

Assessment Brief



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

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North Carolina Writing Assessments at Grades 4, 7, and 10

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History of the North Carolina Writing Assessment

Believing that statewide emphasis on writing instruction was needed and that the measurement of writing enhances instructional efforts, North Carolina began a statewide assessment of writing in 1983–1984 at the sixth and ninth grades. During the 1985–1986 school year, writing was assessed statewide at grades 6 and 8. Students at grade 4 began taking the writing test during the 1992–1993 school year.

However, in order to reduce testing time and cost, in 1995–1996 the writing assessment was reduced to grades 4 and 7 only. The seventh grade test combined the modes of writing tested previously at grade 6 (descriptive and clarification/expository) with the eighth grade point of view/expository mode. In 2001 the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Testing Program, the NCDPI English/Language Arts Section, and North Carolina State University Technical Outreach for Public Schools staff met and began the process that would result in new writing assessments and scoring procedures at grades 4, 7, and 10. Beginning in March 2003, writing was assessed at grades 4, 7, and 10. Currently, students are administered the North Carolina Writing

Assessment at grades 4, 7, and 10. The measurement of writing ensures that ample time and resources are allotted for its development in the classroom.

Eligible Students

Students in membership at grades 4 and 7, including students who are repeating the grade, must participate in the standard administration of the North Carolina Writing Assessment. All students in membership at grade 10 who are following the College or University Preparation, College or Technical Preparation, and the Career Preparation Courses of Study must participate in the writing assessment. Students following the Occupational Course of Study are not required to participate in the administration of the grade 10 writing assessment. However, Occupational Course of Study students are required to participate in the spring 2006 **NCEXTEND2** OCS Field Test of Writing.

Students with disabilities and students identified as limited English proficient who do not participate in the standard administration of the writing assessment at grades 4, 7 and 10 must be administered a state-designated alternate assessment (i.e., NCCLAS, **NCEXTEND2**, or NCAAP). The NCCLAS and NCAAP alternate

assessments for writing are available to eligible students at grades 4, 7, and 10. For the 2005–06 school year, *NCEXTEND2* for writing is available to eligible students at grades 4 and 7 only.

Writing Modes

The North Carolina Writing Assessment program requires that the modes of writing assessed at grades 4, 7, and 10 be aligned with each grade’s curriculum as specified in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. For the 2005–2006 school year the program will assess writing using the following modes:

Grade Level	Type of Assessment
4	Extended narrative response (personal or imaginative)
7	Extended argumentative response (problem/solution or evaluative)
10	Extended informational response (definition or cause/effect)

Design of the Writing Assessment

Students will receive the following information from the 2005–2006 statewide writing assessments: (a) total content score, (b) total conventions score (i.e., sentence formation, usage, and mechanics), (c) total writing score, and (d) Achievement Level ranking. Only one writing prompt will be administered at each grade statewide. No student will be administered more than one writing prompt.

The North Carolina Writing Assessment scoring model is comprised of a content component with a 1–4 score scale and a conventions component with a 0–2 score scale. All student responses will be individually read and scored by two independent readers. The scores will be summed; whereby, each student response can receive 8 possible score points for content and 4 possible score points for conventions. A total writing score is then calculated by multiplying the total content score by 2 and then adding the total convention score. The total writing score equals

(2 × the total content score) plus the total conventions score.

The State Board of Education has set Achievement Level III as grade level proficiency. A review procedure is incorporated into the scoring process for those students whose total writing score falls within one point of the cut line at Achievement Level III (total writing score = 11). By achieving a score at or above the standard, the student has demonstrated a reasonable command of the particular mode of writing assessed.

Achievement Level	Total Writing Score
Level I	4–7
Level II	8–11
Level III	12–16
Level IV	17–20

The 2005–2006 report depicting statewide performance on the writing assessment at grades 4, 7, and 10 will not be disseminated until all data are analyzed and approved by the NCDPI leadership and/or the State Board of Education.

Writing Scores in the ABCs and AYP

For the 2005–06 school year, the writing assessment results at grades 4, 7, and 10 will be included in the performance composite of the ABCs. The writing assessment at grade 10, in combination with the English I end-of-course assessment, will be included in AYP. Writing results for the 2005–06 school year will be reported by LEA and by school.

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