

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: Survey 2000**

NORTH CAROLINA

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.

The statewide testing program in North Carolina was implemented in 1992-93 with state tests designed by North Carolina teachers, curriculum specialists, testing experts and the Department of Public Instruction staff. The testing program was modified to focus on the basics of reading, mathematics and writing under the plan to reorganize education in North Carolina, known as the **ABCs of Public Education**. To encourage a strong emphasis on the basic academics, the ABCs focuses the statewide testing program on the basic academic skills (i.e. reading, mathematics, and writing) which should be mastered by all students.

2. What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)* The **North Carolina Testing Program** consists of: NC Grade 3 Pretests, NC End-of-Grade Tests (EOG), NC Writing Assessment, NC Open-Ended Assessment, NC Tests of Computer Skills, NC Norm-referenced Testing Program, NC Competency Tests, NC High School Comprehensive Test, and NC End-of-Course Tests (EOC).

- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested*

- Grade 3: Grade 3 Pretest in Reading and Math and End-of-Grade Test in Reading and Math
 - Grade 4: End-of-Grade Test in Reading and Math, Writing Assessment, Open-Ended Assessment in Reading and Math
 - Grade 5: End-of-Grade Test in Reading and Math, ITBS
 - Grade 6: End-of-Grade Test in Reading and Math
 - Grade 7: End-of-Grade Test in Reading and Math, Writing Assessment
 - Grade 8: End-of-Grade Test in Reading and Math, Open-Ended Assessment in Reading and Math, Computer Skills, ITBS
 - Grade 9: End-of-Course tests in English I, Algebra I, ELPS (Economic, Legal and Political Systems), and Physical Science
 - Grade 10: End-of-Course tests in Geometry, Biology, English II (Writing), Competency Tests in Reading and Mathematics (if not passed at Grade 8), Comprehensive Test in Reading and Mathematics
 - Grade 11: End-of-Course tests in Algebra II, U.S. History, and Chemistry
 - Grade 12: End-of-Course tests in Physics
- *Norm or Criterion Referenced Both*
- *Matrix or Census Testing Both* – ITBS test is administered to a sample of NC students, the remaining assessments are census.
- *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.* Most of the tests are multiple choice, with the exception of the open-ended tests, the Writing Assessment, and the NC Computer Skills Performance Test.
- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)*
 - Pretest for Grade 3: First three weeks of school
 - Test to meet the NC Competency Standard: One locally established date in summer, fall and spring (seniors one month prior to graduation)
 - NC Computer Skills Test: June 1 – July 30 testing window; October 1 – November 30 testing window; February 15 – April 14 testing window.
 - English II Essay Test: July, October, November, December, March, or May (varies by school scheduling)
 - End-of-Course Multiple Choice Tests: Last week/day of session or course
 - Open-Ended Assessment at Grades 4 and 8: November
 - NC Writing Assessment at Grades 4 and 7: March
 - ITBS: April
 - End-of-Grade Multiple Choice Grades 3 – 8, Reading and Mathematics: Last three weeks of school
 - High School Comprehensive Test: Last three weeks of April
 - NAEP field tests: Determined by NAEP
- *Meeting the NC Competency Standard and the proposed High School Exit Exam*

Students who entered the ninth grade prior to 1994-95 school year were required to pass the North Carolina Minimum Competency Tests to meet graduation requirements. Students who entered the ninth grade during or after the 1994-95 school year are required to meet a more rigorous competency standard than was previously enforced: that of the North Carolina Competency Tests of Reading and Mathematics. The standard is equivalent to Level III on the eighth-grade reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests. Students who do not demonstrate performance at Level III or above on the end-of-grade tests at the end of grade 8 must pass the Competency Tests in Reading and Mathematics in high school in order to meet the graduation requirement. Students may take this test up until one month prior to graduation.

In April 1999, the North Carolina State Board of Education established the Student Accountability Standards, which provide four Gateway Standards for student performance. The last of these, Gateway 4, requires students to pass an “exit exam of essential skills” as one of the conditions for earning a North Carolina high school diploma. This requirement is in effect for students graduating in 2003 and beyond. In addition, students graduating in 2001 and beyond will be required to pass a test of computer skills.

The North Carolina High School Exit Exam will be administered for the first time to 11th grade students in the spring of 2002. Students who do not meet the standard for passing the exit exam will be given focused remedial instruction and will have additional opportunities to take the exit exam during their 12th grade year. The North Carolina High School Exit Exam assesses students’ proficiency in four competency areas or domains: 1) Communication, 2) Processing Information, 3) Problem Solving, and 4) Using Numbers and Data. Each domain consists of a list of learning objectives that will be measured by the exit exam. The domains and the learning objectives are addressed in the following content areas of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study: English/reading/grammar, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The exit exam, which consists of multiple-choice questions, is divided into a series of four tests, each of which assesses one of the four different domains.

- *Other Assessments* SAT, NAEP

- *Transitional or Final Assessment System* Phasing in final assessment system.

- 3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state? Probe on:*
 - *State Department of Education*
 - *Commercial Testing Organization*
 - *State teachers and administrators*
 - *Assessment Committee*
 - *Other*

With the exception of the ITBS assessment, the tests that currently comprise the North Carolina testing program were developed by staff of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and teachers in North Carolina. Teachers play an important role in the development of assessments, including:

- Provision of instructional and content validity to the development process
- Writing test questions and participation in item reviews and test reviews

- Review of items prior to and after the administration of field tests
- Participation in the setting of performance standards (achievement levels)

The North Carolina High School Exit Exam is being developed by Riverside Publishing in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and educators from across the state. North Carolina teachers and curriculum experts are playing a major role in the development of the exit exam by participating in activities such as item writing, item review, and test review.

4. What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?

All schools must participate in the statewide testing program; all students in schools are subject to the testing requirements.

5. Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned?

The End-of-Grade and End-of-Course tests measure objectives described in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Curriculum specialists review all test items for their alignment with the state's curriculum.

6. What is the state's approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?

The criterion-referenced tests in North Carolina were developed in North Carolina for the purposes of being aligned with the Standard Course of study. Teachers participated in the development of assessments and reviewed them for alignment with state curriculum.

7. How are the data included in the state assessment system used?

- Student Grade Promotion/Retention (beginning in 2000-2001 school year), Graduation, Diploma and/or Certification
- School accountability and District accreditation
- Program Evaluation (Title I)
- Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.
- Instructional guidance to local administrators, teachers, and state assistance teams.
- School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)

Moreover, each test has specific uses for which it was designed. Among these:

- NC Pretest – Grade 3: The purpose of this assessment is to provide an accurate, global estimate of student skills and knowledge at the beginning of the school year. One of its uses is to determine growth in student performance over the school year.
- NC High School Comprehensive Test: This is a curriculum-based test in Reading and Mathematics; however, it is not course specific. The results may be used to make norm-referenced interpretations with the state norms that were established the first year of the test

administration. It is used to determine academic growth from the End-of-Grade Reading and Mathematics Test in Grade 8 to Grade 10. It may be used by schools and school systems to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and to compare group performance across the state.

- NC Competency Standard: Passage of the Competency Tests in Reading and Mathematics is required by all students who did not achieve at least grade level (Level III) achievement on the Grade 8 End-of-Grade Test in order to receive a high school diploma.

8. Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

As the North Carolina curriculum is modified and updated, new assessments will be developed to match the curriculum; and newer tests will be equated with older tests. Most recently, the math assessment has been updated, new items were piloted in 1999-2000 and will be in place in 2000-2001. The high school exit exam, described in more detail earlier, is under development. In 2000-2001, End-of-Course Prediction formulas will be used to predict growth for high school students using their End-of-Grade and other End-of-Course tests.

9. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.

One of the issues that North Carolina officials have grappled with is the link between testing and curriculum; testing schedules, item types, and the timely reporting of data. The majority of North Carolina tests are multiple choice, which enables schools to test within the last few weeks of the school year or term, and still receive results in a timely manner. All district central offices have the hardware and software to scan and score multiple choice assessments, which further expedites the process. The state does provide additional quality control measures. There has been some criticism that the EOG and EOC assessments should include more constructed-response items, but this would require additional scoring time and a larger budget, and would push the testing date earlier in the school year. Earlier testing also encounters resistance from teachers who prefer to have their students tested at the end of the year, when they have had the maximum amount of time to provide instruction.

In addition, there has been some criticism that teachers are placing inadequate emphasis on science and social studies at the K-8 level, because these are not included in the state accountability measures. A solution to this issue could be to test on these subjects, but North Carolina officials are sensitive to the complaints that they already administer a high number of assessments.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?

Policies regarding students with disabilities:

Every effort must be made to include students with disabilities in the statewide testing program. North Carolina policy states that, to the extent possible, all students with disabilities shall participate in the statewide student accountability standards for elementary, middle, and high school levels. Only the IEP team or Section 504 Committee can determine if a student with a disability will be administered a state test under standard conditions, with accommodations, or be exempted from participation in a statewide test administration. All avenues for accommodations must be exhausted prior to a discussion for exemption. Students who are exempt must be administered an alternate assessment.

Policies regarding students with Limited English Proficiency:

North Carolina guidelines for the inclusion of students with Limited English Proficiency state that a student whose documented English language proficiency has been assessed as Novice/Low to Intermediate/Low in listening, reading, and writing may be exempted from statewide standardized testing by the same school system for up to two years from the time of initial enrollment in the school system. Limited English proficient students may be exempted from one subject test and be tested on the others. For example, a student may be tested in math and exempted from the writing essay test. The local committee that documents the student's limited English proficiency plan determines the exemption status.

In the near future, North Carolina will be implementing a system of student accountability standards known as "gateways." Gateway policies state that students of limited English proficiency shall meet the same standards as all students. However, in accordance with federal law, English language proficiency cannot be the factor that determines that a student has not met performance standards for the gateways. Therefore, the following guidelines must be used:

- 1) Students who are exempt from statewide testing in accordance with the Guidelines for Testing Students with Limited English Proficiency shall also be exempt from the test standard for passage through each of the gateways. Instead, an instructional portfolio containing documentation of the students' English language proficiency and progress in all academic areas shall be submitted to a local committee of teachers and administrators to determine if students are ready to be promoted to the next level.
- 2) Gateways 1, 2, and 3. Once limited English proficient students are no longer eligible for exemption from statewide testing, they may be eligible for a waiver up to two additional years. They may receive a waiver from the test standard at the gateway students first encounter if their English language proficiency is below "superior" in reading and writing.
- 3) High School Graduation Requirements. Limited English proficient students shall meet the same standards as all students for high school graduation.
- 4) School districts shall provide focused intervention for these students until they have met statewide promotion standards and high school graduation requirements (up to age 21). This

intervention shall involve extended, supplemental instructional opportunities that include assistance in the development of English language proficiency.

North Carolina collects data regarding the number of students exempted from participation in statewide test administrations. In addition, data regarding the area of disability is collected.

2. What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Modified Test Formats

- Audio Cassette
- Braille Edition
- Computer Skills Portfolio Assessment Accommodation
- Large Print Edition
- “One Test Item Per Page” Edition
- Video Cassette

Assistive Technologies/Devices and Special Arrangements

- Assistive Technologies/Devices
- Braille Writer
- Cranmer Abacus
- Dictation to a Scribe
- Interpreter/Transliterators/Signs/Cues Test (Except for reading test)
- Magnification Devices
- Student Marks Answers in Test Book
- Test Administrator Reads Test Aloud (not for reading tests)
- Use of Typewriter or Word Processor

Special Test Environments

- Hospital/Home Testing
- Multiple Testing Sessions
- Scheduled Extended Time
- Testing in a Separate Room

Accommodations for LEP students:

- Testing in a Separate Room
- Scheduled Extended Time
- Multiple Test Sessions
- Test Administrator Reads Test Aloud in English
- Student Marks in Test Book
- English/Native Language Dictionary

3. Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?

North Carolina does not provide assessments in languages other than English.

4. Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?

For the 1999-2000 school year, the IEP team or the committee that provides the limited English proficiency plan determines the alternate assessment when students are exempted from participation in a secure state test administration.

North Carolina has two alternate assessments for students with disabilities. The first, the North Carolina Computerized Adaptive Tests in Reading Comprehension and/or Mathematics is designed for students who are following the North Carolina Standard Course of Study at a different grade level. This test may be administered in place of the Pretest-Grade 3, the End-of-Grade tests in Reading Comprehension and Mathematics, and the High School Comprehensive Test. For students with serious cognitive disabilities following a functional curriculum, North Carolina compiles the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio. As of February 2000, no decisions had been made regarding an alternate form of the Writing Assessment and the Open-Ended Assessment.

5. Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?

Yes, North Carolina has the goal of inclusion of students with disabilities and LEP students in statewide assessments.

6. Are changes planned in the for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

No changes are currently planned for the inclusion of students with disabilities and LEP students; testing accommodations were revised in August 1999.

Performance Standards

1. How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?

North Carolina has established four performance levels with the following descriptors:

Level I: Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills of the subject/course to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.

Level II: Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills of the subject/course and are minimally prepared to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.

Level III: Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the course/ subject matter and skills and are well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.
Level IV: Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient in the course subject matter and skills and are very well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.

Range of scores associated with each achievement level for End-of-Course tests:

Subject Area	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Algebra I	23-44	45-54	55-65	66-87
Algebra II	23-45	46-57	58-68	69-88
Biology	26-46	47-54	55-64	65-87
Chemistry	23-47	48-55	56-64	65-88
ELP	21-42	43-51	52-60	61-87
English I	22-42	43-51	52-60	61-85
Geometry	23-45	46-56	57-66	67-87
Physical Science	23-43	44-53	54-63	64-87
Physics	23-42	43-51	52-62	63-87
US History	27-47	48-56	57-64	65-88

Range of scores associate with each achievement level for End-of-Grade tests:

Subject/Grade	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Reading PT3	119-127	128-132	133-144	145-162
EOG Reading 3	114-130	131-140	141-150	151-172
4	118-134	135-144	145-155	156-179
5	124-138	139-148	149-158	159-182
6	124-140	141-151	152-161	162-183
7	126-144	145-154	155-163	164-183
8	132-144	145-155	156-165	166-187
HSCT Reading	132-150	151-162	163-174	175-201
Math PT3	105-117	118-125	126-134	135-154
EOG Math 3	98-124	125-137	138-149	150-173
4	111-131	132-142	143-155	156-182
5	117-140	141-149	150-160	161-188
6	130-145	146-154	155-167	168-196
7	134-151	152-160	161-172	173-203
8	137-154	155-164	165-177	178-208
HSCT Math	141-159	160-171	172-188	189-226

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures (e.g. 70% of students in Maryland pass the MSPAP)?

North Carolina has established an expected growth/gain composite and an exemplary growth/gain composite for schools. The growth goal is determined using a formula that takes

into account statewide average test scores, past performance of a cohort of students, and statistical adjustment (regression to the mean) applied separately by grade and subject. Differences in pretest to posttest on a matched set of students are measured against the goal. The exemplary growth/gain goal for End-of-Grade tests is approximately 110% of the expected growth/gain goal. For the EOC tests, the exemplary goal is set at 5% of the difference between the baseline index and 100. The composites must be equal to or greater than zero to meet the expected and exemplary growth/gain standards, respectively. The growth/gain standard is a sum of the following components:

- End-of-Grade growth; growth in reading and mathematics from Grade 8 to Grade 10
- Writing index gain for grades 4 and 7
- End-of-Course and English II indexes gain
- College Prep/College Tech Prep component
- Gain in competency passing rates

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

A performance composite is calculated to show the percent of students in a school who score at or above grade level on end-of-grade and/or end-of-course tests. The performance composite is one of the factors used in determining low-performing school status. If a school does not make expected growth/gain AND less than half its students are performing at or above grade level (Achievement Level III), the school is low-performing. The achievement levels outlined in question 1, above, are based on state assessments.

The expected gain is based on the cognitive and non-cognitive components outlined above. A school's rate of gain is used to generate the following designations of schools: Schools Making Exemplary Growth/Gain, Schools Making Expected Growth/Gain, Schools with No Recognition, and Low-performing Schools. For additional details on school designations and state accountability, please refer to the section on accountability, below.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

In 1998-99, every school that contained one or more of the grades 3-12 and that collected the appropriate data participated in the ABCs. Appropriate data for K-8 included testing results in reading, mathematics, and writing. Appropriate data for computing gain in high schools included selected EOC results, percent of completers of College Prep/College Tech Prep courses of study, and the gain in competency passing rate from grade 8 to 10. For computing growth in high schools, appropriate data were results of the North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test in reading and mathematics. K-2 schools sending more than half of their students to a single receiving school were eligible for incentive awards if the receiving school earned an incentive award based on making its growth standard. Special schools without sufficient data were eligible for prorated incentive awards if one or more of the schools they served earned incentive awards.

Beginning in 1999-2000, Alternative Schools were included in the ABCs on the basis of achievement based data and local option data.

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

The state achievement levels (cut scores) will be modified as new tests are phased in to match updated curricula. In 2000-2001, the computer skills performance test results will be included in the school's performance composite.

6. What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?

In 1998-99, 354 (17.9%) schools were identified as Schools with No Recognition and 13 (0.7%) were identified as Low-Performing.

Reporting Performance Data

1. Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:

- *Student reports*

Parents are provided with reports from the school on their child's achievement level on the state assessments.

- *School reports*

Most reporting in North Carolina focuses on the District and State level. Contained within these reports is much school-level data, including: school performance on ABC measures, school performance recognition and status categories, SAT results, dropout rate, etc.

- *District reports*

North Carolina produces school system results which may be downloaded from the NCDPI website. These reports, included in **A Report Card for Public Education, Volume II**, contain the following information:

- ✓ End-of-Grade test percent of students at or above grade level by grade and subject, for all students and disaggregated by American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, White, Other, Male, Female, Behaviorally-Emotionally Handicapped, Hearing Impaired, Educable Mentally Handicapped, Specific Learning Disabled, Speech-Language Impaired, Visually Impaired, Traumatic Brain Injured, Other Exceptional Classifications, Academically Gifted, Section 504, Limited English Proficient.

- ✓ End-of-Course test percent of students at or above Level III for all students and disaggregated in the same manner as EOG tests.
 - ✓ SAT results by school, for three years
 - ✓ ABC Dropout rate by school, dropout rate for alternative schools
 - ✓ Supplemental data by system and state, including: enrollment, attendance, average teacher local supplement, percent eligible for free/reduced lunch, number of violent incidents per 1000, local per student expenditure
- *State reports*

North Carolina produces a state report, **A Report Card for the ABCs of Public Education**, Volumes I (August) and II (November) which is accessible on the NCDPI website. Volume I of this report contains background information on the accountability system, special conditions and technical notes. In addition, Volume I includes the following data:

- ✓ Performance of all schools, with indication of whether school met expected or exemplary growth standard, performance composite, and ABC status
- ✓ Schools of Distinction
- ✓ Schools of Excellence
- ✓ 25 Most Improved K-8 Schools
- ✓ 10 Most Improved High Schools
- ✓ Schools Making Exemplary Growth
- ✓ Schools Making Expected Growth
- ✓ Low-Performing Schools
- ✓ Schools with No Recognition
- ✓ Charter Schools

Volume II of this report contains the following data:

- ✓ End-of-Grade tests, percent of students at or above Level III by subject and grade. Results reported for all students and disaggregated by: American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, White, Other, Male, Female, Behaviorally-Emotionally Handicapped, Educable Mentally Handicapped, Specific Learning Disability, Visually Impaired, Other Health Impaired, Traumatic Brain Injured, Limited English Proficient, Other Exceptional Classifications, Academically Gifted.
- ✓ End-of-Course results reported in the same manner as End-of-Grade
- ✓ ABCs Dropout Rate by state, school system, and school
- ✓ SAT score and percent tested for three years by state, school system and school
- ✓ Supplemental data, including disaggregated student enrollment, student attendance, local teacher supplements, local student expenditures, and a school violence index by school system.
- ✓ County Listings, data downloadable
- ✓ City School District listing
- ✓ Charter School listing

An additional state report, **The State of the State** may be downloaded from the NCDPI website. This report contains the following data:

- ✓ NAEP results and trends

- ✓ ITBS by grade, composite score and advanced skills, trends
- ✓ SAT results, participation rate, and students entering UNC institutions
- ✓ AP results
- ✓ ABCs of Public Education, definitions of awards and recognition categories, results K-12
- ✓ End-of-Grade results by grade and subject, explanation of achievement levels
- ✓ End-of-Course results
- ✓ Writing Assessment results
- ✓ English II writing assessment results
- ✓ Closing the Gap in Student Performance: results by ethnicity and gender for NAEP, ITBS, SAT, AP, Writing Assessment, EOG Tests, EOC tests.

Finally, North Carolina produces reports on the state's performance on national assessments including the SAT and NAEP.

- *Title I reports*

Title I reports are not publicly disseminated, but the Title I office reports annually to the U.S. Department in accordance with federal regulations.

2. How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?

Data are readily accessible on the NCDPI website and are also available in a print format. In addition, test results are routinely reported in the media. The ABC Report Volume I (essentially school-based results) is released in the summer, whereas Volume II (disaggregated data) is released in the fall, due to the additional time required for all calculations.

3. At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)?

North Carolina publicly disaggregates district and state data (End-of-Grade tests, End-of-Course tests, SAT, etc.) on the following variables: American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, White, Other, Male, Female, Behaviorally-Emotionally Handicapped, Hearing Impaired, Educable Mentally Handicapped, Specific Learning Disabled, Speech-Language Impaired, Visually Impaired, Traumatic Brain Injured, Other Exceptional Classifications, Academically Gifted, Section 504, Limited English Proficient. These data are publicly reported with the exception of subgroups that contain fewer than five students.

4. Do trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from "1996-97 on")?

Trend information is available for many of the assessments that make up the North Carolina Testing Program, generally for the past three years. Trend data are also available for SAT and AP assessments as well.

5. *How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?*

The results for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency are aggregated with other students (if they participated in the assessment) and disaggregated by disability and LEP.

6. *What are the state's requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?*

All schools are required to have a school improvement plan; low performing schools are required to review these plans in light of assessment results and develop a plan to improve performance.

7. *Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?*

No changes are anticipated in the area of performance reporting.

8. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.*

The biggest challenges in the area of reporting are in the time demands for collecting and calculating data, and generating results for the public. Additional challenges concern the effective communication of what the assessment and accountability results mean: it is difficult to communicate to the public exactly what a regression analysis consists of and how the expected growth is calculated.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. *Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.*

The State Board of Education developed the ABCs of Public Education in response to the School-Based Management and Accountability Program (SB 1139) enacted by the General Assembly in June 1996. The ABCs focuses on strong accountability with an emphasis on high educational standards; teaching the basics; and maximum local control. An accountability model for elementary and middle schools was implemented in 1996-97. The high school accountability model was developed during 1996-97, and was implemented for the first time in 1997-98.

The ABCs Accountability Model for all schools establishes growth/gain standards for each elementary, middle, and high school in the state. Schools that attain specified levels of growth/gain are eligible for incentive awards or other recognition (including Schools of Excellence, Schools of Distinction or 25 Most Improved K-8 Schools, 10 Most Improved High Schools in Academic Growth/Gain). Schools where growth/gain and performance fall below specified levels are designated as low-performing. Outcomes are based on end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) test results, and selected other components. To be eligible for incentive awards, schools also must not have excessive exemptions and must test at least 98% of their

eligible students in K-8, and at least 95% of students enrolled in specific courses or grades in high school.

2. *What are the characteristics of the state accountability system?*

- *Who is held accountable (students, schools, districts)?*
 - *For what are they held accountable (adequate yearly progress, student achievement, processes, multiple non-cognitive indicators, etc)?*
 - *Using what criteria (state assessments, local assessments, both state and local criteria)?*
 - *To what targets or performance levels?*
 - *With what consequences (promotion or graduation, program improvement, additional planning, state takeover, rewards, assistance, etc.)?*
- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

Currently, student accountability policies focus on state requirements for graduation and local requirements for promotion to the next grade. Graduation requirements currently in effect are as follows: Students who entered the ninth grade during or after the 1994-95 school year must meet a more rigorous competency standard than was previously enforced: that of the North Carolina Competency Tests of Reading and Mathematics. The standard is equivalent to Level III on the eighth-grade reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests. Student who do not demonstrate performance at Level III or above on the end-of-grade tests at the end of grade 8 must pass the competency tests in high school in order to meet the graduation requirement. In addition, new Gateway student accountability requirements will be implemented over the next few years. Please refer to question 8 in this section for further information on these policies.

• *School Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

School accountability measures were implemented as part of the ABCs of Public Education restructuring plan. According to the ABCs, schools are classified into several categories for the purpose of awarding incentives and recognition. The award or recognition a school receives is determined in most cases by the school's attainment as reflected in the growth/gain composites (expected and exemplary) and the performance composite.

The categories are defined as follows.

Schools of Excellence: A School of Excellence is a school that made expected growth/gain and had at least 90 percent of its students performing at or above grade level (i.e., in Achievement Levels III or IV). Such schools are recognized at a statewide event sponsored by the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction in the fall. They receive a dated banner to hang in the school and a certificate. In addition, they receive whatever incentive award they earn as having made expected or exemplary growth/gain.

Schools of Distinction A School of Distinction is a school that had at least 80 percent of its students performing at or above grade level (i.e., in Achievement Levels III or IV) irrespective of growth or gain (but does not qualify as a School of Excellence). Schools of Distinction receive a plaque and a certificate.

25/10 Most Improved Schools in Academic Growth/Gain The 25 Most Improved K-8 schools are those that attained the State's 25 highest values on the exemplary growth composite. The 10 Most Improved High Schools attained the State's 10 highest values on the exemplary growth/gain composite. Any school with a combination of grades which includes grade 9 or higher is eligible for the high school recognition rather than the K-8 list. These schools are recognized at the statewide event in the fall. In addition, they receive a dated banner to hang in the school, a certificate and financial awards.

Schools Making Exemplary Growth/Gain These schools attained their exemplary growth/gain standard. They receive a certificate and financial awards. Incentive awards for making exemplary growth/gain are \$1500 per person for certified staff and \$500 per person for teacher assistants.

Schools Making Expected Growth/Gain These schools attained their expected growth/gain standard (but not their exemplary growth/gain standard). They receive a certificate of recognition and financial awards. Incentive awards for making expected growth/gain are \$750 per person for certified staff and \$375 per person for teacher assistants.

Schools with No Recognition These schools did not make their expected growth/gain standards; but they have at least half their students scoring at or above grade level (i.e., in Achievement Levels III or IV) as measured by the performance composite.

Low-Performing Schools Low-Performing Schools are those that fail to meet their expected growth/gain standard and have significantly less than 50% of their students performing at or above grade level (i.e., in Achievement Levels III or IV).

Sanctions: The State Board assigns assistance teams to low-performing schools, giving priority to those where performance is declining. However, if a school fails to improve student performance after assistance, the team may recommend that assistance continue, or that the Board take further action; additional interventions may include termination of administrator's contract, appointment of an interim superintendent (when more than half of schools in a district are low-performing) and/or suspension of powers and duties of the local board of education. The State Board may recommend the dismissal of any principal when the Board receives from the assistance team two consecutive evaluations that include written findings and recommendations regarding the principal's inadequate performance. Either the principal assigned to a low-performing school or the assistance team assigned to the school may recommend to the State Board of Education that a certified staff member take a general knowledge test if the school has been assigned an assistance team and the certified staff member's lack of general knowledge is determined to contribute to inadequate performance.

- *District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

The ABC system is a school-based system. Hence, most of the attention is focused on the school level. However, the accreditation system focuses on school districts. A school district in which half of schools are identified as low-performing may lose its accreditation and suffer other

consequences such as the removal of the superintendent or other administrators by the local board of education.

3. *What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?*

- *Relative growth*
- *Absolute target*
- *Narrowing the Gap between high and low achievers*
- *Other*

The primary method of determining progress in North Carolina is that of Expected Growth, measured by the Growth/Gain composite. For 1999-2000, the Growth/Gain composite is the sum of the following components:

- **End-of-Grade growth:** For schools with any combination of grade 3 through 8, growth is computed using pretest to post-test differences in grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics on a matched set of students. Growth in Reading and Mathematics from Grade 8 to Grade 10 is computed from the grade 8 EOG test in reading and mathematics to the NC Comprehensive Test in Reading and Mathematics administered in grade 10.
- **Writing index gain for grade 4 and 7:** The index gain is based on improvement over a baseline; three successive years of writing data are necessary for computing gain.
- **End-of-Course indexes gain:** Gain is based on comparison of the current year's index and the baseline (average of the two previous years).
- **College Prep/College Tech Prep Component:** The percentage of 1999-2000 diploma recipients who have completed either a college prep or a college tech prep course of study are compared to a baseline average of the 1998 and 1999 percents.
- **Gain in competency passing rates:** The gain in the percentage of students meeting the NC Competency Standard will be computed as part of the growth/gain composite.

The formula used to measure expected growth is the following:

$$\text{Expected Growth} = b_0 + (b_1 \times \text{ITP}) + (b_2 \times \text{IRM})$$

Where: b_0 = North Carolina average rate of Growth

b_1 and b_2 = fixed values used to estimated true proficiency and regression to the mean

ITP = index for true proficiency

IRM = index for regression to the mean

Finally, the North Carolina State Board of Education has made the improvement of minority, especially Black, student achievement a key policy goal.

4. *Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?*

All students who participate in state assessments, have both pretest and posttest scores, and satisfy certain membership requirements are included in the measures of progress.

5. *How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?*

The systems of accountability for Title I and the state as a whole are closely aligned: both are based on the ABCs model of absolute performance and the growth/gain composite.

6. *Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?*

Although North Carolina disaggregates a great deal of data, subgroup performance levels are not used as an indicator in the calculation of accountability measures. However, legislation passed in 1999 required the State Board of Education to develop a revised pilot accountability system that would disaggregate student performance within designated groups.

7. *Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?*

Charter schools are included in the state accountability system.

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

A significant portion of the accountability system under the ABCs has been implemented, however, additional changes are to be put into effect in the coming years. In 1997 the General Assembly directed the State Board of Education to implement a system of student accountability measures. The North Carolina policies for the new system of “Gateways” are presented below.

Gateway 1.

In addition to meeting local promotion requirements, students in grade 3 shall demonstrate proficiency by having test scores at Level III or above on end-of-grade tests in both reading and mathematics. Students scoring at Level III or above and meeting all local promotion requirements shall be promoted to grade 4 unless determined otherwise by the school principal, in consultation with teacher(s). The effective date is 2001-02.

Gateway 2.

In addition to meeting local promotion requirements, students in grade 5 shall demonstrate proficiency by having test scores at Level III or above on end-of-grade tests in both reading and mathematics. Additionally, the grade 4 writing assessment shall be used as a screen to determine whether students are making adequate progress in developing writing skills. If a student has not scored at or above proficiency level 2.5 on the grade 4 writing assessment, the school shall provide intervention and assistance to develop writing skills. The principal and teacher(s) shall use locally developed and scored writing samples during grade 5 to determine if students have made adequate progress in order to be promoted to grade 6.

Students scoring at Level III or above on reading and mathematics, meeting all local promotion standards, and making adequate progress in writing shall be promoted to grade 6, unless determined otherwise by the school principal, in consultation with teacher(s). The effective date is 2000-01.

Gateway 3

In addition to meeting local promotion requirements, students in grade 8 shall demonstrate proficiency by having test scores at Level III or above on an end-of-grade test in both reading and mathematics. Additionally, the grade 7 writing assessment shall be used as a screen to determine whether students are making adequate progress in developing writing skills. If a student has not scored at or above proficiency level 2.5 on the grade 7 writing assessment, the school shall provide intervention and assistance to develop writing skills. The principal and teacher(s) shall use locally developed and scored writing samples during grade 8 to determine if students have made adequate progress to be promoted to grade 9.

Students scoring at Level III or above on reading and mathematics, meeting all local promotion standards, and making adequate progress in writing shall be promoted to grade 9 unless determined otherwise by the school principal, in consultation with teacher(s). See sections, "Review Procedures," "Students with Disabilities" and "Students of Limited English Proficiency" for additional information, pages 3 and 8. The effective date is 2001-02.

Gateway 4

Students shall meet the following requirements to receive a North Carolina high school diploma.

1. Existing local and state graduation requirements
2. A passing score on an exit exam of essential skills. Students shall take this exam in the spring of the students' 11th grade year (Effective date: Graduating Class of 2003).
3. A passing score on computer skills test (Effective date: Graduating Class of 2001).

High School Diploma Recognition: Any student receiving specified scores on English language arts and mathematics parts of the exit exams shall be eligible for recognition given as a part of the North Carolina Scholars Program. These specified scores are in addition to the existing North Carolina Scholars Program requirements. The effective date is for the graduating class of 2003.

9. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.

As new assessments are developed to match updated curricula, the state is posed with certain challenges with regard to calculating expected growth, as the data are collected from different tests with different scales. These altered calculations will require extra time, hence there will be a delay in the release of ABCs results.

Another challenge that North Carolina faces is resistance from teachers to the ABCs accountability system. Some teachers have expressed concerns about "teaching to the test", narrowing the curriculum, and spending too much time practicing for the tests. North Carolina officials are sensitive to these concerns and have attempted to address them.

North Carolina has encountered some challenges with regard to the designations of schools based on ABCs accountability measures. For example, a school making “exemplary growth” may have attained a high growth target (and hence staff will receive a financial bonus), but it may still have a low percentage of students at or above grade level (or Achievement Level III). On the other hand, a school with a high percentage of students above grade level but not achieving expected growth will receive the designation of “no recognition” which has negative connotations to the public and no rewards.

One positive outcome of the assessment and accountability system has been improved instruction in low-performing schools. State assistance teams determined that some teachers in low-performing schools were unfamiliar with the Standard Course of Study and worked to focus instruction on material that students need to know.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?

Schools are identified as low-performing on the basis on their growth/gain composite and performance composite: Low-Performing Schools are those that fail to meet their expected growth/gain standard and have significantly less than 50% of their students performing at or above grade level (i.e., in Achievement Levels III or IV). The same definition is used to determine if Title I schools have made adequate yearly progress. However, a Title I school must fail to make adequate yearly progress for two years in order to be placed in school improvement, whereas it is only one year under the ABCs system for schools to possibly be identified as low-performing . Hence, a low-performing school may be assigned an assistance team under the ABCs, but not be in Title I improvement.

2. Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?

The final decision with regard to the status of a school (be it low-performing, no recognition, or otherwise) rests with the State Board of Education.

3. What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

The main types of assistance that are available to low-performing schools are evaluation and planning and expert assistance.

4. Who provides the state assistance?

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*

- *SDE staff*
- *Other – Explain*

Within the Department of Public Instruction, there is a Division of School Improvement, which oversees the assistance to low-performing schools. Assistance may be state-mandated, as in the case of low performing schools, or voluntary, for schools that may request special assistance but not be identified as low-performing, though they may be on the borderline. Mandated assistance is delivered by Assistance Teams, which are composed of educators who are “on loan” from school districts. Team members receive additional training from the state before they are assigned to schools. Voluntary assistance is provided by staff within the Division of School Improvement; these schools work on areas such as needs assessment, school improvement plan and staff development.

5. Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?

Essentially, the support that is available for low-performing schools is the same, regardless of their Title I status. However, Title I schools in school improvement may receive additional services from the NCDPI Title I staff.

6. Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?

If a school makes its expected growth, or has 50% of students at or above grade level, it is no longer considered low-performing.

7. Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?

Under the ABCs, every school in the state, regardless of status, must have a school improvement plan that is approved by the local school board. A school that is identified as low-performing is required to review the school improvement plan and to inform the public about what changes will be made to improve that school.

8. Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

No changes are currently planned for the identification and assistance for low-performing schools. However, if the ABC accountability system substantially changes, then the criteria for low-performing schools could change as well.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?

- *What measures are used (relationship between cognitive/non-cognitive data)?*
- *What targets have been established?*
- *Are local assessment systems included as criteria? If so, does the state provide guidance? Monitor their use?*
- *Is subgroup performance included in the criteria?*

The North Carolina system of adequate yearly progress is based on the state ABCs program, including the performance and progress measures. With regard to the performance composite, schools should not have more than 50% of students performing below grade level. The progress component is the measure of expected growth, detailed in the accountability section, above.

Adequate Yearly Progress in North Carolina is primarily built around the end-of-grade and end-of-course tests. In grades three through eight, the state analyzes scores in reading and mathematics, in grades four and seven writing samples are used, and for high school measures the state uses EOC scores in the courses that are required for graduation, such as Algebra and Biology. Local assessments are not included in the state criteria, nor are subgroup performance levels.

2. What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:

- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools*
- *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools*
- *Districts*

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

If a Title I school achieves either the absolute performance minimum threshold (not more than 50% of students below grade level, which corresponds to Achievement Levels III and IV) *or* the expected growth goal, then they are considered to have made adequate yearly progress. If more than 50% of a district's schools are in school improvement or have not made adequate yearly progress, then that LEA will be designated as not making adequate yearly progress. The definition of adequate yearly progress is the same for targeted assistance schools, schoolwide programs, and charter schools. Generally, schools that have made exemplary or expected growth, or those who are designated "no recognition" are considered to have met adequate yearly progress. At the moment, the state has no plans to modify these definitions of adequate yearly progress.

3. What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?

Each of the school systems has the data needed and the tools needed to make the determinations of which schools are not making adequate yearly progress, but the final decision rests with the

State Board of Education, through the verification of the data. The state does not allow any discretion in these decisions, although there is an appeals process for schools that disagree with the ABCs growth/gain as reported in the Report Card. Schools rely entirely on ABCs data and federal regulations.

4. *What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?*

In North Carolina, under the ABCs system, if a school fails to attain the growth/gain and performance targets for one year, it is considered low performing. However, under the Title I system, two consecutive years of not meeting adequate yearly progress goals are required to be placed in school improvement. To get out of school improvement, a building must make adequate yearly progress for two out of three years. In sum, the definition of adequate yearly progress depends entirely on state ABC results, but designation as in need of improvement is based on federal regulations.

With regard to LEAs, if 50% of the schools in an LEA have not made adequate yearly progress then the LEA would be placed in LEA improvement. However, this has never happened, and under current rules, North Carolina officials do not foresee this occurring.

With regard to school improvement plans, every school in North Carolina is required to have one, regardless of their Title I status or their low-performing status. Title I schoolwide schools that are identified as in need of improvement are not required to have a separate plan, but their plan must incorporate all the Title I requirements. In addition, the LEA has the responsibility to examine the school improvement plans of Title I schools in need of improvement, in order to determine what steps need to be made to improve academic performance.

5. *What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?*

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

Schools in need of improvement may receive evaluation and planning assistance as well as expert assistance, but do not receive additional financial aid.

6. *Who provides the assistance?*

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*
- *SDE staff*
- *Other – Explain*

Much of the assistance that is provided to schools in need of improvement is available to schools through the ABCs system, as they have already been identified as low-performing. This assistance consists essentially of a full-time on-site state assistance team. In addition, Title I staff

and compensatory education staff may provide assistance, and SERVE, a regional consortium may provide training assistance.

7. Have waivers played a role in this process?

Waivers have played a role in a few North Carolina schools, where waivers were granted for a schoolwide program rather than targeted assistance program. Several of the schools that applied for schoolwide waivers were denied these waivers, as a significant portion of their students were already performing at or above grade level.

However, a few years ago North Carolina requested a waiver to have one system for determining which schools were in need of improvement. The waiver was denied, on the grounds that the state definition was not rigorous enough because schools could be in a school improvement program for one year and out the next year. As a result, there is some incongruity in the North Carolina system because some schools that are considered low-performing under the ABCs, but are not in Title I school improvement.

8. Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

North Carolina does not anticipate changing the Title I system at this time. However, if they do discuss changes, these discussions will likely concern the status of “No Recognition” Schools. These schools did not make their expected growth/gain standards; but they have at least half their students scoring at or above grade level (i.e., in Achievement Levels III or IV) as measured by the performance composite.

9. Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?

There is alignment between the Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress: both are based on the ABCs, and both use the same performance and expected growth indicators.

10. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.

The major issue facing Title I in North Carolina is the inconsistency between schools in need of improvement under Title I and those that are identified as low-performing under the ABC system.

Contact Information

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Title I

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