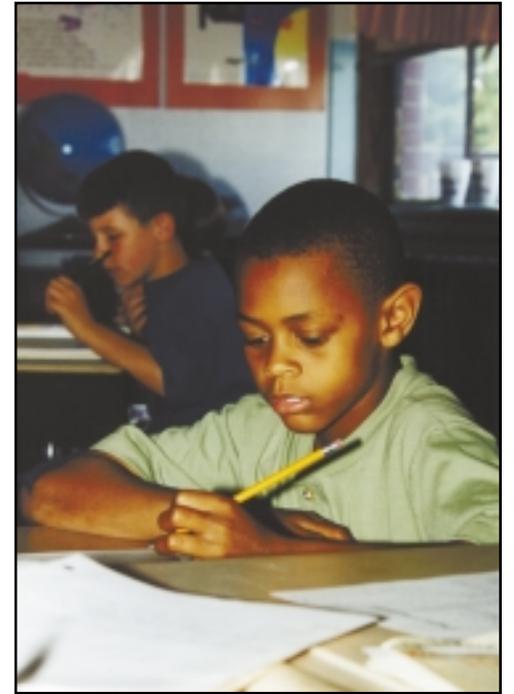


why we TEST



It's the law. North Carolina's general statutes require public schools to test students on their academic progress. The State Board of Education has established "gateways," which are tied to the testing program, that will determine if students in grades 3, 5 and 8 across North Carolina are promoted to the next grade.



Testing also determines whether a student receives a high school diploma. Testing has benefits. It helps teachers and parents assess the academic

progress of students. It helps the school look at ways to better serve all children. But it takes everyone — students, teachers **AND** parents — working together.

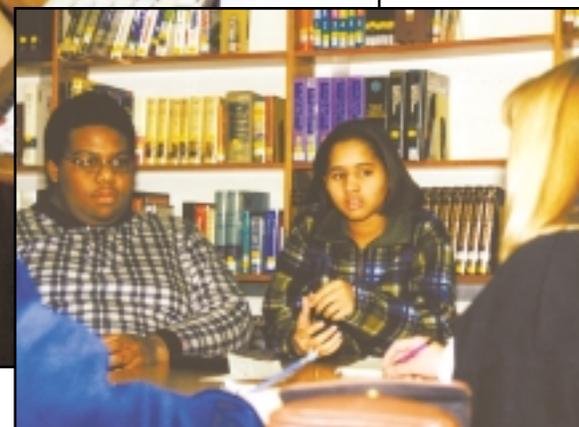
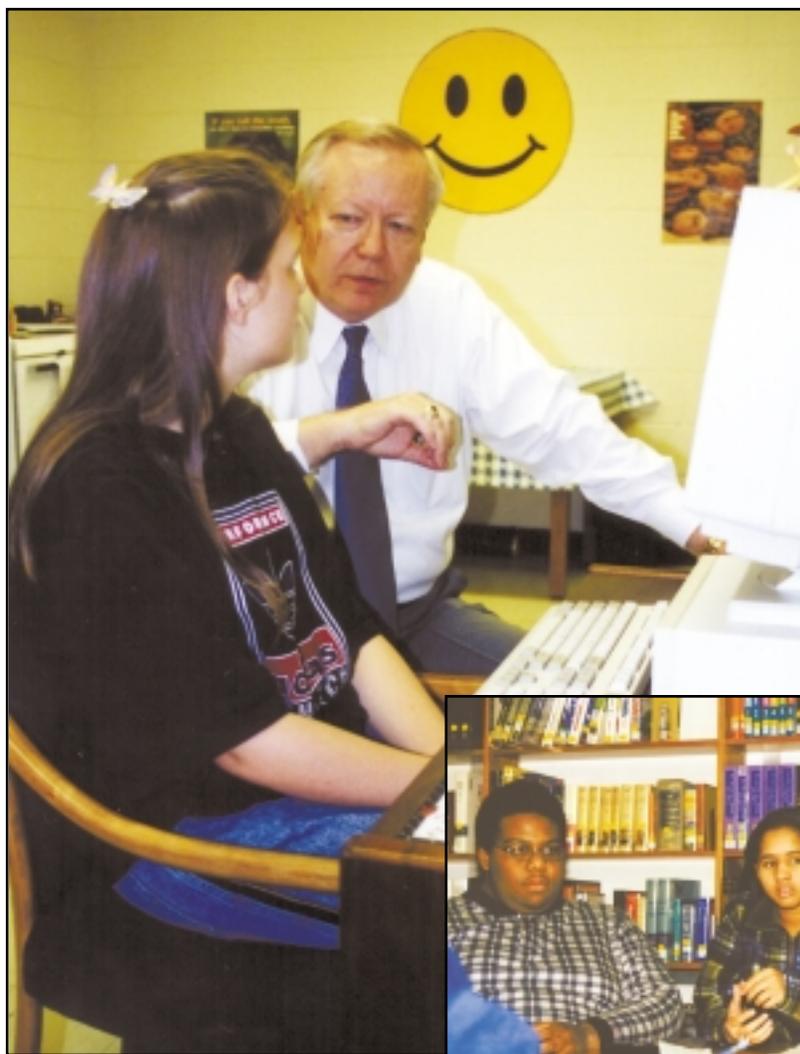
Rockingham County Schools



when I was in School

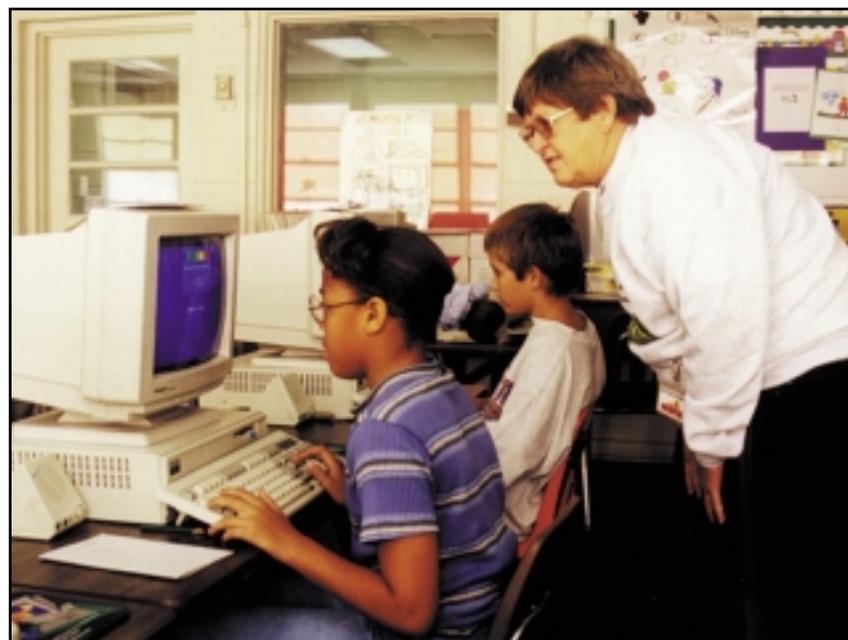
Ten, 20 or 30 years ago, students didn't take so many state tests...But that was then. While test

scores are not a perfect measure of what all students can do, they have a lifelong impact on a child. In today's world dominated by technology and a global marketplace, the demands on students are more rigorous than ever. And accountability — showing how students are achieving — is more important than ever. The State Board of



Education requires local school systems to test students at every level in grades 3-12. Students must pass basic skills tests to receive a diploma. And a high school diploma is the true gateway to the future.

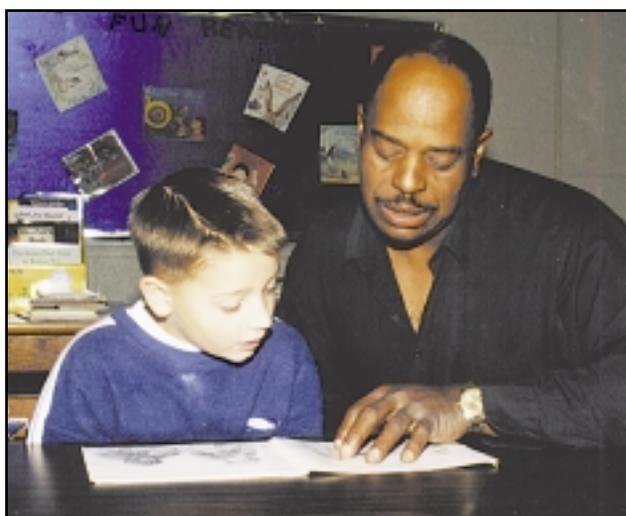
how you can help



Public education is the responsibility of everyone: students, teachers and parents. And because testing has come to play such a key role in the academic lives of our children, it is now more important than ever to work together.

How Parents Can Help — Some Dos and Don'ts

- Help the child understand why tests are necessary.
- Spend time with your child. Read books, newspapers and magazines and review the materials with your child to make sure they understand the main points of the article or story.
- Try not to cram the night before a test. It often makes things worse. Instead, spend a relaxing night at home and try to get a good night's sleep.
- On the morning of the big test, start the day off right. Eat a good, unhurried breakfast.
- Make sure the child has the necessary supplies — two sharpened pencils, extra paper and a good eraser.
- Don't make a big deal about test results, especially on a single test.
- After a test, spend some time helping your child learn from his or her mistakes. Praise the successes; children need pats on the back, too.



testing takes **time**

but not as much as you would think...

3rd Grade

When tests are given: August (pretest) and May (end of grade) for reading and math. March for writing.

Total test time: 375 minutes

4th Grade

When tests are given: November for open-ended reading and math tests. March for writing. May for end-of-grade reading and math.

Total test time: 355 minutes

5th Grade

When tests are given: August (pretest) and May (end of grade) for reading and math. March for writing. Iowa Test of Basic Skills in April for randomly selected students.

Total test time: 375 minutes (including ITBS)

6th Grade

When tests are given: March for writing. May for end-of-grade reading and math.

Total test time: 265 minutes

7th Grade

When tests are given: March for writing. May for end-of-grade reading and math.

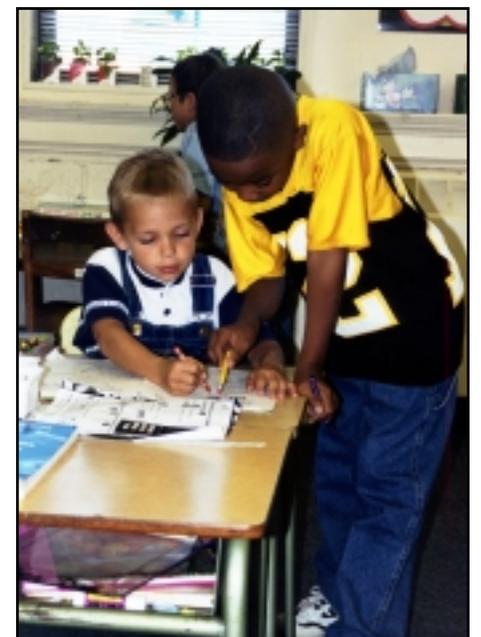
Total test time: 265 minutes

8th Grade

When tests are given: November for open-ended reading and math tests. February for North Carolina Computer Skills Test. March for writing. Iowa Test of Basic Skills in April for randomly selected students. May for end-of-grade reading and math.

Total test time: 645 minutes

On average, students actually spend less than two full school days taking the tests that are required by the state each year. In grades 3-7, the amount of time spent taking tests ranges from 265 minutes to 375 minutes. The tests are based on the state's Standard Course of Study, which Rockingham County's teachers are required to use. One reason it may seem like there is so much testing is because of the way it is scheduled. All state tests — reading, math, writing and computer skills — in grades 3-8 must be given within a specific time frame. Pretests, which are administered in 3rd grade, must be given within the first three weeks of school. End-of-grade tests in reading and math, which are administered in grades 3-8, must be given within the last three weeks of school. It is in the 8th grade, when students must also take the N.C. Computer Skills Test, that the actual amount of test-taking time increases. One reason for that is because passing the Computer Skills Test is now a graduation requirement.



testing takes **time**

but not as much as you would think...

Students in grades 9-12 spend less than a week of their high school careers taking state-mandated tests. But each test is important if the student wants to finish high school with a diploma. In the 8th grade, students must pass the North Carolina Computer Skills Test. If they don't, they must continue to

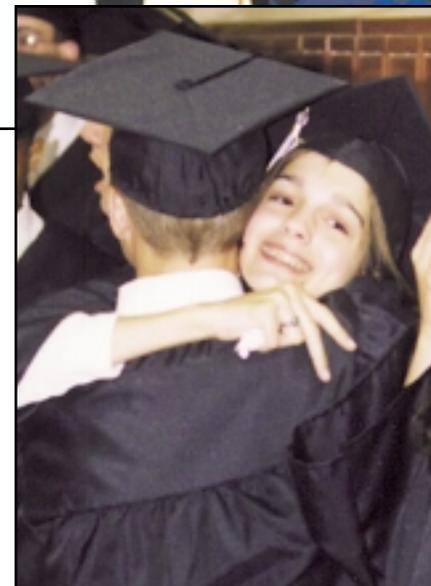
Algebra I — 120 minutes
Algebra II — 120 minutes
Biology — 110 minutes
Chemistry — 110 minutes
ELPS — 110 minutes
English I — 110 minutes
English II — 110 minutes
Geometry — 110 minutes
Physical Science — 110 minutes
Physics — 110 minutes
U.S. History — 110 minutes

Students also are required to take the North Carolina Competency Test (200 minutes) and the High School Comprehensive Test (144 minutes). Both tests are administered over two days.

retake the exam and pass it before they receive a diploma.

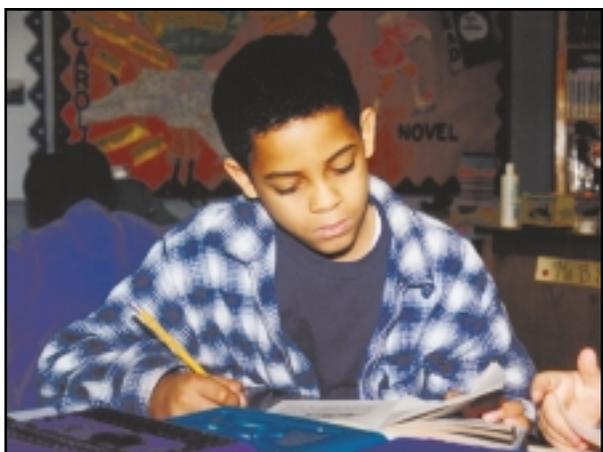
The North Carolina Competency Test also is state mandated for students who did not meet Level III or higher

standard in the End-of-Grade Reading and Math tests in the 8th grade. Starting with the Class of 2003, students will be required to take and pass an exit exam during their junior year as part of the State Board of Education's new "Gateways/ Student Accountability Standards" initiative. As testing standards rise, the amount of time won't increase by much, but the stakes will.



gateways to graduation

Rockingham County Schools has minimum promotion standards that each student must pass to move onto the next grade. However, the State Board of Education has taken those requirements one step



further with



new Student Accountability Standards, commonly known as “Gateways.” Taking effect with the Class of 2003, the standards are designed to encourage accountability among students and parents by establishing “gateway” standards for

grades 3, 5, 8 and 12. Elementary and middle school gateways require students to meet local promotion/graduation requirements, score at Level III or above on the state end-of-grade tests in reading and writing, and score at or above 2.5 on the grade 4 and grade 7 writing assessment. In high school, students

must meet local and state graduation requirements, pass an exit exam on essential skills in the 11th grade, and pass the Computer Skills Test.

Here is when students currently enrolled in school will be impacted by the state’s new Gateway standards:

Current Grade	When Standards Take Effect	School Year
K	3rd grade	2002-2003
1	3rd grade	2001-2002
2	5th grade	2002-2003
3	5th grade	2001-2002
4	5th grade	2000-2001
5	8th grade	2002-2003
6	8th grade	2001-2002
7	12th grade	2004-2005
8	12th grade	2003-2004
9	12th grade	2002-2003

other resources

Homework Assistance Line

623-3689

Open 4 to 8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays

Parent Resource Center

623-2300

Located in the Eden Mall

Minimum Standards & Testing Guidebook

Available through the

Rockingham County Schools Public Information Office

Rockingham County Schools

Testing Department

627-2673

Dianne Campbell, Director

“why we test...” was produced by the Rockingham County Schools Public Information Office. Coordinators were Dianne Campbell, Director of Testing and Accountability, and Glenn Cook, Public Information Officer. For more information or copies of this booklet, call 627-2673 or 627-2633.