

Article 10A.

Testing.

Part 1. Commission on Testing.

§§ 115C-174.1 through 115C-174.6: Repealed by Session Laws 1995, c. 524, s. 1.

§ 115C-174.7. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 115C-174.8. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 115C-174.9. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 2. Statewide Testing Program.

§ 115C-174.10. Purposes of the Statewide Testing Program.

The testing programs in this Article have three purposes: (i) to assure that all high school graduates possess those minimum skills and that knowledge thought necessary to function as a member of society; (ii) to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the education process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (iii) to establish additional means for making the education system at the State, local, and school levels accountable to the public for results. (1977, c. 522, s. 1; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 1014, s. 74(a); 1995, c. 524, s. 2; 2009-451, s. 7.20(a).)

§ 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 aligned with the standard course of study 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.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-451, s. 7.20(c), effective July 1, 2009.

(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) Repealed by Session Laws 2014-78, s. 3(a), effective July 1, 2014.

(4) **(For applicability, see editor's note)** To the extent funds are made available, the State Board of Education shall use a competitive bid process to adopt one

nationally norm-referenced college admissions test to make available to local school administrative units, regional schools, and charter schools to administer to 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 nationally norm-referenced college admissions test or an alternate precursor test to the nationally norm-referenced college admissions test 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-81.5, 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 nationally norm-referenced college admissions test and precursor test.

Alternate assessment and nationally norm-referenced college admissions test 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.

The State Board of Education shall adopt and provide to local school administrative units all tests required by federal law or as a condition of a federal grant. (1977, c. 522, s. 1; c. 541, s. 1; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1983, c. 627, s. 1; 1985, c. 409, ss. 1, 2; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 1014, s. 74(a); 1987, c. 738, s. 180(a); 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1086, s. 77(a); 1989, c. 778, ss. 4, 5; 1995, c. 524, s. 3; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.14; 1998-212, s. 9.15(b); 1998-220, ss. 6, 11; 2000-140, s. 21(a), (b); 2003-275, s. 1; 2004-124, ss. 7.11, 7.27; 2005-458, s. 3; 2009-451, s. 7.20(c); 2010-31, s. 7.30; 2011-8, s. 1; 2011-145, s. 7.30(a); 2011-280, ss. 1, 2.1; 2012-142, s. 7A.1(e); 2013-208, s. 1; 2014-78, s. 3(a); 2017-57, s. 7.26C(a); 2017-126, ss. 14, 15.)

§ 115C-174.12. Responsibilities of agencies.

(a) The State Board of Education shall establish policies and guidelines necessary for minimizing the time students spend taking tests administered through State and local testing programs, for minimizing the frequency of field testing at any one school, and for otherwise carrying out the provisions of this Article. These policies and guidelines shall include the following:

- (1) Schools shall devote no more than two days of instructional time per year to the taking of practice tests that do not have the primary purpose of assessing current student learning;
- (2) Students in a school shall not be subject to field tests or national tests during the two-week period preceding the administration of end-of-grade tests, end-of-course tests, or the school's regularly scheduled final exams; and

- (3) No school shall participate in more than two field tests at any one grade level during a school year; [and]
- (4) All annual assessments of student achievement adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(1) and (3) and all final exams for courses shall be administered within the final 10 instructional days of the school year for year-long courses and within the final five instructional days of the semester for semester courses. Exceptions shall be permitted to accommodate a student's individualized education program and section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plans and for the administration of final exams for courses with national or international curricula required to be held at designated times.

These policies shall reflect standard testing practices to insure reliability and validity of the sample testing. The results of the field tests shall be used in the final design of each test. The State Board of Education's policies regarding the testing of children with disabilities shall (i) provide broad accommodations and alternate methods of assessment that are consistent with a student's individualized education program and section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plans, (ii) prohibit the use of statewide tests as the sole determinant of decisions about a student's graduation or promotion, and (iii) provide parents with information about the Statewide Testing Program and options for children with disabilities. The State Board shall report its proposed policies and proposed changes in policies to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee prior to adoption.

The State Board of Education may appoint an Advisory Council on Testing to assist in carrying out its responsibilities under this Article.

(b) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be responsible, under policies adopted by the State Board of Education, for the statewide administration of the testing program provided by this Article.

(b1) The Superintendent shall notify local boards of education by October 1 of each year of any field tests that will be administered in their schools during the school year, the schools at which the field tests will be administered, and the specific field tests that will be administered at each school.

(c) Local boards of education shall cooperate with the State Board of Education in implementing the provisions of this Article, including the regulations and policies established by the State Board of Education. Local school administrative units shall use the annual tests to fulfill the purposes set out in this Article.

(d) By October 1 of each year, each local board of education shall notify the State Board of Education of any local standardized testing to be administered to students by the local school administrative unit at the direction of the local board of education in its schools and the calendar for administering those tests. The local board of education shall include the following information:

- (1) The source of funds supporting the local testing program.
- (2) The time allotted to administer each test.
- (3) Whether the test is a computer-based test or a paper-based test.
- (4) The grade level or subject area associated with the test.
- (5) The date the test results are expected to be available to teachers and parents.
- (6) The type of test, the purpose of the test, and the use of the test results.
- (7) Estimates of average time for administering tests required by the local board of education by grade level.

The local board of education shall meet the requirements of this subsection by inputting the information into the uniform calendar published by the Department of Public Instruction pursuant to subsection (e1) of this section.

(d1) In each even-numbered year, each local board of education shall review all local standardized testing administered to students by the local school administrative unit at the direction of the local board of education for the prior two school years, in order to determine the number of tests administered to students and the number of hours required for students to complete the tests. If the average over the prior two-year period of either (i) the number of tests administered or (ii) the number of hours required for students to complete the tests exceeds the State average over the prior two-year period, as published pursuant to subsection (e1) of this section, the local board of education shall submit to the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education, by October 1 of the even-numbered year, a plan to eliminate certain local standardized testing in order to ensure that neither the number of tests nor the number of hours required for students to complete the tests exceeds the State average. The State Board of Education shall waive the requirement that a local board develop and submit a plan if the State Board finds that the local board has made significant progress toward reducing local testing to the State average.

(e) By December 15 of each year, the State Board of Education shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee containing information regarding the statewide administration of the testing program, including the number and type of tests and the testing schedule, and a summary of any local testing programs reported by local boards of education to the State Board of Education in accordance with subsection (d) of this section. The report shall also include a summary of any local plans provided to the State Board in accordance with subsection (d1) of this section.

(e1) By September 1 of each year, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall publish on the website of the Department of Public Instruction the following:

- (1) A uniform calendar that includes schedules for State-required testing and reporting results of tests for at least the next two school years, including estimates of the average time for administering State-required standardized tests. The uniform calendar shall be provided to local boards of education in an electronic format that allows each local board of education to populate the calendar with, at a minimum, the information required by subsection (d) of this section. The uniform calendar shall be searchable by local school administrative unit and denote whether a test on the calendar is required by the State or required by a local board of education.
- (2) For the local standardized testing information populated by local boards of education under subdivision (1) of this subsection, a summary of the nature and extent of the local testing, including the average over the prior two-year period of (i) the number of tests administered and (ii) the number of hours required for students to complete the tests. (1977, c. 522, ss. 4-6; c. 541, ss. 2, 5-7; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 1014, s. 74(a); 1995, c. 524, s. 4; 2001-424, s. 28.17(f); 2002-126, s. 7.30; 2002-159, s. 70; 2005-276, s. 7.37; 2009-451, s. 7.20(d); 2011-145, s. 7.13(q); 2011-391, s. 14(b); 2013-360, s. 9.2(a); 2016-94, s. 8.32(b); 2017-10, s. 2.14; 2017-57, s. 7.28A(b); 2019-165, s. 2.1; 2019-212, s. 3(a); 2025-25, s. 29(5).)

§ 115C-174.13. Public records exemption.

(a) Until the State Board of Education designates that a test is released, any test developed, adopted, or provided by the State Board of Education, as provided in this Article, is not a public record within the meaning of G.S. 132-1. The State Board of Education may develop rules to allow inspection of a test prior to release, but shall require that individuals inspecting the test meet the same standards for confidentiality required for employees of local boards of education in test administration. As used in this section, the term "test" includes both the test and related test materials.

(b) Any written material containing the identifiable scores of individual students on any test taken pursuant to the provisions of this Article is not a public record within the meaning of G.S. 132-1 and shall not be made public by any person, except as permitted under the provisions of the Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. 1232g. (1977, c. 522, s. 7; c. 541, s. 8; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 1014, s. 74(a); 2014-115, s. 49.2.)

§ 115C-174.14. Provisions for nonpublic schools.

All components of the Statewide Testing Program shall be made available to nonpublic schools in the manner prescribed in G.S. 115C-551 and G.S. 115C-559. (1977, c. 522, s. 8; c. 541, s. 9; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 1014, s. 74(a).)

§ 115C-174.15. (For applicability, see editor's note) Report student performance on local standardized tests.

(a) A local board of education shall provide a student's results on standardized tests required by the local board, as reported pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.12(d), to the following persons and according to the following time lines:

- (1) To the student's teachers no later than one week after the standardized test is administered.
- (2) To the student's parents no later than 30 days after the standardized test is administered.

(b) If the superintendent of the local school administrative unit determines in writing that extenuating circumstances exist and reports those circumstances to the local board of education, the local board may extend the above time lines in the discretion of the local board of education. (2017-57, s. 7.28A(c).)

§ 115C-174.16. (For applicability, see editor's note) Report student performance on statewide, standardized tests.

The Department of Public Instruction shall make available to local boards of education a student's results on all statewide, standardized tests in a timely manner and in an easy-to-read and understandable format a minimum of two weeks prior to the first day of attendance of the next school year. Local boards of education shall make those results available to both the student's teacher of record and parent or guardian prior to the first day of student attendance of the school year. These reports shall include all of the following information:

- (1) A clear explanation of the student's performance on the applicable statewide, standardized tests.
- (2) Information identifying the student's areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
- (3) Intervention strategies and appropriate resources based on the student's areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, when available.

- (4) Longitudinal information on the student's progress in each subject area based on previous statewide, standardized test data, when available.
- (5) Information showing the student's score compared to other students in the local school administrative unit, in the State, or, if available, in other states.
- (6) Predictive information showing the linkage between the scores attained by the student on the statewide, standardized tests and the scores he or she may potentially attain on nationally recognized college entrance examinations, if available. This information shall be provided in a timely manner as it becomes available to the Department of Public Instruction but may be provided later than the beginning of the school year. (2017-57, s. 7.28A(c).)

§ 115C-174.17. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 3. Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test Opportunities Encouraged.

§ 115C-174.18. Opportunity to take Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).

Every student in the eighth through tenth grades who has completed Algebra I or who is in the last month of Algebra I shall be given an opportunity to take a version of either the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or the PreACT test, at the discretion of the local school administrative unit, one time at no cost to the student. A student receiving instruction through a home school, as provided by Part 3 of Article 39 of this Chapter, shall be eligible to participate in testing as provided in G.S. 115C-565.1. The maximum amount of State funds used for this purpose shall be the cost of the PSAT/NMSQT. (1989, c. 752, s. 77(a); 2005-154, s. 1; 2013-360, s. 8.27(c); 2013-363, s. 3.18; 2023-134, s. 7.75(a).)

§ 115-174.19: Repealed by Session Laws 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 677, s. 5.

§ 115C-174.20: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 115C-174.21: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 4. Student Diagnostic Tests.

§ 115C-174.22. (For applicability, see editor's note) 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 nationally norm-referenced college admissions test adopted by the State Board through the competitive bid process pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(4). The results of the tests shall be used 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. (2011-145, s. 7.30(b); 2011-280, ss. 2, 2.1; 2013-208, s. 2; 2017-57, s. 7.26C(b).)

§ 115C-174.23: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 115C-174.24: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 5. Career and College Readiness.

§ 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 a concentration in career and technical education courses. (2011-145, s. 7.30(b); 2011-280, ss. 2, 2.1; 2017-57, s. 7.23H(f).)

§ 115C-174.26. Advanced courses.

(a) It is the intent of the State to enhance accessibility and encourage students to enroll in and successfully complete more rigorous advanced courses to enable success in postsecondary education for all students. For the purposes of this section, an advanced course is an Advanced Placement course, an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme course, or a Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) course, including an AS-Level or A-Level course. To attain this goal, to the extent funds are made available for this purpose, students enrolled in public schools shall be exempt from paying any fees for administration of examinations for advanced courses and registration fees for advanced courses in which the student is enrolled regardless of the score the student achieves on an examination. A student receiving instruction through a home school, as provided by Part 3 of Article 39 of this Chapter, shall be eligible to participate in administration of examinations for advanced courses as provided in G.S. 115C-565.1.

(b) Eligible secondary students shall be encouraged to enroll in advanced courses to expose them to more rigorous coursework while still in secondary school. Successfully completing advanced courses will increase the quality and level of students' preparation for postsecondary career paths and their pursuit of higher education.

(c) The results of student diagnostic tests administered pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.18 and G.S. 115C-174.22, such as the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) and ACT, shall be used to identify students who are prepared or who need additional work to be prepared to enroll and be successful in advanced courses. Students may also be identified for potential enrollment in advanced courses based on other criteria established by schools to increase access to those courses for their students.

(d) Local boards of education shall provide information to students and parents on available opportunities and the enrollment process for students to take advanced courses. The information shall explain the value of advanced courses in preparing students for postsecondary level coursework, enabling students to gain access to postsecondary opportunities, and qualifying for scholarships and other financial aid opportunities.

(e) Local boards of education shall ensure that all high school students have access to advanced courses in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Such access may be provided through enrollment in courses offered through or approved by the North Carolina Virtual Public School.

(f) The State Board of Education shall seek a partner, such as the College Board, to form the North Carolina Advanced Placement Partnership, hereinafter referred to as Partnership, to assist in improving college readiness of secondary students and to assist secondary schools to ensure that students have access to high-quality, rigorous academics with a focus on access to Advanced Placement courses.

In order to implement its responsibilities under this section, the partner selected by the State Board of Education shall provide staff to do the following:

- (1) Provide professional development in the form of support and training to enable teachers of Advanced Placement courses to have the necessary content knowledge, instructional skills, and materials to prepare students for success in Advanced Placement courses and examinations and mastery of postsecondary course content.
- (2) Provide administrators, including principals and counselors, with professional development that will enable them to create strong and effective Advanced Placement courses in their schools.
- (3) Provide teachers of students in grades seven through 12 with preadvanced course professional development and materials that prepare students for success in Advanced Placement courses.
- (4) Provide consulting expertise and technical assistance to support implementation.
- (5) Prioritize assistance to schools designated as low-performing by the State Board of Education and provide for frequent visits to the schools targeted by the Partnership.

(g) The Partnership shall report annually to the Department of Public Instruction on the Partnership's implementation of its responsibilities under subsection (f) of this section.

(h) The State Board of Education shall report annually by December 15 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on advanced courses in North Carolina. The report shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

- (1) The North Carolina Advanced Placement Partnership's report to the Department of Public Instruction as required by subsection (g) of this section and the State Board's assessment of that report.
- (2) Number of students enrolled in advanced courses and participating in advanced course examinations, including demographic information by gender, race, and free and reduced-price lunch status.
- (3) Student performance on advanced course examinations, including information by course, local school administrative unit, and school.
- (4) Number of students participating in 10th grade PSAT/NMSQT testing.
- (5) Number of teachers attending summer institutes offered by the North Carolina Advanced Placement Partnership.
- (6) Distribution of funding appropriated for advanced course testing fees and professional development by local school administrative unit and school.
- (7) Status and efforts of the North Carolina Advanced Placement Partnership.
- (8) Other trends in advanced courses and examinations. (2013-360, s. 8.27(b); 2014-5, s. 12; 2014-115, ss. 49.5, 84; 2015-264, s. 60; 2017-57, s. 7.28D(a); 2017-102, s. 48(h); 2023-134, s. 7.75(b).)