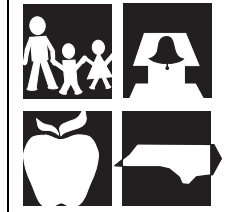


# Assessment Brief



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 End-of-Course Tests

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### Introduction

The North Carolina End of Course (EOC) tests were initiated in response to legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly - the North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Reform Act of 1984. This act mandates the implementation of the Basic Education Program through the establishment of a core curriculum for all students for each content area and the development of tests to assess the implementation of each curriculum across the state. The end-of-grade (for grades 3-8) and end-of-course (for high school and middle school) tests are revised with the beginning of each new curriculum cycle, a necessity since they measure the objectives outlined in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (the curriculum). In 1992-93, the State completed the transition to a new assessment system - with state tests designed by North Carolina teachers, curriculum specialists, testing experts and DPI staff.

### Description of tests

Based on the 1984 and 1989 legislation, North Carolina End-of-Course Tests were developed for two purposes:

- To provide accurate measurement of individual student knowledge and skills specified in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*, and
- To provide accurate measurement of the knowledge and skills attained by groups of students for school, school system, and state accountability.

End-of-course tests are based on the assessment of higher level skills within the context of specific subject-area content. When properly administered and interpreted, these test results provide an independent, uniform source of reliable and valid information, which enables:

- Students to know the extent to which they have mastered expected knowledge and skills and how they compare to others;
- Parents to know if their children are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a highly competitive job market;
- Teachers to know if their students have mastered grade-level knowledge and skills in the curriculum and, if not, what weaknesses need to be addressed;
- Community leaders and lawmakers to know if students in North Carolina schools are improving their performance over time and how the students compare with students around the state; and
- Citizens to objectively assess their return on investment in the public schools.

End-of-Course Tests for 2003-04 school year are being given in Algebra I; Algebra II; Biology; Chemistry; Economic, Legal, & Political Systems; English I; Geometry; Physical Science; and Physics. For information on testing accommodations for students with disabilities, refer to the publication *Testing Students with Disabilities* (published February 2003, available at [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing)). The school system test coordinator, along with on-site school officials, decides who administers the EOC tests. It is essential that the test administrator and proctor be trained prior to the test administration in: (1) all procedures related to the standard administration of the North Carolina End-of-Course Tests; (2) the use of accommodations (as appropriate); and (3) the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics*, including the sanctions.

## Eligible Students

Presently, taking end-of-course tests is not a requirement for graduation; however, the tests are required for students enrolled in the course for credit. All students, including students with disabilities, enrolled in a course for credit must be administered the end-of-course test. Students who are repeating the course for credit must also be administered the EOC test. Arrangements must be made to test students who are suspended from school. Membership in these courses is collected through the Student Information Management System (e.g. SIMS or NCWISE); these counts will be compared with the number of students tested in all schools as part of accountability quality control procedures and reporting of test results.

Students enrolled in courses for credit that are a part of a series of the same course such as Algebra IA or IB shall take the appropriate end-of-course test at the end of the second course regardless of the final course taken to complete the series. In the event a student elects to retake either part (part IA or part IB) after completing the series, the student is to retake the appropriate end-of-course test. Schools must provide a system of documentation that facilitates the monitoring of student enrollment in the parts for the purpose of local and state accountability. Documentation must note students enrolled in both parts who are eligible to take the appropriate end-of-course test. The student's most recent end-of-course test score will be used for the purpose of state accountability.

## Reporting test results

The scores for the multiple-choice North Carolina End-of-Course Tests are reported as:

**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 allow the comparison of student and group performance to predetermined standards based on what is expected in each subject at each grade level. Each EOC achievement level corresponds to a range of scale scores for each subject. The four levels are:

**Level I:** Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills of the 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 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

## State Board of Education Policy for End-of-Course Tests

The North Carolina State Board of Education changed its policy on delineating use of end-of-course tests for accountability in August 2001. According to the North Carolina State Board of Education Policy for end-of-course tests:

- (a) The LEA shall include each student's end-of-course test results in the student's permanent records and high school transcript.
- (b) The school system shall give each end-of-course test within a 120-minute period within the final ten days of the course.
- (c) Starting with the 2001–2002 school year, LEAs shall use results from all multiple-choice EOC tests (English I, Algebra I, Biology, U.S History, Economic Legal and Political Systems (ELPS), Algebra II, Chemistry, Geometry, Physics, and Physical Science) as at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the student's final grade for each respective course. LEAs shall adopt policies regarding the use of EOC test results in assigning final grades.
- (d) Students who are enrolled for credit in courses where end-of-course tests are required shall take the appropriate end-of-course test.
- (e) Students who are exempt from final exams by local board of education policy shall not be exempt from end-of-course tests.
- (f) Each student shall take the appropriate end-of-course test the first time the student takes the course even if the course is an honors or Advanced Placement Course.
- (g) Students shall take the appropriate end-of-course test at the end of the course regardless of the grade level in which the course is offered.
- (h) Students who are identified as failing a course for which an end-of-course test is required shall take the appropriate end-of-course test.
- (i) Effective with the 1999–2000 school year students may drop a course with an end-of-course test within the first 10 days of a block schedule and within the first 20 days of a traditional schedule.

History Note: Authority GS 115C-12(9)c.; 115C-81(b)(4); Eff. November 1, 1997; Amended Eff. September, 2001; August 1, 2000; August 1, 1999