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WCPSS ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS, 2007-08

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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 2007-08, four alternate assessments were available for use in grades/courses where the state typically tests students. As in previous years, results for WCPSS students were mixed. NCEXTEND2 EOG results remained low (39% or less), and students with significant cognitive disabilities taking NCEXTEND1 assessments achieved 27-49% proficiency. More positively, high school students taking NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments achieved 66-67% proficiency (up from 22-48%), and students taking NCCLAS assessments (chiefly English language learners) achieved 17-60% in reading, 33-80% in mathematics, and 68% in English I (up from 22% and 59% in previous years). 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 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 some specific 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).

At the school level, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is responsible for making decisions about the initial evaluations and re-evaluations of students with disabilities. The written IEP plan that a team develops for each student with a disability determines not only the instructional process and goals for the student but also whether that student requires an accommodation or alternate assessment of some type in lieu of the standard state assessments used for other students.

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 evaluation 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.¹

For the 2007-08 school year, four different alternate assessments were available for use in grades or courses where the state typically tests students: NCEXTEND1 EOG, NCEXTEND2 EOG, NCEXTEND2 OCS, and NCCLAS (NC Checklist of Academic Standards). Results for students completing these assessments in 2007-08 are detailed in 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, in 2007-08, science (grades 5 and 8) and writing (grades 4 and 7) assessments. 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.

The NCCLAS assessment 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 in 2007-08) AND have been in U.S. schools for less than two years. (Note: IDEA 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 screening test annually until they meet the "proficient" standard in four domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing.)²

¹ See Section .1504 of the state 2004 Edition of *Procedures Governing Programs & Services for Children with Disabilities*. Viewed at <http://www/dpi.state.nc.us/docs/ec/policy/policies/2004>

² Beginning in 2008-09, the IPT was replaced by the WIDA Access Placement Test (W-APT) developed by the World-Class Instructional and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium comprised of states who share standards and assessments.

- 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:

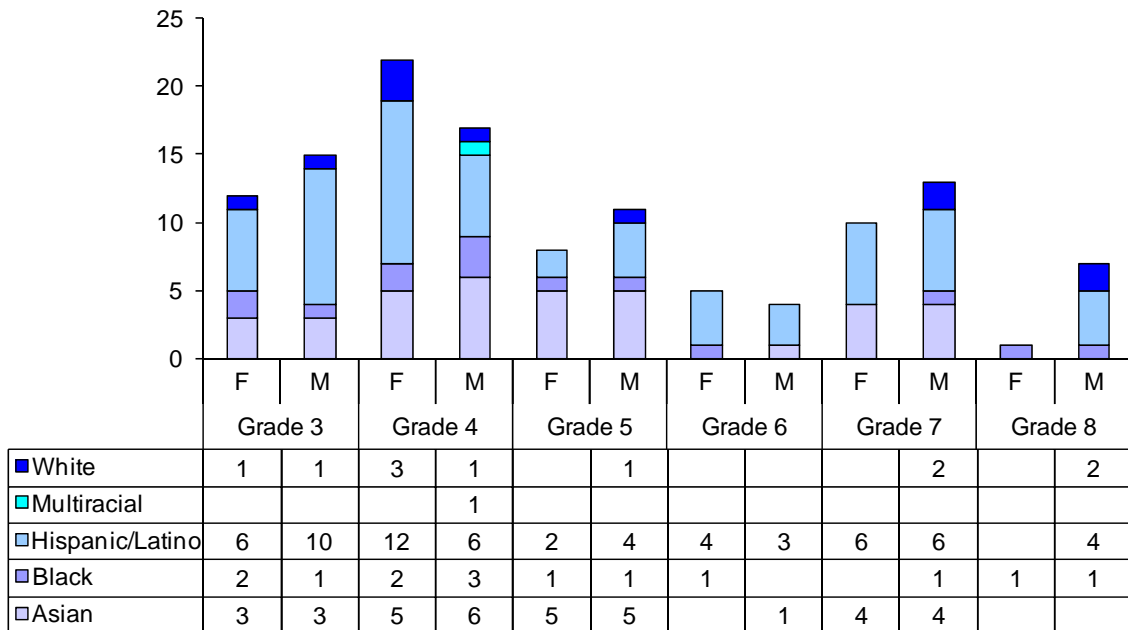
- A checklist of skills based on specific objectives from the *NC Standard Course of Study*.
- A scoring rubric with performance indicators for achievement levels, plus scoring sheet.
- A student profile and student work samples.

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 2007-08, all but three 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 125 students identified for NCCLAS EOG assessments in 2007-08 (compared to 145-147 students in earlier years), half (down from 78% in spring 2006) were Hispanic/Latino, and 29% (up from 14% two years earlier) were Asian.

Figure 1
WCPSS Students Identified for NCCLAS EOG Assessments in
One or More Subject Areas by Gender, Race and Grade Level, 2007-08



Note: n=125

Students may be identified for use of an NCCLAS assessment in one subject area and use of a standard test in another subject area. The number of students identified for use of NCCLAS EOG assessments, by content area and grade level, in 2007-08 is shown in Table 1 and Figures 2 and 3. Also shown are WCPSS and statewide proficiency rates for EOG NCCLAS assessments.

Compared to the two previous years, fewer students in 2007-08 were identified for NCCLAS testing in reading and in mathematics, with six or fewer students at each subject/grade level in four of six grades. *Because of the small number of WCPSS students participating in NCCLAS assessments by subject/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.

In the third year, 2007-08, NCCLAS reading proficiency rates were lower overall than in the previous year (17%-60% compared to 30-67% in 2006-07), yet higher than proficiency rates for LEP students taking the standard EOG tests at grades 3-5 both at the district level and statewide. The writing proficiency rate at 4th grade decreased (from 36% to 27%) while the 7th grade proficiency rate - for 12 students - increased (67%, up from 25% the previous year).³

As in previous years, NCCLAS mathematics proficiency rates were higher than those for reading, with 67-80% mathematics proficiency in three of six grades (grades 3, 4, and 7). 2007-08 mathematics proficiency rates were also higher than those for the previous year (19-55%). Furthermore, mathematics proficiency rates at grades 3, 4, and 7 were higher than the proficiency rates for both WCPSS and statewide LEP students taking standard EOG tests.

Although science tests were administered in 2007-08, results were not used for accountability purposes. NCCLAS science proficiency rates were low (39% at grade 5 and 29% at grade 8), as were district and statewide results for standard tests.

In contrast to previous years, in which more students were identified for use of NCCLAS assessments in mathematics than in reading, a similar number of WCPSS students in 2007-08

³ At the end of the 2007-08 year, the NC State Board of Education removed writing as a subject area for EOG testing.

were identified for use of NCCLAS reading assessments as for use of NCCLAS mathematics assessments. This had been assumed unlikely 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.

Overall, fewer students were identified for use of NCCLAS assessments than in previous years. Mathematics proficiency rates continued to climb, but reading proficiency rates remained low.

Table 1
WCPSS and NC Results on NCCLAS Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results
for LEP Students and All Students, 2007-08

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	15	26.7%	20.9%	63.8%	222	23.0%	19.0%	55.6%
Grade 4	12	33.3%	28.5%	69.2%	271	21.4%	26.5%	60.6%
Grade 5	5	60.0%	31.6%	67.0%	223	30.0%	26.3%	56.9%
Grade 6	***	<=5%	33.9%	69.5%	219	21.9%	30.0%	60.5%
Grade 7	6	16.7%	22.3%	62.1%	303	20.5%	19.7%	52.0%
Grade 8	6	<=5%	20.0%	65.6%	272	25.4%	17.1%	55.1%
Mathematics								
Grade 3	14	78.6%	57.0%	80.1%	239	59.4%	55.6%	74.4%
Grade 4	12	66.7%	58.0%	81.9%	281	53.7%	56.8%	74.2%
Grade 5	***	<=5%	57.4%	79.1%	235	62.6%	55.2%	70.8%
Grade 6	***	<=5%	51.4%	76.6%	227	48.9%	48.5%	69.0%
Grade 7	5	80.0%	45.1%	74.3%	305	58.0%	47.6%	68.1%
Grade 8	6	33.3%	48.3%	75.3%	276	54.0%	46.6%	69.1%
Science								
Grade 5	17	41.2%	17.0%	49.5%	406	30.8%	15.2%	40.8%
Grade 8	7	28.6%	25.4%	64.5%	387	34.6%	21.1%	52.5%
Writing								
Grade 4	22	27.3%	n/a	69.1%	379	35.4%	n/a	59.8%
Grade 7	12	66.7%	n/a	69.5%	377	35.5%	n/a	58.4%

*** Fewer than five students were assessed.

<= The percentage of students is not shown if it is less than 5 percent.

Note 1: LEP students in US schools for two or more years must take standard EOG and EOC tests.

Note 2: Science results were not used in state and AYP accountability models.

Note 3: Writing was removed from the list of subject areas for EOG testing at the end of the 2007-08 school year.

Figure 2
WCPSS Results on NCCLAS Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2007-08 Reading

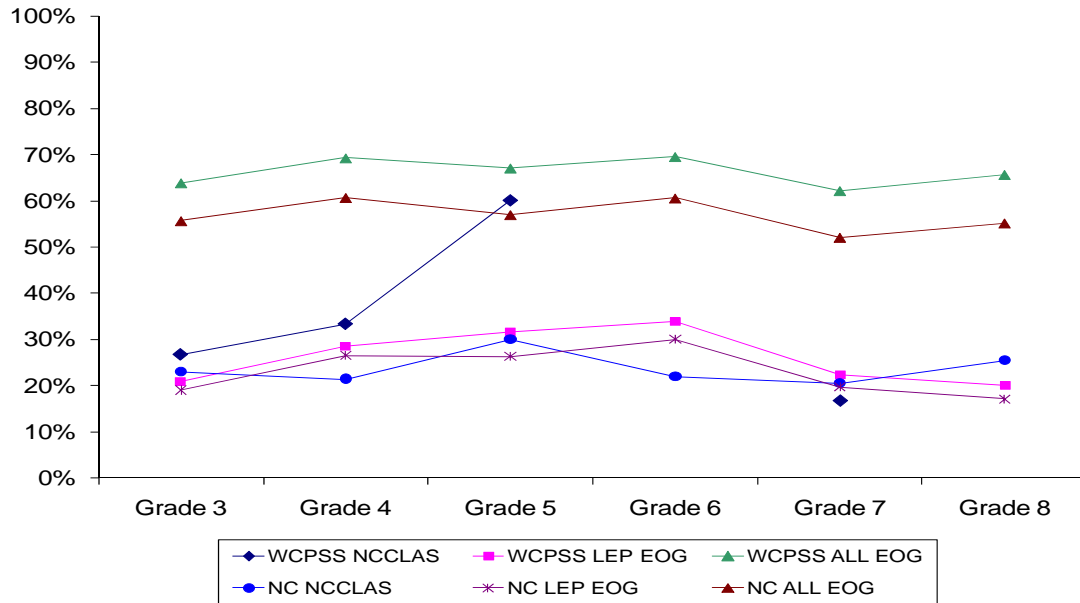
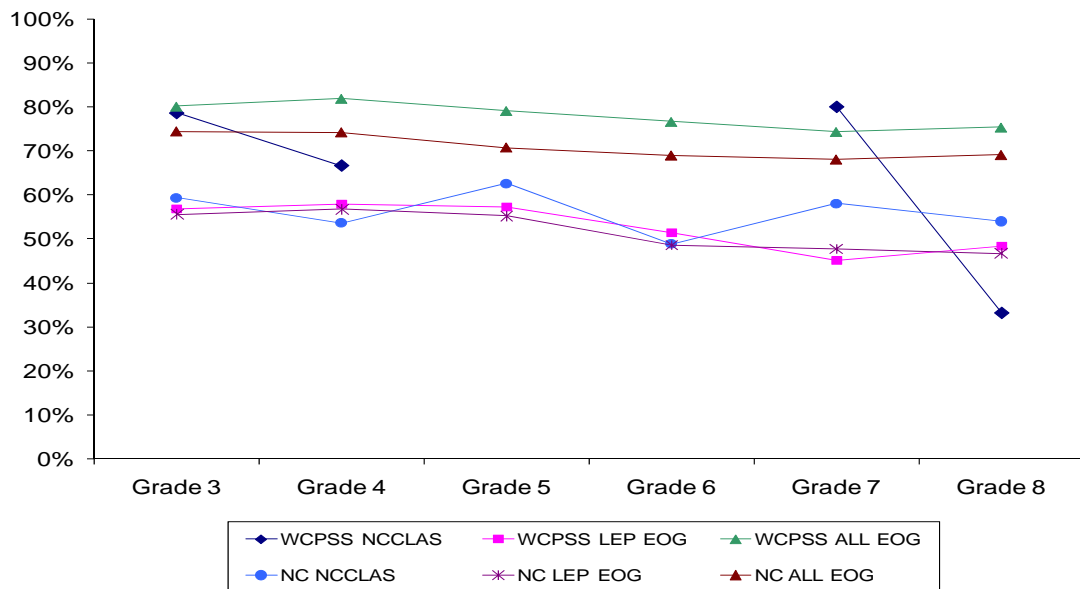


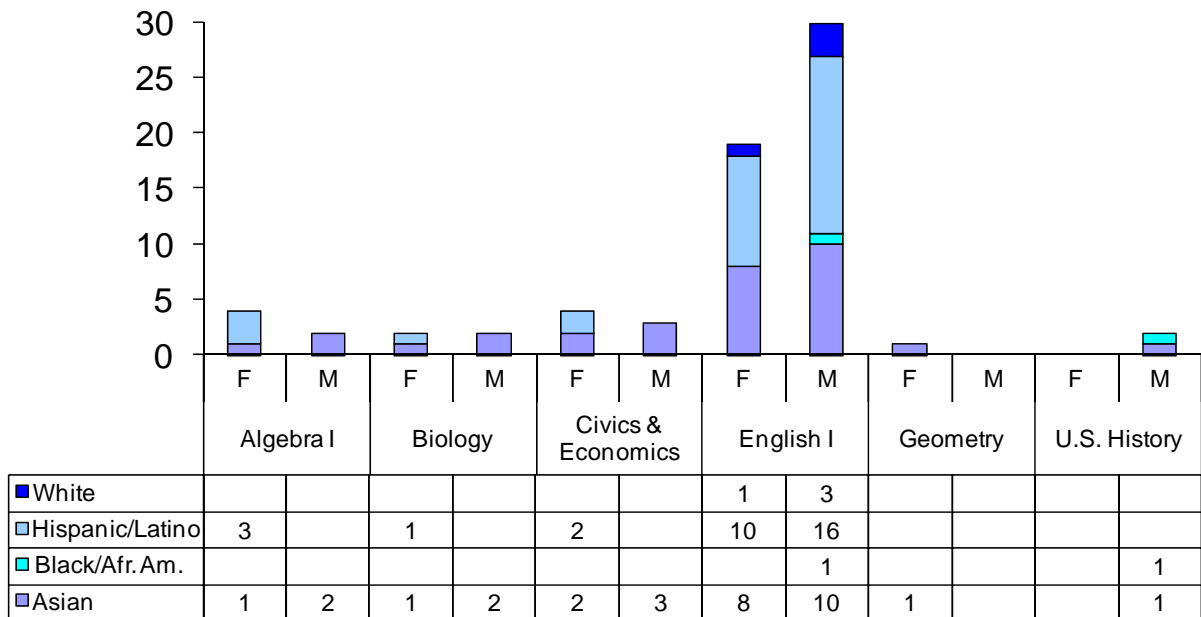
Figure 3
WCPSS Results on NCCLAS Mathematics Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2007-08 Mathematics



NCCLAS EOC Results

Selected characteristics of students participating in NCCLAS EOC assessments are shown in Figure 4. Fifty-eight students participated in NCCLAS EOC assessments in 2007-08, with some taking more than one test. Of these test takers, the majority of students were Hispanic/Latino and Asian (46% and 45%, respectively), compared to 85% Hispanic/Latino in 2006-07.

Figure 4
WCPSS Students Participating in NCCLAS End-of-Course Assessments
in One or More Subject Areas by Gender, Race and Course, 2007-08



Note: n=58

As shown in Table 2 below, the largest number of WCPSS NCCLAS EOC students in 2007-08 was in English I, with 69% of those students achieving proficiency (up from 59% in 2006-07 and 22% in 2005-06). Additionally, the 69% proficiency rate was higher (by 30 percentage points) 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 courses other than English I in all three years of NCCLAS EOC testing. However, in 2007-08 the number of high school courses in which students were identified for NCCLAS assessments increased from four courses to six (with the addition of geometry and U.S. History). This may reflect the fact that, beginning with entering 9th graders in 2006-07, a requirement for high school graduation is the passing of EOC tests in five core courses (Algebra I, Biology, Civics & Economics, English I, and U.S. History).

Table 2
WCPSS and NC Results on NCCLAS Assessments Compared to Standard
EOC Results for LEP Students and All Students, 2007-08

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
English I	49	67.3%	37.4%	78.8%	546	68.5%	35.9%	73.1%
Algebra I	6	<=5%	50.4%	79.3%	347	77.2%	46.3%	69.0%
Biology	***	<=5%	46.5%	76.5%	213	84.5%	42.8%	68.0%
Civics & Economics	6	66.7%	41.8%	78.0%	263	79.1%	37.2%	68.5%
Geometry	***	<=5%	64.0%	75.1%	50	70.0%	54.9%	67.9%
U.S. History	***	<=5%	44.2%	74.1%	164	85.4%	42.5%	66.5%

*** Fewer than five students were assessed.

<= The percent proficient is less than 5 percent.

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

II. NCEXTEND1

In 2006-07, NCEXTEND1 assessments replaced the NC Alternate Assessment Portfolio assessments in use since 2000-01 for students enrolled in grades 3-8 or 10. These assessments are based on the *NC Extended Content Standards (NCECS)*, which differ in complexity from regular grade-level standards, and all students in NCECS (adapted) curriculum classrooms are assessed via NCEXTEND1. Unlike with other assessments, students identified for use of NCEXTEND1 in a single subject area are identified for its use in all subject areas.

Eligibility criteria for NCEXTEND1 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/>

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

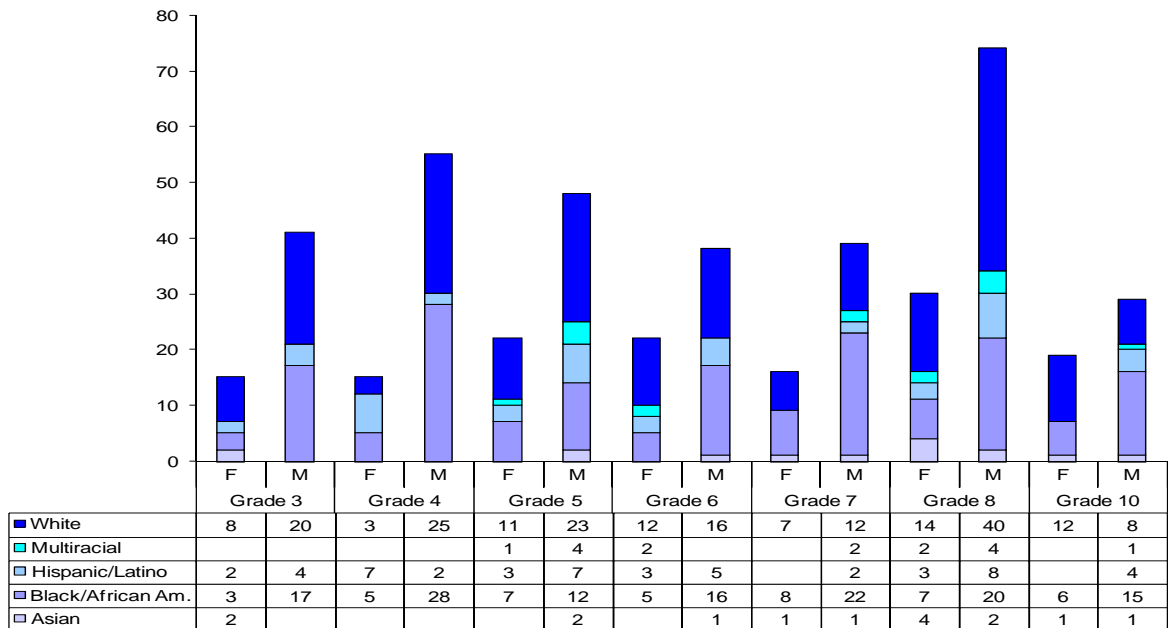
- Students are evaluated based on alternate achievement standards.
- Assessment content consists of state-developed performance tasks written by NC special education teachers.
- During a six-week testing window, two independent assessors (teachers) evaluate the student’s performance on the tasks.
- Each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

NCEXTEND1 EOG Results

In the second year of implementation, 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 and science assessments at grades 5 and 8.

As shown in Figure 5, the performance of 415 WCPSS elementary and middle school students and 48 10th-grade students (all in adapted curriculum classrooms) was assessed using the NCEXTEND1 in 2007-08. 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 (36-37%) participated in NCEXTEND1 assessments, compared to their proportion (24-28%) in those populations. The largest number of students assessed with the NCEXTEND1 was at grade 8, the “gateway” grade for promotion to high school.

**Figure 5
Number of WCPSS Students at Grades 3-8 and 10, by Race and Gender,
Identified for Use of NCEXTEND1 Assessments in 2007-08**



Note: n=463

The areas of identification for participating students in 2007-08 (the second year of NCEXTEND1 implementation) are shown in Table 3. Except for nine students receiving resource or home/hospital services, all students were in full-time separate settings during the instructional day. Most of these students were identified as either Autistic (41%) or Moderate Intellectual Disability (32%).

Table 3
Number of WCPSS Grades 3-8 and 10 Students, by Areas of Identification, Using NCEXTEND1 Assessments in 2007-08

Identification	# Students	% Students
Autistic	188	40.6%
Intellectual Disability-Mild	33	7.1%
Intellectual Disability-Moderate	150	32.4%
Intellectual Disability-Severe	42	9.1%
Multiple Disabilities	33	7.2%
Specific Learning Disabled	3	0.6%
Other Health Impaired	3	0.6%
Visually Impaired	1	0.2%
In Transition	10	2.2%
<i>Total</i>	463	100.0%

Results from the first year of testing, 2006-07, showed that 74-88% of participating students scored at or above grade level in reading, 63-81% in mathematics, and 71-89% in writing. The NC State Board of Education deemed these scores as too high and directed that new cut-points be developed for the four achievement levels in order to lower the passing rate. As a result, lower scores were forecast for the following year.

Second year (2007-08) results, as predicted, were lower than those of the previous year. 2007-08 NC and WCPSS results on NCEXTEND1 assessments in reading, mathematics, science and writing are presented in Table 4 and Figures 6 and 7. 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 NCEXTEND1 reading assessments (with revised standards) ranged from 27-45% compared to a range of 49-54% statewide.
- Although the proficiency rates of WCPSS students using NCEXTEND1 reading assessments in grades 3-8 were lower than those of statewide NCEXTEND1 students, they were greater in all grades than those of both district and statewide SWD students taking the standard EOG reading tests.

Mathematics

- Overall, WCPSS proficiency rates in mathematics were low (33-49%) and similar to those in reading.
- Proficiency rates of WCPSS students on NCEXTEND1 mathematics assessments (with revised standards) were lower in all grades than those of statewide NCEXTEND1 students, and lower in five of six grades than district SWD students taking standard EOG mathematics tests.

Writing

- WCPSS NCEXTEND1 writing proficiency rates ranged from 30-48%, compared to a range of 50-74% statewide.
- Overall, WCPSS NCEXTEND1 writing results were substantially lower than those of district standard writing assessments.

Table 4
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND1 Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results
for SWD Students and All Students, 2007-08

Subject Area and Grade	WCPSS				NC			
	Number Tested WCPSS NCEXTEND1	Percent Proficient WCPSS NCEXTEND1	Percent Proficient for WCPSS SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All WCPSS Students: Standard EOG Tests	Number Tested NC NCEXTEND1	Percent Proficient NC NCEXTEND1	Percent Proficient for NC SWD Students: Standard EOG Tests	Percent Proficient for All NC Students: Standard EOG Tests
Reading								
Grade 3	56	44.6%	36.7%	63.8%	939	52.9%	29.8%	56.0%
Grade 4	70	40.0%	38.8%	69.2%	912	50.2%	31.8%	60.9%
Grade 5	70	44.3%	33.4%	67.0%	822	49.1%	25.9%	57.2%
Grade 6	60	45.0%	36.5%	69.5%	817	51.5%	26.0%	60.9%
Grade 7	55	34.2%	30.7%	62.1%	720	50.8%	19.4%	52.5%
Grade 8	104	38.5%	31.8%	65.6%	932	53.6%	21.6%	55.7%
Grade 10	48	27.1%	n/a	n/a	634	56.0%	n/a	n/a
Mathematics								
Grade 3	56	42.9%	57.2%	80.1%	938	52.5%	53.8%	74.8%
Grade 4	70	38.6%	57.5%	81.9%	910	50.0%	49.6%	74.5%
Grade 5	70	37.1%	52.8%	79.1%	821	54.8%	43.7%	71.1%
Grade 6	59	49.2%	45.7%	76.6%	815	58.5%	37.6%	69.4%
Grade 7	55	32.7%	44.3%	74.3%	717	58.3%	34.8%	68.6%
Grade 8	104	39.4%	44.4%	75.3%	932	50.2%	35.5%	69.8%
Grade 10	48	33.3%	6.4%	12.9%	633	47.7%	7.9%	17.8%
Science								
Grade 5	69	27.5%	25.3%	49.5%	818	36.2%	22.0%	40.8%
Grade 8	103	19.4%	35.7%	64.5%	930	35.2%	26.1%	52.5%
Writing								
Grade 4	69	30.4%	n/a	69.1%	887	49.6%	n/a	59.8%
Grade 7	54	48.1%	n/a	69.5%	697	59.7%	n/a	58.4%
Grade 10	48	39.6%	n/a	79.2%	208	74.0%	n/a	72.4%

Figure 6
WCPSS Results on NCEXTEND1 Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2007-08
Reading

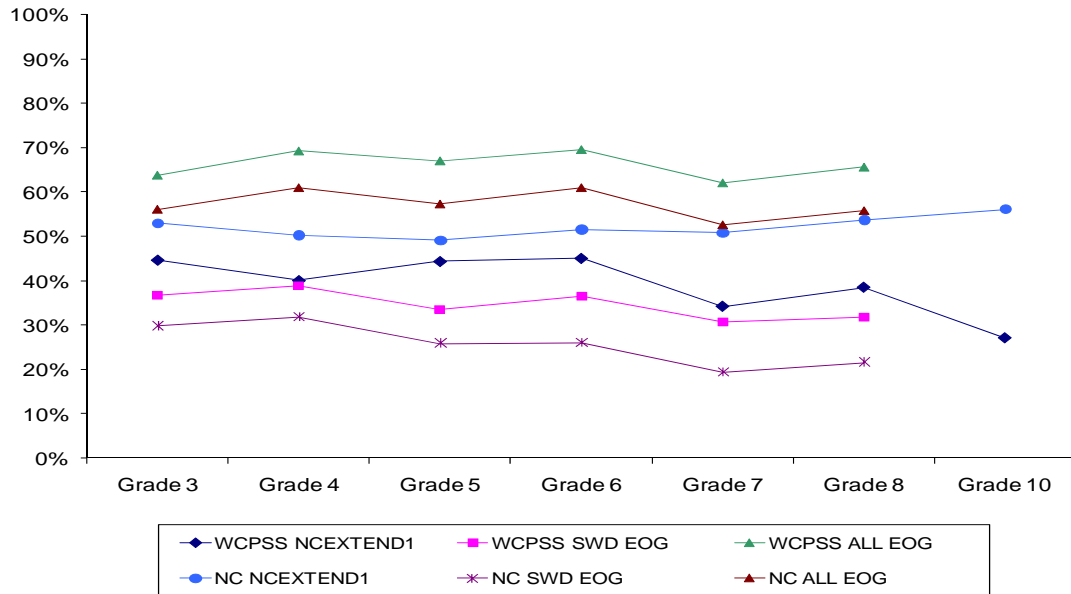
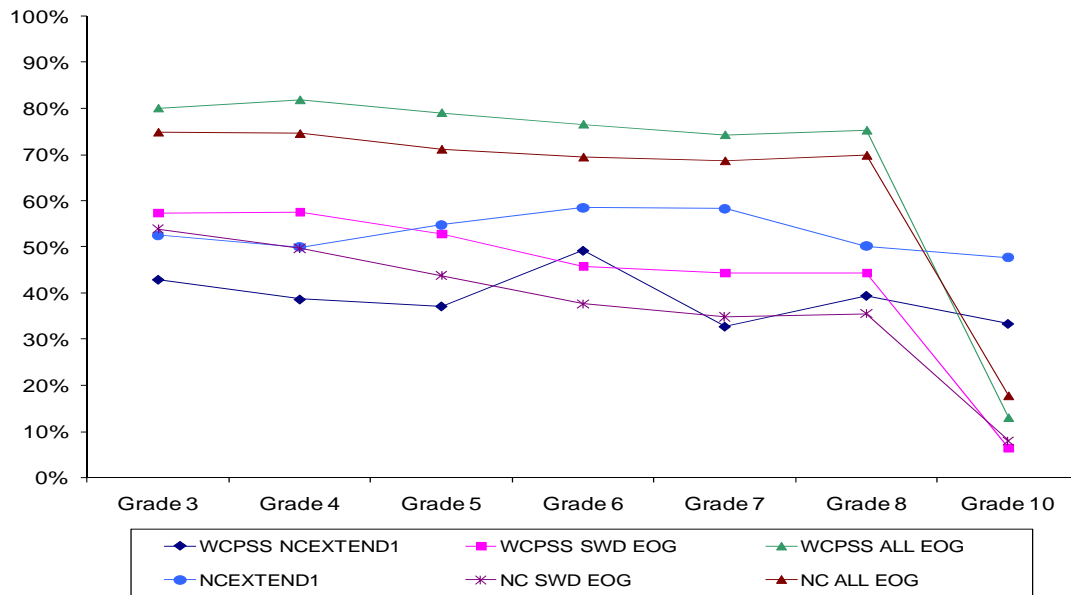


Figure 7
WCPSS Results on NCEXTEND1 Math Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2007-08
Mathematics



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). 2007-08 was the third 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 for NCEXTEND2 EOG testing 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 receive instruction in the grade-level NC SCOS. More than one thousand (1,196) WCPSS students at grades 3-8 took NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments in 2007-08 (compared to 1,045 students in 2006-07). The areas of exceptionality identification for these students are shown in Table 5. Eighty-three percent of the students were in three areas of identification: Learning Disabled (39%), Mild Intellectual Disability (26%), and Other Health Impaired (17%).

Table 5
Number of WCPSS Grades 3-8 and 10 Students by Area of Identification
Taking One or More NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments in 2007-08

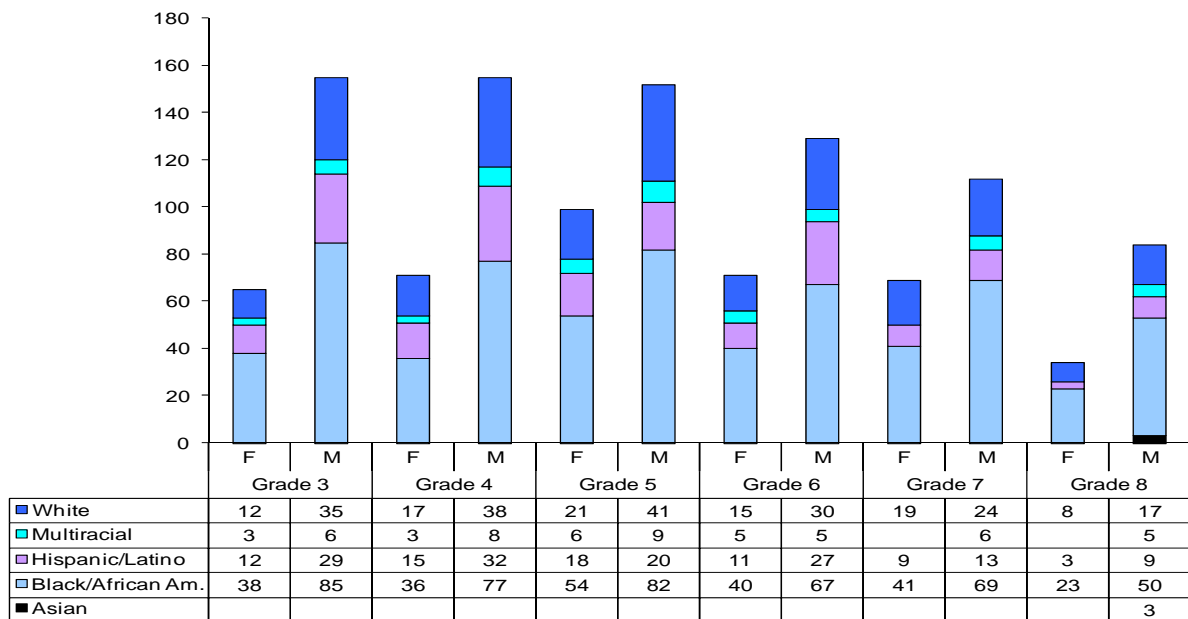
Identification	# Students	% Students
Autistic	123	10.3%
Emotionally Disabled	48	4.0%
Hearing Impaired	15	1.3%
Intellectual Disability-Mild	312	26.1%
Specific Learning Disabled	461	38.5%
Other Health Impaired	206	17.2%
In Transition	31	2.6%
<i>Total</i>	1,196	100.0%

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 elementary student population in 2007-08 included 51% White students and 24% Black/African American students, the student group taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments was the inverse: 53% Black/African American and 24% White. This distribution is similar to that of the two previous years.

The racial/ethnic composition of WCPSS middle school (grades 6-8) students in 2007-08 was 52% White, 28% Black/African American, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian American, and 4% Multiracial students. However, the composition of students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments, similar to that of the previous years, was 58% 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, 2007-08.



Note: n=1,196

Statewide and WCPSS NCEXTEND2 EOG results in reading, mathematics, and writing for 2007-08 are shown in Table 6 and Figures 9 and 10. 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 across grades were similar to those of the previous two years. The percentage of students scoring at or above grade level on the NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments remained low in both reading (12-24%) and mathematics (20-39%), comparable to statewide proficiency rates in reading (16-26%) and slightly lower than statewide rates in mathematics (29-46%).
- NCEXTEND2 Writing Assessment proficiency rates remained extremely low (less than 10%, as in previous years).

Table 6
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2007-08

Subject Area and Grade	WCPSS				NC			
	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	223	16.1%	36.7%	63.8%	2,892	15.5%	29.8%	56.0%
Grade 4	226	15.5%	38.8%	69.2%	3,275	17.4%	31.8%	60.9%
Grade 5	251	20.7%	33.4%	67.0%	3,493	22.2%	25.9%	57.2%
Grade 6	200	24.0%	36.5%	69.5%	3,288	25.6%	26.0%	60.9%
Grade 7	181	18.1%	30.7%	62.1%	3,110	23.5%	19.4%	52.5%
Grade 8	118	11.9%	31.8%	65.6%	2,942	23.1%	21.6%	55.7%
Mathematics								
Grade 3	199	26.6%	57.2%	80.1%	2,473	28.9%	53.8%	74.8%
Grade 4	208	20.2%	57.5%	81.9%	2,819	29.1%	49.6%	74.5%
Grade 5	243	33.7%	52.8%	79.1%	3,167	35.8%	43.7%	71.1%
Grade 6	204	38.7%	45.7%	76.6%	3,065	45.9%	37.6%	69.4%
Grade 7	173	31.8%	44.3%	74.3%	2,921	43.5%	34.8%	68.6%
Grade 8	124	29.0%	44.4%	75.3%	2,895	43.7%	35.5%	69.8%
Writing								
Grade 4	186	6.5%	n/a	69.1%	2,482	7.0%	n/a	59.8%
Grade 7	132	<=5%	n/a	69.5%	2,483	6.4%	n/a	58.4%

<= The percent proficient was less than 5 percent.

Figure 9
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Reading Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2007-08
Reading

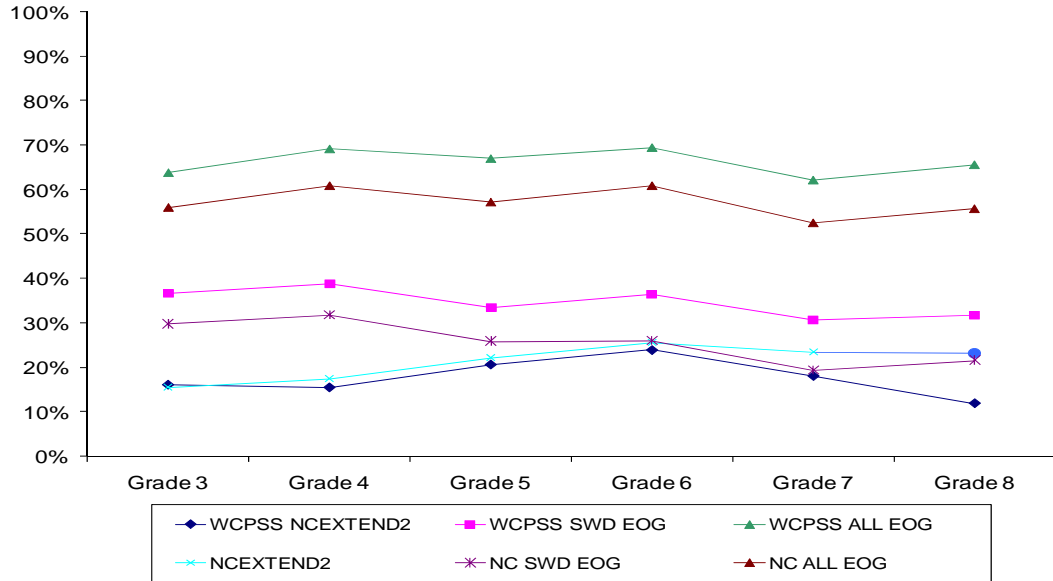
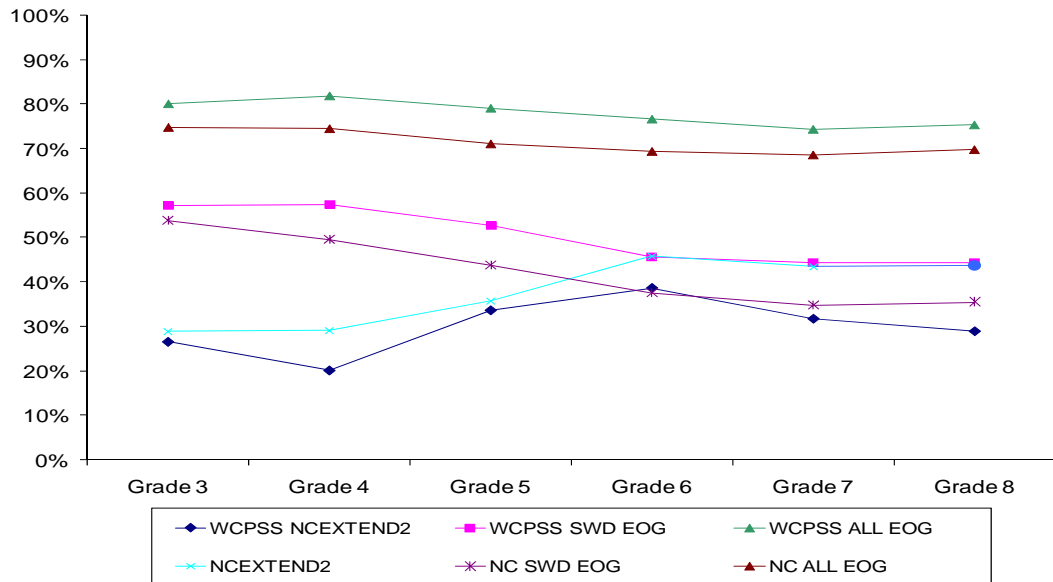


Figure 10
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 EOG Math Assessments Compared to Standard EOG Results for SWD Students and All Students, 2007-08
Mathematics



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. **NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments**, based on the OCS curriculum and with a simplified vocabulary and format, became operational in the 2006-07 school year. These assessments are alternates for required high school assessments in reading, mathematics and science (generally English I, Algebra I and Biology) that are used to satisfy requirements of AYP.

Eligible students with disabilities, enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) in their high schools, 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)⁴

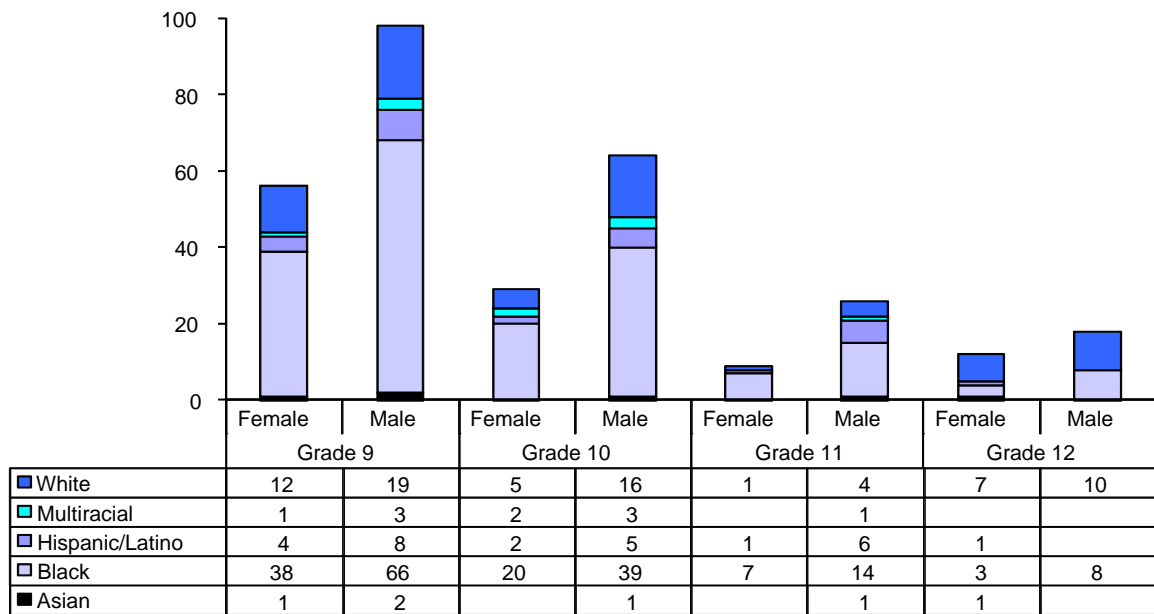
The format of NCEXTEND2 OCS mathematics and reading assessments is a 40-item multiple-choice test with simplified vocabulary and three (rather than four) answer choices for each item. More information about the OCS curriculum, assessments, and sample test items can be viewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eoc/ocs>.

Selected characteristics of students participating in one or more of the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments in 2007-08 are shown in Figure 11. Of the 312 students participating, 49% were 9th graders, 30% 10th graders, 11% 11th graders, and 10% 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 2007-08 included 54% White students and 29% Black/African American students, the racial/ethnic composition of the student group taking the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments was 63% Black/African American and 24% 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.

⁴ 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 NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments in 2007-08



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 2007-08 school year.) About 43% of students using the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments were identified as Intellectually Disabled – Mild.

Table 7
Number of WCPSS High School Students by Area of Identification Participating in One or More NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments in 2007-08

Identification	# Students	% Students
Autistic	23	7.4%
Emotionally Disabled	16	5.1%
Hearing Impaired	6	1.9%
Intellectually Disabled - Mild	133	42.6%
Intellectually Disabled - Moderate	7	2.2%
Specific Learning Disabled	73	23.4%
Other Health Impaired	42	13.5%
Orthopedically Impaired	3	1.0%
Speech/Language Impaired	1	0.3%
Traumatic Brain Injured	1	0.3%
In Transition	7	2.3%
<i>Total</i>	312	100.0%

NCEXTEND2 OCS Results

A comparison of NC and WCPSS 2007-08 results of NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments in Occupational English, Occupational Mathematics, and Occupational Sciences (Life Skills) is shown in Table 8. Overall, in the three NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments, 66-67% of WCPSS students and 47-61% of statewide students tested achieved proficiency.

**Table 8
WCPSS and NC Results on NCEXTEND2 OCS Assessments, 2007-08**

	# Students Tested WCPSS	% Students Proficient WCPSS	# Students Tested NC	% Students Proficient NC
Occupational English	162	66.7%	2,555	47.3%
Occupational Mathematics	178	66.9%	2,520	55.4%
Occupational Sciences (Life Skills)	155	65.8%	2,456	60.7%

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. Over a three-year period, four student groups were targeted for implementation:

1. English language learners new to U.S. schools (eligible for NCCLAS).
2. 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).
3. 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).
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).

The intent of the requirement that IEP goals, instruction, and assessment, be aligned with grade-level content is to ensure that all students have access to grade-level content and can work toward grade-level achievement. Within WCPSS, test administrators and assessors, as well as IEP teams and teachers districtwide, were trained and continue to be trained in eligibility criteria and assessment procedures. In 2007-08, four alternate assessment options (NCCLAS, NCEXTEND1 EOG, NCEXTEND2 EOG, and NCEXTEND2 OCS) were used in WCPSS. In short, results of the alternative assessments in the second year of implementation were mixed: NCEXTEND1 end-of-grade results (24-49% proficiency) were low (after higher, more stringent

cut-scores were implemented at the direction of the SBE), while the high school NCEXTEND2 OCS results (66-67% proficiency) were higher than in the previous year (22-48% proficiency). Meanwhile, results for alternative assessments in their third year of implementation - NCEXTEND2 EOG and NCCLAS - were also mixed: NCEXTEND2 EOG results remained lower than desired (7-39%) while NCCLAS mathematics proficiency increased at three grade levels (67-80%) and reading proficiency increased at one grade level (60%). Encouragingly, NCCLAS proficiency rates were higher than those of LEP students taking standard tests in three grades in mathematics, two grades in reading and for English I at the high school level. However, of particular concern are the proficiency rates (7-39%) across grade/subject areas for the 1,196 students taking NCEXTEND2 EOG assessments.

As noted in our previous reports, 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. On the other hand, too many students taking the alternate assessments in 2007-08 did not reach proficiency. While students taking the NCEXTEND2 OCS assessments achieved 66-67% proficiency and NCCLAS EOG mathematics and English I scores increased, most students taking the NCEXTEND2 EOG (7-39%) and NCEXTEND1 EOG (33-45%) assessments did not reach proficiency.

These less than desirable outcomes lead, as in the previous years, to questions regarding purpose/intent, scope, and appropriateness of testing, as well as alignment of instruction and resources. A complicating factor is that, while alternate assessments are being developed, subject areas (science and writing) as well as standards are shifting from year to year.

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. Nonetheless, scores on these assessments in the second and third year of implementation - particularly the NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 assessments - are low enough to impact the perceived value (and validity) of these assessments.

It is important to acknowledge that the development of reliable, valid assessments for students with significant learning impairments is a challenge to the educational measurement community and that, despite its limitations, the system of alternate assessments in North Carolina is recognized as one of the best in the country. Unfortunately, it may be years before we have the technology and methodology to accurately measure achievement of our most challenged students. Meanwhile, if students do not stand a reasonable chance of passing, then the assessment program runs the risk of adhering to the letter of federal law while violating its spirit. Therefore, we must continue to focus on the best possible instruction we can deliver for these students - and aim for improved assessments and instructional feedback - while realizing that "official" measures of the impact of that instruction may be only a partial representation of actuality.

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.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program (May 2006). *North Carolina testing program assessment options, 2006-07*.

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North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of Accountability Services/Test Development Section (November 2008). *Reports of supplemental disaggregated state, school system (LEA), and school performance data for 2006-08*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/2008/app/disag-public.cgi>

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> and <http://www/dpi.state.nc.us/docs/ec/policy/policies/2004>.

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Speas, C., and McMillen, B. (June 2008). *WCPSS alternate assessment results, 2006-07*. Raleigh, NC: Wake County Public Schools.