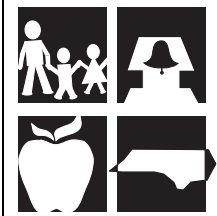


Assessment Brief



Public Schools of North Carolina • State Board of Education • Howard Lee, Chairman • North Carolina Department of Public Instruction • Michael E. Ward, Superintendent

Understanding the North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test—Reading and Mathematics

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Introduction and History

The North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test—Reading and Mathematics was approved by the State Board of Education at its March 1997 meeting as a component of the ABCs accountability model for high schools effective with the 1998-99 school year. Because the ABCs of Public Education emphasizes performance in the basic skills, the high school comprehensive test focuses on the assessment of reading and mathematics. This multiple-choice test was developed to measure growth in student achievement in reading and mathematics from grade 8 to grade 10 for the purpose of high school accountability. However, a State Board of Education decision discontinued the use of the tests for this purpose effective with the 2001-02 school year.

Adequate Yearly Progress

The North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test—Reading and Mathematics is currently being utilized to comply with the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation of 2001. *No Child Left Behind* requires that, by the 2005-06 school year, each state must measure every child's progress in reading and math in each of grades 3 through 8 and at least once during grades 10 through 12, hence the high school comprehensive test being administered in the 10th grade.¹ The HSCT was reinstated by the State Board of Education effective with the 2002-03 school year to fulfill this requirement. Student achievement data

on the test must be disaggregated, or reported, by student subgroups according to: race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status.²

Description

The high school comprehensive test is an end-of-grade curriculum-based test that assesses the reading strand of the English language arts competencies and the mathematics competencies the typical student should have mastered by the end of the tenth grade. The content measured is not course specific. The results of the test can also be used to make norm-referenced interpretations with the state norms which were established the first year of the test administration (1998).

The reading comprehension part of the test assesses a student's ability to read, understand, and critically analyze print material. This part of the test was designed to measure specific goals and objectives from the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* for English/Language Arts K–12, such as:

- Goal 1—The learner will use strategies and processes that enhance control of communication skills development.

¹ from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testing-faq.html>

² from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/schools/accountability.html>

- Goal 2–The learner will use language for the acquisition, interpretation, and application of information.
- Goal 3–The learner will use language for critical analysis and evaluation.
- Goal 4–The learner will use language for aesthetic and personal response.

The mathematics part of the test assesses a student’s ability to apply mathematical knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. This part of the test was designed to measure specific goals and objectives from the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* for Grade 10 Mathematics, such as:

- Goal 1–This strand will focus on performing operations, solving problems, and representing mathematical relationships using real numbers.
- Goal 2–This strand will focus on describing, defining, and using the properties of plane and solid figures and solving related problems and using methods and systems of measurement, both direct and indirect, customary and metric, and solving related problems.
- Goal 3–This strand will focus on using the language of algebra to express numerical, geometric and problem-based relationships and solve related problems and modeling, graphing and exploring data sets and functions including those involving linear, quadratic and exponential relations and solve related problems.
- Goal 4–This strand will focus on using statistical methods, analysis and relationships to collect, organize, and describe data and communicate the results and determining the probability of simple and compound events and solve related problems.

Eligible Students

All students classified as tenth graders in the school system student information management system shall participate in the North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test administration as follows: standard test administration, standard test administration with accommodations/ modifications, or state designated alternate assessments such as the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP) or the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory (NCAAAI). Students following the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) are required to participate in the test administrations well as those students who repeat grade 10. *Offlevel testing (i.e., administering the high school*

comprehensive test to students not classified as tenth graders) is not permitted.

Students with disabilities are required to participate in the High School Comprehensive Test of Reading Comprehension and Mathematics. They may participate with or without accommodations, or complete one of the two alternate assessments. According to State Board of Education policy HSP-C-005, students with disabilities shall be included in the statewide testing program and may participate in the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP) or the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory (NCAAAI) as documented in the students’ current Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.

Eligible students identified as limited English proficient who do not participate in the regular administration of the test (with or without accommodations) must participate in an alternate assessment. According to State Board of Education policy HSP-C-005, students identified as limited English proficient shall be included in the statewide testing program or they may participate in the North Carolina Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory (NCAAAI) if they the eligibility criteria.

Reporting of Test Scores

The school system test coordinator establishes the schedule at the local level for scanning and scoring North Carolina multiple-choice tests. Scanning, scoring, and initial district school-level reporting all occur locally.

Schools will receive rosters and summary data depicting overall student performance at the school level. The rosters and summary data are typically provided locally soon after the student answer sheets are scanned. School performance and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results are also reported during the summer and early fall. Similar to the test results provided for the North Carolina End-of-Course Tests, high school comprehensive test scores will consist of:

Scale Scores, which measure subject-specific achievement and are standardized across tests;

Percentiles, which show the relative position of an individual’s test score within the test scores of the standardization group; and

Achievement Levels, which are predetermined performance standards that allow the student’s performance to be compared to grade level expectations. Four achievement levels (I, II, III, and IV) are reported in each subject area.