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North Carolina Education News

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Advanced Placement Results - North Carolina

More than 15 percent of the public high school class of 2007 achieved at least one AP® Exam grade of 3 or higher—the score that is predictive of college success. This achievement represents a significant and consistent improvement since the class of 2002 when less than 12 percent of public school graduates attained this goal.

In its fourth annual "AP Report to the Nation," the College Board (the not-for-profit membership association that owns and administers the AP Program), focuses on educators' quantifiable successes in helping a wider segment of the nation's students gain access to and achieve success in college-level work. Of the estimated 2.8 million students who graduated from U.S. public schools in 2007, almost 426,000 (15.2 percent) earned an AP Exam grade of at least a 3 on one or more AP Exams during their high school tenure, the report documents. This is up from 14.7 percent in 2006 and 11.7 percent in 2002.

Earning a 3 or higher on an AP Exam is one of "the very best predictors of college performance," with AP students earning higher college grades and graduating from college at higher rates than otherwise similar peers in control groups, according to recent reports from researchers.

State Reports:

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/ap/nation>

Full report:

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/ap-report-to-the-nation-2008.pdf>

North Carolina Report:

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/North-Carolina-AP-Report-2008.pdf>

Moving North Carolina Forward: High Standards and High Graduation Rates

After conducting a thorough policy analysis, Achieve and Jobs for the Future suggested in this report to North Carolina ways it can create a more coherent, intentional, and aligned assessment and accountability system to improve both achievement and graduation rates for struggling and out-of-school students. The report includes a preliminary framework for next generation high school accountability indicators that recognize and reward schools that help all students graduate on time with a college and career-ready diploma.

The recommendations were presented to an independent Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability in North Carolina. This report was part of *Moving Forward: High Standards and High Graduation Rates*, a joint project of Achieve, Inc., and Jobs for the Future and funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Full report:

<http://www.achieve.org/files/MovingNCForward.pdf>

State Dropout Rate Increases In 2006-07

A total of 23,550 students - or 5.24 percent of the students in grades nine through 12 - dropped out of school in the 2006-07 school year, according to the "Annual Dropout Event Report for School Year 2006-07" today presented to the State Board of Education. The dropout rate in 2005-06 was 5.04 percent or 22,180 students.

Forty-three percent of North Carolina's 115 school districts reported a decrease in dropout events with Washington, Clay and Camden counties showing the largest rate decreases - approximately 50 percent decreases in each case. Large increases in a handful of school districts pushed up the state average.

Efforts to Improve High Schools

The issue of high school dropouts has prompted significant work recently to improve middle and high schools so that students are better engaged and supported in their learning. Specific efforts expected to affect the dropout rate include:

- Literacy Coaches. The 2007 session of the General Assembly approved 100 additional literacy coaches for middle schools, increasing the total number to 200.
- Learn and Earn Early College High Schools. By the end of 2008, 76 Learn and Earn Early College high schools should be operational or in planning across the state. These schools provide students, particularly non-traditional college students or students who could be first-generation college students, the opportunity to earn an Associate's Degree at no cost while still under the supervision and support of high school faculties. Early results of these schools are promising. For 2005-06, the 12 Learn and Earn high schools in operation that year had a combined ninth grade promotion rate of 96 percent, while the statewide average promotion rate for that grade was 85 percent. Five of the Learn and Earn high schools promoted 100 percent of their ninth graders.
- Dropout Prevention Grants. The Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation awarded 60 groups (school systems, schools, agencies and nonprofits) across the state grants totaling \$7 million to help them in their efforts to reduce drop outs. The Commission will evaluate the programs and decide whether expanding or replicating them will improve graduation rates in the state.
- High School Transformation. Two years ago, the Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education began serious work in partnership with the state's chronically low-performing high schools to provide the support they need for systemic change and improvement. NCDPI now has 35 schools in High School Turnaround and 54 schools in High School Turnaround Assessment, the first step toward improving each school.
- North Carolina Virtual Public School. The goal of the North Carolina Virtual Public School is to provide students with courses that are unavailable to them at their traditional schools or scheduled at times that students are not able to access traditional brick-and-mortar courses.
- Learn and Earn Online. Learn and Earn Online enables students to register and take online courses through any community college or through the University of North Carolina at Greensboro iSchool at no cost to the student or their family.
- EARN Scholarships. The EARN Scholarship provides incentives for students and enables Early College high school students who are at or below 200 percent of the poverty level and who complete an Associate's Degree with an acceptable

grade point average, to qualify to earn their baccalaureate degree debt-free at one of North Carolina's public universities.

Other Report Findings

Data analysis found that almost one-third (32 percent) of all dropout events continue to occur during the ninth grade year with 25 percent of dropouts leaving in 10th grade and 22 percent of them dropping out in 11th grade. Dropout rates increase in frequency as students reach 16 years of age. Seventy-eight percent of dropout events occurred between the ages of 16 and 18.

Although the dropout rates for Black (6.16 percent), Multiracial (5.23 percent) and White (4.52 percent) students increased in 2006-07, the dropout rate for American Indian students (7.71 percent) fell to its lowest level in the last four years. The dropout rate for Asian students declined (2.41 percent). The dropout rate for Hispanic students (7.66 percent) also declined - despite a large increase in dropout events. This is attributed to a rapidly increasing Hispanic student population.

The 2006-07 school year also saw a slight decrease (59.4 percent from 59.9 percent) in the number of male students dropping out although they continue to be much more likely to drop out than females.

State law requires school officials to record the reason for a student's decision to drop out of school. In 2006-07, 51 percent of the dropout events listed attendance issues as the reason for the student's decision to drop out. Although schools are only to use this reason code for students who drop out due to excessive absences that caused the student to become ineligible or in jeopardy of becoming ineligible to receive course credits, there are concerns that this code also is used to cover other reasons that may be uncertain or unknown. There will be an "unknown" code added to the 2007-08 report, which should address this issue. Other common reasons reported by schools include enrollment in a community college (13.6 percent) followed by moved, school status unknown (10.6 percent) and academic problems (7.1 percent).

Dropout data have been collected each year since 1988-89, although specific reporting methods changed in 1991 to conform to new federal guidelines and in 1999 because of changes in the state's definition of a dropout.

For the annual dropout rate calculation, a dropout is defined as a student who:

- was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year, which is the reporting year;

- was not enrolled on Day 20 of the current school year;
- has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district approved educational program; and
- does not meet any of the following reporting exclusions:
 - transferred to another public school district, private school, home school or state/district approved educational program;
 - temporarily absent due to suspension or school-approved illness; or
 - death.

North Carolina also collects a four-year cohort graduation rate each year. This rate indicates the percentage of first-time ninth graders who graduated from high school four years later.

The complete dropout report and district level numbers are available online at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/research/dropout/reports>.

Eight Principles Honored as Regional Wachovia Principles of The Year; Principles to Compete For Statewide Honor

Eight principals were recently selected to represent their regions as regional Wachovia Principals of the Year and will now compete for the title of 2008 Wachovia Principal of the Year. The winner will succeed the 2007 Wachovia Principal of the Year, Craig Hill, former principal of Kinston High School (Lenoir County Schools) and currently an assistant superintendent with Wilson County Public Schools.

The regional Wachovia principals of the year are:

REGION	PRINCIPAL	SCHOOL	COUNTY
North Central	Cathy Moore	Sanderson High	Wake County Schools
Northeast	Arty Tillet	First Flight High	Dare County Schools
Northwest	Danny Cartner	South Davie Middle	Davie County Schools
Southeast	Lori Howard	Clyde Erwin Elementary	Onslow County Schools
Southwest	Debra Morris	A.L. Brown High	Kannapolis City Schools
Sandhills/South Central	Vicky Kirby	Pate Gardner Elementary	Scotland County Schools

Piedmont-Triad/Central	Nakia Hardy	Broadview Middle	Alamance-Burlington Schools
West	Thomas Keever	Valley Springs Middle	Buncombe County Schools

Nine Teachers Honored as Regional Teachers of The Year; Teachers to Compete for Statewide Honor

Nine teachers were recently selected to represent their regions and charter schools as regional Teachers of the Year and will now compete for the title of 2008-09 North Carolina Teacher of the Year. The winner will succeed the 2007-08 Teacher of the Year, James Bell, an eighth grade English teacher at Chowan Middle School, Edenton-Chowan Public Schools.

The regional teachers of the year are:

REGION	TEACHER	SCHOOL	COUNTY
North Central	Paige Elliott	Fuquay-Varina High	Wake County Schools
Northeast	Sonya Rinehart	John A. Holmes High	Edenton-Chowan Public Schools
Northwest	Janice Raper	Hurley Elementary	Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Southeast	Ruth Parker	Clinton High	Clinton City Schools
Southwest	Bernard Waugh	Kannapolis Intermediate	Kannapolis City Schools
Sandhills/South Central	Trisha Muse	Page Street Elementary	Montgomery County Schools
Piedmont-Triad/Central	Cindi Rigsbee	Gravelly Hill Middle	Orange County Schools
West	Renee Peoples	West Elementary	Swain County Schools
Charter Schools	Freida Baker	East Wake Academy	Wake County

North Carolina State Board of Education Awarded HIV Prevention Grants by National Association of State Boards of Education

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has made grants to three state boards of education to promote more effective instruction to K-12 students about HIV prevention. The \$13,000 grants are being made to the North Carolina, Oregon, and Tennessee State Boards of Education.

“HIV remains a dire threat to public health. And as with any communicable disease, education must be a cornerstone of our prevention efforts. These HIV prevention grants continue NASBE’s long and proud tradition as a national leader in promoting student health policies and of providing support—both technical assistance and financial resources—to state boards of education,” said Brenda Welburn, NASBE Executive Director.

The *HIV Prevention Policy and Program Improvement Initiative* assists state boards of education and state education agencies to more effectively provide K-12 students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to prevent HIV infection. The grants will support intensive state capacity building to improve HIV-related education policies and programs. The three state boards of education developed specific action plans that reflect their particular state’s needs.

The **North Carolina State Board of Education** will develop an on-line training module for school administrators to increase knowledge, attitudes and support for HIV prevention education and emphasize the state's Healthful Living Standard Course of Study (SCS).

The grants are part of NASBE’s *HIV Prevention Policy and Program Improvement Initiative*, a facet of the *Center for Safe and Healthy Schools*, which is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Adolescent and School Health (CDC-DASH).

NASBE represents America’s state and territorial boards of education. Its principal objectives are to strengthen state leadership in education policymaking; advocate

equality of access to educational opportunity; promote excellence in the education of all students; and assure responsible lay governance of education.

North Carolina's Top Youth Volunteers Selected In 13th Annual National Awards Program

Clayton and Charlotte students earn \$1,000 awards, engraved medallions and trip to nation's capital

Honors also bestowed on other top youth volunteers in North Carolina

Nicholas Marriam, 15, of Clayton and Garrie Brocato, 13, of Charlotte were named North Carolina's top two youth volunteers for 2008 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. The awards program, now in its 13th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

Nicholas was nominated by West Johnston High School in Benson, and Garrie was nominated by Southwest Middle School in Charlotte. As State Honorees, each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion, and an all-expense-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join the top two honorees – one middle level and one high school youth – from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for several days of national recognition events. Ten of them will be named America's top youth volunteers for 2008 at that time.

Nicholas, a freshman at West Johnston High School, brings a smile and a gift to sick children in a program he started after spending two years in the hospital fighting cancer. Nicholas was just 6 years old when he was diagnosed with T-cell lymphoma. "I felt very scared and saw my parents cry a lot," he said. "I fought hard and finally won my battle, but did not want the kids who were still struggling to feel alone."

Nicholas began collecting games and toys from friends and businesses to bring with

him when he went back to visit kids in the hospital where he had been treated. “The feeling was overwhelming,” he recalled. “I saw so many kids smile and laugh, I knew I wanted to do this all of the time!” After his family moved from Maryland to North Carolina, Nicholas formed a nonprofit foundation to celebrate five years of remission, took his program to hospitals in the Raleigh-Durham area, and recruited his cousin back in Maryland to continue his hospital visits there. Nicholas now organizes fund-raisers and uses money from summer jobs and grants to purchase the toys he leaves behind on his hospital visits. He also does some public speaking, manages a board of directors, and handles his foundation’s paperwork. “It’s the hardest thing I have ever done,” he said. “But I know it will make a difference to a child laying in a hospital somewhere who is scared and lonely.”

Garrie, a seventh-grader at Southwest Middle School, recruited a team of friends to help her raise more than \$36,000 for cancer causes and to organize events throughout the year to increase cancer awareness. Garrie’s interest in volunteering began when she accompanied her mother to an American Cancer Society Relay for Life meeting several years ago. “I listened to what was going on and I knew immediately I wanted to be involved in this fight against cancer,” said Garrie.

She gathered a group of friends together for the Relay for Life fund-raiser and in only three months, Garrie’s team raised more than \$4,000 by selling homemade valentines and bookmarks, and holding an Easter egg giveaway. When it was over, Garrie kept her team together, not only for future relays, but also to stage events focusing attention on breast exams, the dangers of cigarette smoking, skin cancer prevention, and other cancer topics. She holds weekly meetings at her home and sends out a regular newsletter to team members and sponsors. Garrie also initiated an art supplies drive for cancer patients at a summer camp, and shaved her head to show support for those suffering through chemotherapy treatments. “I know that all that I have done is so small, but I believe that if every person did one thing to make the world a better place, then it would be,” Garrie said.

In addition, the program judges recognized six other North Carolina students as Distinguished Finalists for their impressive community service activities. Each will receive an engraved bronze medallion:

Max Cohen, 18, of Charlotte, a senior at Charlotte Country Day School, initiated a school and community book drive that produced more than 3,000 used textbooks and novels for underprivileged South African school children. He also encouraged a friend at another school to conduct a similar drive, which resulted in the shipping of an additional 1,000 books to the nonprofit organization Books for Africa.

Erika May, 13, of Cary, an eighth-grader at Lufkin Road Middle School in Apex, has been tutoring and mentoring a homeless boy from her school for the past five years. Erika, with help from her family, has helped the boy improve his grades and provides him with opportunities that he never would have otherwise.

Svyatoslav Petrov, 17, of Raleigh, a junior at Ravenscroft School, has been volunteering for the past four years as a mentor to Russian orphans affected by the nuclear plant disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine, in 1986. In addition, he developed a health education program to teach these children about healthy eating, substance abuse prevention, and ways to improve their weakened immune systems.

Matthew Sabo, 18, of Salisbury, a senior at Salisbury High School, collected thousands of bottles of toiletries for victims of Hurricane Katrina, along with clothing, furniture, cleaning supplies, tools and household items. He also raised \$4,600 to purchase construction supplies to build houses in Pascagoula, Miss., where he joined in the rebuilding effort.

Nathaniel Sink, 18, of Lexington, a senior at West Davidson High School, constructed a swing set and renovated the surrounding park grounds for a local tabernacle. Nathaniel raised \$6,000 to purchase materials, recruited a group of volunteers to assist, and managed the project from start to finish.

Lisa Waugh, 18, of Winston-Salem, a senior at Forsyth Country Day School in Lewisville, created "Love Thy Neighbor," a project organized through her church that throws block parties every two weeks for the homeless and other needy people. Lisa, who has raised \$16,000 to support the project, organizes activities and meals for the parties, and arranges for donations of personal care items, bus passes and other necessities for the attendees.

School Finance Redesign Project - North Carolina

The School Finance Redesign Project (SFRP) encompasses research, policy analysis, and public engagement activities that examine how K-12 finance can be redesigned to better support student performance. SFRP addresses the question, "How can resources help schools achieve the higher levels of student performance that state and national education standards now demand?"

To accomplish this purpose, the project is studying governmental policies, finance structures, and professional practices; it is assessing policy options for finance redesign; and it is developing decision making tools for policy makers and educators.

See report on project work to date, which focuses on **North Carolina**, Ohio, Texas, and Washington state:

<http://www.schoolfinanceredesign.org/pub/workingpapers.shtml>

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D. Superintendent, Guilford County Schools Greensboro, N.C.

Named the 2008 North Carolina Superintendent of the Year by the North Carolina Association of School Administrators, Terry Grier has worked to advance academic rigor and achievement, giving all students the chance to succeed, while improving public education during his eight-year tenure with Guilford County Schools, Greensboro, N.C.'s third-largest school district with an ever-growing student enrollment of more than 71,000.

In 2006, Grier led GCS to become one of the first districts to address the educational crisis of teacher turnover and shortage in highly impacted schools. Initiating Mission Possible, the district used an incentive program designed to attract, retain and reward both teachers and administrators who achieve results in select schools. During the past seven years, the district's dropout rate has been cut in half. In 2005, the National Dropout Prevention Center presented GCS with its Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Recovery.

The district's success with AP and IB courses attracted the eye of Newsweek magazine's Challenge Index. For the third consecutive year, Grimsley High School was ranked among the top 100. The number of AP Exams taken by GCS students has increased from 2,864 in 2000 to 8,393 in 2007. To encourage participation in higher-level courses, GCS has implemented an AP Diploma program. A student who takes five AP courses and receives a grade of 3 or higher on each exam is issued an AP Diploma. During a Cool to Be Smart awards ceremony last summer, 236 students received an AP/IB Diploma, and one student won a new car, five won a laptop computer and six won a \$1,500 college scholarship.

To attract the interest of high school students who do not excel with the traditional high school curriculum, Grier pioneered the district's first middle college high school program, which includes six different middle colleges located on separate college campuses. He implemented one of the first Early Colleges to allow gifted high school students to take courses on a college campus, many becoming full-time college freshmen during what would have been their junior year in high school. Grier has published more than 50 articles in educational journals and is a frequent speaker at national and state educational conferences. He has been featured in national educational publications such as: Education Week, Urban Educator and Scholastic Administrator for his innovative ideas and proven leadership in education. He earned his doctoral degree in education from Vanderbilt University. On July 1, Grier will become the new superintendent of the San Diego Unified School District.

The Leadership Limbo

New Fordham report on teacher labor agreements in America's fifty largest districts

In the era of No Child Left Behind, principals are increasingly held accountable for student performance. But are teacher labor agreements giving them enough flexibility to manage effectively? A new report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, *The Leadership Limbo: Teacher Labor Agreements in America's Fifty Largest School Districts*

(http://ce.edexcellence.net/dsp_emailhandler.cfm?eid=43665&uid=42295),

attempts to answer this question and others.

The main findings:

- Thirty, or more than half, of the 50 districts have labor agreements that are ambiguous. The collective bargaining agreements and the formal board policies in these districts appear to grant leaders substantial leeway to manage assertively, should they so choose.
- Fifteen of the 50 districts are home to Restrictive or Highly Restrictive labor agreements. Nearly 10 percent of the nation's African-American K-12 students population attend school in the 15 lowest-scoring districts--making these contracts major barriers to more equal educational opportunity.
- Districts with high concentrations of poor and minority students tend to have more restrictive contracts than other districts--another alarming indication of inequity along racial and class lines.
- The labor agreements of the nation's 50 largest districts are particularly restrictive when it comes to work rules.
- Most of these agreements are also quite restrictive when it comes to rewarding teachers for service in hard-to-staff subject areas such as math and science, with 31 actually prohibiting districts from doing so.
- Five of the fifty districts in the analysis can claim relatively "flexible" teacher labor agreements that explicitly give leaders broad authority to manage their schools effectively. The five are **Guilford County, North Carolina**; Austin, Dallas, and Northside, Texas; and Fairfax County, Virginia.

Full report:

http://ce.edexcellence.net/dsp_emailhandler.cfm?eid=43663&uid=42295

