



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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**TO** LEA Superintendents

**FROM** June St. Clair Atkinson *JSA*

## **NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S READ TO ACHIEVE LAW**

Last week, local superintendents Don Phipps, Darrin Hartness and I spoke at the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations meeting. I made the following recommendations:

1. Reduce the number of required passages for portfolio
2. Give school districts flexibility in conducting summer reading camps
  - Extended learning opportunities
  - Balanced calendar approach
3. Extend funding for K, 1 and 2 for summer intervention
4. Allow promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade if otherwise ready and maintain requirements for focused intervention
5. Provide consistency among charters and other public schools
6. Clarify details about testing exceptional children

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### **Portfolio Options**

The General Assembly's *Read to Achieve* law allows a student portfolio as one of several options to promote a child to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. G.S. §115C-83.1C(8) states:

“Student reading portfolio” means . . . [f]or each benchmark [12 standards], there shall be three examples of student work demonstrating mastery by a grade of seventy percent (70%) or above. (emphasis added)

It is a teacher’s decision about how to calculate the 70% or above, however, two options include:

1. After a student has attempted three passages in a standard, teachers may divide the total number of items attempted (15) into the total number of correct items across the three passages to determine if the student met the 70% passing requirement. For example, a student who answers 11 of 15 items correct will have achieved 73% correct, which meets the 70% requirement.

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2. Teachers may average the scores of three passages. If a student has at least 70%, he/she has met the standard.

Teachers, principals, and central office staff may elect to use another method that meets the spirit of the law.

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**Readability  
Portfolio Passages**

The 120 passages that have been developed thus far have followed the industry standard of using the readability formula of Spache as just one indicator of third grade reading level. The 21-step process involves North Carolina elementary teachers, exceptional children experts, reading experts, and outside evaluators. Please see the released 3rd grade reading passages we have compiled from other states (Attachments II-VI). The passages are comparable to North Carolina's work since, typically, the same industry standard is followed.

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**Portfolio Security**

If you use the portfolio process, please keep in mind the following: The Portfolio is a collection of reading selections to support reading instruction. After students have read a selection and answered the items, teachers may review the selection and the item responses with those students who have been assessed on the passage. This will provide needed feedback to students on their performance. Students' responses may also be shared with parents. Also, teachers should have access to all of the reading selections so they may decide which selections are most appropriate for their students based on their reading progress.

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**Portfolio Processes  
for 2014-15**

The portfolio will be available for use in the 2014-15 school year, allowing teachers to integrate it into their classroom practices all year. The NCDPI will increase the number of available selections in the portfolio to provide improved alignment of the selection with the student's needs. The intent is to eventually deliver the selections through Home Base.

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**Meeting Accountability**

Students with a scale score of 442 or higher on the Beginning of Grade 3 English Language Arts/Reading Test have demonstrated proficiency and have met the reading promotion standards of Read to Achieve. These students, however, will have to take the End-of-Grade 3 English Language Arts/Reading Test at the end of the school year for inclusion in the growth analysis.

It is not appropriate to require these students to participate in the portfolio unless it is an instructional activity.

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**Good Cause  
Exemption for Students  
with Disabilities**

For the school year 2013-14, the Good Cause Exemption for students with disabilities, as defined in G.S. §115C-106.3(1), whose individualized education program indicates the use of alternative assessments and reading interventions will include students who take **NCEExtend 1** and **NCEExtend 2**. This is the final year **NCEExtend 2** tests will be available for administration.

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**Locally-Developed  
Alternative Assessments**

Local school districts may submit a request to use a locally determined alternative assessment as a means to meet the proficiency requirement for Read to Achieve. It is not necessary to submit a request to the State Board of Education if the alternative assessment has previously been approved for another school system. We ask that you let us know about your use of an alternative assessment.

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**Summer  
Reading Camps**

In the January 28 presentation to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, I proposed giving district flexibility in scheduling the summer reading camps. I am optimistic about the General Assembly addressing this issue.

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**Advisory Committee**

Last week, we had our first Reading Advisory Committee meeting. This committee is comprised of local and state board members, reading specialists, local superintendents, parents, and curriculum leaders. We had a very productive first meeting.

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I will be sharing this information with teachers and principals and ask that you do also. Please call me if you have questions.

JSA:mw

Attachments (5)