

# 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., Superintendent

## Pretest—Grade 3 Multiple-Choice Test for Fall 2008

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*This brief is available on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Testing Section Web site, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/grade3pretest/>.*

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### **The North Carolina Pretest—Grade 3**

The North Carolina Pretest—Grade 3 of Reading Comprehension and Mathematics is a multiple-choice test administered within the first three weeks of school to all students at grade 3. The pretest measures the knowledge and skills specified for grade 2 from the reading and mathematics goals and objectives of the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. The pretest allows schools to establish benchmarks to compare individual and group scale scores and achievement levels with the results from the regular end-of-grade test administration to be held at the end of grade 3 in the spring. In addition, a comparison of the results from the pretest and the results from the regular spring grade 3 end-of-grade administrations allows schools to measure growth in achievement in reading comprehension and mathematics at the third-grade level for the ABCs accountability program.

### **New Test Edition for Reading Comprehension**

Effective with the 2008–09 school year, there will be a new edition (Edition 3) of the North Carolina Pretest—Grade 3 Reading Comprehension test. The test is aligned with the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* for English/Language Arts which was approved by the State Board of Education in 2004. Like previous editions of the reading comprehension test, the reading selections represent different genres students read such as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, content, and consumer. Although drama is not one of the selection genres on Edition 3, it continues to be a critical part of the curriculum and should be included in classroom instruction. Dramas

are intended to be acted, not read independently as required in a multiple-choice testing format.

For test Edition 3, introductory statements, referred to as frames, will only be provided on selections which require background information for understanding the context of the selection. For example, a selection written by a former United States president might include a frame that provides the historical context of the president's administration. Selections which do not require contextual information will not have a frame.

The reading comprehension test (Edition 3) includes embedded experimental sections consisting of one selection and 6–9 associated items. Embedded items do not count toward or against the student's score. Embedding experimental items minimizes the testing impact on instructional time and maximizes student motivation on the items consistent with an operational environment, providing more robust statistics for the experimental items which are ultimately used to build operational forms of the tests.

The NCDPI is required to establish new academic achievement levels based on the scores from the first administration of a newly revised assessment. Fall 2008 is the first operational administration of the newly revised pretest—grade 3 reading assessment; therefore, the reading scores from the fall 2008 administration will be delayed. Scores from the reading comprehension test will be released pending results of the scaling and standard-setting process

and the adoption of the achievement standards (cut scores) by the State Board of Education.

**Mathematics**

The North Carolina Pretest—Grade 3 Mathematics Test measures the goals and objectives in the 2003 North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* for Mathematics. The competency goals and objectives of the 2003 mathematics curriculum adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education for each grade are organized into five strands, or goals. The goals include (1) number and operations, (2) measurement, (3) geometry, (4) data analysis and probability, and (5) algebra. Like the reading comprehension test, the mathematics test includes embedded experimental sections. The embedded items do not count toward or against the student’s score.

The mathematics test is administered on two days and consists of two parts: calculator active and calculator inactive. The calculator active part of the test must be administered before the calculator inactive part of the test. Students are allowed to use calculators for the calculator active part of the test.

The minimum (“at least”) calculator requirement for grade 3 is a four-function calculator with memory key. Additional features (e.g., graphing features) that are not restricted are allowed but are not required. Students are not allowed to use calculators for the calculator inactive part of the test.

**Time**

Because the pretest is designed to assess the knowledge and skills set of every student, every effort should be made to provide the time necessary for students to answer all items. The NCDPI has provided information to guide schools in scheduling the pretest by offering the estimated time required to complete the test. The estimated time is the time that the NCDPI estimates that it will take approximately 95% of the students to complete the test. At the school level, provisions are made for students who need time beyond that scheduled to complete the test. The NCDPI also offers a maximum time that is typically double the estimated time required to complete the assessment. No administration of the pretest—grade 3 may exceed the maximum time allowed for reading and mathematics. See Table 1 below for a list of times and number of items on the tests.

**Table 1: Pretest—Grade 3 Time and Number of Items**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Estimated Time</b>	<b>Maximum Time Allowed</b>
Reading Comprehension	38	85 minutes	180 minutes
Mathematics—Calculator Active	42	80 minutes	180 minutes
Mathematics—Calculator Inactive	20	40 minutes	120 minutes

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