



HOW TO READ YOUR HIGH SCHOOL REPORT CARD

Just as student report cards provide parents with information on their child's performance, the NC School Report Cards offer a snapshot of some important information about individual schools. This document is designed to help you understand and use the information in your school's Report Card.

SCHOOL PROFILE

Under "School Profile," you'll find general information about your school including school size and average class size.

School Size is important because it can influence the types of academic programs or activities (such as advanced courses or after-school sports) that a school can offer.

Course Size may influence the one-on-one attention that teachers provide to students and the level of classroom discipline. How does

your child's course size compare with the school's average and course size averages in the district and state? Ask your school principal about targeted course sizes in your district; be aware that targets may vary by subject.

Title I Status indicates whether this school is part of the federal program that provides funding for high poverty schools to help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind.

HIGH STUDENT PERFORMANCE

There are a number of ways to measure student performance; state test results are just one of the measures that are covered in your school's Report Card. On a school-by-school basis, there are additional ways to evaluate student performance as well. Look at student grades, at the percentage of students earning top grades or repeatedly failing, and ask for information about student projects and academic clubs and activities. These additional measures are important and can help you form a more complete picture of student academic achievement in your school.

Performance of Students in Each Course on ABCs

End-of-Course Tests helps you to see what percentage of students were proficient on each of the End-of-Course tests given at your school in the spring of 2009. Look for large differences in performance between subject areas. Talk to your school principal about your observations and learn more about how your school is working to improve academic achievement.

Performance of Each Student Group on the ABCs End-of-Course

Tests displays test results so that differences in passing rates (often referred to as achievement gaps) between students of different ethnicities, gender, family circumstances, or racial backgrounds are apparent. North Carolina is working hard to eliminate performance differences between the groups of students listed here and your school's overall performance depends partly on closing these "gaps." Find out what your school is doing to close achievement gaps and what you might be able to do to help.

School Performance — Each year, schools receive one or more ABCs designations based on their performance on the state's End-of-Grade/End-of-Course tests. These designations are awarded based on standards in two areas: 1) performance, the percentage of students testing at or above grade level, and, 2) growth, whether students have learned as much as they were expected to learn in one year. Both measures are important in evaluating student achievement in a school. The percentage of students' scores at grade level/proficiency or above is one important way to view the overall achievement of a school. At the same time, the growth measure also is important. Growth measures the change in academic achievement for students in the current year. Even a school with 90 percent or more of its students' scores at grade level has room for students to grow academically each year and should be showing growth annually.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Results — Adequate Yearly Progress "sets the bar" for school performance by groups of students, and schools can either clear the bar or miss it; there is no partial credit. In order to make AYP, schools need to meet every single performance target set for them. Targets are set for student graduation rates and for student performance on the state's Tests in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. Schools work toward targets in each of those areas for the school's performance as a whole and for the following student groups when they contain 40 or more students: white, black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, multiracial, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, and students with disabilities.

SAFE, ORDERLY & CARING SCHOOLS

Under “Safe, Orderly & Caring Schools,” you can find measures for school safety and access to technology.

School Safety is critical to learning. To find out more about what and where incidents of crime or violence have occurred in your school, speak with your school principal. For information about school disciplinary actions like out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, view your school Report Card online at www.ncreportcards.org.

Access to Technology in your school building can help you understand more about the instructional resources available in your school. In addition to knowing what percent of classrooms in your school are connected to the Internet, you might also ask school administrators about the speed of Internet connections, the number of Internet-connected computers in classrooms with connections, and how teachers make use of the Internet for instruction.

QUALITY TEACHERS

Most people — parents and education experts alike — agree that good teachers are critical to students’ success in learning at school. By looking at some measures of teacher qualifications, you can better understand the overall quality of the teachers working in your school.

Fully Licensed Teachers — One measure of teacher quality is whether or not a teacher has been granted a teaching license. The types of teaching licenses vary as teachers progress from beginning to more experienced. When a teacher is called “fully licensed,” he/she has met all of the requirements and teaching standards set by North Carolina’s State Board of Education.

National Board Certified Teachers — National Board Certification is not required for teaching in the state of North Carolina, but it is a voluntary way for teachers to gain additional professional credentials that recognize their advanced teaching skills and techniques. National Board Certification is the highest level of teaching certification a teacher can hold.

Years of Teaching Experience — Examine the distribution of teaching experience in your school. Teaching experience is often associated with professional expertise, but it is best to consider this data in the context of additional information. By talking to your school’s principal, you may learn that many of the less experienced teachers in your school are the most active with students, or that they have the most current knowledge of educational research and new teaching practices.

Teacher Turnover Rate — Use your school Report Card to check what percentage of teachers left your school district between this school year and last. Is the percentage much different than state average?

Before drawing a conclusion about the frequency with which teachers leave, gather more information from your school’s principal. Consider asking why teachers have left your district and whether there is anything you can do to help improve teacher retention.

Highly Qualified Teachers — One of the important provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a requirement that all teachers of core academic subjects must be Highly Qualified. North Carolina already has rigorous standards for teacher licensure and this federal law adds one more way in which teacher qualifications can be measured. This table provides information about the percentage of classes taught by teachers who currently meet the federal Highly Qualified definition in this school and in the state.

Highly Qualified teachers are generally defined as teachers who are fully licensed (also called certified) by the state. They hold at least a bachelor’s degree from a four-year institution, and they demonstrate competence in the subject area(s) they teach. The standards for Highly Qualified only apply to teachers in core subject areas: English, reading, language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, social studies, economics, arts, history, geography, and kindergarten through grade 6. The federal regulations do not apply to non-core subject area teachers such as vocational teachers or physical education teachers. Because the criteria and the timeline for Highly Qualified teachers can vary so much from teacher to teacher, it is very important that conclusions about these data only be drawn after additional research and detailed discussion with your school principal. Many effective, quality teachers may not currently meet the federal definition of Highly Qualified, but the state expects its numbers of Highly Qualified teachers to increase as rules become more clear and requirements are fully communicated to teachers.

KEEP IN MIND...

Use district and state averages as reference points in reading school-level data. Remember that these averages only provide an indication of how favorable the data might be. In many instances, it would be a mistake to judge a school as “better” or “worse” based only on slight differences in this data.

Additional data about your school are available through your school’s web-based School Report Card at www.ncreportcards.org. Use your online School Report Card to learn more about schools and to link to additional tips for understanding and using School Report Card information.