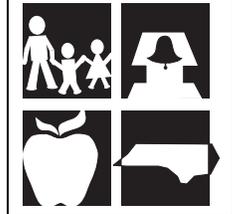


# Assessment Brief



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

## North Carolina Online Test of Computer Skills Feasibility Study

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*This brief is available on the North Carolina Department of Public Education Testing Section web site, [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing).*

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### Proficiency Graduation Requirements

In May 1991, the North Carolina State Board of Education, as part of the Quality Assurance Program, established a computer proficiency requirement for graduation that was to begin with the class of 2000. In October 1995, the board modified the requirement by making it effective beginning with the graduating class of 2001. Students who entered the eighth grade during the 1996–1997 school year and beyond must meet the computer proficiency requirement in order to receive a high school diploma.

The year a student entered grade eight determines which forms of the test the student must be administered in order to meet the computer proficiency graduation requirement. Students who entered eighth grade from the 1996–1997 school year through the 1999–2000 school year must meet the computer skills graduation requirement based on the 1992 computer skills curriculum. Students who entered eighth grade during the 2000–2001 school year and beyond must meet the computer skills graduation requirement based on the 1998 computer skills curriculum.

### The Online Test of Computer Skills

Beginning in spring 2001, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction began the test development process for a web-based computer skills test that combines the traditional multiple-choice and performance tests into one test and delivers it online. The redesigned computer skills test, as a single test, will be used to fulfill the computer skills proficiency graduation requirement. The online test's presentation and format will:

1. Modify the traditional performance test items to fit into an online format while maintaining the integrity of the performance component of the assessment;
2. Reduce the total actual test administration time by administering one computer skills test instead of two separate computer skills tests;
3. To the extent possible, no longer require students to save files, print documents, or match ID numbers from the test booklet to student printouts; and
4. Provide students, parents, and schools with results of student performance in a shorter length of time.

## **The Online Test of Computer Skills Feasibility Study**

As part of the test-development process, the NCDPI is conducting a feasibility study in September 2003. The purpose of the feasibility study is to conduct research and further develop the online test of computer skills as well as gain feedback on the newly developed word-processing application known as NCEdit.

The computer skills feasibility study involves only school system employees (adults) who volunteer to participate. During the test administration, participants access test items from a secure site on the World Wide Web. Participants respond online (1) by performing word processing and keyboarding tasks and (2) by selecting a response from multiple choices using a mouse or keyboard. Test items for this test assess (1) keyboard utilization, word processing, and desktop publishing; (2) database use; (3) spreadsheet use; (4) telecommunications; (5) societal issues (including ethics and care/operations); and (6) multimedia presentation.

Participants must access a separate database file and a separate spreadsheet file when responding to specific test items. The directions for opening and closing these files during the test administration will be included within the format of the online test items. As a result, participants must be able to move between windows (e.g., the browser and the performance software) during the actual test administration.

For the September 2003 administration, two forms of the computer skills feasibility study will be administered at each testing site. The two forms will be randomly assigned to the participants. After the test administration is completed, each participant will provide feedback through an online survey. The feedback assists in the continued development of an accessible online instrument.

## **Online Practice Activity**

To prepare for the online test of computer skills, participants are strongly encouraged to complete the North Carolina Online Test of Computer Skills Practice Activity. The practice activity provides participants with the opportunity to become familiar with the test format prior to the actual test administration. Participants practice word processing and keyboarding skills and practice entering responses by either (1) using the mouse to click on the letter of the response (for PCs, participants will click on the left mouse button only) or (2) using the keyboard to key the letter of the response. Participants practice moving between windows and using the scroll bar. During the practice activity, participants have the opportunity to become familiar with the text-sizing tool and the section navigation tool.

## **NCEdit**

The practice activity and the online test of computer skills require a newly developed proprietary word-processing application known as NCEdit. NCEdit allows students to edit files, italicize words, move text, spell check, etc. Site coordinators will have to download and install the program onto local computers. NCEdit is not secure test material and does not have to be deleted following the completion of the practice activity or the test administration. Once NCEdit has been downloaded, sites will receive notification of updates to the software as needed.

## **Development Time Line**

Following the fall administration of the adult feasibility study, volunteer student focus groups will participate in online computer skills administrations in spring 2004. A selected sample of students will participate in the online field test of computer skills in 2004–2005. The first operational year for the online test will be 2005–2006.