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DATE: August 7, 2006

TO: LEA Superintendents
Charter School Directors

FROM: Elsie C. Leak, Associate Superintendent
Curriculum and School Reform Services

LMF
Louis M. Fabrizio, Director
Division of Accountability Services

SUBJECT: Districtwide Assessments

During July 2005, the Office of Special Education Programs, United States Department of Education, conducted an onsite verification visit with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. As a result of that visit, corrective actions must be taken related to the monitoring of districtwide assessments. As provided for in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), all children with disabilities must be included in any districtwide assessments (with necessary accommodations or alternate assessments as appropriate) that are conducted and their participation and performance must be reported with the same frequency and detail as for children without disabilities.

DEFINITION: A districtwide assessment is one that (1) is required by the local school system, not the State, (2) is given to all students in (a) every grade in all schools or (b) the same grade in all schools that have that grade, and (3) is not used to determine eligibility for special education as required in *Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Students with Disabilities*.

Some examples of districtwide assessments include benchmark tests given every quarter to students in grades 3-8, high school math placement tests given to all eighth graders, and local writing tests given to students in grades 3-10.

If a district, or LEA, has an assessment that meets the criteria above, the LEA **must** take steps to ensure that the following are true:

- Procedures must be in place to ensure that each IEP identifies any individual accommodation(s) that may be needed for a child with a disability to participate in the districtwide assessment(s).
- Alternate assessments must be administered to children with disabilities whose IEP team has determined that they cannot participate in the standard administration of the districtwide assessment(s).

DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY SERVICES

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

- If the LEA reports publicly the results of its districtwide assessments, it must also report, with the same frequency and detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children, the following:
 - the number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments and the number of those children with disabilities who were provided accommodations in order to participate in those assessments;
 - the number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments that are aligned with the State's challenging academic content standards and challenging academic achievement standards;
 - the number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards; and
 - the performance of children with disabilities on regular assessments and on alternate assessments compared with and included in with the achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, on those assessments.

LEAs that administer districtwide assessments must take necessary steps to ensure that they meet the federal requirements as stated above. As NCDPI staff from various divisions conduct monitoring visits of LEAs, information may be requested regarding the LEA's districtwide assessments. We appreciate your cooperation in providing this information when requested.

If you should have questions regarding districtwide assessments, please contact Pam Biggs, Testing Policy and Operations consultant, at (919) 807-3778 or pbiggs@dpi.state.nc.us.

ECL:LMF:pfb

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