



## **Board Approves Changes to Testing/Accountability**

*From the June 2008 NCASA State Board Review*

The State Board of Education approved changes Thursday to North Carolina's testing and accountability program as the Board begins the process of revamping the state's 15-year-old ABCs accountability program. Chairman Howard Lee reminded State Board members of the work ahead of them, "I'd like to emphasize we have taken the first step of many steps to come."

Changes were presented by Board member Wayne McDevitt who chaired a workgroup of State Board of Education members that made policy recommendations based on proposals previously presented by the Board's Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability.

Last month the workgroup presented a document encompassing a significant number of the proposals from the Blue Ribbon Commission. Following May's meeting, the Board took the recommendations under review and solicited comments from stakeholders for approximately 30 days. According to McDevitt, feedback which included 165 emails shared with the Board was overwhelmingly positive. The workgroup's document set forth in May was adopted with limited updates made for clarification.

Eleven of the adopted changes will be implemented in the 2008-09 school year, while seven policies requiring further development will be addressed in the comprehensive implementation plan to be presented to the State Board in October. Timelines, resources needed and plans to involve the business community and other stakeholders are to be included in that report.

Immediate changes include the elimination of the state's fourth- and seventh-grade writing tests, which will be replaced with a K-12 writing assessment system that includes authentic and on demand writing assignments appropriate to each grade level and backmapped from the graduation project for LEAs to use in assessing these K-12 assignments. Due to federal No Child Left Behind requirements, the 10th-grade test may still be offered for the 2008-09 school year.

All adopted changes are outlined in the document "Framework for Change: The Next Generation of Assessments and Accountability," which can be accessed at:  
<http://www.ncasa.net/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=211>.

The proposals from the Blue Ribbon Commission were fully endorsed by the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA), the North Carolina School Superintendents' Association (NCSSA) and the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals' Association (NCPAPA), all of which were instrumental in getting that commission's work started last year.

NCASA Executive Director Bill McNeal addressed the Board in Thursday's meeting stressing the need to work together to implement the adopted changes. "We as administrators want to work arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder with you. We want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem and we are committed to improving performance of our students."

Lloyd Thrower, NCPAPA Executive Director also expressed his approval of the recommendations by emphasizing NCPAPA's goal of fairness in testing and the significance of the changes in order to achieve that goal, "we thank you for listening to our concerns and we thank you for this document."