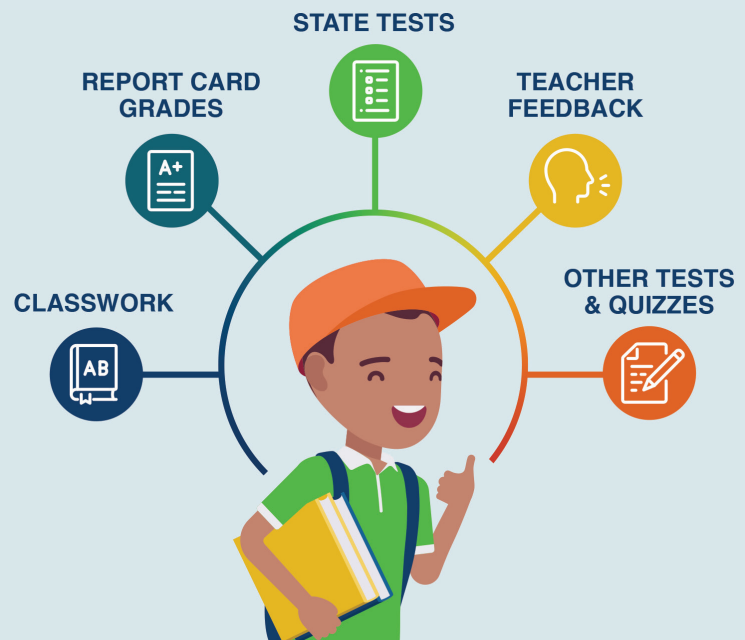




## A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN NORTH CAROLINA: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



### State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA, requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in third through eighth grade and once in high school. In North Carolina, students in third through eighth grade take End-of-Grade tests (EOG) in reading and math. Students in fifth and eighth grade also take an EOG test in science. High school students take End-of-Course tests (EOC) in Biology, English 2 and NC Math 1 and 3. Results from the EOC tests count for at least 20% of a student's final grade in each course.

While state tests are just one of many ways to measure student progress, they are the only measures that are consistent from school to school and across the state. They are important for families to see how well their child is meeting expectations compared with other students across the state.

## Read to Achieve: A Focus on Third Grade Reading

Studies show that third grade is a critical year for students. By the end of third grade, students should have learned fundamental reading skills that will help them understand what they read and think critically in fourth grade and beyond. As a result, North Carolina has a Read to Achieve policy that requires all third grade students to achieve at least a Level 3 (out of five) on the reading EOG to move onto fourth grade. A student may be held back in third grade if they do not score at least a Level 3. The school is required to provide additional support and interventions for students who score below Level 3 so they can improve critical reading skills and retake the test.

### A Focus on Grade Level Skills

The EOG and EOC tests are focused on grade level material and are aligned to the North Carolina state standards (North Carolina Standard Course of Study). The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom every day throughout the year, which are the skills and knowledge that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The tests are typically taken in school in May or June each year. They include a variety of different types of questions, including traditional multiple choice and open ended questions that ask students to explain and support their answer. Students may be asked to take paper and pencil or online versions of the tests.

#### Grade 6: Math

What is the value of  $(5r + \frac{1}{5})^2$  when  $r = 0$

Enter your response here:

Only 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, ., -, and / are allowed in your answer.

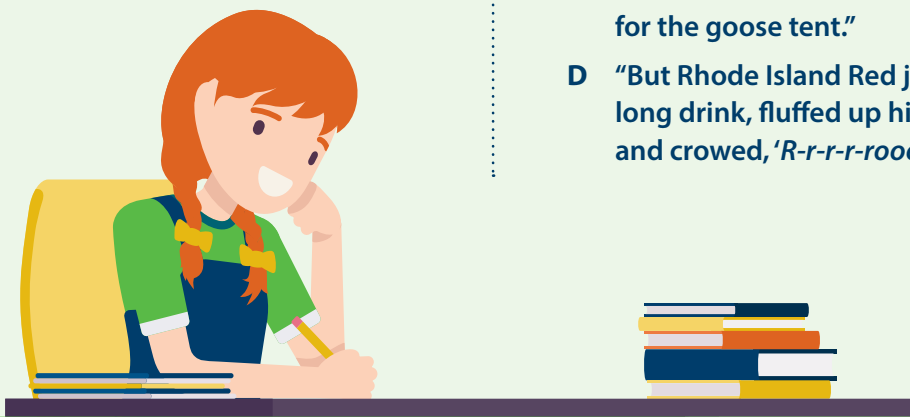
Answers that are mixed numbers must be entered as an improper fraction or a decimal.

#### Grade 3: ELA

Use both parts of this text to answer this question.

**Which statement from the text shows that Rhode Island Red is proud?**

- A "And in the middle of the poultry tent sat Rhode Island Red, the rooster."
- B "One morning, Red pecked at the latch on his cage."
- C "Rhode Island Red headed straight for the goose tent."
- D "But Rhode Island Red just drank a long drink, fluffed up his feathers, and crowed, 'R-r-r-roooo!'"



## Useful Information for All

### **FAMILIES:** Understanding Grade Level Performance

The Individual Student Report can help students and families better understand how well they are meeting the expectations of the grade level and whether they are on track for the next grade. If a student doesn't reach Level 3, they may need additional support or practice to master grade level skills and content. The score report can also help families start meaningful conversations with teachers, to discuss each student's areas of improvement and identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

#### Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's Individual Student Report :

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What are short term learning goals for my child to measure/show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



### **TEACHERS:** Informing Instruction

Teachers can use previous year EOG results to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help. State test results can also help teachers improve their instruction from one year to the next. They can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

Students may take different types of tests throughout the school year, depending on the school or district. Some students take benchmark tests (also called diagnostic or formative tests), such as MAP Growth, i-Ready or NC Check-Ins. These may be taken several times a year and measure mastery of important concepts and skills in reading and math. Typically, students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their "starting point" and again throughout the year to measure their progress. They help teachers identify and address learning gaps so they can provide additional support for students to stay on track to meet grade level expectations. While the state tests are only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade level expectations.

### **SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions**

State test results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about how to effectively meet the needs of schools and students. School and district level test scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and indicate if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use state test scores to understand what strategies and changes are working, so they help improve other schools and classrooms in their community.



### **STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve**

State leaders use EOG/EOC results to identify schools and districts that need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as trends among certain groups of students that performed much lower on the test than the rest of the students in that school. These schools may receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers or tutors or they may purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students. EOG/EOC results can also help identify effective programs and practices, so they can be used in more schools across the state.

#### **Where Can I Go for More Information?**

- For more information, visit [DPI.NC.gov/Districts-Schools/Testing-and-School-Accountability/State-Tests](https://DPI.NC.gov/Districts-Schools/Testing-and-School-Accountability/State-Tests)
- To see a practice test, visit [Data.NCSU.edu/nctest/Destination.html](https://Data.NCSU.edu/nctest/Destination.html)
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit [PTA.org/FamilyGuides](https://PTA.org/FamilyGuides)
- For more information about the North Carolina PTA visit [NCPTA.org/](https://NCPTA.org/)
- For free activities to support learning in ELA, math and science, download the Gooru Navigator App for Learners and Parents at [Gooru.org/About/](https://Gooru.org/About/)

