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WCPSS ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS, 2006-07

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ABSTRACT

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction revised the alternate assessment system for students with disabilities (SWD) and/or limited English proficiency (LEP) in 2005-06. In 2006-07, five alternate assessments - two new and three continuing ones from the previous year - were available for use in grades/courses where the state typically tests students. Four options were used by WCPSS students, and results were mixed. While students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 taking the new NCEXTEND1 assessments achieved 63-89% proficiency, only 22-48% of high school students taking the new NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments achieved proficiency. In the second year of implementation, NCEXTEND2 EOG assessment results remained low (31% or less), while students (chiefly English language learners) taking NCCLAS assessments achieved 63-88% proficiency, up from 10-65% in the previous year. These and other outcomes are detailed in this report.

BACKGROUND

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Reauthorization of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all students with disabilities must be included in any state and districtwide assessments with necessary accommodations or alternate assessments as appropriate, and their results must be reported with the same frequency and detail as for students without disabilities. In response to guidance from the US Department of Education in early 2005, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) revised the state's alternate assessment system, effective with the 2005-06 school year, and now provides the options described in this report. These assessments are designed for certain SWD students and some English language learners.

Results from alternate assessments are included in each school's annual state ABCs Performance Composite (percent of students performing at or above grade level) and the federal measure of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) required under NCLB. To meet AYP standards, a school must meet every performance target for each student subgroup in the school, including those identified as SWD and limited English proficient (LEP).

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is responsible for making decisions about the initial evaluations and reevaluations of students with disabilities. The written IEP plan that a team develops for each student with a disability determines the instructional process and goals for the student. The plan also specifies whether that student requires an accommodation or alternate assessment of some type in lieu of the standard state assessments that other students will take.

By law, members of a student's IEP team must include the following:

- A representative of the district who is (1) qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, and (2) knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the availability of district resources,
- At least one special education teacher or, where appropriate, one special education provider who serves the student,
- At least one regular education teacher of the student (if the student is or will be participating in the regular education environment),
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluations results (who may be one of the members described above),
- The parent(s) of the child,
- At the discretion of the parent(s) or the district, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related-services personnel, and
- The child, whenever appropriate.*

For the 2006-07 school year, five different alternate assessments were available for use in grades or courses where the state typically tests students, with two new assessments, NCEXTEND1 EOG and NCEXTEND2 OCS. The three continuing assessments were NCCLAS (NC Checklist of Academic Standards), NCEXTEND2 EOG, and the NC Alternate Assessment of Computer Skills. The results for 2006-07 for the students taking these assessments are detailed in the next sections of this report.

RESULTS

I. NCCLAS (NC CHECKLIST OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS)

NCCLAS is a grade-level alternate assessment measuring grade-level content and grade-level standards that may substitute for multiple-choice end-of-grade (EOG) tests in grades 3-8, multiple-choice end-of-course (EOC) examinations at the high school level, and writing assessments at grades 4, 7 and 10**.

These assessments must be specified either in a student's IEP or a written LEP plan for English language learners. Typically, students identified for use of NCCLAS assessments are unable to access the paper and pencil test, even with assistive technology and approved accommodations. This test is designed for:

- Students who score below "Intermediate High" on the reading component of the state-mandated English language proficiency test (IDEA Proficiency Test or IPT) and, for NCCLAS writing eligibility, score below "Superior" on the writing portion of the test AND have been in U.S. schools for less than two years. (Note: IPT testing/screening is required for all students entering WCPSS schools if they live in a home where English is not the primary language. These students continue to take the IPT annually until they meet the "proficient" standard in four domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing.)

* See Section .1504 of the state 2004 Edition of *Procedures Governing Programs & Services for Children with Disabilities*. Viewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/policy/policies/procedures.>

**10th-grade assessments are a substitute for High School Competency Tests for purposes of NCLB Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting.

- Students who are newly blinded, have some forms of autism or recent traumatic brain injury, or have other physical disabilities that prohibit the manipulation of materials and information within standard tests, even with available accommodations.

NCCLAS assessments are in a folder format and consist of:

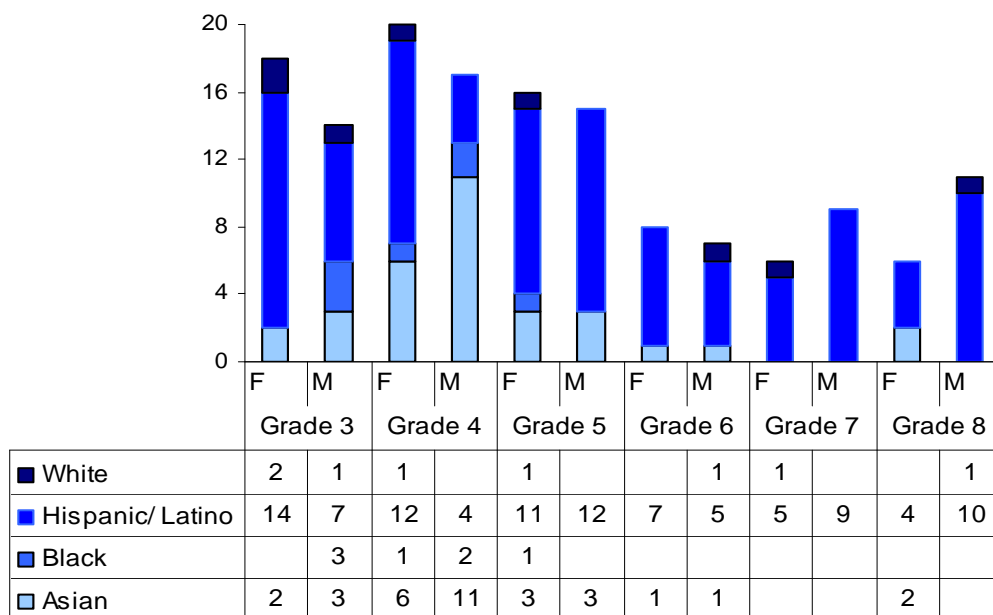
- A checklist of skills based on specific objectives from the *NC Standard Course of Study*.
- A scoring rubric with performance indicators for achievement levels, with an enclosed scoring sheet.
- A student profile and student work samples.

Two independent assessors are required for each student, with the first assessor being the primary instructor for the specific grade-level subject area (who documents the student’s academic performance with observations and work samples). The second assessor uses the student work samples and other written materials provided by the first assessor to complete another independent scoring. If final scores from the two assessors are not in agreement, a third independent assessor resolves the differences. Results are then submitted through an online system, where final score points and achievement levels are assigned.

NCCLAS EOG Results

In 2006-07, all but two WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments were identified as LEP and had been in U.S. schools for less than two years. Selected characteristics of those students are shown in Figure 1. Of the 147 students identified for NCCLAS EOG assessments in 2006-07 (compared to 145 students in 2005-06), the majority (68%, down from 78% the previous year) were Hispanic/Latino, and 22% (up from 14%) were Asian American.

Figure 1.
WCPSS Students Identified for NCCLAS EOG Assessments in
One or More Subject Areas by Gender, Race and Grade Level, 2006-07
n=147



The number of students identified for use of NCCLAS EOG assessments, by content area and grade level, in 2006-07 is shown in Table 1 and Figures 2 and 3. Also shown are WCPSS and statewide proficiency rates for EOG NCCLAS assessments. Because of the small number of WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments by grade level, caution must be used in interpreting the results.

In the initial year, 2005-06, with the exception of grades 3 and 6 mathematics, proficiency rates tended to be lower in NCCLAS subject areas and grades (10-46%), compared to results of the standard EOG assessments (Speas and McMillen, 2007). No more than 30% of WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments at any grade achieved proficiency in reading or writing, and statewide results were similar (8-37%). As for mathematics, WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments in 2005-06 achieved the highest proficiency at 3rd grade (65%), with proficiency rates in the other five grades ranging from 24-46% (compared to 31-40% in all six grades at the state level).

One year later, in 2006-07, NCCLAS proficiency rates increased overall (19-67%) and were higher than those for LEP students taking the standard EOG assessments in four of six grades in mathematics, and in 6th-grade reading and 4th-grade writing.

Again in the second year, in both WCPSS and North Carolina as a whole, more students were identified for use of NCCLAS mathematics assessments than NCCLAS reading assessments, likely because any student with a home language other than English and in U.S. schools *for less than a full school year* is not required to take the state reading tests. However, all students are required to take either the standard mathematics tests (with or without accommodations) or alternate assessments, based on the assumption that mathematics assessments require less knowledge of the English language.

In 2006-07, proficiency rates in reading increased. With the exception of grades 4 and 5 (30% and 33%), student proficiency in WCPSS ranged from 43-67%, compared to 32-43% statewide. Writing proficiency rates at grades 4 and 7 also increased over 2005-06 levels but remained low (25-36%) for both district and state.

In mathematics in 2006-07, WCPSS students achieved the highest proficiency in 6th grade (60%), the lowest proficiency in 8th grade (19%), and a range of 50-55% in the other grades. With the exception of grades 4 and 8, WCPSS NCCLAS proficiency rates were higher than those statewide. Additionally, WCPSS NCCLAS mathematics proficiency rates were higher, in four of six grades, than those for both WCPSS and NC LEP students taking standard EOG tests.

Overall in 2006-07, WCPSS NCCLAS EOG proficiency rates were higher than those of the previous year, yet remained low (with most in the 19-50% range). As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the highest outcomes were in 6th-grade reading (67% proficiency) and four of six grades in mathematics (50-60%), where NCCLAS proficiency rates were higher than those of LEP students taking standard EOG tests.

Table 1
WCPSS and NC Results on NCCLAS Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results
for LEP Students and All Students, 2006-07

Subject Area and Grade	WCPSS				NC			
	Number Tested WCPSS NCCLAS	Percent Proficient WCPSS NCCLAS	Percent Proficient for WCPSS LEP Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests	Number Tested NC NCCLAS	Percent Proficient NC NCCLAS	Percent Proficient for NC LEP Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests
Reading								
Grade 3	23	42.9%	61.4%	88.2%	278	35.3%	60.6%	83.7%
Grade 4	13	30.0%	74.8%	91.7%	307	37.8%	73.5%	87.4%
Grade 5	19	33.3%	76.2%	94.3%	305	42.6%	76.8%	91.6%
Grade 6	9	66.7%	59.0%	87.8%	235	38.7%	61.1%	84.2%
Grade 7	9	44.4%	67.9%	92.5%	285	31.6%	65.2%	88.1%
Grade 8	10	50.0%	61.2%	92.0%	337	35.6%	63.7%	89.5%
Mathematics								
Grade 3	29	51.7%	51.1%	79.5%	298	50.0%	50.5%	71.9%
Grade 4	24	50.0%	55.5%	79.0%	311	50.2%	51.5%	68.7%
Grade 5	29	55.2%	48.4%	76.6%	307	52.4%	48.5%	67.6%
Grade 6	15	60.0%	40.6%	74.4%	248	44.0%	40.7%	65.3%
Grade 7	12	50.0%	41.2%	73.5%	286	46.2%	38.6%	64.1%
Grade 8	16	18.8%	43.3%	73.7%	340	38.2%	40.3%	65.7%
Writing								
Grade 4	25	36.0%	29.0%	62.4%	451	32.8%	N/A	52.8%
Grade 7	8	25.0%	23.8%	64.7%	432	33.6%	N/A	50.8%
Grade 10	36	88.9%	N/A	66.1%	681	83.8%	N/A	51.4%

Note: LEP students in US schools for two or more years must take standard EOG and EOC tests.

Figure 2
WCPSS Results on NCCLAS Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2006-07

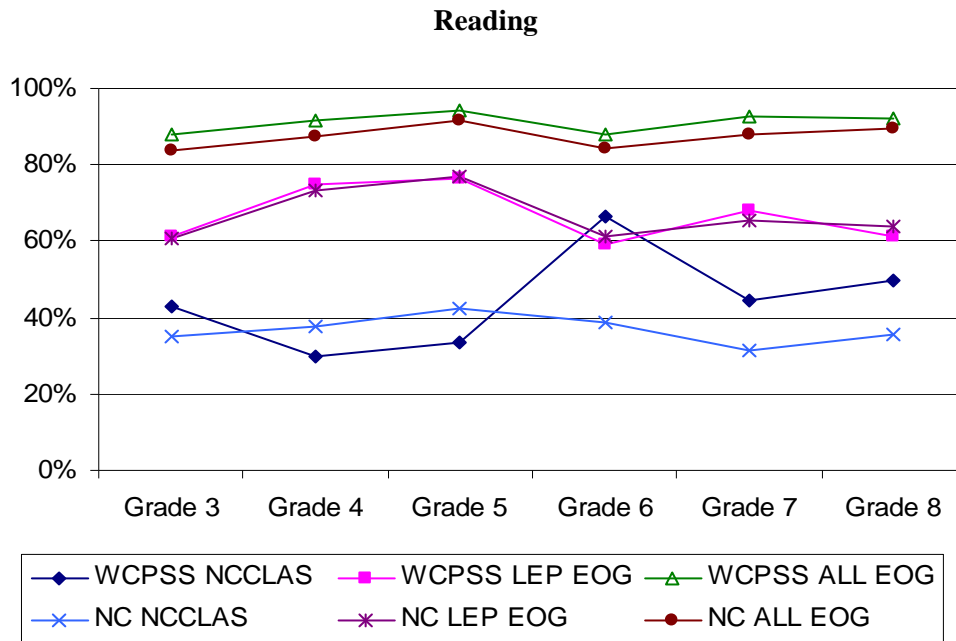
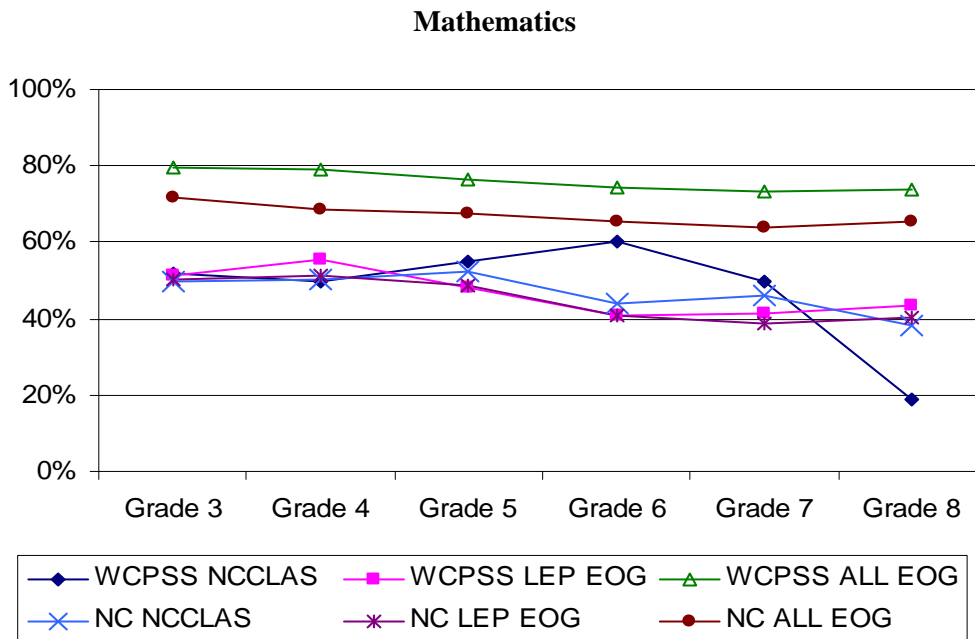


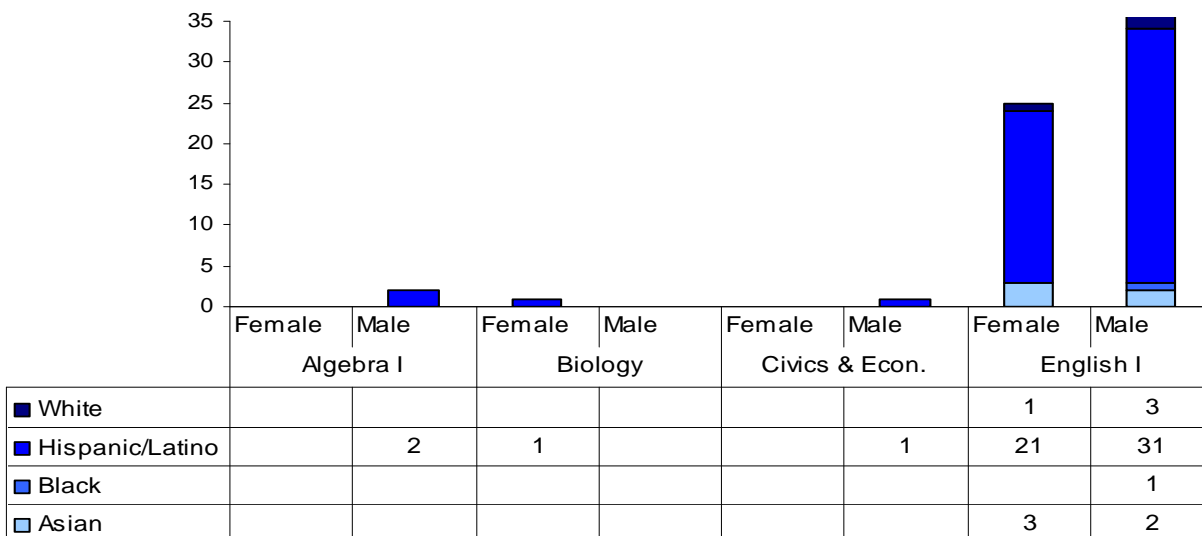
Figure 3
WCPSS Results on NCCLAS Mathematics Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2006-07



NCCLAS EOC Results

Selected characteristics of students participating in NCCLAS EOC assessments are shown in Figure 4. Of the 66 students participating in NCCLAS EOC assessments in 2006-07, the majority (85%) were Hispanic/Latino students.

Figure 4
WCPSS Students Participating in NCCLAS End-of-Course Assessments
in One or More Subject Areas by Gender, Race and Course, 2006-07



As shown in Table 2, the largest number of WCPSS NCCLAS EOC students in 2006-07 was in English I, with 59% achieving proficiency (up from 22% the previous year). Additionally, the 59% proficiency rate was higher than that of WCPSS and statewide LEP students taking the standard English I test. Very small numbers (<5) of WCPSS students were identified for use of NCCLAS assessments in other courses in Years 1 and 2. Passing the EOC tests in five core courses (Algebra I, Biology, Civics & Economics, English I, and U.S. History) is a requirement for high school graduation for students entering high school in 2006-07 and beyond.

Table 2
WCPSS and NC Results on NCCLAS Assessments Compared to Standard
EOC Results for LEP Students and All Students

Subject Area and Grade	Number Tested WCPSS NCCLAS	Percent Proficient WCPSS NCCLAS	Percent Proficient WCPSS LEP: Standard EOC Tests	Percent Proficient All WCPSS: Standard EOC Tests	Number Tested NC NCCLAS	Percent Proficient NC NCCLAS	Percent Proficient NC LEP: Standard EOC Tests	Percent Proficient All NC: Standard EOC Tests
Algebra I	***	***	49.8%	78.9%	374	71.9%	41.4%	66.7%
Biology	***	***	35.3%	74.2%	175	80.6%	31.4%	65.3%
Civics & Econ	***	***	37.6%	75.4%	212	72.2%	29.4%	65.8%
English I	62	58.7%	35.4%	79.9%	688	53.8%	33.5%	72.2%

*** Fewer than five students were assessed.

Note: LEP students in U.S. schools for two or more years must take standard EOG and EOC tests.

II. NCEXTEND1

In 2006-07, NCEXTEND1 assessments replaced NCAAP (NC Alternate Assessment Portfolio) assessments in use from 2000-01 through 2005-06 for students enrolled in grades 3-8 or 10. Eligibility criteria for NCEXTEND1 assessments, the same as for the older NCAAP assessments, include the following:

- Students must have a significant cognitive disability and require extensive and explicit instruction to acquire, maintain, and generalize new skills in the tested areas.
- Students must exhibit severe and pervasive delays in multiple areas of development and in adaptive behaviors such as communication, daily living skills, and self-care.
- Students' IEP goals must focus on the functional application of academics, and instruction is based on a student's assigned grade-level on *NC Extended Content Standards* (NCECS), access points drawn from the statewide Standard Course of Study. Information regarding extended standards/NCECS is available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/ncecs/> and <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/instructional/extended/>. Extended content differs in complexity from regular grade-level standards.

All students in NCECS (adapted) curriculum classrooms are assessed via NCEXTEND1. In 2006-07, students served in adapted curriculum classrooms were identified as Autistic (AU), Severe Profound Mentally Disabled (SPMD), Trainable Mentally Disabled (TMD), and Multi-handicapped (MU).

The format and scoring for an NCEXTEND1 assessment is as follows:

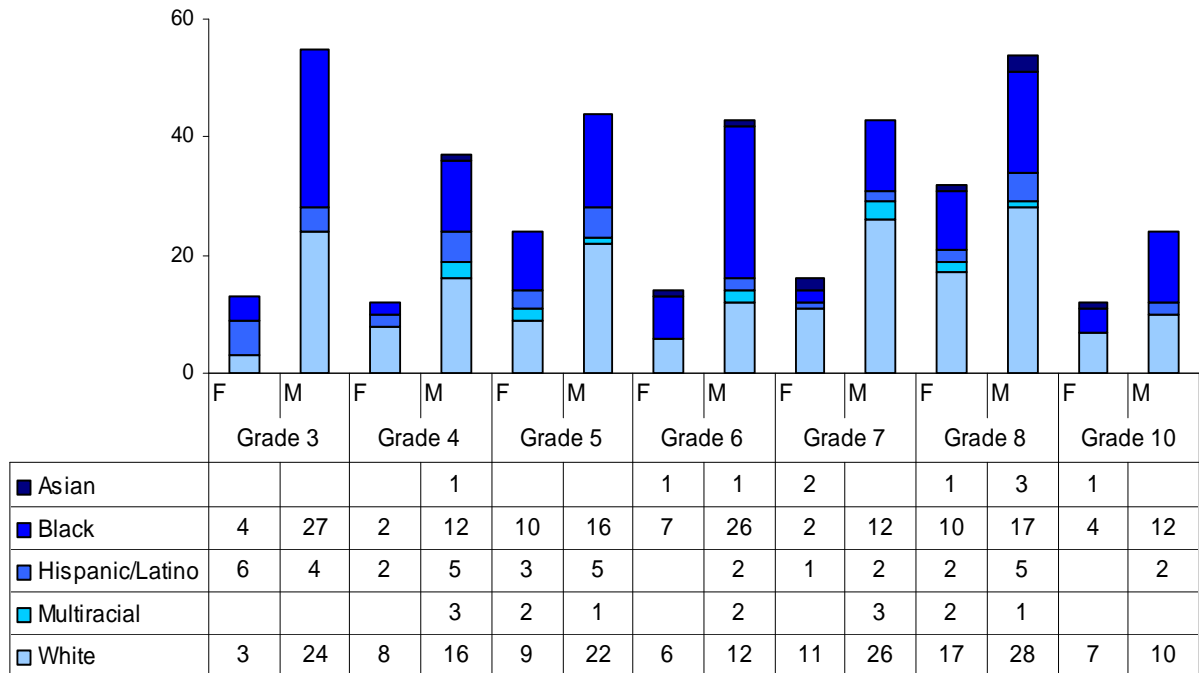
- Students are evaluated based on alternate achievement standards.
- Assessment content consists of state-developed performance tasks written by NC special education teachers.
- During a six-week testing window, two independent assessors (teachers) evaluate the student's performance on the tasks.
- Each assessor independently enters the results online.

Unlike with other alternate assessments, students who are identified by IEP teams for use of an NCEXTEND1 assessment must use NCEXTEND1 assessments in all subject areas. For the 2006-07 school year, NCEXTEND1 served as an alternate assessment for reading and mathematics EOG tests at grades 3-8 and 10, as well as for writing assessments at grades 4, 7, and 10. Additionally, science tests were piloted for 5th-grade students.

As shown in Figure 5, the performance of 387 WCPSS elementary and middle school students and 36 10th-grade students was assessed using the NCEXTEND1 in 2006-07. At each grade, more males than females were deemed eligible, perhaps because some syndromes and genetic disabilities that result in significant cognitive impairment are more prevalent in males than in females. Also, at grades 3-5 and 6-8, a slightly higher percentage of Black/African American students (37-38%) participated in NCEXTEND1 assessments, compared to their proportion (26-28%) in those populations. Identical to the pattern for the old NC Alternate Assessment Portfolio, the largest number of students assessed

with the NCEXTEND1 (all in adapted curriculum classrooms) was at grade 8.

Figure 5
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 3-8 and 10, by Race and Gender,
Identified for Use of NCEXTEND1 Assessments in 2006-07
(n=423)



The areas of identification in which 2006-07 NCEXTEND1 students were participating are shown in Table 3. Except for three students receiving resource services, all students were in full-time separate settings during the instructional day. Most of these students were identified as either Autistic (36%) or Trainable Mentally Disabled (34%).

Table 3
Number of WCPSS Grades 3-8 and 10 Students by Areas of
Identification With NCEXTEND1 Assessments in 2006-07

Identification	# Students	% Students
Autistic	154	36.4%
Educable Mentally Disabled	25	5.9%
Multi-Handicapped	44	10.4%
Orthopedically Impaired	1	0.2%
Other Health Impaired	10	2.4%
Severely/Profoundly Mentally Disabled	37	8.7%
Trainable Mentally Disabled	145	34.3%
Traumatic Brain Injury	5	1.2%
Visually Impaired	2	0.5%
Total	423	100.0%

A comparison of NC and WCPSS 2006-07 results on NCEXTEND1 assessments in reading, mathematics, and writing is shown in Table 4. Also shown are comparisons of NCEXTEND1 results with standard EOG results for students with disabilities (SWD) and all students. The results of those comparisons by subject area are presented below:

Reading

- WCPSS student proficiency rates on the new NCEXTEND1 reading assessments ranged from 74-88% (compared to a range of 80-85% statewide).
- With the exception of two grade levels, the proficiency rates of WCPSS students in reading were greater than those of both WCPSS and statewide SWD students taking the standard EOG reading tests.
- Overall, WCPSS proficiency rates were higher in reading than in mathematics.

Mathematics

- At every grade level, proficiency rates of WCPSS and statewide students on the new NCEXTEND1 mathematics assessments were greater than those of district and statewide SWD students taking standard EOG mathematics tests.
- Statewide, lower percentages of students achieved proficiency in NCEXTEND1 mathematics than in reading at every grade level. The same was true for WCPSS students except at grades 5 and 7 where proficiency rates for reading and mathematics were identical (78% and 81%).

Writing

- Both WCPSS and statewide NCEXTEND1 writing proficiency rates were higher than those for all NC students taking standard writing tests.
- WCPSS proficiency rates ranged from 71% at 4th grade to 89% at 10th grade, compared to a range of 82-84% statewide.
- Overall, compared to statewide student results, WCPSS students showed greater proficiency in NC EXTEND1 writing at grade 10, similar proficiency at grade 7, and lower proficiency at grade 4.

Table 4
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND1 Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results
for SWD Students and All Students, 2006-07

	WCPSS				NC			
	Number Tested WCPSS NC EXTEND1	Percent Proficient WCPSS NC EXTEND1	Percent Proficient for WCPSS SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests	Number Tested NC EXTEND1	Percent Proficient NC EXTEND1	Percent Proficient for NC SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests
Reading								
Grade 3	68	82.4%	69.4%	88.2%	896	79.9%	62.4%	83.7%
Grade 4	49	73.5%	76.5%	91.7%	754	82.6%	67.0%	87.4%
Grade 5	68	77.9%	82.1%	94.3%	738	82.7%	72.9%	91.6%
Grade 6	57	82.5%	67.2%	87.8%	733	81.0%	56.3%	84.2%
Grade 7	59	81.4%	74.1%	92.5%	777	83.7%	63.6%	88.1%
Grade 8	86	88.4%	74.4%	92.0%	850	84.1%	66.3%	89.5%
Grade 10	36	80.6%	n/a	n/a	651	84.5%	n/a	n/a
Mathematics								
Grade 3	68	76.5%	59.7%	79.5%	896	75.9%	52.0%	71.9%
Grade 4	49	71.4%	54.5%	79.0%	754	78.8%	45.6%	68.7%
Grade 5	68	77.9%	49.4%	76.6%	738	77.8%	39.4%	67.6%
Grade 6	57	63.2%	46.1%	74.4%	733	80.2%	35.2%	65.3%
Grade 7	59	81.4%	42.1%	73.5%	777	82.0%	31.5%	64.1%
Grade 8	86	72.1%	43.0%	73.7%	850	75.8%	32.9%	65.7%
Grade 10	36	75.0%	8.9%	13.6%	651	76.7%	7.3%	14.3%
Writing								
Grade 4	49	71.2%	n/a	62.4%	774	81.7%	24.00%	52.7%
Grade 7	59	83.6%	n/a	64.7%	795	83.9%	18.80%	50.8%
Grade 10	36	88.9%	n/a	66.1%	681	83.8%	19.10%	51.4%

Figure 6
WCPSS Results on NCEXTEND1 Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2006-07

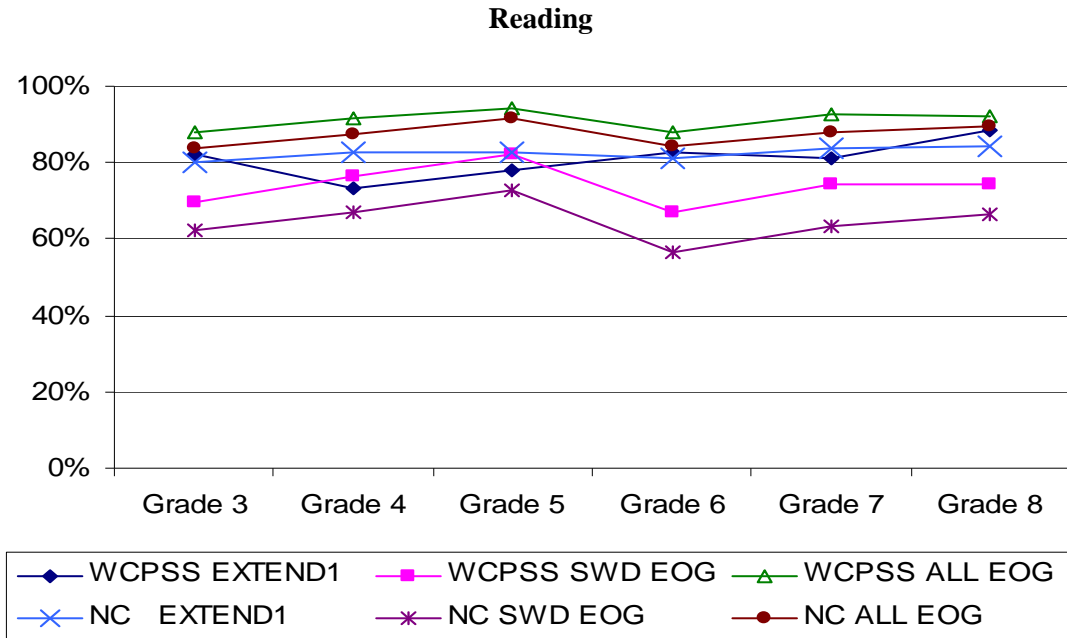
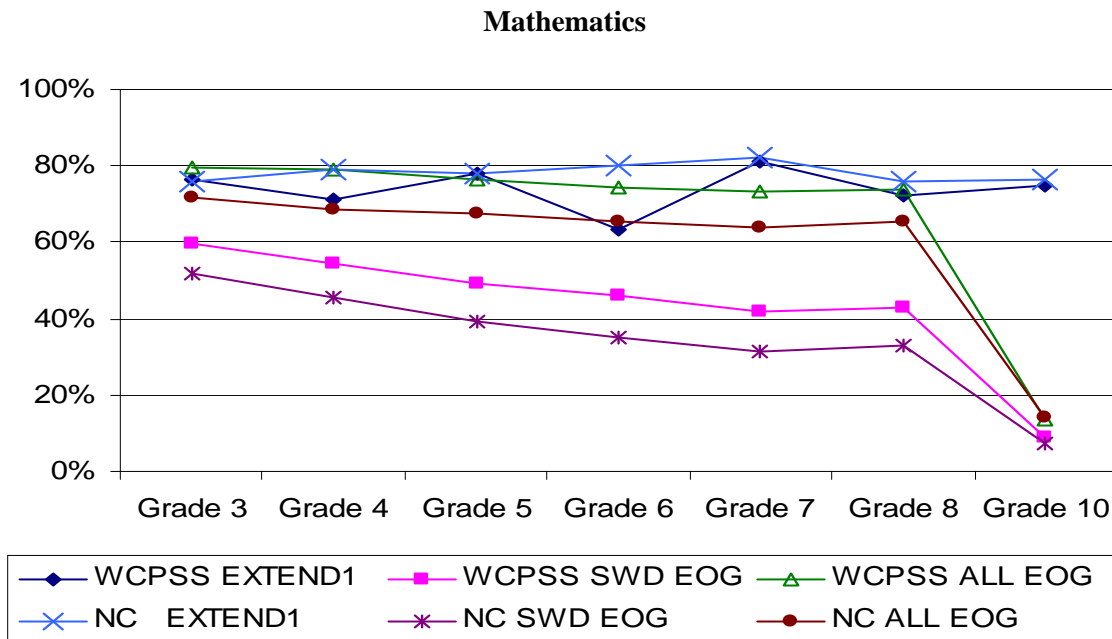


Figure 7
WCPSS Results on NCEXTEND1 Math Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2006-07



III. NCEXTEND2 EOG

In 2005-06 the NC testing program was expanded to include new NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments based on the grade-level NC SCOS content but with modified grade-level standards and a modified test format (i.e., multiple-choice tests have shorter reading passages, simplified vocabulary, fewer multiple-choice test items, three rather than four response choices for each test item, and a modified page layout with only one or two items per page). 2006-07 was the second year of implementation for the reading and mathematics assessments at grades 3-8 and 10 and writing assessment at grades 4 and 7.

Student eligibility criteria considered by the IEP team include:

- not having a significant cognitive disability;
- having a disability that prevents the student from attaining grade-level proficiency in the subject area, with the best of instruction, within the school year covered by the IEP – as demonstrated by objective evidence of two or more measures such as standardized state tests, intelligence and aptitude tests, and psychological evaluations; and
- having a disability that may require assessments of different design than standard tests and accommodations.

Additionally, IEP teams may recommend that a student be assessed by NCEXTEND2 in one or more subject areas, while participating in standard EOG testing in another area. IEP teams may also recommend accommodations for some students using NCEXTEND2.

All students with disabilities participating in NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments are receiving instruction in the grade-level NC SCOS. More than one thousand (1,045) WCPSS students at grades 3-8 and 10 took NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments in 2006-07 (compared to 1,032 students the previous year). The areas of exceptionality identification in which these students were participating are shown in Table 5. Sixty-six percent of students participating in NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments were in two areas of identification: Learning Disability or Educable Mentally Disabled.

* 10th-grade assessments are a substitute for High School Competency Tests for purposes of NCLB Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting.

Table 5
Number of WCPSS Grades 3-8 and 10 Students by Area of Identification
Taking One or More NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments in 2006-07

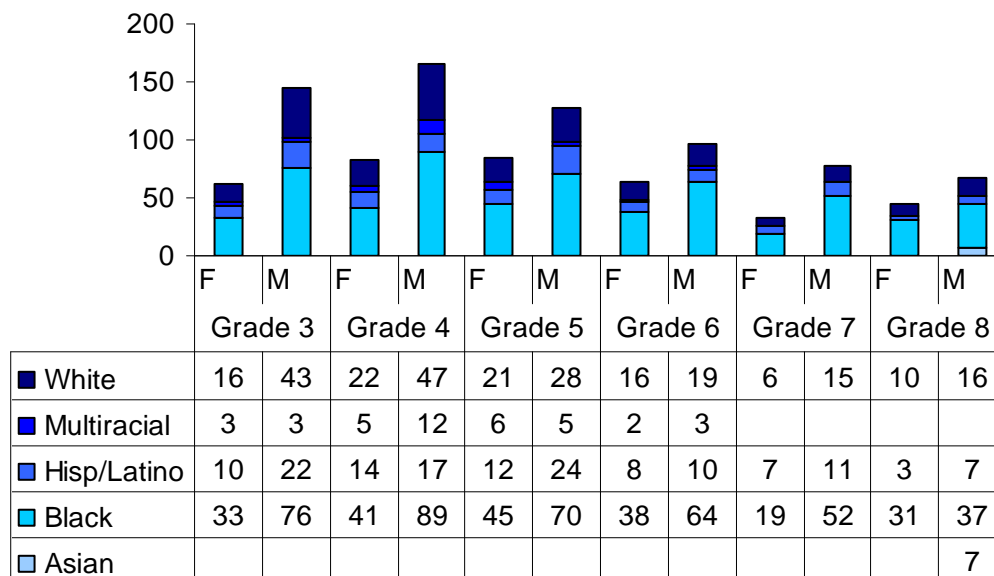
Identification	# Students	% Students
Autistic	87	8.3%
Behaviorally/Emotionally Disabled	37	3.5%
Educable Mentally Disabled	314	30.0%
Hearing Impaired	15	1.4%
Learning Disability	380	36.4%
Other Health Impaired	167	16.0%
Orthopedically Impaired	4	0.4%
Speech-Language Impaired	2	0.2%
Trainable Mentally Disabled	5	0.5%
Traumatic Brain Injury	8	0.8%
Visually Impaired	4	0.4%
In Transition	22	2.1%
Total	1,045	100%

As shown in Figure 8, more males than females were identified for use of NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments at each grade, and Black/African American students, followed by White students, participated most often. At both the elementary and middle school levels, a disproportionate number of Black/African American students was identified for use of NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments.

Although the grades 3-5 student population in 2006-07 included 53% White students and 26% Black/African American students, the student group taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments was the inverse: 53% Black/African American and 27% White. This distribution is similar to that of the previous year.

The racial/ethnic composition of WCPSS grades 6-8 students in 2006-07 was 53% White, 28% Black/African American, 9% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Asian, and 4% Multiracial students. However, the composition of students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments, similar to that of the previous year, was 63% Black/African American, 22% White, and more proportional representation of other subgroups. The disproportionate number tested appears to reflect a disproportionate number of Black/African American students in certain exceptionality categories.

Figure 8
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 3-8, by Race and Gender,
Taking One or More NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments, 2006-07.
(n=1,045)



Statewide and WCPSS NCEXTEND2 EOG results in reading, mathematics, and writing for 2006-07 are shown in Table 6. Also shown are comparisons of NCEXTEND2 EOG results with standard EOG results for other students with disabilities (SWD) and all students tested. General results were as follows:

- Overall, WCPSS NCEXTEND2 EOG reading and mathematics results were similar to those of the previous year. The percentage of students scoring at or above grade level on the NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments was low (16-36%) in reading and mathematics for both WCPSS students and students statewide, with the exception of 10th grade mathematics (54-55%) where only 13 WCPSS students and 107 students statewide were tested.
- WCPSS and statewide proficiency rates (6-8%) on the NCEXTEND2 writing assessments were considerably lower than those in reading and mathematics.

Table 6
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results
for SWD Students and All Students, 2006-07

Subject Area and Grade	Number Tested WCPSS NCEXTEND2	Percent Proficient WCPSS NCEXTEND2	Percent Proficient for WCPSS SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests	Number Tested NC NCEXTEND2	Percent Proficient NC NCEXTEND2	Percent Proficient for NC SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests
Reading								
Grade 3	206	15.5%	69.4%	88.2%	2,935	16.7%	62.4%	83.7%
Grade 4	247	23.3%	76.5%	91.7%	3,263	20.9%	67.0%	87.4%
Grade 5	211	27.0%	82.1%	94.3%	3,228	24.5%	72.9%	91.6%
Grade 6	160	24.4%	67.2%	87.8%	2,940	28.2%	56.3%	84.2%
Grade 7	110	16.4%	74.1%	92.5%	2,804	23.0%	63.6%	88.1%
Grade 8	111	22.5%	74.4%	92.0%	2,531	28.3%	66.3%	89.5%
Mathematics								
Grade 3	194	22.2%	59.7%	79.5%	2,475	26.5%	52.0%	71.9%
Grade 4	243	25.1%	54.5%	79.0%	2,838	28.6%	45.6%	68.7%
Grade 5	203	29.6%	49.4%	76.6%	2,777	32.1%	39.4%	67.6%
Grade 6	149	29.5%	46.1%	74.4%	2,613	36.1%	35.2%	65.3%
Grade 7	106	29.2%	42.1%	73.5%	2,598	35.8%	31.5%	64.1%
Grade 8	116	31.0%	43.0%	73.7%	2,436	36.4%	32.9%	65.7%
Grade 10	13	53.8%	8.9%	13.6%	197	55.3%	7.3%	14.3%
Writing								
Grade 4	227	7.9%	n/a	62.5%	2,559	8.1%	24.0%	52.7%
Grade 7	97	6.2%	n/a	64.7%	2,433	7.5%	18.8%	50.8%

Note: No WCPSS students participated in 10th-grade reading and writing assessments.

Figure 9
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2006-07

Reading

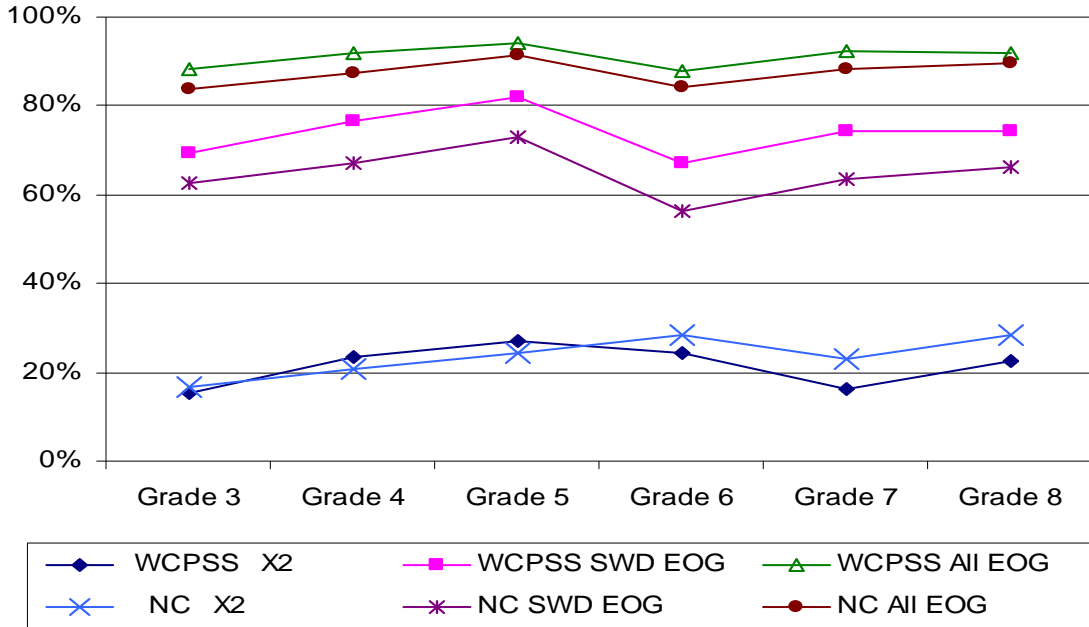
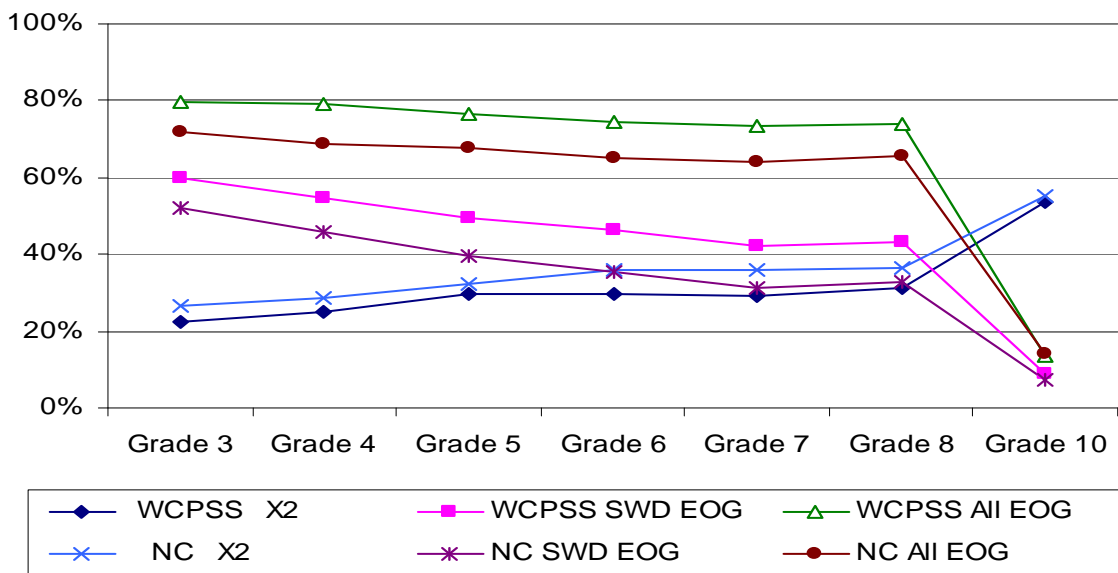


Figure 10
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Math Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2006-07

Mathematics



IV. NCEXTEND2 OCS (OCCUPATIONAL COURSE OF STUDY)

The Occupational Course of Study is intended to meet the needs of a small group of students with disabilities who need a greatly modified high school curriculum that focuses on post-school employment and independent living. New NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments, based on the OCS curriculum and with a simplified vocabulary and format, were field tested in spring 2006 and became operational in the 2006-07 school year. These assessments are alternates for required high school assessments in reading, mathematics, writing and science (generally English I, Algebra I, 10th grade Writing and Biology) that are used to satisfy requirements of AYP.

Eligible students with disabilities are enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) in their high schools, and must take the appropriate NCEXTEND2 OCS assessment at the conclusion of four courses:

- Occupational Mathematics I
- Occupational English I (Reading)
- Occupational Sciences I and II (Life Skills)*
- Occupational Writing at Grade 10

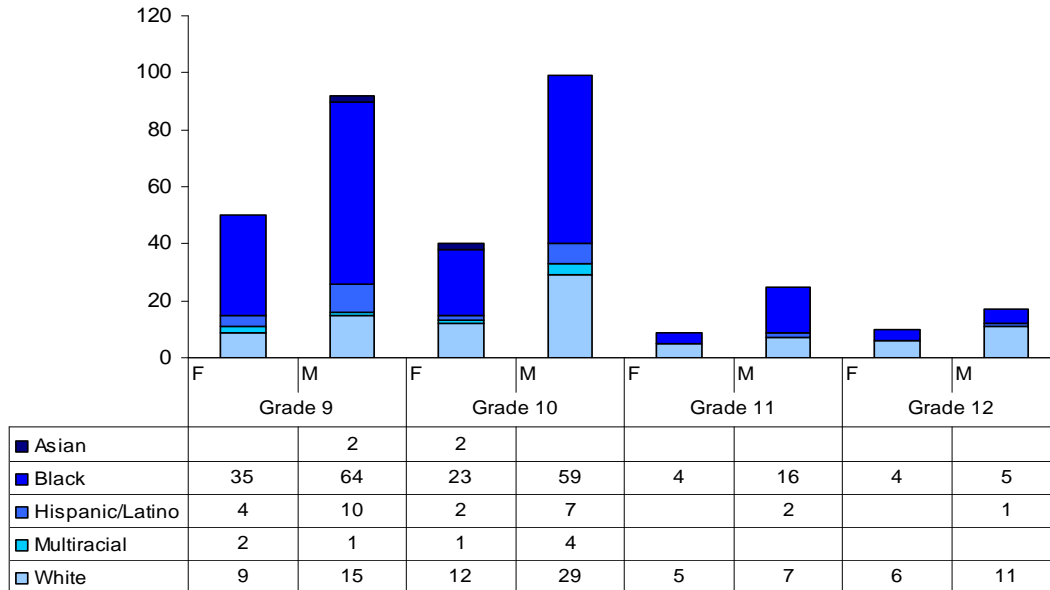
The format of NCEXTEND2 OCS mathematics and reading assessments is a 40-item multiple-choice test with simplified vocabulary and three (rather than four) answer choices for each item. For the NCEXTEND2 OCS writing assessment, students are provided with a prompt stimulus and are expected to give an extended response meeting curriculum expectations. The same scoring rubrics are used as for other writing assessments. More information and sample test items can be viewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eoc/ocs>.

Selected characteristics of students participating in one or more of the new NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments in 2006-07 are shown in Figure 11. Of the 342 students participating, 41% were 9th graders, 41% 10th graders, 10% 11th graders, and 8% 12th graders. More males than females participated at every grade level, and a disproportionate number of Black/African American students participated in the OCS alternative option.

Although the grades 9-12 student population in 2006-07 included 58% White students and 28% Black/African American students, the racial/ethnic composition of the student group taking the new NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments was 61% Black/African American and 27% White, with more proportional representation of other subgroups. This distribution is similar to that of the student group taking the NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments. The disproportionate number of Black/African American students tested reflects a disproportionate number within the high school Occupational Course of Study, for only those completing the OCS courses are eligible for use of NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments.

* The OCS science examination is not taken until both OCS Science I and OCS Science II courses have been completed. Thus, course content of OCS Science I is studied in one grading period but not assessed until the course content of Science II in another grading period has also been completed.

Figure 11
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 9-12, by Race and Gender,
Identified for Use of New NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments in 2006-07
(n=342)



The areas of identification for students participating in one or more NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments are shown in Table 7. (Note: Students could participate in more than one OCS assessment, depending upon the number of OCS courses that a student completed in the 2006-07 school year.) About 41% of students using the new NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments were identified as Educable Mentally Disabled.

Table 7
Number of WCPSS High School Students by Area of Identification
Participating in One or More New NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments in 2006-07

Area of Identification	# of Students	% of Students
Autistic	29	8.5%
Behaviorally-Emotionally Disabled	17	5.0%
Deaf-Blind	2	0.6%
Educable Mentally Disabled	140	40.9%
Hearing Impaired	6	1.8%
Multi-Disabled	2	0.6%
Orthopedically Impaired	2	0.6%
Other Health Impaired	43	12.6%
Specific Learning Disabled	66	19.3%
Speech-Language Impaired	2	0.6%
Trainable Mentally Disabled	4	1.2%
Traumatic Brain Injured	1	0.3%
Period of Re-Evaluation	28	8.2%

NCEXTEND2 OCS Results

A comparison of NC and WCPSS 2006-07 results of NCEXTEND OCS assessments in Occupational English I (reading), Occupational Mathematics I, Occupational Sciences (Life Skills), and Occupational Writing (10th grade) is shown in Table 8. Statewide results for OCS sciences/Life Skills were not available at the time this report was published. Overall, in the four new NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments, 22-48% of WCPSS students and 29-48% of statewide students tested achieved proficiency.

**Table 8
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments, 2006-07**

	# Students Tested WCPSS	% Students Proficient WCPSS	# Students Tested NC	% Students Proficient NC
OCS English I	130	44.6%	2,571	45.2%
OCS Mathematics I	137	35.0%	2,626	48.4%
OCS Sciences (Life Skills)	146	47.9%	Not Available	
OCS Writing (10th grade)	134	22.4%	2,143	28.8%

V. NC ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT OF COMPUTER SKILLS

Students eligible for the alternate assessment of computer skills include:

- Students who cannot access the NC Online Test of Computer Skills (at grade 8) as a result of technical/technology limitations at the building level, and/or
- Students with disabilities who, due to the nature of their disabilities, are unable to access the online test.

This alternate assessment is based on the NC SCOS and consists of a multiple-choice section of 35 items (that the student completes on an answer sheet) and a performance section with 25 computer-related tasks (that the test administrator observes and marks on the answer sheet).

As in the previous year, no WCPSS students were identified for use of the computer skills alternate assessment in 2006-07.

VI. CHANGES IN THE ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR 2007-08

NCCLAS, NCEXTEND1, and NCEXTEND2 EOG Science Assessments: Although NCCLAS, NCEXTEND1, and NCEXTEND2 end-of-grade assessments in reading, mathematics, writing, and science were field tested in 2005-06, science assessments at grades 5 and 8 did not become operational until 2007-08. Eligibility requirements are the same as for the other NCCLAS, NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments.

New NCEXTEND1 Cut-Points in Scale Scores: The NC State Board of Education deemed first-year NCEXTEND1 scores in 2006-07 (63-88%) as too high and directed that new cut-points be developed for the four achievement levels in order to lower the passing rate. Thus, new cut-points for scoring NCEXTEND1 assessments are being used in 2007-08.

DISCUSSION

In response to directives from NCLB and the U.S. Department of Education, NCDPI revised the state's alternate assessment system in 2005-06. Test administrators and assessors, as well as IEP teams and teachers districtwide, were trained and continue to be trained in eligibility criteria and procedures. Two new alternate assessment options (NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments) and three continuing options (NCEXTEND2 EOG, NCCLAS, and the NC Alternative Assessment of Computer Skills) were implemented in 2006-07. No WCPSS students participated in the NC Alternative Assessment of Computer Skills in either 2005-06 or 2006-07..

In 2006-07—the second year of implementation for NCCLAS EOG Assessments in reading, writing and mathematics—147 students (99% English language learners new to U.S. schools) were identified for one or more NCCLAS assessments. Proficiency rates in 2005-06 were 30% or less in reading and writing, and 24-65% in mathematics (with similar rates statewide). In 2006-07, WCPSS proficiency rates increased at every grade level in reading (30-67% proficiency) and writing (25-35%) and in four of six grades in mathematics (19-60%). Encouragingly, proficiency in NCCLAS EOC English I increased to 59% in 2006-07 (up from 22%), and EOG reading proficiency in one grade and mathematics proficiency rates in four grades were higher than those of LEP students taking standard EOG tests. Nonetheless, proficiency rates at both the local and state levels remain lower than desired.

Also in the second year of implementation, NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments were taken by 1,045 students in grades 3-8 and 10 in 2006-07. With the exception of 10th-grade mathematics in 2006-07 (with only 13 WCPSS test takers), less than 32% of participating students in the past two years scored at or above grade level in reading, mathematics and writing at either the state or local level.

New NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments are alternates that are required testing for students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study at the high school level. Eligible students with disabilities must take the appropriate NCEXTEND2 OCS assessment after completing each of four courses: Occupational Mathematics I, Occupational English I (reading), Occupational Writing, and Occupational Sciences (Life Skills) I and II. In this first year of implementation, 342 students participated in one or more of the four new NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments. Student results ranged from 22-48% proficiency across the OCS subject areas.

Also new in 2006-07 were the NCEXTEND1 EOG Assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. More than 400 WCPSS students with significant cognitive disabilities were formally assessed via NCEXTEND1 (replacing the older NC Alternate Assessment Portfolio). Unlike with other assessments, students identified for use of NCEXTEND1 in a single subject area are identified for NCEXTEND1 in all subject areas. Results from this first year showed that 74-88% of participating students scored at or above grade level in reading, 63-81% in mathematics, and 71-89% in writing. Overall, reading and writing results were higher than those in mathematics, and similar to statewide results. WCPSS NCEXTEND1 results were higher in every subject and grade than those for both local and state SWD students taking the standard EOG tests. However, as noted earlier, the NC State Board of Education deemed the new

NCEXTEND1 scores too high and directed that new cut-scores be developed for use in the 2007-08 year, which means that those scores will likely decline.

In short, results of the two new alternative assessments in 2006-07 were mixed. NCEXTEND1 end-of-grade results (74-88% proficiency) were encouraging for a first year of implementation (but deemed too easy by the NC Board of Education), while the new high school NCEXTEND2 OCS results (22-48% proficiency) were lower than desired. Meanwhile, results for alternative assessments in their second year of implementation—NCEXTEND2 EOG and NCCLAS—showed increases from the previous year but, with one or two grade/subject exceptions, remained lower than desired. Of particular concern are the proficiency rates (6-31%) across grade/subject areas for the more than 1,000 students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments. Encouragingly, NCCLAS proficiency rates (30-66%) were higher than those of LEP students taking standard tests in four grades in mathematics, one grade in reading and, at the high school level, for English I.

For a second year, overall results present decision makers with a dilemma. On one hand, the development of the new alternate assessments reflects focused efforts to provide – for all students – improved access to and accountability for grade-level content in the NC SCOS. Over a two-year period, four student groups were targeted for implementation:

1. English language learners new to U.S. schools (eligible for NCCLAS).
2. Students not having a significant cognitive disability but whose disabilities hinder them, even if significant growth occurs, from attaining grade-level proficiency within the single school year (eligible for NCEXTEND2 EOG). In the past, these were students sometimes using off-level assessments (i.e. a 3rd or 4th grade reading test when the student is in 5th grade).
3. Students with a significant cognitive disability who typically are receiving separate service delivery in adapted curriculum classrooms (eligible for NCEXTEND1 end-of-grade assessments at grades 3-8 and 10).
4. Students with disabilities who need a greatly modified high school curriculum that focuses on post-school employment and independent living (eligible for NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments).

Clearly, the intent of the requirement that IEP goals, instruction—and assessment—be aligned with grade-level content is to ensure that these students have access to grade-level content and can work toward grade-level achievement.

On the other hand, most students taking the alternate assessments in 2006-07 did not reach proficiency. While students taking the new NCEXTEND1 assessments achieved 63-89% proficiency, most students taking the NCEXTEND2 EOG and NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments did not reach proficiency, and only about half of students taking NCCLAS assessments achieved proficiency.

These less than desirable outcomes lead, as in the previous year, to questions regarding purpose and appropriateness of testing, as well as alignment of instruction and resources. For example, some educators question the purpose and appropriateness of using another English language assessment (NCCLAS reading, writing, English I) for English language learners who have already been screened by IPT testing and have scores indicating limited English proficiency. Also, some educators question the determination by state decision-makers that 63-89% proficiency on the new NCEXTEND1 EOG assessments—when compared to low results of other alternative assessments—indicates that the NCEXTEND1 assessment in 2006-07 must have been too easy and needs to be changed so that fewer students will pass.

Low results for SWD students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG and NCEXTEND OCS assessments (6-54 % proficiency at each subject/grade) raise questions regarding the intent and scope of these assessments – and of the underlying new curricula (NCECS for adapted curriculum classrooms and *Occupational Course of Study* at the high school level). Another question: To what degree is instruction for these students aligned with the new curricula?

Historically, test scores for SWD students in WCPSS are lower during the first years of implementation than in subsequent years, in part because it takes time for educators and parents to process and implement new curricula as well as new assessment eligibility criteria and the often lengthy and complex alternate assessment administration procedures. A complicating factor is while new alternate assessments are being added, the processes and procedures as well as standards of existing ones are shifting from year to year. Nonetheless, if scores on these assessments remain relatively low, the perceived value (and validity) of these assessments is likely to decline. If students do not stand a reasonable chance of passing, then the assessment program will run the risk of adhering to the letter of federal law while violating its spirit.

We must acknowledge, however, that the development of reliable, valid assessments for students with significant learning impairments is a challenge to the educational measurement community. Despite its limitations, the system of alternate assessments employed by the state of NC is one of the best-developed in the country. Unfortunately, it will likely be years from now before we have the technology to accurately measure achievement of our most challenged students. Therefore, we must continue to focus on the best possible instruction we can deliver for all students while realizing that the “official” measures of the impact of that instruction may be only a partial representation of reality.

RESOURCES

NC State Board of Education Policy 16 NCAC 6D .0506 *Accountability standards for students with disabilities*. (01/06/2005). NC General Statutes 115C-12(9b); GS 115C-81(b)(4); NC Constitution, Article IX, Section 5.

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North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. *NC extended content standards*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/ncecs>

Section .1504 of *NC procedures governing programs & services for children with disabilities* (2004 Edition). Retrieved from: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/policy/policies/procedures>.

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