



# NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Maurice "Mo" Green, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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**TO** LEA Superintendents  
Charter School Directors

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## 2026–27 ANNUAL TESTING PROGRAM AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

In preparation for the 2026–27 school year, this memo outlines updates, procedures, and requirements for the Annual Testing Program and school accountability system. The document is organized into two sections: (1) updates and (2) standard operating procedures and information.

### Updates

#### Test Security Updates

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is committed to maintaining a fair, valid, and equitable Annual Testing Program. State Superintendent Maurice 'Mo' Green emphasized during the April 2026 Test Security webinars that maintaining assessment integrity is a shared responsibility. Statewide assessment results provide critical information for students, families, educators, and policymakers while supporting public confidence in North Carolina's education system. The NCDPI appreciates the continued partnership of Public School Units (PSUs) in upholding the North Carolina Testing Code of Ethics.

North Carolina General Statute § 115C-76.100 requires PSUs to implement a policy that shall prohibit students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time. PSUs are reminded of their responsibility to review local policies and testing procedures to ensure alignment with G.S. 115C-76.100 and the North Carolina Annual Testing Program's test security requirements. As a reminder, only approved electronic devices are permitted during state testing. Unauthorized access to cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, or other communication devices poses a significant test security risk, particularly as personal technology and artificial intelligence continue to evolve.

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Schools should clearly communicate their device policies and consequences for violations to students, staff, and families and implement procedures that prevent access to unauthorized devices during testing.

As a follow-up to the April test security webinars, during the 2026–27 school year, the Office of Testing will partner with an independent vendor to conduct a statewide test security audit. The audit is intended to provide actionable feedback to strengthen policies, procedures, and operational practices to enhance overall test integrity. It will focus on four areas:

- state procedures and policy oversight,
- local implementation of testing procedures,
- State testing platform and digital security, and
- data forensics to identify potential testing irregularities, including emerging risks associated with AI-assisted cheating.

### **End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) Retesting**

EOG and EOC retesting opportunities will continue during the 2026–27 school year. PSUs must ensure that retesting practices adhere to all state and local policies and procedures. As a reminder, only students whose initial EOG or EOC test score is not proficient are eligible for one retest opportunity and parents or guardians must opt their students into retesting. PSUs shall not require students to complete retesting as a condition for earning final grades or course credit.

All students participating in a grade 3 reading retest through a within-year or summer program will take the EOG reading test as their initial retest opportunity. Students who do not demonstrate proficiency after the initial retest may participate in the spring administration of the Read to Achieve Test as a third opportunity to meet promotion requirements. Only results from the initial retest are used for accountability and reporting purposes.

### **Anonymous Tip Line**

An anonymous testing tip line was launched in the spring to support integrity and accountability across the state. This secure channel allows individuals to report concerns, observations, or potential issues related to testing practices. All submissions are reviewed promptly and handled with discretion. The anonymous tip line can be accessed at: [Accountability and Testing | NC DPI](#), and the anonymous tip line webpage address can be found in all test administration guides and handbooks published by the NCDPI Office of Testing.

### **Updated Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) and Flexible Testing Windows**

The annual testing program has updated the CDM and flexible testing windows to reflect additional test date availability in the fall and the spring.

- July (last 10 school days of the month),
- September and October (last 5 school days of each month),
- March (last 10 school days of the month), and
- fall and spring testing windows.

Schools are required to submit and receive approval for CDM and flexible testing in NCTest.

### **Changes to the PreACT**

The new enhanced PreACT blueprint is scheduled to launch in Fall 2026 and will introduce several key updates, including the addition of an English, Math, and Reading (EMR) composite score, increased test questions in each subtest, and an additional 30 minutes of overall testing time.

### **Key Dates**

#### ***Accountability End-of-Year Date***

The end of the year for accountability data collection is July 6, 2027.

#### ***NC Education: Help Desk and Availability***

NC Education is not available from December 24, 2026, through January 1, 2027.

NCTest and NC Admin systems will not be available July 7–17, 2027, to allow the NC Education testing management platform to reset for the 2027–28 school year. During this time, it will not be possible to administer any online or paper state-designated tests (including NC Check-Ins 2.0) or to review reports.

### **Standard Operating Procedures and Information**

#### **Test Administration Recommendations**

To ensure testing protocols are followed with fidelity and reported test scores accurately reflect student achievement and support state and local accountability measures, the NCDPI continues to strongly recommend the following test administration best practices:

- When possible, a teacher who is not exposed to the test subject content should be assigned to administer EOG and EOC tests.
- When the teacher of record is administering the test, a second person serving as a proctor should be present during the test session.
- If assigning a proctor to each test administration is not feasible, roving proctors should be used to monitor no more than three test sessions.

As a reminder, PSUs are expected to conduct routine internal monitoring during test administrations. Additional guidance about internal monitoring, including a sample monitoring checklist, is available in the *North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policy and Procedures Handbook*.

#### **Secure Test Materials**

PSUs must continuously review and enforce test security policies and procedures to ensure compliance with all security and copyright requirements. Copying, reproducing, or paraphrasing test materials for any activity is a breach of test security and a violation of federal copyright laws, 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0311–The Testing Code of Ethics, and State Board of Education policy.

Students and staff are prohibited from sharing or discussing test questions with others during or after testing. Discussion of test questions is permitted only when reporting a suspected test security breach.

Without exception, if there is any doubt about the misuse or unauthorized disclosure of test questions or associated secure test materials, the PSU must immediately contact the regional accountability office. PSUs should reference the *North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policies and Procedures Handbook* or the *Testing Security Protocol and Procedures for School Personnel* guide for additional information about test security and system requirements.

### **Requests for Testing Exceptions Based on Significant Medical Emergencies and/or Conditions**

There may be rare instances in which a student is unable to participate in a state assessment during the testing window, including makeup dates, because of a significant medical emergency and/or condition. Examples include, but are not limited to, circumstances involving students who are (1) in the final stages of a terminal or degenerative illness, (2) comatose, or (3) receiving extensive short-term medical treatment due to a medical emergency. Under these circumstances, a school may request a testing exception for the student from the Office of Testing. If a medical exception is granted, the student remains enrolled in the school during the test window; however, the student does not take the test(s), and the student is not included when calculating participation rates.

When submitting medical exception requests, it is important to remember that the medical exception committee determines whether the student's data will be removed from the school's denominator. Decisions regarding student testing should be guided by the student's individual medical needs and circumstances, not exclusively by whether a medical exception has been approved. However, if the student is not tested and the medical exception is denied, the student will be included in the participation calculation. PSUs should reference the *North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policies and Procedures Handbook* for additional information about Medical Exception Requests.

### **Adherence to the 10/20 Day Rule**

Per 16 N.C. Admin Code 06D. 0309, "PSU students may drop a course with an EOC within the first 10 days of enrollment in a semester block schedule or within the first 20 days of enrollment in a yearlong traditional schedule. Students who are enrolled for credit after the 10 or 20 days shall not drop a course with a required EOC and shall participate in the EOC administration at the completion of the course." Exceptions to the 10/20 day rule are allowed when it is in the best interest of the student to be removed from a course requiring an EOC test. These cases should be evaluated individually, and consideration should be given to ensure the accountability of the school is not compromised. PSUs should reference the *North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policies and Procedures Handbook* for additional information about exceptions to adherence to the 10/20 Day Rule.

**English II End-of-Course Delayed Scoring**

English II EOC tests include multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and student-written constructed response questions. The constructed response questions are hand scored, and the time required to transmit responses to the vendor and complete the scoring process impacts the timeline for returning scores. Schools are advised to administer the English II EOC test as early in the test window as possible to facilitate optimal return of the scores.

For English II EOC testing, the vendor begins scoring the first business day after test records are received and returns the scored test records electronically to the NCDPI within approximately six business days of starting the scoring process. An additional day is required for processing the files from the scoring vendor to the NCDPI. Therefore, test coordinators should allow approximately seven business days to receive test records. Please note that scoring will pause Monday, December 21, 2026, and resume Monday, January 4, 2027.

Please share the annual testing updates with appropriate staff in your PSU. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact your regional accountability office.

MM:CS:KM

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