

Introduction

In North Carolina, students are assessed throughout the school year. These assessments range from informal classroom formative assessments to periodic interim or benchmark tests and more formal standardized tests. These tests all serve specific purposes, and all function in some way to inform teachers and staff the extent to which students are engaged in learning and building knowledge and skills.

Not all schools and districts administer the same array of assessments in any given year. Although some tests are required for students across the state (e.g. EOG and EOC), districts and schools have the option of selecting whether to administer others. Private schools have even more flexibility. Major differences also exist in the level of transparency for test results required by public and private schools.

Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

Statewide Testing. All traditional public and charter schools students must participate in the [North Carolina Testing Program](#). Except for the K-3 mClass, Grade 3 Beginning-of-Grade (BOG) test and the three ACT tests, all tests are administered per federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. Participation in and performance on the tests are reported to the federal government and also contribute to North Carolina’s school performance grades.

North Carolina’s EOG and EOC tests are designed to measure student mastery of the content standards described in the [North Carolina Standard Course of Study](#). They are standardized tests that provide normative information so educators and parents can compare their students’ scores to scores from all students who took the test in a given year.

Table 1. NC Required Testing for 2023-24

| Grade | Reading | Mathematics | Science | Other | English Learners |
|-------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| K-3* | MClass/DIBELS | | | | |
| 3 | BOG EOG | | | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 4 | EOG | EOG | | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 5 | EOG | EOG | EOG | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 6 | EOG | EOG | | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 7 | EOG | EOG | | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 8 | EOG | EOG | EOG | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 9 | | EOC NC Math 1 | | | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 10 | EOC Eng. II | | EOC Biology | Pre ACT | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 11 | | EOC NC Math 3 | | ACT | WIDA/ACCESS |
| 12 | | | | ACTWorkKeys | WIDA/ACCESS |

*Not included in the NC Testing Program Requirements

Federal and state policies require all eligible students, including English Learners and students with disabilities to participate in the state testing program. Students for whom the standard test administration (without accommodations) is not appropriate must be administered the standard test administration with accommodations or a state-designated assessment, with or without accommodations.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s [Office of Accountability and Testing](#) designs and manages the statewide assessments. To help public schools plan for testing and as required by [state law](#), a [two-year testing calendar](#) is published on the NCDPI website.

The [2023 Appropriations Act](#) requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to recommend a nationally standardized test for grades 3 and 8 to be administered to public school students and used to compare performance with voucher-receiving private school students. These tests would be administered beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

Additional tests

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Every two or four years, selected students in 4, 8, or 12th grade participate in NAEP assessments. These are federally mandated tests given to students across the nation. NAEP is often called the Nation’s Report Card because it is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of students in public and private schools.

NC Check-Ins 2.0 (NC Personal Assessment Tool). Districts and schools choose whether to administer NC Check-Ins. The tests are administered throughout the school year to provide teachers with granular data for immediate feedback about students’ performance on grad-level-specific content standards.

Optional Local testing. Most districts choose to administer additional tests for specific purposes. For example, the CoGAT is used to screen students for AG programs. Other tests are used to provide progress monitoring throughout the school year. As required by state law, the [testing calendars for each district](#) are also publicly available. This requirement **does not apply to charter schools**. The local testing calendars include the test name, grades, subjects, and administration windows in addition to the purpose (e.g. formative, benchmark), and intended use (e.g. diagnostic, mastery) of the test results. A survey of tests most frequently used in local districts include FastBridge, IOWA, iReady, NWEA MAP, Star Renaissance, and TerraNova.

Reporting and Public Transparency

As part of the North Carolina Accountability Program and to fulfill federal requirements, all traditional public schools and charter schools must report their student test scores, participation rates, and other student data such as demographics to the NCDPI. [State law](#) also requires NCDPI to calculate and report school achievement, growth, and overall performance grades. These grades, along with other information, are public record and are easily accessed through the North Carolina School Report Cards [website](#).

Private Schools

Private schools in North Carolina **are not required to participate in the state’s testing/accountability system and test scores are not reported publicly**. The [NC Department of Administration Division of Non-Public Schools](#) oversees and monitors non-public and homeschools to ensure they comply with state laws.

Required testing. According to state law, each [private school must administer](#) a nationally standardized test to students in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11. **Students receiving Opportunity Scholarship and ESA+ vouchers must be administered a nationally standardized test every year in grade 3 and above.**

Table 2. Grade and Content Requirements for Private School Testing

| Grade | Reading/Language | Mathematics |
|-------|---|--|
| 3 | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling | Mathematics |
| 6 | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling | Mathematics |
| 9 | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling OR Verbal Competencies | Mathematics OR Quantitative Competencies |
| 11 | Verbal Competencies | Quantitative Competencies |

Each private school may select which test to administer provided it meets the content guidelines shown in Table 2. Private schools **are not required to align their curriculum or instruction to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study**. Private schools have no instructional content requirements.

Private schools may select from a number of tests to meet their testing requirement. A partial list includes the following: ACT, BASI, Brigance, CAT, CLT 10, CLT 8, IOWA (ITBS), NWEA MAP, SAT, STAR Renaissance, Terra Nova, WIAT, Woodcock Johnson, and WRAT.

The [2023 Appropriations Act](#) adjusted the testing and reporting requirements for students whose tuition is paid for in part or completely by Opportunity Scholarship or ESA+ vouchers. As shown in Table 3, students in grades 3 and 8 are administered an assessment designated by the NCSEAA (per recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) and students in grade 11 are administered the ACT.

Table 3. Testing Requirements for Voucher-Receiving Students beginning in 2024-25.

| Grade | Reading/Language | Mathematics |
|-------|---|--|
| 3 | Test designated by NCSEAA | Test designated by NCSEAA |
| 4* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling | Mathematics |
| 5* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling | Mathematics |
| 6* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling | Mathematics |
| 7* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling | Mathematics |
| 8 | Test designated by NCSEAA | Test designated by NCSEAA |
| 9* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling OR Verbal Competencies | Mathematics OR Quantitative Competencies |
| 10* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling OR Verbal Competencies | Mathematics OR Quantitative Competencies |
| 11 | ACT | ACT |
| 12* | English Grammar, Reading, Spelling OR Verbal Competencies | Mathematics OR Quantitative Competencies |

*Determined by the school administrator.

Reporting and Public Transparency

Non-public school law requires that all test results for private school students be kept on file at the school's office for one year after the testing date for annual inspection by a Department of Non-Public Education staff representative.

The statute which governs the K12 Opportunity Scholarship and Education Student Accounts voucher programs requires that all nonpublic schools submit test results for all students who have received voucher funds in grades three and higher to the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority ([NCSEAA](#)) no later than July 15 of each year for the previous school year. These data, with the exception described below, are not public record.

As specified in the [2023 Appropriations Act](#), private schools enrolling 25 or more voucher students per grade must report aggregate standardized test performance scores to the NCSEAA for students in grades 3, 8, and 11. These data are public record and may be shared with public or private institutions of higher education in North Carolina and research organizations. Test data for all other grades must be retained by the school, which must annually certify to the NCSEAA compliance with all requirements.

In addition, NCSEAA must report annually to the NCDPI and Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (no later than December 1) on the aggregate performance on the designated nationally standardized test in comparison to national outcomes for the test.

Resources and References

North Carolina General Assembly - Current Operations Appropriations Act 2023:
<https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2023/Bills/House/PDF/H259v7.pdf>

North Carolina Department of Administration Division of Non-Public Schools:
<https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education/private-schools>

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Office of Accountability and Testing:
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/accountability-and-testing>

North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA): <https://www.ncseaa.edu/>

North Carolina School Report Cards: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/data-reports/school-report-cards>

Last updated February 2024

See our website for more information: www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org