school, parents and others can see the actual performance for the groups of students at the school in reading, mathematics and writing; the percentage of students tested; whether the school met or exceeded goals that were set for it; and the status designated by the state.

Some schools that do not meet their goals and that have low numbers of students at grade level receive help from the state. Other schools, where the goals have been reached or exceeded, receive bonuses for the certified staff and teacher assistants in that school.

Local school systems received their first results under NCLB in July 2003 as part of the state's ABCs accountability program. Under NCLB, each school is evaluated according to whether or not it met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is not only a goal for the school overall, but also for each subgroup of students in the school. Every subgroup must meet its goal for the school to meet AYP.

AYP is only one part of the state's ABCs accountability model. Complete ABCs results are released in September and will show how much growth students in every school made as well as the overall percentage of students who are proficient.

The ABCs report is available on the Department of Public Instruction's Web site at <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/> or ask your principal about the ABCs report for your school.

How Was the Information Provided?

Continued

REPORTING BY THE STATE

The state reports information on student performance in various ways.

The North Carolina School Report Cards provide information about K-12 public schools (including charters and alternatives) for schools, school systems and the state. Each report card includes a school or district profile and information about student performance, safe schools, access to technology and teacher quality. These report cards are available at www.ncschoolreportcards.com/src/.

As a participating state in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), North Carolina student performance is included in annual reports released nationally on selected subjects. The state also releases state and local SAT scores each summer.

In addition, *Education Week*, the national education publication, releases state performance data yearly.



ADDRESSING PARENTS CONCERNS

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

Questions & Answers

Testing is important so it is natural that parents have lots of questions. Here are a few of the more commonly asked questions and their answers.

What material is covered on the end-of-grade and end-of-course tests?

Basically, end-of-grade tests cover the curriculum taught during that school year for the particular grade. The end-of-course tests measure the material covered in core courses in high school.

Are the tests multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, essay or other?

Most North Carolina tests are multiple-choice. The writing tests in grades 4, 7, and 10, the Computer Skills Performance Test in grade 8, the NCAAAI and NCAAP are performance-based tests. This means that the students are required to demonstrate their knowledge through the performance of a task. Performance tests such as writing must be given earlier in the year to allow extra time for scoring. The performance tests are sent to a company that the state pays to score them. This company must meet very high quality standards. The multiple-choice tests are scored in the school system with test-scoring equipment.

How much class time is taken away for testing?

Most of the tests are approximately two hours long. This period includes time for the test administrator to read instructions to the students, for students to fill in some background information and, in some cases, for students to take scheduled short breaks. The State Board of Education is very aware of the need to preserve as much time as possible for instruction. At the same time, the Board also needs to ensure that students are learning the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*.

How do we know the tests are not culturally or racially biased?

North Carolina, as a test publisher, is committed to creating test questions and tests that are bias-free. Every precaution is taken to ensure that the questions and the tests accurately and fairly portray all groups of society without reference to stereotypes or traditional roles regarding gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, or geographic setting. At the beginning of each item writing or bias review session, test item writers and reviewers are provided information and guidelines for creating bias-free questions and tests. All test questions are reviewed for cultural and regional biases prior to the field testing of the tests. After field testing, statistical analyses are performed on the field test data to detect gender and ethnic bias.

Are students' values/beliefs measured on the tests?

The tests measure the content of what is taught in North Carolina's classrooms. The tests require students to think, analyze and reach conclusions, but they are not designed to measure students' values/beliefs.

When are the tests given?

The EOG tests are given in the last three weeks of the school year in that school system. EOC tests are given in the last 10 days of the course or the last five days of a course for a block schedule. Performance tests are given earlier in the school year to allow time for individual scoring. A testing calendar for the current school year has been included at the end of the information packet for your reference.

Questions & Answers

continued

How can students prepare for the tests?

Paying attention in class to what the teacher is teaching, asking questions when they are uncertain, completing homework, and most importantly, reading can help children do well on the tests.

What type skills or knowledge does a student's performance reflect?

The tests measure what a student has learned from the curriculum during the grade/course. Tests are scored using four levels:

- Achievement Level I performance means insufficient mastery;
- Achievement Level II is inconsistent mastery;
- Achievement Level III is consistent mastery (at grade level); and
- Achievement Level IV is superior mastery.

Why was a Lexile measure included on my child's Parent/Teacher Report of the North Carolina End-of-Grade Reading Comprehension test?

MetaMetrics, Inc. has partnered with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to provide all students in grades three through eight with a Lexile measure on the reading comprehension portion of the end-of-grade test. Parents and teachers can use the Lexile measure to ensure that the materials students read provide the right balance of intellectual stimulation. This will ensure that the students are challenged by what they read as opposed to being frustrated. For more information, please go to MetaMetrics' Web site at <http://www.lexile.com/EntrancePageFlash.html>.

What if a child has special needs?

There are testing accommodations for some children with disabilities and some students who are limited English proficient. The need for the accommodations must be documented in the student's Individual Education Program (IEP), Section 504, or LEP Plan. Also see the following page:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/alternate/>

Why are changes being made in how exceptional children (children with disabilities) are tested?

Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1997, require that students with disabilities be included in state- and district-wide testing (assessment) programs. The amendment further provided that where necessary, appropriate accommodations must be made so that these students could participate in testing. Appropriate accommodations include the following:

- Assitive Technology Devices;
- Braille Edition;
- Braille Writer/Slate and Stylus (Braille Paper);
- Computer Skills Portfolio Assessment;
- Cramner Abacus;
- Dictation to a Scribe;
- Hospital/Home Testing;
- Interpreter/Transliterater Signs/Cues Test;
- Keyboarding Devices;
- Large Print Edition;
- Magnification Devices;
- Multiple Testing Sessions;
- One Item Per Page Editions;
- Scheduled Extended Time;
- Student Marks Answers in Test Book;
- Test Administrator Reads Test Aloud (in English); and
- Testing in a Separate Room.

The requirement was effective in 1997; however, even with appropriate accommodations some students still are not able to take part in state and district assessment programs. For those students, the IDEA law required that states and local districts develop alternate assessments to be used by the 2000-01 school year. Holding schools accountable for performance by children with disabilities is in line with the belief that all children can learn.

**Questions
& Answers**
continued

Do charter school, home school and private school students take the state tests?

Charter schools are public schools so their students take the tests. Private school and home school students are not required to take the state tests although some choose to participate.

What happens if a child does not pass the EOG/EOC tests?

Unless designated differently by the local school system, for most tests there is no pass/fail, but the tests tell teachers how well students are doing. However, students in grades 3, 5 and 8 are required to score at Achievement Level III in order to be promoted unless the principal determines that he/she should be promoted based on other indicators. End-of-course test scores are included as a part of the final course grade. For all courses, the test score must count 25 percent toward the student's final course grade. See information on the statewide Student Accountability Standards for more information on this question.

Is there a retest option for the tests?

At grades 3, 5 and 8, when the tests are used as a part of the state promotion decision, there are options for retesting. Also, in high schools, students are retested on the computer skills and competency tests until they demonstrate proficiency.

Can a parent appeal his or her child's test score, and if so, how long do they have to make an appeal?

Yes, parents can appeal a student's test score. However, the amount of time in which to do so is up to the local school district.

With the increased reliance, won't teachers just simply be teaching to the test now?

The tests are based on the NC *Standard Course of Study*, the curriculum that is to be taught in the schools. Teachers who teach the curriculum are doing exactly what the state expects them to do – teaching the content on which the tests are based. Just because the tests are based on the curriculum does not mean that teachers have the actual questions that are on the test.



TERMS TO KNOW

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

ABCs of Public Education or ABCs –

The state's educational improvement program that focuses on school accountability, the basics and local control. It was put in place by the legislature and State Board of Education in 1995.

Accountability – The way public schools assure the public of results. There is a yearly report on school progress that is available via the Web at <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs>.

Achievement Levels – The four degrees of performance on state end-of-grade and end-of-course tests. End-of-grade achievement levels are:

Level I – Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject 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 grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level's work.

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

Levels for the high school end-of-course tests are similar but indicate insufficient mastery, inconsistent mastery, consistent mastery or superior performance in the course subject matter and skills.

Assessment – Another way of describing evaluating students on their performance.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a minimum set of achievement goals that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year

in order to reach 100 percent student proficiency by 2013-14. For a school to make AYP, each subgroup and the school overall must make AYP in both reading and mathematics, and the school must test at least 95 percent of students in each subgroup. The subgroups are: 1) The School as a Whole, 2) White, 3) Black, 4) Hispanic, 5) Native American, 6) Asian/Pacific Islander, 7) Multiracial, 8) Economically Disadvantaged Students, 9) Limited English Proficient Students, and 10) Students with Disabilities.

Competency Test – To test competency in essential skills, students currently must achieve Level III on the eighth grade end-of-grade tests. If they do not reach this level at the end of eighth grade, they may retake the test multiple times until they pass to receive a high school diploma

End-of-Course Tests – The tests that students in high school take at the end of specified courses to demonstrate how well they've learned the curriculum that is taught in that course.

End-of-Grade Tests – The tests that students in grades 3-8 take at the end of each year to demonstrate how well they have learned the curriculum that is taught in reading and mathematics.

Exit Exam – The multiple-choice test required for graduation that will be given initially in the 11th grade and will measure essential skills in communications, processing information, problem solving and using numbers and data. The Exit Exam is currently on hold pending legislative study.

Grade Level – Description of student work that meets minimum standards at each grade. Grade level equals Achievement Level III in end-of-grade scoring. Levels III and IV would be con-

Terms to Know

sidered at or above grade level work.

High School Comprehensive Test –

This test is taken by students in the tenth grade to determine how much they have learned in reading and mathematics since they took the end-of-grade tests in the eighth grade.

North Carolina *Standard Course*

of Study – The *Standard Course of Study* provides the description of what all students should know and be able to do. It defines the minimum academic standards for school systems to follow and to communicate to the public.

Student Accountability Standards –

These standards, also called gateways, were put in place by the State Board of Education for grades 3, 5, 8 and graduation. The standards ensure that students are working at grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics before being promoted or receiving a high school diploma. Local school systems may go beyond the state standards and include other requirements in the standards.

For additional testing definitions, please visit <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acronyms.html>.



TESTING RESOURCES

THE NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

The Department of Public Instruction has a number of publications available on curriculum and testing. These include resource publications for teachers on linking instruction and assessment, the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* by subject, item bank testlets to help diagnose strengths and weaknesses, released test items, and a few resources for parents.

To get a copy of the Publications Catalog, call 1-800-663-1250 or check the publications catalog on the Web at www.ncpublicschools.org.

WEB INFORMATION

The ABCs report on performance of every school, test calendars, descriptions of all the state tests and other information is available on DPI's Web site at abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs. Information on NCLB is available on DPI's home page, www.ncpublicschools.org under *What's New?*

The NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program has sample test items available for grades 3 through 8. Sample test items for can be found at the following Web sites:

- Grade 3 Pretest sample test items are available at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/grade3practiceactivity/
- End-of-grade sample test items are available at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eog
- Computer skills tests sample items are available in the student handbook at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/computerskills/

Sample test items also are available for high school tests which includes the following:

- End-of-course sample test items are available at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eoc
- High school comprehensive sample items are available in the teacher handbook at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/highschoolcomprehensive/index.html
- Competency tests of reading and mathematics sample items are available in the student handbook at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/competency/

REGIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICES

There are six regional accountability offices for the Department of Public Instruction. These offices are a resource for schools and school systems. They are located in the Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Western areas of the state.

OTHER RESOURCES

Every local school system's central office has at least one person who works with testing.

The Department of Public Instruction's Division of Accountability Services has extensive information on the Web at www.ncpublicschools.org (Agency Web Sites) or call 919/807-3769.