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Understanding Testing: North Carolina Pretest—Grade 3

Purpose of the Grade 3 Pretest

The purpose of the North Carolina Pretest—Grade 3 is to provide an accurate, global estimate of individual student skills and knowledge specified in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* at the beginning of the school year. The pretest, which is developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), is used in the determination of growth in student performance during the school year for the school-by-school ABCs Accountability Program. The pretest does not provide diagnostic information concerning the specific strengths and weaknesses of individual students or groups of students.

The grade 3 pretest was developed to assess grade 3 reading comprehension and mathematics. Three forms of the pretest are administered in each classroom. The grade 3 pretest measures the knowledge and skills specified for grade 2 which are necessary for students to be successful in grade 3. As with all tests developed by the NCDPI, to demonstrate success on the pretest students are expected to have knowledge of important ideas and concepts; to understand and interpret material; to apply knowledge, skills, and concepts; and to make connections. While knowledge of facts and concepts is important, the questions on this pretest are at a much broader level and concern major ideas students are expected to know.

Beginning with the implementation of the ABCs Accountability Program in 1996-97, the grade 3 pretest in reading comprehension and mathematics is administered to all students at the beginning of the third grade. This provides pre-scores for third graders in the accountability model since there is no test from grade 2 to provide the pre-data for the growth analysis. For the purpose of state accountability, the pretests in reading comprehension and mathematics for grades 4-8 are the posttests for the previous grade.

Description of the Grade 3 Pretest

The grade 3 pretest assesses the goals and objectives described in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* for grade 2.

Testing Window

As soon as initial class membership is confirmed but no later than the first three weeks of school.

Administration Time

A total of approximately 148 minutes for 68 items which may be given on one day, two days, or three days. Time includes 56 minutes for directions and breaks.

Type of Booklet

Each student receives a multiple-choice test book and a separate scannable answer sheet with bubbles but sufficient white space.

Ancillary Materials

Rulers and four-function calculators. The practice test provides each student with an opportunity to practice bubbling responses on an answer sheet.

Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension part of the pretest mirrors the grade 3 end-of-grade reading test. Students read a variety of passages and then respond to 3-7 associated items. During reading comprehension, students read 5 passages representing literary (narrative, fiction, drama, and poetry), content-based (science, social studies, art, and health), and human-interest (perform a task, short informational piece) material. Each student answers 28 multiple-choice items assessing goal 2 (the use of language for the acquisition, interpretation, and application of information) and goal 3 (the use of language for critical analysis and evaluation) of the English Language Arts curriculum.

The questions associated with each reading passage are the important ideas and concepts necessary for a complete understanding of the content of the passage. There has been no attempt to specify the exact number of questions developed by goal and/or objective for each passage. Vocabulary is assessed in the context of the passage presented. The passages and the items are from the grade 3 end-of-grade reading item pool and the associated item statistics are from field tests conducted with groups of grade 3 students at the beginning of third grade.

Mathematics

The mathematics part of the pretest assesses the grade 2 mathematics curriculum. Each student answers 40 multiple-choice mathematics items—5 symbolic computation items and 35 application items. Students are expected to use rulers and calculators during the applications portion of the pretest. The specific goals and objectives assessed were determined by curriculum specialists. The items on each form of the test are distributed as depicted in the table below.

Approximately half of the items are from the grade 3 end-of-grade mathematics item pool (ones where content is similar at both grades 2 and 3) and the associated item statistics are from field tests conducted with groups of

grade 3 students at the beginning of third grade. The remaining items in the grade 3 mathematics pretest item pool were developed to more adequately assess the grade 2 *Standard Course of Study* and the associated item statistics are from field tests conducted with groups of grade 2 students at the end of second grade.

Scores and Reports

Performance on the grade 3 pretest of reading comprehension and mathematics is reported using developmental scales established for reading and mathematics (grades 3 through 8). These scales were developed in conjunction with the L. L. Thurstone Psychometric Laboratory at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Class rosters, frequency reports, and goal summary reports are available to provide curricular information. The grade 3 pretest is scanned and scored locally using the SCANXX program provided by the NCDPI; therefore, results are available soon after testing. In addition, the NCDPI provides LEAs with the capacity (i.e., parent/teacher report) to provide individual student grade 3 pretest performance (i.e., scale score, achievement level, and percentile) to parents and teachers beginning with the 1997-98 school year.

Table 1. Distribution of mathematics items on each grade 3 pretest form.

Goal	Goal Description	Objectives on test	Percentage of Test Items
1	The learner will identify and use numbers to 100 and beyond.	1.3-1.7, 1.9-1.12	19.0%
2	The learner will demonstrate an understanding and use of geometry.	2.1-2.3, 2.5	7.5%
3	The learner will demonstrate an understanding of classification, pattern, and seriation.	3.1-3.7	15.0%
4	The learner will understand and use standard units of metric and customary measurement.	4.1, 4.6-4.15	15.0%
5	The learner will use mathematical reasoning and apply problem solving strategies.	5.1, 5.2, 5.4-5.7	15.0%
6	The learner will demonstrate an understanding of data collection, display, and interpretation.	6.1-6.5	10.0%
7	The learner will be able to compute with whole numbers.	Comp: 7.4, 7.5, 7.11 A: 7.2-7.3, 7.7, 7.9-7.10	12.5% 6.0%