



# ABCs 2004 Accountability Report Background Packet

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

## Overview

The ABCs of Public Education is North Carolina's primary school improvement program with the goals of providing strong local school accountability, an emphasis on mastery of basic subjects and as much local decision making as possible. Since 1996, when the ABCs program became law, it has been modified and improved to better portray school performance and to ensure that its measures are as fair and accurate as possible. Formulas are used to measure the academic growth and achievement for all schools. The 2003-04 school year marked the eighth year of the ABCs for K-8 schools and the seventh year for high schools.

No Child Left Behind, the federal education law, requires an additional accountability measure called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP, which is included in the 2004 ABCs Accountability Report, focuses on sub-groups of students with a goal of closing achievement gaps and increasing proficiency to 100 percent.

What has remained constant throughout the history of the ABCs model is that both growth and "bottom line" performance are recognized under the ABCs. Schools are rewarded based on growth in student achievement, and school assistance teams are assigned to the lowest-performing schools. Schools also are recognized for the percentage of their students' scores at or above grade level.

The ABCs accountability report is a Web-based report to provide convenient and inexpensive access to as many North Carolina citizens as possible. The ABCs Accountability Report is released annually at the same Web address: <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>. This background packet provides an introduction to the ABCs Accountability Report, an example of the ABCs report format, and answers to basic questions about the ABCs model.

## What's New?

Honor Schools of Excellence, a new recognition category approved by the State Board of Education, recognizes those schools that meet or exceed growth goals, have 90 percent or more of their students at or above grade level, and make Adequate Yearly Progress.

## Timeline

### June 30

Local school systems are required to submit test data to DPI. (Note: These data are preliminary.)

### July 19

Preliminary AYP results are released by local school systems for their respective schools.

### July

DPI verifies test data with local school systems, analyzes data and prepares report.

### August 5

ABCs Accountability Report released at State Board of Education meeting; ABCs Accountability Report Web site goes live.

### August-September

Assistance Teams begin work in low-performing schools designated by the State Board of Education.

State Board of Education members, State Superintendent and top DPI leaders begin visiting schools and presenting banners to the 25 Most Improved K-8 Schools, 10 Most Improved High Schools and Honor Schools of Excellence.

# Highlights of the ABCs Accountability Model

## ABCs Awards and Recognition Categories

### School Status Labels and Recognitions

Performance Level Based on Percent of Students' Scores at or above Achievement Level III	Academic Growth	
	Schools Making Expected Growth or High Growth	Schools Making Less than Expected Growth
90% to 100%	Met AYP	Honor School of Excellence
	AYP Not Met	School of Excellence
80% to 89%	School of Distinction	
60% to 79%	School of Progress	
50% to 59%	Priority School	
Less than 50%	Priority School	Low Performing
<i>Additional Recognitions</i>		
25 Most Improved K-8 Schools and 10 Most Improved High Schools		

### Incentive Awards

- In all schools that attain the High Growth standards, certified staff members each receive up to \$1,500 incentive awards and teacher assistants receive up to \$500.
- In all schools attaining the Expected Growth standard (but less than High Growth), certified staff members each receive up to \$750 and teacher assistants receive up to \$375.

### Sanctions

Schools that do not meet the expected growth standard and have a performance composite of less than 50 percent are identified as low performing. The State Board of Education will assign mandatory state assistance teams to a select group of low-performing schools. Other schools in this category will be eligible for voluntary assistance to help improve the school's performance. Low-performing schools must notify students' parents in writing about the schools' low-performing status. The ABCs program includes reporting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of schools under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, but no ABCs rewards or sanctions are based on AYP for the 2003-04 school year.

### Components of the ABCs at the K-8 Level

- Based on the end-of-grade tests in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 (growth and performance).
- Alternate Assessment Portfolios and Alternate Assessment Academic Inventories (for qualified

students with disabilities) in performance composite and AYP only.

- Computer Skills Tests at grade eight in performance composite only.
- Statewide accountability testing is not allowed in grades K-2. Special assessments are used to chart students' academic growth.
- End-of-Course results for students taking EOC tests (growth and performance).

### Components of the ABCs at the High School Level

- Student performance on eight mandated end-of-course tests: Algebra I; Algebra II; Biology; Chemistry; English I; Geometry; Physical Science; Physics.
- Growth is calculated using prediction formulas that factor in past performance to predict students' future performance.
- Current year-to-baseline (average of two previous years) comparison of percentages of students completing College/University Prep or College Tech Prep courses of study.
- ABCs dropout rate (current year versus two-year baseline).
- Gain in passing rate on high school competency tests from the end of 8th grade to the end of 10th grade.
- SAT scores and participation rates for the last three years are reported, but not included in the schools' composite scores determining ABCs status.

# Report Format – What You’ll See on the Web

**The ABCs of Public Education**  
**2003–2004 Growth and Performance of North Carolina Schools**  
**Growth and Performance of Schools**

Type	System and School(s)	Grade Span	Met Expected	Met High	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABCs Status	AYP	AYP Code
	<b>River County</b>								
	Roane Elem	04 06	Yes	No	74.5	~	Pro Exp	Yes	
	Hilldale Elem	PK 06	Yes	Yes	91.8	~	Exc Hgh	Yes	CI
	<b>Leigh County</b>								
	Villages Elem	0K 05	Yes	Yes	55.0	~	Exc Hgh	Yes	
	Mountain Mid	06 08	Yes	No	55.0	~	Pri	No	
	Piney HS	09 12	No	No	62.0	~	NR	No	
	<b>Blue Acad</b>								
	Blue Acad	0 12	Yes	Yes	80.5	~	Dst Hgh	Yes	
	<b>Elk</b>								
	Ridge Pri	PK 02	Yes	Yes	~	1	Hgh	Yes	
	Valley	03 05	Yes	Yes	76.9	~	Pro Hgh	Yes	

**ABCs STATUS:** Exp – Expected Growth; Hgh – High Growth; HE – Honor School of Excellence; Exc – School of Excellence; Dst – School of Distinction; Pro – School of Progress; Pri – Priority School; MI – 25 Most Improved K-8 Schools; 10 Most Improved High Schools; LP – Low-Performing; NR – No Recognition; 95R – Less than 95% tested

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** 1 – K-2 Feeder; 2 – Senior High (Gr 9-12); 3 – Senior High (Gr 10-12); 9 – School did not meet data requirements; \* Confidence Interval Applied; ~ No Special Conditions; @ Charter School evaluated as alternative

**AYP CODE:** CI – Confidence Interval applied; SH – Safe Harbor; TAS – Targeted Assistance School; FE – Feeder School; SE – Special Evaluation; 95A – Participation Rate Averaging

**AYP:** UR – Under Review

**TYPE:** C – Charter; R – Regular; A – Alternative

**Key to reading the status category abbreviations and special conditions.**

**Grades served in each school**

**The ABCs program establishes a growth standard for each school. Expected growth is based on the school’s previous performance, statewide average growth and a statistical adjustment that’s needed whenever you compare test scores of students from one year to the next. All this information is placed in a formula that indicates whether a school met expected growth or exceeded that to meet high growth standards.**

**The performance composite indicates what percentage of students’ scores in each school are at or above grade level (Achievement Level III). Schools are recognized for the percentage of students performing at this proficiency level and whether they made their growth goals.**

**Occasionally, a school will have special conditions that need to be noted in the ABCs report. These special conditions may include unusual grade configurations such as K-2 or 10-12, insufficient data because of small numbers of students tested or other information pertinent to the ABCs report. The key to the special conditions is at the bottom of each Web page.**

**The AYP Code indicates which NCLB rules were applied in determining school performance.**

**AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) is a measure required under the federal No Child Left Behind law. To make AYP, a school must meet every performance target for each subgroup in the school. For more on AYP, please go to [www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb)**

**This column refers to the type of designation a specific school has earned by virtue of its growth and performance composite. The key to these abbreviations is at the bottom of each Web page.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What measure is most important for parents to know – growth or performance?

Both measures are important in evaluating student achievement in a school. The percentage of students performing at grade level/proficiency or above is one important way to view the overall achievement of a school. At the same time, the growth measure also is important. Growth shows how aggressively a school's students are moving forward each year. Even a school with 90 percent or more of its students at grade level is highly unlikely to have every student achieving at the top of the testing scale and should be showing growth annually.

### How can a school be high performing under the ABCs and not make AYP?

The ABCs model measures growth over time and also determines the performance composite for the school as a whole. AYP measures school performance differently. To meet AYP, a school must meet target goals for each subgroup of students that numbers 40 or more. Target goals are set annually by the state for reading and mathematics at grades 3-8 and 10, and for attendance rates or graduation rates as well. AYP is an all-or-nothing model. If a school misses one target, it does not make AYP. For example, although a school could have High Growth and a performance composite over 90 percent, it could fall short on one subgroup's performance and miss making AYP. The State Board of Education changed the ABCs recognition categories to include AYP for 2003-04. Honor Schools of Excellence are those schools that meet or exceed growth goals, have 90 percent or more of their students performing at or above grade level and make AYP.

### What happens to low-performing schools?

In accordance with state law, the State Board of Education assigns state assistance teams to low-performing schools that are considered to be most in need of this additional help. Priority is given to schools where the performance of students may be declining.

### What role do assistance teams play?

Assistance teams consist of currently practicing teachers and other educators, representatives of higher education, school administrators, retired educators and others the State Board of Education considers appropriate. Team members have been specially trained to take on this role. The assistance teams are required by law to review and investigate all facets of school operations and assist in developing recommendations to improve student performance at each school to which they are assigned.

A comprehensive review may include curriculum and program offerings, instruction and scheduling, student services, school-community relations, school climate, achievement results, professional development, school improvement planning process, school-based management practices and human and fiscal resources. The assistance team uses the review to help it recommend specific actions that will improve student achievement at that school. Team members also evaluate certified personnel assigned to the school and make recommendations concerning their performance.

The assistance teams collaborate with school staff members, central office staff and local school boards in designing, implementing and monitoring improvement plans to alleviate problems and improve student performance. The assistance teams report to the local boards of education, the community and the State Board of Education on the schools' progress.

### Can personnel in low-performing schools be dismissed?

Local superintendents recommend to the local board whether to retain, transfer, dismiss or demote principals in low-performing schools. The superintendent also is required to submit a plan for addressing the needs of all identified low-performing schools. Regardless of the local superintendent's recommendation, the State Board of Education has the discretion to recommend the dismissal of any principal of a low-performing school to which an assistance team has been assigned. State law also allows a principal or an assistance team to recommend that a certified staff member take a State Board-designated general knowledge test if the principal or assistance team determines that the certified staff member's performance is impaired by his or her lack of general knowledge.



## **How can high-performing schools still meet their growth goals year after year?**

While it may seem more difficult for schools with a high percentage of students at or above grade level to continue meeting growth expectations, it is possible for them to do so. Even in schools with 95 percent of their students at or above grade level, all students are not scoring at the top of the testing scale. Many students may, in fact, be just slightly over the bar for being proficient and have considerable room to grow before "maxing out" on the tests' scales. Accountability analysts say that North Carolina has no schools where all students have reached the top of the testing scale regardless of the fact that many reach the proficiency standard.

## **How do the Student Accountability Standards fit into the ABCs?**

Student Accountability Standards for students rely on some of the same tests used to determine schools' ABCs status. The end-of-grade tests are used both to determine school status and also to help determine whether students are ready to be promoted to the next grade level from grades 3, 5 and 8.

## **How does the ABCs model fit with federal requirements?**

The ABCs model is serving North Carolina very well, functioning as a catalyst for significant improvements in student achievement. By incorporating AYP into the ABCs, North Carolina is adding an important gap-closing component. Under the federal requirements, schools are held accountable for the performance of each subgroup of students within the school. This is a new standard that will move our state and the nation toward the elimination of achievement gaps. This year, the AYP designation does not affect ABCs incentive awards. Title I schools, under federal requirements, can face sanctions if they do not make AYP for two consecutive years because of problems in the same content area.

## **More Background On the Web**

**The Department of Public Instruction's Web site includes a great deal of background information about the ABCs.**

- **2003-04 NC Testing Program: General Information, Policies and Procedures**  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/policies/>
- **NC Statewide Testing Calendar for 2003**  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/calendars/0304.htm>
- **Setting Annual Growth Standards**  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/2003memo/Standardsfeb2003.pdf>
- **Refinement of the ABCs Awards and Recognition Categories**  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/2004memo/AWARDABC04.pdf>
- **Evolution of the ABCs**  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/2003memo/200203abc.pdf>
- **Determining Composite Scores in the ABCs Model**  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/DeterminingCompositeScoresABCs04.pdf>

Additional information on Student Accountability Standards is available at [www.ncpublicschools.org/student\\_promotion/](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/student_promotion/)

Information on the "No Child Left Behind" federal legislation and Adequate Yearly Progress is available at [www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb)

## 2004 ABCs Information Contacts

### **ABCs Requirements/Basis for Status**

Division of Accountability Services

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### **Assistance Teams**

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### **Communications and General Information**

Division of Communications and Information

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### **ABCs Data and Summary Press Release**

<http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org>

### **Department of Public Instruction's Web Address**

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org>

