



September 4, 2014

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Thank you for choosing a public school for your child's education. One benefit of that choice is that you receive annual information about how your child and his or her school perform academically. In addition, the annual NC School Report Cards, typically released each fall, provide information about teacher qualifications, school safety and more. This year, for the first time, each public school will have a letter grade applied to its performance and noted on the Report Cards.

There are many measures of overall school health and performance. These include all of the measures listed in the NC School Report Cards, but also information that is best gathered in person during a school visit or a conversation with your child's teacher or principal. I hope you will use the information on the NC School Report Cards, as well as the school performance information provided in September, as a starting point in considering how your child's school or future school is performing.

At the end of the day, we share the responsibility of preparing your student for the next grade or the next challenge after high school. The accountability model is one way to measure how well schools are meeting this challenge for your student and for the 1.5 million public school students in North Carolina.

Following are three key dates for providing important data information to you.

On Sept. 4, information will be available for the first time about how public schools and public charter schools performed in 2013-14.

What will you learn on Sept. 4?

- The percentage of students in each school who scored at Achievement Levels 1-5. Achievement Level 3 is considered state-level proficiency and Achievement Levels 4 and 5 are considered college and career ready.
- Growth level. This is the rate at which students in the school learned over the past year. The standard is roughly equal to a year's worth of growth for a year of instruction. Schools will meet academic growth goals, not meet growth goals or exceed growth goals.
- Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) Status. This describes whether the students in the school as a whole and in each identified subgroup met the performance targets set by the state. AMO status spotlights performance gaps among groups of students so that these gaps can be closed over time.
- Performance on other high school indicators: The ACT, The ACT WorkKeys, 4-year and 5-year Graduation Rates, and successful completion of high-level math courses.

On Oct. 4, Read to Achieve's first year results will be released. The program's goal is to ensure that every third grade student is reading at or above grade level by the end of the school year. The report will include:

- The number and percentage of students who passed the reading end-of-grade assessment;
- The number and percentage of students not demonstrating proficiency on the reading end-of-grade assessment;
- The number and percentage of students who take and pass an alternative assessment;
- The number and percentage of students retained (this would include students who are physically retained and students retained with a retained reading label); and
- The number and percentage of students with a Good Cause Exemption (this would include portfolio, limited English proficient, exceptional children and multiple retentions).

On Feb. 5, 2015, the annual NC School Report Cards will be released to provide even more information, including:

- Letter grades describing the school's overall academic performance and growth.
- Details about each performance indicator for your school, school district and the state overall (for example, reading end-of-grade proficiency, math end-of-grade proficiency, etc.).
- Graduation rates for high schools.
- Average class size.
- The percentage of teachers in your school and district who are fully licensed, who have advanced degrees or National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification, experience levels and teacher turnover rates.
- The number of acts of crime or violence reported per 100 students at the school, district and state levels.

This fall, North Carolina begins its third year under a new *Standard Course of Study* that guides what teachers teach at each grade and in each subject. The state-required tests that students take are designed to measure how well students have mastered the new standards, considered by many to be higher expectations than the standards in place before 2012. Because the new standards are more difficult, North Carolina student performance dipped in the first year, 2012-13, but this pattern is not unusual when standards are raised, and we expect to see gradual improvements each year going forward.

I hope that you will encourage your students in their schoolwork, and lend your support to your child's school. Together, I am confident that we can help every child be ready to pursue his or her dream.

Sincerely

Randy Bledsoe

Dr. Randy Bledsoe, Superintendent