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WCPSS ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS, 2008-09

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ABSTRACT

In 2008-09, four alternate assessments were available for use in grades/courses where the state typically tests students. As in earlier years, results for WCPSS students were mixed. Student performance on the NCCLAS, an assessment designed mainly for limited English proficient (LEP) students, improved in mathematics but remained low in reading for the 141 students in grades 3 to 8 who took them. Fewer students took NCCLAS EOC exams but proficiency rates in English I and Algebra I, the two tests taken by the most students, were 81% and >95%, respectively. On the NCEXTEND1 assessments, which are taken by students with significant cognitive disabilities, proficiency rates ranged from 49-57% in reading and 46-73% in math for 461 Grade 3-8 students. The NCEXTEND2 assessments, administered to students with moderate intellectual or learning disabilities, were taken by the largest number of WCPSS students (1572). Results on these modified EOG exams were slightly higher than those of the two previous years but proficiency rates across grade levels remained low in both reading (18-41%) and mathematics (30-52%). At the high school level, 277 students took NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments, which are based on the Occupational Course of Study and serve as alternates for required assessments in reading, mathematics, and science. The percentage of students achieving proficiency on the exams ranged from 44% in English, to 50% in mathematics, and 53% in Science.

BACKGROUND

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Reauthorization of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all students with disabilities must be included in any state and district-wide assessments with necessary accommodations or alternate assessments as appropriate, and their results must be reported with the same frequency and detail as for students without disabilities. In response to guidance from the U.S. Department of Education in early 2005, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) revised the state's alternate assessment system, effective with the 2005-06 school year, and now provides the options described in this report. These assessments are designed for some specific SWD students and some English language learners.

Results from alternate assessments are included in each school's annual state ABCs Performance Composite (percent of students performing at or above grade level) and the federal measure of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) required under NCLB. To meet AYP standards, a school must

meet every performance target for each student subgroup in the school, including those identified as SWD and limited English proficient (LEP).

At the school level, an *Individualized Education Program (IEP)* team is responsible for making decisions about the initial evaluations and re-evaluations of students with disabilities. The written IEP plan that a team develops for each student with a disability determines not only the instructional process and goals for the student but also whether that student requires an accommodation or alternate assessment of some type in lieu of the standard state assessments that other students use.

For the 2008-09 school year, four different alternate assessments were available for use in grades or courses where the state typically tests students: NCEXTEND1 EOG, NCEXTEND2 EOG, NCEXTEND2 OCS, and NCCLAS (NC Checklist of Academic Standards). Results for students completing these assessments in 2008-09 are detailed in this report.

RESULTS

NCCLAS (NC CHECKLIST OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS)

NCCLAS is a grade-level alternate assessment measuring grade-level content and grade-level standards that may substitute for multiple-choice end-of-grade (EOG) tests in grades 3-8, multiple-choice end-of-course (EOC) examinations at the high school level and, in 2008-09, science assessments at grades 5 and 8. These assessments must be specified either in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a written LEP plan for English language learners. Typically, students identified for use of NCCLAS assessments are unable to access the paper and pencil test, even with assistive technology and approved accommodations.

The NCCLAS assessment is designed for:

- Students who score below proficiency (Level 5.0 Bridging) on the state-mandated English language proficiency identification assessments (one for identification and, later, one measuring progress) AND have been in U.S. schools for less than two years. (Note: IDEA testing/screening is required for all students entering WCPSS schools if they live in a home where English is not the primary language. These students continue to take the screening test annually until they meet the "proficient" standard.
- Students who are newly blinded, have some forms of autism or recent traumatic brain injury, or have other physical disabilities that prohibit the manipulation of materials and information within standard tests, even with available accommodations.

NCCLAS assessments are in a folder format and consist of:

- A checklist of skills based on specific objectives from the *NC Standard Course of Study*.
- A scoring rubric with performance indicators for achievement levels, plus scoring sheet.
- A student profile and student work samples.

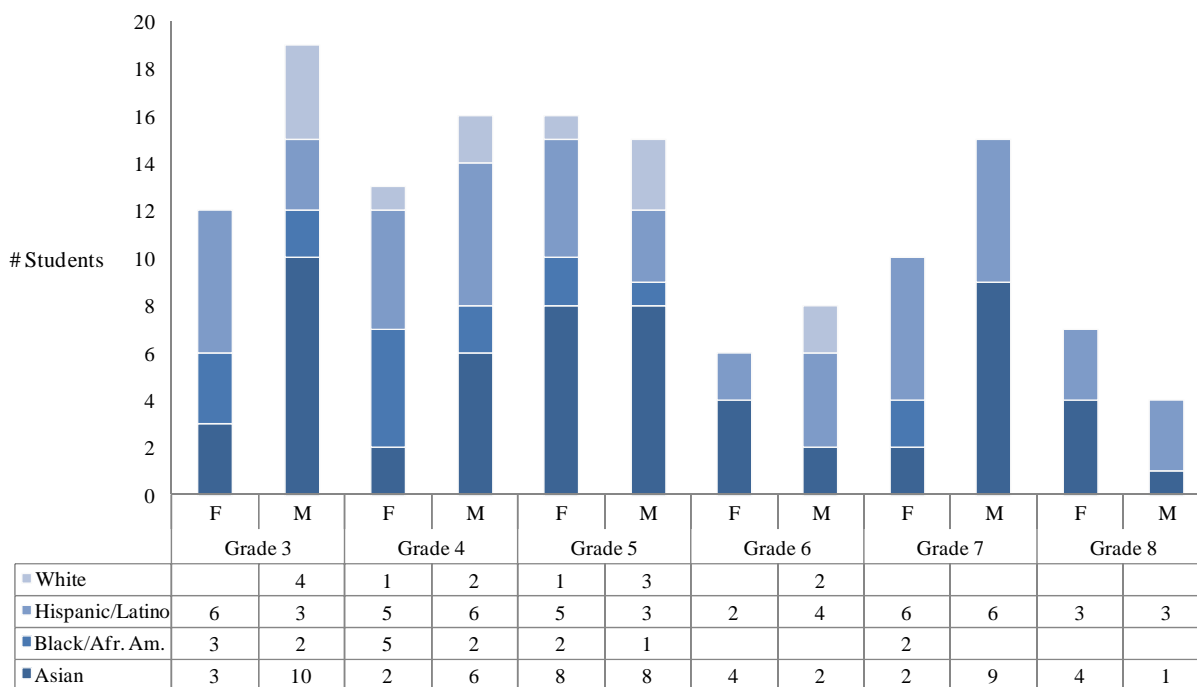
Two independent assessors are required for each student, with the first assessor being the primary instructor for the specific grade-level subject area (who documents the student's academic performance with observations and work samples). The second assessor uses the

student work samples and other written materials provided by the first assessor to complete another independent scoring. If final scores from the two assessors are not in agreement, a third independent assessor resolves the differences. Results are then submitted through an online system, where final score points and achievement levels are assigned.

NCCLAS EOG Results

In 2008-09, all but two WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments were identified as LEP and had been in U.S. schools for less than two years. Selected characteristics of those students are shown in Figure 1. Of the 141 students identified for NCCLAS EOG assessments in 2008-09 (compared to 125 students the previous year), 37% (down from 78% and 50% in previous years) were Hispanic/Latino, and 42% (up from 14% two years earlier) were Asian American.

Figure 1
WCPSS Students Identified for NCCLAS EOG Assessments in
One or More Subject Areas by Gender, Race and Grade Level, 2008-09
(n=141)



Students may be identified for use of an NCCLAS assessment in one subject area and use of a standard test in another subject area. The number of students identified for use of NCCLAS EOG assessments, by content area and grade level, in 2008-09 is shown in Table 1 and Figures 2 and 3. Also shown are WCPSS and statewide proficiency rates for EOG NCCLAS assessments.

Compared to the two previous years, more students in eleven of 12 grade/subject areas in 2008-09 were identified for NCCLAS testing in reading and in mathematics. Nonetheless, because of the small number of WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments by subject/grade level, caution must be used in interpreting the results.

In the initial year, 2005-06, with the exception of grades 3 and 6 mathematics, proficiency rates tended to be lower in NCCLAS subject areas and grades (10-46%), compared to results of the standard EOG assessments (Speas and McMillen, 2007). No more than 30% of WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments at any grade achieved proficiency in reading or writing, and statewide results were similar (8-37%). As for mathematics, WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments in 2005-06 achieved the highest proficiency at 3rd grade (65%), with proficiency rates in the other five grades ranging from 24-46% (compared to 31-40% in all six grades at the state level).

One year later, in 2006-07, NCCLAS proficiency rates increased overall (30-67%) and were higher than those for LEP students taking the standard EOG assessments in 6th-grade reading and in four of six grades in mathematics.

In the third year, 2007-08, NCCLAS reading proficiency rates were lower overall than in the previous year (17%-60% compared to 30-67% in 2006-07), yet higher than proficiency rates for LEP students taking the standard EOG tests at grades 3-5 both at the district level and statewide. NCCLAS mathematics proficiency rates were again higher than those for reading, with 67-80% mathematics proficiency in three of six grades (grades 3, 4, and 7). Furthermore, mathematics proficiency rates at grades 3, 4, and 7 were higher than the proficiency rates for both WCPSS and statewide LEP students taking standard EOG tests.

In the fourth year, 2008-09, as in the previous year, a similar number of WCPSS students were identified for use of NCCLAS reading assessments as for use of NCCLAS mathematics assessments. This had been assumed unlikely in the earlier years because any student with a home language other than English and in U.S. schools for less than a full school year is not required to take the state reading tests. However, all students are required to take either the standard mathematics tests (with or without accommodations) or alternate assessments, based on the assumption that mathematics assessments require less knowledge of the English language.

Overall, mathematics proficiency rates continued to climb (90% and 83% at two grade levels), but reading proficiency rates remained low (11-38%). Proficiency rates on the new NCCLAS science assessments were very low at grade 8 (12.5%) and moderate at grade 5 (54.5%).

Table 1
WCPSS and NC Results on NCCLAS Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results
for LEP Students and All Students, 2008-09

| Subject Area and Grade | WCPSS | | | | NC | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
| | Number Tested* WCPSS NCCLAS | Percent Proficient WCPSS NCCLAS | Percent Proficient for WCPSS LEP Students: Standard EOG Tests | Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests | Number Tested* NC NCCLAS | Percent Proficient NC NCCLAS | Percent Proficient for NC LEP Students: Standard EOG Tests | Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests |
| Reading | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 15 | 33.3% | 38.4% | 72.2% | 249 | 45.0% | 37.3% | 66.6% |
| Grade 4 | 13 | 38.5% | 40.3% | 76.3% | 268 | 42.5% | 39.1% | 70.5% |
| Grade 5 | 13 | 38.5% | 38.4% | 76.2% | 246 | 46.3% | 36.4% | 69.6% |
| Grade 6 | 8 | 12.5% | 45.2% | 77.8% | 220 | 44.1% | 44.6% | 72.2% |
| Grade 7 | 9 | 11.1% | 37.0% | 72.4% | 215 | 47.4% | 34.9% | 65.7% |
| Grade 8 | 8 | 12.5% | 31.4% | 73.4% | 250 | 42.8% | 31.8% | 67.5% |
| Mathematics | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 18 | 77.8% | 71.7% | 85.7% | 269 | 64.3% | 72.7% | 82.4% |
| Grade 4 | 14 | 64.3% | 70.7% | 87.0% | 274 | 66.8% | 70.2% | 82.7% |
| Grade 5 | 10 | 90.0% | 66.9% | 85.5% | 265 | 68.3% | 67.5% | 81.1% |
| Grade 6 | 6 | 83.3% | 66.4% | 84.2% | 239 | 57.3% | 63.7% | 78.7% |
| Grade 7 | 12 | 33.3% | 60.8% | 82.3% | 231 | 65.4% | 63.9% | 79.1% |
| Grade 8 | 7 | 42.9% | 56.4% | 82.2% | 264 | 63.3% | 66.3% | 81.2% |
| Science | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 5 | 11 | 54.5% | 28.8% | 66.3% | 262 | 53.8% | 30.8% | 61.5% |
| Grade 8 | 8 | 12.5% | 37.9% | 75.6% | 268 | 54.5% | 40.6% | 68.3% |

* Number of valid scores.

Note 1: Beginning in 2008-09, results for reading, mathematics, and science for grades 3-8 contain re-test results.

Note 2: LEP students in US schools for two or more years must take standard EOG and EOC tests.

Note 3: Unless otherwise indicated, data on the number of tests taken and percent proficient are from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of Accountability Services. For a link to DPI's test results website, see *Resources* at the end of this report.

Figure 2
WCPSS Results on NCCLAS Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2008-09 Reading

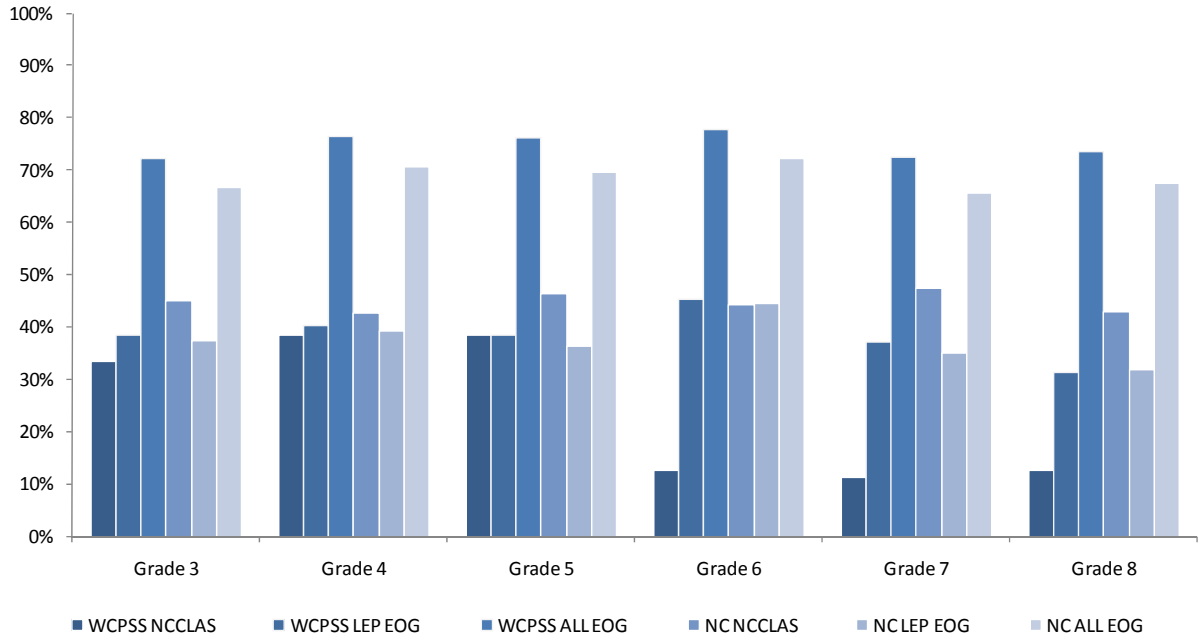
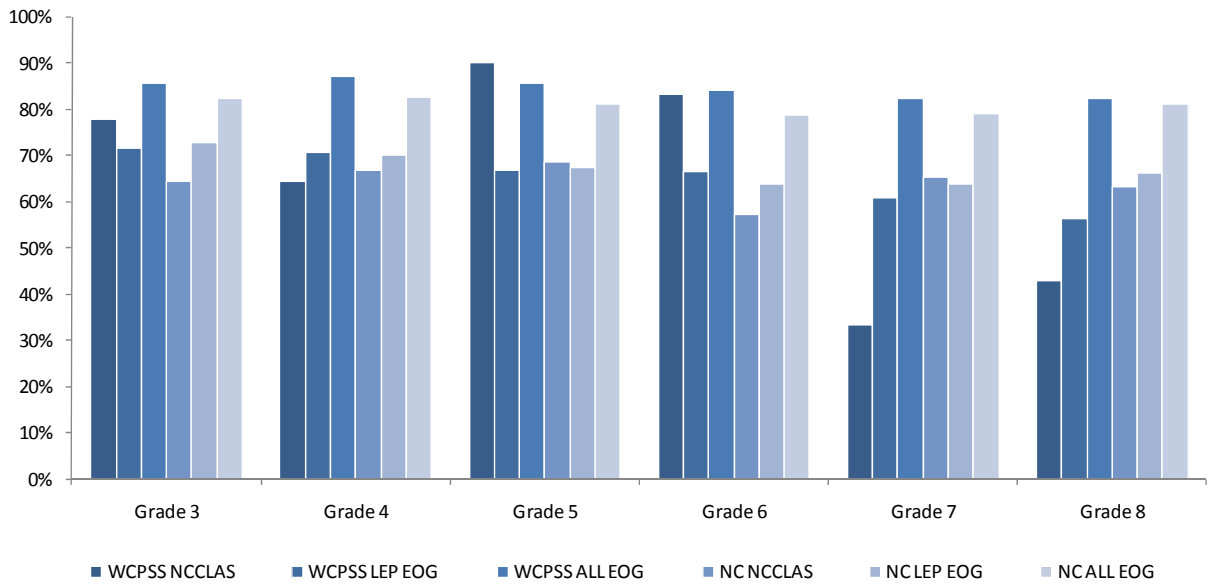


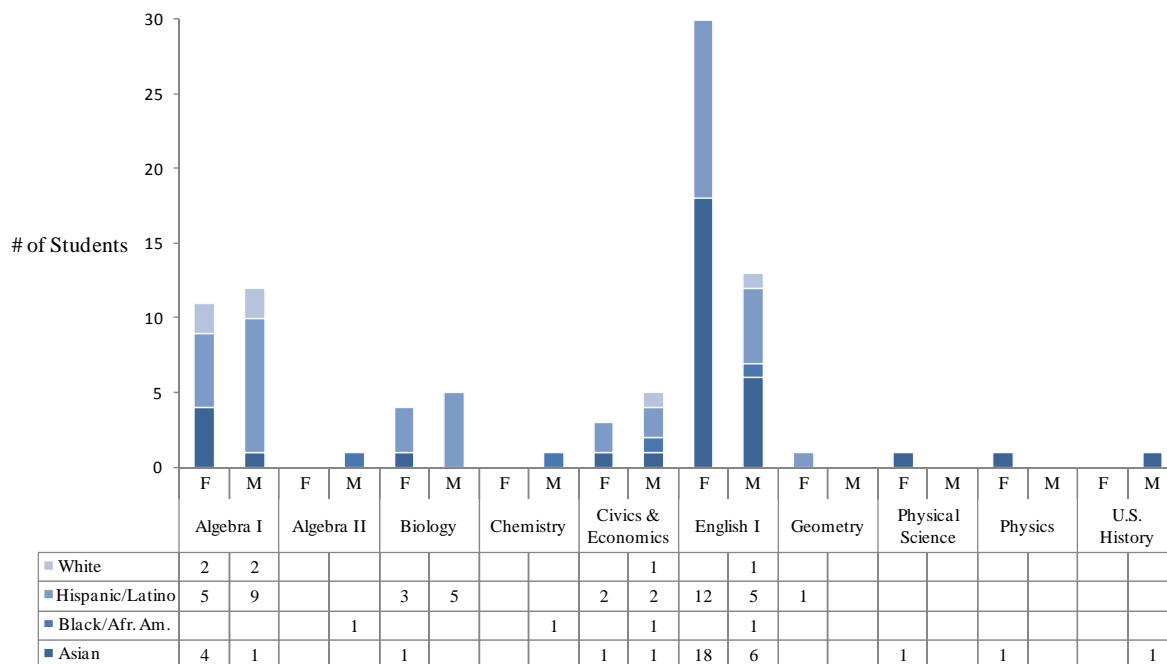
Figure 3
WCPSS Results on NCCLAS Mathematics Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2008-09 Mathematics



NCCLAS EOC Results

Selected characteristics of students participating in NCCLAS EOC assessments are shown in Figure 4. Eighty-seven students participated in NCCLAS EOC assessments in 2008-09, with some taking more than one test. Of these test takers, the majority of students were Hispanic/Latino and Asian (49% and 39%, respectively), compared to 85% Hispanic/Latino in 2006-07.

Figure 4
WCPSS Students Participating in NCCLAS End-of-Course Assessments
in One or More Subject Areas by Gender, Race and Course, 2008-09
(n=89)



As shown in Table 2, the largest number of WCPSS NCCLAS EOC students in 2007-08 was in English I (43 students) with 81% of those students achieving proficiency (up from 67% in 2007-08 and 59% in 2006-07). This proficiency rate was higher than that of all WCPSS and statewide students taking the standard English I test. Another 23 students took the NCCLAS Algebra I test, with those students achieving >95% proficiency. Nine and eight students took the Biology and Civics and Economics tests, respectively, and very small numbers (<5) of WCPSS students were identified for use of NCCLAS assessments in six other courses.

Table 2
WCPSS and NC Results on NCCLAS Assessments Compared to Standard
EOC Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2008-09

| Subject Area | WCPSS | | | | NC | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Number Tested * WCPSS NCCLAS | Percent Proficient WCPSS NCCLAS | Percent Proficient For WCPSS LEP Students: Standard EOC Tests | Percent Proficient For WCPSS All Students: Standard EOC Tests | Number Tested* NC NCCLAS | Percent Proficient NC NCCLAS | Percent Proficient For NC LEP Students: Standard EOC Tests | Percent Proficient For All NC Students: Standard EOC Tests |
| English I | 43 | 81.4% | 43.8% | 81.2% | 602 | 77.7% | 40.8% | 74.3% |
| Algebra I | 23 | >95% | 54.5% | 76.7% | 547 | 85.9% | 50.8% | 67.9% |
| Algebra II | *** | | 71.8% | 81.6% | 41 | 80.5% | 64.4% | 72.9% |
| Biology | 9 | >95% | 58.3% | 80.5% | 288 | 91.7% | 48.2% | 71.3% |
| Chemistry | *** | | 82.2% | 87.3% | 11 | >95% | 68.3% | 77.7% |
| Civics & Economics | 8 | 75.0% | 48.2% | 80.4% | 305 | >95% | 42.5% | 71.3% |
| Geometry | *** | | 70.7% | 81.0% | 77 | 81.3% | 62.4% | 73.3% |
| Physical Science | *** | | 58.6% | 67.2% | 107 | 86.9% | 50.0% | 62.7% |
| U.S. History | *** | | 53.5% | 77.6% | 221 | >95% | 52.9% | 71.2% |

*Number of valid scores.

*** Fewer than five students were assessed.

Note : LEP students in US schools for two or more years must take standard EOG and EOC tests.

NCEXTEND1

In 2006-07, NCEXTEND1 assessments replaced the NC Alternate Assessment Portfolio assessments in use since 2000-01 for students enrolled in grades 3-8 or 10. *NC Extended Content Standards (NCECS)* differ in complexity from regular grade-level standards, and all students in NCECS (adapted) curriculum classrooms are assessed via NCEXTEND1. Unlike other assessments, students identified for use of NCEXTEND1 in a single subject area are identified for its use in all subject areas.

Eligibility criteria for NCEXTEND1 assessments include the following:

- Students must have a significant cognitive disability and require extensive and explicit instruction to acquire, maintain, and generalize new skills in the tested areas.
- Students must exhibit severe and pervasive delays in multiple areas of development and in adaptive behaviors such as communication, daily living skills, and self-care.
- Students’ IEP goals must focus on the functional application of academics, and instruction is based on a student’s assigned grade-level on *NC Extended Content Standards (NCECS)*, access points drawn from the statewide Standard Course of Study. Information regarding

extended standards/NCECS is available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/ncecs> and <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/instructional/extended/>

The format and scoring for an NCEXTEND1 assessment is as follows:

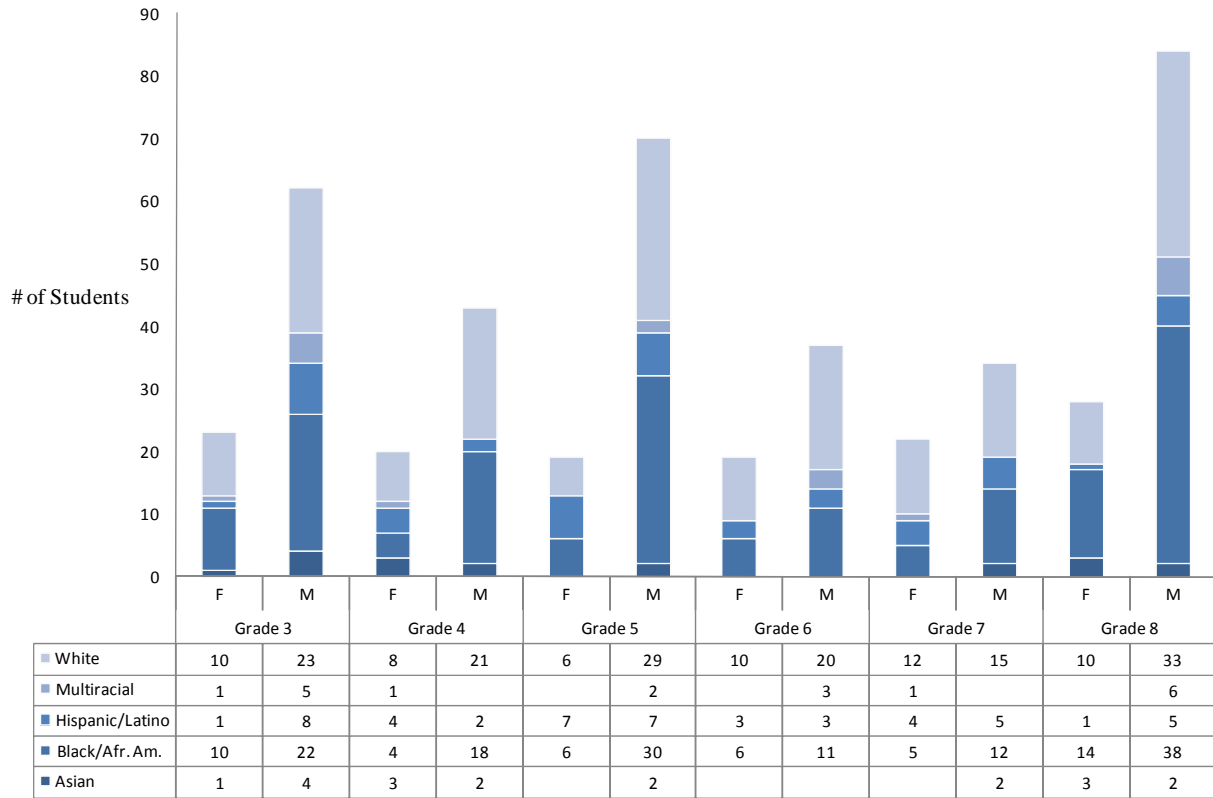
- Students are evaluated based on alternate achievement standards.
- Assessment content consists of state-developed performance tasks written by NC special education teachers.
- During a six-week testing window, two independent assessors (teachers) evaluate the student's performance on the tasks.
- Each assessor independently enters the results online.

NCEXTEND1 EOG Results

In the third year of implementation, NCEXTEND1 served as an alternate assessment for reading and mathematics EOG tests at grades 3-8, as well as for science assessments at grades 5 and 8.

As shown in Figure 5, the performance of 461 WCPSS elementary and middle school students (all in adapted curriculum classrooms) was assessed using the NCEXTEND1 in 2008-09. At each grade, more males than females were deemed eligible, perhaps because some syndromes and genetic disabilities that result in significant cognitive impairment are more prevalent in males than in females. Also, at grades 3-5 and 6-8, a slightly higher percentage of Black/African American students (38-39%) participated in NCEXTEND1 assessments, compared to their proportion (24-28%) in those populations. The largest number of students assessed with the NCEXTEND1 was at grade 8, the "gateway" grade for promotion to high school.

Figure 5
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 3-8, by Race and Gender,
Identified for Use of NCEXTEND1 Assessments in 2008-09
(n=461)



The areas of identification for participating students in 2008-09 are shown in Table 3. Except for four students receiving resource or home/hospital services, all students were in full-time separate settings during the instructional day. Most of these students were identified as either Autistic (44%) or Moderate Intellectual Disability (30%).

Table 3
Percentage of WCPSS Grades 3-8 Students, by Areas of Identification, Using NCEXTEND1 Assessments in 2008-09

| Identification | % Students |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Autistic | 44.3% |
| Intellectual Disability-Mild | 6.8% |
| Intellectual Disability-Moderate | 30.1% |
| Intellectual Disability-Severe | 9.4% |
| Multiple Disabilities | 5.8% |
| Learning Disabled | 0.2% |
| Orthopedically Impaired | 0.4% |
| Other Health Impaired | 1.1% |
| Traumatic Brain Injured | 0.2% |
| Visually Impaired | 0.4% |
| In Transition | 1.3% |
| Total | 100% |

Results from the first year of testing, 2006-07, showed that 74-88% of participating students scored at or above grade level in reading, 63-81% in mathematics, and 71-89% in writing. The NC State Board of Education deemed these scores as too high and directed that new cut-points be developed for the four achievement levels in order to lower the passing rate. As a result, lower scores were forecast for the following year.

Second year (2007-08) results, as predicted, were lower than those of the previous year. WCPSS student proficiency rates on the NCEXTEND1 reading assessments (with revised standards) ranged from 27-45% compared to a range of 49-54% statewide. Overall, WCPSS proficiency rates in mathematics were low (33-49%) and similar to those in reading.

Third year (2008-09) results for WCPSS and NC on NCEXTEND1 assessments in reading, mathematics, and science are presented in Table 4 and Figures 6 and 7. Also shown are comparisons of NCEXTEND1 results with standard EOG results for students with disabilities (SWD) and all students. The results of those comparisons by subject area are presented below:

Reading

- WCPSS NCEXTEND1 reading results ranged from 49 -57% compared to 62-70% statewide.
- Although the proficiency rates of WCPSS students taking NCEXTEND1 reading assessments in grades 3-8 were lower than those of statewide NCEXTEND1 students, they were greater in all grades than those of both WCPSS and statewide SWD students taking the standard EOG reading tests.

Mathematics

- Overall, WCPSS proficiency rates in mathematics (46-73%, up from 33-49% the previous year) were higher than those in reading.
- Proficiency rates of WCPSS students on NCEXTEND1 mathematics assessments were lower in all grades than those of statewide NCEXTEND students, and lower in three of six grades than district SWD students taking standard EOG mathematics tests.

Science

- WCPSS NCEXTEND1 science proficiency rates ranged from 28-49%, compared to a range of 53-60% statewide.
- Overall, WCPSS NC EXTEND1 science results were higher than those of district and statewide SWD students taking standard science assessments at grade 5, but lower at grade 8.

Table 4
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND1 Assessments Compared to Standard EOG
Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2008-09

| Subject Area and Grade | WCPSS | | | | NC | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | Number Tested WCPSS NCEXTEND1 | Percent Proficient WCPSS NCEXTEND1 | Percent Proficient for WCPSS SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests | Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests | Number Tested NC NCEXTEND1 | Percent Proficient NC NCEXTEND1 | Percent Proficient for NC SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests | Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests |
| Reading | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 85 | 50.6% | 43.9% | 72.2% | 979 | 66.8% | 38.1% | 66.6% |
| Grade 4 | 63 | 57.1% | 48.7% | 76.3% | 950 | 65.8% | 39.4% | 70.5% |
| Grade 5 | 89 | 56.2% | 45.7% | 76.2% | 992 | 67.0% | 36.1% | 69.6% |
| Grade 6 | 56 | 55.4% | 44.8% | 77.8% | 823 | 66.3% | 36.8% | 72.2% |
| Grade 7 | 56 | 57.1% | 38.2% | 72.4% | 806 | 69.5% | 30.4% | 65.7% |
| Grade 8 | 112 | 49.1% | 41.7% | 73.4% | 919 | 62.8% | 31.6% | 67.5% |
| Mathematics | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 85 | 58.8% | 66.1% | 85.7% | 980 | 67.6% | 62.0% | 82.4% |
| Grade 4 | 63 | 57.1% | 65.7% | 87.0% | 952 | 65.2% | 59.6% | 82.7% |
| Grade 5 | 89 | 66.3% | 60.6% | 85.5% | 991 | 74.5% | 54.7% | 81.1% |
| Grade 6 | 56 | 73.2% | 56.4% | 84.2% | 823 | 75.8% | 49.0% | 78.7% |
| Grade 7 | 56 | 67.9% | 52.0% | 82.3% | 807 | 72.7% | 47.5% | 79.1% |
| Grade 8 | 113 | 46.0% | 52.9% | 82.2% | 918 | 59.4% | 50.1% | 81.2% |
| Science | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 5 | 89 | 49.4% | 42.8% | 66.3% | 993 | 60.0% | 37.6% | 61.5% |
| Grade 8 | 112 | 27.7% | 46.8% | 75.6% | 917 | 53.1% | 39.5% | 68.3% |

Note: Beginning in 2008-09, results for reading, mathematics, and science for grades 3-8 contain re-test results.

Figure 6
WCPSS Results on NCEXTEND1 Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2008-09 Reading

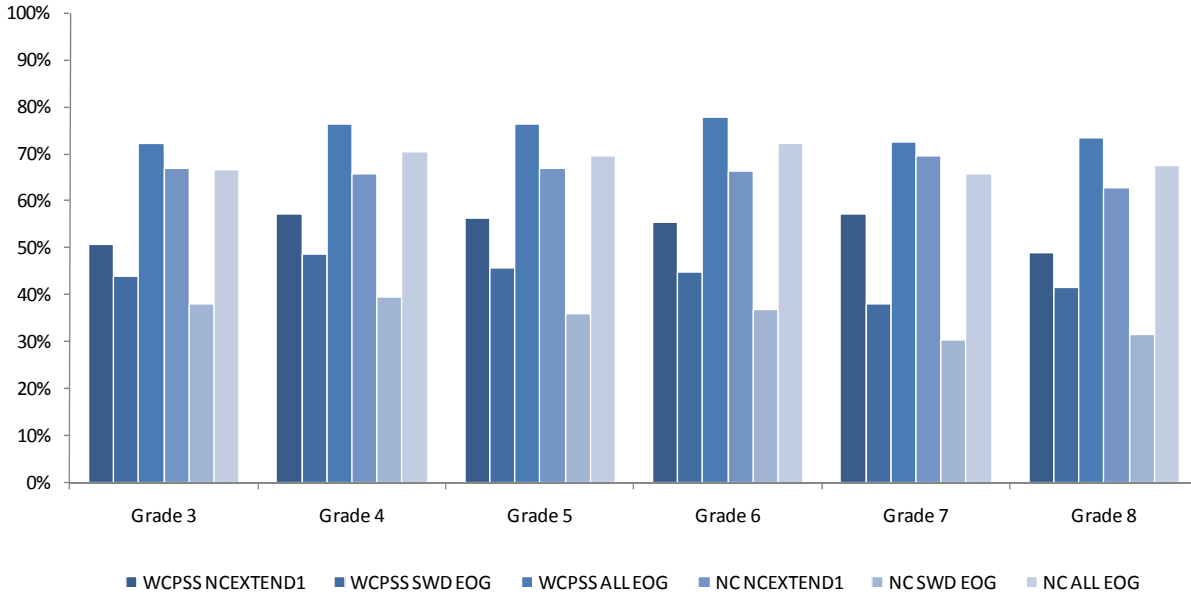
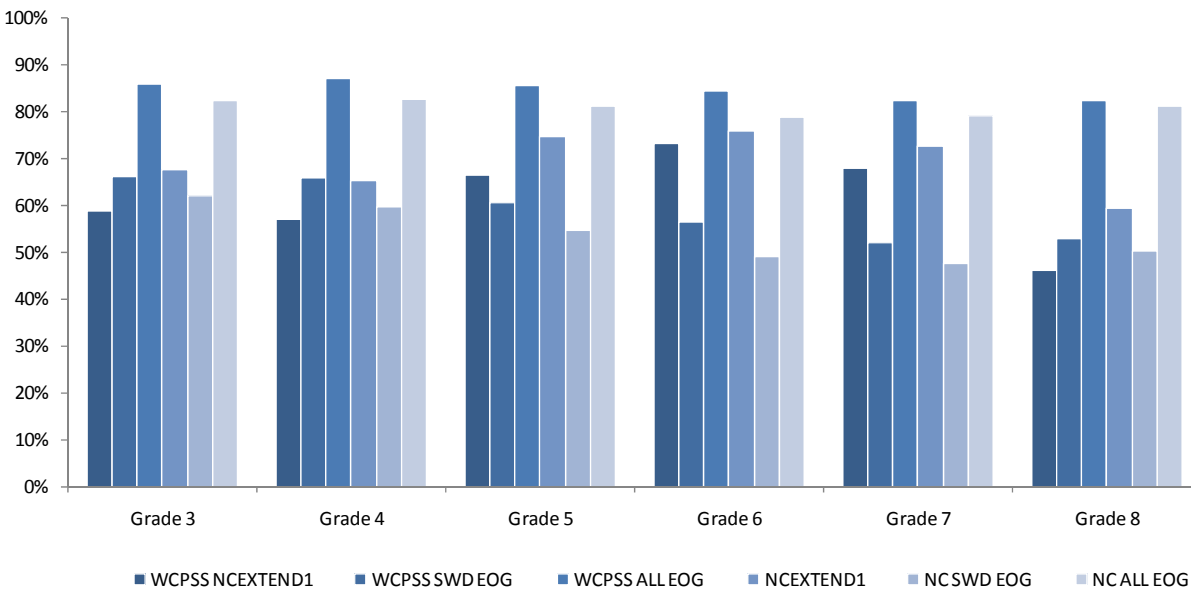


Figure 7
WCPSS Results on NCEXTEND1 Math Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2008-09 Mathematics



NCEXTEND2 EOG

In 2005-06 the NC testing program was expanded to include new NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments based on the grade-level NC SCOS content but with modified grade-level standards and a modified test format (i.e., multiple-choice tests have shorter reading passages, simplified vocabulary, fewer multiple-choice test items, three rather than four response choices for each test item, and a modified page layout with only one or two items per page). 2008-09 was the fourth year of implementation for the reading and mathematics assessments at grades 3-8 and the first year of implementation for a science assessment at grades 5 and 8.

Student eligibility criteria considered by the IEP team for NCEXTEND2 EOG testing include:

- not having a significant cognitive disability;
- having a disability that prevents the student from attaining grade-level proficiency in the subject area, with the best of instruction, within the school year covered by the IEP – as demonstrated by objective evidence of two or more measures such as standardized state tests, intelligence and aptitude tests, and psychological evaluations; and
- having a disability that may require assessments of different design than standard tests and accommodations.

Additionally, IEP teams may recommend that a student be assessed by NCEXTEND2 in one or more subject areas, while participating in standard EOG testing in another area. IEP teams may also recommend accommodations for some students using NCEXTEND2.

All students with disabilities participating in NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments receive instruction in the grade-level NC SCOS. More than one thousand (1,572) WCPSS students at grades 3-8 took NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments in 2008-09. The areas of exceptionality identification for these students are shown in Table 5. Sixty-three percent of the students were in two areas of identification: Learning Disabled (42%), and Mild Intellectual Disability (21%).

Table 5
Percentage of WCPSS Grades 3-8 Students by Area of Identification
Taking One or More NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments in 2008-09

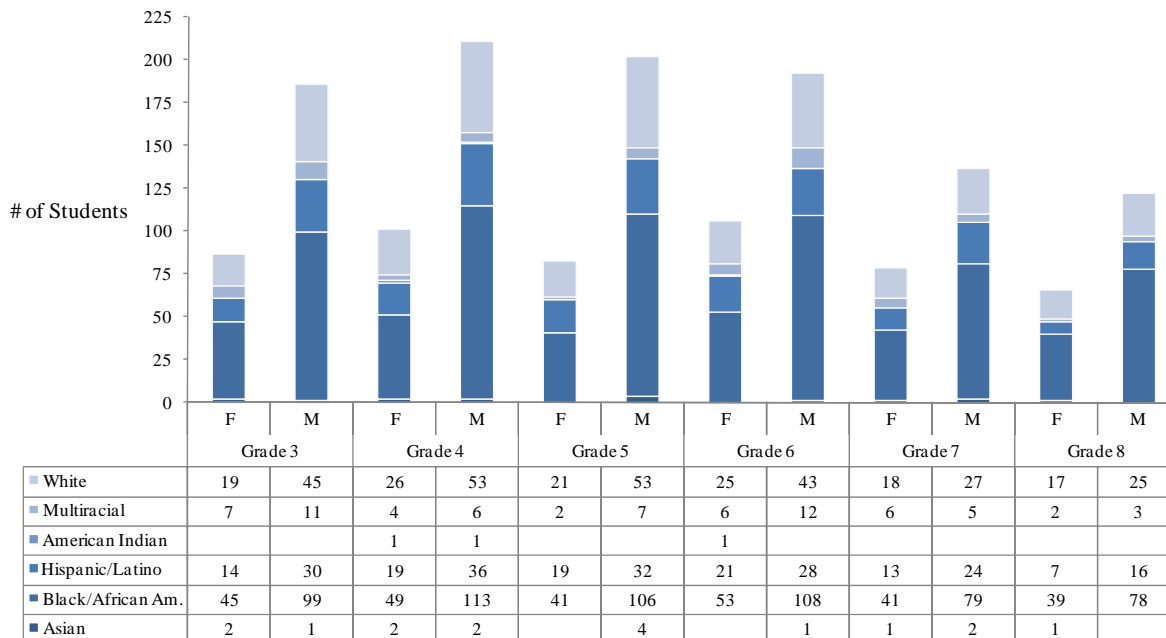
| Identification | % Students |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Autistic | 10.1% |
| Hearing Impaired | 1.3% |
| Intellectual Disability-Mild | 20.9% |
| Intellectual Disability-Moderate | 0.8% |
| Learning Disabled | 41.7% |
| Multihandicapped | 0.4% |
| Orthopedically Impaired | 0.5% |
| Other Health Impaired | 19.4% |
| Serious Emotional Disability | 4.4% |
| Speech/Language Impaired | 0.1% |
| Traumatic Brain Injured | 0.2% |
| Visually Impaired | 0.1% |
| Total | 100.0% |

As shown in Figure 8, more males than females were identified for use of NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments at each grade, and Black/African American students, followed by White students, participated most often. At both the elementary and middle school levels, a disproportionate number of Black/African American students was identified for use of NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments.

Although the grades 3-5 student population in 2008-09 included 51% White students and 24% Black/African American students, the student group taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments approached the inverse: 25% White and 42% Black/African American (down from 53% the previous year).

The racial/ethnic composition of WCPSS grades 6-8 students in 2008-09 was 51% White, 28% Black/African American, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian, and 4% Multiracial students. However, the composition of students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments, similar to that of the previous years, was 53% Black/African American, 25% White, and more proportional representation of other subgroups. The disproportionate number tested appears to reflect a disproportionate number of Black/African American students in certain exceptionality categories.

Figure 8
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 3-8, by Race and Gender,
Taking One or More NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments, 2008-09.
(n=1,572)



Statewide and WCPSS NCEXTEND2 EOG results in reading, mathematics, and science for 2008-09 are shown in Table 6 and Figures 9 and 10. Also shown are comparisons of NCEXTEND2 EOG results with standard EOG results for other students with disabilities (SWD) and all students tested. General results were as follows:

- Overall, WCPSS NCEXTEND2 EOG reading and mathematics results across grades were slightly higher than those of the previous two years. The percentage of students scoring at or above grade level on the NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments increased yet remained low in both reading (18-41%, up from 12-24%) and mathematics (30-52%, up from 20-39%), comparable to statewide proficiency rates in reading (26-42%) but lower than statewide mathematics rates (41-63%).
- Proficiency rates on the new NCEXTEND2 Science Assessments were low (28% and 31%).

Table 6
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments
Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2008-09

| Subject Area and Grade | WCPSS | | | | NC | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | Number Tested WCPSS NCEXTEND2 | Percent Proficient WCPSS NCEXTEND2 | Percent Proficient for WCPSS SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests | Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests | Number Tested NC NCEXTEND2 | Percent Proficient NC NCEXTEND2 | Percent Proficient for NC SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests | Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests |
| Reading | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 264 | 18.2% | 43.9% | 72.2% | 3,207 | 25.8% | 38.1% | 66.6% |
| Grade 4 | 295 | 27.8% | 48.7% | 76.3% | 3,648 | 30.8% | 39.4% | 70.5% |
| Grade 5 | 270 | 31.1% | 45.7% | 76.2% | 3,886 | 39.8% | 36.1% | 69.6% |
| Grade 6 | 269 | 27.9% | 44.8% | 77.8% | 3,798 | 39.7% | 36.8% | 72.2% |
| Grade 7 | 196 | 40.8% | 38.2% | 72.4% | 3,504 | 42.4% | 30.4% | 65.7% |
| Grade 8 | 177 | 27.7% | 41.7% | 73.4% | 3,313 | 40.4% | 31.6% | 67.5% |
| Mathematics | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 243 | 30.0% | 66.1% | 85.7% | 2,733 | 40.5% | 62.0% | 82.4% |
| Grade 4 | 266 | 38.7% | 65.7% | 87.0% | 3,054 | 44.6% | 59.6% | 82.7% |
| Grade 5 | 249 | 40.2% | 60.6% | 85.5% | 3,395 | 49.2% | 54.7% | 81.1% |
| Grade 6 | 272 | 47.8% | 56.4% | 84.2% | 3,532 | 60.0% | 49.0% | 78.7% |
| Grade 7 | 203 | 52.2% | 52.0% | 82.3% | 3,261 | 59.9% | 47.5% | 79.1% |
| Grade 8 | 168 | 45.2% | 52.9% | 82.2% | 3,159 | 63.2% | 50.1% | 81.2% |
| Science | | | | | | | | |
| Grade 5 | 246 | 28.0% | 42.8% | 66.3% | 3,528 | 41.3% | 37.6% | 61.5% |
| Grade 8 | 162 | 30.9% | 46.8% | 75.6% | 3,144 | 48.7% | 39.5% | 68.3% |

Figure 9
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2008-09
Reading

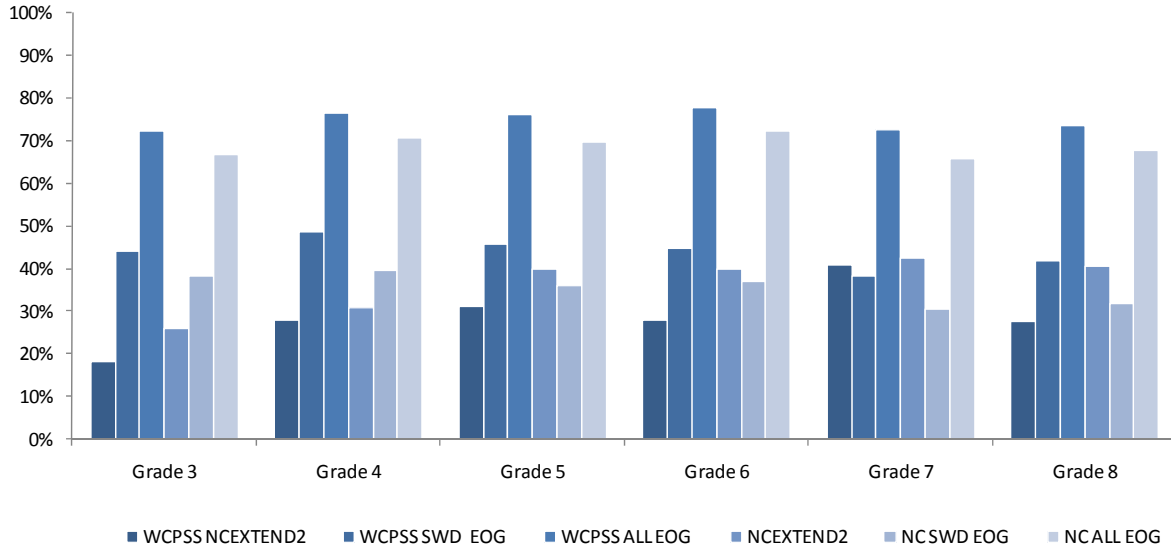
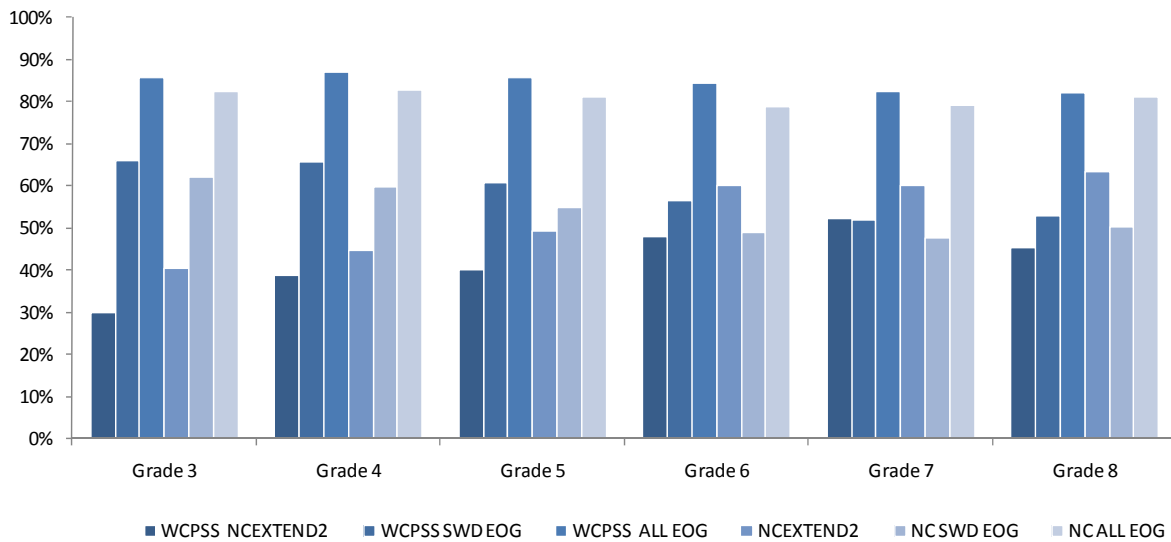


Figure 10
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Math Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2008-09
Mathematics



NCEXTEND2 OCS (OCCUPATIONAL COURSE OF STUDY)

The Occupational Course of Study is intended to meet the needs of a small group of students with disabilities who need a greatly modified high school curriculum that focuses on post-school employment and independent living. *NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments*, based on the OCS curriculum and with a simplified vocabulary and format, became operational in the 2006-07 school year. These assessments are alternates for required high school assessments in reading, mathematics and science¹ (generally English I, Algebra I and Biology) that are used to satisfy requirements of AYP.

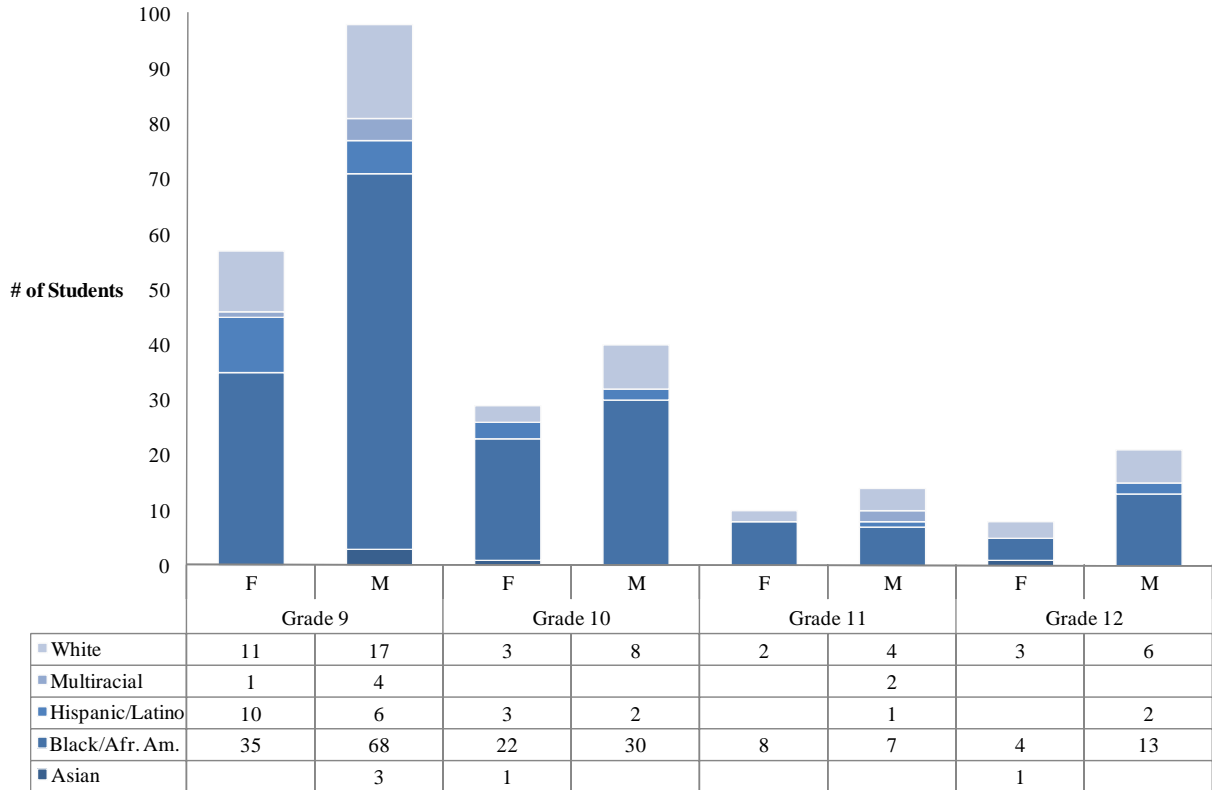
The format of NCEXTEND2 OCS mathematics and reading assessments is a 40-item multiple-choice test with simplified vocabulary and three (rather than four) answer choices for each item. More information about the OCS curriculum, assessments, and sample test items can be viewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eoc/ocs>.

Selected characteristics of students participating in one or more of the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments in 2008-09 are shown in Figure 11. Of the 277 students, 56% were 9th graders, 25% 10th graders, 9% 11th graders, and 10% 12th graders. More males than females participated at every grade level, and a disproportionate number of Black/African American students participated in the OCS alternative option.

Although the grades 9-12 student population in 2007-08 included 54% White students and 29% Black/African American students, the racial/ethnic composition of the student group taking the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments was 63% Black/African American and 24% White, with more proportional representation of other subgroups. This distribution is similar to that of the student group taking the NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments. The disproportionate number of Black/African American students tested reflects a disproportionate number within the high school Occupational Course of Study, for only those completing the OCS courses are eligible for use of NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments.

¹ The OCS science examination is not taken until both OCS Science I and OCS Science II courses have been completed. Thus, course content of OCS Science I is studied in one grading period but not assessed until the course content of Science II in another grading period has also been completed.

Figure 11
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 9-12, by Race and Gender,
Identified for Use of NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments in 2008-09
(n=277)



The areas of identification for students participating in one or more NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments are shown in Table 7. (Note: Students could participate in more than one OCS assessment, depending upon the number of OCS courses that a student completed in the 2008-09 school year.) Almost 40% of students using the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments were identified as Intellectually Disabled – Mild, and another 22% were identified as Learning Disabled.

Table 7
Percentage of WCPSS High School Students by Area of Identification
Participating in One or More NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments in 2008-09

| Area of Identification | % of Students |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Autistic | 6.9% |
| Hearing Impaired | 0.7% |
| Intellectual Disability - Mild | 39.4% |
| Intellectual Disability - Moderate | 1.8% |
| Learning Disabled | 22.4% |
| Orthopedically Impaired | 0.4% |
| Other Health Impaired | 13.4% |
| Serious Emotional Disability | 4.3% |
| Traumatic Brain Injured | 0.7% |
| Period of Re-Evaluation | 10.1% |
| Total | 100.0% |

NCEXTEND2 OCS Results

A comparison of NC and WCPSS 2008-09 results of NCEXTEND OCS assessments in Occupational English, Occupational Mathematics, Occupational Sciences (Life Skills), and the new 10th Grade Writing assessment is shown in Table 8. Overall, in the three continuing NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments, 44-53% of WCPSS students and 51-65% of statewide students tested achieved proficiency. Writing assessment results for both the district and statewide students were low (35% and 33%, respectively).

Table 8
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments, 2008-09

| | # Students Tested WCPSS | % Students Proficient WCPSS | # Students Tested NC | % Students Proficient NC |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Occupational English | 138 | 44.2% | 2,601 | 50.9% |
| Occupational Mathematics | 131 | 50.4% | 2,643 | 56.6% |
| Occupational Sciences (Life Skills) | 104 | 52.9% | 2,435 | 64.5% |
| OCS Writing at Grade 10 | 140 | 35.0% | 2,249 | 33.3% |

DISCUSSION

In 2008-09, four alternate assessment options (NCCLAS, NCEXTEND1, NCEXTEND2 EOG, and NCEXTEND2 OCS) were administered in WCPSS.

In the fourth year of implementation for NCCLAS EOG assessments in reading and mathematics, 141 students (99% English language learners new to U.S. schools) were identified for one or more NCCLAS assessments. However, caution must be used in interpretation of results because small numbers of students were tested at each subject/grade level. Proficiency rates in 2008-09 remained low in reading (11-38%), but continued to climb in mathematics (90% and 83% at two grade levels), while proficiency rates for the new NCCLAS science assessments were very low at grade 8 (13%) but higher and similar to statewide rates at grade 5 (55%).

Encouragingly, at the high school level, more students were identified for testing, and proficiency in NCCLAS EOC English I increased to 81% (up from 59% the previous year), proficiency in NCCLAS Algebra I and Biology was greater than 95%, and the proficiency rate for Civics and Economics was 75%. These results were higher than those for all WCPSS students and statewide students taking the standard EOC tests.

NCEXTEND1 EOG Assessments in reading and mathematics were in the third year of implementation and the second year of revised standards in 2008-09. More than 400 WCPSS students with significant cognitive disabilities were formally assessed via NCEXTEND1. Unlike other assessments, students identified for use of NCEXTEND1 in a single subject area are identified for NCEXTEND1 in all subject areas. Results from the third year showed that 49-57% (up from 27-45%) of participating students scored at or above grade level in reading, 46-73% (down from 63-81%) in mathematics, and 49% and 28% in science at grades 5 and 8. Overall, while lower than desired, WCPSS NCEXTEND1 results were higher at every grade in reading and in three of six grades in mathematics than those for both local and state SWD students taking the standard EOG tests. Results on the new science assessments were split: higher at grade five (59%) but lower at grade 8 (28%) than for SWD students taking the standard EOG tests.

NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments, in the third year of implementation, were taken by 1,572 students in grades 3-8 in 2008-09. In previous years, less than 30% of participating students scored at or above grade level in reading at either the state or local level. In the third year, district and statewide results were slightly higher, ranging from 18-42%. Similar results occurred in mathematics, with district proficiency rates of 30-52% (up from 20-38%) and statewide rates of 40-63% (up from 20-44%). District results on the new science assessments were lower (28-31% proficient) than statewide results (41-49%), also low.

NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments are alternates that are required testing for students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study at the high school level. Eligible students with disabilities must take the appropriate NCEXTEND2 OCS assessment after completing each of four courses: Occupational Mathematics I, Occupational English I (reading), Occupational Writing, and Occupational Sciences (Life Skills) I and II. In this third year of implementation, 277 students participated in one or more of the four NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments. Student results ranged from 35-53% proficiency (up from 22-48% the previous year) across the OCS subject areas.

Unfortunately for high schools in North Carolina, the U.S. Department of Education in April, 2009 decided to "invalidate" the NCEXTEND2 OCS tests at the high school level for the purpose of AYP determinations. As per the U.S. Department of Education's decision, any student taking the NCEXTEND2 OCS tests for Math and English was to be counted as a "non-participant" for AYP.

Since there was no other test available and/or appropriate for those students when they took those courses, every high school's "percent tested" targets was negatively affected, such that any high school large enough to have an SWD subgroup was unlikely to make AYP based on that issue alone. Moreover, since those OCS students count not only in the SWD subgroup but also any other group of which they are a member (FRL, LEP, etc.), this decision affected other participation targets as well. Until North Carolina's DPI comes up with an acceptable replacement for the NCEXTEND2 OCS tests, this problem will likely be with us for a while.

Overall, results of the alternative assessments in 2008-09, as in earlier years, were mixed. In the second year after revised standards, NCEXTEND1 end-of-grade results increased from the very low (27-45%) proficiency rates of the previous year to moderate rates of 49-57% proficiency in reading and 46-73% in mathematics. Meanwhile, in the third year of implementation, NCCLAS EOG proficiency rates remained low in grades 3-8 reading (11-38%) but increased to 77- 90% in mathematics at three grade levels. At the high school level, students participated in nine (up from five) NCCLAS EOC assessments, with proficiency rates greater than 95% in Algebra I and Biology and 81% in English I. Less encouraging was the proficiency rates (18-52%, up from 11-38%) across grade/subject areas for the 1,572 students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments (also in the third year of implementation). Similarly, the high school NCEXTEND2 OCS results (35-53% proficiency) remained lower than desired.

As noted in our earlier reports, overall results present decision makers with a dilemma. On one hand, the development of the new alternate assessments reflects focused efforts to provide – for all students – improved access to and accountability for grade-level content in the NC SCOS. Clearly, the intent of the requirement that IEP goals, instruction - and assessment - be aligned with grade-level content is to ensure that these students have access to grade-level content and can work toward grade-level achievement.

On the other hand, many students taking the alternate assessments in 2008-09 did not reach proficiency. While students taking the new NCEXTEND1 assessments achieved 46-73% proficiency, most students taking the NCEXTEND2 EOG and NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments did not reach proficiency, and only about half of students taking NCCLAS EOG assessments achieved proficiency.

These less than desirable outcomes lead, as in the previous years, to questions regarding purpose and appropriateness of testing, as well as alignment of instruction and resources. For example, some educators question the purpose and appropriateness of using another English language assessment (NCCLAS reading, writing, English I) for English language learners who have already been screened by IPT testing and have scores indicating limited English proficiency.

Low results for SWD students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG (grades 3-8) and NCEXTEND OCS (high school) assessments (18-53 % proficiency at each subject/grade) raise questions regarding the intent and scope of these assessments – and of the underlying new curricula (NCECS for grades 3-8 adapted curriculum classrooms and *Occupational Course of Study* at the high school level). Another question is the degree to which instruction for these students is aligned with the new curricula and curriculum guides.

Historically, test scores for SWD students in WCPSS are lower during the first years of implementation than in subsequent years, in part because it takes time for educators and parents to process and implement new curricula as well as new assessment eligibility criteria and the often lengthy and complex alternate assessment administration procedures. A complicating factor is that while new alternate assessments are being added, the processes and procedures as well as standards of existing ones are shifting from year to year. Nonetheless, if scores on these assessments remain relatively low, the perceived value (and validity) of these assessments is likely to decline. If students do not stand a reasonable chance of passing, then the assessment program will run the risk of adhering to the letter of federal law while violating its spirit.

We must acknowledge, however, that the development of reliable, valid assessments for students with significant learning impairments is a challenge to the educational measurement community. Despite its limitations, the system of alternate assessments employed by the state of North Carolina is one of the best-developed in the country. Unfortunately, it will likely be years from now before we have the technology to accurately measure achievement of our most challenged students. Therefore, we must continue to focus on the best possible instruction we can deliver for all students while realizing that the “official” measures of the impact of that instruction may be only a partial representation of reality.

RESOURCES

NC State Board of Education Policy 16 NCAC 6D .0506 *Accountability standards for students with disabilities*. (01/06/2005). NC General Statutes 115C-12(9b); GS 115C-81(b)(4); NC Constitution, Article IX, Section 5.

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