

# Understanding Your Child's End-of-Grade Test Scores

## Grades 6, 7, and 8

During the final three weeks of the school year, your child took the state-required multiple-choice North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests in Reading and Mathematics. The End-of-Grade Testing Parent/Teacher Report provides your child's test scores and information that you may need to understand your child's scores. In addition, the End-of-Grade Testing Parent/Teacher Report offers suggestions about what you can do to help your child in reading and mathematics.

Test scores are among the many ways to find out how well your child is doing in school. Test scores allow you to compare your child's performance with that of other students in the same grade at the school and with other students across North Carolina. However, test scores should always be considered along with *all* other available information provided about your child.

Three forms of the end-of-grade reading and mathematics tests are administered in each classroom. Each form contains different test questions. The forms have been "equated" (or linked) so that student scores can be compared.

### *Scores for the End-of-Grade Tests*

**Developmental Scale Scores** The number of questions that your child answered correctly is called a raw score. For the end-of-grade tests, the raw score is converted to a developmental scale score. The developmental scale score allows for the comparison of your child's end-of-grade scores by subject from one grade to the next. The developmental scale score is like a ruler that measures growth in reading and mathematics from year to year. Just like height in inches, your child's scores in reading and mathematics are expected to increase each year. In 2002–2003, reading scale scores for grades 6 through 8 ranged from 228 to 290. The scale scores for mathematics ranged from 228 to 310.

**Percentiles** The percentile allows you to compare your child's performance on the test this year to all North Carolina students who took the test in the "norming year." The norming year for a test is generally the first year the test was administered. The norming year for mathematics was 2001. For reading comprehension, the norming year was 2003. The percentile tells you that your child performed at a level equal to or better than the stated percentage of students who took the test during the norming year. The higher the percentile, the better a student performed compared to other students in his or her grade. Percentiles range from 1 to 99.

**Achievement Levels** Achievement levels are predetermined performance standards that allow your child's performance to be compared to grade level expectations. The judgment of many teachers is used to set the achievement levels. Four achievement levels (I, II, III, and IV) are reported in each subject area. The description of each achievement level follows.

**Level I:** Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject area to be successful at the next grade level.

**Level II:** Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject area and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.

**Level III:** Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.

**Level IV:** Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work.



### Key Features of the Reading Test

- Reading and knowledge of vocabulary are assessed by having students read selections and then answer questions related to the selections.
- The selections on the test are reading materials chosen to reflect the variety of actual reading done by students in and out of the classroom.
- Selections include both literary and informational texts. Literary texts include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. Informational texts include content areas (art, science, health, mathematics, social studies, etc.), and consumer/practical selections (pamphlets, reviews, recipes, projects, etc.).
- Nine selections are included on each test; there are 56 questions on each test in grades 6–8.
- Four types of items (organized into categories) are on the reading test. The categories are described below.

### Category Information with Definitions and Example Items for Reading Grades 6–8

*Cognition:* Cognition refers to the initial strategies a reader uses to understand the selection. It is about the purpose and organization of the selection. It considers the text as a whole or in a broad perspective. Cognition requires the reader to apply strategies, such as using context clues to determine meaning, summarizing to include main points, and identifying the purpose of text features.

*Interpretation:* Interpretation requires the student to develop a more complete understanding of the text. It may ask students to clarify, to explain the significance of, to extend, and/or to adapt ideas/concepts. Interpretation requires the reader to make inferences and generalizations.

*Critical Stance:* Critical Stance refers to tasks that ask the student to stand apart from the selection and consider it objectively. Critical stance requires the reader to apply processes such as comparing/contrasting and understanding the impact of literary elements.

*Connections:* Connections refer to connecting knowledge from the selection with other information and experiences. Connections require the reader to relate the selection to events beyond/outside the selection. In addition, the reader will make associations outside the selection and between selections.

#### *Cognition Example Items:*

- What is the **main** idea of the selection?
- Based on the context of paragraph 3, what does \_\_\_\_\_ mean? (vocabulary in context)
- What is the purpose of the first subheading in the selection?
- Which of the following **best** describes Joe? (Answer is clearly stated in the selection.)

#### *Interpretation Example Items:*

- What is the significance of Joe’s decision to buy the bicycle?
- What is the tone/mood of the selection?
- Based on the selection, what will **most likely** happen next?
- Which of the following **best** describes Joe? (Answer is not clearly stated in the selection.)

#### *Critical Stance Example Items:*

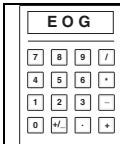
- How is X different from Y?
- How does Joe change from the beginning to the end of the selection?
- What is the effect of beginning the selection with \_\_\_\_\_?
- What is ironic about X?
- Analogies (All relationships are found in the text.)

#### *Connections Example Items:*

- Which experience is **most similar** to Joe’s experience in the selection?
- How would this experience help Joe the next time he buys a bicycle?
- People who play this game are most likely to have which of the following characteristics?
- Analogies (Initial relationship from text; others from outside experience.)

## How Can I Help My Child with Reading?

- Establish time for your child to read.
- Provide your child with a variety of suitable reading materials.
- Read aloud to and with your child.
- Take time to discuss interesting books you and your child have read.
- Model reading by reading a variety of materials yourself, such as newspapers, magazines, schedules, etc.
- Discuss the purpose of different text types, such as fiction, letters, newspaper articles, journals, etc.
- Share and discuss articles, diagrams, charts, illustrations, and maps with your child.
- Ask your child open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a simple word, a single phrase, or sentence. (Why? How do you know? Explain ... Tell me about ... Give me examples.)
- Ensure that your child reads independently each day.



## North Carolina End-of-Grade Test—Mathematics

### Key Features of the Mathematics Test

- The mathematics test assesses student achievement in the four strands of the mathematics curriculum: (1) Number Sense, Numeration, and Numerical Operations; (2) Spatial Sense, Measurement, and Geometry; (3) Patterns, Relationships, and Functions; and (4) Data, Probability, and Statistics.
- The 80-item test is administered in two parts: Calculator Inactive (24 questions) and Calculator Active (56 questions). Students are not allowed to use calculators during the Calculator Inactive part (30%) of the test. Students are allowed to use calculators during the Calculator Active part (70%) of the test.
- For both parts of the mathematics test, students in grades 6, 7, and 8 are given graph paper, rulers, and protractors to use to answer some of the test questions.
- Both parts of the test in grades 6, 7, and 8 require students to interpret information from problems in context in order to generate the appropriate responses to the test questions.

### Interpretive Achievement Levels for Mathematics Grades 6–8

The interpretive achievement levels for mathematics provide you with a description of typical student performance at each achievement level. The descriptions are related to information from actual test results for all North Carolina students. These descriptions are intended to build from Level I through Level IV. For example, the description for Level III is also based on student performance at Level I and Level II. Students performing at Level III and Level IV are considered to be achieving at or above grade-level expectations. The description for each mathematics interpretive achievement level follows.

#### Achievement Level I (Limited Performance)

- Exhibits minimal performance.
- Shows very limited evidence of conceptual understanding and use of strategies.
- Frequently responds with inappropriate answers and/or procedures.

#### *Typically a student:*

- Very often displays misunderstandings.
- Infrequently completes tasks appropriately and accurately.
- Needs assistance, guidance, and modified instruction.

#### Achievement Level II (Not Yet Proficient)

- Exhibits inconsistent performance and misunderstandings at times.
- Shows some evidence of conceptual understanding.
- Has difficulty applying strategies or completing tasks in unfamiliar situations.

#### *Typically a student:*

- Sometimes responds with appropriate answers or procedures.
- Frequently requires teacher guidance.
- Needs additional time and opportunities.
- Demonstrates some Level III competencies but is inconsistent.

#### Achievement Level III (Proficient)

- Exhibits consistent performance.
- Shows conceptual understanding.
- Applies strategies in most situations.
- Responds with appropriate answers or procedures.
- Accurately completes tasks.
- Needs minimal assistance.

#### *Typically a student:*

- Exhibits fluency and applies learning.
- Shows some flexibility in thinking.
- Works with confidence.
- Recognizes cause and effect relationships.
- Applies, models, and explains concepts.

#### Achievement Level IV (Exceeds Expectations)

- Consistently performs beyond grade level.
- Works independently.
- Understands advanced concepts.
- Creatively applies strategies.
- Analyzes and synthesizes.
- Shows confidence and initiative.

#### *Typically a student:*

- Justifies and elaborates responses.
- Makes critical judgements.
- Makes applications and extensions beyond grade level.
- Applies Level III competencies in more challenging situations.

#### **How Can I Help My Child with Mathematics?**

- “Do math” with your child at home as problem-solving partners.
- Math is everywhere! Make a list of all the ways your family uses mathematics at home:
  - Newspapers include graphs and charts.
  - Weather reports include charts, graphs, data, and statistics.
  - Sporting events provide data and statistics.
  - The grocery store affords an opportunity for practicing measurement and estimation.
  - Recipes can be modified.
  - The changing seasons give an opportunity to examine temperature.
  - Road trips encourage map reading, distance, time, and gasoline mileage problems.
- By “doing math” together, you will demonstrate that learning mathematics is fun!

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### *Ask Questions*

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As you review your child’s End-of-Grade Testing Parent/Teacher Report, make notes about the test scores and other information that you do not understand. Be sure to discuss your questions with your child’s teacher when you attend a parent-teacher-student conference. The back of the report provides space for your child’s teacher to make comments; you may want to discuss these comments with your child’s teacher. Remember that your child’s teacher can best describe your child’s performance on the end-of-grade tests in addition to specific strengths and weaknesses observed throughout the past school year.

Meeting with your child’s teacher on a regular basis provides you with the opportunity to discuss your child’s progress and any local policies that require the use of test scores. The conference with your child’s teacher should include discussions about instructional activities, special projects, homework assignments, and test scores. The teacher can also provide you with ideas for supporting your child’s learning in the home. It may be appropriate for your child to attend the conference(s) so that he or she can participate in the discussions and understand the expectations. It is appropriate for students to know what is expected of them. Students also need to be involved in setting goals and developing plans for their education. Just before the conference ends, review with the teacher what you can do to help your child.