

Assessment Brief



Public Schools of North Carolina • State Board of Education • Howard Lee, Chairman • North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., State Superintendent

Understanding the North Carolina End-of-Course Tests

November 29, 2007 • Vol. 11, No. 1

This brief is available on the North Carolina Department of Public Education Accountability Services Web site, www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/shared/abriefs/.

This publication and the information contained within must not be used for personal or financial gain. North Carolina school system/school officials and teachers, parents, and students may download and duplicate this publication for instructional and educational purposes only. Others may not duplicate this publication without prior written permission from the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program.

Description of the End-of-Course Tests

The North Carolina End-of-Course Tests (EOC) were developed for two purposes:

- To provide accurate measurement of individual student knowledge and skills specified in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* and
- To provide accurate measurement of the knowledge and skills attained by groups of students for school, school system, and state accountability.

End-of-course tests are based on the assessment of higher level skills within the context of specific subject-area content. When properly administered and interpreted, these test results provide an independent, uniform source of reliable and valid information, which enables:

- Students to know the extent to which they have mastered expected knowledge and skills and how they compare to others,
- Parents to know if their children are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a highly competitive job market,
- Teachers to know if their students have mastered subject area knowledge and skills in the curriculum and, if not, what weaknesses need to be addressed,
- Community leaders and lawmakers to know if students in North Carolina schools are improving their performance over time and how the students compare with students around the state, and
- Citizens to objectively assess their return on investment in the public schools.

Use of End-of-Course Assessments

End-of-course assessments should be used as follows:

- (a) The LEA shall include each student's end-of-course assessment results in the student's permanent records and high school transcript.
- (b) The LEA shall give each end-of-course assessment within the final five days of the course on a block schedule and the final ten days of the course on a traditional schedule.
- (c) The LEA shall use results from all operational end-of-course assessments as at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the student's final grade for each respective course. The LEA shall adopt policies regarding the use of end-of-course assessment results in assigning final grades.
- (d) Students who are enrolled for credit in courses in which end-of-course assessments are required shall take the appropriate end-of-course assessment.
- (e) Students who are exempt from final exams by local board of education policy shall not be exempt from end-of-course assessments.
- (f) Each student shall take the appropriate end-of-course assessment the first time the student takes the course even if the course is an honors or Advanced Placement course.
- (g) Students shall take the appropriate end-of-course assessment at the end of the course or an alternate assessment regardless of the grade level in which the course is offered.
- (h) Students who are identified as failing a course for which an end-of-course assessment is required shall take the appropriate end-of-course assessment.
- (i) Students may drop a course with an end-of-course assessment within the first 10 days of a block schedule or within the first 20 days of a traditional schedule.

- (j) Students who are enrolled in the Integrated Math sequence shall take the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II end-of-course assessments and shall be administered.
- (1) the Algebra I end-of-course assessment during the final five days (block schedule) or final ten days (traditional schedule) of Integrated Math II course;
 - (2) the Geometry end-of-course assessment during the Integrated Math III course on a locally established test date; and
 - (3) the Algebra II end-of-course assessment during the last five days (block schedule) or final ten days (traditional schedule) of the Integrated Math III course.

End-of-course tests given in the 2007-08 school year are Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Civics and Economics, English I, Geometry, Physical Science, Physics, and U.S. History.

Eligible Students

All students, including students with disabilities, enrolled in a course for credit must be administered the end-of-course test, with or without accommodations, or its alternate assessment. Students who are repeating the course for credit must also be administered the EOC test. Arrangements must be made to test students who are suspended from school.

Students enrolled in courses for credit that are a part of a series of the same course such as Algebra IA or IB shall take the appropriate end-of-course test at the end of the second course regardless of the final course taken to complete the series. Schools must provide a system of documentation that facilitates the monitoring of student enrollment in the parts for the purpose of local and state accountability. Documentation must note students enrolled in both parts who are eligible to take the appropriate end-of-course test. The student's most recent end-of-course test score will be used for the purpose of state accountability.

Reporting Test Results

The scores for the multiple-choice North Carolina End-of-Course Tests are reported as scale scores, percentiles, and achievement levels. The scale scores measure subject-specific achievement and are standardized across tests. Percentiles show the relative position of an individual's test score within the test scores of the standardization group. There are four achievement levels. Achievement levels allow the comparison of student and group performance to predetermined standards based on what is expected in each subject. Each EOC achievement level corresponds to a range of scale scores for each subject. For more information on North Carolina EOC achievement levels, refer to Web site www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/shared/achievellevel.

Delay in Scores

Fall 2007 is the first operational administration of the newly revised Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, Physics, and Algebra II assessments. Therefore, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, and Physics scores from the fall 2007 administrations will be delayed. In addition, based on results from the 2006–07 test data, it was determined that the Algebra II assessment could be shortened (i.e., fewer items) and still maintain a high level of technical quality. Instead of being required to establish new standards for Algebra II, the NCDPI is required to re-evaluate the existing standards to see if adjustments are necessary due to the revisions made to shorten the test. Therefore, scores from the fall 2007 Algebra II administration will also be delayed. Scores from the Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, and Physics tests will be released pending results of the standard setting process and the approval of the standards by the State Board of Education. Scores from the Algebra II test will be released pending re-evaluation of the existing standards. There will not be a delay in reporting scores for tests administered in spring 2008.

Online Test Administration Option

The North Carolina End-of-Course Tests will be provided in an online format for schools interested in participating in this option. The procedures, policies, and eligibility that apply to the paper-and-pencil version of the End-of-Course test also apply to the online format.

High School Exit Standards

According to State Board of Education (SBE) policy HSP-N-004 (16 NCAC 6D. 0503), students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in 2006-07 and beyond are required to meet new exit standards. The exit standards only apply to students following the Career Preparation, College Technical Preparation, or College University Preparation courses of study. Students are required to perform at Achievement Level III (with one standard error of measurement) or above on the five EOC assessments of Algebra I, Biology, English I, Civics and Economics, and U.S. History and successfully complete a graduation project. Additional information regarding the high school exit standards can be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/highschoolexit>.

*In compliance with federal laws, NC Public Schools administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law. Inquiries or complaints should be directed to: Associate Superintendent
Office of Curriculum and School Reform Services
6307 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-6307
Telephone (919) 807-3761; Fax (919) 807-3767*