



2016 READY Accountability Background Brief

This briefing paper provides basic background information to help you understand the 2015-16 school accountability data, including how the test data are used.

The 2015-16 school year was the fourth year under the state's READY accountability model.

The READY initiative has three components:

- A *Standard Course of Study* focused on the most critical knowledge and skills that students need to be successful at the next grade level and after high school.
- End-of-grade and end-of-course assessments with rigorous open-ended questions and real-world applications that require students to express their ideas clearly with supporting facts.
- An accountability model that measures how well schools are doing to ensure that students are career and college ready upon high school graduation.

Data being released to State Board of Education members at their Sept. 1 meeting will provide insight into student academic progress and school performance in 2015-16. This includes student performance on end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments based on five achievement

levels, overall student proficiency on end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments, academic growth, School Performance Grades, and graduation rates.

With respect to School Performance Grades, schools will be graded using a 15-point grading scale, and grades will be based on the school's achievement score (80 percent) and students' academic growth (20 percent).

Information contained in this background brief will provide more details into the state's READY accountability model.

Achievement Levels

To better report students' career and college readiness, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction uses a five-level achievement scale:

Achievement Level 1: Limited Command

Achievement Level 2: Partial Command

Achievement Level 3: Sufficient Command
(Grade-Level Proficiency)

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

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

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 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.

TIMELINE

June 30, 2016

Local school systems submit accountability data to the NCDPI

July-August 2016

NCDPI engages in data checks for local districts

September 1, 2016

End-of-grade proficiency, end-of-course proficiency, high school indicators, academic growth, School Performance Grades, as well as graduation rate presented at State Board of Education meeting

Fall 2016

NC School Report Cards released



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	–
9	–	Math I	–	–
10	English II	–	Biology	ACT Plan
11	–	–	–	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	ASSESSMENTS	OTHER MEASURES
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-level
6th Grade ELA	6th Grade Math	Biology	Math I	math courses
7th Grade ELA	7th Grade Math		ACT	
8th Grade ELA	8th Grade Math		ACT WorkKeys	

Annual Measurable Objectives

States are not required to report Annual Measures of Objectives during the transition from *No Child Left Behind* to *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (2014-15 – 2016-17); however, beginning in 2017-18, North Carolina's ESSA plan will include long-term goals for closing achievement gaps and interim targets for achieving these goals.

Read to Achieve

The goal of the state's Read to Achieve program is to ensure that every third grader is reading at or above grade level. 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 October meeting, State Board of Education members will receive a report on the success of the program's third 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 retained in third grade and students placed in fourth grade 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 2015-16 school year is the third 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 continue to be based on a 15-point scale.

Schools also have the opportunity to earn an A⁺NG for their School Performance Grade. Schools receiving this grade earned an A and did not have a significant achievement gap that was larger than the largest state average achievement gap. This additional designation was added in 2014-15 to address federal requirements that the highest designation not be awarded to schools with significant achievement gaps.

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 and performance. NCEXTEND1 is an alternate assessment for certain students with disabilities and is included in performance 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 and performance. NCEXTEND1 is an alternate assessment for certain students with disabilities and is included in performance only, not in growth.
- **ACT** – The percentage of students meeting the UNC system admissions minimum 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 Two Accountability Measures

- **Performance** – The percentage of students in the school who score at Achievement Levels 1-5. Achievement Level 3 is considered grade-level proficiency and Achievement Levels 4 and 5 are considered on track to be 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.

How Test Data are Used

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and local school districts use end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) test data in a number of ways.

- **Meeting Federal Reporting Requirements** – At the state level, student performance on EOG/EOC assessments must be reported to the US Department of Education as required under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (formerly known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)). As the state develops North Carolina's ESSA plan, consideration will be given regarding reporting of reading, mathematics and science proficiency rates.

States are not required to report Annual Measures of Objectives during the transition from NCLB to ESSA (2014-15 – 2016-17); however, beginning in 2017-18, North Carolina's ESSA plan will include long-term goals

for closing achievement gaps and interim targets for achieving these goals.

- **Providing READY Accountability Reporting** – The State Board of Education's READY Accountability Model requires that student performance on EOG/EOC assessments be reported by school, district and state. The information also is reported by assessment, grade and student group.
- **Assigning School Performance Grades** – Since 2013-14, student performance data have been used to assign letter grades to North Carolina public schools as required by the NC General Assembly. The grades are based on each school's achievement score (80 percent) and each school's students' academic growth (20 percent).

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

Schools also may earn an A^{NG} if the school did not have an achievement gap larger than the largest state average achievement gap. This additional designation was added in 2014-15 to address federal requirements that excludes schools with significant achievement gaps from earning a state's highest achievement designation.

In addition to the overall performance score and grade, a separate score and grade for reading and mathematics is reported for schools containing K-8 grade levels. Schools with no data available to calculate at least a School Achievement Score will not receive a School Performance Grade (e.g. K-2 schools and alternative schools).

- **Identifying Low-Performing Schools and Districts** – NCDPI staff use the data to identify low-performing schools and districts, which, under state law, are based on the School Performance Grade and Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) growth calculations.

Low-performing schools are those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth" as defined by General Statute 115C-105.37. To avoid a low-performing designation, schools must earn a school performance grade of C or better.

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 Third Graders for Support Under Read to Achieve** – EOG assessment data are used to identify third grade students who need additional support to achieve reading proficiency. The goal of the state's Read to Achieve program 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 will have multiple opportunities to show proficiency. In addition, students may receive support through one or more of the following options:

- guaranteed uninterrupted blocks of reading time and other intensive reading interventions;
- reading camps;

- teachers selected based on demonstrated student outcomes in reading proficiency;
- placement in a transition class or a 4th grade accelerated class for the entire 4th grade year;
- promoted to fourth grade with a Good Cause Exemption but continue to receive instructional supports and services and reading interventions; or
- retention in the third grade.

- **Evaluating North Carolina Educators** – North Carolina educators participate in an annual evaluation process to assess their performance relative to the North Carolina Professional Standards and to design an annual plan for professional growth.

Student academic growth data are one indicator included in annual professional development plans of teachers and principals. Educators who are responsible for evaluating teachers, assistant principals and principals are encouraged to use academic growth data when they are evaluating the performance of teachers, assistant principals and principals.

- **Assessing District Initiatives to Improve Student Proficiency** – Districts use student performance data to assess the success of initiatives they have implemented to increase student reading and mathematics proficiency, close academic achievement gaps between groups of students and gauge the effectiveness of professional development.

RESOURCES

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

READY ANIMATION – The animated READY logo tells the story of why North Carolina has raised standards and made other key changes in public schools in a 2.5 minute video clip. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCNYt5_K6CU

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/>

2016 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>