

NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION NEWS

February 2007

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Education News

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QUALITY COUNTS 2007: North Carolina

Education Week's "Quality Counts" report has ranked North Carolina exactly average on a 2 of 4 categories covered. North Carolina ranked 25th in the nation for Elementary and Secondary performance and 35th for Chance for Success.

The Elementary and Secondary Index is based equally on current performance and improvement, or changes over time, and uses 15 individual indicators relating to reading and math performance, graduation rates and the results of advanced placement exams.

The "Chance-for Success" index, which is based on 13 indicators that highlight whether young children get a good start, succeed in elementary and secondary school, and hit key educational and income benchmarks as adults.

North Carolina 's other scores were:

Aligning Education from Cradle to Career

State rank: 25

Standards, Assessments, and Accountability

State rank: 9

To read the complete, highly detailed report on North Carolina, please go to:
(<http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2007/17shr.nc.h26.pdf>)

Scores on State-generated Tests Often Contradict Results on a National Test

When her son came home from middle school with a report card showing he'd passed North Carolina's year-end algebra test, Margaret Carnes believed he had the foundation he needed for high school.

Then she met with his teacher, who cautioned her not to be too confident. By the state's yardstick, students had to answer correctly fewer than half the questions to pass. In some grades, they can flub two-thirds of the questions and still be marked "proficient."

It can be a harsh wake-up call for children and parents alike. Students are told they are where they're supposed to be academically, but a rude awakening awaits them in high school. "It compels one to ask the question, Have they been prepared?" said Carnes, now managing director for Charlotte Advocates for Education (<http://www.advocatesfored.org/>), a nonprofit group pushing for higher state standards.

It's a problem of long standing in U.S. public education. While international assessments confirm that American students lag behind those in several other countries in science and math, many school districts and states keep telling parents that their children, like those in Lake Wobegon, Garrison Keillor's hometown of fable, are all above average.

More testing under the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act was supposed to help measure whether elementary school children are learning what they need to know. But scores on state-generated tests often contradict results on a national test. North Carolina is one of several states with glaring differences between how well it says its students are doing and the harsher verdict of independent comparisons.

The North Carolina Board of Education finally is getting the message. It has switched to a tougher math exam, and recently raised the passing scores in math for grades 3 to 8. So far it's one of only a handful of states raising their standards...

The change in North Carolina's end-of-grade tests is the first such adjustment since the tests began in 1993. "The Board felt that it was time to increase standards in its efforts to better prepare students for the rigors of the 21st-century competitiveness," said Lou Fabrizio, the state's director of accountability.

The state board ordered tougher passing grades applied retroactively to tests administered in 2006. Only 66 percent of fourth-graders passed this time, compared with 92 percent the year before.

That may alarm and frustrate some students and parents, but others, such as Margaret Carnes, say it's ultimately for the best.

It's better to know the truth now, she said, "than to find out ... that they graduated from high school without the skills they need to succeed..."

To read the complete article, please go to:
(<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=172668>)

North Carolina Surpasses 10,000 Certification Milestone; Accounts for One-fifth of Nation's Certified Teachers

With the recent addition of 1,525 newly certified teachers (once again the largest class in the country), North Carolina has surpassed the 10,000 National Board Certified teachers' milestone with a total of 11,325 North Carolina teachers having achieved this prestigious certification. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) released its 2006 certification results this morning.

Nationwide, 7,793 teachers and counselors earned certification this year, bringing the national total to 55,306. North Carolina accounts for one-fifth of the nation's nationally certified teachers. Florida is the next closest state with 9,238 National Board Certified teachers followed by South Carolina (5,077), California (3,659), Ohio (2,629) and Mississippi (2,555).

In addition, Wake County Public Schools leads the national district list with 1,156. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (955), Guilford County Schools (452) and Forsyth County Schools (311) were among the top 20 districts in the nation.

State Board of Education Chairman Howard Lee attributed the state's continued success to the support teachers receive both at the state and local levels. "North Carolina has made a commitment from the Governor's office all the way to the schoolhouse to provide teachers support in their pursuit of certification. The State Board of Education congratulates each of these teachers for meeting this challenge."

National Board Certification was first offered in 1994, when eight North Carolina teachers achieved this professional credential. Since then, the number of North Carolina teachers receiving the certification has grown dramatically.

North Carolina supports teachers in their efforts to achieve National Board Certification by:

- paying up-front the \$2,500 assessment fee (As a condition, the teacher is obligated to teach in the state during the following year whether they achieve National Board Certification or not.)
- providing three paid release days from normal teacher responsibilities to help teachers develop their portfolios
- providing a 12 percent salary supplement to the teachers' regular salary upon receipt of National Board Certification (good for the 10-year life of the certification)
- awarding 15 continuing education units (CEUs) to the individual completing the National Board Certification process.
- Also, the State Board of Education awards a North Carolina teaching license to out-of-state teachers who are employed in North Carolina and who possess National Board Certification.

National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession, and participation is voluntary. Teachers achieve certification through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes between one and three years to complete

and measures what accomplished teachers and counselors should know and be able to do. Certification is currently available to educators in 27 fields.

2006 N.C. SCHOOL REPORT CARDS

The 2006 N.C. School Report Cards provide parents, educators and others with an up-to-date "one-stop" shop to locate information about how the state's schools and school districts are performing on a variety of measures.

Snapshots and additional information are available online at www.ncreportcards.org and provide a variety of search capabilities.

There are some new elements to note regarding the 2005-06 school year.

- **Three-year Trend Data for Mathematics:** Because new tests were implemented based upon the revised Standard Course of Study for mathematics, a three year trend will not be available in this subject area for this release of the NC School Report Cards.
- **School Improvement Status:** If a school has entered Title I Improvement status, a dynamic message will appear. Schools enter Improvement status by not meeting target goals in the same subject (reading, mathematics, or Other Academic Indicators) for two years in a row. A school in Title I School Improvement status must take certain measures to improve performance.
- **District Improvement Status:** In addition to schools, school districts will display a dynamic message based upon whether or not they have entered Title I Improvement status. Districts enter Improvement status by not meeting target goals in the same subject (reading, mathematics, or Other Academic Indicators) in each of the three grade spans (3-5, 6-8, and high school) for two years in a row. A district in Title I District Improvement must take certain measures to improve performance.
- **AYP On-Time and Cohort Graduation Rates:** On-Time graduation rates would be used this year for the last time to meet federal No Child Left Behind requirements. The new Cohort rate and the On-Time Graduation rates will not be available for viewing on Jan. 30, but will be available in Spring 2007.
- **Test of Computer Skills:** This is the first year that eighth graders took the Test of Computer Skills via online assessment. An alternate assessment also was available for students with special needs or in cases where online delivery of the assessment was not technologically feasible.

- Civics & Economics and US History End-of-Course data reflect new tests based on the revised Standard Course of Study. The 2004-05 release didn't contain these data.

The N.C. School Report Cards have been produced annually since 2001. The most current and comparable information about local schools, districts and the state overall is provided in this on-line resource. Users of the report cards can search by school or school system name, by using a North Carolina map, or by a list of the state's 115 school districts. Advanced search capabilities allow for customized searches.

Each school report card includes a school profile, information about academic performance, school climate and safety and teacher quality. School snapshot summaries are online in English and Spanish.

State Dropout Rate Increases in 2005-06

North Carolina's dropout rate increased slightly in 2005-06 and is now 5.04 percent, an increase of 6.33 percent according to the *Annual Dropout Event Report for School Year 2005-06*. The dropout rate in 2004-05 was 4.74 percent.

Many parts of the state experienced decreases in dropout events with 46 of the 115 local districts reporting decreases. Five of the largest school districts account for a disproportionate amount of the increase. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Wake, Guilford, Cumberland and Winston-Salem/Forsyth schools accounted for 56 percent of the increase in the grade 9-12 dropout events. Overall, the state recorded 22,180 dropout events in grades nine through 12.

State law requires school officials to record the reason for a student's decision to drop out of school. Recently, there has been a rapid increase in the number of students who report they are dropping out of high school to enroll in a community college. In 2003-04, 7 percent of dropouts reported community college enrollment as the reason; in 2004-05, the percentage was 9.6. In 2005-06, 12.1 percent or 2,692 students gave community college enrollment as the reason for dropping out. A majority of dropout events continue to be related to attendance issues. Other reasons identified include students moving with school status unknown (9.5 percent) and academic problems (6.5 percent).

Currently, 58 North Carolina high schools are involved in Learn and Earn and the New Schools Project, formal efforts to significantly reform high school operations. More than 100 schools are expected to be in some phase of program development by 2008. These efforts, as well as others across the state, are helping students access rigorous curricula, participate in smaller learning communities and receive the support they need to be successful in high school.

Data analysis found that almost one-third (32.7 percent) of all dropout events continue to occur during the ninth grade year with 25.7 percent of students dropping out in 10th grade and 22.4 percent of students dropping out in 11th grade. Dropout rates increase in frequency as students reach 16 years of age. Seventy-nine percent of dropout events occurred between the ages of 16 and 18.

The 2005-06 school year also saw an increase in the number of male students dropping out with over twice as many leaving school as opposed to female students. Black males accounted for a disproportionate amount of the increase in the dropout count. While the dropout rates for Hispanic and American Indian students remain high, the rate for American Indian students decreased. The rate for Hispanic students continued to rise.

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.

The complete dropout report is available at (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schoolimprovement/effective/dropout/>).

Electronic Transcripts Increase 368% in North Carolina

North Carolina, which three years ago was the first state to offer a statewide electronic student transcript exchange, saw significant usage growth in 2006. Over 15,000 electronic transcripts were transmitted from 115 North Carolina high schools to the state's 110 colleges and universities last year through CFNC.org, a significant increase from the prior year's 3,200 transcripts.

Eliminating redundant tasks like printing, mailing, filing and data entry, Xap's Transcript Exchange improves efficiency with a fast and secure method to request, send, receive and import digital academic transcripts directly into the student information system. Using Xap's complete digital application solution and supporting industry standards (PESC), North Carolina institutions are seeing annual cost savings of up to \$75,000.

"The ability for students to send their official high school transcripts electronically is an incredible advantage both to students and school counselors who save time and money, and colleges can react much faster in making an admissions decision," said Robert Kanoy, Senior Associate Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs with the University of North Carolina system.

North Carolina views CFNC.org as a key factor behind the increase in the percentage of high-school students continuing on to college from 55% to 64%. CFNC.org provides career and education planning, as well as a simplified process for submitting both admissions applications and transcripts to students' institutions of choice.

"We are pleased to be the technology partner with North Carolina that developed the first statewide electronic transcript exchange in the nation three years ago," said Liz Dietz, Xap's Chief Executive Officer. "We look for recently-launched statewide exchanges in Illinois, Georgia and Tennessee to see similar success. While the marketplace's vast number of student information systems has created a traditional challenge for some, we have been successful in providing a true digital solution. Additionally, we have a proven track record and are constantly raising the bar, as evidenced by our new Portable Document Extract (PDX) technology that demystifies the electronic transcript data exchange between different systems."

New Tech High at Garinger is Pioneering

One Alternative to Assembly-line Education

Two freshmen at New Technology High look up from their laptops, where they're writing business letters to surgeons.

A visitor wants Joshua Vincent and Kevaun Truesdale to explain how their school, which just opened in Garinger High, differs from the larger school from which it sprang.

"Garinger may be kind of a bad school," says Joshua, 14, "but we're not."

What's different?

"Here, people dress professionally," Joshua says. "At the other campus they dress like slobs."

To an outsider, the distinction can be elusive. New Tech teens, many wearing jeans and hooded sweatshirts, look a lot like the other Garinger students.

But molding a distinct identity is part of the small-school movement, which the eastside Garinger is helping pioneer in its effort to survive.

New Tech supplies laptops, small classes and real-life projects to engage teens in college-prep academics...

To read the complete article, please go to:

(<http://www.charlotte.com/mlid/charlotte/living/education/16522975.htm>)