FAMILY GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT

This guide discusses why assessments are important, provides an overview of the different assessments that students take, and reviews questions families can ask teachers about assessments. Finally, the guide looks at how North Carolina ensures assessments are fair and accessible for all students.

WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

Assessment is a tool used to measure, track, and monitor student progress or mastery of particular learning objectives and expectations over time. Assessment may be ongoing and informal like those used by teachers during daily instruction or formal like those given at a specific time such as at the end of a unit, semester, or year. This guide will look at both informal and formal assessment that takes place across the state.

WHY DO WE ASSESS?

Assessment gives stakeholders a picture of how students are performing. Charting a student's progress can also allow teachers and school leaders to make informed decisions.

STUDENTS

Students, in discussions with their teachers, get an idea of how they are progressing, where they need to spend extra time, and areas where they might benefit from enrichment work.

FAMILIES

Families use data to understand how their student is progressing. It can be a good discussion point in a teacher-family conference. Data from assessments can show families how they may support work being done in the classroom.

TEACHERS

Teachers can use assessment data to drive their planning and instruction. For example, data can help a teacher decide when students are ready to move to the next topic, or when more time and instruction is needed. Also, students who have shown they understand a topic can be offered acceleration activities.

SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

School and district leaders can use data to gauge how classrooms and schools are performing. This data can be used to identify resources or professional development that would help teachers help students; it can also help administrators make personnel decisions to improve quality of learning and evaluation of how state academic standards are being implemented through local curriculum.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF ASSESSMENT?

FORMATIVE

Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used to monitor student learning, Formative assessment helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses in specific concepts, and enables them to target areas that need work. It also helps teachers identify areas where students are struggling and allows them to address learning gaps immediately. Formative assessment is typically informal and can include teacher observations, student participation, class discussion, and short quizzes. Teachers may generate their own tasks to see how well students understand new concepts. Data from these forms of assessment will drive teacher planning such as providing additional support or moving students to other topics if they are ready.

INTERIM

Interim assessment typically occurs three or four times a year. Interim assessments evaluate what students have learned in relation to (1) a set of standards or academic goals and (2) a specified time. These interim assessments may serve a variety of purposes, including to identify gaps in a student's learning, to evaluate a particular educational program or instruction, or to provide an early indicator of how students will perform on the statewide summative assessment. The NC Check-Ins, developed by the NC Department of Public Instruction and available for schools to use on a voluntary basis, are an example of an interim assessment. Public school units may administer different interim assessments created at the district level, or one that has been purchased from a testing vendor that may serve similar purposes at the school or district level.

SUMMATIVE

Summative assessments provide information about students' achievement of academic content standards following a longer period of instruction, such as a unit of study, a semester of learning, or a school year. Examples of summative assessments include unit tests, final course exams developed by a teacher, and an end-of-year or end-of-course assessment administered by the state. State-developed summative assessments are administered in a standardized manner so that each student across the state can demonstrate their achievement under similar testing conditions. The NC Department of Public Instruction produces End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-Course (EOC), and NCEXTEND1 assessments that measure grade- and course-level content standard expectations and give information on how well-prepared a student is for college and career.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIRED STATE TESTS?

Grade →		3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
BOG3[1]	BOG3[1] Reading	✓									
EOG[2]	Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	Math	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	Science			✓			✓				
EOC[2,3]	English II								✓		
	NC Math 1							✓			
	NC Math 3*								✓		
	Biology								✓		
ACT	PreACT[4]								✓		
	The ACT[4]									✓	
	ACT WorkKeys							For students who complete a concentration in Career and Technical Education courses[5]			

[1] Beginning of Grade 3 Reading

[2] Or associated NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment; high school alternate assessments are taken at Grade 10

[3] For accountability purposes - English II by Grade 10 and one high school math and biology by Grade 11

* For students who took NC Math 1 prior to Grade 9

[4] PreACT and The ACT (or the College and Career Readiness Alternate Assessments at Grades 10 and 11) are administered to students as part of the state accountability model

[5] Per § 115C-174.25

BEGINNING-OF-GRADE 3 READING TEST

In response to Read to Achieve legislation, all third grade students take the Beginning-of-Grade 3 (BOG3) Reading assessment each fall. Read to Achieve legislation aims "to ensure that every student read at or above grade level by the end of third grade and continue to progress in reading proficiency so that he or she can read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts needed for secondary education and career success." The BOG3 Reading assessment provides baseline data of students' reading skills and satisfies the requirements of Read to Achieve legislation. For more information on how the BOG3 is used, please visit the BOG3 webpage.

NCEXTEND1 ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS

The North Carolina NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessments are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and the decision to participate must be documented in their current Individualized Education Program (IEP).

HOW ARE STUDENTS' SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT SCORES SHARED WITH FAMILIES?

REPORTING FOR EOG, EOC, AND NCEXTEND1 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Individual Student Reports (ISRs) provide information on how students performed on state-administered assessments such as EOG, EOC, and NCEXTEND1. The scores on these assessments are only one of many indicators of how students are progressing. Test scores should always be considered along with all other available information provided by the teacher about a student.

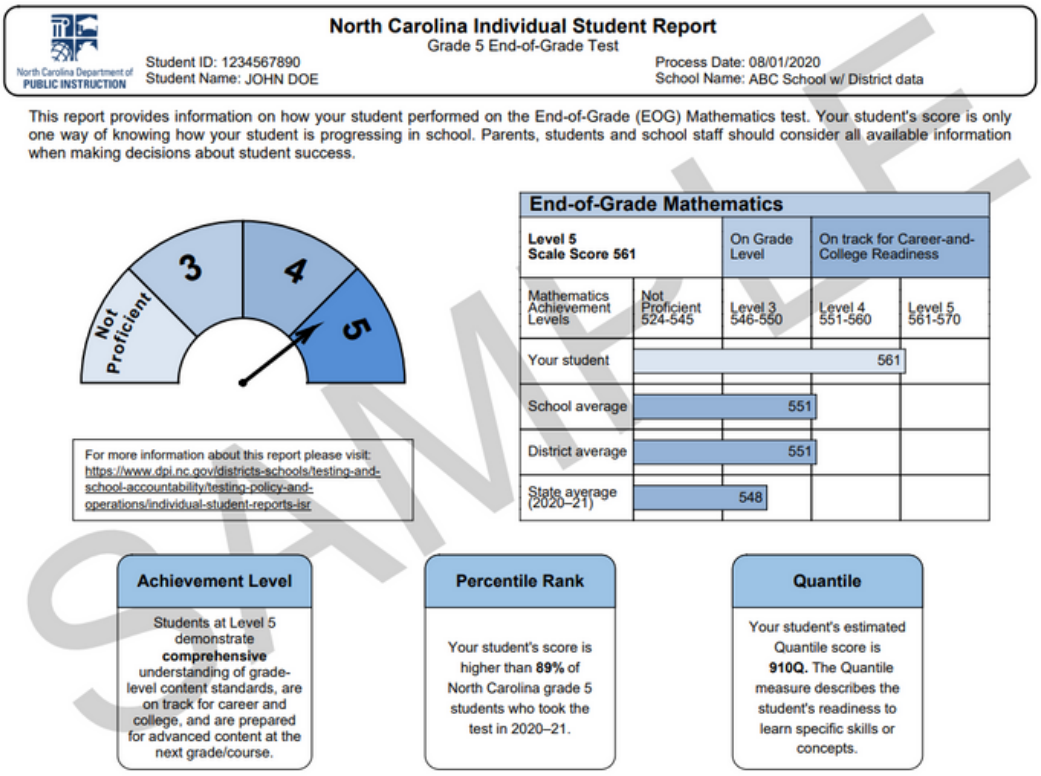
Achievement levels are predetermined performance standards that allow a student's performance to be compared to grade-level expectations.

- Four achievement levels (i.e., Not Proficient, Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5) are reported for EOG and EOC tests.
  - Levels 3 and above indicate a student's performance is on-grade level though some support may be needed at the next grade level.
  - Levels 4 and 5 indicate a student's performance is on track for career- and college-readiness expectations for EOG and EOC tests.
- Three achievement levels (i.e., Not Proficient, Level 3, and Level 4) are reported for NCEXTEND1 tests.
  - Levels 3 and above indicate a student's performance is on-grade level though some support may be needed at the next grade level.
  - Level 4 indicates a student's performance is on track for competitive employment and post-secondary education expectations for NCEXTEND1 tests.

Each student's **scale score** (how well the student performed) is given, as well as school, district, and state averages.

A **percentile rank** is also given. The percentile shows if a student performed the same or better than other students.

SAMPLE GRADE 5 MATH ISR



HOW DOES NC ENSURE ITS ASSESSMENTS ARE FAIR AND ACCESSIBLE FOR STUDENTS?

In North Carolina, teachers help develop and review all state-created assessments, like the NC Check-Ins interim assessments, and the End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-Course (EOC), and NCEXTEND1 summative assessments. Questions for these assessments are written and reviewed by NC teachers.

All questions are reviewed by various specialists and go through a rigorous process.

- Do the questions match the content standards for this grade level?
- Are the questions free of bias?
- Are the questions age-appropriate?

In addition, each question is evaluated to ensure that it is accessible for all students (eg, partially sighted students, English Learner students). Accommodations, such as extended time or testing in a separate setting, are provided to students with Individualized Education Programs, English Learners Plans, or Section 504 plans.

Before any question can count towards a student's score, each question is field tested and evaluated to ensure it meets these demands. If the data show that the question is not fair or reliable, it will not be used.

WHAT QUESTIONS CAN YOU ASK EDUCATORS TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR STUDENT'S PROGRESS?

BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

- What assessments will my student take this school year?
- What is the purpose of each assessment?
- How will you use the information gathered from the assessment to support my student?
- How should I expect to receive updates on my student's progress?
- Are there areas where my student needs extra support or acceleration?
- What can we do at home to support my student?

DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

- What can you tell me about my student's learning?
- Has my student made progress this year?
- Is my student meeting grade-level expectations?
- What are my student's strengths and needed areas of improvement?
- Can I see some examples of my student's work?
- Based on my student's classwork, can you share any other insights about my student's progress?
- Which skills and concepts from this school year are important for my student's success next school year?
- Is there any extra help or enrichment available for my student?
- What can I do to help my student outside of school?

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NCDPI Office of Accountability and Testing

North Carolina Department of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION