Testing is one tool that schools use to measure how well students understand and apply what they learn in class. We use a variety of tests and assessments to monitor student performance, including multiple choice tests, portfolios, performance tasks, and essays. Assessment results are used to evaluate whether students need additional support and/or enrichment.

Some assessments are required by the state and federal government, while others are chosen by Durham Public Schools to improve student, school, and district performance.

North Carolina-developed assessments are curriculum-based tests designed to measure the objectives found in the state-adopted content standards. The assessments are available online and by paper/pencil (note: paper/pencil is offered ONLY as required for accessibility for students with IEP/504 plans, and all students are allowed ample opportunity to complete the assessments. Students with disabilities and students identified as English Learners (ELs) may also receive approved accommodations to complete certain assessments. The need for accommodations must be documented in the student's current Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP) Plan, or Section 504 Plan. Students may take a standard administration with or without accommodations or an alternate assessment, as specified in the student's plan.

To help parents better understand what tests are required and how they support student achievement, this guide provides an overview of the district assessments.

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A Parent's Guide to Assessments in DPS

Assessments Given by Grade Level – Elementary

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Kindergarten Entry				
Kindergarten Assessment – Early Learning Inventory (ELI)	State-mandated	Entering Kindergarten students	Measures kindergarten readiness in Literacy, math, physical, personal and social skills.	The results provide a baseline of student knowledge and informs instruction. The results are shared on NC School Report Card.
English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science				
Benchmark Assessments for English/Language Arts, Math and Science	Required by DPS	Grades 3-5	Comprehensive assessments administered two times a year to determine student understanding and growth on grade-level standards.	Teachers use these results to guide and inform both individual and small-group instruction. The results are used by teachers/schools to determine areas for enrichment and remediation aligned to standards that have been taught.
Multi-Tiered System of Support Screeners for Reading, Math and Social/Emotional	State-mandated	Grades K-5	The assessments are at the sub-skill level to determine specific diagnostic information to inform teacher instruction.	These universal screeners allow schools to assess sub-skills to inform instruction to address specific learning gaps.
K-3 Reading Diagnostic	State-mandated (K-3) Required by DPS (4-5)	Grades K-5	A reading assessment that is given to determine reading comprehension level.	Teachers use the results to determine appropriate reading instructional strategies to address specific student needs.
K-2 Assessments	State-mandated Math Assessment	All K-2 students	Quarterly assessment tasks created to assess students' understanding of math standards.	Teachers use these results to determine areas for enrichment and remediation. Results are also used to conduct conferences with parents and are included in the student portfolio for the following year's classroom teacher.

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Common District Assessments (CDAs) • Math grades 3-5 • ELA grades 3-5 • Science grade 5	Required for High Priority schools; otherwise, it is a school-level decision (check with your school)	Students at High Priority schools and those that elect to do so	To inform instruction and provide feedback to students regarding their progress.	Results are used as formative assessments to inform students of their progress in these courses. Teachers also use the data to inform instruction.
English Language Learners				
ACCESS for English language learners (ELLs)	State-mandated	English language learners in grades K-12	The ACCESS for ELLs is a large-scale test of English language proficiency based on the World- Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards.	Results are used to satisfy state and federal requirements for the annual assessment of the English language proficiency of English Language Learners.
World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Screener	State-mandated	Students with a home language other than English	The WIDA Screener or W-APT placement test is used to identify students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).	This placement test is used to identify English Language Learners.
State Accountability				
N.C. Beginning-of-Grade (BOG) • ELA/ Reading - Grade 3	State-mandated	Grade 3	The Beginning of Grade (BOG) is the state's mandated reading assessment to collect baseline data in English/Language Arts (ELA).	Results are used to measure student growth and proficiency.
N.C. End-of-Grade (EOG) exams • Reading - Grade 3, 4, 5 • Math - Grades 3, 4, 5 • Science - Grade 5	State-mandated	Grades 3-5	The EOG assessments are state-mandated tests that measure students' mastery of state standards in ELA/Reading, math and science.	The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) uses EOG results as one measure of school accountability. Summary results are also used for school improvement actions.

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Read-to-Achieve (RtA)	Optional – Students who qualify will be offered the opportunity to take this assessment.	Students in grades 3-4 who have not demonstrated reading proficiency at the 3rd grade level.	The RtA Alternate Assessment of reading comprehension is administered to students who have not demonstrated reading proficiency appropriate for a 3rd grade student on a State-approved standardized test and do not have a Good Cause Exemption. Proficiency on this assessment satisfies the Read-to-Achieve law.	Results are used to determine whether or not students have demonstrated mastery of the 3rd grade reading standards thereby satisfying the Read-to-Achieve law.
Grade 3 Reading Portfolio	Schools decide if the portfolio will be used on a student-by-student basis.	Students in grades 3-4 who are not demonstrating reading proficiency at the 3rd grade level.	The Grade 3 Reading Portfolio is a way for students to demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for a third-grade student. A portfolio of evidence from eleven reading standards is collected and maintained by the teacher throughout the school year. If the student demonstrates proficiency on the portfolio, they will satisfy the Read-to-Achieve Law.	A completed portfolio must contain evidence of proficiency in eleven standards with an average score of 70% or higher. Results will determine whether or not the student has satisfied the Read-to-Achieve law.

Assessments Given by Grade Level – Middle

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Reading, Mathematics, and Science				
Multi-Tiered System of Support Screeners for Reading, Math and Social/Emotional	State-mandated	Grades 6-8	The assessments are at the sub-skill level to determine specific diagnostic information to inform teacher instruction.	These universal screeners allow schools to assess sub-skills to inform instruction to address specific learning gaps.
Benchmark assessments for Reading, Math, and Science	Required by DPS	Grades 6-8 Reading & Math Grade 8 Science	Comprehensive assessments administered two times a year to determine student understanding and growth on grade-level standards.	Teachers use these results to guide and inform both individual and small-group instruction. The results are used by teachers/schools to determine areas for enrichment and remediation aligned to standards that have been taught.
Common District Assessments (CDAs) • NC Math I • Math grades 6-8 • ELA grades 6-8 • Science grade 8	Required for High Priority schools; otherwise, it is a school-level decision (check with your school)	Middle school students enrolled in these courses and where teachers have elected to administer the District CDAs	To inform instruction and provide feedback to students regarding their progress.	Results are used as formative assessments to inform students of their progress in these courses. Teachers also use the data to inform instruction.
English Language Learners				
ACCESS for English language learners (ELLs)	State-mandated	ELLs in grades K-12	The ACCESS for ELLs is a large-scale test of English language proficiency based on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards.	Results are used to satisfy state and federal requirements for the annual assessment of the language proficiency of English language learners.

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Screener	State-mandated	Any student with a home language other than English	The WIDA Screener placement test is used to identify students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).	This placement test is used to identify students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
State Accountability				
N.C. End-of-Course (EOC) exams for High School Courses taught in Middle School	State-mandated	Students enrolled in a high school credit course (Math I & III)	The EOC assessments are state-mandated tests that measure mastery of State Standards.	The results of the EOC tests are used for state accreditation and compliance with state and federal mandates. Individual student results are used as one measure to make educational decisions. Summary results are used as one measure to guide school improvement actions. Per North Carolina State Board of Education policy, schools are to use results from all EOC tests as at least 20 percent of the student's final grade for each respective course.
N.C. End of Grade (EOG) Exams • Reading - Grade 6, 7, 8 • Math - Grades 6, 7, 8 • Science - Grade 8	State-mandated	Grades 6-8	The EOG assessments are state-mandated tests that measure students' mastery of state standards in ELA/Reading, math and science.	The results of the EOG tests are used for overall school proficiency scores. Individual student results are used as one measure to make educational decisions. Summary results are used as one measure to guide school improvement actions.

Assessments Given by Grade Level – High

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Reading, Mathematics, and Science				
Benchmarks • NC Math I • NC Math III • English II • Biology	Required by DPS	High school students enrolled in these courses	To inform instruction and provide feedback to students regarding their progress.	Results are used as formative assessments to inform students of their progress in these courses. Teachers also use the data to inform instruction.
Common District Assessments (CDAs) • NC Math I • NC Math II • NC Math III • English II • Biology	Required for High Priority schools; otherwise, it is a school-level decision (check with your school)	High school students enrolled in these courses, where teachers have elected to administer the District CDAs	To inform instruction and provide feedback to students regarding their progress.	Results are used as formative assessments to inform students of their progress in these courses. Teachers also use the data to inform instruction.
World Languages District Benchmarks and Final Exams	Required by DPS	All students enrolled in Spanish I, II, III; French I, II, III; Spanish for Native Speakers I, II; Chinese I, II; Latin I & II; Russian I & II; ASL I & II	To inform instruction and provide feedback to students regarding their progress.	Results are used as formative assessments to inform students of their progress in these courses. Teachers also use the data to inform instruction. The final exams count for 20% of the overall grade.

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate				
Advanced Placement (AP) Exams	Expected for students enrolled in AP Courses; optional for other students	High school students who choose to take an exam, regardless of whether they are enrolled in an AP course.	The AP program allows students to take college-level courses and exams to earn college credit. Students who score a level 3 or higher are guaranteed college credit by any UNC system university. A score of 3 or higher is also honored for credit by many colleges and universities. AP exams consist of multiple-choice and free-response items. All AP exams are optional for students.	Students' AP exam results enhance their college applications and eligibility for scholarships. Results are also used by high schools for advising and counseling students, by DPS for evaluating instructional effectiveness and planning curriculum, and by colleges and universities to make decisions regarding admissions and scholarships.
International Baccalaureate (IB) Course Exams	Required by IB	IB juniors and seniors in the final year of an IB course	At the end of each course, students sit for an external examination prepared by an International Board of Examiners, which has the final authority on the setting of examinations and the assessment of all candidates for the awarding of the IB diploma. International Baccalaureate course exams are rigorous, and performance is measured against predetermined criteria rather than the performance of other students taking the same examinations.	Results are used by high schools for advising and counseling students, by DPS and IB for evaluating instructional effectiveness and planning curriculum, to determine awarding of IB diplomas, and by colleges and universities to make decisions regarding admissions, scholarships and course credit or placement.
College Entrance Exams				
ACT	State-mandated	Grade 11	The ACT is a standardized, curriculum-based, multiple-choice achievement test that includes four areas: English, mathematics, reading and science. The ACT assesses skills and knowledge that are important for success in college.	The results are used to fulfill state accountability measures. Results are also used by high schools for advising and counseling students, identifying opportunities for remediation and enrichment, and by colleges and universities to make decisions regarding admissions, scholarships and loans and course placement.

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Pre-ACT	State-mandated	Grade 10	Pre-Act allows students to take a practice ACT to inform progress. Pre-ACT mirrors the ACT and includes four multiple-choice tests in English, math, reading, and science.	The results are used for advising and counseling students and identifying opportunities for remediation and enrichment prior to the ACT.
Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/ NMSQT)	Optional	Select Students Grade 11	The PSAT is a standardized, multiple-choice test that includes three sections: critical reading, mathematics and writing. The test provides practice for the SAT and allows students the opportunity to enter National Merit scholarship programs. Individual PSAT results are helpful for advising and counseling students.	The results are used for advising and counseling students and identifying opportunities for remediation and enrichment prior to the SAT. Students who qualify for the National Merit Scholarship may receive scholarships that supplement the costs of college expenses.
Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Optional	High school students bound for colleges	There are two types of SAT tests offered: the SAT and the SAT Subject Tests. The SAT is a standardized, multiple-choice test with three sections: critical reading, mathematics and writing. The SAT assesses skills students need to be successful in college.	Results are used by high schools for advising and counseling students, by DPS for evaluating instructional effectiveness and planning curriculum, and by colleges and universities to make decisions regarding admissions, scholarships and loans, course placement and academic advising.
English Language Learners				
ACCESS for English language learners (ELLs)	State-mandated	English language learners in grades K-12	The ACCESS for ELLs is a large-scale test of English language proficiency based on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards.	Results are used to satisfy state and federal requirements for the annual assessment of the English language proficiency of English language learners.

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Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Screener	State-mandated	Students with a home language other than English	The WIDA Screener placement test is used to identify students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).	This placement test is used to identify LEP students.
State Accountability				
N.C. End-of-Course (EOC) exams • Biology • English II • NC Math I • NC Math III	State-mandated	Students enrolled in an EOC course	The EOC assessments are state-mandated tests that measure mastery of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts/reading and mathematics and the North Carolina Essential Standards for Science.	The results of the EOC tests are used for state accreditation and compliance with federal mandates. Individual student results are used as one measure to make educational decisions. Summary results are used as one measure to guide school improvement actions. Per N.C. State Board of Education policy, schools are to use results from all EOC tests as at least 20 percent of the student's final grade for each respective course.
WorkKeys	State-mandated	Grade 12 - Career and Technical Education concentrators	The three ACT WorkKeys assessments measure mastery of Applied Mathematics, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents.	Results are the basis of the National Career Readiness Certificate program and connect work skills, training and skill testing for educators and employers.
Career/Technical Education				
CTE Exams, Credentials and Performance-based Measures	State-mandated	Students enrolled in a CTE course	The CTE assessments are state-mandated tests that measure mastery of Career and Technical Education standards. Students have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized certificates or credentials that make them globally competitive for work and post-secondary education.	The results of CTE tests are used for state accreditation and compliance with federal mandates. Individual student results are used as one measure to make educational decisions. Summary results are used as one measure to guide school improvement actions. Per N.C. State Board of Education policy, schools are to use results from all CTE tests as at least 20 percent of the student's final grade for each respective course.

Other Assessments – Various Grade Levels

Name of Assessment	Required or Optional?	Who takes it?	What is it and why is it important?	How are results used?
Nationally Normed Tests				
Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)	Required by DPS	Grade 2	CogAT is a Universal Screener that is used to measure general thinking and problem-solving skills and indicates how well the student uses these skills to solve verbal, quantitative and nonverbal problems.	In combination with other relevant information about a student, scores can be used to adapt instruction in ways that enhance the student's success in learning. Scores may also be used as part of the identification process for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program.
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	Optional	Grades 2-12	ITBS® is a nationally standardized achievement test for K-12 students that measures Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science.	Scores can be used to compare a student's scores to children across the country. Scores may also be used as part of the identification process for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program.
Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)	Optional	Grades K-12	A cognitive abilities test measuring verbal, nonverbal and quantitative skills in students K-12.	Scores reflect a student's ability related to his/her academic success providing educators and parents information about a student's thinking and problem-solving skills. Scores may also be used as part of the identification process for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program.
Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)	Optional	Grades K-5	A nonverbal group-administered abilities test used to estimate students' reasoning and problem-solving skills.	Scores can be used to measure a student's aptitude, focusing on analytic and problem-solving skills rather than specific knowledge. Scores may also be used as part of the identification process for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program.

Woodcock Johnson IV, Test of Achievement	Optional	Grades K-12	WJ IV ACH includes 20 tests for measuring four broad academic domains: reading, written language, mathematics, and academic knowledge.	Scores may be used as part of the identification process for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program.

Resources

For more information about testing and assessments, please visit the websites listed below.

- **NC Department of Public Instruction:** http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/

- **DPS Student Handbook:** English | Español

- **SAT/PSAT:** https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat

- **ACT:** http://www.act.org/

- **Advanced Placement:** https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home

- **International Baccalaureate:** https://www.ibo.org/

- **Career Technical Education (CTE):** https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/career-and-technical-education

DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2023-24 Office of Assessments Monthly Calendar
Research and Accountability

2023 Jul
- RTA - Summer
- EOC – Summer
- CDM - Summer

2023 Aug
- EOC - Summer
- BOG3 (Year-Round)
- Grade 3 Portfolio

2023 Sep
- BOG3 (Traditional)
- RtA Fall (Year-Round)
- Fall CDM
- Grade 3 Portfolio

2023 Oct
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- PreACT (10th grade)
- CCRAA – 10
- RtA Fall (Traditional)

2023 Nov
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- PreACT (10th grade)
- CCRAA – 10
- Fall ACT WorkKeys

2023 Dec
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- Fall ACT WorkKeys
- EOCs (Year-Round & Specialty 4X4) High Schools

2024 Jan
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- EOCs (Traditional 4x4) High Schools
- ACCESS & Alt. ACCESS

2024 Feb
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- ACCESS & Alt. ACCESS
- Spring CDM
- ACT
- CCRAA-11
- NCEXTEND1- 11
- Sping ACT WorkKeys

2024 Mar
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- ACT
- CCRAA-11
- NCEXTEND1 – 11
- Spring ACT WorkKeys
- ACCESS & Alt. ACCESS

2024 Apr
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- ACT
- CCRAA-11
- NCEXTEND1 - 11

2024 May
- Grade 3 Portfolio
- EOGs
- EOCs
- NCEXTEND1
- RtA Spring

2024 Jun
- EOGs
- EOCs
- NCEXTEND1
- RtA Spring
- Take Two (After the last student day)

The EOGs must be administered during the last ten (10) days of the school year. EOCs must be administered during the last five (5) days (4x4/semester courses/summer school) or the last ten (10) days (traditional yearlong schedule) of the instructional period. (State Board policy TEST-016)