

**From June Atkinson, NC Superintendent of Public Instruction  
and  
Bill Colby, Chairman of the NC State Board of Education**



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## **Student Academic Growth Increases in 2013-14; Proficiency Now Reported Under Five Achievement Levels**

Almost 75 percent of North Carolina public school schools (74.7 percent) met or exceeded their academic growth goals in 2013-14 according to the *2013-14 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools* report today presented to State Board of Education members. This is an increase of 3.4 percentage points from 2012-13.

In addition to academic growth, results also were provided for the end-of-grade and end-of-course tests as well as The ACT, ACT WorkKeys, four- and five-year cohort graduation rates, and the percentage of graduates passing Math III, Integrated Mathematics III or Algebra II (North Carolina's measure of math rigor in high school). Although the graduation project is not a required component of the state's accountability model, the percentage of high schools requiring a graduation project also was reported. Data for the schools, districts and state is available at [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting).

State Superintendent June Atkinson said she was pleased that academic growth moved up last year. "If history is any indication, we will continue to see increases in the percentage of schools meeting or exceeding academic growth. As we move into the third year with the current *Standard Course of Study* and teachers and students become more familiar with its expectations, academic growth and proficiency will continue to increase."

State Board of Education Chairman Bill Cobey said, "The State Board is committed to high standards with the expectation that our educators and students will rise to meet them. It is imperative that we do everything we can to challenge our students while in school so that when they graduate they will be able to compete with anyone for jobs on a global scale."

North Carolina's new accountability model continues to provide information on both academic growth rates and the percentage of students who scored proficient on state assessments. Growth reflects the academic progress students made during the course of the school year. It is quite possible for a student or a school to have a

strong pattern of academic growth yet have many students who may not have scored proficient or above on state tests. Some students begin the school year behind their peers and will need to achieve significant academic growth in order to meet proficiency standards by the end of the grade or course. Also, standards are much higher now than in the past, which makes it more challenging for some students to reach proficiency levels.

In terms of academic growth, 769 schools (31.8 percent) exceeded expected growth. A total of 1,038 schools (42.9 percent) met expected growth, and 615 schools (25.4 percent) did not meet growth goals. In 2012-13, 28.6 percent of schools exceeded growth, 42.7 percent met growth and 28.7 percent did not meet growth.

To better report students' career and college readiness, the State Board of Education in March 2014 adopted a new five-level achievement scale that replaces the previous four-level scale. Students who score at Achievement Level 1 show limited command of the subject material. Achievement Level 2 students show partial command. Achievement Level 3 is considered the state proficiency standard and students at this level show sufficient command of subject material. Students who score at this level may get on track for career and college readiness with additional academic support. Achievement Levels 4 and 5 are considered career and college ready and students at these levels show solid command and superior command of subject material respectively. The 2013-14 school year is the first year that student proficiency is being reported under these five achievement levels.

Across all grade levels (grades 3-8), on the Reading End-of-Grade (EOG), 56.3 percent of students scored at Achievement Level 3 and above and 44.7 percent scored at Achievement Level 4 and above. On the Mathematics EOG, 51 percent of students scored at Achievement Level 3 and above and 43.1 percent scored at Achievement Level 4 and above. On the Science EOG (grades 5 and 8), 67.8 percent scored at Achievement Level 3 and above and 57.3 percent scored at Achievement Level 4 and above. On the English II, Math I and Biology End-of-Course assessments, 58.6 percent of students scored at Achievement Level 3 and above and 47.8 percent of students scored at Achievement Level 4 and above.

Students also made gains in other accountability measures:

- The ACT: Percent of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who met the UNC System minimum admission composite score requirement of 17 increased to 59.3 percent from 58.5 percent the previous year.
- ACT WorkKeys: Percent of graduates who are Career and Technical Education concentrators and earn a Silver Certificate or higher increased to 67.6 percent from 67.3 percent in 2012-13.

- 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: The number of students expected to graduate in a four-year cohort compared to the number of students who actually graduated in four years or less increased to 83.8 percent from 82.5 percent the previous year.
- 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: The number of students expected to graduate in a 5-year cohort compared to the number of students who actually graduated in five years or less increased to 84.9 percent from 83.1 percent in 2012-13.
- Students Passing Math III, Integrated Mathematics III or Algebra II: As in 2012-13, the percentage of students successfully passing Math III, Integrated Mathematics III or Algebra II was greater than 95 percent.
- Graduation Project: Percent of high schools implementing a graduation project was 44.2, down from 44.7 percent in 2012-13.

As a requirement of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, formerly known as No Child Left Behind, schools are measured against Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). AMO are a series of performance targets that states, school districts and specific subgroups of students must achieve each year to meet the federal law's requirements. Reporting AMO helps ensure that attention remains focused on closing performance gaps among student subgroups. Of the 2,485 schools participating in the 2013-14 testing program, 511 schools (20.6 percent) met all targets, and 1,974 schools (79.4 percent) did not meet all targets. AMO targets are available online at <http://goo.gl/FciGgl>.

The 2013-14 school year was the second year of the state's READY initiative, which includes a new *Standard Course of Study* in all subjects and grade levels, new student assessments aligned to the revised *Standard Course of Study* and a new school accountability model. Although students have been taking end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments since the early 1990s, the new assessments are more rigorous and are based on standards that no longer focus only on grade-level proficiency but also on career and college readiness measures designed to help students be successful after high school graduation.

To access the *2013-14 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools Executive Summary*, visit [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting). For more information about the specifics of the new READY accountability model, please review the *READY Accountability Background Brief* at [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting). To view released test questions, visit [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/releasedforms](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/releasedforms).