



The  
**Basic Education Program**  
for North Carolina's  
Public Schools

1994

**North Carolina State Board of Education**  
**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction**  
**Bob Etheridge, State Superintendent**  
**Raleigh, North Carolina**

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### **Basic Education Program Milestones**

July, 1983	General Assembly directs State Board of Education to define and cost out a basic education program.
October, 1984	State Board of Education approves the Basic Education Program.
February, 1985	State Board of Education revises Basic Education Program.
June, 1985	General Assembly enacts legislation directing State Board of Education to adopt a basic education program.
September, 1985	State Board of Education adopts Basic Education Program.
November, 1985	State Board of Education revises promotion standards.
December, 1985	State Board of Education revises instructional time provision.
January, 1986	State Board of Education revises Basic Education Program.
March, 1987	State Board of Education revises Basic Education Program.
February, 1988	State Board of Education revises Basic Education Program.
April, 1991	State Board of Education revises instructional time.
June, 1992	State Board of Education revises high school graduation requirements.
July, 1992	State Board of Education revises vocational education.
May, 1994	State Board of Education revises promotion standards.

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## I. Introduction

The Basic Education Program for the State of North Carolina is just that: basic. The pages that follow describe the program, the purpose and the components. Because this program is basic, it does not describe an ideal education program. Rather, it describes a program of instruction which is fundamentally complete and which would give the student a thorough grounding in these areas: arts education, English Language Arts (communication skills), information skills and computer skills, second languages, healthful living, mathematics, science, social studies, and vocational education.

The premise that there is a common core of knowledge and skills which every child shall command when he or she graduates from high school is essential to the concept of a basic education program. As defined, a basic education program is not one dimensional. Indeed, it must address all aspects of a child's development, from kindergarten through high school, or else it cannot properly be termed basic. The arts, for example, are an essential part of the basic program—as essential, for instance, as mathematics or second languages are to the development of well-rounded citizens.

Another distinguishing feature of the Basic Education Program is that it does not encourage learning in the content areas such as mathematics and social studies at the expense of instruction in areas such as library skills, which enable students to continue learning after their classroom days have ended. It is said that our knowledge about the world in which we live roughly doubles every 10 years. The child who is ill-equipped to continue learning after his or her formal education has ended will be far less able to adapt to changes at home and in the workplace.

Each of the following sections briefly describes the purpose of each component, the arts, social studies, etc., and outlines the content sequence. The course of study outlined is a continuum, and the knowledge and skills imparted in each grade level build upon and reinforce what has previously been taught. The curriculum descriptions contained here summarize the *Standard Course of Study* which is a part of the Basic Education Program.

The program also includes—as it must, if it is to be successful— support services, such as guidance and psychological services; promotion standards; special programs, such as in-school suspension and Chapter I; programs for exceptional children; equipment and material needs; staffing ratios; staff development; and facility standards.

Each local education unit must offer all components of the Basic Education Program, with these exceptions:

1. The offering of courses listed as electives in the appendix is at local discretion.
2. The local unit must meet the minimum requirements for vocational courses specified and may go beyond this number.
3. A local school board may petition the State Board of Education for a waiver from a component of the Basic Program if the local board feels the component in question is not appropriate for its local situation. (Note: Separate from Performance-Based Accountability Program waivers.)

The program described in this document is what each child in the North Carolina public schools is guaranteed. Any local administrative unit may provide programming, facilities, staffing, or other resources beyond those described here at local expense.

## II. The Curriculum

### Purposes of the Basic Curriculum

The primary purposes of the basic curriculum are (1) to help students become responsible, productive citizens, and (2) to help students achieve a sense of personal fulfillment. While it is sometimes difficult to separate the specific competencies underlying these purposes, it is clear students must develop specific competencies needed to gain employment or continue their education. These competencies include thinking and reasoning skills, information and technology skills, and the basic content and process knowledge provided within a core curriculum - arts education, English Language Arts (communication skills), healthful living, guidance, mathematics, science, second language studies, social studies, and vocational education.

To succeed in an ever-changing society, children must develop the ability to maintain a positive attitude toward themselves, a sense of independence and responsibility for themselves, a positive attitude toward others including those from different cultures, a respect for the rights of others, a sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, a sense of responsibility to others, a willingness to cooperate with others in working toward a common goal, and the ability to understand and cope with a constantly changing society.

To help students develop these competencies and become responsible, productive citizens who have a sense of personal fulfillment, the basic curriculum must rest on commonly accepted principles of learning. First among these principles is the importance of integrating the curriculum—of emphasizing the understanding of concepts and processes over the mere acquisition of isolated facts. Stressing the mastery of integrated knowledge helps students move from what is known to an understanding of the unknown, to see relationships and patterns and to begin to make generalizations, to understand the interrelatedness of the subject areas and skills areas, and to succeed in learning. An integrated curriculum helps students learn how to learn.

A second principle considered in the development of the basic curriculum is that learners are more likely to attempt those tasks at which they feel they can succeed, and which are relevant to their lives. If students are to be successful in school and if they are to pursue lifelong learning, they must see learning as fulfilling and worthwhile. The basic curriculum is, therefore, a program of continuous learning based upon the individual student's needs, interests, and stages of development. The curriculum provides opportunities for the student to develop self-expression, to learn to communicate effectively, to maintain and develop both physical and emotional health, to choose among curriculum electives, and to become an active participant in the learning process. The basic program emphasizes the importance of personalizing the curriculum and helping each student to reach his or her maximum potential.

The basic curriculum represents the program which should be provided for all children in North Carolina. The following subject area descriptions are summaries of the *Standard Course of Study* which is directed toward helping students to achieve responsible, productive citizenship and personal fulfillment. As the curriculum itself changes to meet the needs of a changing world, the State Board of Education will modify or expand, as necessary, the Basic Education Program. Unless noted otherwise, the appropriate class size in grades K-3 is 23; in grades 4-12, 26.

The *Standard Course of Study* shall be available to all students (kindergarten through grade 12) and required of all students through grade 5. In Grades 6-8, students will continue the *Standard Course of Study* but may have choices in three areas. In the arts, all four disciplines will be available with students being required to take at least one each year. Second language studies (Grades 6-8) and vocational education (Grades 7-8) will be available to all students but not required. Competencies in Computer Skills, Information Skills, and Guidance may be provided in a separate course or through content integration.

## Thinking and Reasoning Skills

To become productive, responsible citizens and to achieve a sense of personal fulfillment, students must develop their ability to think and reason. It is no longer adequate for students to simply memorize information for recall. If graduates are to function effectively now and in the 21st century, they must be able to acquire and integrate new information, make judgments, apply information, and reflect on learning.

Research during the 1960s in cognitive psychology has led to the study of the processes that underlie learning. Although there are numerous models of intelligence and learning, the following guiding assumptions serve as the foundation for a thinking framework for North Carolina public schools.

- All students can become better thinkers.
- Thinking is content dependent and influenced by the learner's prior knowledge of that content.
- The teaching of thinking should be deliberate and explicit with an emphasis on the transfer and application of thinking processes and skills.
- Thinking is improved when the learner becomes aware and takes control of thinking processes and skills.
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be aligned to enhance the teaching of thinking.
- Improving student thinking will require fundamental changes in the school culture, including lesson design, student assessment, classroom organization, and school governance.
- Over-emphasis on factual recall inhibits the development of thinking.
- Schools must become "homes for the mind" where educators model thoughtful behavior-decision making, problem solving and other thinking processes.
- Efforts to improve thinking within a school or school system should be guided by a conceptual framework and comprehensive plan.
- There is no single best program for the teaching of thinking.

The Department of Public Instruction has adopted *Dimensions of Thinking* (1988) as the framework for the revised curriculum. The more recent work, *Dimensions of Learning* (1994), builds on the theory and research from *Dimensions of Thinking* and provides direction from a practitioner's perspective.

## **Dimensions of Thinking**

- **Thinking Skills:** These are specific cognitive operations-the building blocks of thinking. Examples are observing, recalling, comparing, and ordering.
- **Thinking Processes:** These are complex sequences of thinking skills. Different processes involve variable sequences of thinking skills. They occur over time.
- **Creative Thinking:** This is the ability to form new combinations of ideas to fulfill needs. It is generative in nature and is usually judged by outputs.
- **Critical Thinking:** This is reasonable, reflective thinking-deciding what to believe. It is evaluative in nature and helps one not to be blinded by his/her own point of view.
- **Metacognition:** This is the awareness of one's own self as a thinker.

Marzano, R.J. et. al. (1988). *Dimensions of Thinking*, Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum.

## **Summaries of Content Areas**

The following summaries of content areas from the *Standard Course of Study* reflect newer views of how students learn and of how a curriculum framework supports the integration of various disciplines within the total curriculum. They emphasize conceptual learning rather than the acquisition of isolated facts and encourage active learning, communication, problem solving, collaboration, and assessment as an integral part of the instructional process.

\* For a full description of the curriculum, see the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*.

## Arts Education K-12

Arts Education is based upon National Standards and encompasses four arts disciplines: dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. The 1994 National Standards for Arts Education outline what students should know and be able to do in the arts. The following excerpt from those Standards offers a summary of the K-12 Program.

There are many routes to competence in the arts disciplines. Students may work in different arts at different times. Their study may take a variety of approaches. Their abilities may develop at different rates. Competence means the ability to use an array of knowledge and skills. Terms often used to describe these include creation, performance, production, history, culture, perception, analysis, criticism, aesthetics, technology, and appreciation. Competence means capabilities with these elements themselves and an understanding of their interdependence; it also means the ability to combine the content, perspectives, and techniques associated with the various elements to achieve specific artistic and analytical goals. Students work toward comprehensive competence from the very beginning, preparing in the lower grades for deeper and more rigorous work each succeeding year. As a result, the joy of experiencing the arts is enriched and matured by the discipline of learning and the pride of accomplishment. Essentially, the Standards ask that students should know and be able to do the following by the time they have completed high school:

They should be able to communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines — dance, music, theatre and the visual arts. This includes knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabularies, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of each arts discipline.

They should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.

They should be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives, and from combinations of those perspectives. This includes the ability to understand and evaluate work in the various arts disciplines.

They should have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines, across the arts as a whole, and within cultures.

They should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills *within and across the arts disciplines*. This includes mixing and matching competencies and understandings in art-making, history and culture, and analysis in any arts-related project.

As a result of developing these capabilities, students can arrive at their own knowledge, beliefs, and values for making personal and artistic decisions. In other terms, they can arrive at a broad-based, well-grounded understanding of the nature, value, and meaning of the arts as a part of their own humanity.

## **English Language Arts K-12 (COMMUNICATION SKILLS)**

### **Competency Goals**

The English Language Arts curriculum reflects the spiraling and integrated nature of language. It contains the same four goals for kindergarten through grade 12. These goals are:

Goal 1: The learner will use strategies and processes that enhance control of communication skills development.

This goal refers to metacognition, the awareness of and control over one's cognitive processes including commitment, attitudes, and attention. It is knowing about one's own learning. Learners who are proficient in this goal are aware of thinking and learning strategies and when to apply them in preparation, engagement, and response.

Goal 2: The learner will use language for the acquisition, interpretation, and application of information.

This goal begins with the acquisition of information and progresses to include interpretation and application. Learners who are proficient in this goal develop an initial understanding by identifying, collecting, and selecting information. In addition, they develop a more complete understanding by organizing and using information.

Goal 3: The learner will use language for critical analysis and evaluation.

This goal focuses on establishing a critical stance to form opinions, make judgments, and evaluate quality. Learners who are proficient in this goal must stand apart from the selection, information, or experience and consider it objectively. In addition, they will be able to use criteria to compare and contrast, assess validity and accuracy, determine value, and judge relevance and importance.

Goal 4: The learner will use language for aesthetic and personal response.

This goal calls for a personal reflection and reaction to selections, situations, and events. Learners who are proficient in this goal are able to respond and reflect from a personal perspective as they connect their background knowledge and experience to selections, situations, and events. They can experience vicariously, recognize and consider cultural and historical significance, and respond critically and creatively.

### **Strands**

There are no separate goals for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing strands. Separate narrative sections in *The Teacher Handbook* address some of the specific characteristics and instructional issues of each strand and present information on “best practices” related to the teaching of each strand. Though the descriptions of the strands are separate, the strands themselves should be viewed as interrelated processes with as many if not more similarities than differences.

### **Implications for Learning**

*The Teacher Handbook* also contains a section called “Implications for Learning” that describes teaching strategies and classroom activities by grade level spans K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12. The purpose of this information is to provide examples of classroom activities at different grade levels that address the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

## Grade Level Benchmarks

The Benchmarks in *The Teacher Handbook* are developmentally appropriate indicators of student progress toward proficiency in language goals and objectives. Benchmarks describe language characteristics students should exhibit, content they should know, and tasks they should be able to perform consistently and accurately by the end of a grade level.

## Program Goals

The goals of the entire English Language Arts (Communication Skills) curriculum are to produce students who have the language skills to be self-directed learners, collaborative workers, and problem solvers who read carefully and write accurately. These are abilities students will need to be successful in both their personal and professional lives in the 21st century.

## Guidance K-12

Guidance activities integrated into the curriculum in grades K-3 give students the opportunity to conceptualize, verbalize, and understand personal attitudes, feelings, and behavior. Exploration of these developmental components help young children gain greater understanding of themselves and others. This understanding contributes to their overall educational progress. Guidance for K-3 students focuses on several developmental areas which should include:

- self-awareness
- relationships among people
- self-discipline
- the diverse world of work
- learning to follow directions
- appropriate group behavior
- skills for learning

In Grades 4-6, classroom guidance activities help to expand student understanding of self and the effects of behaviors and attitudes on individual development, as well as on group processes. Through integration of these activities with other curriculum areas, exploration of the world of work continues in conjunction with greater understanding of one's individual interests and skills. Areas of focus at this level should include:

- relationships among people
- appropriate use of leisure time
- acceptance of others
- need for lifelong learning
- study skills
- handling success and failure

Guidance in grades 7 and 8 helps students develop positive feelings about themselves and others, understand the changes taking place during this transitional period and acquire a clearer appreciation of their own abilities, interests, and behaviors. A major emphasis at this level is to assist students with problem solving and decision making skills that will help them set personal, educational, and career goals. Activities should focus on:

*(Pending Revision 1995)*

- effective communication and interaction skills
- understanding of one's belief system
- the ability to evaluate and respect other opinions
- coping skills
- appropriate use of leisure time
- study skills
- relationship of school subjects to career opportunities

In Grades 9-12, guidance activities emphasize students' awareness of their overall strengths and weaknesses, and consideration of those characteristics in making educational and career decisions. Attention is given to helping students understand the present and potential role they have as contributing members of society. Skills and knowledge acquired through the guidance curriculum at this level should include:

- interaction skills
- life planning skills
- successful work habits
- a personal philosophy of life
- the relationship between educational goals and career opportunities
- appropriate leisure activities
- coping skills

## **Healthful Living K-12**

The purpose of Healthful Living Education is to provide appropriate instruction for the acquisition of behaviors that contribute to a safe, healthy, and physically active lifestyle. This can be achieved through a program that reflects the needs of the student throughout his/her school experience. Students at all grade levels need the ability to use appropriate health-promotion resources, self-esteem building skills, self-management skills, and interpersonal communication skills essential to a productive and enjoyable life.

The Healthful Living Education program, when appropriately reinforced in a comprehensive manner, can be expected to have the following benefits for students:

- Lessens the occurrence of student risk taking behaviors that contribute to disease, injury and death. This includes improper nutrition and physical inactivity that lead to cardiovascular disease, risk taking behaviors that may result in HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, drinking and driving while impaired, and student safety (bicycle, auto, and other accidents) — the number one cause of death for North Carolina students.
- Increases the desirable social behaviors and levels of self-image for students. Skills for increasing the awareness and respect for cultural diversity through participation in physical activities, useful stress management skills and conflict resolution skills are examples of ways the Healthful Living curriculum increases desirable social and self-esteem building skills. This area is critical since teenage violence and homicide remains the number one cause of serious injury and death for teenage African-American males.

- Establishes positive behaviors that promote higher levels of health for students. Positive behaviors that enhance a higher morale, productivity, and less absenteeism by students is reflected in the new curriculum. This also includes reducing the instances of students dropping out of school due to health-related behaviors (e.g., pregnancy, school violence, alcohol and drug use).
- Develops appropriate levels of personal fitness. The curriculum brings a well-researched and up-to-date understanding of the importance of physical activity for maintaining a viable and productive life.
- Lowers state and local health care expenses. The development of a better health-educated citizenry, equipped to handle personal, social, environmental, safety, and medical care decisions is also reflected in the curriculum.

Because current research demonstrates that a youngster's health and fitness status is determined more by his or her own behaviors than by advances in medical technology or availability of health services, it is essential that we provide all North Carolina students with valuable Healthful Living Education knowledge, skills, and health-promotion behaviors. The needs of handicapped students should be addressed through a specifically designed, adapted physical education program.

## **Mathematics K-12**

The mathematics curriculum addresses societal expectations that all students have the opportunity to become mathematically literate, are capable of extending their learning, have an equal opportunity to learn, and become informed citizens capable of understanding issues in a technological society. The curriculum gives students opportunities to learn to value mathematics, become confident in their ability to do mathematics, become mathematical problem solvers, learn to communicate mathematically, and learn to reason mathematically. Calculators, computers, and other technologies are expected to be used to address and support the mathematics curriculum at every level.

Elementary students should be actively engaged in constructing mathematical understandings, in using manipulative materials for a purpose, in conducting investigations and recording findings, and in working cooperatively to solve problems. Students should be lead by questioning and probing, by encouragement to clarify their thinking orally and in writing, and by the presentation of problems rather than solutions. The curriculum provides for the development of number sense, the recognition of patterns and relationships, and student involvement in geometry, pre-algebra, measurement, and data investigations.

Middle school students should be active learners, challenged to apply their prior knowledge and experience in new and more difficult situations. Rather than being just the receivers of information, students should be engaged in the process of learning. Students need to discuss, write, read, and listen to mathematical concepts. Activities should provide students the opportunity to work both individually and in small- and large-group arrangements. Supporting the mathematics curriculum should be problems that create the need for new ideas and motivate students. These problems should

emphasize real and relevant applications of mathematics. The curriculum expects a broad range of topics to be taught including numeration, geometry, pre-algebra, measurement, problem solving and mathematical reasoning, probability and statistics, and computation.

High school students should be in an environment where reasoning, problem solving, communication, and connections to other disciplines and the real world are evident. Computational algorithms, the manipulation of expressions and paper and pencil drill should not dominate mathematics. Whether working in groups or individually, students should be engaged in activities that use mathematical concepts and skills in the context of genuine problems and situations. Students should be active participants in the serious exploration of mathematical ideas. The mathematics curriculum aims to provide every student with broad and appropriate mathematical content. The content must enable students to study higher level mathematics as well as provide the flexibility to help prepare students for many different careers and vocations. The basic high school mathematics program includes courses from Pre-Algebra through AP Calculus.

## **Information Skills K-12**

INFORMATION SKILLS are the skills that prepare students to gather, process, use, and communicate information. We are continuously bombarded with diverse ideas, new information, and innovative technologies that increase the demand for students to become skilled in accessing, processing, and using information. Integrated with other curricular areas, information skills become the essential tools that equip students to interact with all forms of media for relevant purposes. Authentic practice of Information Skills will enable students to become lifelong learners and informed decision makers.

COMPETENCY GOAL 1: The learner will experience a wide variety of reading, listening, and viewing resources to interact with ideas in an information-intensive environment.

This goal responds to the growing diversity of ideas and information formats. The sheer mass of information and variety of media formats challenge every learner to filter, interpret, accept, and/or discard information and “media” messages. Students must use the reading, listening, and/or viewing skills that are appropriate for a specific format and purpose. A spiraling sequence of experiences with media resources will enable learners to become competent users and creators of information in all forms.

COMPETENCY GOAL 2: The learner will identify and apply strategies to access, evaluate, use, and communicate information for learning, decision making, and problem solving.

This goal acknowledges the benefits of systematic processes for seeking, using, and communicating information. To become self-directed learners, students must recognize an information need and apply a process for acquiring pertinent information. When integrated into curricular areas, reference and production processes become relevant to students and, therefore, are more likely to be transferred into real-life situations. Increasingly more complex practice with information-seeking skills prepares students for identifying problems, making informed judgments, and communicating information.

## **Computer Skills K-12**

COMPUTER SKILLS are the skills that students will need to study and work successfully, to access and use information at school and in everyday life experiences, and to understand the impact of computer technology on society in our technology-based, information-rich world. Students who complete a carefully-planned computer skills program will be prepared for these challenges. Such a program should contain the following three goals:

COMPETENCY GOAL 1: The learner will understand important issues of a technology-based society and will exhibit ethical behavior in the use of computer technology.

This goal addresses the ever increasing role of technology in all parts of society. Students must recognize the impact society has had in making our world a global community and our workplace a technology-dependent environment. They should understand that as the appropriate use of technology has increased so has the misuse. They need to recognize the difference in such uses and exhibit ethical behavior in using computer technology, copyrighted software, and information accessing tools.

COMPETENCY GOAL 2: The learner will demonstrate knowledge and skills in using computer technology.

In order to become productive users of computer technology, students must master certain computer operations and application software skills. This goal establishes the set of necessary skills for independent computer operation: knowledge of fundamental computer terms and functions, demonstration of keyboarding skills, and ability to use software correctly. Secondly, Goal 2 includes the application software skills that students will need to be problem solvers, technology communicators, and information seekers. The application software skills identified are for word processing, database management, spreadsheet problem-solving, and telecomputing operations.

COMPETENCY GOAL 3: The learner will use a variety of computer technologies to access, analyze, interpret, synthesize, apply, and communicate information.

This goal focuses on the computer skills that students will need to access, analyze, and share information. After acquiring the fundamental computer operation and application software usage skills, students will need to apply these skills to access information using a variety of resources. From CD-ROM software to electronic bulletin boards to online databases to microcomputer-based-lab applications to multi-media systems, students will obtain information to analyze it using database, spreadsheet, and graphing software. They will then communicate and share the results through telecomputing, desktop publications, and multi-media productions. These competencies obtained in Goal 3 will equip the students with the computer skills to be problem solvers and technology communicators.

## **Science K-12**

The science curriculum places emphasis on five major program goals. These goals address the nature of science, process skills, manipulative skills, positive attitudes toward science, and scientific

concepts and principles in the areas of earth, life, and physical science. Energy, environmental concerns and recent advances in science and technology permeate the curriculum. The curriculum is designed to foster reasoning, thinking, and problem solving skills. Stress is placed on experimental science instruction and the use of technology.

The elementary science curriculum provides opportunities for concrete, manipulative experiences which give broad coverage to science and allow students to experience more abstract concepts. These experiences assist the child in developing a basic understanding of the conceptual themes of matter, energy, motion, time, space, and forces. Content areas of earth, life, and physical sciences should be presented in an integrated fashion. With elementary students, understanding the process of science is more important than knowing the content of science. Through activities using process, students gain a basic understanding of science content. The development of problem solving and reasoning skills is an essential part of the learning process. Inquiry methods are used to deal with real problems that are relevant to the student.

The middle level science curriculum is an integrated form of earth, life, and physical science. Instructional time and depth of content are increased. Science concepts and principles are presented from a student-centered perspective, placing emphasis on the nature of science and inquiry. Instruction is largely experiential, stressing scientific methods through application of process skills: controlling variables, formulating hypotheses, interpreting data, and designing experiments. Problem solving and reasoning experiences are essential in the learning process. Scientific inquiry deals with both academic and real-world problems. Personal needs, societal issues, and academic and career preparation are interwoven into the course content. Appropriate science instruction assists middle level students in the transition from concrete reasoning processes to abstract reasoning patterns.

The high school science curriculum becomes more specific and theoretical. There is a continuation of concept development with emphasis on the nature of science and scientific inquiry. The high school program places emphasis on both applied and theoretical aspects of science. Courses stress doing science through the use of manipulatives and laboratory work, presenting science as a practical and relevant subject. The basic philosophy reflects an attitude that science is understandable and is a process of finding out about the universe. Courses are challenging and reflect a philosophy of science as inquiry. All students benefit from a program which has high expectations. Emphasis is placed on using current technology as students investigate relevant problems. Concept acquisition emphasizes recent developments in science and technology and addresses socially relevant issues.

## **Second Languages K-12**

The goal of the K-12 second language program is communicative competence within an authentic cultural context. Students develop the ability to listen, speak, read, and write the second language in order to be able to communicate with a native speaker. Students also increase their knowledge and understanding of cultures in which the language is spoken.

The Basic Education Program is based on instruction in one second language, selected by the local school unit. Instruction continues through the school year and is scheduled with sufficient

frequency to enable students to progress in their second language development. The elementary grades program begins with an emphasis on listening and speaking skills which are acquired through developmentally-appropriate activities that reflect the needs, abilities, and interests of students. Students begin to develop an awareness of the lives of children living in other cultures where the second language is spoken. Reading and writing may be introduced at grade 3 in programs which feature frequent instruction, thereby giving students an opportunity to see in writing what they already can say. Whenever possible, language learning takes place within a cultural context and is often integrated with other areas such as mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts.

The middle grades second language program addresses two groups of students: those who began the second language in the elementary grades and those who are beginning the second language for the first time. The primary goal of the program is the continual development of language skills in a communicative context. Culture continues to play an integral role in the program and seeks to promote understanding of the everyday life and values of people in the cultures where the language is spoken. The middle school second language program focuses on the needs of early adolescents, their attitudes, level of maturity, and wide range of interests. Students are actively engaged in using their language skills and knowledge in meaningful educational experiences and are provided opportunities to expand their skills.

The high school program recognizes three major groups of students: those who have had a long sequence of second language study beginning in the elementary grades, those who began a second language in the middle grades, and those who have not had previous second language study. The goal of the program continues to be communicative competence within a variety of cultures. Grammar and vocabulary are presented within relevant contexts and meaningful situations. Cultural elements may include the contributions of cultures to the advancement of civilization, as well as patterns of everyday life. As students continue to be provided with opportunities to develop stronger language skills, they improve their ability to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

## **Social Studies K-12**

A balanced and effective social studies program, K-12, prepares students to be active, informed, and responsible citizens of the state and the nation. Social studies increases students' awareness of their world, their nation, and their state, giving them fundamental understanding of their own society and others both past and present. Students gain from social studies programs the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable them to be effective problem-solvers, good decision-makers, and wise planners. They are prepared, as a result of their social studies education, to respond to present, recurring, and unforeseen problems.

Students successfully completing a balanced and effective social studies program possess civic understanding and accept their responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society. They are: proficient in the skills of information acquisition; information use for problem-solving, decision-making, and planning; self-management and social and civic participation; possess the ability to apply concepts, generalizations, and theories to analyze and explain government, history and geography in a variety of settings and contemporary issues; demonstrate values consistent with the

fundamental tenets of democracy; exhibit constructive attitudes toward change, conflict, diversity, and uncertainty; and demonstrate concern for others and for the environment.

The subject matter of social studies is the entirety of human experience. Learning activities in social studies provide the opportunity for students to use skills introduced in other areas as they learn to understand and practice the art of living and working together in a productive and non-destructive manner.

The social studies program at the elementary level introduces children to important concepts and generalizations from history and the social sciences through an integrated study of children and their families, their homes and schools, and the neighborhoods and communities where they live. Studies in kindergarten through grade 3 begin with immediate surroundings familiar to children and move deliberately to children and families, homes and schools, and neighborhoods in other environments. In grades 4 and 5, students begin studies of world regions as they examine regions of North Carolina, the United States, Canada, and nations of Latin America.

In the middle grades students in grades 6 and 7 continue the geographic study of world regions as they examine the Eastern Hemisphere. Students learn about Europe including areas formerly in the Soviet Union, in grade 6, and investigate regions in Africa, Asia, and Oceania in grade 7. In eighth grade, students focus on the discipline of history as they examine North Carolina's past within the context of the national framework.

In grades 9-12, students polish and deepen their understanding of history and the social sciences through their study of the Economic, Legal, and Political Systems in Action, world studies, United States History and social studies electives. In the study of Economic Legal and Political Systems in Action, students consider basic concepts, institutions, and reasoned approaches for analyzing problems, actions, and policies. The world studies program offers students three complementary but distinct approaches to the study of the world. A historical, geographic or cultural approach may be taken to this study. The study of United States History enables students to develop a historical perspective through an examination of cause-and-effect relationships in the history of our nation. This study emphasizes social, political and economic developments of the 20th century. Social studies electives should consist of well-balanced offerings in history and the social sciences.

## **Vocational and Technical Education 6-12**

The mission of vocational and technical education is to help empower students for effective participation in a global economy as world-class workers and citizens. Specific purposes of vocational education are:

1. Preparation for further vocational and technical education.
2. Preparation for initial employment.
3. Assistance in making educational and occupational decisions.
4. Application and reinforcement of related learning from other disciplines.
5. Preparation for making informed consumer decisions and applying practical life skills.
6. Assistance for persons who have academic, socioeconomic, and/or other disadvantages or handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in vocational programs.

Competency-based courses are offered in eight vocational program areas, with each area having school-based and work-based learning:

Agricultural Education  
Business Education  
Career Development  
Marketing Education

Health Occupations Education  
Home Economics Education  
Technology Education  
Trade and Industrial Education

A comprehensive vocational program includes preparatory, instructional, and transitional programs and services for work or further education.

Combined with other academic offerings, vocational education assists all enrollees, including members of special populations, in the progress and success of career goal attainment. Students enrolling in vocational education must have a career development plan outlining courses to be taken and special services required. A career guidance, placement, and follow-up system must exist to assist students with career development.

In grades 6-8, vocational and technical education is part of the sequential process in the continuum of self-awareness and career development. The program's thrust is the emphasis on the individual — self awareness, educational and occupational opportunities in the world of work and career decision-making. The relationships of changes in society are related to the individual and potential employment.

Exploring Career Decisions and Keyboarding may be offered in grades 6-8. Exploratory programs in biotechnology, business and marketing technology, and life skills are available in grades 7-8. These exploratory experiences are designed to assist students in making wiser decisions about choices related to themselves and the world of work and developing a tentative career development plan.

All programs, grades 9-12, should include workplace learning such as cooperative on-the-job training, internships, school-based enterprises, and youth apprenticeships. These work-based experiences, combined with school-based learning, help students make the connection between school and work. Vocational student organizations, another school-to-work transition strategy, are a vital part of each instructional program area, also. These school-to-work transition strategies are considered a part of the school day.

Each vocational and technical education offering must be based on competency goals and objectives which enable students to develop specified levels of proficiency needed in the workplace, the home, and at the next level of training and development. Evaluation of students' competency attainment is to be based on a comparison of their performance and a predetermined standard. Students should be furnished written documentation of specific competencies attained through participation in a vocational and technical program.

When designing the curriculum for a school or the total school system, priority of course offerings should be based on: (1) student needs, interests, and aspirations, and (2) labor market demands and projections.

Programs in vocational education are designed to contribute to the educational outcomes of students. Vocational programs contribute to students being able to:

1. Identify, organize, plan, and allocate resources — time, money, materials and facilities, and human resources.
2. Work with others by participating as a team member, serving clients/customers, negotiating, and working with diversity.
3. Acquire and use information.
4. Work with and operate effectively within social organizations, and technological systems.
5. Work with a variety of technologies.
6. Contribute to the development of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and mathematical systems.
7. Contribute to the development of thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, and reasoning.

Vocational and technical programs must be offered in compliance with the Standards for Approval of Vocational and Technical Programs passed by the North Carolina General Assembly and the Vocational Technical Education Programs of Study and Support Services Guide. This guide specifies class size, course descriptions, and sequences.

### **III. Programs Not Confined to Subject Areas**

#### **Exceptional Children**

##### **The Purpose of Programs for Exceptional Children**

The primary purpose of exceptional children programs is to ensure that students with disabilities and students classified as academically gifted develop mentally, physically and emotionally to the maximum extent possible through the provision of an appropriate, individualized education in the least restrictive environment.

Exceptional children are (1) students who because of permanent or temporary mental, physical, or emotional disabilities need special education and are unable to have all their educational needs met in a regular class without special education or related services, or (2) students who demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate outstanding intellectual aptitude and specific academic ability and, in order to develop their abilities, may require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular school program. Classifications of exceptional children include those who are autistic, academically gifted, hearing impaired (deaf or hard of hearing), mentally handicapped (educable, trainable, or severely/profoundly), multihandicapped, orthopedically impaired, other health impaired, pregnant, behaviorally-emotionally handicapped, specific learning disabled, speech-language impaired, traumatic brain injured, and visually impaired (blind or partially sighted). See Section .1501 of Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special Needs for definitions of these classifications.

Exceptional children programs and services may be classified as both instructional programs and instructional support services, depending upon the educational need of an individual student.

### **Content Sequence and Learning Outcomes**

Curricula for most exceptional students follow the curricula for students in general education. Emphasis must be given to instruction in English Language Arts, arts education, social studies, healthful living, mathematics, science, career and vocational education, depending upon the needs of the individual student. Attention must focus upon cognitive, affective, motor and vocational development within the curricular areas. The Individualized Education Program for the disabled and the Group Education Program for the academically gifted, both of which are based upon a comprehensive assessment, are to state in writing the special education offerings to be provided to each exceptional student.

Learning outcomes—knowledge, skills, concepts understandings, and attitudes—for the disabled and the academically gifted will differ from student to student. For many exceptional students, the same learning outcomes developed for students in general education will be appropriate. Some exceptional students will meet the learning outcomes at a different time and in a different manner than students in general education. Some students with severely limiting disabilities might not meet the learning outcomes in general education and will need a totally different curriculum.

The purpose for adapting or changing curricula and teaching and learning strategies for exceptional students is to assist the students in achieving as much as is possible from their school experiences and to be prepared to function as independently as is possible. Completion of school experience by students with disabilities is determined by meeting the requirements for graduation or by attaining the goals set forth in the Individualized Education Program, or both. To graduate with a diploma, an exceptional student must obtain the State mandated units of credit based upon successful completion of course work and acceptable scores on tests adopted by the State. Exceptional students who do not meet the State and local requirements for a diploma, but meet other requirements for graduation, will be eligible to participate in graduation exercises and receive a certificate of graduation.

Although the course requirements are the same for exceptional students as with nonexceptional students, the instruction must be tailored on an individual basis to meet a student's particular needs.

Teachers, principals and the school system's central office staff have the responsibility for evaluating the learning outcomes for exceptional students just as they do for students in general education. The primary purposes for the evaluation of student outcomes are to determine gains made by individual students and to determine changes that occur at class, school and system levels. Learning outcome data are useful in the formulation of goals, the derivation of measurable objectives from stated goals, and as a systematic method for planning.

The Individualized Education Program for students with disabilities requires objective criteria, evaluation procedures, and schedules for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether or not short-term instructional objectives have been achieved. The Group Education Program for the academically gifted requires annual goals and evaluation methods. Periodic probes to determine a student's achievement may be made through various tests or methods: teacher observation, commercially-made and teacher-made tests, checklists, writing samples, product development, sociograms, and the like. Data-based teaching, with daily recording of student responses, is most appropriate for determining degree of mastery.

All special education instruction provided to exceptional students is to be individualized and designed to meet unique learning needs. Modification of instructional programs, creative instructional approaches, and individualized programming are necessary to meet the special needs of exceptional students.

**Autistic.** Students with autism have a pervasive developmental disability and represent a very heterogeneous group with regards to their intellectual abilities, ranging from profoundly mentally handicapped to normal or near normal levels of intelligence. Regardless of intellectual ability, the characteristic problems in language and social relationships interfere with the school achievement of all students with autism. The expected learning outcomes vary widely depending upon the abilities of the student.

**Behaviorally-Emotionally Handicapped.** If appropriate early intervention services are provided to students classified as behaviorally-emotionally handicapped, they will generally be able to progress academically on grade level. If services are delayed, the students may fall several grades below their indicated potential. These students range in intelligence and achievement from very low to superior, and may score very high on standardized tests while failing the course work in school. Others may perform well in the course work, but score very low on standardized tests. It is imperative that the learning outcomes set for these students be determined on an individual basis according to their special behavioral, intellectual, perceptual and educational strengths and weaknesses.

**Academically Gifted.** These students possess general intellectual ability and specific academic achievement. The determining factors for learning outcomes of gifted students are program design and intent. A student who is gifted in one academic subject or area may not be gifted in all subjects or areas. These students are expected to excel far beyond general education minimum competency goals and performance indicators established in any area of study in which they have been identified as gifted.

**Hearing Impaired.** Educational programs for most students who are deaf or hard of hearing vary according to the degree of the disability, age of onset of the disability, mental ability and age of intervention for amplification and instruction in communication, including speech and language. Generally, students who are deaf or hard of hearing will be able to master the learning outcomes developed for general education. Many students who are deaf require educational interpreters. Most students will need specialized amplification and modifications to succeed in the general education classroom.

**Mentally Handicapped.** The learning outcomes (skills, knowledge, and attitudes) for students in general education may be the same for many students classified as educable mentally handicapped and for some students classified as trainable mentally handicapped. In addition to competency goals in basic skills areas, these students require competency goals in self-care, personal development and selected areas of vocational education. Students who are severely or profoundly mentally handicapped require the establishment of learning outcomes that are different from those developed for students in general education.

**Multihandicapped.** Learning outcomes for some students classified as multihandicapped may be the same as for those students in general education. Generally, these students possess severe types of disabling conditions that require learning outcomes that are much the same as those for the severely mentally handicapped. The type and severity of the various disabling conditions are important factors in determining competency goals for these students.

**Orthopedically Impaired, Other Health Impaired, and Speech-Language Impaired.** Students with these disabilities are basically the same as students without disabilities; therefore, the learning outcomes developed for general education are usually appropriate. Exceptions may be indicated depending upon the extent of the disability and the functioning level of the student.

**Visually Impaired.** Educational programming for students who are blind or partially sighted varies according to the degree of vision loss, native intelligence and the presence of other disabling conditions. Instruction in safe travel, orientation and mobility, should be provided on a regular basis for all students who are visually impaired. Most students will be able to read "print" in regular typeset or large print. Other students may require instruction in Braille. Most students who are blind or partially sighted will be able to master the learning outcomes developed for general education. Special modifications will be required for physical education, mathematics, and career and vocational education.

**Specific Learning Disabled.** Learning outcomes of general education will be the same for most students with specific learning disabilities. However, the performance indicators may often differ. Instruction may be provided on a one-to-one basis, in small groups or in large groups, with most students needing a combination of these approaches during the school day. Attention must be given to the need for individualization, with instruction designed in keeping with each student's preferred learning modality.

**Components of Exceptional Children Programs.** The necessary components for exceptional children programs include: (1) identification, referral, screening, evaluation and placement of students, (2) parental involvement in evaluation and placement processes, (3) development of Individualized Education Programs or Group Education Programs, (4) due process rights for parents, (5) maintenance of confidentiality of records and of a data collection system, and (6) provision of instruction and related services.

Instruction is based upon the curricula needs (academic, affective, motor and vocational) of each student. Instruction varies from student to student; curricula may vary from student to student. Appropriate related services must be made available to exceptional students so their individual educational needs will be met. Grade levels often have little meaning for many students with disabilities, especially those with the more severe types of disabling conditions, including those with cognitive deficits.

For those students with disabilities for whom grade-level recognition may be significant, the following descriptions may be appropriate:

#### Grades K-3

The curriculum for the student with a disability, in general, should revolve around health, mental and physical; social experiences; readiness activities; visual and auditory discrimination;

language; speech; quantitative concepts; motor skills; and familiarity with common materials, their uses and methods of using them. These are not taught effectively in isolation, but rather should be taught through the use of units and activities. In this way, meaning is associated with the development of skills and concepts, a need for them is present, and an opportunity for their application is at hand.

#### Grades 4-6

The curriculum is developed around two major areas of emphasis: improvement in general living skills and development of proficiency in the understanding and use of academic skills. The areas are taught as integrated activities rather than apart from each other.

#### Grades 7-8

The curriculum offers a consolidation of social and academic skills learned at the previous levels. Greater and more varied application of academic skills, prevocational skills and social experiences are presented. Efforts are made to establish readiness for learning about jobs and job requirements.

#### Grades 9-12

The curriculum at this level draws upon all that has been taught to the learner and emphasizes the provision of experiences and the development of concepts and attitudes required in wholesome, contributing community membership. Extensive attention must be given to transition from school to adult life, especially occupations and employment.