

# HOW MUCH TESTING IS TAKING PLACE IN NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS AT GRADES K-12?

## AN ANALYSIS OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS

By Micah Guindon, Hunter Huffman, Allison Rose Socol, Sachi Takahashi-Rial Project 8.5 / August 2014



### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How many assessments are administered to students per year?
2. How much time do students spend in assessments per year?
3. What is the purpose of the assessments?
4. How can the state alleviate testing burden on students and teachers?

## BACKGROUND

### PROBLEM

The recent push toward higher-stakes assessments has led to growing concern on the part of parents, teachers, and education leaders about the implications of testing. Critics of tests express concern that “teaching to the test” has a harmful effect on classroom instruction and student learning. Some critics maintain that assessments are not an accurate representation of students’ and teachers’ skills and abilities. Others view them simply as a waste of time that could be better spent in instruction. Yet the data from assessments has allowed policymakers to analyze the gaps in subgroup achievement, better understand the correlations between demographics and outcomes, and evaluate the impact of innovative reforms.

Parents fall on both sides of argument. A recent poll found that 49 percent of parents nationwide think there is too much standardized testing in schools.<sup>1</sup> Yet, another survey found that three out of four parents believe it is important to regularly assess whether their children are on track to meet state academic goals.<sup>2</sup> Parents, as well as other stakeholder groups in K-12 education, acknowledge the need for testing, yet also express concern over the testing environment.

### LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT: FROM NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND TO READ TO ACHIEVE

Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) increased focus on accountability at the state and local levels. NCLB requires states to test students in reading and mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and once in grades 10-12. It also requires states to administer science tests once in grades 3-5, 6-8, and 10-12.<sup>3</sup> NCLB expanded the federal government’s role in education by setting standards for academic achievement and monitoring progress toward those goals. NCLB required individual schools to meet state “adequate yearly progress” targets for both their student populations as a whole and for certain demographic subgroups.<sup>4</sup> If a school receiving federal Title I funding failed to meet the target over three years in a row, it would be subject to outside corrective measures, including possible governance changes.<sup>5</sup> While North Carolina had a statewide testing program in place before NCLB, the legislation brought new federal stakes and requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Lazarin M. (October 16, 2014). *Testing Overload in America’s Schools*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/16/99073/testing-overload-in-americas-schools/> | <sup>2</sup> *ibid* | <sup>3</sup> *Federal Education Budget Project. No Child Left Behind - Overview*. April 24 2014. <http://febp.newamerica.net/background-analysis/no-child-left-behind-overview> | <sup>4</sup> *Education Week. No Child Left Behind*. September 19, 2011. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/no-child-left-behind/> | <sup>5</sup> *ibid*



North Carolina's Race to the Top grant, awarded in 2010, further increased the federal requirements for statewide assessments. As part of North Carolina's Race to the Top implementation, the State built upon the existing Educator Evaluation System and began to evaluate its teachers partially on the basis of student achievement. North Carolina created a system of value-added scores to determine the impact of an individual teacher on student learning. Value-added scores are calculated using scores from End of Grade assessments (EOGs) and End of Course assessments (EOCs), tests that existed before Race to the Top. However, the new Educator Effectiveness Model necessitated the creation of additional assessments, North Carolina Final Exams, to evaluate teachers who taught subjects not tested by EOGs and EOCs. In order to avoid duplicating end of year tests, the State Board of Education mandated that NC Final Exams would act as the final test of any class in which they are administered. The new Educator Effectiveness Model also tied new concerns to the outcomes of statewide assessments.

The State's NCLB waiver necessitates continued administration of EOGs, EOCs, and NC Final Exams. The Obama administration announced in 2011 it would award waivers for NCLB requirements to states that agreed to adopt certain education reforms, such as teacher evaluations tied to student test scores.<sup>6</sup> North Carolina's waiver requires continued testing in the EOG and EOC math, reading, and science assessments as well as in many other grades and subjects for the purposes of teacher evaluation.

Concerns about overtesting have reached their peak in the years after the North Carolina legislature passed Read to Achieve (HB 950, Session Law 2012-142). Read to Achieve eliminates social promotion of third graders who fail to demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for a third grade student. Schools can use many different measures to demonstrate student proficiency. A third grader can either score proficient on the Beginning of Grade (BOG) test, which is taken at the start of third grade; score proficient on the EOG; successfully complete a portfolio of 36 reading assessments; retake the EOG once if she fails it the first time; or successfully pass an authorized alternative test.<sup>7</sup> Read to Achieve requires additional testing time for third graders and their teachers and adds further weight to the outcomes of certain assessments.

## DEFINING ASSESSMENT

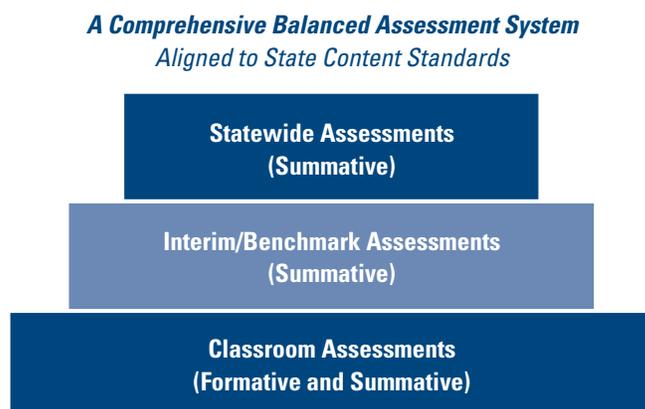
Hours spent in assessment come from summative end-of-year tests as well as benchmarks throughout the year. Statewide summative assessments align with state standards, take place at the end of the year or class, and function to provide student achievement data to schools, districts, and states. Summative assessments provide information about outcomes. In contrast, benchmark assessments provide information throughout the

year and focus more on student progress than student outcomes. Benchmark assessments align with state standards, are generally administered quarterly throughout the year, and provide student-level achievement data.<sup>8</sup> As NCLB and RttT have heightened the stakes of North Carolina's statewide summative assessments, schools and districts rely more on benchmark assessments to track student progress toward state goals. The state neither requires districts to use benchmark assessments nor does it place limitations around which benchmarks districts may use.

## DEFINING A COMPREHENSIVE BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Benchmark assessments are a crucial part of a comprehensive balanced assessment system. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) Accountability Services Division, a comprehensive balanced assessment system includes classroom assessments, interim/benchmark assessments, and statewide assessments that are aligned to state standards (NCDPI). Figure 1 shows how these three pieces fit together.

### Visual 1. NCDPI's Model of a Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System



For Visual 1, the descriptions in parentheses use NCDPI's definitions of formative and summative processes to describe the ways these assessments are used. For example, classroom assessments can be used formatively (to inform instruction and drive student learning) or summatively (to find out what students know at the end of a unit).

Classroom assessment lays the foundation of the assessment system. Formative classroom assessment is a process used by teachers during instruction that provides feedback to adjust teaching and learning.<sup>9</sup> For example, a 1st grade teacher may have a student take attendance. The teacher would learn whether the child can count by ones and whether she knows that the last number counted represents the total number of children present.

<sup>6</sup> Education Week. NCLB Waivers: A State-by-State Breakdown. Last updated August 17, 2014. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/infographics/nclbwaivers.html> | <sup>7</sup> Wagner, Lindsay. Students, teachers grapple with Read to Achieve law. NC Policy Watch. March 20, 2014. <http://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2014/03/20/students-teachers-grapple-with-read-to-achieve-law/> | <sup>8</sup> Henderson S., Petrosino A., Guckenburg S., & Hamilton S. (2007). *Measuring How Benchmark Assessments Affect Student Achievement*. Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory Program. US Department of Education. | <sup>9</sup> NCDPI Accountability Services Division. *Learn More about Formative Assessment*. <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/accountability/educators/vision/formative>

The purpose of classroom formative assessment is to help students and teachers understand how they can improve, and in fact some studies have found that the formative assessment process improves student academic outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Classroom assessment forms the base of the system because it occurs minute-to-minute or week-to-week in the classroom and informs classroom practice.

Interim/ benchmark assessments build the bridge between classroom and statewide assessment. Benchmarks are administered less frequently than classroom assessments, but also drive instruction toward end-of-year goals. While teachers choose which classroom assessments to give and states choose statewide assessments, benchmarks are chosen by districts and schools.

Statewide summative assessments make up the last level because they are evaluative and primarily used to compare performance among students (NCDPI).

Policymakers in the legislature and at NCDPI receive concerns from parents, teachers, and school and district staff about the amount of time and energy that testing consumes for both teachers and children. The State Board of Education and DPI are interested in looking into ways that these concerns can be addressed. However, the State has more information about federal and state required assessments than it has about additional assessments required at the local level. A key step toward addressing concerns about overtesting is to find out how much testing is taking place across the State, including local testing.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to learn more about state and federal required assessments, the research team met with NCDPI assessment staff. The team collected titles of assessments by grade level and subject area as well as assessment administration times.

To better understand the types of assessments required at the district level, the research team created and distributed an online survey. The survey, delivered through the Qualtrics platform, asked respondents to record the number, frequency, type, and administration time of assessments by grade level, exceptionality, and English language proficiency. The survey also asked respondents to rank their reasons for administering those assessments on a seven-point scale. The scale included six fixed answers, along with an option for “other”. The survey instrument also asked respondents what the state could do to alleviate the testing burden on students.

The survey was distributed in July 2014 via a confidential link through the Testing News Network (TNN) and Accountability Services News Network (ASNN), two tools that NCDPI uses regularly to communicate with local testing and accountability staff.

The survey asked school districts and charter schools to identify themselves. See Appendix 4 for the full survey instrument.

In order to answer the final research question, “How can the state alleviate testing burden on students and teachers?,” the team took a multi-pronged approach. First, this question was included in the Local Education Agency (LEA) (For the purposes of this report, the terms LEA and district will be used interchangeably) survey so that local accountability staff would have a chance to give their input and perspective from the ground level. Second, the team researched approaches that other states have taken in response to testing concerns from their constituents. Third, the team looked into an innovative model being piloted in North Carolina.

## STATE/FEDERAL ASSESSMENTS

Figure 1 illustrates the annual hours of statewide state and federal required testing by content area and assessment title. Each color represents a different content area as indicated by the key. The number in each colored segment represents the number of hours that a particular assessment takes to administer. Appendix 3 provides a full list of state and federally required assessments.

Testing times and amounts will vary for some of the assessments listed here. The following sections outline ways that some students’ testing experiences may vary from the times presented in the figure.

### TIME ON ASSESSMENTS

#### Grades K-3 Assessment

In accordance with North Carolina’s Read to Achieve legislation, NCDPI adopted mClass Reading 3D as the statewide formative<sup>11</sup>, diagnostic assessment system for grades K-3. All students in grades K-3 must receive mClass benchmark assessments three times a year (Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year). For a kindergartener, each benchmark assessment takes seven minutes, for a total of 21 minutes of benchmarks per year.<sup>12</sup> Each child must also undergo progress monitoring in between benchmarks. Benchmark and progress monitoring assessments collect similar data on student reading level, but benchmarks include multiple assessments for data reliability and additional information on student ability. A student’s reading proficiency dictates how often that student must undergo progress monitoring.

- A student scoring “At or Above Benchmark” must be progress monitored a minimum of once per grading period.<sup>13</sup>
- A student scoring “Below Benchmark” must be progress monitored a minimum of every 20 days.<sup>14</sup>
- A student scoring “Well Below Benchmark” must be progress monitored a minimum of every 10 days.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998a). *Assessment and Classroom Learning*. *Assessment in Education* 5(1) pp. 7-71. Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998b). *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2). Boston, C. (2002). *The concept of formative assessment*. College Park, MD: ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation. |

<sup>11</sup> Here, formative refers to the function of the assessment, not the way it is administered. mClass is formative in that it provides feedback for teachers and students in order to improve student learning. mClass is not formative in its method of administration because it does not fit seamlessly into instruction. | <sup>12</sup> Interview with Carolyn Guthrie. |

<sup>13</sup> *ibid* | <sup>14</sup> NCDPI. *mClass Reading 3D Quick Reference Guide*. | <sup>15</sup> *ibid*

For Figure 1, the research team calculated assessment time for mClass formative assessments using the case of a student who scores “Below Benchmark.” The school year has 185 instructional days. For a student consistently scoring “Below Benchmark,” that is nine progress monitoring sessions per year. Because the three benchmarking tests are a form of progress monitoring, there are only six separate progress monitoring sessions per year. Students who are “Far Below Benchmark” require more progress monitoring and students “At or Above Benchmark” require less. See Appendix 1 for detailed calculations of K-3 mClass formative assessments.

Testing times also reflect the hours for an individual child, but not the impact of testing on the teacher. For mClass individualized formative assessments, teachers must take each child aside and administer the assessments. This takes away instructional time from the child taking the assessment, but also potentially from the rest of the class. The LEA survey results and communication with NCDPI officials show that teachers who lack assistants struggle to find ways to continue quality instruction while administering individualized assessments. In order to calculate assessment timing for teachers, the number of hours per child for mClass assessment would have to be multiplied by the number of children in the classroom. For example, a kindergarten teacher with 20 children in her classroom would be engaged in 51 minutes of assessment multiplied by 20 children. One LEA estimated that teachers lose 45 hours of instruction per year due to mClass.

The Kindergarten Entry Assessment, part of the K-3 formative assessment process, will be piloted during the 2014-15 school year. The process includes gathering information about children through work samples, questions, observations, etc. that occur during teaching. This process is not an isolated event, but functions as part of the instructional routine that occurs daily throughout the school year. Because it fits seamlessly into instruction, it is not included in Figure 1’s Annual Hours of State and Federal Testing.

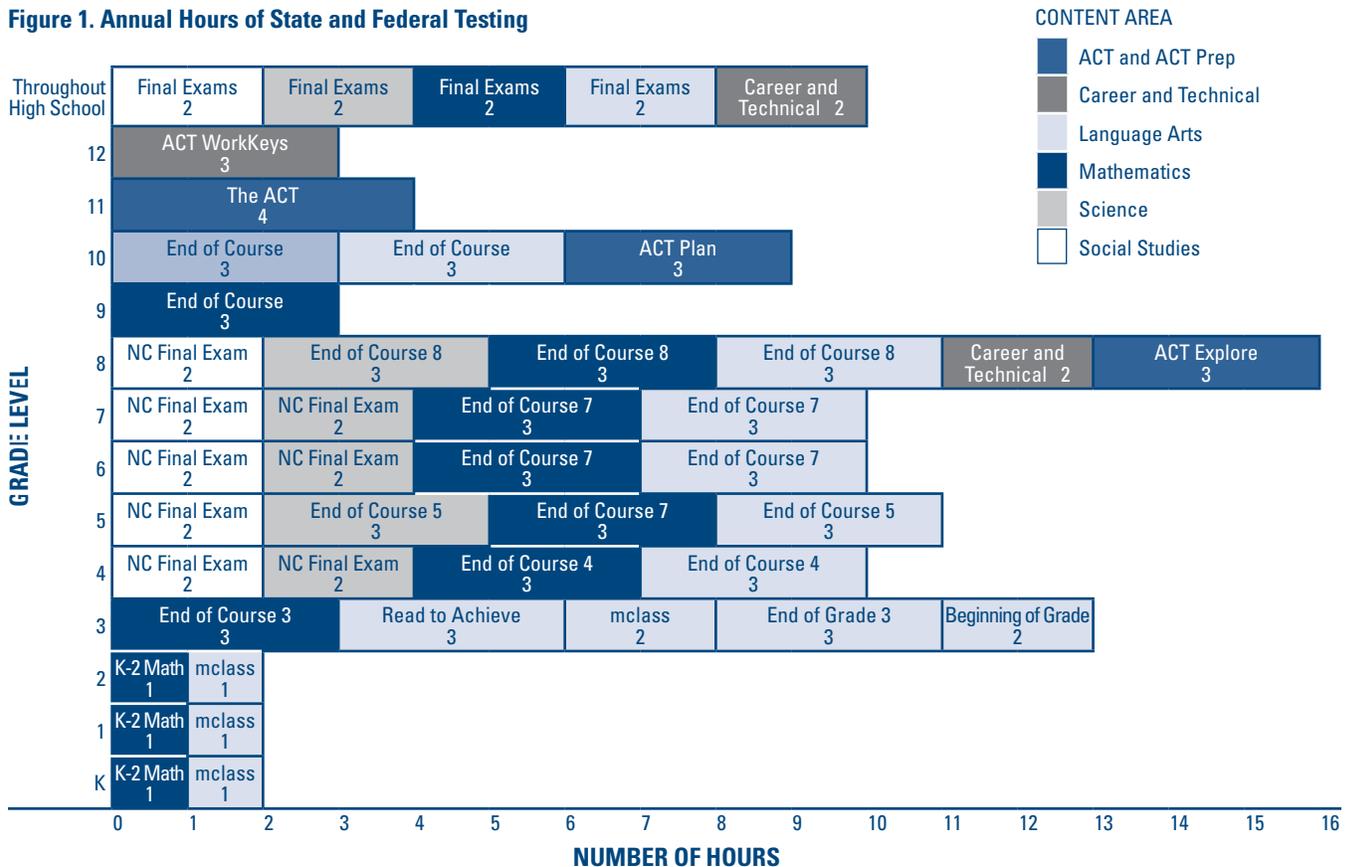
### Grades 4-5 Assessment

The majority of North Carolina students will not receive a Social Studies and Science Final Exam for grades 4-5. These final exams are meant for evaluating social studies and science teachers at the elementary level, but not every school employs these types of teachers. If the same fourth grade teacher delivers content for math, reading, science, and social studies, that teacher’s value-added scores can be determined using only the math and reading End of Grade assessments.

### High School Assessment

Testing times will also vary depending on high school students’ course schedules. If a high school student takes many CTE classes and other classes with Final Exams,<sup>16</sup> she will sit through more hours of assessment. Fewer such classes will result in fewer hours of assessment.

**Figure 1. Annual Hours of State and Federal Testing**



<sup>16</sup> A list of all 2013-14 NC Final Exams can be found at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/common-exams/finalexamcritems13.pdf>

Some state and federal assessments were not included in this visual, including the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, NCEXTEND1, and assessments for language minority and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students as discussed below.

### Assessment for Special Populations

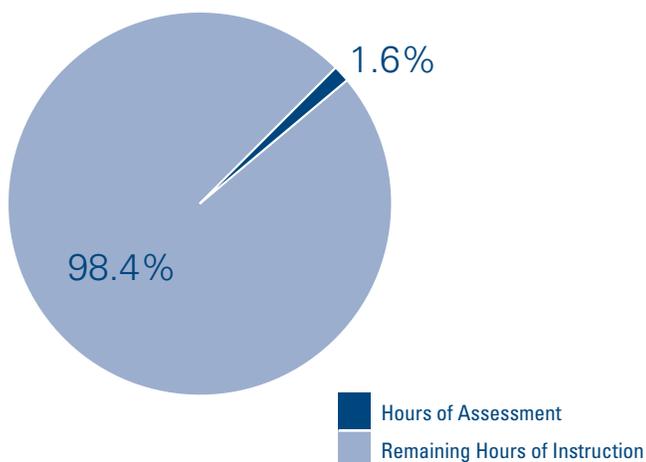
Students with severe intellectual disabilities take the NCEXTEND1 instead of required tests in the following subjects: Language Arts and Math in grades 3-8, 10, and 11; Science in grades 5, 8, 10, and 11. NCEXTEND1 is another time-intensive assessment that requires energy from teachers and others in the school building. This testing requires special administration: often one-on-one between teacher and student, with another proctor present. Depending on how many students in a school take the NCEXTEND1, finishing the assessments can take anywhere from two to six weeks.

Federal and state policies require all K-12 students identified as language minority students through the Home Language Survey process upon initial placement be assessed for limited English language proficiency. The state instrument for identification of LEP students is the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs. All students identified as LEP (based solely upon W-APT or ACCESS scores) must be administered the ACCESS for ELLs or its alternate during the annual English language proficiency testing window. The standard administration time for the ACCESS for ELLs is 2.25 hours.

### Eighth Grade Assessment

In North Carolina, the typical eighth grader faces more hours of assessments each year than her counterparts in other grades. Figure 2 helps to put those hours in the context of the rest of the school year. North Carolina requires that public schools provide no less than 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction per year. The 16 hours that eighth grade students spend in assessments make up 1.6 percent of that minimum instruction time.

**Figure 2. Annual State and Federal Hours of Assessment for an 8th Grader**



### PURPOSES OF STATE AND FEDERAL ASSESSMENTS

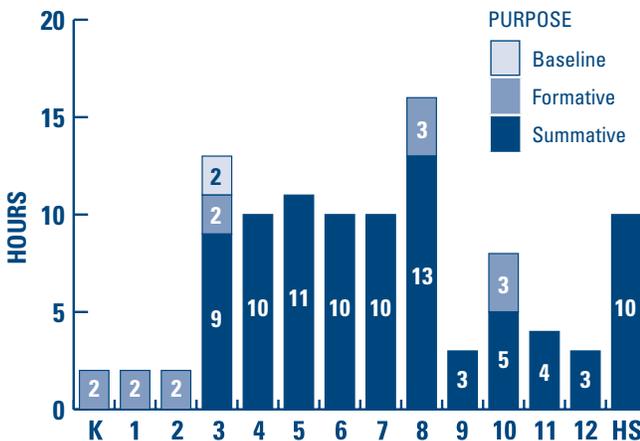
Figure 3 attempts to answer our third research question “What are the purposes of the assessments?” with regards to state and federal testing.

Baseline assessments are those that are given at the beginning of a year or section in order to better understand the knowledge students start out with. An example of a uniformly administered baseline assessment is the Beginning of Grade 3 assessment, which is given to third grade students to meet the requirements of the State’s Read to Achieve law.

For this visual, formative refers to the way the assessment is used. Here, formative assessments occur throughout the year (or years, in the case of the ACT Plan and Explore) to support instruction and provide feedback for students and teachers. Assessments with formative uses include: K-2 math, K-3 individualized formative assessments, and the ACT Plan and Explore.

Summative assessments are given once at the end of a year or course. Summative assessments show what students learned or describe their level of proficiency in a particular grade level or subject. The majority of statewide state and federal assessment is summative. For the assessments shown below, summative assessment makes up 88 hours, and formative 14.

**Figure 3. Hours of Testing by Assessment Use**



Some statewide assessments serve both state and federal purposes, while other assessments serve only state purposes. For example, North Carolina General Statute 115C-174.11 states, “To the extent funds are made available, the State Board of Education shall plan for and require the administration of the ACT test for all students in the eleventh grade unless the student has already taken a comparable test and scored at or above a level set by the State Board.” As such, the ACT meets a statewide requirement. The ACT also meets a federal requirement. To receive flexibility from NCLB requirements, states must implement college- and career-ready standards.<sup>17</sup> As such, North Carolina includes the ACT as part of its waiver for NCLB.

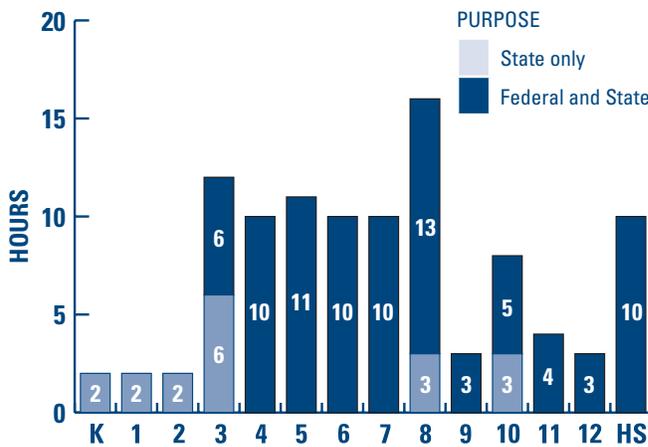
<sup>17</sup> Whitehouse.gov. Reforming No Child Left Behind. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/k-12/reforming-no-child-left-behind>

In contrast, some assessments are only used for state purposes. For example, assessments under the Read to Achieve legislation (K-3 individualized formative assessments, Beginning of Grade 3, and Grade 3 Read to Achieve) do not fulfill any federal testing requirements.

Figure 4 breaks down the hours of statewide testing into two categories: 1) assessments that fulfill federal and state purposes, and 2) assessments that fulfill only state purposes. Assessments that fall into the first category include: CTE Post-assessments, NC Final Exams, EOGs and EOCs, the ACT, and ACT WorkKeys. These assessments are required as part of North Carolina’s NCLB waiver. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 requires CTE Post-assessments for high school grades. CTE Post-assessments for middle school grades are required as part of the NCLB waiver. The ACT and ACT WorkKeys are included in the waiver as part of the state’s commitment to college and career readiness.

Assessments that fall into the second category (fulfill only state purposes) include: K-2 math, K-3 individualized formative assessments, ACT Plan, ACT Explore, Beginning of Grade 3, and Grade 3 Read to Achieve. For a detailed list of state statutes with their corresponding assessments, see Appendix 2.

**Figure 4. Hours of Testing by Assessment Purpose**



## LOCAL TESTING

Ninety-nine LEAs and 69 charter schools responded to the survey and shared the number of assessments they give and the amount of time those assessments take. The questions read:

*“Apart from federal- and state-required assessments, what assessments do you require of students in the following grades? Please give the title of each assessment.”*

*“For standard administration (without accommodations), how many minutes are allotted for a student to complete this assessment?”*

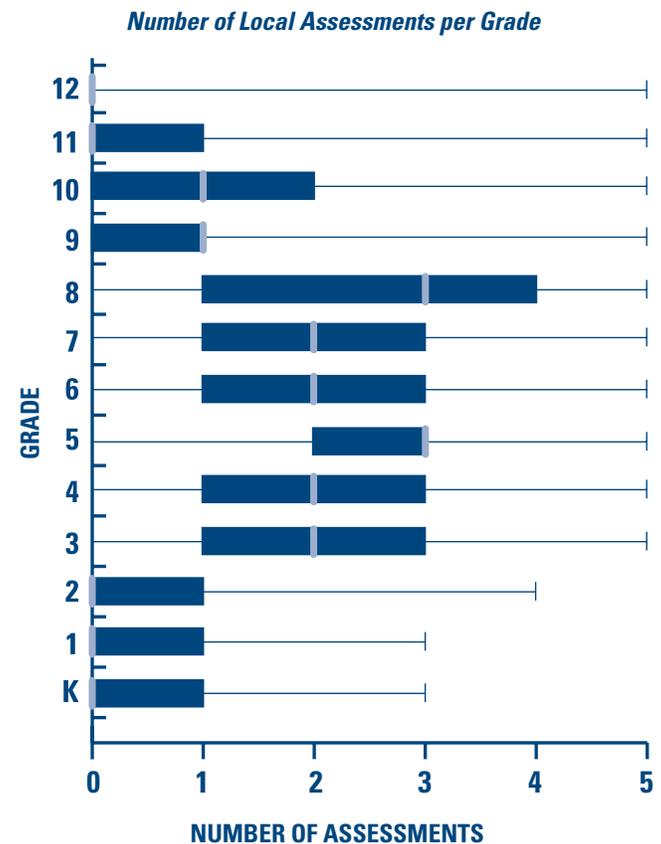
For the following charts and figures, districts are included, but not charters. This distinction is made in order to illustrate the differences and similarities between charter responses and district ones. See the Section on Charter School Assessments for figures relating to charter schools.

## NUMBERS AND HOURS OF LOCAL ASSESSMENTS

Figure 5 shows the number of local assessments per grade as a box and whisker plot.<sup>18</sup> In order to keep the survey brief, it was designed so that survey respondents could only enter up to five assessments per grade. They had the option of adding additional assessments at the end of the survey, though most respondents did not. Fourteen respondents total (both charters and districts) wrote in additional assessments.

Survey responses show that the majority of local testing takes place in grades 3 through 8. Grades 5 and 8 have the highest median amounts of tests, at 3 assessments per year. However, the range of number of tests given in 8th grade is much wider than the range for 5th. The median number of tests is zero for Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade. In other words, most respondents do not administer any additional local tests in these grades.

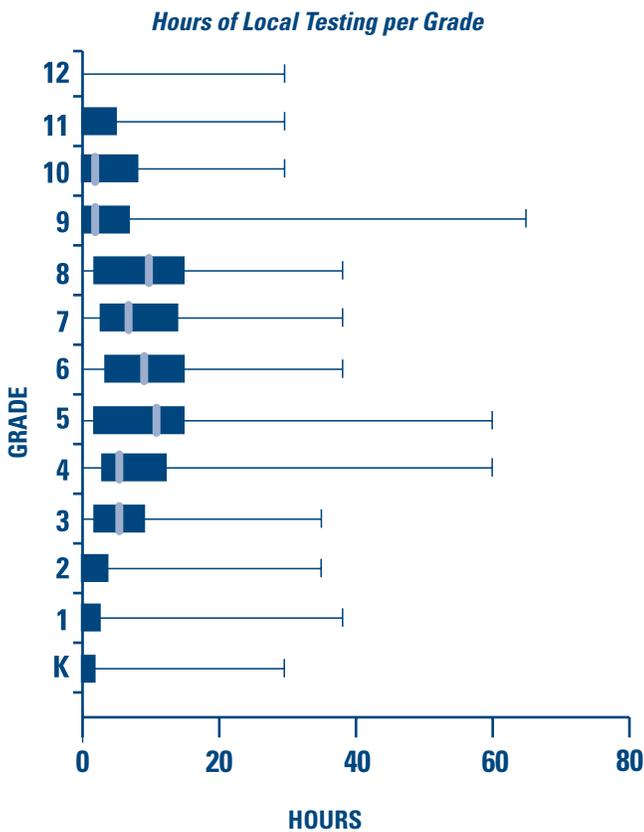
**Figure 5. Number of District Assessments per Grade**



<sup>18</sup> How to interpret box and whisker plots: The green shaded area encompasses 50 percent of responses, while the dark line in the middle of the box shows the median response. The whiskers extend to the maximum and minimum values. In this case, all minimum values are 0. Each whisker encompasses 25 percent of responses.

Figure 6 shows the hours of local assessments per grade as a box and whisker plot. This shows a similar pattern as Figure 5's number of tests with the majority of hours of testing occurring in grades 3 through 8. Here, because there was no cap on how many hours respondents could report, the ranges between the minimum responses and the maximum responses are much larger than the ranges in Figure 5. While the maximum responses are often quite high, sometimes depicting testing times over 60 hours, looking at the median 50 percent of responses gives a more representative view of the amount of testing taking place across the state. Box and whisker plots use the median as a measure of central tendency. Medians are helpful measures in this case especially, as a mean would be pulled upward toward the unrepresentative maxima and fail to produce an accurate measure of central tendency. Median hours of testing range from zero (Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 11th grade, 12th grade) to nine hours (5th grade).

**Figure 6. Hours of Local Testing per Grade**



Another way of viewing the variation in hours of local testing is to look at a histogram breakdown of responses for one grade. Figure 7 uses 3rd grade as an example. It is surprising to note that fifteen districts are giving zero locally-required assessments. The spread is also interesting, as it fails to follow a normal curve or any regular pattern. Districts vary significantly in how often they choose to assess their students. This report does not attempt to give any guidance on how much testing is the optimal amount, but future analysis may look into whether the current levels of testing are too high or too low.

**Figure 7. Histogram of Hours of Third Grade Local Assessments**

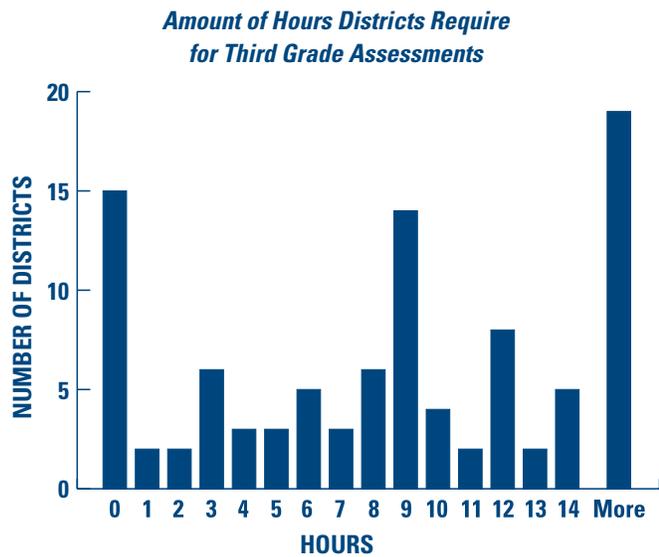


Figure 8 adds the eight hours that an 8th grader in the median North Carolina school district spends in locally-required assessments to the 16 hours that she spends in state and federal required assessments. These 24 hours total 2.3 percent of all hours of instruction for the year. Since 8th graders spend the most time in assessments every year, 2.3 percent represents the highest proportion of the school year spent in testing for any grade (for the median district).

**Figure 8. Annual State, Federal, and Local Hours of Assessment for a Median 8th Grader**

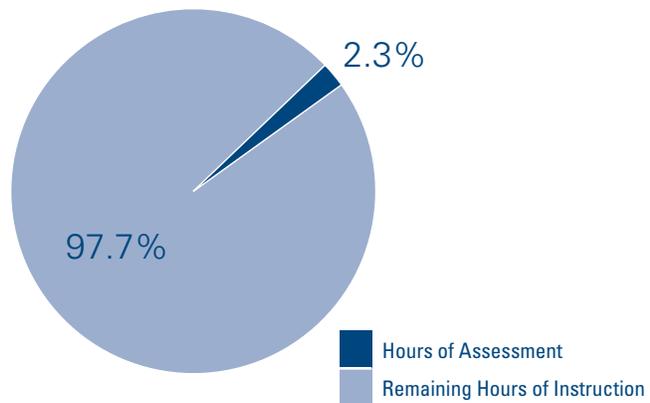
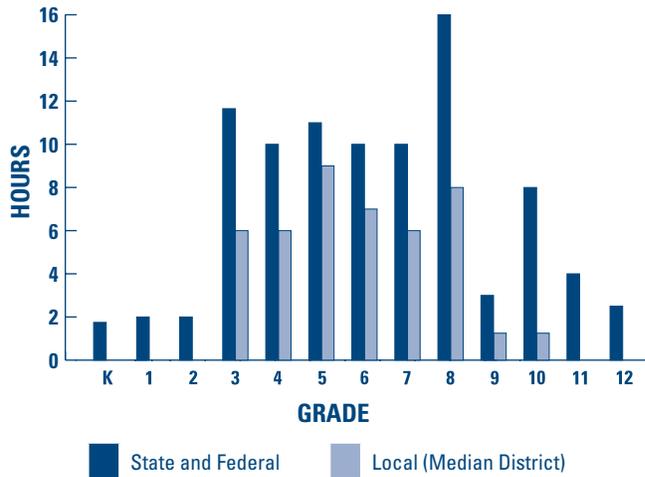


Figure 9 uses data from the median responses in each grade to compare the number of hours of state and federal required assessments to the number of hours of local assessments. For every grade, state and federal required assessments take more hours than the median local assessments. This chart uses the median hours of assessment time in order to attempt to represent the hours of assessment time in a typical district. However, there is a broad range of testing times across districts. Some administer fewer hours of assessments, some much more. Fifty percent of the responding districts have either the same or more local testing than the median indicated in the figure below.

**Figure 9. State and Federal Assessment Time Compared to Local Assessment Time**

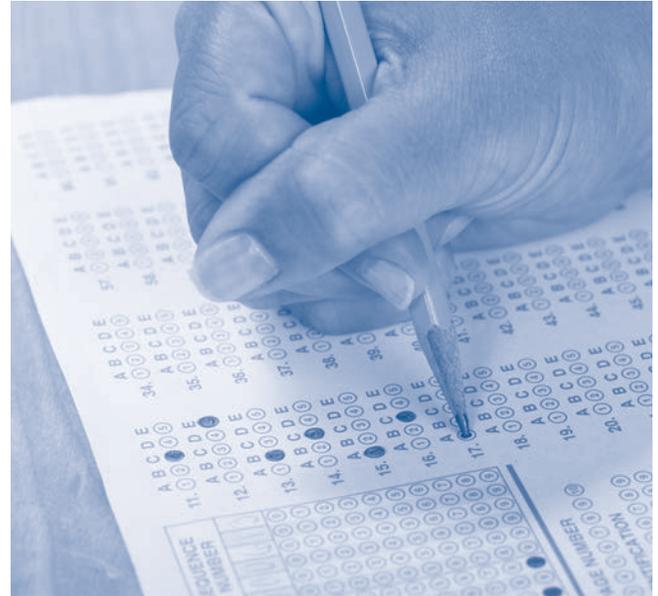
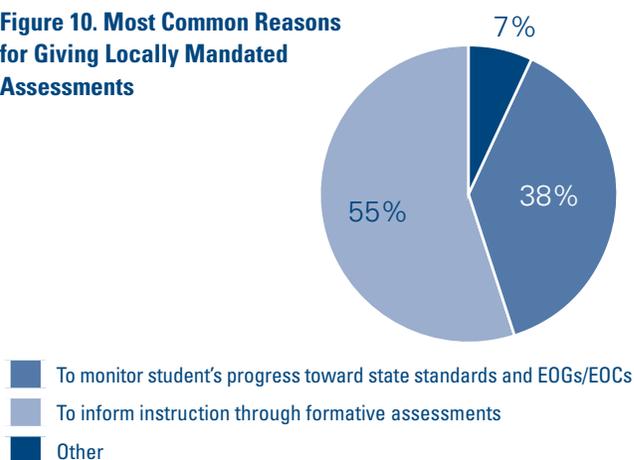


**PURPOSES OF LOCAL ASSESSMENTS**

In order to answer the third research question (What is the purpose of the assessments?), the research team included a question on the survey to allow respondents to rank the most relevant reasons they require assessments at the local level. Figure 10 shows that the most common responses ranked most relevant were “To inform instruction through formative assessments” (55 percent) and “To monitor students’ progress toward state standards and EOGs/EOCs” (38 percent). Seven percent of respondents ranked other reasons, including

- “To perform local teacher and school evaluations”
- “To assess content not included in state and federally mandated assessments”
- “To identify students who are academically or intellectually gifted”
- “Program evaluation”
- “Identification of low-performing students/students needing remediation”

**Figure 10. Most Common Reasons for Giving Locally Mandated Assessments**



It is difficult to describe all of the assessments that districts are using, but the assessment names that districts provided give some clue. The team conducted an analysis of assessment names by counting recurring phrases and words.<sup>19</sup> Figure 11 visualizes these counts in a word cloud, which depicts more common phrases and words as larger than less common phrases and words. “Math Benchmark” was mentioned 98 times, “Reading Benchmark” 78 times, and “Science Benchmark” 61 times. Other common assessment phrases and words include “Quarterly Math,” “Science,” “ELA,” and “MAP.”

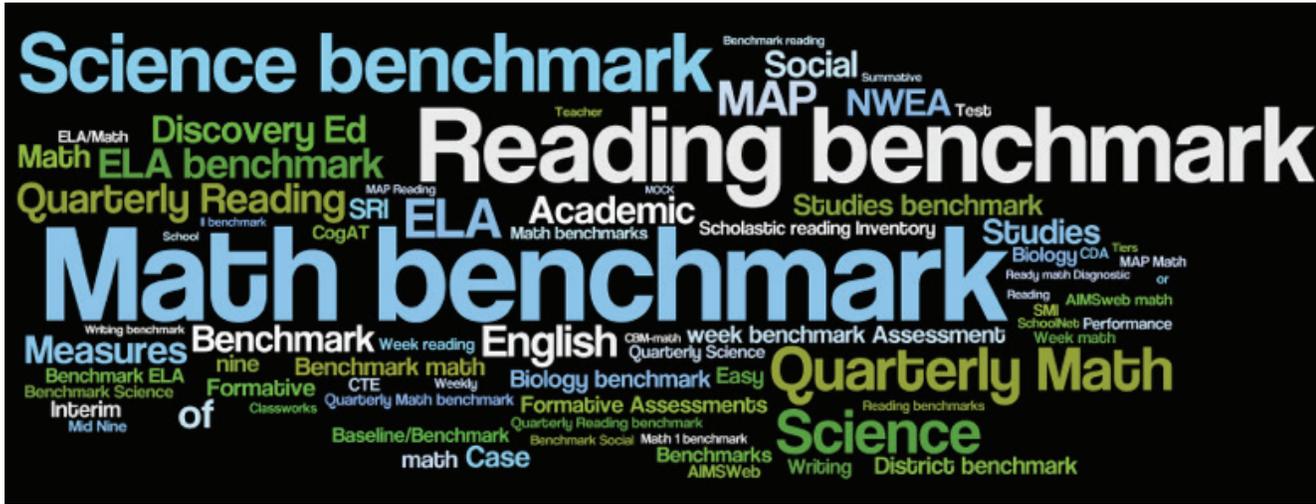
MAP stands for Measures of Academic Progress, and is a product of the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). MAP is an online computer-adaptive test that schools and districts can use to track student progress toward Common Core standards. As a student responds to MAP questions, the test responds to the student’s answers, adjusting questions up or down in difficulty. MAP assesses reading, math, and language usage, but there is also a MAP for science and a MAP for Primary Grades (for K-2 students). Districts referenced MAP 37 times and NWEA 28 times.

The results of this analysis echo the purposes that districts gave for their required assessments. Benchmark assessments seem to be the most common type of locally required assessment, and those track progress toward state standards and inform instruction throughout the year.

Districts had different ways of designating similar assessments in the survey. For example, while one district may refer to a test as “local benchmark- math,” another may refer to a seemingly similar assessment as “math benchmark.” This makes word analysis difficult as those two assessments are not both counted as the same type of assessment. Further discussion with districts may need to take place in order to get a better idea of what types of assessments they give.

<sup>19</sup> These counts include all districts and all grades, so one district reporting administration of a “Math Benchmark” for each grade K-12 could represent 13 counts of the phrase “Math Benchmark.”

Figure 11. Most Common District Assessment Names



## CHARTER SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

For the most part, charter school assessments follow a similar trend as those required by districts. Charters report more tests and more hours of testing occurring in grades 3-8 than in other grades. Charters also have very little additional testing taking place in the very early grades and the very late grades. Charters reported a broad range of responses, from zero additional assessments in some grades to five assessments, from zero hours of additional testing to 78 hours. See Figures 12 and 13.

Figure 12. Number of Local Assessments per Grade (Charters only)

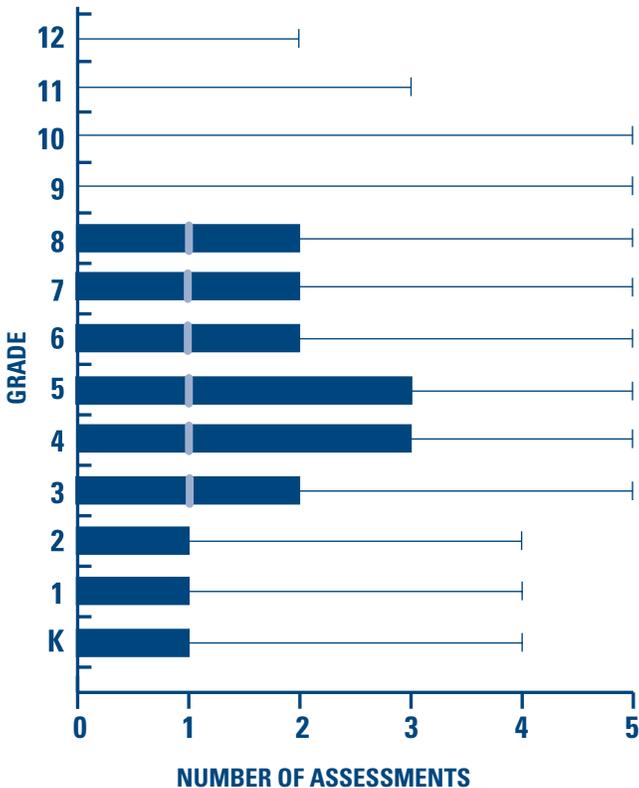
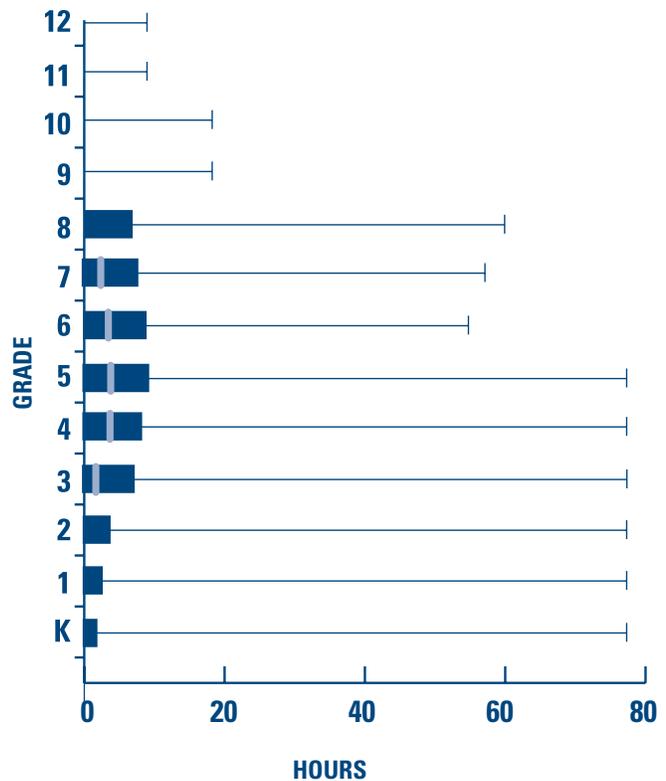
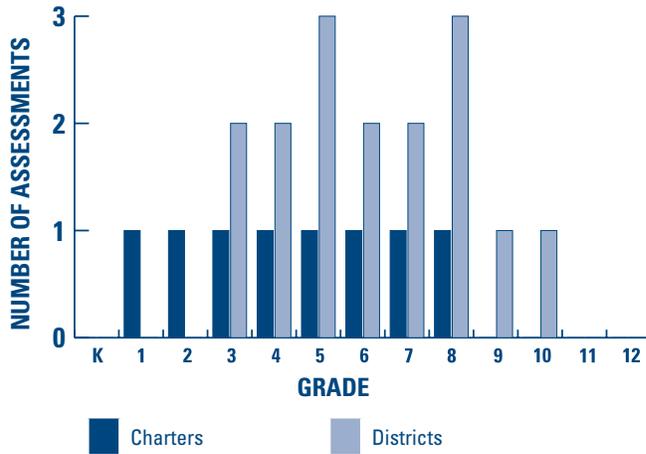


Figure 13. Hours of Local Testing per Grade (Charters only)

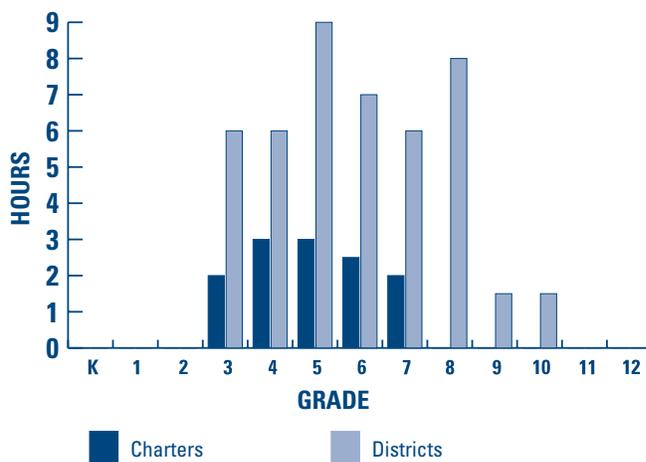


However, there are differences in the amounts of testing taking place between charter school reports and district reports. In grades 3-10, the median district gave more assessments (and therefore more hours of assessments) than the median charter. In the case of 5th grade, this difference is around six hours more testing for students in the median district, in 8th grade the difference is eight hours. See Figures 14 and 15.

**Figure 14. Comparison of Districts' and Charters' Median Number of Tests per Grade**



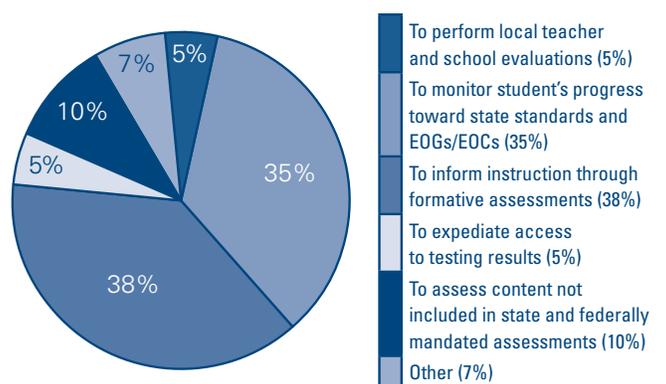
**Figure 15. Comparison of Districts' and Charters' Median Hours of Testing per Grade**



## COMPARING PURPOSES OF LOCAL ASSESSMENTS

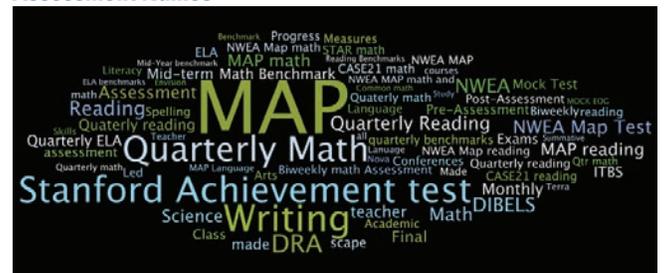
Charters were a bit more divided than districts on the purposes of their additional required assessments. Similar to districts, informing instruction through formative assessments was the most common charter response (38 percent), followed by monitoring students' progress toward state standards and EOGs/EOCs (35 percent). For districts, only seven percent ranked a different reason as their primary purpose for giving local assessments. For charters, 27 percent gave a different reason other than the primary two. Ten percent primarily give additional assessments to assess content not included in state and federally mandated assessments. Seven percent wrote in another answer not listed. These four "Other" respondents answered with responses such as "Normed tests" and "NA – We only administer state tests at this time other than standard classroom assessments." See Figure 16 for a breakdown of responses.

**Figure 16. Charters' Most Common Reasons for Giving Local Assessments**



According to the survey results, charters administer different types of tests than districts. "MAP" was the most commonly referenced assessment with 56 mentions. "NWEA MAP Test" received 14, and "MAP reading" and "MAP Math" were each mentioned 13 times. Overall, assessment titles that included the word "MAP" were frequent. "Writing" received 28 responses and the Stanford Achievement Test 27. The Stanford Achievement Test is a nationally normed test that assesses grades K-12 in reading, reading comprehension, math, spelling, language, listening comprehension, science, and social science. Similar to districts, quarterly benchmarks are popular with charters, with "Quarterly math" receiving 26 mentions.

**Figure 17. Most Common District Charter School Assessment Names**



## POTENTIAL CAUSES FOR THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHARTER AND DISTRICT RESPONSES

The differences in amount of tests and testing between charters and districts could be attributed to many different factors. One factor may be the type of test used. Perhaps the types of tests charters use allow them to use fewer tests throughout the year or fewer hours of testing throughout the year. Another possible factor may be the populations that charters and districts serve. If the charter student population is significantly different in some way than the student population in traditional public schools, charters may assess less in order to meet the needs of their unique demographics. Another potential factor may be a difference in resources or resource allocation. Perhaps charters are able to pay for more expensive assessments that are shorter/less frequently administered. On the other hand, perhaps they

are unable to divert resources to additional testing. Perhaps charters have other priorities that they divert resources to that do not include assessments. Any or all of these factors could contribute to the differences documented, in addition to other factors not explored here.

## LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

### INCONSISTENT INTERPRETATIONS OF HOURS OF TESTING

While the purpose of the survey was to collect local testing information, some districts included state assessments in their responses. The survey instructions included a list of state assessments so that respondents would have an idea of which assessments to exclude. K-2 Math and K-3 Formative Assessments were not included in this list, so many districts wrote in the times, frequencies, and names of these assessments. In order to provide true representation of the amount of local testing taking place in North Carolina, the research team manually removed these names, times, and frequencies. While doing so, the research team noticed that respondents reported a wide range of times for assessments that should have reasonably uniform administration times. For example, specific guidelines dictate how long and how often teachers must administer mClass (DIBELS) testing in K-3. Yet responses about timing and frequency varied.

Many respondents reported testing names, times, and frequencies for state-mandated tests that were listed in the instructions. They reported EOGs, EOCs, and LEP ACCESS assessments as locally-required tests. The research team also deleted these instances in order to provide true representation of locally required testing. Yet the team noticed again that responses varied in their reports of how long these assessments took to administer. This variation is surprising because EOGs and EOCs have very strict administration times that are not open to local interpretation.

### POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR VARIATIONS IN RESPONSES

One possible cause for these variations in responses is miscommunication of survey instructions. It is possible that respondents did not read the survey instructions fully, were confused by the instructions, or misinterpreted the instructions. One example of where this could happen in the case of mClass assessments is the failure of the instructions to specify whose time the assessment impacts. If a respondent considers the perspective of the teacher, then he/she might multiply the amount of time it takes one student to complete mClass by the number of students in a class. However, the research team aimed to report the number of minutes students spend in assessments, not administration time for teachers.

Survey miscommunication may also exist if testing coordinators responded with exceptional students in mind. The survey instructions read: "For standard administration (without accommodations), how many minutes are allotted for a student to complete this assessment?" Yet some respondents may have reported the longest possible time that any one student takes

on the test, including students with individual education plans (IEPs) that allow for extended time. For example, if a state test takes two hours, but a district has students that get up to two hours of additional time, the respondent may have indicated that the test takes four hours for administration.

Survey miscommunication may also exist if testing coordinators took other test preparation time into consideration. Many assessments include time for providing instructions, practice items to be taken immediately before the assessment, as well as built-in breaks. If some respondents interpreted these practices as part of "minutes allotted for a student to complete the assessment," they may inflate the testing time or have different interpretations than other respondents.

Another possible cause for these variations in responses is miscommunication between testing coordinators and school staff. It may be that testing coordinators at the district level have inconsistent information about the number of required district assessments being administered to students.

Another possible cause for these variations in responses is actual discrepancy in the frequency and duration of state test administration. Perhaps some miscommunication between state and local testing coordinators exists and districts actually have different testing administration times for state assessments.

There appears to be some discrepancy in the reports of frequency and duration of state tests. If there are discrepancies in statewide summative assessment administration, there may be discrepancies in local assessment administration as well. Miscommunications that occurred in order to produce variation in responses about state-required testing may also create large variation in responses about locally-required testing.

## MODELS FOR ALLEVIATING TESTING BURDEN

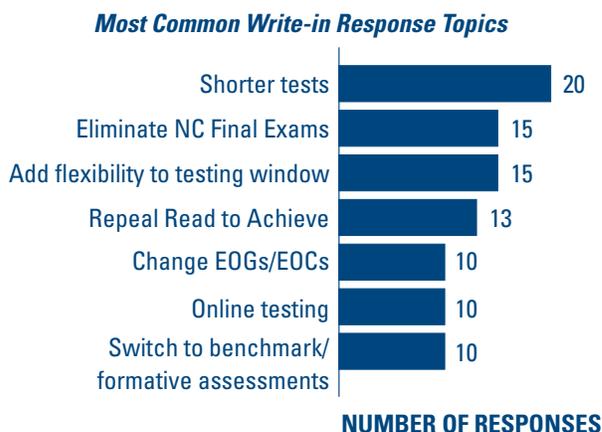
The research team attempted to answer the final research question (How can the state alleviate testing burden on students and teachers?) using a three-pronged approach:

1. Ask for LEA input and analyze the results
2. Research models that other states have utilized
3. Learn more about North Carolina's strengths in this field

### RESPONSES FROM LEA SURVEY

The survey asked respondents, "What could the state do to alleviate testing burden on students?" The question received 129 responses (from both charters and LEAs) ranging from "Nothing. It should stay as is. We love the 3rd grade portfolio and would appreciate if state provide same for other grade levels" to one response that included 721 words and made multiple points about the mission and purpose of student assessment. The research team categorized the responses into seven topics, as seen in Figure 18.

**Figure 18. Responses from LEA survey: What could the state do to alleviate testing burden on students?**



The topic of shorter tests came up the most frequently, with 20 responses. For example, “Students are drained after testing for approximately four hours. It was painful to see the students burnout. It is frustrating to coach students throughout the year and observe a child lose confidence within himself/herself in one hour!” NC Final Exams were also a popular topic, with 15 responses. Many comments on that topic echoed this sentiment: “Eliminate North Carolina Final Exams – the tests have no instructional relevance, since Race to the Top is expiring, there is no need to meet the teacher effectiveness requirements.” Though this statement is factually incorrect, it reflects a belief that may be commonly held. In fact, North Carolina is federally mandated to administer NC Final Exams as part of its NCLB waiver. Adding flexibility to the testing window was another model that districts and charters felt would alleviate testing burden. Some recommended setting up state test administration over several days rather than in one long sitting, while others recommended allowing LEAs extra time to administer assessments. Most complaints about Read to Achieve acknowledged that the North Carolina General Assembly is the only body with power to repeal the requirements of those assessments. Other suggestions included: switching to formative assessments given throughout the year to provide summative assessment information, switching to online testing, not testing every grade, giving only one test per year, and prioritizing consistency for teachers and children.

### LESSONS FROM OTHER STATES

The research team searched for other states that are struggling with similar concerns of over-testing from stakeholders. New Mexico, New York, Texas, and Virginia stood out as having innovative approaches to alleviating testing burden on teachers and students. Each of these states had approaches that alleviated state testing, and most also had approaches that attempted to alleviate locally-required testing.

## NEW MEXICO

### Approach to state-required testing

Since 2010, New Mexico has decreased state-mandated testing time across all grades by about 30 minutes per year.<sup>20</sup> By decreasing the number of testing items<sup>21</sup>, the state reduced the length of the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) by 15 percent.<sup>22</sup> Today, less than two percent of the school year is dedicated to state-mandated testing.<sup>23</sup>

### Approach to locally-required testing

#### Information-gathering from districts

Officials at the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) responded to legislators’, district officials’, and families’ concerns about the amount of testing by conducting a small survey of district-level practices.<sup>24</sup> The survey was administered in May 2014 to the attendees of an assessment symposium, and will be administered again in August 2014.

The surveys indicated that districts were mandating more assessments than just the state and federally-required ones.<sup>25</sup> NMPED found out that some districts were giving local assessments that duplicated the state assessments. District officials thought that their tests were required by the state, when they were not. Anecdotally, districts reported that giving once-required assessments became habit even if they were no longer required. For example, when the state offered to pay for the implementation of the DIBELS assessment, districts added that assessment to some grade levels, but did not remove the others administered at those same grade levels.

#### Encouraging reduction of local testing

Subsequently, a handful of districts have decreased the number of local tests administered.<sup>26</sup> NMPED is very conscious of districts’ autonomy and local control, so the department encourages reducing local testing instead of mandating it.

### Takeaways for North Carolina<sup>27</sup>

Communicate with districts to share best practices related to testing. This way, North Carolina can encourage local change without mandating it.

NMPED created a list of talking points for state board members and legislators so that they can respond accurately to questions and complaints from the public. Many times, these talking points have added clarity to the conversation and pacified frustrated community members.

<sup>20</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. *Testing in New Mexico*. [http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMTeachDocs/Toolbox/Testing%20in%20New%20Mexico%20Eblast%20\(March%207%202014\).pdf](http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMTeachDocs/Toolbox/Testing%20in%20New%20Mexico%20Eblast%20(March%207%202014).pdf) | <sup>21</sup> While this strategy does indeed decrease the amount of time students spend in statewide summative assessment, psychometricians maintain that shorter tests yield fewer inferences about student progress. | <sup>22</sup> *ibid* | <sup>23</sup> *ibid* | <sup>24</sup> Lenti, Leighann. (June 2014). *Personal Interview with Micah Guindon*. Lenti is the Deputy Secretary for Policy and Program at New Mexico Public Education Department. | <sup>25</sup> *ibid* | <sup>26</sup> *ibid* | <sup>27</sup> *ibid*

## NEW YORK

### *Approach to state and federally-required testing*

The NY State Education Department was granted federal flexibility to eliminate double-testing of students in grades 7 and 8 who take a Regents Exam in mathematics.<sup>28</sup>

### *Approach to locally-required testing*

#### **Grants to districts**

As part of the Board of Regents initiative to keep the focus on teaching in New York State schools, the NY State Education Department offers “Teaching is the Core” grants to local school districts that commit to review all local assessment practices to ensure that all local tests help inform instruction and improve student learning.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Review process for eliminating unnecessary tests**

On March 31, 2014, Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2014 was signed into law by the state’s governor.<sup>30</sup> New York’s Board of Regents adopted emergency regulations in order to implement the provisions of the new law. These regulatory amendments create an expedited review process for eliminating unnecessary tests.

The first step of the review process is the district’s submission of its Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). The state used the approved APPR as of June 5, 2014 to identify the course names and locally-developed assessments of each district. The state then sends each district an individualized Testing Transparency Report. The report includes information about ways that testing can be further reduced at the local level. The districts use these reports to make changes to their assessment loads.

#### **Caps on local testing time and test preparation time**

The amendments also establish caps on local testing time and test preparation time:<sup>31</sup>

1. The amount of time devoted to traditional standardized assessments that are not specifically required by state or federal law for each classroom or program within a grade level cannot exceed, in the aggregate, one percent of the minimum in required annual instructional hours for the grade; and
2. The amount of time devoted to test preparation using traditional standardized assessments under standardized testing conditions for each classroom or program within a grade level cannot exceed, in the aggregate, two percent of the minimum required annual instructional hours for the grade.

Note: Time devoted to classroom quizzes or exams, portfolio reviews, performance assessments, formative assessments, and diagnostic assessments is not included in this calculation.

#### **Elimination of K-2 standardized assessments**

Starting in the 2014-15 school year, the Regents have eliminated traditional standardized assessments for use in kindergarten through grade two from the list of state-approved assessments. If a district were to administer traditional standardized third party or vendor assessments to students in kindergarten through grade two, it could jeopardize its state funding.

### *Takeaways for North Carolina*

North Carolina may look into the process New York undertook to ensure that 7th and 8th grade students did not receive multiple math assessments in one year. New York worked with the US Department of Education to amend its NCLB waiver to accomplish this goal.

North Carolina may consider steps to decrease local testing, including caps on local testing time and test preparation time and creating a review process for the elimination of unnecessary tests. New York’s state-approved assessment list is another tool that provides the state with more control over the types of assessments administered.

## TEXAS

### *Approach to state-required testing*

#### **Reducing standardized testing**

Texas Governor Rick Perry signed House Bill 5 (which unanimously passed both chambers of the state legislature) into law in June of 2013. This state law reduced the number of benchmark standardized tests required of high school students in order to graduate from 15 to 5.<sup>32</sup> The Texas Education Agency then instituted a policy that students who had previously failed one of the tests that is no longer required would not need to retake the test in order to graduate. The courses that the state dropped from its required exams include: Algebra II, Chemistry, English III, Geometry, Physics and World History.<sup>33</sup> Texas law prohibits parents from removing their child from class or other school activities in order to avoid a test or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester.<sup>34</sup>

Beginning with students first enrolled in grade 9 in the 2011-12 school year, students must pass five end-of-course (EOC) exams in order to graduate: Algebra I, Biology, English I

<sup>28</sup> The University of the State of New York. *Fact Sheet – Common Core and Assessments*. <http://www.nystudentsachieve.org/Community%20Forum-CCLS-Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL%20with%20seal.pdf> | <sup>29</sup> The University of the State of New York. *Fact Sheet – Common Core and Assessments*. <http://www.nystudentsachieve.org/Community%20Forum-CCLS-Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL%20with%20seal.pdf> | <sup>30</sup> New York State Department of Education. *Guidance on the Approved Regulatory Amendments to APPR to Help Reduce Local Testing*. <https://www.engageny.org/resource/guidance-on-the-approved-regulatory-amendments-to-appr-to-help-reduce-local-testing> | <sup>31</sup> *ibid* |

<sup>32</sup> Smith, M. (2013). *High School Diplomas Become Less General*. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/us/high-school-diplomas-become-less-general.html?pagewanted=all> | <sup>33</sup> *ibid* | <sup>34</sup> Texas Education Code § 26.010

(including reading and writing in a single exam), English II (including reading and writing in a single exam), and U.S. History. In some instances, performance on an AP, IB, ACT, SAT, PSAT, or ACT-Plan exam can be used to satisfy EOC requirements.

#### *Approach to locally-required testing*

##### **Caps on local benchmark testing and administration time**

Texas Education Code explicitly states that local school districts cannot use more than two benchmark assessment instruments for a corresponding state-administered assessment instrument.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, locally required assessments cannot be administered to any student on more than ten percent of instructional days in any school year.<sup>36</sup> District school-level planning and decision-making committees may limit the percentage of instructional days available for benchmark testing to ten percent or less.<sup>37</sup> The prohibitions in these sections do not apply to college preparation assessments (e.g. SAT, ACT, etc.) or for parents of special needs children who request additional benchmark assessments.<sup>38</sup>

While the law restricts the practice at the district level, there remains a loophole for individual schools to require more benchmark assessments in an effort to familiarize students with test-taking strategies and to improve their performance.<sup>39</sup> That means that even as districts comply with the law and keep the number of full-length benchmark exams at two, schools may continue to focus on test preparation with shorter practice exams taking place as frequently as twice a week.<sup>40</sup>

By local policy, a school district may issue a certificate of coursework completion to a student who successfully completes curriculum requirements but who fails required state assessment tests.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Takeaways for North Carolina*

North Carolina could look into ways to use AP, IB, ACT, SAT, PSAT, or ACT-Plan scores in lieu of other assessments like Final Exams and EOCs.

It is helpful to keep in mind that district-level caps on levels and hours of testing may not be effective at the school level. Texas's experience with caps on testing shows the extent to which schools feel the need to benchmark student progress.

## VIRGINIA

### *Approach to state-required testing*

#### **Replacing standardized tests with alternative assessments**

In 2014, Virginia state legislators and Governor Terry McAuliffe passed a law reducing the number of standardized tests mandated in elementary and middle schools. Starting in 2015, the total number of tests will be reduced to 17 from 22.<sup>42</sup> This law eliminates five tests in total: three in social studies, one in science, and one in writing. Instead, alternative assessments will be given in these subject areas. Alternative assessments will be determined at the local level and can include products, portfolios of work, or even speeches. Proponents of this law say these alternative assessments require students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the material through essays or projects.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Innovation committee**

The bill also creates an "innovation committee" of parents, teachers, curriculum specialists, lawmakers, and school board members. This committee will report to the state board of education on ways to improve all Virginia tests. They will also give recommendations regarding the quantity and quality of tests and the development of alternative assessments.<sup>44</sup>

This measure represents a significant departure from the high stakes testing route that Virginia has taken for the last two decades. Nonetheless, the testing reduction had overwhelming support from legislators and educational groups. The bill's sponsor indicated that this will be the first step of several to reduce the testing burden on Virginia's children and teachers. Prior to the passing of the bill, many school boards and education associations passed resolutions calling for legislators to rethink the state's "over reliance" on testing. Even social studies teachers (who did not initially support the idea out of fear that if the test was eliminated in their subject area, social studies would decrease in importance) supported the measure when alternative assessments were added to the bill.<sup>45</sup>

#### *Takeaways for North Carolina*

North Carolina could consider ways to use alternative assessments in lieu of traditional standardized tests. Though this is an unlikely option for EOGs and EOCs, it may be possible for use in evaluating knowledge on NC Final Exams.

<sup>35</sup> Texas Education Code § 39.0263(b) | <sup>36</sup> Texas Education Code § 39.0262(a) | <sup>37</sup> Texas Education Code § 39.0262. | <sup>38</sup> Texas Education Code § 39.0263(c) & (d) |

<sup>39</sup> Smith, M. (April 26, 2014). *New Law Is Limiting Standardized Tests, but Not Prep Work*. *New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/27/us/new-law-is-limiting-standardized-tests-but-not-prep-work.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/27/us/new-law-is-limiting-standardized-tests-but-not-prep-work.html?_r=0) | <sup>40</sup> *ibid* | <sup>41</sup> Texas Education Code § 28.025(d) | <sup>42</sup> Chandler, M. (April 5, 2014) *Virginia students will take fewer Standards of Learning tests next year*. *Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-students-will-take-fewer-standards-of-learning-tests-next-year/2014/04/05/eea18666-bb46-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-students-will-take-fewer-standards-of-learning-tests-next-year/2014/04/05/eea18666-bb46-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html) | <sup>43</sup> Chandler, M. (April 5, 2014) *What are 'authentic assessments'? How are they different from multiple-choice tests?* *Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/what-are-authentic-assessments-how-are-they-different-from-multiple-choice-tests/2014/04/05/612454e8-bb7e-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/what-are-authentic-assessments-how-are-they-different-from-multiple-choice-tests/2014/04/05/612454e8-bb7e-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html) | <sup>44</sup> Chandler, M. (April 5, 2014) *Virginia students will take fewer Standards of Learning tests next year*. *Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-students-will-take-fewer-standards-of-learning-tests-next-year/2014/04/05/eea18666-bb46-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-students-will-take-fewer-standards-of-learning-tests-next-year/2014/04/05/eea18666-bb46-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html) | <sup>45</sup> Chandler, M. (April 5, 2014) *Virginia students will take fewer Standards of Learning tests next year*. *Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-students-will-take-fewer-standards-of-learning-tests-next-year/2014/04/05/eea18666-bb46-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-students-will-take-fewer-standards-of-learning-tests-next-year/2014/04/05/eea18666-bb46-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html)

## NORTH CAROLINA ALLEVIATING TESTING BURDEN

### Eliminating Multiple State-required Assessments

In the past five years, North Carolina has decreased the amount of EOCs from ten to three and eliminated other state-required assessments.

Effective the 2009–10 school year, Senate Bill 202/S.L. 2009-451 eliminated funding for most state-administered tests not currently required by federal law or as a condition of federal grants.<sup>46</sup> As a result of this legislation, the North Carolina Testing Program eliminated Grade 3 Pretests of Reading Comprehension and Mathematics, Computer Skills, End-of-Course Tests of Chemistry and Physics, and Competency Tests of Reading and Mathematics.

In that same year, the State eliminated the North Carolina High School Comprehensive Tests of Reading and Mathematics and the North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards (NCCLAS). The Comprehensive Tests of Reading and Mathematics had been replaced by a combination of other tests, and was rarely used after 2004-05. The North Carolina Testing Program eliminated NCCLAS in response to the technical peer review letter dated August 12, 2009, from the U.S. Department of Education.

At the March 2010 meeting, State Board of Education members approved removing the Geometry End-of-Course assessment from the statewide testing program beginning in the 2010-11 school year to facilitate school and student transition to the new mathematics curriculum.<sup>47</sup>

Effective July 1, 2011, House Bill 48/S.L. 2011-8 eliminated state administered tests that are not required by federal law or as a condition of a federal grant. As a result of this legislation, the North Carolina Testing Program eliminated End-of-Course Tests of Algebra II, Civics and Economics, Physical Science, and U.S. History.

### North Carolina's K-3 Formative Assessment Process

North Carolina is also innovating on the topic of alleviating testing burden. In response to legislation passed by North Carolina's General Assembly, and to meet requirements of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, NCDPI's Office of Early Learning is designing a developmentally appropriate, individualized assessment for K-3 students. This assessment, which will be used by all school districts, will be formative in nature and aligned with both North Carolina's Early Learning and Development Standards and the Standard Course of Study (Common Core State Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards). The K-3 Formative Assessment Process will begin piloting the first phase, the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, in Fall 2014.

The purpose of the K-3 Assessment will be to inform instruction.<sup>48</sup> It is formative in nature and used on a daily basis by teachers

and students to guide teaching and learning. While data from the K-3 Assessment will be gathered at entry into kindergarten and entered into the state's longitudinal data system, that data will be used to inform professional development and support rather than for accountability and high-stakes purposes (e.g., to evaluate teachers or early learning programs).<sup>49</sup> In fact, the K-3 Assessment will include safeguards to prevent misuse of information in decisions about individual children.

The K-3 Formative Assessment Process will gather a variety of data (e.g., observations, conversations, work samples, tasks) from multiple sources (e.g., teachers, support staff, families, community members). In addition, the K-3 Assessment will be constructed using principles of universal design so that it will be accessible to the greatest number of children possible, including children with special needs and students with limited English proficiency. It will build on the best assessments currently being used in the early grades while broadening areas assessed from reading and mathematics to incorporate five domains of development and learning included in North Carolina's definition of school readiness: approaches to learning, cognitive development, emotional – social development, health and physical development, and language development and communication. As a result, the process will provide teachers a more complete picture of the whole child and provide data to inform daily instructional practices.

The K-3 Formative Assessment Process will include a kindergarten entry process that addresses five domains of development and occurs within the first sixty days of enrollment.<sup>50</sup> The data from this initial administration will be used to provide information that both teachers and students will use to inform teaching and learning.

This process will work to alleviate testing burden on students and teachers by making assessment a part of everyday instruction. It will not require that teachers remove students from the classroom to give one-on-one formative assessments. It will not require standardized multiple choice tests. It will give teachers ways to gather data on student understanding without these tools.

It is important to note that this type of formative assessment is not an appropriate replacement for standardized summative assessments. Formative and summative assessments are designed for different purposes and uses. While many stakeholders in education are interested in investigating how formative assessments can take the place of summative assessments for accountability purposes, the research and development in this area is still very new. It remains to be seen whether test developers are able to create formative assessments that meet the State's requirements for summative assessment: validity (whether a testing item measures what it

<sup>46</sup> NCDPI. *Elimination of Tests from the North Carolina Testing Program*. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reasonselimtests> | <sup>47</sup> *ibid* | <sup>48</sup> This paragraph taken from DPI's K-3 Assessment Overview document, which can be found at <http://rtt-enc-k3assessment.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/About+the+K-3+Assessment> | <sup>49</sup> This paragraph taken from DPI's K-3 Assessment Overview document, which can be found at <http://rtt-enc-k3assessment.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/About+the+K-3+Assessment> | <sup>50</sup> This paragraph taken from NCDPI's K-3 Assessment Overview document, which can be found at <http://rtt-enc-k3assessment.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/About+the+K-3+Assessment>

intends to measure), reliability (whether a testing item receives consistent responses), and alignment with state standards.

NCDPI's implementation teams will be working with individual districts to help them hone their testing programs. The first phase of implementation will introduce the K-3 Assessment Process and integrate it into the district's current practices. Once a district is comfortable with that transition, the implementation team can work with the district to identify where it may be able to eliminate duplicative testing. The Office of Early Learning has already received some interest in this process from piloting districts. Other districts may find it more difficult to eliminate local assessments. Many districts have spent money, time, and effort training schools and teachers on local assessment tools, and may want to remain consistent with what they have begun.

North Carolina is leading a ten-state consortium so that other states can learn from and replicate this work. Other states started asking DPI's Office of Early Learning about their model when the US Department of Education (US ED) ranked North Carolina first out of all the states that applied for the Early Learning Challenge grant. North Carolina received an Enhanced Assessment Grant from US ED so that NCDPI could implement the K-3 Assessment Process and lead a consortium of states that includes South Carolina, Rhode Island, Maine, Delaware, Oregon, North Dakota, and Arizona. Currently, North Carolina is working with the other states in the consortium to determine which aspects of the K-3 Assessment Process will work best for those states' unique populations. Other states are looking to North Carolina, since it is leading the nation as the first state to implement a statewide formative assessment process that does not interrupt instruction.

## KEY FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

### STATE AND FEDERAL TESTING

The team's analysis of state and federal testing returned several key findings. Students in different grades receive very different numbers of assessments and hours of testing each year. A typical kindergartener spends less than two hours per year in state and federal assessments, while an eighth grader may spend up to 16 hours. Yet the 16 hours that eighth grade students spend in assessments make up a very small fraction of instruction time for the year: 1.6 percent. The majority of statewide assessments are summative in nature and fulfill federal requirements.

### LOCAL TESTING

Similar to state and federal testing, students in different grades receive very different numbers of local assessments and hours of testing each year. Grades three through eight receive more local assessments than the earlier and later grades because districts use local tests to track student progress toward

state goals. Districts also vary significantly in how often they assess their students and for how many hours. This report does not attempt to give any guidance on how much testing is the optimal amount, but future analysis may look into whether the current levels of testing are too high or too low. Further discussion with districts may also need to take place in order to get a better idea of what types of assessments they give.

### CHARTER SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

For the most part, charter school assessments follow a similar trend as those required by districts. Charters reported a broad range of responses both for number of tests and hours of testing administered. Charters report more tests and more hours of testing occurring in grades 3-8 than in other grades because their assessments are used to track student progress toward state goals. Charters differ from districts in that they tend to give fewer assessments, and therefore fewer hours of assessment. NWEA MAP is a more popular assessment in charter schools than in traditional districts.

### MODELS FOR ALLEVIATING TESTING BURDEN

This report describes strategies for alleviating testing burden from LEAs across North Carolina, from other states, and from the K-3 Formative Assessment Process.

Districts' most common feasible recommendations were to shorten assessments and provide flexibility around the testing window. New Mexico shortened their state assessments, while other states decreased state required assessment time by eliminating some state required tests or allowing students to take alternative assessments instead of traditional standardized tests. States decrease the amount of time students spend in locally required assessments by using review processes for eliminating duplicative local tests and setting caps on the amount and duration of local testing. The K-3 Assessment Process in North Carolina will work to alleviate testing burden on students and teachers by making assessment a part of everyday instruction. The process will give teachers ways to gather data on student understanding without traditional standardized tests or individualized assessments.

### NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### Testing Burden on Teachers and School Staff

This report did not look into models for alleviating testing burden on teachers specifically. Further research should include the perspectives of teachers and administrators. These practitioners provide unique perspective as the coordinators and administrators of local and state level assessments. The research team recommends further study into testing's impact on teacher and school staff time.

Future research may specifically look into the process of administering mClass assessments and NCEXTEND1, because these assessments elicit consistent concern from teachers and administrators.

For mClass individualized formative assessments, teachers must take each child aside and administer the assessments. This takes away instructional time from the child taking the assessment, but also potentially from the rest of the class. The LEA survey results and communication with DPI officials show that teachers who lack assistants struggle to find ways to continue quality instruction while administering individualized assessments. One LEA estimated that teachers lose 45 hours of instruction per year due to mClass.

NCEXTEND1 is another time-intensive assessment that requires energy from teachers and others in the school building. This testing requires special administration: often one-on-one between teacher and student, with another proctor present. Depending on how many students in a school take the NCEXTEND1, finishing the assessments can take anywhere from two to six weeks.

If further research can identify ways to make test administration for these assessments easier and less time consuming for teachers, both students and teachers will benefit.

### Decreasing Miscommunications and Misrepresentations of Assessment Time

Currently, NCDPI provides testing calendars and charts of state and federal required assessments. Perhaps additional professional development and information is needed to avoid miscommunications and misrepresentations of assessment time between state and district entities. For example, the State could provide further training for districts about policies surrounding assessment and about appropriate purposes and uses of tests.

Miscommunications may also exist between districts and schools. LEA testing coordinators can involve teachers by working with them to document the amount of time it takes them to administer federal, state and local required assessments.

### The Effectiveness of District Benchmark Practices

Benchmarks play a critical role in bridging the gap between daily formative assessments and yearly statewide assessments. However, the state has more information about the process of choosing, designing, and implementing federal and state

required assessments than it has about the undertaking of these processes at the local level. A key step toward addressing concerns about district overtesting is to explore current district practices. A related question might be: "How can the State support districts in their use of effective benchmarking practices?" Critical categories of inquiry include:

1. What makes a "good" benchmarking system? What resources need to be in place in order for a good benchmarking system to exist?
2. What is the process that districts currently undertake when choosing the benchmark assessments they require? Is there variation across districts in their methods of decision making?
3. How do districts currently use benchmark assessments? How effective are their practices and how do they know?
4. What other supports can the state provide to districts?

### The Effects of Summative Tests on Benchmark Practices

The recently-formed State Board of Education Taskforce on Summative Testing will utilize and continue the work presented in this report regarding federal, state, and local required testing. The Taskforce will provide summative testing options and a plan for testing for school year 2016-17 and beyond. A question the Taskforce may want to pursue is: How does the statewide summative test affect the decision making process around and implementation of benchmark assessments?

Certain types of summative assessments may affect the amount and type of benchmark testing differently. A 2014 report by the left-leaning Center for American Progress recommends states adopt Common Core-aligned state assessments to alleviate local testing burden.<sup>51</sup> According to the authors, because Common Core-aligned state assessments include more open-ended questions and provide guidance for instruction, districts could decrease the number and length of benchmark assessments in use. As such, teachers could decrease time spent in traditional test preparation. Further research is required to better understand if this assertion holds true in states that use Common Core-aligned state assessments. Further research should pay special attention to whether or not this assertion would hold true in North Carolina going forward.

<sup>51</sup> Lazarin M. (October 16, 2014). *Testing Overload in America's Schools*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/16/99073/testing-overload-in-americas-schools/>

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS The research team appreciates the time and energy of individuals who supported this project. Thank you to:

**Amy McMahon**, Assistant Principal and Testing Coordinator, Sampson County Schools, Midway Middle School

**Amy Scrinzi**, Project Lead, Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge

**Bill Cobey**, Chairman, State Board of Education

**Carolyn Guthrie**, Director, K-3 Literacy

**Cindy Bagwell**, Project Administrator, Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge

**Eric Moore**, Fiscal Analyst, Office of the Chief Financial Officer

**Dan Tetreault**, Project Lead, Race to the Top/ Early Learning Challenge

**Jo Anne Honeycutt**, Director, Career and Technical Education

**Jody Koon**, Early Childhood Education Consultant, Office of Early Learning

**John Pruette**, Executive Director, Office of Early Learning

**June Atkinson**, State Superintendent, NC Department of Public Instruction

**Kayla Siler**, Policy & Planning Analyst, Race to the Top

**Kitty Rutherford**, K-12 Mathematics

**Nancy Carolan**, Section Chief, Testing Policy and Operations

**Philip Price**, Chief Financial Officer

**Tammy Howard**, Director, Accountability Services

**Vanessa Jeter**, Director, Communication and Information Services

**Regional Accountability Coordinators** across the state who made phone calls and emails on behalf of our survey

**Testing and accountability staff** at districts and charter schools that filled out our survey

## APPENDIX 1. K-3 MCLASS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT CALCULATIONS

Grade	Benchmark Time (minutes)	Benchmark Frequency (per year)	Total Benchmark Time per Year (minutes)	Progress Monitoring Time (minutes)	Progress Monitoring Frequency (per year)	Total Progress Monitoring Time per Year (minutes)	Total mClass Time per Year
K	7	3	21	5	6	30	51
1	10	3	30	5	6	30	60
2	10	3	30	5	6	30	60
3	20	3	60	5	6	30	90

## APPENDIX 2. ASSESSMENTS WITH CORRESPONDING STATE STATUTES

### ACT EXPLORE (GRADE 8) & PLAN (GRADE 10)

§ 115C-174.22. Tools for student learning.

To the extent funds are made available for this purpose, and except as otherwise provided in G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(4), the State Board shall plan for and require the administration of diagnostic tests in the eighth and tenth grades that align to the ACT test in order to help diagnose student learning and provide for students an indication of whether they are on track to be remediation-free at a community college or university.

### THE ACT (GRADE 11)

§ 115C-174.11. Components of the testing program.

(c) Annual Testing Program.

(4) To the extent funds are made available, the State Board of Education shall plan for and require the administration of the ACT test for all students in the eleventh grade unless the student has already taken a comparable test and scored at or above a level set by the State Board. ...

### ACT WORKKEYS

§ 115C-174.25. WorkKeys. -

To the extent funds are made available for this purpose, the State Board shall plan for and require local school administrative units to make available the appropriate WorkKeys tests for all students who complete the second level of vocational/career courses.

### GRADES 3-8, END-OF-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS & MATHEMATICS; GRADE 5 & 8, END-OF-GRADE SCIENCE; ALGEBRA I (OR INTEGRATED MATH I), ENGLISH II, BIOLOGY, & ALGEBRA II (OR INTEGRATED MATH III) END-OF-COURSE

§ 115C-83.15. School achievement, growth, performance scores, and grades.

(b) Calculation of the School Achievement Score. – In calculating the overall school achievement score earned by schools, the State Board of Education shall total the sum of points

earned by a school on all of the following indicators that are measured for that school:

- (1) One point for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for mathematics in grades three through eight.
- (2) One point for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for reading in grades three through eight.
- (3) One point for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for science in grades five and eight.
- (4) One point for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on the Algebra I or Integrated Math I end-of-course test.
- (5) One point for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on the English II end-of-course test.
- (6) One point for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on the Biology end-of-course test.
- (7) One point for each percent of students who complete Algebra II or Integrated Math III with a passing grade.
- (8) One point for each percent of students who achieve the minimum score required for admission into a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina on a nationally normed test of college readiness.
- (9) One point for each percent of students enrolled in Career and Technical Education courses who meet the standard when scoring at Silver, Gold, or Platinum levels on a nationally normed test of workplace readiness.
- (10) One point for each percent of students who graduate within four years of entering high school.

§ 115C-174.11. Components of the testing program.

(c) Annual Testing Program. -

- (1) The State Board of Education shall adopt the tests for grades three through 12 that are required by federal

law or as a condition of a federal grant. These tests shall be designed to measure progress toward reading, communication skills, and mathematics for grades three through eight, and toward competencies for grades nine through 12. Students who do not pass the tests adopted for eighth grade shall be provided remedial instruction in the ninth grade.

## **GRADES 3 – 12 FINAL EXAMS**

### **§ 115C-174.11. Components of the testing program.**

#### **(c) Annual Testing Program. -**

- (1) The State Board of Education shall adopt the tests for grades three through 12 that are required by federal law or as a condition of a federal grant. These tests shall be designed to measure progress toward reading, communication skills, and mathematics for grades three through eight, and toward competencies for grades nine through 12. Students who do not pass the tests adopted for eighth grade shall be provided remedial instruction in the ninth grade.
- (2) If the State Board of Education finds that additional testing in grades three through 12 is desirable to allow comparisons with national indicators of student achievement, that testing shall be conducted with the smallest size sample of students necessary to assure valid comparisons with other states.
- (3) The State Board of Education shall continue to participate in the development of the Common Core State Standards in conjunction with the consortium of other states, review all national assessments developed by both multistate consortia, and implement the assessments that the State Board deems most appropriate to assess student achievement on the Common Core State Standards.
- (4) To the extent funds are made available, the State Board of Education shall plan for and require the administration of the ACT test for all students in the eleventh grade unless the student has already taken a comparable test and scored at or above a level set by the State Board. The State Board of Education shall require the administration of an alternate to the ACT or an alternate to the PLAN precursor test to the ACT to a student who (i) exhibits severe and pervasive delays in all areas of conceptual, linguistic, and academic development and in adaptive behaviors, including communication, daily living skills, and self-care, (ii) is following the extended content standards of the Standard Course of Study as provided in G.S. 115C-81, or is following a course of study that, upon completing high school, may not lead to admission into a college-level course of study resulting in a college degree, and (iii) has a written parental request for an alternate assessment.

The State Board of Education shall ensure that parents of students enrolled in all public schools, including charter

and regional schools, have the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding participation in the ACT and the PLAN precursor test to the ACT.

Alternate assessment and ACT assessment results of students with disabilities shall be included in school accountability reports, including charter and regional schools, provided by the State Board of Education.

- (d) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the State Board of Education shall not require the public schools to administer any standardized tests except for those required by federal law or as a condition of a federal grant.

### **§ 115C-81. Basic Education Program.**

- (b) The Basic Education Program shall include course requirements and descriptions similar in format to materials previously contained in the standard course of study and it shall provide:
  - (1) A core curriculum for all students that takes into account the special needs of children;
  - (2) A set of competencies, by grade level, for each curriculum area;
  - (3) A list of textbooks for use in providing the curriculum;
  - (4) Standards for student performance and promotion based on the mastery of competencies, including standards for graduation, that take into account children with disabilities and, in particular, include appropriate modifications;

## **KINDERGARTEN ENTRY ASSESSMENT**

### **§ 115C-83.5. Developmental screening and kindergarten entry assessment.**

- (a) The State Board of Education shall ensure that every student entering kindergarten shall be administered a developmental screening of early language, literacy, and math skills within 30 days of enrollment.

## **K-2 INDIVIDUALIZED ASSESSMENTS (MCLASS)**

### **§ 115C-83.6. Facilitating early grade reading proficiency.**

- (a) Kindergarten, first, second, and third grade students shall be assessed with valid, reliable, formative, and diagnostic reading assessments made available to local school administrative units by the State Board of Education pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11(a). Difficulty with reading development identified through administration of formative and diagnostic assessments shall be addressed with instructional supports and services. To the greatest extent possible, kindergarten through third grade reading assessments shall yield data that can be used with the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), or a compatible and comparable system approved by the State Board of Education, to analyze

student data to identify root causes for difficulty with reading development and to determine actions to address them.

§ 115C-174.11. Components of the testing program.

(a) Assessment Instruments for Kindergarten, First, Second, and Third Grades. – The State Board of Education shall develop, adopt, and provide to the local school administrative units developmentally appropriate individualized assessment instruments consistent with the Basic Education Program and Part 1A of Article 8 of this Chapter for the kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Local school administrative units shall use these assessment instruments provided to them by the State Board for kindergarten, first, second, and third grade students to assess progress, diagnose difficulties, and inform instruction and remediation needs. Local school administrative units shall not use standardized tests for summative assessment of kindergarten, first, and second grade students except as required as a condition of receiving federal grants.

**K-2 MATH ASSESSMENTS**

Priority: Globally Competitive Students

Category: Accountability Model

Current Policy Date: 02/04/1999

The State Board of Education requires that schools and school districts implement assessments at grades K, 1, and 2 that

include documented, on-going individualized assessments throughout the year and a summative evaluation at the end of the year. These assessments monitor achievement of benchmarks in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. They may take the form of the state-developed materials, adaptations of them, or unique assessments adopted by the local school board. Grades K, 1, and 2 assessments should be implemented by all schools by the 2000-2001 school year. The intended purposes of these assessments are (1) to provide information about the progress of each student for instructional adaptations and early interventions, (2) to provide next-year teachers with information about the status of each of their incoming students, (3) to inform parents about the status of their children relative to grade-level standards at the end of the year, and (4) to provide the school and school district information about the achievement status and progress of groups of students (e.g., by school and grade level) in grades K, 1, and 2.

**READ TO ACHIEVE**

§ 115C-83.7. Elimination of social promotion.

(a) The State Board of Education shall require that a student be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for a third grade student, as demonstrated on a State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students. The test may be readministered once prior to the end of the school year.

**APPENDIX 3. COMPLETE LIST OF STATE AND FEDERAL ASSESSMENTS**

Test	Grade	Content Area	Minutes	Hours	Purpose	Statute	State or Federal
mClass	K	Language Arts	51	0.85	Formative	GS115C-83.6(a), GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
K-2 Math	K	Mathematics	66	1.1	Formative	GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
mClass	1	Language Arts	60	1	Formative	GS115C-83.6(a), GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
K-2 Math	1	Mathematics	66	1.1	Formative	GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
mClass	2	Language Arts	60	1	Formative	GS115C-83.6(a), GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
K-2 Math	2	Mathematics	66	1.1	Formative	GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
End of Grade 3	3	Language Arts	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
Beginning of Grade	3	Language Arts	90	1.5	Baseline	GS 115C-83.7(a)	State
Read to Achieve	3	Language Arts	160	2.666666667	Summative	GS 115C-83.7(a)	State
End of Grade 3	3	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
mClass	3	Language Arts	90	1.5	Formative	GS115C-83.6(a), GS 115C-174.11(a)	State
End of Grade 4	4	Language Arts	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Grade 4	4	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
NC Final Exam	4	Science	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
NC Final Exam	4	Social Studies	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
End of Grade 5	5	Language Arts	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal

Test	Grade	Content Area	Minutes	Hours	Purpose	Statute	State or Federal
End of Grade 5	5	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Grade 5	5	Science	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
NC Final Exam	5	Social Studies	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
End of Grade 6	6	Language Arts	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Grade 6	6	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
NC Final Exam	6	Science	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
NC Final Exam	6	Social Studies	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
End of Grade 7	7	Language Arts	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Grade 7	7	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
NC Final Exam	7	Science	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
NC Final Exam	7	Social Studies	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
End of Grade 8	8	Language Arts	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Grade 8	8	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Grade 8	8	Science	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
NC Final Exam	8	Social Studies	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
ACT Explore	8	ACT and ACT Prep	180	3	Formative	GS115C-174.22	State
Career and Technical	8	Career and Technical	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
End of Course	9	Mathematics	180	3	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Course	10	Language Arts	150	2.5	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
End of Course	10	Science	150	2.5	Summative	GS115C-81(b)(4), GS115C-83.15	Federal
ACT Plan	10	ACT and ACT Prep	195	3.25	Formative	GS115C-174.22	State
The ACT	11	ACT and ACT Prep	240	4	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(4)	Federal
ACT WorkKeys	12	Career and Technical	165	2.75	Summative	GS115C-174.25	Federal
Final Exams	Throughout High School	Mathematics	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
Final Exams	Throughout High School	Social Studies	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
Final Exams	Throughout High School	Language Arts	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
Final Exams	Throughout High School	Science	120	2	Summative	GS115C-174.11(c)(1)	Federal
Career and Technical	Throughout High School	Career and Technical	120	2	Summative	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006	Federal



## APPENDIX 4. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thank you for completing this survey. The information you provide will help us create a more complete picture of student testing statewide.

As a reminder, state and federal laws require North Carolina students to complete:

- End of Grade and End of Course tests
- NC Final Exams
- Beginning-of-Grade 3 and Read-to-Achieve
- ACT Explore, ACT Plan, the ACT
- ACT WorkKeys for students who complete the second level of vocational/career courses
- NCEXTEND1
- W-APT and ACCESS for English Language Learners

The purpose of this survey is to determine what, if any, **additional** testing is required by each school district. For example, a district may require a mid-year benchmark assessment in order to gauge progress toward end-of-year goals.

Please answer each question specifically as it relates to your school district.

Please click the ">>" button below to continue.

As a reminder, state and federal laws require North Carolina students to complete:

- End of Grade and End of Course tests
- NC Final Exams
- Beginning-of-Grade 3 and Read-to-Achieve
- ACT Explore, ACT Plan, the ACT
- ACT WorkKeys for students who complete the second level of vocational/career courses
- NCEXTEND1
- W-APT and ACCESS for English Language Learners

Apart from federal- and state-required assessments, what assessments do you require of students in the following grades? Please give the title of each assessment.

Minutes: For standard administration (without accommodations), how many minutes are allotted for a student to complete this assessment?

Frequency: How many times per year is this assessment administered?

Sample Answer:

	Assessment 1
Kindergarten Assessments	Quarterly Math
Minutes	45
Frequency	3

	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4	Assessment 5
<b>Kindergarten Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>1st Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>2nd Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>3rd Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>4th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>5th grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4	Assessment 5

As a reminder, state and federal laws require North Carolina students to complete:

- End of Grade and End of Course tests
- NC Final Exams
- Beginning-of-Grade 3 and Read-to-Achieve
- ACT Explore, ACT Plan, the ACT
- ACT WorkKeys for students who complete the second level of vocational/career courses
- NCEXTEND1
- W-APT and ACCESS for English Language Learners

Apart from federal- and state-required assessments, what assessments do you require of students in the following grades? Please give the title of each assessment.

Minutes: For standard administration (without accommodations), how many minutes are allotted for a student to complete this assessment?

Frequency: How many times per year is this assessment administered?

	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4	Assessment 5
<b>6th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>7th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>8th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				

As a reminder, state and federal laws require North Carolina students to complete:

- End of Grade and End of Course tests
- NC Final Exams
- Beginning-of-Grade 3 and Read-to-Achieve
- ACT Explore, ACT Plan, the ACT
- ACT WorkKeys for students who complete the second level of vocational/career courses
- NCEXTEND1
- W-APT and ACCESS for English Language Learners

Apart from federal- and state-required assessments, what assessments do you require of students in the following grades? Please give the title of each assessment.

Minutes: For standard administration (without accommodations), how many minutes are allotted for a student to complete this assessment?

Frequency: How many times per year is this assessment administered?

	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4	Assessment 5
<b>9th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>10th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>11th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>12th Grade Assessments</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				

As a reminder, state and federal laws require North Carolina students to complete:

- End of Grade and End of Course tests
- NC Final Exams
- Beginning-of-Grade 3 and Read-to-Achieve
- ACT Explore, ACT Plan, the ACT
- ACT WorkKeys for students who complete the second level of vocational/career courses
- NCEXTEND1
- W-APT and ACCESS for English Language Learners

Apart from federal- and state-required assessments, what assessments do you require of students in the following classifications? Please give the title of each assessment.

Minutes: On average, how many minutes are allotted for a student to complete this assessment?

Frequency: How many times per year is this assessment administered?

	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4	Assessment 5
<b>Assessments for Students with Limited English Proficiency</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
<b>Assessments for Exceptional Students</b>	<input type="text"/>				
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Minutes	<input type="text"/>				
Frequency	<input type="text"/>				

Rank the following reasons for giving locally mandated assessments in order of their relevance to your district (1 being most relevant):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To monitor students' progress toward state standards and EOGs/EOCs	<input type="radio"/>						
To perform local teacher and school evaluations	<input type="radio"/>						
To inform instruction through formative assessments	<input type="radio"/>						
To expedite access to testing results	<input type="radio"/>						
To assess content not included in state and federally mandated assessments	<input type="radio"/>						
To identify students who are academically or intellectually gifted	<input type="radio"/>						
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>						

What could the state do to alleviate testing burden on students?

District name:

District number:



By Micah Guindon, Hunter Huffman, Allison Rose Socol, Sachi Takahashi-Rial

The Financial and Business Services Area is in its eighth year of the Research Intern Program. The Program is designed to help build a quality research program within NCDPI to supplement and supply data for discussions related to procedural, process, and policy changes. This year's program included students from Duke University's Master of Public Policy program, North Carolina State University's Master of Public Administration program, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Master of Public Administration and Doctorate in Education programs. The intern program is managed by Eric Moore (919-807-3731) and Kayla Siler (919-807-3824) | intern\_research@dpi.nc.gov.

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION :: June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., State Superintendent :: 301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, NC 27601-2825

In compliance with federal law, the NC Department of Public Instruction administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.

Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination issues should be directed to: Dr. Rebecca Garland, Deputy State Superintendent  
6368 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-6368 :: Telephone: (919) 807-3200 :: Fax: (919) 807-3388