

## Frequently Asked Questions

This document was developed based on questions generated at the 2008 North Carolina High School Network Conference.

***1. Is it possible for Accountability Services to give individual student goal summary reports for LEAs to use as diagnostic information?***

The EOC tests are not designed to provide diagnostic information. In order to give accurate diagnostic information, the EOC tests would have to be much longer. However, the test development staff has been investigating ways to report at a finer grain than total test score level, and a new individual student report is under development.

***2. Schools have such a short time to remediate. Even though a goal summary report is statistically unreliable, isn't it better to use the goal summary report to guide remediation than to have nothing at all to follow?***

As you note, sub-score reporting is statistically unreliable. As such, placement or instructional decisions made on unreliable data may in fact be *more* detrimental to the student. A teacher who has spent an entire block or entire school year with a student is a much better resource for information about a student's knowledge, skills, and abilities than a two-hour test.

***3. To provide more diagnostic information to teachers, will future goal summary reports be divided by objective?***

No. Because of the scope of the curriculum, each objective has very few, in some cases just one or two, items associated with it on any given EOC form. To provide objective-level information would be more unreliable than goal-level information and much more prone to misleading conclusions about student achievement or classroom instruction.

***4. Will more sample questions and benchmark tests be made available from the state to help teachers better prepare students for high stakes tests?***

Sample questions are available on the NCDPI Accountability Services Division Web site. The test development section is researching ways to provide more instructionally informative assessment resources for teachers to use throughout the year. Teachers should also refer to the many resources provided by the NCDPI curriculum staff, as the tests are aligned to the NC *Standard Course of Study*.

***5. What is Accountability Services doing to promote the use of formative assessment as an aid to student learning?***

The Accountability Services Division supports State Superintendent Dr. June Atkinson's vision of a comprehensive balanced assessment system which includes formative assessment used during instruction by students and teachers to provide feedback that will be used to help advance learning. Various workshops have been conducted across the state to provide information regarding this classroom practice. Test Development staff have been conducting research both independently and in collaboration with other states to be able to better inform the state's

leadership on the direction that would be most beneficial to students and educators. This includes research on validity, reliability, and alignment to our state content standards. For more information, please visit <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/educators/vision/>.

**6. *Where can we find out more information about the Blue Ribbon Commission and their report?***

The State Board of Education convened the Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability to provide a comprehensive review of the state's accountability system—including student testing. Dr. Sam Houston, chief executive officer and president of the Science, Math and Technology Center and a former local school superintendent, chaired the Commission. A complete report from the Commissions may be found at [http://www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe\\_meetings/0801/accountabilityfinalreport.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe_meetings/0801/accountabilityfinalreport.pdf).

**7. *Social studies is not tested at grades 3–8; however, the Blue Ribbon Commission did not recommend eliminating the two high stakes high school social studies tests (i.e., Civics and Economics and U. S. History). How do you explain the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations for the elimination of some of the testing requirements?***

The charge to the Commission was to comprehensively review and offer to the State Board of Education recommendations for re-visioning the State's testing program and accountability system. Recommendations to eliminate and replace the writing test, the computer skills test, and the English I EOC were based on review of all the information and data made available to the Commission from formal presentations by professional associations and commissions, individuals in the field, parents, higher education, the business community, 21<sup>st</sup> century initiatives, the State Superintendent, DPI staff, representatives of a national testing organization, an individual testing expert, and Judge Howard Manning. In addition, the Commission considered the recommendations in Senate Bill 1463, the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* (PL 107-110) and the fiscal implications of noncompliance, and letters received from stakeholders. The Commission did not recommend the elimination of the social studies courses because they are part of the high school exit standards. The high school exit standards include those five end-of-course assessments that all students following the Career Preparation, College Technical Preparation, or College University Preparation courses of study are required to take.

**8. *A Blue Ribbon Commission member acknowledged that North Carolina has the best accountability system in the nation and has a great department working hard to find the right answers. From the Blue Ribbon Commission's report, what recommendations could move the accountability system forward?***

The Accountability Services Division is in the process of reviewing the recommendations to determine how they may impact the current system and any future systems that may be developed. These considerations will be provided to the State Board of Education as they decide how to move the testing and accountability systems forward.

**9. *How are cut scores set? Is the curve set in such a way that there is always a certain percentage of students who fail the test?***

The tests are not scored “on a curve.” During the early phases of test development and through

the first operational (pilot) year, information is collected from teachers on the degree to which they think their students have achieved mastery over the course content. In the fall of the pilot year, these data are gathered and applied to the fall data using a standard-setting method called contrasting groups. These results are used as interim standards. After an entire school year's worth of data have been collected, an additional standard-setting procedure is implemented called item mapping (sometimes also called bookmarking). In both standard setting methods, the judgment of North Carolina teachers is the primary source of information on where to put the cut scores.

**10. *Do students who graduate in three years count against the LEA in the four- or five-year graduation rate?***

No. Students who graduate in three years do not count against the LEA in the four- or the five-year graduation rate. The four-year rate equals those who graduated in four years or less.

The five-year rate equals those who graduated in five years or less.

**11. *When scores are delayed, does it take longer for some schools (e.g., elementary and middle schools) to receive scores than it does for others (e.g., high schools)?***

The length of the delay depends on what process has to happen in order to be able to release the information. EOG tests are placed on a developmental scale, therefore, the delay is typically longer for EOGs than for EOCs. However, all scaling and scoring information is released to all LEAs at the same time.

**12. *Why for the 2007–08 school year, are the high stakes EOC and EOG tests no longer “untimed” but have a maximum time allowed?***

For the past several years, the EOCs and the EOG mathematics and science tests have been untimed. When the tests were untimed, only a small number of students (5% or less) did not finish the state tests at the end of the estimated test administration time. In looking at the testing time data, almost one-hundred percent (99.8%) of the students can complete the tests in a maximum time allowed. Providing a maximum testing time allows students ample opportunity to complete the tests and for building administrators to properly plan for how the school day should be structured to accommodate state testing schedules.

**13. *How are the estimated times and maximum times determined for highstakes tests?***

During the final field testing, the test administrator's manual directs the teacher to record elapsed time on the board, and as students finish the tests, they record the amount of time it took for them to complete the test directly on their answer sheets. These timing data are analyzed to determine the most appropriate estimated and maximum times for the test. The general guideline for estimated administration time is the amount of time it took for 95% of students to complete the test during the field test plus 15 minutes. The general guideline for the maximum amount of time is the amount of time it took for 99.98% of students to finish rounded up to the nearest 15 minutes.

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