

## NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION NEWS

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## **Complete ABCs Results Released; Rigorous Standards Reflected in Results**

A total of 54.2 percent of North Carolina's K-12 schools made expected or high academic growth under the North Carolina's school accountability model, the ABCs of Public Education, according to the 2005-06 ABCs of Public Education accountability report.

This year marks the first year for new standards under the 10-year-old accountability system.

"Today's results mark the beginning of a new cycle of accountability for North Carolina," said State Superintendent June Atkinson. "The State Board of Education has set a higher standard for academic rigor to help our students be prepared for the 21st century competitive world."

Results outlined today are similar to those from 1996-97, the first year of the ABCs model for grades 3-8. The percentage of students scoring at Achievement Level III (proficient) or above in reading ranged from 83.1 percent for sixth grade to 90.5 percent for fifth grade. For mathematics, the range was 61.2 percent proficient at grade eight to 68.7 percent proficient in grade three.

"The math curriculum is more rigorous and challenging and so are the tests that measure it," said State Board of Education Chairman Howard Lee. This is the first time that North Carolina has reset standards since our state began the accountability program. We believe it is essential for schools to raise expectations to help every child be prepared."

In addition to the more difficult curriculum and assessments, other changes mark the 2005-06 year. It is the first year for the new ABCs growth formulas approved by the state education board in 2005. The new formulas - developed after the General Assembly directed the State Board of Education to complete a thorough evaluation of the ABCs standards - address a number of concerns raised at that time. This year also is the first time that the standards for the mathematics test

have been changed significantly. Because this year's ABCs results are based on new formulas and the results of new math assessments, state school accountability officials cautioned against comparing results to previous years.

## **School Designations**

In the 2005-06 school year, 64 K-12 schools (2.7 percent) earned a designation of Honor Schools of Excellence, the highest category of performance. Honor Schools of Excellence also met the federal requirement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in addition to having met at least Expected Growth and having 90 percent or more of their students' test scores at or above the proficient level.

Five schools (.2 percent) are Schools of Excellence, which means that they met at least Expected Growth and had 90 percent or more of their students' test scores at or above the proficient level.

A total of 305 schools (12.9 percent) are Schools of Distinction, which means that they met at least Expected Growth and had 80-89 percent or more of their students' test scores at or above the proficient level.

A total of 729 schools (31 percent) are Schools of Progress, which means that these schools met at least Expected Growth and had 60-79 percent of their students' test scores at proficient or better.

Seven hundred and thirty-six schools, or 31.3 percent, are No Recognition Schools. These schools did not meet their Expected Growth goals even though they had 60 percent or more of their students' test scores at the proficient level or better.

Three hundred and forty-six schools, or 14.6 percent, are Priority Schools – schools with less than 60 percent of their students' test scores at the proficient level or better and making Expected Growth or High Growth and schools that have 50-59 percent of students' test scores at the proficient level or better regardless of growth.

Forty schools (1.7 percent) had no ABCs status because they are special schools.

## **Incentive Awards**

The ABCs program provides incentive awards to teachers, principals and other certified school-based staff, in addition to teacher assistants. In all schools that attain the High Growth standard, certified staff members each receive up to \$1,500 incentive awards and teacher assistants receive up to \$500. In schools attaining Expected Growth, certified staff members each receive up to \$750 and teacher assistants receive up to \$375. This year, funds for incentive awards will be released to local school districts as soon as possible after today's release with the goal of districts being able to provide the incentive awards in December to all staff who earn them.

## **Assistance Plan to be Discussed in December**

This year, 54 schools (2.3 percent) were identified as Low-Performing Schools. These schools have significantly less than 50 percent of their students' test scores at the proficient level or above and did not make Expected Growth or High Growth.

The NCDPI's Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and School Reform Services Dr. Elsie Leak will bring a plan for providing assistance to low-performing elementary and middle schools to the Board in December.

## **High School AYP Targets**

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a performance measure required by the federal No Child Left Behind education law. Each state must set AYP targets for the percentage of students proficient on state tests. Under federal law, each state's ultimate goal is 100 percent proficiency by 2013-14. AYP requires measuring progress on these targets by groups of students — a very rigorous standard. Among North Carolina's schools, 45.2 percent (1,043) of the state's

2,310 schools with an AYP status met AYP. The standard required for meeting AYP this year was 76.7 percent for reading (K-8) and 65.8 for (K-8) math. The math target was adjusted in October when the State Board of Education raised standards passing the math end-of-grade assessments. The target for 10th grade reading/language arts was 35.4 percent and for 10th grade math it was 70.8 percent.

### **ABCs Background Information**

The ABCs accountability model measures school achievement in two primary ways: the percentage of students' test scores at or above the proficient level (performance composite) and whether the school has met academic growth expectations from one year to the next. The growth measurement provides the basis for awarding incentive awards, but both measures are important indicators of schools' success over time.

The tests used for ABCs accountability purposes — the end-of-course and end-of-grade assessments — include the assessments used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress and for the state's student accountability standards.

The complete ABCs report is available online at:

<http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs>

### **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Outperform Other Large Cities in NAEP Trial**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg public schools performed better in science than other urban school districts in a special assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg, along with Austin, Texas, outperformed the other large urban school districts participating in the trial assessment. Ten urban school

districts participate in this voluntary measure. In addition to Charlotte and Austin, the other participants were Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City and San Diego. This is the first year that science has been assessed through the TUDA.

"We congratulate the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system for participating in the trial urban assessment and for setting rigorous goals for its students. We are pleased that North Carolina's representative in this assessment outperformed most other participants, and we look forward to continued improvement from Charlotte-Mecklenburg students," said State Board of Education Chairman Howard Lee and State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Austin, Texas, were at the top of the 10 urban districts for fourth and eighth grade science. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's science results were lower than the North Carolina overall results, which were released in May.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's average science score for fourth graders was 145, as compared to 149 for North Carolina overall and to 149 for the nation's public schools overall. For eighth graders, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg average science score was 142 as compared to 144 for North Carolina and to 147 for the nation overall.

In addition to the scale scores, the NAEP also reports the percentage of students considered to be at or above Basic on the assessment. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's percent of fourth graders at or above Basic in science was 60 percent, as compared to 65 percent for North Carolina and 66 percent for the nation. For eighth graders, 50 percent of the students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg were considered at or above Basic, as compared to 53 percent for North Carolina overall and 57 percent for the nation.

### **Test Score Gaps**

Tougher state math exams brought bleak results for low-income and minority students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Officials knew the new scoring system, designed to give a more realistic picture

of grade-level skills, would drop pass rates for elementary and middle schools across the state.

But in CMS, most of the thousands of students who failed were poor, black or Hispanic. Gaps of 30 to 40 percentage points between those students and their white or middle-class peers call into question the gains that have brought CMS national acclaim for the past decade...

The old math exam, widely criticized as too easy to pass, had given more than 70 percent of CMS's low-income and black middle school students passing marks in 2005. This year less than 50 percent passed, compared with 80 percent or more of their white and nonpoor peers.

Many say N.C. reading exams, which saw no changes in the scoring method, continue to give a false sense of accomplishment...

To see the rest of this article please go to:

<http://www.charlotte.com/mld/charlotte/living/education/15850480.htm>

## **Moore County Schools Are #8**

"It's tremendous to reach No. 8 in the latest state rankings," says James Tagliareni, chief technology officer at Moore County Schools. "Everyone at Moore County Schools deserves credit for infusing technology into our classrooms, from the school district leadership who made technology a top priority four years ago to every school principal and teacher who embraced the computers, high-speed Internet access and technology training that we provided them. Our continued strong showing in the state rankings is proof that we are instilling into our students the technology skills they will need to compete in the 21st Century workforce." Moore County Schools, which has purchased more than 5,000 new computers over the past four years, continues to improve the district's technology infrastructure without increasing its budget. The district, which last year had 2.5 students for each Internet-connected computer, now has 2.29 students per Internet-connected computer. The state average is 3.43 students per computer. In addition, 100 percent of Moore County School's classrooms are connected with high-speed Internet access, compared to 98.5 percent in the state.

Moore County Schools continued its trend of squeezing the most out of its Information Technology budget. This year, the district's average cost to install, operate and maintain a network of computers was \$66 per pupil, a 22 percent drop from the previous year and less than half the state average of \$139 per pupil. Last year, computers cost Moore County Schools \$87 per pupil.

Moore County Schools had many technology highlights this past school year, including online technology training for teachers, and additional computers, personal digital assistants and interactive whiteboards in the classroom. Other highlights include:

- The district's Office of Information Technology dramatically increased the speed of Internet access to every classroom, from 10 megabits per second (mbps) to 100 mbps, while saving the district money in the process. The Office of Information Technology negotiated a new deal with an Internet Service Provider that provides the faster speeds at a lower cost. The deal saves the district \$150,000 a year.
- In March, Union Pines High School became one of three schools in the country to win a \$250,000 grant from Dell, Microsoft and Intel's "FutureReady" program, given to schools with the best plans for incorporating technology in the classroom. Microsoft chairman Bill Gates and Dell chairman Michael Dell picked the winners. The grant is providing hardware and software to Union Pines High School.
- Aberdeen Elementary School last fall received a \$250,000 grant by the North Carolina Technology Association to purchase new desktop and notebook computers, printers and projectors, as well as educational software and technology training for students and teachers.
- Robbins Elementary received a \$14,000 Partners in Education Grant from the IBM Hispanic Diversity Network. The grant provides notebook computers and an LCD projector to enhance the school's MentorPlace program, in which IBM employees work with students on technology-related activities.

The district purchased and installed new software that allows teachers to view students' screens while they work on assignments in school computer labs. Teachers can communicate with each individual student through headphones and take control of students' computers if they need help. The software also

enables teachers to take snapshots of students' screens, which allows teachers to easily share the students' work with the class.

In March, the district partnered with Carthage Police and the County Sheriff's Office to build a wireless network, allowing first-responders to view school surveillance cameras wirelessly as they respond to 911 calls at Union Pines High School.

"The school district's dramatic climb in the state rankings is very impressive and shows the dedication and commitment the district has to helping students become better prepared for the future," says Dr. Larry Upchurch, Deputy Superintendent. "The technology is not only engaging students more in the classrooms, its helping them understand the material better and improving overall learning."

#### *About Moore County Schools:*

Moore County Schools educates more than 12,000 students in 22 K-12 schools in Moore County, North Carolina, an economically diverse community whose major industries include agriculture, tourism, health care and education. The school district offers a comprehensive curriculum that includes workforce development, programs for special needs and gifted students and arts education. In addition to Advanced Placement courses at all three high schools, Pinecrest High School offers the International Baccalaureate Program. The district's 2005 SAT average of 1042 exceeded the national average by 14 points. For more information, visit <http://www.mcs.k12.nc.us>.

### **2006 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools Honored**

Five North Carolina public schools were recently honored as 2006 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. These schools were among 242 public and 50 private schools to achieve this honor.

Recipients received a plaque and a flag signifying their No Child Left Behind Blue

Ribbon School status during a National Recognition Ceremony held Nov. 10-11 in Washington, D.C.

North Carolina public schools receiving this prestigious recognition are: Brawley Middle (Iredell-Statesville Schools), Davis Drive Elementary (Wake County Schools), Eastover Central Elementary (Cumberland County Schools), Laurel Hill Elementary (Scotland County Schools), and W.A. Bess Elementary (Gaston County Schools).

In announcing the schools, U.S. Secretary of Education Spellings said, "These schools show what wonderful accomplishments can be made when we focus on the bottom line in education – student achievement." Spellings added that all of these schools have students from all subgroups who've made impressive test gains or who scored in the top tier on state tests. "They are outstanding examples of how all students can achieve to higher standards," she said.

For the past 24 years, the U.S. Department of Education has recognized many of the nation's most successful schools through its Blue Ribbon Schools Program. Schools selected for this prestigious award model excellence in leadership, teaching, curriculum, student achievement and parental involvement. On July 28, 2002, Department officials announced that schools singled out for national honors must also reflect the goals of the nation's new education reforms for high standards and accountability found under No Child Left Behind.

Blue Ribbon Schools are selected based on one of two assessment criteria:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance on state tests, as determined by the state superintendent.
- Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent on state tests or, in the case of private schools, in the top 10 percent of the nation on nationally-normed tests.

Of the schools submitted by each state, at least one-third must meet the criterion of having 40 percent of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds and showing dramatic improvement. State education departments nominate public schools for consideration. Once all nominations are received, the Secretary invites the nominated schools to submit applications for possible recognition as a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School.

Additional information regarding the Blue Ribbon Schools Program is available online at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/2006/>

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