

September 2016 From the Board Room

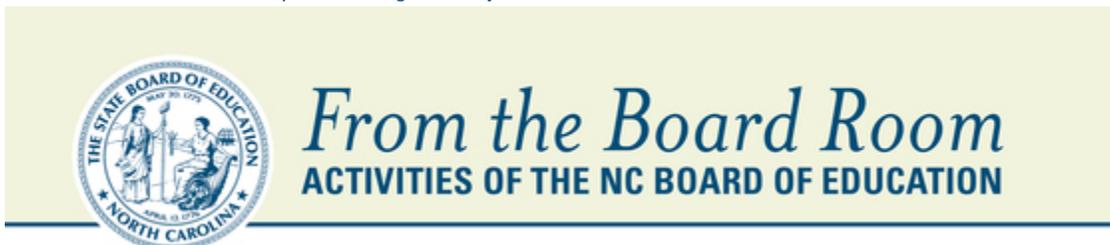
North Carolina Public Schools

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Inbox

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SEPTEMBER 2016

The State Board of Education is comprised of the State Treasurer, the Lieutenant Governor and 11 citizens appointed by the Governor. This newsletter highlights the Board's activities on behalf of the 1.5 million public school students in our state and the more than 100,000 educators who provide services to children. You may view all State Board of Education member and advisor information [online](#). To access current and archived versions of From the Boardroom, visit the State Board of Education's [website](#).

School and Student Performance Up in 2016

More than 75 percent of public schools overall earned grades of C or better in the third year of the state's A-F grading system, according to results presented to the State Board of Education at its September meeting. Nearly a third (32.7 percent) of the state's 2,459 traditional public and charter schools with grades for the year achieved As and Bs – including the A+NG designation for schools that earn an A and do not have significant achievement and/or graduation gaps – up from the 29.4 percent that did so in 2013-14, the first year that schools were assigned letter grades. The proportion of schools receiving Ds and Fs fell last year to less than a quarter (23.2 percent) of all schools – a decline of nearly 20 percent among schools with the lowest grades over the last three years, from 707 to 571.

The state's four-year high school cohort graduation rate, which factors into the letter grades for high schools reached a new high of 85.8 percent in 2016. On state exams, the percentage of students proficient in math and science improved across all grades in elementary, middle and high school; reading and high school English performance was more mixed.

Bill Cobey, chairman of the State Board of Education, said that the latest accountability results reflect a clear focus on a set of goals aimed at ensuring students finish high school well prepared. "North

Carolínians should feel confident that their public schools continue to improve and rise to the higher expectations for college and career readiness that the board set beginning with the 2012-13 school year,” Cobey said.

In particular, he pointed to overall proficiency rates on end-of-grade and end-of-course exams, which exceeded the board’s goals for the 2015-16 school year.

(Due to rounding, the percentage of schools may not total 100 percent. School grades are based on a 15-point scale. Low-performing schools are identified annually as those that receive a School Performance Grade of D or F and do not exceed growth.)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE GRADE	2013-14 PERFORMANCE		2014-15 PERFORMANCE		2015-16 PERFORMANCE	
	SCHOOLS	PERCENT	SCHOOLS	PERCENT	SCHOOLS	PERCENT
A+NG	NA	NA	69	2.8%	84	3.4%
A	132	5.4%	89	3.6%	86	3.5%
B	582	24.0%	584	23.9%	634	25.8%
C	1,003	41.4%	1,022	41.8%	1,084	44.1%
D	561	23.1%	536	21.9%	469	19.1%
F	146	6.0%	146	6.0%	102	4.1%
Total	2,424		2,446		2,459	

Reading Achievement Comprehensive Plan Report Includes Legislative Recommendations

Elementary schools began the fourth year of the Read to Achieve law this fall with its intensive focus on reading instruction and support, especially at the third grade. The goal of Read to Achieve is to ensure that students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. This annual report to the General Assembly includes five recommendations for future legislation to strengthen reading and literacy efforts. These recommendations include providing instructional coaches in each elementary school to work with classroom teacher and literacy instruction; expanding the number and future development of Master Literacy Trainers to extend professional development in this area; expanding transitional and accelerated classes for students who move to fourth and fifth grades without full proficiency in reading; more recognition of the work of K-2 teachers in reading instruction and in student reaching achievement; and consideration of a statewide literacy campaign to highlight why literacy is essential and how adults can help students.

Board Members Consider Priorities for Budget Request

State agencies are in the process of preparing budget requests for the Governor’s 2017-19 budget recommendations to the General Assembly. This year, the State Board of Education is considering priorities identified during regional listening meetings with local school district leaders as well as items to support the Department of Public Instruction in its delivery of services to districts.



As Board members finalize their budget request, they will be working under the guidance of the Office of State Budget and Management, which limits each agency's request to 2 percent of the agency's current appropriation and requires agencies to identify a commensurate budget cut that would also be enacted. This ensures that any new budget priorities are addressed without the provision of extra funds.

NC DPI Chief Financial Officer Philip Price presented a variety of possible budget request items this month for discussion by Board members. This discussion will continue in October and members will act on the expansion budget request in November. Possible items include funding for general professional development for teachers (\$13.5 million for districts); professional development on digital learning and standards (\$15 million split between districts and regional service alliances); the purchasing of more digital content and lesson plans for teachers (\$6 million); bringing textbook funding up to at least \$90 million; restoring funding for instructional supplies and equipment (\$46.9 million); funding to allot additional assistant principals and teacher assistants (\$95.5 million); a new allotment for school building technology support (\$84.6 million) and funding for additional instructional support personnel to help schools deal with social and emotional issues related to students (\$34.8 million). Local school superintendents have identified extra support for students' emotional needs as one of their priorities.



Proof of Concept Study is now NC Check-Ins

Last school year, North Carolina operated a proof of concept study to try a new assessment process for elementary and middle school students. This proof of concept – now called NC Check-Ins – relies on three shorter, interim check-in assessments plus an end-of-grade assessment to gauge student learning and progress.

Teachers say they appreciate the Check-Ins because they provides them with more immediate and usable feedback about their students throughout the year. This allows teachers to adjust instruction to improve student learning.

This year, the NC Check-Ins continue with a larger number of districts and schools. In grade 5 mathematics, 79 districts, 169 schools and 15,023 students are participating. In grade 6 English language arts/reading, 73 districts, 111 schools and 15,915 students are participating. Also, 18 additional districts and three charter schools have volunteered to be in the program alongside those selected to provide a sample for evaluating this new approach. For students and teachers, the NC Check-Ins can mean fewer assessments since districts no longer need to provide local benchmarking tests.

Abstinence Grants Provided to 28 Districts

Federal Title V State Abstinence Education grants of \$50,000 each were awarded to 28 local school districts to support student decisions to abstain from sexual activity by providing abstinence programming specifically focused on groups that are most likely to bear children out-of-wedlock, such as youth in or aging out of foster care.

As a condition of receiving this grant, North Carolina must certify that all abstinence education materials that are presented as factual are medically accurate and grounded in scientific research. Districts receiving this grant are: Alleghany, Anson, Ashe, Bertie, Bladen, Caldwell, Edenton-Chowan, Cumberland, Duplin, Edgecombe, Granville, Greene, Halifax, Hertford, Hoke, Lee, Lenoir, Montgomery, Northampton, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland, Swain, Vance, Warren, Washington and Wayne.

SBE Highlights: A [checklist](#) of Board actions is posted every month at the conclusion of the meeting. The State Board of Education's next meeting will be held Oct. 6 at Appalachian State University in Boone and preceded by a planning meeting on Oct. 4-5. NC. Board materials will be available [online](#) by clicking on the Meetings tab.



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