



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Nationally Norm-Referenced College
Admissions Test

SL 2017-57, (SB 257), SECTION 7.26C.(c)

Date Due: May 15, 2019 – UPDATED June 15, 2020

Report # 104A

DPI Chronological Schedule, 2018-2019

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Introduction

Session Law 2017-257, the Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2017, became law on June 28, 2017. Among its many provisions, the Session Law made certain changes to General Statute 115C-174.11 and state law concerning nationally normed-reference college admissions tests.

In particular, Section 7.26C.(a) of the Session Law modified G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(4) such that the law now states that “to the extent funds are made available, the State Board of Education shall use a competitive bid process to adopt one nationally norm-referenced college admissions test to make available to local school administrative units, regional schools, and charter 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.” Additionally, the G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(4) was revised to state that “to the extent funds are made available for this purpose, and except as otherwise provided in G.S. 115C-174.22, “...the State Board shall plan for and require the administration of diagnostic tests in the eighth and tenth grades that align to the nationally norm-referenced college admissions test adopted by the State Board through the competitive bid process pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(4). The results of the tests shall be used to help diagnose student learning and provide for students an indication of whether they are on track to be remediation-free at a community college or university.”

Further, Section 7.26C.(c) of Session Law 2017-257 stated that the State Board of Education “shall report on the results of the competitive bid process to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division no later than May 15, 2019.”

In response to these statutory requirements, and consistent with G.S. 115C-11(i) and G.S. 115C-21(a)(9), the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction provided technical and administrative assistance to facilitate the competitive bid process. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Purchasing and Contract Section first released a Request for Proposals (RFP) on January 8, 2019. The following chart provides the schedule for the RFP facilitated by NCDPI:

Event	Responsibility	Date and Time
Issue RFP	State	January 8, 2019
Submit Written Questions	Vendor	January 25, 2019 by 2:00 P.M. EST
Provide Response to Questions	State	February 1, 2019
Submit Proposals	Vendor	February 12, 2019
Representative of NCDPI’s four-person evaluation panel provides report on RFP to SBE	State	May 1, 2019
SBE requests that the review panel provide a recommendation with rationale	State	May 2, 2019
Evaluation panel reconvenes and unanimously determines recommendation with rationale	State	May 6, 2019

Event	Responsibility	Date and Time
Evaluation panel representatives provide requested recommendation and rationale to SBE	State	May 13, 2019
SBE reviews rationale provided by evaluation panel and votes to initiate a new RFP process with (1) additional input from local education agencies and postsecondary partners to inform the contract requirements and the evaluation rubric, and (2) a larger, more diverse RFP panel, including assessment experts, representation from LEAs, and post-secondary stakeholders.	State	May 13, 2019
Contract Award	State	June 28, 2019

In addition to the above activities, the State submitted questions to the potential vendors for clarification as part of the proposal review process.

The State received three proposals. The evaluation determined each potential vendor's response to the requirements in the Scope of Work as detailed in the RFP. The outcome of this review was a recommendation for the award of the contract, presented to the State Board of Education on May 13, 2019. After reviewing the information provided by the Department's internal four-person evaluation panel and the rationale for the panel's recommendation, the Board directed the agency to reissue the RFP and institute a process that includes (1) feedback from local education agencies and postsecondary partners to inform the contract requirements and the evaluation rubric and (2) a larger, more diverse RFP panel involving representation from local education agencies, postsecondary stakeholders, and assessment experts to conduct the evaluation. The Board anticipates that it will be better able to make an informed, responsive award with the additional engagement of educators, practitioners, and other stakeholders. Their insights regarding test administration, customer service concerns, and the preferred features for a nationally norm-referenced college admissions test will help ensure that North Carolina has the correct tool to help diagnose student learning and provide for students an indication of whether they are on track to be remediation-free at a community college or university.

UPDATED Next Steps (May 1, 2019)

The Department of Public Instruction staff will work closely with the State Board of Education, LEAs, and other stakeholders to capture feedback on additional information to include in a new RFP for the state's nationally norm-referenced college admissions test. It is expected that a new RFP will issue for advertisement in the next 90 days (mid-August 2019).

UPDATE (June 5, 2019)

The State Board directed the Department of Public Instruction to award the RFP to the current vendor, ACT, for a period of one year with no extensions. The contract was finalized June 28, 2019.

UPDATE: Request for Proposals Issued on August 20, 2019

As requested by the State Board of Education, the NCDPI gathered input from educators, practitioners, and other stakeholders on their perspectives of the purpose and uses of college and career assessments. Of the 168 responses, most were from district/charter school test coordinators (38.3%), district superintendents/charter school directors (17.3%), and administrators (16%). Included in the survey were questions on whether data from various assessments were used to improve instruction, whether the data from the various assessments were used for college planning purposes, and on the preferences for assessment mode (online or paper/pencil) and assessment dates. Respondents also provided open-ended comments.

With the input from the survey, the NCDPI drafted and subsequently issued an RFP for college and career readiness assessments on August 20, 2019. The following chart shows the timeline for the RFP process.

Event	Responsibility	Date and Time
Issue RFP	State	August 20, 2019
Submit written questions	Vendor	August 30, 2019
Provide response to questions	State	September 6, 2019
Submit proposals	Vendor	September 16, 2019
Oral presentations	Vendors	October 16, 2019
Review panel evaluates proposals	State	October/November 2019
Evaluation panel reconvenes and unanimously determines recommendation	State	December 12, 2019
SBE reviews recommendation provided by review panel and votes to initiate contract	State	March 5, 2020
Contract Award	State	TBD

To broaden the perspective of the NCDPI review panel, a district-level curriculum and instruction leader participated in the vendor presentations held on October 16, 2019. This participant was non-voting but provided general feedback on the vendor presentations, focusing on the needs of schools.

The review panel consisted of assessment experts, standards and curriculum experts, and a career and technical education expert. The unanimous recommendation of the review panel was presented to the SBE on January 8, 2020, for discussion. After additional discussion on February 5, 2020, and March 4, 2020, the SBE voted on March 5, 2020, to award the college and career readiness to ACT as follows:

The Grade 11 ACT
The Grade 10 Pre-ACT
The Grade 12 ACT WorkKeys

It was not approved to award the Grade 8 college and career readiness assessment or the Grade 11 ACT Writing Component.

Based on SBE approval and confirmation of available funds from the North Carolina General Assembly, the NCDPI procurement office is proceeding to award the contract to ACT.