

NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION NEWS

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Education News

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Understanding North Carolina High School Graduation Rates

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of whether or not the nation's public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society. In today's increasingly competitive global economy, graduating high school is a critical step towards securing a good job and a promising future. Yet nationally, one-third of our students—about 1.2 million each year—leave high school without a diploma, and graduation rates for poor and minority students are even lower. The failure to graduate every child prepared for the 21st century has serious consequences for both individual students and the rest of American society. Yet, the unacceptably low graduation rates of America's youth have been obscured for far too long by inaccurate data, misleading calculations and reporting, and flawed accountability systems.

Nationally, and for each state, *Understanding High School Graduation Rates* illustrates the discrepancies in graduation rates reported by government and independent sources, examines why this is important, and describes three core policy areas that are fundamental to calculating, reporting, and improving accurate graduation rates:

- Use of common, accurate graduation rate calculations

- Statewide data system that track individual student data from the time students enter the educational system until they leave it

Policies that meaningfully holds high schools accountable for improving student achievement on test scores and increasing graduation rates so that low-performing students are not unnecessarily held back or encouraged to leave school without a diploma.

To see North Carolina report:

http://www.all4ed.org/publications/wcwc/NorthCarolina_wc.pdf

Bell Names North Carolina's Teacher of the Year

James Bell, an eighth grade English teacher at Chowan Middle School, Edenton-Chowan Public Schools, was named the 2007-08 North Carolina Teacher of the Year. Bell succeeds Diana Beasley from Hickory High School, Hickory Public Schools.

In accepting the award, Bell said his selection as North Carolina's Teacher of the Year was as much about his students and athletes as about himself. "It is the hundreds of students that I teach, coach or just talk to every single day at Chowan Middle School. They are the real reason that I have been successful as an educator." Bell said he looked forward to representing North Carolina as "we hold ourselves to the highest standards as we strive to lift our students to achieve well beyond anyone's expectations."

Thanks to the NC Automobile Dealers Association (NCADA), the state's Teacher of the Year receives a new automobile. Under this partnership with the Public Schools of North Carolina, the NCADA also sponsored the night's dinner, activities and awards.

Bell has nine years of teaching experience, six in his current position. Professionally he is a member of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) and is currently serving as its Building Representative. He has made a number of staff development presentations including "Tricks of the Trade" for first year teachers,

explicitly teaching reading strategies to middle grade students, reading strategies to be used during and after reading, reading strategies and teaming in the middle school, and using Thinking Maps while reading poetry. He is currently serving on Edenton-Chowan's System Wide Literacy Team.

He has received several awards and recognitions including the North Carolina Region One Teacher of the Year 2007-08, Edenton-Chowan Schools Teacher of the Year 2006-07, Chowan Middle School Teacher of the Year 2006-07, Albemarle Athletic Conference Coach of the Year 2006-07, and the North Carolina Region One Team of the Year 2005-06. Bell received his Bachelor of Science in English with a minor in Journalism from North Carolina Wesleyan College and his teaching certification from East Carolina University.

The state's Teacher of the Year spends the school year traveling the state as an ambassador for the teaching profession. Bell also receives a one-time \$7,500 stipend, a technology package from SMARTer Kids Foundation, a trip to the International Space Camp, an international trip through the NC Center for International Understanding, and a trip to the National Teacher of the Year conference. In addition, the state Teacher of the Year serves as an advisor to the State Board of Education for two years.

The other regional finalists were:

- North Central Region: Sonya Kiser, North Johnston High (Johnston County Schools);
- Northwest Region: Sherrard Pearce, Mooresville Sr. High (Mooresville Graded Schools District);
- Southeast Region: Beth Howard, Dixon Elementary (Onslow County Schools);
- Southwest Region: Denise Andrews, North Belmont Elementary (Gaston County Schools);
- Sandhills/South Central Region: Bridget Johnson, Vass-Lakeview Elementary (Moore County Schools);
- Piedmont-Triad/Central Region: Shawn Watlington, Greensboro Middle College (Guilford County Schools); and
 - West Region: Jerome Hughes, Asheville High (Asheville City Schools).

Jane Norwood, State Board Vice-Chair, Testifies to Congress on High School Reform

Dr. Jane Norwood, Vice-chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education, testified before the full House Education Committee on dropout prevention policies, strategies to improve high school graduation rates, and the current status of high school reforms. Norwood was a witness on behalf of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) in the latest of a series of congressional hearings on the No Child Left Behind Act.

“We recognize that the institution of the American high school must undergo sweeping improvements in order to prepare all students for today’s economy. Effective high school reforms must focus on the core issues of literacy, high school structure -- including use of the school day and the school calendar -- teacher quality, and dropout prevention,” Dr. Norwood told House Education Committee members.

North Carolina has taken great strides in focusing on these vital issues, moving toward greater accountability with more accurate data, including the use of a new four-year cohort graduation rate. State boards of education are similarly engaged in efforts to improve the high school curriculum and raise student achievement. Indeed, NASBE has undertaken multiple projects related to graduation rates and accountability, including a partnership with the Gates Foundation to redesign high schools.

More broadly, Norwood explained to the committee, the overarching goals of the No Child Left Behind Act—100% student proficiency and closing the achievement gap—cannot be achieved without effective high school reforms.

“The ‘3 R’s’ of high school reform—Reform, Relevancy, and Reading—must be incorporated into state and federal policies,” said Norwood.

- **Reform** – promoting intervention and recovery efforts as part of the comprehensive restructuring of high school.
- **Relevancy** – crafting policies sensitive to the unique circumstances, interests,

needs, and demands of students and schools and cognizant of the real world impact and reaction at the school and classroom level.

- **Reading** – dramatically improving the reading abilities of high school students. Students lacking the necessary literacy skills are more likely to drop out, go to jail, and be unemployed.

“In today’s world, we, as education leaders, must communicate the message that a high school education and a high school diploma have become a bare necessity and should be a minimum expectation—if not a basic right—for all students. We have an obligation to protect and promote this right. Effective, meaningful, and rigorous high school reform policies are needed at the local, state, and federal levels in order to increase graduation rates, prevent dropouts, and raise overall student achievement,” said Norwood.

Dr. Norwood’s written testimony and that of the other hearing witnesses, including former Governor Bob Wise, as well as an archived webcast of the hearing are available on the House Education Committee website at <http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/fc042307.shtml>.

HP Awards More Than \$7 Million in Education Grants to Schools in the U.S. and Puerto Rico

Grants Promote Student Interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

HP is awarding 172 K-12 public schools and two- and four-year colleges and universities in the United States and Puerto Rico more than \$7 million in mobile technology, cash and professional development.

The grants, part of the 2007 HP Technology for Teaching grant program, are designed to improve student achievement through the innovative uses of technology in the classroom while encouraging student interest in careers in technology, engineering, math and science, including environmental science. During the 2007-2008 academic year, grant projects will affect nearly 42,000 students.

Since 2004, HP has contributed a total of \$36 million in HP Technology for Teaching grants to more than 650 schools worldwide. During the past 20 years, HP has contributed more than \$1 billion in cash and equipment to schools, universities, community organizations and other nonprofit organizations around the world.

“HP empowers students and teachers to succeed through innovative uses of technology and training,” said Bess Stephens, vice president, Philanthropy and Education, HP. “We invest in schools to increase educational attainment and contribute to the development of a skilled, diverse workforce in the future.”

Since the inception of the HP Technology for Teaching initiative, grant recipients have reported a positive impact on teaching and student achievement as a result of the program.

“The HP Technology for Teaching initiative is an exemplary comprehensive philanthropic education program,” said Leslie Conery, deputy chief executive officer, International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). “As a result of the professional development, community building and HP’s commitment to sharing best practices, grant recipients are reporting a direct, positive impact on student learning.”

K-12 grants

HP is awarding nearly \$4.1 million in cash and equipment to teams of five teachers at 130 K-12 public schools in the United States. Preference was given to schools serving low-income students and projects including a math, science or environmental component.

The award package, valued at more than \$31,000 for each team, will include five HP Tablet PCs, five multimedia projectors, five HP digital cameras, five HP Officejet All-in-Ones, software and accessories, and a cash stipend for each teacher.

Teachers will also participate in a professional development program sponsored by HP and led by ISTE, during which they will receive customized mentoring and learning opportunities and will participate in an online learning community to share best practices.

Grant recipients represent schools in 37 states and the District of Columbia. In many grant proposals, teachers and students plan to use mobile technology outside the classroom to learn about their environment and then enhance their learning inside the classroom through the Internet.

Higher education grants

HP is awarding 42 two- and four-year colleges and universities in the United States and Puerto Rico a total of \$2.9 million in cash and equipment. Each recipient package will include HP products, including HP Tablet PCs, and a faculty stipend valued at more than \$68,000 per award.

The higher education grants support course redesign to help increase the number of students graduating with degrees in business, engineering, computer science and environmental science. The program aims to enhance student success as faculty members adopt technology-enhanced instruction in their classrooms.

This year, several projects will use HP Tablet PCs in conjunction with geographic information system (GIS) and global positioning system (GPS) software to assist undergraduate science students with field data collection and data visualization.

2007 HP Technology for Teaching grant recipients - North Carolina

East Forsyth High School, Kernersville

Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City

Fairmont Middle School, Fairmont

Piedmont Community College, Roxboro

River Road Middle School, Elizabeth City

Williston Middle School, Wilmington

**Two Students Named Outstanding Youth Scientific Leaders;
Recipients to Participate in National Youth
Science Camp® This Summer**

Hae Rhee Chung, a senior at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (Durham; Leslie Brinson, advisor), and Diane Caitlin Saunders, a senior at Riverside High School (Durham Public Schools; Elizabeth Christenbury, advisor), were recently selected as two of the most promising scientific leaders in North Carolina's 2007 high school graduating class. They will represent North Carolina as delegates in the 44th session of the National Youth Science Camp® held near the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia, to be held June 27-July 23.

Chung is a National AP Scholar and has received the Siemens Advanced Placement Award (one of two for NC). She received Honorable Mention at the 2006 iGEM intercollegiate synthetic biology competition as a part of the Duke University iGEM team. Chung also is a developmental attaché for the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCCSM), a NC State Science Fair place winner, and leads the Korean Seminar at NCCSM as a teacher. She is a concert pianist and an accomplished violinist, having played with several local symphonies and the North Carolina Symphony.

Saunders is a National Merit Scholarship Finalist and an AP Scholar with Honor awardee. She attended the Governor's School of North Carolina after her junior year. A scholar-athlete, Saunders is an all-conference selection on both the field hockey and lacrosse teams. She is an accomplished artist, having won many awards on local, state, and national levels.

Four additional high school seniors were selected for their outstanding achievement in science and will serve as alternate delegates: Travis Price, Northwest Cabarrus High School (Cabarrus County Schools; Joanne Driscoll, advisor), Nathan Bihlmeyer, Franklin Academy (Wake County; Sam Wheeler, advisor), Lu Liu, Broughton High School (Wake County Schools; Laura Woods, advisor) and Haowei Claire Tong, West Forsyth High School (Winston-Salem-Forsyth County Schools; Sean Bennett, advisor).

Two North Carolina Youth Volunteers Honored at National Award Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Super Bowl MVP Peyton Manning Pays Tribute to Young Heroes as Part of Four-Day Recognition Events

Two North Carolina students, Caroline Johnson, 17, of Wilmington and Mason Park, 11, of Raleigh were honored in the nation's capital for their outstanding volunteer work during the presentation of The 2007 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. The two young people – along with 100 other top youth volunteers from across the country – received \$1,000 awards as well as personal congratulations from Indianapolis Colts quarterback and Super Bowl MVP Peyton Manning at the 12th annual award ceremony and gala dinner reception, held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

Caroline and Mason were named the top high school and middle level youth volunteers in North Carolina last February. In addition to their cash awards, they received engraved silver medallions and an all-expense-paid trip with their parents to Washington, D.C.

Caroline, a junior at John T. Hoggard High School, started a club at her school to raise money and public support for victims of genocide, natural disasters and other crises around the world. Before moving to North Carolina last August, Caroline learned about the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, and became active in her Kansas school's Save Darfur Club. "I became very upset and moved by the entire situation," she said. Caroline intended to launch a Darfur club at her new school in Wilmington, but after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast, decided to expand her focus and work on behalf of people everywhere who need funds and attention.

She secured approval for her new "G.A.P.P. Club" (for Global Awareness and Peace Promotion) from the student council, and recruited a teacher advisor and student members. The club now meets every week and schedules one or two activities a month. It has conducted a frappacino sale for UNICEF's AIDS fund, a bake sale for earthquake victims in Pakistan, awareness campaigns for genocide victims in Sudan and Uganda, and events to raise money by selling candy, bracelets and buttons. "I hope and believe that we have shown our fellow students that it is very cool and very important for young people to be involved in things that some might say are too big or too faraway for us to be able to help," said Caroline.

Mason, a sixth-grader at West Millbrook Middle School, has helped raise nearly

\$48,000 for the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association, and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society over the past five years. "Diseases are out there so we have to help those who have them and keep raising money so scientists can find a cure to stop them," he said. In his first volunteer effort, Mason participated in a local school walk when he was just 6. "It was a great feeling to know that even at such a young age I could be involved and have such an impact on others," he remembered.

Now he engages in several fund-raising campaigns a year, participating as a team member in nationally sponsored events, and also pursuing his own fund-raising activities, such as washing cars, selling lemonade, recycling cans, setting up collection jars, canvassing for donations, and holding yard sales. In the process, Mason has given speeches to audiences of up to 3,000 people, appeared in TV and radio public service announcements, led flag ceremonies and sang the national anthem, and sent hundreds of letters and e-mail notes to potential sponsors. One year, he even asked Santa Claus and birthday party guests to make donations instead of bringing him gifts. "It's the greatest feeling in the world knowing that I am part of someone else's success," said Mason. "If everyone would take the time to help change someone's life, the world would be a much better place filled with happiness and hope."

School Music Programs Get the Gift of Music

NOTION Music has begun the process of donating more than 600 copies of its music composition software to high schools and colleges across the country.

The contribution, valued at approximately \$244,000, is being distributed over the next few weeks to music departments that have experienced recent budgetary restraints or have other needs that the software will address. The first round of schools to benefit from NOTION's donation include:

- Cary Christian School, Cary, NC
- Winston-Salem State University, Winston-Salem, NC

NOTION software combines the best players, the finest instruments and the latest

recording technology. It was developed by recording the instrumental sounds of London Symphony Orchestra at the legendary Abbey Road Studios. NOTION Music makes software that is used by professional and hobbyist musicians around the world allowing anyone, anywhere to write, record and play music as if working with a full ensemble of musicians.

NOTION still has a limited quantity of software available for school music departments. To nominate a school, please send an email to: notationmusic@fleishman.com.

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