



# 2014 READY Accountability Background Brief

The 2013-14 school year was the second implementation year of the state's READY initiative, which includes a new *Standard Course of Study* in all subjects and grade levels, new student assessments aligned to the revised *Standard Course of Study* and a new school accountability model.

North Carolina's standards are focused on the most critical knowledge and skills that students need to learn to be successful at the next grade level and life after high school. Corresponding assessments include more open-ended questions and real-world applications of student learning. In practical terms, this means students are expected to master more relevant material, to solve problems that reflect real-world questions, and to express their ideas clearly and with supporting facts.

Although North Carolina public school students have been taking end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments since the early 1990s, the new assessments are more rigorous and are based on standards that no longer focus only on grade-level proficiency but also on career and college readiness measures designed to help students be successful after high school graduation.

## TIMELINE

### June 30, 2014

Local school systems submit accountability data to the NCDPI

### July-August 2014

NCDPI engages in data check for local districts

### September 4, 2014

End-of-Grade proficiency, End-of-Course proficiency, high school indicators, academic growth as well as graduation rate presented at State Board of Education meeting

### October 2, 2014

Read to Achieve results presented to State Board of Education

### February 5, 2015

NC School Report Cards released



## Achievement Levels

To better report students' career and college readiness, the State Board of Education in March adopted a new five-level achievement scale that replaces the old four-level scale:

**Achievement Level 1:** Limited Command

**Achievement Level 2:** Partial Command

**Achievement Level 3:** Sufficient Command  
(State Proficiency Standard)

**Achievement Level 4:** Solid Command  
(Career and College Readiness)

**Achievement Level 5:** Superior Command  
(Career and College Readiness)

Under this new range of achievement levels, Achievement Level 3 identifies students who have a sufficient command of grade-level knowledge and skills in the tested content areas (English language arts, math and science) to move on to the next grade, but who may need academic support to be successful at a high level in the next grade level. Students who scored at Achievement Level 3 may get on track for career- and college-readiness with additional academic support. The new level, Achievement Level 5, indicates students who have a superior command of English language arts and mathematics and are clearly in line to be career and college ready by the time they graduate from high school.



Here are the state assessments that students 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	End-of-Grade	ACT® Explore
9	–	Math I	–	–
10	English II	–	Biology	ACT Plan
11	–	–	–	The ACT
12	–	–	–	ACT WorkKeys

Here are the measures that are included in North Carolina's reports:

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL INDICATORS			HIGH SCHOOL INDICATORS	
3rd Grade ELA	3rd Grade Math	5th Grade Science	<b>ASSESSMENTS</b>	<b>OTHER MEASURES</b>
4th Grade ELA	4th Grade Math	8th Grade Science	Biology	4-year and 5-year Graduation Rates
5th Grade ELA	5th Grade Math	Math I	English II	Successful completion of high
6th Grade ELA	6th Grade Math	Biology	Math I	level math courses
7th Grade ELA	7th Grade Math		The ACT	
8th Grade ELA	8th Grade Math		The ACT WorkKeys	

## Annual Measurable Objectives

Schools will continue to be measured against Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) as those are a requirement of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), formerly known as No Child Left Behind. This is to ensure that attention remains focused on closing performance gaps among student subgroups. AMO are a series of performance targets that states, school districts and specific subgroups of students must achieve each year to meet the federal law's requirements. AMO targets are available online at [www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/readytargettables13.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/readytargettatables13.pdf).

## Read to Achieve

The 2013-14 school year also saw the implementation of the state's Read to Achieve program. The program's goal is to ensure that every third grade student is reading at or above grade level by the end of the school year. Students who are not reading at grade-level by the end of third grade receive extra support, including reading camps, multiple opportunities to show proficiency, guaranteed uninterrupted blocks of reading time, and intensive reading interventions so that they will be more prepared to do fourth grade work.

At their Oct. 2 meeting, State Board of Education members will receive a report on the success of the program's first year that will include:

- the number and percentage of students demonstrating and not demonstrating proficiency on end-of-grade;
- the number and percentage of students who take and pass an alternative assessment;

- the number and percentage of students retained (this would include students who are physically retained and students retained with a retained reading label); and
- the number and percentage of students with a Good Cause Exemption (this would include portfolio, limited English proficient, exceptional children and multiple retentions).

## School Performance Grades

The 2013-14 school year is the first year for which public schools and charter schools will receive a letter grade under the General Assembly's A-F School Performance Grades. The grades will be based on the school's achievement score and on students' academic growth. The final grade will be based on a 15-point scale. The letter grades will be included in the School Report Cards, which will be released on Feb. 5, 2015.

## K-8 READY Accountability Model Components

- Statewide accountability testing is done in grades 3-8 only. For students in grades K-2, special age-appropriate assessments are used to chart students' academic progress and are not included in the READY accountability model.
- End-of-grade assessments in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and science assessments in grades 5 and 8 are counted for academic growth, performance and AMO. NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 are alternate assessments for certain students with disabilities and are included in performance and AMO only, not in growth.

## High School READY Accountability Model Components

- **End-of-Course Tests** – Student performance on three end-of-course assessments: English II, Biology and Math I is counted for growth, performance and AMO. NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 are alternate assessments for certain students with disabilities and are included in performance and AMO only, not in growth.
- **The ACT** – The percentage of students meeting the UNC system admissions requirement of a composite score of 17.
- **Graduation Rates** – The percentage of students who graduate in four years or less and five years or less.
- **Math Course Rigor** – The percentage of graduates taking and passing high-level math courses such as Math III.
- **ACT WorkKeys** – For Career and Technical Education concentrators (students who have earned four CTE credits in a career cluster), the percentage of concentrator graduates who were awarded at least a Silver Level Career Readiness Certificate based on ACT WorkKeys assessments.
- **Graduation Project** – The accountability report will note whether a school requires students to complete a graduation project.

## Understanding the Three Accountability Measures

- **Performance** – The percentage of students in the school who score at Achievement Levels 1-5. Achievement Level 3 is considered state-level proficiency and Achievement Levels 4 and 5 are considered college- and career-ready.
- **Growth** – An indication of the rate at which students in the school learned over the past year. The standard is roughly equivalent to a year's worth of 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.
- **AMO Status** – Whether the students in the school as a whole and in each identified subgroup met the performance targets set by the state with the goal of reducing the percentage of non-proficient students by one-half within six years. The purpose of this is to maintain a spotlight on performance gaps among groups of students so that these gaps can be closed over time.

## RESOURCES

**READY INITIATIVE** – <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ready/>

**READY ANIMATION** – The animated READY logo tells the story of why North Carolina has raised standards in public schools in a 2.5 minute video clip. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCNYt5\\_K6CU&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCNYt5_K6CU&feature=youtu.be)

**NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY** – <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/>

**TESTING PROGRAM GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES** –

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/geninfopoliciesindex>

**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. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/releasedforms>

**READ TO ACHIEVE** – <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/k-3literacy/achieve/>

## 2014 READY INFORMATION CONTACTS

**READY ACCOUNTABILITY/BASIS FOR STATUS** – Accountability Services Division, Tammy Howard, Director, 919.807.3787

**COMMUNICATIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION** – Communication and Information Services,  
Vanessa Jeter, Director, 919.807.3450

**READY DATA BY SCHOOL/DISTRICT/STATE AND PRESS RELEASE** – <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting>

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION** – <http://www.ncpublicschools.org>