

March 5, 2007

H 494. SCHOOLS TO USE NATIONALLY STANDARDIZED TESTS. Filed 3/5/07. *TO PROVIDE FOR THE USE OF NATIONALLY STANDARDIZED TESTS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.*

To be summarized in tomorrow's *Daily Bulletin*.

Intro. by Cleveland.

GS 115C

March 6, 2007

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The current statewide testing program (GS 115C-174.11) authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt three testing programs: (1) assessment instruments for first and second grades; (2) a statewide competency testing program to be administered to all ninth grade students in public schools with opportunities for retesting for students who fail to meet the minimally required standard for graduation; and (3) an annual testing program for grades three through twelve. In addition, under current law, the SBE is required to adopt measurement devices for these three statewide testing programs that may or may not be nationally standardized tests. This act makes the following changes to the statewide testing program.

Purposes of the statewide testing program. Amends GS 115C-174.10 to add as a fourth purpose, to facilitate comparison of North Carolina student performance to national student performance. Current law lists three purposes, (1) to assure that all high school graduates have the minimum skills and knowledge to function as a member of society; (2) to provide a means for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the education process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (3) to establish additional means for making the education system accountable to the public.

Components of the testing program. Amends 115C-174.11 to require that the SBE adopt nationally standardized tests for the competency testing program. Directs the SBE to develop alternate means for demonstrating minimum competence for students identified under SBE policy as eligible for measurement of competency via one of the alternative means, including students with disabilities who fail to pass the nationally standardized competency tests after two attempts. (Under current law, the SBE may adopt nationally standardized tests or other equivalent measures, or may develop alternate means of testing.)

Additionally requires that the SBE adopt nationally standardized tests for the annual testing program measuring progress toward reading, communication skills, and mathematical skills for grades three through eight (end-of-grade tests), and competencies designated by the SBE for grades nine through 12. States that the SBE may adopt nationally standardized tests for high school end-of-course tests to the extent that such tests are available. (Current law allows adoption of tests that are not nationally standardized but are developed based on and aligned with the North Carolina Course of Study.) Retains current law that prohibits use of nationally standardized tests in first and second grades except as required as a condition of receiving a federal grant under the Reading First Program.

Under current law, the SBE is responsible for establishing policies and guidelines to minimize (1) the time students spend taking tests administered via the State and local testing programs, and (2) the frequency of field testing at any one school. The act amends GS 115C-174.12 to eliminate requirements regarding minimizing the frequency of field testing but retains the requirement that schools not spend more than two days of instructional time per year on practice tests. (Field tests are used in the final design of state generated tests. Under the provisions of this act, state generated tests are to be replaced with nationally standardized tests.) Makes conforming changes.

Under current law, the SBE has the power to develop content standards and exit standards and is charged with making those standards developed in the core academic areas measurable. The act amends GS 115C-12(9c) to direct the SBE to make those standards measurable by nationally standardized tests whenever possible. Makes conforming changes to GS 115C-81(g) requiring the use of nationally standardized tests where available. Amends GS 115C-105.33(a) to require that the statewide accountability system that sets annual performance standards for each school to measure growth in student performance change the performance standards to be

based on nationally standardized tests. Currently, the performance standards are based on the statewide testing program known as the ABCs.

Intro. by Cleveland.

GS 115C