

NC Home School Law, Achievement Testing & You

by Greg Munger

North Carolina's home education law regarding achievement testing for home schoolers is really quite simple when you break it down into understandable parts. For example, consider these common questions and their answers . . .

Q. *Who gives the test?*

A. "Each qualified non-public school shall administer. . ."

Q. *When is it to be given?*

A. ". . .At least once in each school year. . ."

Q. *What kind of test is required?*

A. ". . .A nationally standardized test or other nationally standardized equivalent measurement selected by the chief administrative officer. . ."

Q. *What subjects are to be tested?*

A. "English grammar, reading, spelling and mathematics"

Q. *What do I do with the results?*

A. "Maintain records. . .for one year after the testing. . .available for annual inspection by a duly authorized representative of the State of North Carolina."

You can see then, when simply stated, in the matter of the achievement test, you have perfect liberty both to choose the kind of test your child takes and to determine the time, place and setting in which the test is given. You may also choose **who** gives the achievement test to your child. And while DNPE *recommends* that a 3rd party administer the test, NC law makes no such requirement.

It is also helpful to remember that (again according to our state

law) each home school is legally considered a *non-public or private school*. As such, you, the parent-teacher-administrator of your own private school, have all the privileges of controlling every aspect of your children's education.

Along with that privilege, however, comes **responsibility** -- the complete responsibility to develop and teach the curriculum, to organize day-to-day activities, to keep important records of grades, etc., as well as to obtain and annually administer a nationally standardized achievement test.

Since, therefore, you are responsible for such an important task, you may be wondering, "Where do I find these nationally standardized achievement tests? and "How do I administer them?"

One common misconception is that the so-called "end of grade" tests given by the public schools are acceptable for home schools. It is true that G.S. 115C-559 of NC law allows for non-public schools to participate in public school testing programs. However, **"end of grade" tests given by NC public schools do not satisfy NC law for home schools,** because those tests are not nationally standardized; nor do they measure achievement in all the specific areas required for home schools.

Fortunately, there are a number of other good options:

•**Private schools:** If you have contact with one of these traditional classroom schools you may be able to test when they do. Remember, by law, they only have

to test grades 3, 6 & 9, while home schools must test *every student in every grade every year.*

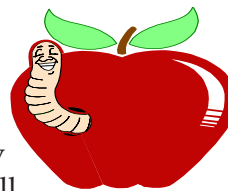
•**Packaged curriculums:** If your curriculum is from a correspondence school or other educational service, you may already have the achievement test provided for you. Check with your supplier for such availability.

•**Private testing services:** By far the greatest number of options are available from independent individuals or companies in the business of providing tests and accompanying services.

These private testing services began to appear several years ago when the achievement test publishers stopped selling tests **directly** to home schooling parents. In the best spirit of free enterprise, many people already involved in home education saw the testing needs home schoolers had and took steps to meet those needs. They set up private, for-profit businesses, contracting with and meeting the often stringent requirements of the test publishers, and subsequently made the tests available to home schooling families and support groups for a small fee. It is from these entrepreneurs that you will usually find the widest range of test types and the best services to meet your needs.

And here, again by law, you are free to choose the service that best suits your student's and school's situation. If you or your child needs a quiet, one-on-one, in-home testing environment then you can find companies that (with varying requirements & prices) will pro-

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vide it. If, on the other hand, a group situation will suffice, that, too, is readily available, usually sponsored by or within your support group.

Which of the nationally standardized tests should you use? NC law makes no requirement and DNPE makes no recommendations. Therefore, you may use one of the big four (ITBS, CAT, Metropolitan, Stanford) or any of a number of lesser-known tests.

Educational researchers generally agree that the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Stanford Ach. Test are both a little more comprehensive because they test "higher order thinking skills" which show how well children reason as well as how they perform repetitive tasks or dexterity skills. But actually, any of the nationally standardized tests (those that have been developed, tested, scored and normed for a group large enough to represent the entire U.S.) will do just fine. And while not necessary, it is generally better for your students and for tracking their year-by-year development and progress (which is, after all, the main purpose of the tests) to stick with the same test from year to year.

You may use the traditional, timed, fill-in-the-bubble, kind of

test (like the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or the California Ach. Tests) in which you are allowed by law to test your own children in your own home. Or you may prefer a non-timed version of these traditional tests (like the PASS test from

Hewitt Research). There is even a short-but-thorough, non-timed, mostly verbal test (called the Woodcock-Johnson) which is only given by a trained administrator who would come to your home or other comfortable location.

"So, what's the next step?" you may ask. With an understanding of North Carolina law and your responsibility to it,

you are now ready to make some choices. **The key to all of this is to choose the test and testing situation that is best for you and your student(s).**

In the pages to follow you will learn all about the tests offered by Piedmont Education Services. If you have any questions, here is how to contact us anytime:

Internet: www.pesdirect.com

Email: gmunger@triad.rr.com

Phone: 336-924-2494, in Winston Salem.



We look forward to serving you.

Happy testing!

Piedmont Education Services is owned and operated by Greg & Bonnie Munger, parents of four children, home schoolers for 14 years and past leaders in state and local support groups.

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TESTS AVAILABLE

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
(vocabulary, word analysis, reading, listening, 4-part language, math, resources, science and social studies for Grades 1-8)

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Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement
(not timed, primarily verbal, individually administered, reduces errors caused by child's reading difficulties, eliminates guessing, provides immediate feedback, tests all subjects required by law, helps to pinpoint aptitudes and learning styles, especially good for slower starters or disabilities, takes only 1 - 2 hours of time, Grades K5-12)

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