Frequently Asked Questions
Transition Plan for Competency and Computer Skills

1. ***How has Senate Bill 202/S.L. 2009-451 changed graduation requirements for students?***

When the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 202/S.L. 2009-451, it ended the graduation requirements for the North Carolina Competency Tests in Reading and Mathematics, the North Carolina Computer Skills Tests, and their corresponding alternate assessments.

2. ***What is the effective date of S.L. 2009-451?***

The law went into effect July 1, 2009.

3. ***What guidance is the NCDPI providing LEAs on procedures to follow for students who have failed to meet the competency and/or computer skills proficiency standards and are either currently enrolled or not enrolled?***

A transition plan for competency and computer skills was developed for LEAs with procedures to follow.

4. ***Who is covered under the transition plan for competency and computer skills?***

The competency testing program was initiated in 1978 (for students enrolled at grade 10), effective with the graduating class of 1981. Effective with the class of 2001, the North Carolina Computer Skills Test was added as a graduation requirement under Feature C of the Quality Assurance Program. The transition plan covers *all* students that were under the competency and computer skills requirements regardless of the graduation year (i.e., the plan covers the graduating class of 1981 through the class of 2009).

5. ***How does the transition plan apply to students who are*** currently enrolled ***in school?***

Effective July 1, 2009, all *currently enrolled* public school students who have not met proficiency on the North Carolina Reading and/or Mathematics Competency Test(s) and/or the North Carolina Computer Skills Test(s) and/or their alternate assessment(s), are no longer required to take these tests or be concerned about them as requirements for graduation.

In order to receive a high school diploma, these students' school records and/or documentation must show that all state and local board requirements have been met. If these students' school records and/or documentation show that all state and local board requirements have been met, these students may be granted diplomas with their graduating class (e.g., class of 2010).

6. ***How will the transcripts of students who are currently enrolled be affected?***

Computer skills and competency scores will not appear on transcripts of students who are currently enrolled. The computer skills and competency scores for students who are currently enrolled have been removed from the students' transcripts.

7. ***How does the transition plan apply to students who are* not enrolled *in school? Can these testing requirements be waived retroactively?***

Effective July 1, 2009, students *not enrolled* in a public school who have met all state and local graduation requirements except for achieving proficiency on the North Carolina Reading and/or Mathematics Competency Test(s) and/or the North Carolina Computer Skills Test(s) and/or their alternate assessment(s), are no longer required to meet the competency or computer skills standards. These students may petition their former school for a diploma. In order to receive a high school diploma, these students' school records and/or documentation must show that all state and local board requirements have been met. If these students' school records and/or documentation show that all state and local board requirements have been met, these students may be granted diplomas.

> **The following questions and answers refer to students who are <u>not</u> currently enrolled in school.**

8. ***What if the student was enrolled in a school that is no longer in operation? How does he/she petition for a diploma?***

If a student was enrolled in a school that has been closed or consolidated, the student may contact the county office of the LEA where the school was located.

9. ***What if the student was enrolled in a charter school that is no longer in operation? How does he/she petition for a diploma?***

If a student was enrolled in a charter school that is no longer in operation, the student may petition the LEA of the student's residence at the time of the school closing.

10. ***What if a former student no longer has a copy of his or her transcript? Where can a copy of the transcript be obtained?***

Individuals may contact the local school or local school system to determine if a transcript still exists.

11. ***If a student is deceased, can his/her parents, guardians, or next of kin petition the LEA for the diploma?***

Yes. If the student's school records and/or documentation show that all state and local board requirements have been met, the parents/guardians should be awarded the student's diploma.

12. ***What is the deadline for filing a petition?***

Students' petitions for diplomas will be honored only during a five year window spanning from July 1, 2009 through July 1, 2014.

13. ***In order to receive a diploma, these students' school records and/or documentation must show that all state and local board requirements have been met. What are the SBE policy numbers that contain the state's graduation requirements for students graduating prior to 2010?***

In order to receive a diploma, students would have to show that they met the requirements in place at the time that they entered ninth grade (i.e., except for proficiency on the Competency Reading and Mathematics Tests, the Computer Skills Test(s), and/or their corresponding alternate assessments). The state's graduation requirements are located in State Board of Education policies GCS-N-004 and GCS-N-003. In addition, a copy of the l981 through 2009 graduation requirements is posted online at http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/competency/competency2.

14. ***Are school systems responsible for notifying students about this opportunity?***

Yes. To help ensure that students, parents, and other stakeholders receive information concerning the elimination of the competency and computer skills proficiency standards, the NCDPI has sent letters to LEA superintendents and charter school directors to inform them of the elimination of the graduation requirements for competency and computer skills and the procedures students must follow for obtaining diplomas. The NCDPI asks that LEAs use this information and develop a local plan that includes (1) contacting students about this opportunity and (2) assigning roles and responsibilities to school staff for reviewing and processing students' petitions and recording diploma changes in the archive.

15. ***What form(s) must be completed by the student when applying for consideration for a high school diploma?***

The local school system may provide a simple form for students to complete. The NCDPI has provided a sample form that LEAs may use or adapt for use. This form may be found at http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/competency/competency2.

16. ***What other documentation may students need to present district or school officials when they petition for their diplomas?***

Students' identification information must be verified. Therefore, students may be asked to produce a valid picture ID, their Social Security number, and their current address and contact information. This list is not all inclusive.

17. ***Who is responsible for making the decision and notifying the petitioning student about whether he or she will receive a diploma?***

Each local school or local school system should designate a person to process these requests. The designee is responsible for checking transcripts and verifying if the student is eligible to receive a diploma. In some cases, where transcripts are no longer available, schools may have documentation/records of students that received a certificate and indicated in these records

the reason(s) why a certificate was granted (e.g., met all requirements except competency reading,
met all requirements except computer skills, etc.). If such records are available at the school, the school designee may use this documentation as proof of eligibility. Once the school has verified
that the student is eligible, the approval is submitted to the LEA superintendent for signature on the student's transcript note (see question 13).

18. Can the decision be appealed to the State?

No State appeals are provided. All local decisions are final.

19. What graduation year should be on the diploma, the current year or the year the student would have graduated?

No diploma issued to these students should be dated prior to July 1, 2009 (i.e., the date the General Statute eliminated the competency/computer skills proficiency requirement). It is inappropriate to back date the diplomas. LEAs should *not* use diplomas that were stored in students' cumulative folders that are dated with the year that the students should have graduated. These students do not officially graduate until the students' petitions have been approved by the LEA that all state and local board requirements have been met. The date on the diploma should be the date the petition is approved.

20. Is there any cost to students?

It is a local decision as to whether to incur the expense of having new diplomas printed or to ask students to pay a fee to have them printed.

21. Before issuing the diploma, the student's transcript must be amended. How should the transcript be amended?

A signed note (see question 20) must be attached to the transcript and kept on file. One copy of the transcript with the attached note should go to the student, and another copy of the transcript with the attached note should go into the student's cumulative folder/archive. This is a standalone process; diploma/transcript information for these students is *not* to be entered into NC WISE (see questions 17–19).

22. Will a standardized note from the NCDPI be provided to superintendents and charter school directors to attach to students' transcripts?

Yes. The NCDPI is providing the following note to LEA superintendents and charter school directors to attach to students' transcripts. This note must be signed by the superintendent or the superintendent's designee. The LEA may elect to have the principal also sign the transcript note.

Effective July 1, 2009, per Senate Bill 202/S.L. 2009-451, the North Carolina Competency Tests of Reading and Mathematics and the North Carolina Computer Skills Tests and/or their alternate assessment(s) are no longer required in order to receive a high school diploma. As such, _____(Student's Name)_____ has fulfilled all state and local board requirements and is granted a diploma on _____(Date of Issuance)_____.

Signature_____

23. Does the transition plan affect the 2008–09 data?

No. Senate Bill 202 S.L. 2009-451 went into effect July 1, 2009, and the transition plan was received by the State Board on September 3, 2009. Therefore, *2008–09 data must not be changed* because of the elimination of the competency and computer skills assessments. Data reporting should be conducted in a fair and ethical manner; LEAs must refer to the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* regarding modifying data.

24. Does the transition plan affect the dropout rate? For example, if a student met the graduation requirements except for proficiency on the computer skills test and dropped out of school, if the student petitions the school and is approved, is the student removed from the dropout list?

No, regardless of the year the student dropped out of school, the dropout list must not to be changed. LEAs must refer to the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* regarding modifying data*.* Recipients of diplomas due to S.L. 2009-451 are *not* to be removed from dropout lists and/or counted in graduation rates. Graduates in this process will *not* be used in any state-rate publications.

25. Does the transition plan affect data collection during the five-year student petition window (i.e., July 1, 2009 through July 1, 2014)?

Recipients of diplomas who are not enrolled are *not* to be counted in any graduation rates (i.e., 2008–09 data collections and beyond). Graduates in this process will *not* be used in any state-rate publications.

26. What data concerning these students who are not enrolled needs to be entered into NC WISE?

LEAs are *not* to put this information into current data systems (i.e., NC WISE). No data regarding recipients of diplomas due to S.L. 2009-451 are to be entered into NC WISE. The LEA's diploma archive should be a separate listing (i.e., not in NC WISE).

27. *Currently LEAs may not have records in NC WISE for students who left school without a diploma (e.g., 1981, 1983, etc.) or whose information was entered into SIMS. Are LEAs required to enter this information into NC WISE?*

LEAs are *not* to put this information into current data systems (i.e., NC WISE). No data regarding recipients of diplomas due to S.L. 2009-451 who are not enrolled are to be entered into NC WISE. The LEA's diploma archive should be a separate listing (i.e., not in NC WISE).

28. *How should LEAs manage this data since NC WISE is not to be used?*

LEAs must create a diploma archive. The diploma archive must consist of (1) an offline paper system and (2) an electronic system that includes at least the following data:
   a. Name of student as it appears on the student's records
   b. Year student was issued a certificate/or last school year of attendance
   c. Reason diploma was originally withheld because of testing deficiency (i.e., competency and/or computer skills)
   d. Date diploma was issued (i.e., date information from petition was verified and approved)

A diploma archive template has been provided at
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/competency/competency2.

29. *Will LEAs be required to submit to the NCDPI any data about the number of diplomas that are issued possibly desegregated by competency versus computer skills, the year the student entered the 9th grade, etc.?*

Yes. LEAs are required to submit the diploma archive at the same time as the graduate data collection is due at the end of the year. More information will be provided closer to the submission date.

30. *How will schools/LEAs report these graduates to the Business and Finance Office for State Archives? Will it be included with the other graduate data?*

Schools/LEAs will submit two separate files: (1) the diploma archive and (2) the regular graduation cohort. The files must remain separate (i.e., not be merged or have any overlapping data).