



SENATE BILL 621: Testing Reduction Act of 2019.

2019-2020 General Assembly

Committee:	House Education - K-12. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	June 25, 2019
Introduced by:	Sens. Tillman, Ballard, Sawyer	Prepared by:	Kara McCraw* Committee Counsel
Analysis of:	Third Edition		

OVERVIEW: *Senate Bill 621 would makes the following changes to testing:*

- *Eliminate the North Carolina Final Exams (NCFEs).*
- *Replace end-of-grade assessments (EOGs) with a "through-grade assessment model" similar to the NC Check-Ins.*
- *Replace end-of-course assessments (EOCs) with a nationally recognized assessment of high school achievement, such as the ACT or SAT.*
- *Require reporting on and reductions in local testing.*
- *Prohibit graduation projects as a condition of graduation.*
- *Require a review of the third grade reading end-of-grade test to ensure alignment with the Read to Achieve alternative assessment.*

PART I: ELIMINATE NC FINAL EXAMS (NCFES)

CURRENT LAW: Under the terms of the now-expired federal Race to the Top grant, North Carolina had to provide a growth measure for every teacher in the State. Since growth measures require some type of standardized measure of student achievement, NCFEs were created to meet that requirement for courses that did not have an EOG or EOC. Under State Board Policy TEST-016, NCFEs are used to provide growth data for teachers of these courses. NCFEs are not currently required by State or federal law.

BILL ANALYSIS: Part I would eliminate the NC Final Exams.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Part I would be effective when it becomes law and would eliminate the NCFEs beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

PART II: REPLACE EOGs WITH THROUGH-GRADE ASSESSMENT MODEL

CURRENT LAW: Under G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(1), the State Board must adopt tests for grades three through 12 that are required by federal law or as a condition of a federal grant. These assessments must be administered in the last 10 days of yearlong courses and in the last 5 days of semester courses. For this purpose, the State Board adopted the EOGs and EOCs. Separate reading and math EOGs are administered in grades 3 through 8, and a science EOG is administered in grades 5 and 8.

Data from the EOGs are used to calculate a portion of the school performance scores and grades required by G.S. 115C-83.15, as well as satisfy federal accountability requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

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BILL ANALYSIS: Part II of the bill would replace the EOGs with a through-grade assessment model, which would be administered as three shorter tests throughout the year rather than one long test at the end of the year. The final summative score would be determined by averaging the student's performance on at least two of the through-grade assessments.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Part II of the bill would be effective when it becomes law and would require the replacement of the EOGs with a through-grade assessment model beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

PART III: REPLACE EOCs WITH A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ASSESSMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT AND COLLEGE READINESS

CURRENT LAW: Under G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(1), the State Board must adopt tests for grades three through 12 that are required by federal law or as a condition of a federal grant. These assessments must be administered in the last 10 days of yearlong courses and in the last 5 days of semester courses. For this purpose, the State Board adopted the EOGs and EOCs. EOCs are administered in the high school courses of Math I, English II, and Biology.

Data from the EOCs are used to calculate a portion of the school performance scores and grades required by G.S. 115C-83.15, as well as satisfy federal accountability requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(4) requires the State Board to adopt a nationally norm-referenced college admissions test to make available to public schools to administer to all students in the eleventh grade unless the student has already taken a comparable test and scored at or above a level set by the State Board. Students can submit scores on this college admissions test to colleges as part of their application process. Additionally, data from this test are used to calculate the college readiness component of the school performance grades.

BILL ANALYSIS: Part III of the bill would replace the EOCs with a nationally recognized assessment of high school achievement or college readiness, such as the ACT or SAT. Instead of taking EOCs in Math I, English II, and Biology, student scores on the subject-specific portions of the nationally recognized assessment would be used to satisfy State and federal high school testing requirements.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The replacement of the EOCs with a nationally recognized assessment would be effective January 1, 2020, and would require the nationally recognized assessment beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. Corresponding changes to the school performance grade calculations would be effective January 1, 2021, and would apply beginning with school performance grades issued based on data from the 2020-2021 school year.

PART IV: PLAN TO REDUCE STANDARDIZED TESTING BY LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

CURRENT LAW: Under G.S. 115C-174.11(d), the State Board cannot require public schools to administer any standardized tests except those otherwise required by State or federal law. However, local boards of education may require additional standardized assessments.

BILL ANALYSIS: Part IV of the bill would require local boards of education, every two years, to review local standardized testing requirements. If either the number of tests administered or the number of hours required for students to complete the tests is higher than the State average, the local board would be required to submit to the State Board and DPI a plan to put local testing in line with the State average. The State Board must waive this requirement if the local board has made significant progress toward reducing local testing. As part of its annual reporting to Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC), the State Board would be required to provide a summary of these local plans.

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The bill would also require the State Board to provide in its annual testing summary the average over the prior two-year period of (i) the number of tests administered and (ii) the number of hours required for students to complete the tests. The summary would be based on data reported by local boards of education under existing law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Part IV would become effective when it becomes law and would apply beginning with reports issued in 2020 based on data from the 2019-2020 school year.

PART V: PROHIBIT GRADUATION PROJECTS AS A CONDITION OF GRADUATION

CURRENT LAW: Under G.S. 115C-12(9d)b.2., the State Board cannot require that students complete a graduation project as a condition of graduation from high school. Local boards of education, however, can include such a condition.

BILL ANALYSIS: Part V of the bill would prohibit local boards of education from making graduation projects a condition of graduation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Part V would be effective when it becomes law and would prohibit local boards of education from requiring graduation projects beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

PART VI: EXAMINATION OF THIRD GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENTS TO BETTER MEET GOALS OF READ TO ACHIEVE

CURRENT LAW: Under Part 1A of Chapter 115C (Read to Achieve), students are required to demonstrate reading proficiency on a State-approved test of reading comprehension to be promoted from the third grade. Students may also be promoted if the student demonstrates reading proficiency through an alternate assessment approved by the State Board of Education.

BILL ANALYSIS: Part VI would require DPI to study the third grade reading EOG to check for alignment with the Read to Achieve alternative assessment. Based on its examination, DPI would be required to modify the third grade reading assessment and report on those modifications by March 15, 2020, to the JLEOC.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Part VI would become effective when it becomes law.

**This summary was substantially contributed to by Brian Gwyn, Committee Counsel.*