



## **KCS Sees Highlights and Challenges in State Accountability Results**

KCS saw some positives and some clear challenges in the release of North Carolina's school accountability report for the 2021-22 school year. The accountability report summarizes students' achievement and growth on their end-of-grade assessments (grades 3-8) and end-of-course assessments and other measures (grades 9-12). From these results, schools are assigned a designation of a school performance grade, a designation for growth, and, depending on the combination of the grade and growth, whether a school is designated as low-performing by the state.

In KCS, we were excited to see that Jackson Park Elementary and North Kannapolis Elementary exceeded growth, while Fred L. Wilson Elementary and Forest Park Elementary met growth. Shady Brook Elementary, GW Carver Elementary, Kannapolis Middle School, and A.L. Brown High School did not meet growth.

School performance grades, a designation based on 80% student achievement (whether students performed on grade level for the state assessment or measure) and 20% student growth (whether students demonstrated a school year's worth of predicted learning on the state assessment), were also released by the state. KCS saw two of its schools (Jackson Park and North Kannapolis) receive a grade of 'C'; three schools (A.L. Brown, Forest Park and Fred L. Wilson) receive a 'D'; and three schools (Shady Brook, GW Carver and Kannapolis Middle) receive a grade of 'F' for 2021-22. All six of the schools that received a 'D' or 'F' have been designated as low-performing by the state.

So what does all of this mean for KCS? First, we are extremely proud of the growth at Jackson Park Elementary and North Kannapolis Elementary. Secondly, while we did not have school performance grades and school growth data for the 2020-21 school year, we did have student achievement results. All of our schools increased in the majority of the achievement areas from the 2020-21 school year as we have begun to see improvement moving out of the pandemic. Third, historically, over 90% of schools designated as low-performing have been schools with high poverty levels and significant needs for student support. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic and numerous schools and districts in the state have seen sizable drops in student achievement from where students were in 2018-19 (the last year of full state

accountability results). Fourth, KCS has excellent staff and students. Our teachers work incredibly hard and are guided by compassion, care, and teaching the state content. While we will need to continue to focus on social-emotional learning and supporting children and families as we move further from the height of the pandemic, last year the focus on accelerating learning was consistently in balance with supporting the many other needs of students as they transitioned back into a full school year. Next, our teachers are teaching and our students are learning. While we did not see the results we hoped for on state assessments in many cases, we believe in multiple measures of student success. Every school, every classroom, every student, has a story to celebrate regarding how success is experienced and every teacher has something to be very proud of. Further, we experienced pockets of success in the state accountability results. In addition to four of our schools meeting or exceeding growth, there are numerous areas to build upon in each of our schools. The public communication only contains the general summary of results: schools have specific data for math, reading, science, student subgroups, graduation rate, and many other indicators that provide opportunities to celebrate. For example:

- A.L. Brown HS: graduation rate of 86.3%
- Fred L. Wilson ES: met growth overall and in all student subgroups overall
- Forest Park ES: showed strong achievement and growth with its Hispanic student subgroup
- GW Carver ES: met growth for overall in Math
- Jackson Park ES: exceeded growth overall and in 5 of 7 student subgroups
- Kannapolis MS: met all student testing participation targets overall and for all subgroups
- North Kannapolis ES: exceeded growth overall and in 4 of 6 student subgroups
- Shady Brook ES: met growth in 3 of 6 student subgroups and met growth in Reading

Moreover, we have work to do and we must maintain expectations. We have identified student growth as our “North Star” for student success. While we celebrate multiple measures of success, student growth is critical to improving school performance grades and state designations. Finally, we have a plan. As our district recognized from the 2020-21 achievement results and our ongoing assessments last year, there was an increase in the number of students not performing at grade level. Over the last year, we worked to redefine our vision around teaching and learning and have worked diligently to integrate data-driven instruction across KCS. Our priorities for improving results are more important than ever: recruiting and retaining strong teachers so that we have stability in our classrooms; utilizing a well-developed curriculum and ensuring that we have aligned core instructional practices across our district; and maintaining a structured framework for providing intervention and support when our students are struggling to master the grade level content. While we celebrate our successes, we also will continue to dive in with a determination to improve our overall results.

# NC Students Make Gains in 2021-22 from Last Year's COVID Drop, Growth Rebounds

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North Carolina students improved their performance on state tests during the 2021-22 school year from the previous year's COVID steep decline, and schools achieved growth almost on par with pre-pandemic levels, according to the state's accountability report presented today to the State Board of Education.

Because of disruptions caused by the pandemic, the accountability report for the 2021-22 school year is the first since 2018-19 to feature all components of the state's accountability framework, including the calculation of A-F School Performance Grades and growth designations.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still significantly impacting students and schools last year, student performance on the state's end-of-grade and end-of-course exams continued to be below levels reported for the 2018-19 year, the last full year prior to the pandemic disruptions that began in March 2020. Still, about seven of every 10 schools achieved at least expected growth last year, as measured by the state's yardstick for year-to-year academic gains.

As projected earlier this year in an analysis by the Department of Public Instruction's Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration, many North Carolina students will require months of additional learning time, possibly over several years, because of disruptions forced by the pandemic. The performance of North Carolina students during the 2021-22 school year also mirrors trends reported in recent weeks by several other states that also showed declines from pre-pandemic performance levels.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt said educators, students and their families are to be commended for their focus and hard work during a challenging year.

“Students and schools in North Carolina faced the same hurdles last year as others across the nation,” Truitt said. “They began the 2021-22 school year handicapped by the year before, that for many, was defined by remote instruction that proved to be less effective than in-person learning. Last year, too, was not without challenges with student and teacher absences because of quarantines and other significant difficulties.”

“Last year’s accountability results are really a testament to the resilience, dedication and commitment of thousands of educators across the state,” Truitt said. “They know as I do that we still have a steep hill to climb and that every step matters.”

Eric Davis, chair of the State Board of Education, said that the 2021-22 accountability results reflect the hard work and dedication of many educators and students, but that the state must redouble its efforts because of the pandemic’s persistent effects on student learning.

“There is no doubt that these results highlight the heroic efforts of educators across our state, and that of students and parents,” Davis said. “They show us how they persevered throughout the last two to three years. We should celebrate those efforts and learn from them as we already are. At the same time, these results show us that we have much more work to do today than we did in 2020.”

Michael Maher, deputy state superintendent in the Division of Standards, Accountability, and Research, said the agency’s impact analysis of lost instruction time due to COVID-19 earlier this year clearly showed the challenge ahead for schools across the state.

“Schools and educators are responding to that formidable challenge with a deliberate focus on supporting and accelerating learning for students,” Maher said. “Teachers, administrators and other educators deserve our appreciation for helping students recover a lot of ground lost to the pandemic.”

The student achievement data for the 2021-22 school year are based on analysis of all end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) tests, which are aligned to the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* in English Language Arts (Reading) and Mathematics and the *Essential Standards* in Science for all public schools in North Carolina. The data provide the percentage of students who scored at Level 3 and above (grade level proficiency), at Level 4 and above (college and career readiness) and at each academic achievement level.

Even while the outcomes are predictably lower than 2018-19 and years before, the results also are not objectively comparable to previous years, given the numerous factors that disrupted instruction during the last three years, said Tammy Howard, accountability director for the Department of Public Instruction.

Howard cautioned that the 2021-22 test data must be considered within the context of all COVID disruptions, and though 2018-19 data is included in the report released today, it is not intended to be used as a comparison for the purpose of evaluating effort or drawing conclusions.

“Since March 2020, the changes in instruction, particularly related to time and place, restrict the feasibility of typical comparisons of student achievement across years,” Howard said. “Educational data must be viewed as before, during, and eventually after COVID.”

The A-F school performance grades that schools received for the 2021-22 year were affected by the formula used to determine those grades because student performance on the state tests far outweighs the credit schools earn for the progress students make on the same tests from one year to the next. Eighty percent of the grade is based mostly on test scores; 20 percent is for growth, measured by a statistical model that evaluates schools’ progress across years.

Even as most schools achieved at least expected growth, the A-F performance grades of many schools were depressed by lower-than-usual percentages of students earning a score of grade-level proficient. With a weighting of 80 percent on the test scores and other achievement data, as expected, the school performance grades have shifted downward, consistent with the impact of the pandemic on test scores.

Truitt emphasized that last year’s school performance grades must be viewed within the context of the pandemic and its impact on student learning and performance.

“I share the same concerns of many educators, parents and others who have raised concerns for years about the fairness of the grades,” Truitt said, “but because of the pandemic, the 80-20 formula caused more school grades to slip. The current accountability model does not do justice to the hard work that teachers and students put in every day in schools across the state, and I look forward to working with stakeholders to consider other metrics important to determining school quality.”

High school performance grades were also impacted by a higher minimum ACT score now required for admission to University of North Carolina campuses. The percentage of students of reaching that new benchmark score on the ACT, required of all 11th graders in North Carolina, is one of the factors used to determine each high school’s A-F performance grade, along with EOC scores, 4-year cohort graduation rates and other indicators. The UNC Board of Governors has raised that score from 17 to 19, resulting in lower percentages of students achieving the new benchmark.

The percentage of 11th graders achieving the new UNC minimum of 19 was 41.7, compared to 55.2 percent in 2020-21 at the previous minimum score of 17. Had the benchmark score remained unchanged at 17, 54.6% of students would have earned the required score.

Scores increased from 2020-21 in all grade levels, 3-8, in both reading and math, at the Grade Level Proficient standard and also at the Career and College Ready standard, except for 3rd grade reading, where scores declined.

Overall, math scores in elementary and middle school grades were up more significantly than reading scores. The scores on science exams, given at grades 5 and 8, also showed more significant gains, at both the CCR and GLP levels, with grade 8 approaching 2018-19 performance.

Among end-of-course exams administered in high school grades, scores on the Math 3 exam exceeded the 2018-19 pre-pandemic performance, while scores on Math 1 and Biology exams improved from the 2020-21 year. Scores on the English II exam remained unchanged for the CCR level and was down slightly at the GLP level.

The state's 4-year cohort graduation rate, also a factor in determining high school performance grades, was 86.2%, a decline from 87% reported in 2020-21, but largely unchanged from the 86.5% rate in 2018-19.

Because of the overall drop in A-F performance grades for the 2021-22 school year, the number of low performing schools increased significantly from the 2018-19 year, when schools were last identified.

Low-performing schools are those that receive a performance grade of D or F and do not exceed growth. Low-performing districts are districts where the majority of schools received a performance grade and have been identified as low performing. For 2021-22, 864 schools have been identified as low performing, up from 488 in 2018-19. The number of low-performing districts increased to 29 from eight in 2018-19.

**\*\*\* [Go here \(https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports\)](https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports) for complete 2021-22 results for the state, districts and schools, under the 2021-22 Reports heading and the 2021-22 Annual Testing Report and the Executive Summary under the Documentation heading.**