

Assessment Brief

Public Schools of North Carolina

State Board of Education • Phillip J. Kirk, Jr., Chairman • North Carolina Department of Public Instruction • Michael E. Ward, Superintendent

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North Carolina Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory

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This publication was developed in collaboration with the NCDPI Exceptional Children Division.

Introduction

The North Carolina Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory (NCAAAI) has been assigned as an alternate assessment for students with disabilities who are following the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. It provides a mechanism for teachers to evaluate student performance based on specific competencies from the curriculum. Teachers use the checklist instrument to document student performance on competencies in the specific content areas. The NCAAAI may be administered to students with disabilities who have current Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans that specify that the student cannot participate in one or more of the following statewide tests:

1) North Carolina Pretest-Grade 3, Reading and/or Mathematics.

- 2) North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) Test of Reading at Grades 3-8
- 3) North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) Test of Mathematics at Grades 3-8
- 4) North Carolina Writing Assessment at Grades 4 and 7

The IEP Team may determine that, due to the nature of the student's disability, the appropriate assessment for the student requires an instrument that assesses student performance below grade level. The NCAAAI may be used to assess students off-grade level in the areas of reading and mathematics.

Why was the NCAAAI Developed?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 states:

- Not all children will be able to participate in state and district-wide assessment programs, even with appropriate accommodations. State education agencies and local education agencies must develop alternate assessments and, beginning no later than July 1, 2000, conduct those alternate assessments.
- Once a state education agency receives information from these assessments, it must make available to the public and report to the public, with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children, the following: number of children with disabilities participating in

regular assessments and number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments.

- The state education agency must report the performance of those children on regular assessments (beginning no later than July 1, 1998) and on alternate assessments (no later than July 1, 2000), if doing so would be statistically sound and would not result in the disclosure of performance results identifiable to individual children.

All students, including those with current IEPs or Section 504 plans, must participate in the statewide testing program. Students with disabilities are allowed to use appropriate accommodations during the administration of North Carolina tests. For students who are unable to access state tests using accommodations, an alternate assessment must be used.

The NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/Testing Section and the NCDPI Exceptional Children Division worked collaboratively with other stakeholders to ensure that North Carolina is in compliance with the IDEA Amendments. The development and implementation of the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP) and the North Carolina Computerized Adaptive Testing System (NCCATS) accommodation reflects these efforts. However, during the late fall of 2000, the NCDPI heard from countless North Carolina educators that the needs of certain students with disabilities were not being met by these efforts. Descriptions of students with disabilities in need of a different alternate assessment include:

- (1) Newly-blinded students who have not had the opportunity to master Braille to the level that would allow the student to be administered a statewide test using the Braille Edition accommodation.
- (2) Students with learning disabilities whose reading skills are below the end of second grade.

(3) Students with serious physical disabilities that prevent participation in a statewide test administration with available accommodations.

(4) Students with cognitive deficits that prevent participation in a statewide test administration with available accommodations and for whom the alternate assessment portfolio is not an appropriate assessment.

Based on these concerns, the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/Testing Section, the NCDPI Exceptional Children Division, and the NCDPI Division of Instructional Services worked collaboratively to develop and implement the NCAAAI as a pilot effective March 2001. Beginning with the 2001-02 school year, the academic inventory will be operational.

What is the NCAAAI?

For each student participating in the NCAAAI, the assessor receives an individual notebook binder. The binder includes the inventory (reading, mathematics, and/or writing benchmarks) for the student, score descriptors, and an area to document evidence to support the assessor's scores for the student.

The academic inventory is designed as a recording sheet for monitoring an individual student's progress throughout the school year. Goals and objectives from the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* are clustered as competencies in each inventory according to "main ideas." The NCDPI Division of Instructional Services developed the competencies in each content area (reading, mathematics, and writing). A score is provided in each inventory to score each competency for each content area and grade level.

The following are examples of competencies in the Grade 4 mathematics inventory located under Using Numbers:

- Read and write numbers less than one million using standard and expanded notation.

- Model and identify the place value of each digit in a multi-digit numeral to the hundredths place.

The following are examples of competencies located in the Grade 7 reading inventory:

- Reads literary materials with complex characters, setting, and episodes.
- Reads informational and practical materials with complex vocabulary, concepts, and format.

The school principal assigns the assessor for the academic inventory. The assessor, working in collaboration with other educators and professionals in the school, monitors student progress using the academic inventory. The assessor must record student performance data for each competency that was taught on each inventory using a scale of 1-8. This data must be reported three times per year: fall baseline data, mid-year data, and final spring data. There is a separate set of descriptors for each content area: reading, mathematics, and writing. Below is an example of one descriptor that is consistent among all three scales (reading, mathematics, and writing) for the four different categories:

Achievement Level IV/Distinguished (7-8): The student consistently demonstrates mastery beyond grade-level skills, strategies, competencies, and expectations.

Achievement Level III/Proficient (5-6): The student consistently demonstrates mastery of grade-level skills, strategies, and competencies.

Achievement Level II/Apprentice (3-4): The student occasionally demonstrates mastery of grade-level skills, strategies, and competencies.

Achievement Level I/Novice (1-2): The student rarely or never demonstrates mastery of grade-level skills, strategies, and competencies.

Assessors are required to record a performance level number (1-8) for each objective that is taught. The assessor is required to record a “NA” (not applicable) performance level for objectives that have not been addressed. The assessor must collect evidence such as student work, conversations with the student, classroom assessments, and teacher observations for the final spring evaluation of student performance. This evidence must be documented and included in the student test binder (notebook) to document student progress.

How will the NCAAAI student notebooks be scored?

At the end of the school year, the assessor determines the student’s overall performance level using the descriptors and 1-8 scale for the final spring evaluation based on the performance levels or scores in each competency area. There is no separate test administered to the student.

If a student was assessed on grade level (that is, at the assigned grade level designated in SIMS/NCWISE), the student will receive an Achievement Level of I, II, III, or IV.

If a student was assessed off-grade level (that is, any grade level below the assigned grade level designated in SIMS/NCWISE), the student receives an Achievement Level of I or II. The student cannot receive an achievement level higher than II.

The NCAAAIs are not scored by the NCDPI as are the Alternate Assessment Portfolios (AAP). Instead, Student Information Sheets (scannable sheets) will be scanned each spring/summer for data collection and reporting purposes. Schools must store complete NCAAAIs including final evidence for a period of at least six months after the remainder of the school year. Each year the NCDPI will randomly request a number of NCAAAIs for further evaluation and audit.

How Will Student Performance Be Reported?

Student NCAAAI performance will be reported in accordance with federal and state laws. As a result, each student assessed will receive a customized individual student report.

The Role of the IEP Team

All students with disabilities who are officially assigned to Grades 3-8 are required to participate in the mandated statewide testing program at a given grade level using one of the available state-provided assessment options. If an IEP team determines that a standard test administration (with or without accommodations) or the Alternate Assessment Portfolio (AAP) is not appropriate, then the Academic Inventory is an option. The IEP team determines student participation in the academic inventory and the grade level at which the student will be assessed. The decision must be documented in the student's current IEP or Section 504 plan. In accordance with state law, the principal determines the student's assigned grade level.

The IEP Team may determine that, due to the nature of the disability, a student is to be assessed with a NCAAAI in reading or mathematics that is below the assigned grade level. Because off-grade level assessment is permitted in reading and mathematics, a student at Grade 7 may be assessed with the following:

- NCAAAI Reading at Grades K-2
- NCAAAI Mathematics at Grade 7
- NCAAAI Writing at Grade 7

The IEP Team may also elect for a student at Grade 7 to use a different option for each statewide test. For example:

- NCAAAI Reading at Grade 5
- North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Mathematics with Accommodations at Grade 7
- NCAAAI Writing at Grade 7

Which students are eligible for assessment with the NCAAAI?

The students must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to use the NCAAAI:

1. The student must have a current IEP or Section 504 plan.
2. The student must be in membership at Grades 3-8 in the local student information management system (e.g. SIMS or NCWISE).
3. The student must be following the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*.

What About Accommodations?

Accommodations are not necessary with a NCAAAI administration because the assessor judges the level of performance for each participating student. The NCAAAI is not a standardized test.

How Will Students Fulfill the Grade 3 Pretest Requirement for the NCAAAI?

If a student's current IEP or Section 504 plan has scheduled the student for the NCAAAI for the Grade 3 Pretest Reading and/or Mathematics, the assessor will use the NCAAAI for Reading Skills and/or Mathematics Skills for Grade 3. The baseline fall data will reflect the student's performance for the grade 3 pretest. The same inventory will be used throughout the year to document the student's performance.

Will the ABCs Include These Test Results?

During the 2000-01 school year, the NCDPI conducted a pilot administration of the NCAAAI. Results from the pilot study will not be used for any accountability purposes for schools or for students. Instead, the number of students participating in the 2000-01 administration will be reported in Volume II of the Report Card for ABCs.

Pending the results of the 2000-01 pilot administration of the NCAAAI, results from the 2001-02 NCAAAI may be used as part of

the performance composite of the ABCs Volume I.

At the time of this publication, no decision has been made regarding the inclusion of this data in the growth component of the ABCs.

Will Test Results from the NCAAAI be used for Statewide Student Accountability?

Results from the 2000-01 pilot may not be used for the Statewide Student Accountability Standard at Grade 5. At the time of this publication, the process for incorporating the NCAAAI student results into the Student Accountability Standards for Grades 3, 5, and 8 has not been determined.