

Background Brief:

2021-22 Accountability Framework



North Carolina's annual school accountability report helps promote the academic achievement of all public school students and to assist stakeholders in understanding and gauging student and school performance against state and national standards. Statewide assessments and other performance indicators help educators, students, parents and other stakeholders measure the progress of students and schools and determine where to provide additional support.

This briefing paper provides basic background information to help you understand the 2021-22 school accountability data, including how the test data are used under the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan. Because of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the accountability report for the 2021-22 school year is the first since 2018-19 to feature all components of the state's accountability framework, including the calculation of School Performance Grades.¹

Data being released to the State Board of Education at its September 1 meeting will provide indicators of student academic progress and school performance for the 2021-22 school year.

Key indicators include:

- Student performance on the required end-of-grade and end-of-course tests;
- Academic growth outcomes for all schools;
- School Performance Grades (SPG) for schools and for school-level subgroups;
- Long-term goals for schools to improve achievement and reduce performance gaps;
- Cohort graduation rates.

Also included is information on schools identified for support and improvement. Per ESSA, schools that do not meet performance standards must be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement and for Targeted Support and Improvement. (See below)

In addition, North Carolina law requires the identification of schools that are low performing or continually low performing and districts that are low performing.

COVID-19 Impacts on the 2021-22 Accountability Report

Data from the 2018-19 school year will be provided in the report to the State Board of Education as context for student and school performance prior to the pandemic. During the 2021-22 school year, the COVID pandemic continued to disrupt teaching and learning in many schools. As a result, 1-1 comparisons to pre-pandemic data are discouraged because of these potential impacts on student learning.

Student Performance on State Assessments

North Carolina students in grades three through eight and in certain high school grades take assessments each year that measure achievement in reading, mathematics and science. Student performance on these end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments is reported as four academic achievement levels:

- **Achievement Level 5:** Comprehensive Understanding (Career and College Readiness)
- **Achievement Level 4:** Thorough Understanding (Career and College Readiness)

- **Achievement Level 3:** Sufficient Understanding (Grade-Level Proficiency)
- **Not Proficient:** Inconsistent Understanding

Achievement Level 3 identifies students who have a sufficient understanding of grade-level knowledge and skills in the tested content areas to move on to the next grade but who may need additional support to be on track for career-and-college readiness. Achievement Levels 4 and 5 indicate students are on track to be career-and-college ready by the time they graduate from high school. The percentage of students meeting Level 3 and above and meeting Level 4 and above will be reported to the State Board of Education.

¹The U.S. Department of Education did not grant waivers from federal testing and accountability requirements for the 2021-22 school year but did approve an addendum requested by the State Board of Education to the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan for relief from certain data requirements impacted by COVID-19. Revisions to accountability measurements being implemented as specified in the addendum to the ESSA State Plan are detailed throughout this brief.

Here are the state assessments that students must take:

GRADE	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE	OTHER
3	Beginning of Grade/End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade	—	—
4	End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade	—	—
5	End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade	—
6	End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade	—	—
7	End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade	—	—
8	End-of-Grade	End-of-Grade/NC Math 1	End-of-Grade	—
9	—	NC Math 1	—	—
10	English II	—	—	Pre-ACT
11	—	NC Math 3	Biology	The ACT
12	—	—	—	ACT WorkKeys

Academic Growth

Academic growth is an indication of the progress that students in the school made over the previous year. The standard is roughly equivalent to a year's worth of expected growth for a year of instruction. Growth is reported for each school as Exceeded Growth Expectations, Met Growth Expectations, or Did Not Meet Growth Expectations as measured by EVAAS, a statistical tool North Carolina uses to measure student growth when common assessments are administered.

Participation

To ensure that all students are included in the academic assessment accountability measures, schools are held accountable for testing at least 95% of eligible students. The participation requirement applies to groups of students of 30 or more, including the All Students group and each subgroup.

School Performance Grades (SPG)

Since 2013-14, student performance data have been used to assign letter grades to North Carolina public schools as required by North Carolina General Statute 115C-83.15. The grades are based on each school's achievement score (weight of 80%) and each school's students' academic growth (weight of 20%). The total school performance score is converted to a 100-point scale and then used to determine a school performance grade of A, B, C, D or F.

The final grade is based on a 15-point scale:

- A:** 85-100
- B:** 70-84
- C:** 55-69
- D:** 40-54
- F:** Less than 40

Each public school will receive an overall letter grade and a letter grade for each student subgroup (Asian, American Indian, Black, Hispanic, Two or More Races, White, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners). Subgroup performance is reported when the number of scores in a particular group is at least 30 for one or more parts of the accountability model.

K-2 schools will receive the letter grades earned by the schools to which they send the largest percentage of students. Schools approved to use the state's alternative accountability model will be assigned a letter grade only for the purposes of identifying Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools and Targeted Support and Improvement schools, as required by federal statute.

The indicators for elementary and middle schools differ from the indicators for high schools as presented in the chart and explanation below:

Elementary/Middle School Indicators			High School Indicators	
· 3rd Grade Reading	· 3rd Grade Math	· 5th Grade Science	ASSESSMENTS	OTHER MEASURES
· 4th Grade Reading	· 4th Grade Math	· 8th Grade Science	· NC Math 1/Math 3	· 4-year Graduation Rates
· 5th Grade Reading	· 5th Grade Math	· NC Math 1	· English II	· Successful completion of high-level math courses
· 6th Grade Reading	· 6th Grade Math	· Growth	· Biology	· Growth (NC Math 1/NC Math 3 and English II)
· 7th Grade Reading	· 7th Grade Math	· English Learner Progress	· The ACT	· English Learner Progress
· 8th Grade Reading	· 8th Grade Math		· ACT WorkKeys	

K-8 SPG Indicators

- **Tested Grades** – Statewide accountability testing is done in grades three through eight only. For students in grades kindergarten through two, special age-appropriate assessments are used to chart students’ academic progress and are not included in the accountability model.
- **End-of-Grade Tests** – Assessments in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight, NC Math end-of-course test for some students in middle school, and science assessments in grades five and eight are counted for academic growth and performance. NCEXTEND1 is an alternate assessment for students with disabilities instructed on the NC Extended Content Standards and is included in performance only, not in growth.
- **English Language Learners** – Students who are classified as English learners take an English language attainment assessment, which is included in the accountability model for students in grades three through eight

Elementary School/Middle School Model Example

Measure	Numerator*	Denominator*	Score used in final calculations
EOG Reading	50	100	
EOG Math and EOC NC Math 1	50	100	
EOG Science	20	30	
EL Progress	10	30	
Total Achievement	130 (sum of numerators)	260 (sum of denominators)	130/260 = 50
	Composite Index		Score used in final calculations
Accountability Growth Score (Reading, Math, Science Composite)	-0.95		75.2

The overall score for the example shown above is calculated using this formula. The numeric score is then converted to a letter grade on a 100-point scale: $50(.8) + 75.2(.2) = 55.04 = 55$: School Performance Grade is a C

*The numerator is the total number of scores that meet the benchmark and the denominator is the total number of scores. The English learners’ progress indicator is based on the number of students, not scores, who meet the benchmark.

High School SPG Indicators

- **End-of-Course Tests** – Student performance on four end-of-course assessments – NC Math 1, NC Math 3, English II and Biology – is counted for performance. NC Math 1, NC Math 3, and English II are counted for growth. NCEXTEND1 is an alternate assessment for students with disabilities instructed on the NC Extended Content Standards and is included in performance only, not in growth.
- **Graduation Rates** – The percentage of students who graduate with their cohort in four years or less.
- **English Language Learners** – Students who are classified as English learners take an English language attainment assessment which is included in the accountability model for students in grade ten.
- **Math Course Rigor** – The percentage of grade 12 students taking and passing the NC Math 3 course.
- **The ACT/ACT WorkKeys** –The percentage of 12th grade students who meet the benchmarks on The ACT or ACT WorkKeys. For The ACT, the benchmark is a score of 19 as set by the UNC Board of Governors in March 2020 (the previous benchmark was a score of 17). For ACT WorkKeys, the benchmark is a score that qualifies for a silver certificate or higher.

High School Model Example

Measure	Numerator*	Denominator*	Score used in final calculations
EOC Math	250	300	
EOC English II	225	300	
4-year Cohort Graduation Rate	280	300	
EL Progress	45	100	
EOC Biology	200	300	
The ACT/ACT WorkKeys	190	200	
Math Course Rigor	200	300	
Total	1390 (sum of numerators)	1800 (sum of denominators)	1390/1800 = 77.2
	Composite Index		Score used in final calculations
Growth Accountability Score (Reading and Math Composite)	-0.95		75.2

The overall score for the example shown above is calculated using this formula. The numeric score is then converted to a letter grade on a 100-point scale: $77.2(.8) + 75.2(.2) = 76.8 = 77$: School Performance Grade is a B

*The numerator is the total number of scores that meet the benchmark and the denominator is the total number of scores. The exceptions are English learners’ progress, 4-year cohort graduation rate, and math course rigor, which are based on the number of students, not scores, who meet the benchmark.

Long-term Goals

Also required by the ESSA, North Carolina established long-term goals with yearly measures of interim progress for the following:

- **Reading and mathematics assessments in grades 3-8**
- **Reading assessments in grade 10**
- **Mathematics assessments in grade 11**
- **4-year cohort graduation rate**
- **English learner progress**

The long-term goals are set with the purpose of increasing student achievement and reducing performance gaps among student subgroups. The timeline for long-term goals and measurement of interim progress have been revised as specified in the addendum to the ESSA state plan. These revisions shift the timeline forward by two years for Academic Achievement, Graduation Rate, and English Language Proficiency. The interim targets for the 2018-19 school year have been shifted to be applied to the 2021-22 school year's data.

Identifying State Low-Performing Schools and Districts

Per North Carolina statute, School Performance Grades and EVAAS growth data are used to determine whether a school or a district is low performing.

As defined by General Statute 115C-105.37, low-performing schools are those that receive a School Performance Grade of D or F and a school accountability growth score of met expected growth or did not meet expected growth. To avoid a low-performing designation, schools must earn a School Performance Grade of C or better or exceed growth.

Schools identified as low performing must develop a plan for improvement that specifically addresses the strategies the school will implement to improve both its School Performance Grade and School Growth designation (G.S. 115C-105.37(a1)). Schools also must notify parents of the school's low-performing status and actions it is taking to improve student performance.

Low-performing districts are those in which the majority of schools that receive a school performance grade and school growth score are identified as low performing. As defined by General Statute 115C-105.39A, districts identified as low performing must develop a district plan for improving both the school performance grade and school growth score of each low-performing school in the district (G.S. 115C-105.39A(b2)).

School and district improvement plans are to be shared with the public, including parents, guardians and staff and made available through the districts' website and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's website. Additional strategies for reform, changes to personnel, supports and interventions may apply to schools and districts that are continually low performing.

Identifying Federal Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools and Targeted Support and Improvement Schools

Under ESSA, North Carolina must identify schools with low performance for providing additional support. These schools are classified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools. There are two categories of CSI schools:

- **CSI – Low Performing:** Lowest performing five percent of all Title I schools
- **CSI – Low Graduation Rate:** High Schools with graduation rates lower than 66.7 percent.

These schools receive support and interventions from the state for at least four years before being eligible to exit.

There are also two categories of TSI schools:

- **TSI – Consistently Under-performing Subgroups (TSI-CU):** Any school with one or more of the same subgroup receiving a grade of "F," per School Performance Grades analysis, for the most recent and the previous two years.
- **TSI – Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT):** Any school with one or more subgroup(s) for which the SPG score is below the highest identified CSI school's All Students during the identification year and the school was on the TSI-CU list for the subgroup(s) for the previous year.



RESOURCES

DATA BY STATE/DISTRICT/SCHOOL – www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY – www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/standard-course-study

TESTING PROGRAM GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES – www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/testing-policy-and-operations

RELEASED TEST FORMS AND ANSWER KEYS FOR END-OF-GRADE AND END-OF-COURSE TESTS – Parents and educators can see firsthand the rigor of questions on the assessments.
www.dpi.nc.gov/document-terms/released-tests

2022 INFORMATION CONTACTS

ACCOUNTABILITY/BASIS FOR STATUS – Office of Accountability and Testing, (984) 236-2710

COMMUNICATIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION – (984) 236-2000

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION – <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/>