

North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension—Grade 8

What are the purposes of the NC Testing Program?

The North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests are required by General Statute 115C-174.10 as a component of the North Carolina Annual Testing Program. As stated, the purposes of North Carolina state-mandated tests are “(i) to assure that all high school graduates possess those minimum skills and that knowledge thought necessary to function as a member of society; (ii) to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the education process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (iii) to establish additional means for making the education system at the State, local, and school levels accountable to the public for results.” This test is one component of the end-of-grade tests, which include reading comprehension and mathematics tests in grades three through eight. Students in grade three began taking a reading comprehension and mathematics pretest in the fall of 1996.

In order to determine the amount of academic student growth at the end of the current school year, the scores from the previous year’s end-of-grade tests are compared and that data is reported for school, school system, and state accountability purposes.

What is measured by the test?

The end-of-grade reading comprehension test for grade eight assesses the reading comprehension components of the grade eight English/Language Arts North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* (NCSCS) adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education in 2004. The test consists of nine reading selections with six to nine associated questions for each selection. Each student is asked to read five literary selections (two fiction, one nonfiction, two poems), three informational selections (two content and one consumer), and one embedded experimental selection (may be fiction, nonfiction, poetry, consumer, or content). The variety of selections on each form allows for the assessment of reading for various purposes: for literary experience, to gain information, and to perform a task.

A description of each goal assessed and the percent range of items for each goal are shown in the table below. Each item is also aligned to a curriculum objective from the North Carolina English Language Arts *Standard Course of Study* and a thinking skill level per Marzano’s (et al) cognitive taxonomy.

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Goal	Description of Goal	Percent Range
1	The learner will use language to express individual perspectives through analysis of personal, social, cultural, and historical issues.	3-7
2	The learner will use and evaluate information from a variety of resources.	18-22
3	The learner will continue to refine the understanding and use of argument.	5-8
4	The learner will continue to refine critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials.	19-21
5	The learner will respond to various literary genres using interpretive and evaluative processes.	45-50
6	The learner will apply conventions of grammar and language usage.	3-8

How is the test administered? The North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension at grade eight is administered within the last three weeks of school. The test has 53 operational items (count for the student) and 9 experimental items (do not count for the student). Multiple equivalent forms are administered in each classroom to provide information for curriculum evaluation and planning. The tests are scanned and scored by the school district with software provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Reports of student performance are produced locally. In addition, test scores are aggregated at the NCDPI to fulfill the reporting requirements for the state and federal accountability programs.

How was the test developed? The reading selections were chosen by North Carolina educators to reflect the variety of reading done by students at this level in and out of school and to ensure accessibility to a majority of students. The chosen selections are ones that would generally be read by students, would be interesting to the students, and have appropriate content for a reading comprehension test at this grade level. The questions for each selection were written and reviewed by trained North Carolina teachers and educators during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years and were field tested in the spring of 2007. Each field test question was administered to approximately 1,400 students from randomly selected schools across the state. The grade eight reading test (Edition 3) will be implemented statewide for the first time in the spring of 2008.

What kinds of scores do students receive on the test? The scores on the end-of-grade reading test are reported on a developmental scale, which allows the measurement of growth in student achievement across the grade levels. The use of scale scores provides for easier and more consistent interpretations of the results from year to year. Achievement levels are also generated to provide an interpretation of student performance relative to a predetermined standard. Student scores are converted to four achievement levels. In addition, student scores are reported as percentile ranks, which are generated from a statewide distribution of students who took the test during the first year the test was administered, the norming year. For Edition 3, this information will not be available until after the standard setting process occurs in the fall of 2008.

How does Edition 3 differ from previous editions of the test? This edition of the end-of-grade reading comprehension tests does not use categories (cognition, interpretation, connections, and critical stance) as an item characteristic. Instead the test is based on the goals and objectives from the NCSCS and thinking skill levels from the cognitive taxonomy described by Marzano, et al.

Another change for this edition is the minimal use of introductory statements for each selection, referred to as frames. When necessary, a frame is included to provide background information on the selection. An example of a necessary frame is one that cites an historical time period for the setting of a selection or additional relevant information not included in the selection.

When will reports be available for spring 2008 The score reports for the reading comprehension end-of-grade tests for spring 2008 will be delayed until early fall of 2008. Analysis of the data and subsequent standard setting must be completed for scale scores, achievement levels, and percentiles to be generated. As soon as these processes are completed, score reports will be produced at the student, classroom, school, LEA and state levels.

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