

North Carolina: Major Education Initiatives (1999-2009) and Statistics

Prepared for the House Education Committee, Chairman Harry Brooks

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North Carolina's ABCs of Public Education program has been the state's major education initiative over the past decade. The ABCs of Public Education was initiated under former Governor Jim Hunt, passed in 1996 by the North Carolina legislature, and expanded upon by former Governor Mike Easley. The program has focused on strong accountability, teaching the basics with an emphasis on high educational standards, and maximum local control. Outlined below are the main elements of the ABCs program, as well as other notable education initiatives that took place over the past decade.

Broad coalition of state leaders, sustained focus on education reform

For at least two decades, North Carolina's elected officials, state leaders, policymakers, educators, and the business community have consistently made education one of the state's top priorities. The Public School Forum was created in 1986 to bring business, political, and education leaders together as "a standing blue ribbon commission on education and the economy." With a 60-member board that includes an equal number of business, political, and education leaders, the Forum sponsors yearly study groups that develop recommendations around specific education policy issues. These recommendations are often implemented into law in a form very near to what was proposed by the study group.

In addition to the Public School Forum, a succession of education reform-minded governors have focused on education from the highest levels of state government. Jim Hunt, four-term governor of North Carolina (1977-1985 and 1993-2001), made education a top priority. Hunt formalized and convened an "Education Cabinet" which included the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education chairman, and presidents of the state university and community college system. Hunt's Education Cabinet has been credited with building consensus between key education policy players, most notably connecting higher education leaders with K-12 leaders. Along with the help of the Public School Forum, Hunt was able to develop a broad consensus around education reform efforts that led to their successful implementation and sustained support.

Governor Mike Easley succeeded Governor Hunt in 2001, and assembled an Education First Task Force made up of educators, business executives, community activists, and elected leaders. This Task Force was charged with developing a road map to make North Carolina the national leader in education by 2010. Governor Easley continued the education reforms implemented by Hunt, establishing a two-decade consistency of education policies rarely seen in state government.

Accountability System and Assessments

North Carolina was one of the first states to implement a standards-based accountability system. The State Board of Education developed the ABCs of Public Education in response to the School-Based Management and Accountability Program enacted by the General Assembly in June 1996. The ABCs called for end-of-grade criterion-referenced tests in grades 3-8 that measured both achievement level and growth. The ABCs also included rewards and consequences based on whether schools and teachers met their growth standards. In 2002-03, the ABCs program was expanded to incorporate the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Reforms of the ABCs program included:

- Criterion-referenced end-of-grade tests in Grades 3-8 in reading and math and a writing assessment in Grades 4 and 7
- Decentralization of staffing to Regional Support Centers and campus central offices
- Flexibility of means—no state waivers required for schools to reallocate resources to meet needs identified in School Improvement Plans
- Consequences for student performance: bonus pay for teachers for high performance and assistance teams for low performing schools
- A data system accessible to the public
- Disaggregation of results as part of analysis — schools not formally evaluated based on subgroup achievement

Focus on High School

The Innovative Education Initiatives Act was passed in 2003. The purpose of the program was to increase the graduation rate, reduce the dropout rate, decrease the achievement gap, and decrease the need for higher education remedial programs. The act provided a means to:

- Identify and support innovative high school programs
- Promote cooperative programs between high schools and institutions of higher education
- Create redesigned middle and high schools
- Provide flexible, customized programs for high school students who would benefit from accelerated, higher-level coursework or early graduation
- Establish high quality alternative learning programs
- Establish a virtual high school

Virtual Education and Concurrent/Dual Enrollment

North Carolina's Virtual Public School provides expanded academic options to over 40,000 students in the state. The Virtual Public School offers over 72 courses-including Advanced Placement, world language, and credit recovery courses- to students. The courses use the Blackboard course management software to maximize student interaction in each class.

The Learn and Earn program allows students to attend a high school located on a college campus and earn a high school diploma and two years of college credit or an associate degree in up to five years. Participating students can take college courses at North Carolina universities or community colleges for free. Students are allowed to start participating as early as the 9th grade. Currently there are 60 Learn and Earn high schools across the state. In addition, North Carolina public high school students can earn college credits through a special initiative called Learn and Earn Online. Qualified students in participating public high schools can take a variety of online college-credit courses at no cost to them or to their families. Students earn both high school and college credit for completed courses.

Focus on Gifted Students

Project Bright IDEA, which stands for Interest Development Early Abilities, began in 2001-02 with the goal of closing the achievement gap between minority and white students in gifted education, primarily by moving underrepresented groups into gifted education classes. The program began with 12 classrooms in six districts and a budget of \$10,000 for materials. About 1,000 students went through the pilot over a three-year period. Several teachers continued the program on their own during the 2004-05 school year. The U.S. Department of Education awarded N.C. a five-year, \$2.5 million grant through the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program to further research the project and expand it to classrooms in six more districts. Eventually, the project will train more than 200 teachers in 36 schools across N.C., and reach more than 5,000 students in grades K-2.

Early Childhood Education Initiatives

Authorized in 1993 under Governor Hunt, Smart Start is North Carolina's nationally recognized and award-winning early childhood initiative designed to ensure that young children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start funds are used to improve the quality of child care, make child care more affordable and accessible, provide access to health services and offer family support. Currently, 77 local partnerships are established throughout the state to administer funding and programs.

More at Four, an early childhood education initiative started in 2001, is a high-quality, full day pre-kindergarten program that serves at-risk children and prepares them for success in school. Children served by More at Four have reportedly exhibited substantial growth in key areas including language, literacy, math and social skills.

Effective Teachers

Over the past decade, North Carolina has expanded and enacted policies to better support teachers. Beginning teachers are required to participate in a 3-year induction program. During the induction period, teachers are provided a formal orientation, mentor support, and both formative and summative evaluations. The state also established Learn NC, an online resource for teachers that provides lesson plans, teaching strategies, and online courses for teachers. In addition, the state conducts an Annual Teacher Working Conditions Survey.

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching is a nationally recognized professional development center for teachers, established by the legislature in 1985. The center provides a year-round curriculum of intensive cross-disciplinary seminars in the sciences, arts, humanities, technology, leadership, communication, and health and wellness. Nearly 5,000 teachers participate in residential seminars and professional development programs at campuses each year.

North Carolina also leads the nation with the highest number of National Board certified teachers in the country. North Carolina provides the following for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) candidates:

- Three paid professional/release days to work on the portfolio entries and study or complete the assessment exercises;
- 15 continuing education units (CEUs), a complete NC teaching renewal cycle, for completion of the National Board Certification process during the year of initial candidacy; and
- 5 continuing education units (CEUs) for completion of the National Board Renewal process.

North Carolina provides the following for National Board Certified Teachers:

- A 12 percent salary increase above the teacher's regular base salary, good for the 10-year life of the certification; and
- A North Carolina teaching license to out-of-state teachers employed in North Carolina who possess National Board Certification.

Information compiled from the North Carolina Department of Public Education, Education Commission of States (ECS), National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Public School Forum of North Carolina, A+ Plan Education Foundation, and Center for Education Policy (CEP), and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

North Carolina: Vital Education Statistics

Overall

Education Enrollment and Attainment		NC	TN	US
Preschool Enrollment	Percent of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool (2007)	45.5%	37.4%	46.2%
Kindergarten Enrollment	Percent of eligible children enrolled in kindergarten programs (2007)	76.8%	75.4%	76.4%
High School Graduation	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma (2005)	67.0%	65.4%	70.6%
Young Adult Education	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in postsecondary education or with a degree (2007)	50.4%	45.7%	52.8%
Adult Educational Attainment	Percent of adults (25-64) with a 2- or 4-year postsecondary degree (2007)	36.5%	30.1%	37.7%

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, Chance for Success Index, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2009/17sos.h28.chance.pdf>

Students

Student Demographics (07-08)	NC	TN
Total	1,422,414	929,543
% White	54.9	68.8
% Black / African American	31.2	24.6
% Hispanic	10.1	4.8
% Asian / Pacific Islander	2.3	1.6
% Indian / Native American / Alaskan	1.4	0.2
% Multiracial	n/a	n/a
% Disabled	13.3	14.7
% Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch	43.2	54.5
% ELL	6.1	3.2
% Female	49.0	48.5
% Male	51.0	51.5

Sources: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, NC Public School Statistical Profile 2008, <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/statisticalprofile/2008profile.pdf>; Tennessee Department of Education, 2008 Report Card, State Profile, <http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:3464209647625034>

Teachers

K-12 Classroom Teachers (2007-08)	NC	TN	US
# of Teachers	97,676	62,282	3,184,994
Students Enrolled per Teacher	14.5	14.5	15.4
Average Salary	\$47,354	\$45,030	\$52,308

Source: National Education Association, *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2008 and Estimates of School Statistics 2009*, Series C – Faculty, <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/09rankings.pdf>

The Teaching Profession (2008) – Condensed		NC	TN	US (# of states)
Grade	Grade	B	C	C
	Total Score	84.8	75.1	
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR QUALITY				
Initial Licensure Requirements for All Prospective Teachers (2007-08)				
State requires substantial formal coursework in subject area(s) taught			✓	27
Prospective teachers must pass written tests	Basic skills	✓	✓	39
	Subject-specific knowledge		✓	42
	Subject-specific pedagogy			6
State requires clinical experiences during teacher training	Student teaching (weeks)	10	15	39
	Other clinical experiences (hours)	--	--	13
Accountability for Effectiveness of Teacher Education Programs (2007-08)				
State publishes pass rates/rankings of teacher-preparation institutions		✓		30
Programs accountable for graduates' performance in classroom setting		✓		18
Data Systems to Monitor Quality (2007)				
Teacher and student records can be matched by course/subject and state assessment results			✓	12
INCENTIVES & ALLOCATION				
Reducing Entry and Transfer Barriers (2007-08)				
State policy allows portability of teacher pension across state lines		✓		20
Teacher Salaries				
Pay Parity - teacher earnings as a percentage of salaries in comparable occupations (2006)		78.8%	85.1%	10*
Incentives for Teacher Leadership and Performance (2007-08)				
State has pay-for-performance program or pilot rewarding teachers for raising student achievement		✓		7
State provides incentives for teachers to earn National Board certification		✓		38
Monitoring the Distribution of Teaching Talent (2007-08)				
State maintains information about the numbers of teachers by school-poverty level for particular categories of teachers	Fully licensed teachers	✓	✓	42
	Highly qualified teachers	✓		31
	First-year teachers	✓	✓	35
	National board certified teachers	✓	✓	25
Managing the Allocation of Talent (2007-08)				
State provides incentives to teachers who work in targeted assignments	Targeted schools	✓		20
	Targeted teaching-assignment areas			16
BUILDING AND SUPPORTING CAPACITY				
Supports for Beginning Teachers (2007-08)				
All new teachers are required to participate in a state-funded induction program		✓		22
Mentoring programs for all beginning teachers	All new teachers are required to participate in a state-funded mentoring program	✓		25

	State has standards for selecting, training, and/or matching mentors	✓		20
State has a reduced-workload policy for first-year teachers		✓		2
Professional Development (2007-08)				
State finances professional development for all districts		✓		24
State requires districts/schools to set aside time for professional development			✓	16
School Leadership (2006)				
State requirements for initial administrator licensure	Supervised internship	✓	✓	28
	Participation in induction or mentoring program			14
School Working Conditions				
Median student-teacher ratio in primary-level schools (2005)		14.3	15.2	26 (median is 15:1 or less)
State collects and publicly reports school-level information on school climate and working conditions (2007-08)		✓		3

*Note: Teacher salaries at least equal to comparable occupations (2006)

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, The Teaching Profession (2008), http://www.edweek.org/apps/qc2009/state_compare.html

K-12 Structure

North Carolina has 115 school systems. As of 2008-09, Florida had approximately 2,496 public schools, including 97 charter schools.

North Carolina's K-12 Governance Structure

Governor	The governor appoints 11 of the 13 voting members of the state board of education and 3 non-voting members of the state board of education (one high school junior, one high school senior and one local superintendent).
Chief State School Officer	The chief state school officer is elected.
State Board of Education	There are 13 voting members of the state board of education. 11 of the 13 members are appointed by the governor. Two of the 13 voting members, the lieutenant governor and state treasurer, are elected. The teacher of the year, the principal of the year and one local school board member are ex-officio, non-voting members. One high school junior, one high school senior and one local superintendent are non-voting members.
Local School Boards	There are 115 local school boards. There are city school boards and county school boards. Members of the 100 county school boards are elected, and members of 15 city school boards are either elected or appointed by city councils.
Local Superintendents	There are 115 local superintendents. There are city superintendents and county superintendents. Local superintendents are appointed by local school boards.

Sources: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Facts and Figures 2008-09, <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/factsfigures/2008-09figures.pdf>; Education Commission of the States, Governance, K-12 Governance Structures Database, http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/educationissues/governance/govk12db_intro.asp

K-12 Achievement

K-12 Achievement (2008)		NC	TN	US
STATE ACHIEVEMENT INDEX	Grade	D+	D+	D+
	Total Score	66.7	67.0	69.4
ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL				
NAEP Mathematics 2007 Percent Proficient	4th Grade	41.0%	28.7%	38.6%
	8th Grade	34.5%	23.1%	31.0%
NAEP Reading 2007 Percent Proficient	4th Grade	29.1%	26.9%	31.7%
	8th Grade	28.0%	25.6%	29.2%
ACHIEVEMENT GAINS				
NAEP Math Scale Score Change 2003 to 2007	4th Grade	-0.4	+5.0	+5.1
	8th Grade	+2.6	+5.8	+4.1
NAEP Reading Scale Score Change 2003 to 2007	4th Grade	-3.3	+3.8	+3.2
	8th Grade	-2.6	+1.1	-0.3
POVERTY GAP				
National School Lunch Program Non-Eligible vs, Eligible 2007	Reading 4th Grade NAEP Scale Score	24.5	26.7	26.8
	Math 8th Grade NAEP Scale Score	28.1	22.2	26.0
Poverty-Gap Change 2003 to 2007 (negative value = narrowing gap)	Reading 4th Grade NAEP Scale Score	-2.7	+2.4	-1.1
	Math 8th Grade NAEP Scale Score	+0.1	-6.4	-2.4
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE				
NAEP Math 2007 Percent Advanced	8th grade	8.0%	3.8%	6.6%
NAEP Math Percent Advanced Change 2003 to 2007	8th grade	+0.9%	+0.8%	+1.6%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION				
Graduation Rates (All Students, Public Schools)	2004	66.1%	72.2%	69.9%
	Change 2000 to 2004	+5.8%	+14.7%	+3.1%
ADVANCED PLACEMENT				
High Test Scores (3 or Above) Per 100 Students in Grades 11 and 12 (Public Schools)	2007	20.6	8.7	16.9
	Change 2000 to 2007	+7.8	+2.9	+6.0

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, K-12 Achievement Index (2008), http://www.edweek.org/apps/qc2009/state_compare.html

Additional K-12 Achievement Indicators	NC	TN	US
Projection of Graduates and Nongraduates			
9th grade enrollment 2004-2005	125,375	80,890	4,176,954
Projected graduates 2007-2008	84,013	52,908	2,947,677
Projected nongraduates 2007-2008	41,362	27,982	1,229,277
Total students lost each school day	230	155	6,829
ACT			
2008 Results (Mean Score)	21.3	20.7	21.1
# of 2008 Test Takers	13,054	50,225	1,421,941
SAT			
2008 Results (Mean Score)	1489	1707	1511
# of 2008 Test Takers	56,442	6,272	1,518,859

Sources: Education Week, *Diploma Counts 2008*, U.S. Public High Schools Losing 6,829 Students Per Day, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/40projections.h27.pdf>; American College Testing, ACT National and State Scores for 2008, <http://www.act.org/news/data/08/states.html>; College Board, SAT Data and Results, College Bound Seniors 2008, <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/sat/cb-seniors-2008>

Truth in Advertising about Student Proficiency = D

North Carolina gets poor marks on the credibility of its student proficiency scores. While the state identified large percentages of its students as proficient in math and reading on 2005 state exams, smaller percentages posted proficient scores on the NAEP in 2005.

Source U.S. Chamber of Commerce, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness*, <http://www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default>

Accountability

North Carolina's ABC Education Program, the state's accountability system, was expanded to incorporate the new statutory accountability requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This federal legislation sets a proficiency goal of 100 percent for all schools by 2013-14. The SBE adopted AYP as a "closing the achievement gap component" of the ABCs in response to General Statute 115C-105.35. A school's ABCs growth status is determined by its growth calculation and its change ratio (a measure of the percent of students meeting their individual growth targets).

Source: North Carolina, Department of Public Instruction, The ABCs of Public Education: 2007-08 Growth and Performance of North Carolina Public Schools, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/abc/2007-08/execsumm.pdf>

Standards, Assessments, and Accountability (2008) – Condensed		NC	TN	US (# of states)
Grade	Grade	B+	A-	B
	Total Score	88.2	91.5	
STANDARDS				
State has standards that are clear, specific, and grounded in content (2007)	English/language arts	E M H	E M H	8
	Mathematics	E M H	E M	24
	Science	E M H	E M H	22
	Social studies/history	H	M	2
State has a regular timeline for revising standards (2007-08)		✓		38
ASSESSMENTS				
Subjects in which state uses assessments aligned to state standards (2007-08)	English/language arts	E M H	E M H	51
	Mathematics	E M H	E M H	50
	Science	E M H	E M H	46
	Social studies/history	H	E M H	12
State provides educators with formative assessments or item banks linked to state standards (2007-08)			✓	21
SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY				
State holds schools accountable for performance (2007-08)	State assigns ratings to all schools based on criteria other than AYP	✓	✓	26
	State has a statewide student-identification system (2007)		✓	48
	State provides rewards to high-performing or improving schools	✓	✓	35

Grade spans: E= elementary school, M= middle school, and H= high school.

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, Standards, Assessments, and Accountability (2008), http://www.edweek.org/apps/qc2009/state_compare.html

K-12 Funding

School Finance (2009)		NC	TN	National Average
Grade	Grade	D+	D+	C+
Total Score		67.8	67.7	77.2
SPENDING				
Per-pupil expenditures (PPE), adjusted for regional cost differences (2006)		\$7,835	\$7,620	\$9,963
Percent of total taxable resources spent on education (2006)		2.6%	2.8%	3.7%

The "Percent of students in districts with PPE at or above U.S. average" and the "Spending Index" indicators in this section are adjusted to reflect regional cost differences and weighted for student needs. The national average for adjusted per-pupil expenditures is \$9,644.

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, School Finance (2009), <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2009/17sos.h28.finance.pdf>

Additional Funding Indicators	NC	TN	US
State & Local K-12 Education Spending (2006)			
Total state and local K-12 education spending (in millions)	\$11,725	\$7,364	\$526,649
State and local K-12 education spending per capita	\$1,322	\$1,212	\$1,763
State and local K-12 education spending as % of personal income	4.1%	3.8%	4.8%
Poverty Funding Gaps Over Time: 1999 – 2005			
Poverty gap change in dollars 1999-2005 (no adjustment for low income students)	-\$939	-\$275	-\$90
Minority Funding Gaps Over Time: 1999-2005			
Minority gap change in dollars 1999-2005 (no adjustment for low income students)	-\$587	\$51	\$73
Funding Gaps by State, 2005 (Adjusted for Low-Income Students)			
Gap between the highest- and lowest-poverty districts 2005 (40% adjustment for low-income students)	-\$825	\$155	-\$1,532
Gap between the highest- and lowest-minority districts 2005 (40% adjustment for low-income students)	-\$738	-\$81	-\$1,275

*A negative number indicates that fewer dollars were provided to high-poverty or high-minority districts.

Sources: Governing, State and Local Sourcebook, State & Local K-12 Education Spending <http://sourcebook.governing.com/topicresults.jsp?sub=151>; The Education Trust, The Funding Gap 2008, http://www.closingtheachievementgap.org/cs/ctag/download/resources/75/FundingGap2007.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d

Other

Flexibility in Management and Policy = B

The state receives a relatively high grade on how much freedom and flexibility it gives its schools and principals. Ninety-nine percent of principals report a major degree of influence over new teacher hiring. The national average is 88 percent.

Data Quality = C

North Carolina gets modest marks for its efforts to collect and report high-quality education data. While the state collects student-level transcript information, it does not use a unique statewide student identifier.

Source U.S. Chamber of Commerce, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness*, <http://www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default>

Dual Enrollment

North Carolina public high school students can earn free college credits through a special initiative called Learn & Earn Online. Qualified students in participating public high schools can take a variety of online college-credit courses at no cost to them or to their families. Students earn both high school and college credit for completed courses. Access to these courses is provided during the regular school day or afterschool. Courses are offered during fall and spring semesters through UNCG iSchool and the community colleges.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Learn and Earn Online,
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/learnandearnonline/>