

Dear CMS parents:

This year, some of our students will be taking more tests than usual because the state of North Carolina is field-testing some new assessments. We wanted to share some information with you about these field tests and why they are important.

As you may know, the state gives End-of-Grade tests in grades three through eight and End-of-Course tests in several high school subjects. These tests are important measurements of how our students are progressing in school. They are used in multiple ways to evaluate our schools, our students and our district as a whole.

Following the lead of the U.S. Department of Education, North Carolina will soon begin testing in additional areas that have not previously had state testing. The state will also begin giving all End-of-Grade tests online, rather than using bubble sheets. The new tests are being developed now by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which has convened a number of teacher focus groups. Our teachers are participating in this. The field tests this year will cover reading and math, as well as other core areas.

Before the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction introduces these assessments statewide, however, they need to be field-tested. To do this, the tests are given to some students in every district in North Carolina, including Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Field testing helps the Department of Public Instruction gauge the validity, reliability, length and difficulty of the tests. It also helps test creators weed out questions that are inappropriate for the education level of the student, determine how much time is needed to set up and administer the tests, and create a scoring scale. In the case of the online testing, it will also allow the Department of Public Instruction to be sure that the change in procedure doesn't affect test scores.

Tests are not the only way that the state measures our progress as a district. But they are an important measure for us, and we encourage you and your student to recognize the value of state tests and the field tests that precede them. The field testing being done this year is an essential part of ensuring that state tests accurately measure each student's academic progress.

Sincerely,

Hugh E. Hattabaugh  
Interim Superintendent