



For immediate release
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ABCs Results Released for 2008-09 School Year; Retesting Benefits K-8 Schools

The number of North Carolina public schools earning the state's top school designations more than doubled in 2008-09, and 71 percent of schools met standards for Adequate Yearly Progress required under federal education law, according to the 2008-09 ABCs of Public Education results presented today to the State Board of Education.

These two measures were helped in part by the State Board of Education's decision to include reading, mathematics and science retest results for students in grades 3-8 in the state's ABCs accountability program and in federal Adequate Yearly Progress calculations.

Results showed that 117 schools, or 4.7 percent, earned the state's top designation – Honor Schools of Excellence. Nine schools, or .4 percent, were Schools of Excellence; and 502 schools, or 20.3 percent, were Schools of Distinction. Schools in these categories had 80 percent or more of their students performing at or above grade level on state end-of-grade and end-of-course tests and showed student academic growth that was at the expected level or greater. Schools in the Honor Schools of Excellence category also met federal Adequate Yearly Progress targets. In the prior year, 2007-08, a total of 239 schools earned one of these three top designations.

Student retest results were included in the performance composite portion of the model for the first time in 2008-09 in response to recommendations of the North Carolina Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability – a representative group of educators, legislators, business leaders and other citizens who advised the State Board of Education on needed changes to the state's accountability program in 2007. This year, students who earned a Level II grade on the end-of-grade tests were retested and the students' highest scores were used in the accountability model. Students must earn a Level III or IV to earn a proficient score on end-of-grade tests. Students earning a Level I score were given the option to retest, but were not required to retest.

The performance composite measure indicates the percentage of students who scored proficient on end-of-grade or end-of-course tests.

State Superintendent June Atkinson congratulated schools on their performance. "Our goal is for students to be proficient in the foundational skills that will allow them to be successful students and adults. Today's news proves that many schools are successfully helping students achieve that goal. The NC Department of Public Instruction is working on plans to assist those schools that were identified as low performing and will present that to the State Board in September."

State Board of Education Chairman Bill Harrison said that this year's data give North Carolinians a clear picture of how well schools are performing. "By including retest results, we can see the number of students who are able to score proficient and demonstrate they are ready for the next grade level. I am pleased that we can give schools credit for this accomplishment."

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Including retest results in this year’s ABCs results boosted the percentage of students counted as proficient. In mathematics, the retest moved the percent proficient from 72 percent to 79.9 percent. In reading, the percent proficient went from 58.5 percent to 67.5 percent. In science, the change was 10 points – from 54 percent proficient before retesting to 64 percent with retesting included.

On the measure of academic growth, the percentage of schools earning Expected Growth increased to 41.5 percent – up from 27 percent – while the percentage of schools earning High Growth results moved from 55 percent to 39.4 percent. Growth is calculated by following individual students’ academic performance from the end of one school year to the end of the next school year. Retest results were not included in the growth calculations. State education officials need several years’ worth of performance data that includes retest results before retesting can be incorporated into academic growth measures.

Under the ABCs model, schools are given specific designations based on their performance. The 2008-09 numbers for each category are as follows:

Honor Schools of Excellence	121 schools	4.9 percent
Schools of Excellence	5 schools	0.2 percent
Schools of Distinction	502 schools	20.4 percent
Schools of Progress	1,060 schools	43.1 percent
No Recognition Schools	250 schools	10.2 percent
Priority Schools	361 schools	14.7 percent
Low-Performing Schools	75 schools	3.0 percent

Today’s report also includes information about schools’ performance under the federal No Child Left Behind/Elementary and Secondary Education Act measures. Seventy-one percent of the public schools in North Carolina met Adequate Yearly Progress, while 29 percent did not. Overall, North Carolina schools had a total of 39,440 AYP targets, and 95.4 percent of these were met. Thirteen percent of North Carolina schools missed AYP by only one target. More information about the federal requirements, AYP targets and other details is available at www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb.

The ABCs report is based on several measures of performance. These include reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests in grades three through eight; science end-of-grade tests in grades five and eight; and end-of-course tests in Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Civics and Economics, English I, Geometry, Physical Science, Physics, and US History. Other measures include the dropout rate, the Computer Skills Test at grade eight and student performance on alternate assessments for certain students with disabilities. Complete details of how these measures are included in the ABCs, definitions of school designations and other information is available in the ABCs/AYP 2009 Accountability Report Background Packet at <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs>.

This is the 13th year of North Carolina’s ABCs report. This year, because of the state’s budget situation, teachers, principals, teacher assistants and other school-based educators will not receive ABCs incentive awards. This is the first year that incentive awards have not been provided since the program began.

A total of 2,515 public schools are included in the ABCs of Public Education. Complete results for all of these schools may be viewed online at <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs>.