



How Are North Carolina Public Schools REALLY Doing ?

Public Schools of North Carolina • State Board of Education • Department of Public Instruction

North Carolina's public schools are improving – student achievement is up, gaps are closing, teachers are better prepared and citizen support remains high. Here are a few of the facts:

- In 2003-04, the eighth year of the ABCs of Public Education for K-8 schools and the seventh year for high schools, 81.3 percent of students in grades 3-8 were considered proficient in reading and mathematics, up 19.6 points from 1996-97. In grades 9-12, student proficiency in core subject areas increased to 73.5 percent, up 16 points from 1997-98. The achievement gaps for all racial groups narrowed with American Indian students posting the most improvement in the past few years, gaining 30.7 percentage points since 1996-97. In addition, 25 percent of all schools, or 563 schools, earned designation as Honor Schools of Excellence, the highest recognition category under the ABCs. Seven in 10 schools made their Adequate Yearly Progress targets under No Child Left Behind. Overall, North Carolina schools met 96.2 percent or 35,661 of 37,087 of their AYP performance targets.
- The 2004 SAT results showed North Carolina's average total SAT score moved up five points to 1,006. The national average total SAT score remained the same at 1,026. The state's score exceeds the Southeast score of 1,001, which increased by two points. North Carolina posted the highest 10-year gain on the SAT of any of the SAT states (states that have more than 50 percent or more of their students taking the college admissions test).
- North Carolina's fourth and eighth grade students topped the national and Southeast average scale scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2003 Reading and Mathematics Assessments. The results were particularly noteworthy in mathematics where no other state or jurisdiction scored significantly higher than North Carolina's fourth graders.
- On the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment, North Carolina students were once again among the top performers with fourth and eighth graders scoring above the Southeast and national averages.
- North Carolina continued to receive solid grades on *Education Week's* ninth annual 50-state report card on public education, earning a B in Standards and Accountability, and a C+ in both School Climate and Equity of Resources. North Carolina also was among the top tier of states in its efforts to improve teacher quality, earning a B in this area.

- Addressing the quality of the state’s teaching force is an integral component of North Carolina’s ongoing efforts to improve schools for the long run.
- North Carolina accounts for one-fifth of the nation’s National Board Certified teachers — 8,280. This represents 7.5 percent of the state's teachers, library media coordinators, and guidance counselors. The next closest state is Florida with 6,364. The 1997 Excellent Schools Act is credited with increasing teaching standards and improving the profession. An independent, multi-year study of North Carolina’s National Board Certified teachers and elementary student performance released in March 2004 found that there is a correlation between certification and improved student performance. Gains were particularly pronounced for younger and lower-income students.
- Thanks to a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, eight North Carolina high schools in Asheville City, Cumberland County, Durham County, Granville County, Newton-Conover City, Scotland County, Wake County and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County will be able to “re-invent” themselves by creating new high schools and schools-within-schools that focus on health science. As inaugural participants in the N.C. New Schools Project, educators and students in these schools will partner with regional health care centers and higher education institutions to take advantage of new learning opportunities.
- The Carolina Poll [fall 2003] by the UNC Journalism School showed over half (58 percent) of North Carolinians surveyed said their schools deserve either an “A” or “B” grade. This strong support for public schools also is reflected in the 2004 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, which found that 70 percent of parents assign the school their oldest child attends an “A” or a “B.” In addition, 66 percent of Americans would improve and strengthen existing public schools, while 26 percent would opt for vouchers.