

MAKING the GRADE

WINTER 2003-04

How does your **SCHOOL** **STACK UP?**

Parents have long asked this question, sometimes even before their children are old enough to attend school. Many others in communities across North Carolina also have a stake in how well schools are doing. Realtors use this information to help sell houses. Local businesses benefit from a highly educated workforce. Citizens want to ensure that the public schools in their communities are preparing students to be successful adults.

Where can you go to find out how your local public schools are doing? Go online to the NC School Report Cards Web site, www.ncreportcards.org.

At this Web site, you'll find information about school safety and the school environment, academic achievement, teacher quality and other facts to help you know exactly how well each of North Carolina's 2,251 public schools and charter schools are doing. This tabloid will preview the NC School Report Cards Web site and show you how to use this window on your local schools' performance.

Education First
NC SCHOOL
REPORT CARDS

STAYING INFORMED WITH REPORT CARDS AND BEYOND

There is no “perfect” school that would best serve every student. That is why a look at the data should not be considered a complete picture of a school or a school district. Some elements of success are not directly measured and not every high-performing school is the best fit for every student. Generally, you would want to see indicators that are at least in line with district and state standards in every section of the Report Card. If you don’t see trends that are as positive as you would like, ask questions of local education leaders and find out if there is a way for you to get involved to create positive change.

The NC School Report Cards are designed to give overview information that provides accountability to the public and also a way for local communities to evaluate priorities for schools. The long-term goal of the Report Cards

The NC School Report Cards contain a wealth of data about schools, but numbers are only part of the total picture. As you look at your school, school district’s, or the state report card, remember to:

- use data to inform discussions and decision-making;
- ask your local educators and leaders questions;
- draw conclusions carefully;
- recognize that some success factors cannot be measured by data; and
- outside factors beyond the school’s control can influence data.

is for parents, citizens and communities to use this information to start conversations about areas of interest and concern, to help you ask questions about how well schools are serving youngsters and to assist communities in aligning school priorities, resources and efforts.

Beyond the NC School Report Cards, there are other ways to stay in touch with what is happening in public schools.

- Follow news about schools in area newspapers and other publications.
- Talk about the stories and post them on refrigerators and bulletin boards in your home.
- Pay special attention to stories that salute students and teachers for their positive contributions.
- Find reports in newspapers and other media of actions taken in communities (in schools and in other settings) to ensure a safe, orderly and caring environment for all who live and work there. Talk with your children about the people who are responsible for safety and discuss ways everyone can contribute to safe schools and communities.
- Watch for notices of local school board meetings and other public meetings concerning education. Older students may be interested in attending at least one meeting to see how the community is involved in supporting quality schools.
- Encourage your child to write letters to elected officials and school board members on education issues of concern. Set an example yourself and write to your representatives on important education issues.

★ WWW.NCREPORTCARDS.ORG ★

NAVIGATING THE NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL REPORT CARDS WEB SITE BEGINS WITH THE HOME PAGE.

The NC School Report Cards Web site provides a variety of ways to link to additional information or to search for the precise information you need.

QUICK SEARCH

If you know the name of the school or district, simply type it into this box and click go. You’ll be taken directly to the NC School Report card for that school or district. Remember that even on individual school report cards, there are data to compare that school with its district-wide average and with the state average.

LIST SEARCH

Choose from any of four different lists to find schools and districts in North Carolina. Select from a list of school districts, of North Carolina counties or cities, or of charter schools across the state. This search produces a complete list of every school district and/or school in the area selected.

The screenshot shows the home page of the NC School Report Cards website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'CONTACT US' on the right. Below the navigation bar is the site logo 'Education First NC SCHOOL REPORT CARDS'. A 'SELECT A SCHOOL YEAR' dropdown menu is set to '2001-02' with '2002-03' as an alternative. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'ABOUT THIS SITE' on the left, 'QUICK SEARCH' with a text input field and a 'GO' button, 'LIST SEARCH' with a dropdown menu showing various school districts like 'Alamance-Burlington Schools' and 'Alexander County Schools', 'MAP SEARCH' with a map icon and a search prompt, and 'CUSTOM SEARCH' with a search prompt. At the bottom, there are links for 'WELCOME LETTER FROM GOVERNOR MICHAEL F. EASLEY' and 'RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING REPORT CARDS', along with a footer providing information about education in North Carolina and links to 'EDUCATION FIRST', 'NC PUBLIC SCHOOLS', and 'FIRST IN AMERICA'.

MAP SEARCH

Click on the map to see a detailed view of the selected region. Then, click on a particular school system to view more detailed information about it.

CUSTOM SEARCH

Create a list of schools based on the characteristics that interest you. Use this search capability to view report cards from other schools with features similar to yours.

★ READING YOUR SCHOOL'S REPORT CARD ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When you open your school report card, you will automatically begin on the “**SCHOOL PROFILE**” page. Please note the four tabs at the top of the page, which serve as a table of contents. Above these tabs also are tabs that will take you to your District’s Report Card and the State’s Report Card. Clicking on one of those tabs will advance you to the data contained under that heading. The heading of your school’s report card, included on each tabbed page, contains all the contact information you might need if you have questions or concerns about the report card information you are viewing.

Under the “**SCHOOL PROFILE**” tab itself, you’ll find general information about your school including school size and average class size and how those numbers compare to the district and state averages.

Category	Value
Our School	0
District	0
State	1

School safety is an important issue to parents – almost as important as how students are performing academically. Under the “**SAFE, ORDERLY AND CARING SCHOOLS**” tab, you will find information pertaining to your school’s safety and instructional resources. School violence numbers and attendance rates are located under this tab as is information on student access to books and technology and the average age of these valuable learning resources. To help determine whether the data from your school is high or low, just compare it to the district and state averages.

	Grade 7		Grade 8		OVERALL	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Our School	91.1	93.2	92.2	91.9	91.7	92.5
# of Tests Taken	235	235	309	309	544	544
District	91.1	93.2	92.2	91.9	88.9	93.8
State	83.2	81.9	85.7	82.4	82.6	86.8

Overall student performance data on end-of-grade or end-of-course tests is included under the “**HIGH STUDENT PERFORMANCE**” tab. This information includes three-year trend data, percentage of students promoted at each gateway and student performance by gender and student groups. Again, your school’s academic performance can be compared to the district and state averages. In addition, your school’s status under the most recent ABCs is included near the bottom of the page followed by whether or not they made Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind and how many performance targets they met.

Category	Value
Our School	41
District	41
State	47

No Child Left Behind, the Federal education legislation approved in 2002, has increased the spotlight on an already critical component to high student achievement – Quality Teachers. Under the “**QUALITY TEACHERS**” tab, you will find information on the overall quality of the teachers working in your child’s school. Information on the number of teachers at the school, how many are fully licensed, how many have advanced degrees or National Board Certification, their years of teaching experience and the teacher turnover rate is highlighted. District and state averages are provided to help you understand how your school compares with others. Some factors in teacher quality can’t be measured, such as dedication to students and communication with parents.



OTHER RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON SCHOOLS:

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

The ABCs of Public Education is North Carolina's school accountability program. At this site, you can access the annual performance results for every school since 1996-97, the first year of the ABCs model. Background information about the model and how it works also is provided at this site.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/reports/>

Test data can be analyzed in a variety of ways to represent how students are performing according to grade level, gender, race, achievement levels, courses and other factors. The reports contained on this site provide more detailed information for the citizen who wants to delve more deeply into performance numbers.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/internet.resources/ncschools.html>

Need to learn more about a specific school district? This site provides a quick way to link to the Web sites of all 117 North Carolina school districts.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>

This site is provided by the National Center for Education Statistics as part of the Nation's Report Card and presents key data about each state's student and school population and its National Assessment of Educational Progress testing history and results. The profiles provide easy access to all NAEP data for participating states and links to the most recent state report cards for all available subjects.

★ SPECIAL FEATURES ★

There are a number of special features built into the NC School Report Cards Web site to help parents and interested citizens better understand the information being presented.

For example, on the home page of the NC School Report Cards Web site is a link to **"Resources for Understanding Report Cards."** These resources, which will help you interpret and discuss the results of your school and district Report Cards, include: Frequently Asked Questions, How to Read Your School Report Card, Questions Parents and Community Leaders Should Ask, and Data Sources & Information Guide.

■ RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING REPORT CARDS

To help English Language Learners, a **"School Report Card Snapshot"** and **"Tips to Understanding Your School Snapshot"** have been translated into Spanish. Links to these resources are available at the top of every report card.

■ SCHOOL REPORT CARD SNAPSHOT

English Spanish

■ TIPS TO UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

English Spanish

Another valuable resource is the **"More Information"** link located under each section's heading. By clicking on this button, you can learn more about the information contained in that section and why it is important.

MORE INFORMATION

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HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL STACK UP?



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