



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

Dear Parent:

During the 2012-13 school year, North Carolina's teachers and students began using new standards for learning. These new standards describe what students should learn in every subject and at every grade level. The standards are online at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/>. North Carolina has had state standards – called the *Standard Course of Study* – for many decades. This new *Standard Course of Study* is the latest update and is designed to meet the needs of today's students to be career and college ready.

Along with the new learning standards, students took new end-of-grade and end-of-course tests to measure their learning. Results of these tests will be available for parents and students beginning on November 7, 2013, when the state's new READY Accountability model results are released for the first time. If you have had a student participating in the previous ABCs of Public Education accountability model, you will notice some changes in the report your student receives this year and also in the accountability report available online to show school performance in 2012-13.

We anticipate that student scores will be lower this year. The new assessments and the standards that they measure are more difficult and more challenging than the previous ones. The performance that students need in order to meet Achievement Level 3 or better is more difficult to reach. Achievement Level 3 is considered to be grade-level performance.

If your student's test scores from 2012-13 are lower than you have been used to seeing, this does not mean your child lost ground in the last school year. It does mean that the targets they were expected to meet were higher than they were used to meeting. Because the 2012-13 school year is the first year for these new, more difficult standards, these results are not being used for student grades or placement and there are no school accountability labels or designations being applied this time.

It is important to discuss the 2012-13 results with your child's teacher if you have concerns. She or he can share strategies that are in place this year to help your child meet the standards for learning. I am confident that our teachers and students will show improvements in the 2013-14 school year and in future years. That is the pattern we have seen in the past when North Carolina raised standards and expectations, and other states that recently have raised their standards have seen the same pattern occur.

More information is available to explain our new standards, the scores being released on Nov. 7 and what you will see on the new READY accountability website on that day. These items and the accountability results will be available at www.ncpublicschools.org under Highlights and News.

My top priority is to work with you and with local teachers, principals and superintendents to help all students prepare for today's very competitive world. Thank you for supporting your student at home and at school.

Sincerely,

June St. Clair Atkinson

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