

NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION NEWS

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IN THIS ISSUE:

[Education News](#)

[Letter to the Editor](#)

[NCAE receives grant to close achievement gap](#)

[\\$153,000 in Grants Awarded for Critical Foreign Language Instruction](#)

[North Carolina Receives AP Incentive Grant; Funds Benefit Low Wealth Districts](#)

[High Schools ABCS Results for 2005-06](#)

[Incentive awards](#)

[Assistance teams assigned](#)

[High school assistance is broadened](#)

[High school AYP targets](#)

[ABCs background information](#)

[State Board of Education Raises Standards for Student Achievement](#)

[Stone Named 2006 MILKEN Family Foundation National Educator](#)

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Education News

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Letter to The Editor

Please note that there are 6 NC public schools in Newsweek's top 100: Raleigh Charter is No 53 and William G Enloe Magnet, in Raleigh, is ranked No. 59. Both of these are higher than a couple of schools you mention here. You might want

to add them!

Thanks.

Diana Bloomfield

NCAE receives grant to close achievement gap

A \$20,000 grant from the National Education Association is helping the North Carolina Association of Educators revise state education policies and create initiatives to close the gaps in student achievement. The grant will help NCAE provide support and training to three low-performing high schools, and use research-based school improvement models to make the case for improved education funding in North Carolina...

To read the rest of this article please go to:

<http://www.citizen-times.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200661018020>

\$153,000 in Grants Awarded for Critical Foreign Language Instruction

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has announced the award of \$12.9 million in grants to school districts in 22 states to help dramatically increase the number of Americans learning foreign languages deemed critical to national security and commerce.

The grants, part of President Bush's National Security Language Initiative, are intended to address the shortage of critical foreign language speakers by supporting new and expanded programs in grades K-12.

"Languages like Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi and Farsi are not only essential for trade in the global economy, but also to our national security," Secretary Spellings said. "When it comes to foreign languages, our students get started too

late—and too few study critical languages. We can and must turn this around."

For more information on the initiative, visit

<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/competitiveness/nsli/index.html>.

Grant recipients in North Carolina:

WINSTON-SALEM, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, \$57,745

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, \$95,367

NORTH CAROLINA RECEIVES AP INCENTIVE GRANT; FUNDS BENEFIT LOW WEALTH DISTRICTS

Participation rates and access to Advanced Placement courses in low wealth districts will increase thanks to the state's recent receipt of an Advanced Placement Incentive Grant worth up to \$1.6 million over the next three years.

State Superintendent June Atkinson said she was pleased that North Carolina once again received the Advanced Placement (AP) Incentive Grant, which will be chiefly used to help widen access for minority students, rural students and others who are under-represented in these courses. "Participation rates show that access to AP courses has spread much more quickly over the past five years. Thanks to this grant, more low-income students, African American students and Hispanic students will continue to be encouraged to take these rigorous courses," Atkinson said.

Since 2000, the number of AP exams taken by low-income North Carolina public school students has grown by 2,553, by 4,134 for African American students and by 1,226 for Hispanic students.

The incentive grant also can be used to develop additional AP online courses, provide targeted professional development to middle and secondary teachers in low wealth districts and develop Summer Pre-AP Academies for middle school students in selected low wealth districts.

Department staff will be sending an announcement to the state's low wealth districts regarding the availability of these grants and how they can participate in the competitive Request for Proposals process. Staff will review local proposals and award subgrants based on identified needs. The funding level for the grant each year is \$549,297.

Access to AP exams is important in encouraging students to reach high standards. It's also an important indicator of future college success. Students who take these college-level courses are more likely to complete their bachelor's degree in four years or less.

Advanced Placement courses are college-level courses offered in 35 subject areas and assessed through the annual AP exams. These exams are graded on a scale of 1-5, with a 5 being the highest score. Most colleges and universities in the United States and North Carolina use AP exam results in their admissions process and may give college credit to students earning grades of 3 or better. AP exams, with the exception of AP Studio Art, which is a portfolio assessment, consist of dozens of multiple choice questions and free-response questions.

HIGH SCHOOL ABCS RESULTS FOR 2005-06

Fifty-seven percent of North Carolina high schools made expected or high academic growth under the state's school accountability model in 2005-06 and a total of 71.4 percent of end-of-course tests scores were reported at the proficient level or higher.

The results are based on new ABCs growth formulas, which raise standards for meeting academic growth targets. Higher academic standards and a stronger focus on academic rigor are at the heart of the State Board of Education's agenda for 21st century skills and learning for all students.

The 2005-06 results are the first provided using the new ABCs formulas developed in 2005 to replace the original ones. The new formulas were

developed after the General Assembly directed the State Board of Education to complete a thorough evaluation of the ABCs standards. This evaluation highlighted reasons for re-developing the ABCs formulas based on more recent growth rates and on lessons learned from a decade of experience with a statewide accountability model.

The new formulas calculate growth using previous assessments of students to predict performance on the following eight mandated end-of-course tests: Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, English I, Geometry, Physical Science and Physics. US History and Civics and Economics will be included in growth calculations starting with the 2006-07 school year although results from these two end-of-course tests as well as results from the grade 10 writing assessment are included in the performance composites for this report. In addition, the percentages of students completing College/University Prep or College Tech Prep courses of study, the ABCs dropout rate, and the passing rate on the high school competency test are included in the ABCs calculations.

Results for K-8 schools will not be available until Nov. 1. Elementary and middle school students took new mathematics assessments in the spring of 2006, and additional time is needed to set achievement cut scores for the new assessments and to perform other analyses before the K-8 ABCs results can be compiled.

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Because this year's ABCs results are based on new formulas, state school accountability officials cautioned against comparing results to previous years.

In the 2005-06 school year, three high schools 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.

Two schools (0.5 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.

Twenty-eight schools (7 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 146 schools 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.

One hundred and twenty-one schools, or 30.6 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.

Sixty-one schools, 15.4 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.

Eight schools 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 following the November release of the K-8 ABCs accountability results with the goal of districts being able to provide the incentive awards in December to all staff who earn them.

Assistance teams assigned

This year, 14 high schools 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.

Based on State Board of Education action, state assistance teams were assigned to the following schools: Bertie High School (Bertie County), Hertford County High School (Hertford County Schools); Carver High School and the School of Pre-engineering (Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools); Reidsville High School (Rockingham County Schools); Andrews High School, Middle College at A&T, Guilford Technical Community College Middle College, (Guilford County Schools); Northwest Halifax High School and Southeast Halifax High School (Halifax County); Red Springs High School (Public Schools of Robeson County); and Hillside High School and Southern High School (Durham Public Schools); and Garinger High School (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools).

High school assistance is broadened

ABCs assistance teams are just one form of state assistance or intervention in schools that are not performing well. In addition to the ABCs assistance teams, teams have been working with 44 high schools identified in 2005 because of performance composites below 60 percent. High school assessment staff also will be working with approximately 200 high schools identified in 2006 as having performance composites below 70 percent.

In September, State Board Chairman Lee and State Superintendent Atkinson joined Gov. Mike Easley to launch a statewide effort to conduct performance audits in all 115 school districts with a goal of ensuring the smart, targeted use of resources in all public high schools. One goal of the audit — to be performed by researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a team of school finance experts — is to identify best practices in spending and allocating resources in the highest performing high schools and replicate them in other schools.

High school reform and redesign also is underway statewide. Through the partnership of the State Board of Education, the Department of Public Instruction and the NC New Schools Project, 25 redesigned high schools and

33 Learn and Earn early college high schools have been launched since 2003, and more are planned in future years.

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 high schools, 47.8 percent of the state's 395 high schools with an AYP status met AYP.

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 ABCs results for 2005-06 high schools released today provide school-level performance results for 395 high schools. High schools were held accountable under the ABCs beginning with the 1997-98 school year. The ABCs model began one year earlier, in 1996-97, for elementary and middle schools. At every level of schooling, the ABCs model emphasizes school-building level accountability and a focus on instruction in basic, core subjects.

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 end-of-course assessments are given to students during the final five days of each course (semester-long course) or during the final 10 days of each course (year-long course) and take approximately two hours each.

The complete ABCs high school report is available online at <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs>.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RAISES STANDARDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

North Carolina's State Board of Education has raised proficiency standards for elementary and middle school students when it approved the achievement levels for the state's new end-of-grade mathematics assessments. These assessments were given for the first time in May 2006 to measure student performance on the revised and more rigorous mathematics curriculum.

In setting the new achievement levels, the State Board of Education made good on months of discussion regarding the need to raise standards for student performance to more closely align with proficiency standards of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and to be more challenging in preparing students for 21 st century skills and learning.

Under the new standards, the percentage of students considered to be proficient ranges from 61 percent (eighth grade) to 69 percent (third grade). This level of proficiency is similar to where the state's proficiency levels were in 1993 – the first year that end-of-grade assessments were required. The percent proficient is the primary factor in each school's performance composite reported under the ABCs of Public Education accountability model. The performance composite indicates the percentage of student test scores that are at or above the proficient level.

STONE NAMED 2006 MILKEN FAMILY FOUNDATION NATIONAL EDUCATOR

Kristen Stone, a third grade teacher at Tanglewood Elementary School (Public

Schools of Robeson County), probably began her morning anticipating another typical school day. Little did she know that her day was going to be anything but ordinary; today she became North Carolina's 2006 Milken Family Foundation National Educator award recipient.

State Superintendent June Atkinson made the surprise announcement during a school-wide assembly. Stone is among the nation's 100 most recent recipients of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award, which carries with it an unrestricted financial award of \$25,000 and membership in a network of over 2,200 past recipients from across the nation who serve as both expert resources and collaborators to network members. Stone is the only North Carolina educator to receive the award this year.

Superintendent Atkinson said that participating in this event is one of the highlights of her job as the state's public schools' leader. "Kristen's third grade students are incredibly fortunate to have such an exceptional teacher. She is a wonderful example of the quality of teachers that call North Carolina's public school classrooms home." Noting that North Carolina has been a participant in Milken for the past 12 years, Atkinson said she finds this a truly humbling experience. "I am honored to have had the opportunity to recognize such an exemplary teacher and shine a light on all the wonderful things she does to inspire and motivate her students to learn and excel."

An independent, blue ribbon committee (appointed by each state's department of education) selects the recipients on a state-by-state basis for the award. Predetermined criteria include exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school; exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession; strong, long-term potential for professional and policy leadership; and an engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

Stone is noted for her ability to inspire and motivate her students to learn. She peppers her instructional methodology with varied activities targeted at a wide range of student interests and abilities that her pupils can't help but become engaged by the subject matter. For example, she teaches the geographical

regions of the state by decorating a cookie that shows the topography of particularly those below grade level – to make sure students are on track for academic growth. She is known for doing whatever it takes to help a child learn. Stone earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1994 from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte and her Master of Arts degree in 2003 from The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. She also is a National Board Certified teacher. She currently serves as grade-level chairperson for the third grade and is mentor to a third-grade teacher. She is a member of Tanglewood Elementary School's Writing Committee, Conferencing Committee and the School Improvement Team; serves as Accelerated Math Coordinator; teaches in the school's Saturday academies; and tutors after school. She is actively engaged in coordinating staff development opportunities for the school and is currently applying for admission to a Masters Degree in School Supervision and Administration program.