



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA


DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

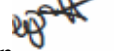
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March 15, 2018

**TO** LEA Superintendents  
Charter School Directors

**FROM** Stacey Wilson-Norman, Chief Academic Officer   
Academic Services

Tammy L. Howard, Director   
Accountability Services Division

William J. Hussey, Director   
Exceptional Children Division

## JUSTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR EXCEEDING 1.0 PERCENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are eligible to take an alternate assessment aligned with the alternate academic achievement standards (see the attached eligibility criteria). LEAs and charter schools must provide sufficient training such that school staff who participate as members of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team understand the eligibility criteria and implement the guidelines established by the state so that all students are appropriately assessed.

The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject using the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards does not exceed 1.0 percent of the total number of all students assessed in each subject. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has reviewed participation data for the NCEXTEND1 assessment in 2016–17 and found at the state level that over 1.0 percent of students in North Carolina participated in some of the NCEXTEND1 content areas. Additionally, data showed there are more than 100 districts and charter schools that exceeded the 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment during the 2016–17 school year.

Based on the 2016–17 school year participation data, the NCDPI anticipates the state will exceed the 1.0 percent cap on alternate assessment participation in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading at grades 3–8, Science at grades 5 and 8, and Science at grade 11 for the 2017–18 school year.

Table 1

Subject and Grade(s)	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
Mathematics Grades 3–8*	7,474	702,479	1.1%
Mathematics Grade 10	1,060	111,938	0.9%
ELA/Reading Grade 3–8*	7,477	702,419	1.1%
ELA/Reading Grade 10	1,060	116,259	0.9%
Science Grades 5 & 8*	2,560	235,064	1.1%
Science Grade 11*	1,161	101,972	1.1%

\* Subject areas that exceed 1.0 percent of test population.

### DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY SERVICES

6314 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6314 | (919) 807-3769 | Fax (919) 807-3772

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

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As required by the ESSA, the NCDPI must notify districts and charter schools that it has identified (based on 2016–17 school year participation data) as being likely to exceed 1.0 percent of students assessed in a subject area on the NCEXTEND1 for the 2017–18 school year. These identified districts and charter schools must provide the NCDPI a justification of the need to assess more than 1.0 percent of its students on the NCEXTEND1 in any subject. Districts and charter schools that did not exceed 1.0 percent in 2016–17, but anticipate exceeding in 2017–18, must also submit a justification.

To assist in this process, assessment participation data for the identified districts and charter schools is located on the secure shell at 2017/ALTPARTXXX.xls (where XXX is the LEA or charter school code). Superintendents and charter school directors must review this data and determine if participation on the NCEXTEND1 in any subject (as delineated in Table 1) may possibly exceed the 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment for the 2017–18 school year.

If it is determined the participation is anticipated to exceed 1.0 percent, the *ESSA* requires the district or charter school to complete and submit a justification (see the attached justification form). Justifications from each district and charter school will be reviewed by the NCDPI, and follow up actions will be determined based on the information in the justification document. Each district's and charter school's staff for students with disabilities and testing/accountability should collaborate to provide the justification. An electronic copy of the justification form is posted on the Testing News Network (TNN) home page under the Administrative Documents section.

The completed justification document must be signed by the superintendent/charter school director, Exceptional Childrens' director, and LEA/charter school test coordinator. The document must be scanned and emailed to [alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov) by May 4, 2018. The justification document will be publicly posted. As such, the document must not contain any personally identifiable student information. The NCDPI will notify districts/charter schools in writing if further information is needed and will include next steps. For questions, please contact your district Exceptional Children Director or Regional Accountability Coordinator.

As always, thank you for all you do for our schools and for ensuring that we appropriately instruct and assess all students in North Carolina.

SWN:TLH:njc

c: Mark Johnson, State Superintendent  
Maria Pitre-Martin, Deputy State Superintendent  
Sherry Thomas, Assistant Director, Exceptional Children  
Dave Machado, Director, Charter Schools  
Deanna Townsend-Smith, Assistant Director, Charter Schools  
Nancy Carolan, Section Chief, Testing Policy and Operations  
Dreama McCoy, Section Chief, Supporting Teaching and Related Services  
Curtis Sonneman, Section Chief, Analysis and Reporting  
Regional Accountability Coordinator  
District Exceptional Children Director  
LEA/Charter School Test Coordinator

Attachments



**Signatures**

Superintendent/Charter School Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Exceptional Children Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

LEA/Charter Test Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The completed justification form must be signed by the superintendent/charter school director, exceptional children’s director, and testing coordinator. The form must be scanned and emailed to [alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:alternateassessment@dpi.nc.gov) by **May 4, 2018**.

The NCDPI will notify districts/charter schools in writing if further information is needed and will include next steps. For questions, please contact your Exceptional Children Director or Regional Accountability Coordinator.

**Note:** See page 3 for additional information that can be included but is not required.

The following additional information can be included with the justification documentation, but is not required:

- Evidence that all educators who administer the alternate assessment meet the requirements for test administrators and have received test administration training prior to administering the alternate assessment.
- Evidence that all students have appropriate access to accessibility features on statewide tests.
- A review of the percentage of students taking the alternate assessment at grade 3 versus grades 4–7 versus grade 8 versus high school and an explanation of how Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are making consistent participation decisions across grade levels.
- A review of data to determine if students are moving from the alternate assessment to the general assessment or vice versa and an explanation for grade levels where this action is more prevalent.
- Evidence that the district is providing appropriate supports and services to students with disabilities to assist in meeting the same graduation requirements as their non-disabled peers.
- An evaluation of students instructed using the Extended Content Standards, but who are spending more than eighty percent (80%) of their day in the general education setting.
- Evidence of data-driven team decisions to determine appropriate instruction and assessment.
- An assessment of varying practices across a district and/or between different schools.
- An explanation of special programs or populations that are served by the district/charter school that may contribute to the alternate assessment participation rate.

## ***NCEXTENDI*** **Eligibility Criteria**

The ***NCEXTENDI*** alternate assessment is a performance-based alternate assessment designed to assess students with significant cognitive disabilities who are being taught using the North Carolina Extended Content Standards. ***NCEXTENDI*** alternate assessment items are grade-level, performance-based, multiple-choice items that measure the standards specified in the North Carolina Extended Content Standards. These Extended Content Standards are available for download at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/ncecs>.

The ***NCEXTENDI*** alternate assessment is available for the following grades and content areas:

- Grade 3 English language arts/reading and mathematics
- Grade 4 English language arts/reading and mathematics
- Grade 5 English language arts/reading, mathematics, and science
- Grade 6 English language arts/reading and mathematics
- Grade 7 English language arts/reading and mathematics
- Grade 8 English language arts/reading, mathematics, and science
- Grade 10 English II, Math I, and biology
- Grade 11 English language arts/reading, mathematics, and science (combined in one assessment)

Note: If the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines, based on the following eligibility criteria, that the ***NCEXTENDI*** is the most appropriate assessment for a student, then that student must be assessed using the ***NCEXTENDI*** in all content areas assessed at that grade level.

To determine participation in any of the ***NCEXTENDI*** alternate assessments, the following eligibility requirements must be met:

- The student must have a current IEP.
- The student is enrolled in grades 3–8, 10, or 11, according to PowerSchool. Note: Only those students enrolled in 11th grade for the first time are required to take the ***NCEXTENDI*** alternate assessment at grade 11.
- The student is instructed using the North Carolina Extended Content Standards in all assessed content areas (i.e., English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, and Science).
- The student has a significant cognitive disability.
  - The student’s disability significantly impacts adaptive behaviors, defined as those skills which are essential for someone to live and function independently.
  - The student requires extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains.
  - The student uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways.

The vast majority of students with disabilities do not have a significant cognitive disability. The *NCEXTENDI* is not appropriate for students who

- are being instructed in any or all of the assessed general grade-/course-level content standards of the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* (i.e., English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, and Science);
- demonstrate delays only in academic achievement;
- demonstrate delays only in selected areas of academic achievement;
- demonstrate delays owing primarily to behavioral issues; or
- if in high school, are pursuing a North Carolina high school diploma (including students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study).

Evidence for the decision to participate in *NCEXTENDI* is not based on

- a disability category or label,
- poor attendance or extended absences,
- native language/social, cultural, or economic differences,
- expected poor performance on the general education assessment,
- academic or other services the student receives,
- educational environment or instructional setting,
- percent of time receiving special education services,
- English Learner (EL) status,
- low reading level/achievement level,
- anticipated disruptive behavior,
- impact of student scores on the accountability program,
- administration decision,
- anticipated emotional distress, or
- need for accommodations to participate in the assessment process.

IEP teams can use the *North Carolina Alternate Assessment Decision-Making Chart* in Appendix D of the *2017–18 Testing Students with Disabilities* publication to aid in decision making regarding the *NCEXTENDI* alternate assessment for students.

In rare cases, students who are medically fragile because of a significant medical emergency and/or condition and are unable to participate in a specific test administration may be granted a medical exception. The principal or school test coordinator must contact the school system test coordinator for procedures on how to request a medical exception. All medical exceptions must be approved by the Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program.