



# ABCs 2006 Accountability Report Background Packet

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

## Overview

The ABCs of Public Education began in the 1996-97 school year as North Carolina's primary school improvement program and with three primary goals: to strengthen local school accountability, to emphasize mastery of basic subjects and to provide as much local decision-making as possible. At the time, the ABCs was a major step forward in improving schools. It provided the state's first school-level accountability system and generated information that has allowed North Carolina to better target its school improvement efforts. The ABCs model was one of the first in the nation to focus attention on the academic growth of students from year-to-year.

This year, 2006, marks significant changes in the ABCs program and a strengthened classroom focus. Under the new ABCs growth formulas, school districts now have the ability to provide teachers with individual student growth information. School districts are no longer limited to only a school-wide view of growth. Teachers and their principals can use individual student growth information to drive classroom instruction for the current year. The ABCs model's new formulas debuting this year continue to measure growth, but in a way that should make for more reliable measures of school performance. Key distinctions between the old and new formulas will be described further in this packet.

In considering the new ABCs of 2006 against the original 1996 ABCs model, it is useful to view the new ABCs as a fresh start in terms of measuring school performance. While the model continues North Carolina's long-standing focus on the annual growth of students and on the reporting of each school's performance composite, the new ABCs formulas are different enough that comparisons between the 2006 performance of schools and prior years may be problematic.

As in prior years, schools will continue to be recognized for student achievement growth and for the proficiency rate within schools. The school designation categories remain stable in scope and in definition, with these exceptions: the 25 Most Improved K-8 Schools and 10 Most Improved High Schools recognition categories have been eliminated. Also, for the first time, the quantity of growth and change ratios (C-ratios) will be reported. The quantity of growth measure reflects the average amount of growth\* for the school. One year of growth for one year of instruction is 0.00. The C-ratios reflect the ratio of student scores that meet the individual growth standard to those that do not. The minimum for high growth is 1.50\*.

No Child Left Behind, the federal education law, also continues to be an important component of accountability for North Carolina schools. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measure is included in the ABCs report, just as it has been since the law went into effect in 2002. AYP requires schools to focus on the proficiency of groups of students within each school with a goal of closing achievement gaps and bringing proficiency rates to 100 percent for every student group by 2013-2014. There are a number of changes to federal AYP regulations this year.

The ABCs accountability report is Web-based to provide convenient and inexpensive access to as many North Carolinians as possible. The address for this report is <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>. This year, because of the extensive nature of the program's changes, two other communication tools are available to help with questions. The ABCs toll-free hotline is available at 1-800-431-7373. Callers are invited to leave their questions on this hotline. Answers will be returned to them in short order. Also, a special email address, [abcs@dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:abcs@dpi.state.nc.us), has been set up to accept questions regarding the ABCs and school accountability in North Carolina.

*\*High schools include factors for courses of study, drop-out, and competency test pass rate.*

## Timeline

### June 30

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

### July 17

Preliminary AYP results for reading for all students, and math results for high school students, are released by local school systems for their respective schools.

### July 18 - September 20

Analyses completed on mathematics operational data and achievement level cut scores set.

### September 20 - October 4

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

### October 5

ABCs Accountability Report presented at State Board of Education meeting. ABCs Accountability report Web site goes live. School Status Labels and Recognition.

# What's New in 2006?

There are many changes to the ABCs accountability model in 2006. These are:

- The formulas for calculating growth are new this year. These new formulas:
  - use two years of prior student performance data in reading and mathematics to predict performance in the current year;
  - re-establish the baseline for academic change scale when new tests are introduced;
  - separate change scores for reading and mathematics; and
  - provide student, classroom and school-level data.
- The mathematics end-of-grade assessments are new this year to align to the latest curriculum revisions. That is why results for the ABCs are delayed. State testing administrators needed all operational data to be turned in at the end of the school year before they could do the needed analyses and set appropriate test scales from grades 3-8 and achievement level scores.
- Third grade mathematics results are not included in growth calculations this year because the third grade pre-test has not been developed.
- Results of the 4th-, 7th and 10th grade writing assessments will be included in the performance composite for each school. Writing has not been in the performance composite for a number of years.
- The ABCs Awards and Recognition Categories no longer include the 25 Most Improved K-8 Schools and the 10 Most improved High Schools in Academic Growth.
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) changes include:
  - a 2 percent cap on certain students with disabilities using certain alternate assessments who are allowed to be considered proficient;
  - a growth model is allowed to be applied to schools that do not initially make AYP. If their students are demonstrated to be on trajectory to reach proficiency within four years, they may be counted as having made AYP; and
  - reporting the percentage of students in each group who meet the growth standard.
- Under the new ABCs growth formulas, school districts now have the ability to provide teachers with individual student growth information.

## 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

## 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).
- NC EXTEND 2 and NCCLAS (NC Checklist of Academic Standards) alternate assessments for certain students with disabilities included in performance composite and AYP only.
- Writing assessments, grades 4 and 7, in performance composite only.
- Computer Skills Tests at grade 8 in performance composite only.
- Statewide accountability testing is done in grades 3-8 only. For students in grades K-2, special assessments are used to chart students' academic progress and are not included in the ABCs reports.
- End-of-course results for students taking EOC tests at the middle school level (growth and performance).

## Components of the ABCs at the High School Level

- Student performance on ten mandated end-of-course tests: Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, English I, Geometry, Physical Science, Physics, US History and Civics and Economics.
- NC EXTEND 2 and NCCLAS (NC Checklist of Academic Standards) alternate assessments for certain students with disabilities included in performance composite and AYP only.
- Growth is calculated using previous related assessments.
- 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) weighted by 1/4 average daily membership.
- 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.

## 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.

## Assistance

Schools that do not meet the expected growth standard and that have a performance composite of less than 50 percent are identified as low performing. The State Board of Education assigns 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 their performance. Low-performing schools must notify students'

parents in writing about the schools' low-performing status.

## AYP and Awards and Sanctions

The ABCs program includes reporting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of schools under the No Child Left Behind law, but ABCs financial rewards are not affected by a school's AYP status.

Title I schools (approximately one-half of North Carolina's total number of public schools) are those that receive federal Title I funds designated to serve students who are educationally disadvantaged. Title I schools that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress for two consecutive years in the same subject may face sanctions under the federal law. These sanctions include offering public school choice, providing supplemental educational services at no cost to qualifying students and other measures. For more information on NCLB sanctions for Title I schools, please go to <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/nclb/>.

## The New Formulas

Since the ABCs model initially was developed in the mid-1990s, a number of factors have changed. In 1996-97, the first year of implementation of the ABCs, the formula for calculating growth was based primarily on the statewide average growth in the years prior to 1996. In addition, since the ABCs model began, the English language arts and mathematics curricula have been revised. These revisions necessitated the implementation of new versions of the reading and mathematics assessments. With each change to the curricula and assessments and with the passage of time, the original ABCs formulas were useful only after a number of equating exercises to allow year-to-year comparisons.

In the 2004 legislative session, the General Assembly directed a thorough evaluation of the ABCs accountability system. This evaluation has resulted in the development of new formulas that are based on more recent growth rates and on the lessons learned from a decade of experience with the ABCs accountability model.

The review of the original growth formulas found the following:

- As the editions of the tests changed, changes in the growth expectations may have been warranted.
- Statewide ABCs growth over time, by grade level, forms a saw-toothed pattern of gains and dips in the percent of schools meeting and exceeding growth targets in reading and or mathematics as a cohort of students moves from grade-to-grade.
- The percent of schools meeting or exceeding growth expectations in reading or mathematics does not appear to be highly correlated to curricular implementation (i.e., a historically high percent of schools met and exceeded expectations in the first year of testing after the implementation of a new curriculum).

In this light, new formulas have been developed to address these findings.

## Features of the New Growth Formulas

- Whenever possible uses two years of actual student performance in the same subject to predict student performance. (The original formula only used one year.)
- Based on eight years of data on student performance (The original formula used three years of history.)
- Expected growth is based on the expectation that a student will perform similarly from year-to-year. (Original formulas anticipate points on a scale from the early 1990s.)
- Provide information on student growth (not just school-level data).
- Uses a change scale which allows comparison of students across test editions (instead of converting to an early 1990s scale).
- Schools cannot meet the High Growth standard without helping at least 60 percent of their students achieve the expected growth standard. (Under the original formulas, a school could be rewarded based on the outstanding performance of only a few students.)
- The dropout rate continues to be included for the high school model along with other components.

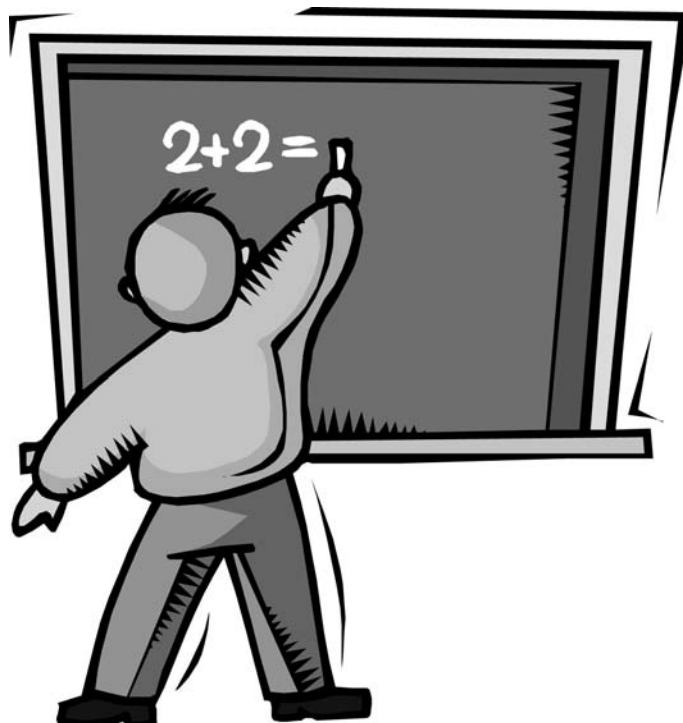
**Key Point: Results from the new formulas may not be the same as results provided by the original formulas.**

## Understanding the Three Results Measures:

- Performance Composite – The percentage of the test scores in the school at or above Achievement Level III (how well the students in the school did against the set standard of proficiency).
- Growth – An indication of the rate at which the students in the school learned over the past year. The standard is equivalent to a year's worth of growth for a year of instruction.
- AYP Status – Whether the students in the school as a whole and in each identified group met the performance standards set by each state following federal guidelines with the long-term goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2013-14.

## Growth Expectations

Under the new formulas, the individual student is expected to perform as well, or better, on the end-of-grade (EOG) assessment for the current year as she or he did, on average, during the previous two years. This expectation will be seen by placing students' scores on the c-scale (the change scale to which a student's developmental scale score is converted). As an indicator of growth, the new model is based on academic change. The academic change is based on an average of the previous two years' assessments. If there is only one year's EOG test data available, the expectation for change will be based on one previous assessment. Like the original formulas, the new formulas factor in an adjustment for regression to the mean (a student who performs above or below the mean score on one EOG will likely score closer to the mean on a subsequent EOG).



# 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

System and School(s)	Grade Span	Expected Growth	High Growth	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABCs Status	Average Growth	C-Ratios	AYP	AYP Code	Type
<b>110</b> Leigh County											
210 Roane Elem	0K-06	Yes	No	74.5	~	Pro Exp	0.00	1.50	Yes	CI	R
220 Hilldale Elem	PK-06	Yes	Yes	91.8	~	Exc High	1.10	1.50	Yes	CI	R
<b>555</b> Parish County											
345 Villages Elem	0K-05	Yes	Yes	88.6	~	L High	~	1.50	Yes		R
360 Mountain Mid	06-05	Yes	No	58	~	Pro	-0.50	0.30	No		R
370 Piney HS	09-12	No	No	52	~	NR	-1.00	0.00	No		R
55A Blue Acad	0K-12	Yes	Yes	~	~	Dst High	1.00	2.00	Yes		C
<b>888</b> River County											
320 Rydger Pri	PK-03	Yes	Yes	~	1	Hgh	0.60	1.70	Yes		R
330 Valley	03	Yes	Yes	76.9	~	Pro High	0.10	1.60	Yes		R

**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; LP- Low-Performing; NR- No Recognition; 95R- Less than 95% tested; NS- No Status

**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; O1 – Option 1 USED

**AYP:** UR – Under Review

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

The AYP Code indicates special NCLB rules that were applied in determining school performance.

School Type  
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)

The ratio of student scores that meet the individual growth standard to those that do not. The minimum for high growth is 1.50.

The average of individual growth for the school. Minimum expected growth is 0.00.

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.

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.

School name

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.

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.

## 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' scores 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 measures the change in academic achievement for students in the current year. Even a school with 90 percent or more of its students' scores at grade level has room for students to grow academically each year 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. However, for the 2004-05 school year the US Department of Education approved new flexibility for schools where only the students with disabilities subgroup missed its proficiency targets. Honor Schools of Excellence are those schools that meet or exceed growth goals, have 90 percent or more of their students' scores 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' scores at or above grade level to continue meeting growth expectations, it is possible for them to do so. Even if all students in a school scored at or above grade level last year, those same students are challenged by new material this year (in the next grade level).

The growth measure inherently provides opportunity for students to demonstrate growth as they learn new material.

## 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 statuses. 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. 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.

## How will the new formulas affect school designations?

The new formulas, because they are based on more recent growth patterns, are likely to show more middle schools making Expected or High Growth, but it is impossible to know the number of schools or percentage of schools that will be categorized in any specific way.

## How do ABCs assistance teams relate to other types of school assistance provided in North Carolina?

North Carolina currently offers some level of assistance to schools and districts identified as needing help. ABCs assistance is offered to low-performing schools identified through the accountability model. North Carolina also offers assistance to Title I Schools and Districts in Title I Improvement and to low-performing high schools identified because their performance composites are below 60 percent.

## More Background On the Web

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

- The ABCs for 2005-06 and Beyond (Growth Formulas)  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/growthformulas>
- 2005-06 Testing Program: General Information, Policies and Procedures  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/>
- 2006-07 Testing Calendar  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/calendars/0607>
- New Growth Formulas and Determination for Computing Growth  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/growth/theabcsmodelfor2005.pdf>
- Evolution of the ABCs  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/abc/2004-05/abcevolution.pdf>
- Hot Topics: ABCs Movie Clip  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/newsroom/topics>

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)



## **2006 ABCs Information Contacts**

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

Division of Accountability Services

919.807.3770

Lou Fabrizio, Director

Chris Cobitz, Section Chief, Reporting

Mildred Bazemore, Section Chief, Test Development

Sarah McManus, Section Chief, Policy and Operations

### **ABCs Assistance Teams**

Division of Elementary Education

919.807.3916

Jackie Colbert, Director

### **Communications and General Information**

Division of Communications and Information

919.807.3450

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

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

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

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org>