

New Hanover County Schools
Required State Testing Frequently Asked Questions
2020-2021

Q Will North Carolina Public Schools receive a testing waiver for the 2020-2021 school year?

A All North Carolina Public Schools will continue to follow state and national requirements regarding testing and assessment. Please refer to the [letter from Betsy DeVos, US Secretary of Education, dated September 3, 2020](#), that reads in part,

“It is now our expectation that states will, in the interest of students, administer summative assessments during the 2020-2021 school year, consistent with the requirements of the law and following the guidance of local health officials. As a result, you should not anticipate such waivers being granted again.”

Q What assessments are required for public school students in North Carolina?

A Detailed information about required state assessments can be found on the [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Testing and School Accountability Website](#). Here is a list of the required state assessments:

- Beginning of Grade 3 Reading Assessment
- End of Course Assessments (NC Math 1, NC Math 3, Biology, & English II)
- End of Grade Assessments (Reading Grades 3-8, Math Grades 3-8, Science Grades 5&8)
- State-Identified Language Proficiency Testing (WIDA Screener/WIDA ACCESS)
- Pre-ACT
- ACT
- ACT WorkKeys
- Alternate Assessments
 - NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessments
 - College and Career Readiness Alternate Assessment Grades 10 & 11
 - Alternate ACCESS for ELLs
- Certain CTE courses have a required state assessment. Contact your school if you have any further questions about CTE assessments.

If you are not sure which test applies to your child, contact your child’s school for more information.

Q Can students opt-out of required state tests?

A To date, North Carolina does not allow any student to opt out of required testing unless there are extenuating circumstances, primarily related to serious health conditions. North Carolina State Board of Education (NC SBE) policy [ACCT-021](#) requires all students in membership (i.e., enrolled in a school) participate in the state testing program. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) sections 1111(b)(3)(C)(i) and (ix)(I) require state tests to “be the same academic assessments used to measure the achievement of all children” and “provide for the participation in such assessments of all students.” These federal requirements do not allow students to be excluded from statewide tests. Rather, they set out the legal rule that all students in the tested grades/courses must be tested.

Parents who request that their child(ren) not be tested or refuse to allow their child(ren) to test must be informed of the state’s testing requirements and any possible academic outcomes for not permitting their child(ren) to test.

The public school unit must administer tests to all students in membership who are “required or permitted to participate” ([TEST-001](#)). If students attend a test session but choose not to answer any test questions, they will be assigned the lowest possible score. Schools do not have the option to remove a student’s test from scoring. The student’s grade for the course and overall grade point average calculation may be negatively affected by receiving the lowest possible score.

Q Do End-Of-Course (EOC) exam scores count as 20% of the student’s final course grade?

A Please refer to [NC SBE Policy TEST-003](#):

Public school students who are enrolled for credit in courses in which EOC assessments are required shall take the appropriate EOC assessment at the completion of the course.

Public schools shall use results from all operational EOC assessments as a minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the student's final grade for each respective course with the exception of

1. students following the Occupational Course of Study Pathway;
2. English Learner (EL) students in their first year in a U.S. school

Courses with required EOC assessments are NC Math 1, NC Math 3, English II, & Biology.

Q What is the legislated testing window for End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Tests?

A Per [G.S. §115C-174.12\(a\)\(4\)](#), “all annual assessments of student achievement adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to [G.S. §115C-174.11\(c\)\(1\)](#) and all final exams for courses shall be administered within the final ten (10) instructional days of the school year for yearlong courses and within the final five (5) instructional days of the semester for semester courses.” It is the expectation that all students be tested.

Your child’s school will provide specific test dates that fall within the state testing window. Contact your child’s school if you have any questions about test dates.

Q Is my child eligible for a medical exception due to COVID-19?

A There may be a rare circumstance in which a student cannot take a state test during the testing window, including makeup dates, because of a significant medical condition.

Examples include circumstances involving students who are in the final stages of terminal or degenerative illnesses, comatose, or receiving extensive short-term medical treatment because of a medical emergency.

Under these circumstances, a school may request a testing exception for the student. If a medical exception is granted, the student remains enrolled in the school during this period; however, the student does not take the test(s), and the school does not include the student when calculating participation rates. Extensive medical documentation of the significant medical condition is required to make this request. The decision to grant or deny a medical exception is made by the Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program. School and district administrators are not a

part of the decision making process and cannot overturn or overrule the decision made by the Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program. If your child has a significant medical condition and you believe they are eligible for a medical exception, please follow-up with your child's school's test coordinator. Please note that choosing to attend school 100% remotely or enrollment in Virtual Academy does not, in itself, qualify as a significant medical condition.

Q Can my child take required state assessments at home?

A State assessments used in the accountability model must be administered under secure conditions and are not available for remote administrations. This includes all assessments listed in the second question on page 1 of this document.

According to NC SBE policy [TEST-004](#), "secure tests developed by the State of North Carolina may not be used for purposes other than those approved by the Division of Accountability Services and the State Board of Education" unless written permission is granted prior to use. Secure test materials may be in electronic or paper format. Because secure tests in North Carolina contain copyrighted material, are often reused, and are costly to generate, every precaution must be taken to ensure all test materials remain secure at all times. Therefore, test administrators, proctors, technology staff, and students must follow rules and procedures that ensure test content is not made available to anyone for any other purpose than to conduct the test administrations.

Q My child(ren) is receiving instruction 100% remotely or is enrolled in Virtual Academy due to concerns about COVID-19. What safety precautions are in place for my child when he/she/they come to school to take a required state assessment?

A New Hanover County Schools has implemented all recommended safety protocols from both state and federal health departments to provide a safe learning environment for all students and staff. This includes, but is not limited to, required face coverings for all students and staff, extensive daily cleaning and weekly deep cleans, and social distanced classrooms, hallways, and other areas inside the buildings. This guidance can be found in the [Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit](#). Additional resources can be found on the [NHCS website](#).

Q Will bus transportation be provided on days when my child(ren) is expected to be on-site for required state testing?

A Yes. Bus drivers will run AA and BB bus routes on all testing days. Students should go to the nearest scheduled bus stop. Please visit the [NHCS Transportation](#) website for more information about bus stops and the estimated stop time. Contact your child's school if you have any questions about transportation on required test days.

Q What do I do if my child(ren) tests positive for COVID-19 and/or is notified by the health department that they have been exposed to a positive case and need to quarantine during a required test window?

A New Hanover County Schools is following the guidance provided by the Department of Health and Human Services for suspected, presumptive, or confirmed cases of COVID-19. If your child has

been contacted by the county health department regarding a confirmed positive COVID-19 test or exposure to a confirmed positive COVID-19 test result, you must follow their guidance for attending school. If the quarantine period overlaps with a required state test window, please communicate with the school's test coordinator to schedule a make-up test date.

Q I have a question that isn't addressed in this document. Who do I contact?

A Your child's school can always best assist you, however, please continue to check this FAQ. It will be updated if new information is received or any changes are made to State or Federal laws related to testing and assessment.