



West Virginia School Report Card, School Results: An Information Brief for Parents

Today, school quality tends to be judged by how well students perform, because that is the standard set by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The law says every school's students should do better each year until 2014, when all students should be able to reach "proficiency" (a high level of skill) in all subjects. The state accountability system is set up to measure how well both schools and students are doing toward meeting the proficiency goal.

This information brief looks at the sections of the school report card that give information about how well the school is performing. A separate information brief looks at just the student results from statewide testing.

Overview

West Virginia law and state department of education policy say that state, county, and school information should be available to parents and other community members. Data are collected and the information is presented in the format of "NCLB Report Cards."

Reports on schools and school systems. The state department of education prepares a report card for every school in West Virginia and makes these available on its Web site (http://wvde.state.wv.us/data/report_cards). The report card shows data for each individual school as it compares to the whole county and/or the whole state. An electronic copy is free—just go online—or you can order a print copy by phoning the state department of education at 304.957.9833, ext. 53328.

Data sources. Most of the information in the school reports comes from records that people in the schools and district offices keep. State and federal laws help school officials decide what data to collect. The data are entered into the West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS), and the state department uses this system to analyze data and create reports.

Subgroups. You will notice that data in the report cards are sometimes listed according to subgroups. These are groups of students who have been defined by NCLB and are reported separately on purpose. Generally, these are students who may struggle with learning and, in the past, were averaged into the school's overall performance. Because of this, they were easy to "leave behind," something that separating the data helps to prevent.

Understanding what data say. Students learn new things every day, so the data in a report show how things were at one moment in time. When the report reaches you, your child or your child’s school may be performing at a different level.



Some information can be hard to collect or hard to analyze. If the information that goes into a report is incomplete, the results of the data analysis will also be incomplete.

Comparing results from several years, a technique called longitudinal analysis, can help educators and parents understand trends. This works best when the same kind of information is collected each year; however, that is not always possible. For example, West Virginia changed its statewide test from a norm-referenced one to a criterion-referenced one during the 2003-2004 school year. Now, we can know whether students are doing better in math since 2004 because the same test has been used every year. But we can’t really compare today’s results to 2003 results because the tests were different.

Understanding the School Sections of the Report Card

In some sections, the school is compared to the whole state; in other sections, the county results also appear.

Accountability. In this section of the report card, the school is rated on student attendance and on the percentages of students who took the statewide tests in math and reading. High schools are rated also on how many students graduate. The state has set targets for all these areas, and if the school meets the targets (or does better), it makes “adequate yearly progress” as required by NCLB. There are no numbers in this section of the report card—a check mark means the school met the standard or target, an X means the school needs to improve, and a blank means the school had fewer than 50 students in that category and does not need to report.

Example of Accountability Section of NCLB Report Card

Subgroups	Mathematics		Reading		Graduation/ Attendance Rate
	Participation Rate	Statewide Testing	Participation Rate	Statewide Testing	
ALL Students	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ETHNIC					
White	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Black					
Hispanic					
Students w/Disabilities					
Economically Disadvantaged	✓	✓	✓	✓	



Teacher information. NCLB requires systems and schools to make sure teachers are “highly qualified.” The report card shows the percentages of teachers who have achieved various levels of education. The numbers that appear beside a degree, such as Master’s Degree+15, indicate the number of extra credit hours a group of teachers has taken. The Teachers on Permits section shows how many teachers are working under special permits while they take classes to become fully certified.

Example of Teacher Information Section of NCLB Report Card

Level of Education	School	County	State
Bachelor’s Degree	23.8%	23.4%	24.2%
Bachelor’s Degree+15	22.5%	32.1%	29.4%
Master’s Degree	17.7%	12.2%	16.4%
Master’s Degree+15		5.9%	8.7%
Doctorate		0.5%	1.1%
Teachers on Permits	1	23	1,018

Discipline. This section indicates whether the school met the standard for keeping discipline referrals as low as possible.

Attendance/graduation rates. This section of the report card shows attendance and graduation rates. NA (or N/A) means not applicable, and it appears in the box for graduation rate if the school is an elementary or middle school.

School information. This section shows the number of students in the school, the average number of students in each class, the drop-out rate (not applicable for elementary schools), and the percentages of highly qualified teachers.

Administration. In this section of the report card, parents can see how many students there are for each administrator and teacher. The average years of experience for all professional staff (principals, teachers, counselors, librarians, and so on) are also listed here.

Advanced Placement courses in high school. This report section shows percentages of classes at each level that are Advanced Placement, or at the college level.

College-entrance testing information. As the name says, this section shows the percentages of students who took the ACT and SAT tests. It also shows the composite, or average, scores students earned. This section also shows what percentage of students in each high school grade took tests to receive credit for Advanced Placement courses.

Definitions. This section of the report card provides definitions of terms and explains how some results were calculated.

Glossary

Accountability: the obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for actions.

Criterion-referenced test: a test that compares the student's performance to a defined set of skills and knowledge.

Norm-referenced test: a test that compares the student's performance to the performance of other students, usually a national sample.

Proficiency: the level at which students master a subject; West Virginia defines five levels—novice, partial mastery, mastery, above mastery, and distinguished. These levels are used to describe student performance on statewide tests. Students who score from mastery to distinguished are considered to be proficient.

Subgroups: defined by NCLB, these are (a) ethnic—White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American; (b) students with disabilities, sometimes called Special Ed on the report card; (c) economically disadvantaged—usually students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals—and sometimes called Low SES on the report card; (d) limited English proficient, or LEP; and (e) migrant.

WESTEST: West Virginia Educational Standards Test; this is the criterion-referenced statewide test that students in grades 3-8 and 10 take every year to measure mastery of academic content.

Get More Information

For more information about West Virginia School Report Cards, go to the West Virginia Department of Education Web site: http://wvde.state.wv.us/data/report_cards.

To find out more about the services we offer, contact West Virginia Parent Connections.

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