

NEWS RELEASE

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State board of education approves school and district rankings; state and federal accountability requirements take effect

JACKSON – The State Board of Education approved school district accreditation statuses and school performance classifications today, setting the baseline for schools to measure academic performance and improvement.

More than 80% of Mississippi public schools achieved a rating of “Level 3/Successful” or higher, with 150 schools reaching “Level 5/Superior-Performing.” Thirty-three schools received a rating of “Level 1/Low-Achieving.”

At a news conference held today after the State Board of Education meeting, Governor Ronnie Musgrove applauded accountability efforts in Mississippi. “We have made tremendous progress in education in the state of Mississippi,” said Musgrove. “By investing in education and strong accountability measures, we will continue to see those investments pay off in terms of a better quality of life, a more competitive workforce, and more high quality good paying jobs.”

“Today we are seeing the fruits of several years of hard work,” said State Board of Education Chair Charlie Deaton. “Education leaders, lawmakers, teachers, business people, community members and parents have worked together to develop Mississippi’s new accountability system – a system that is nationally recognized for its high standards and strong focus on school improvement.”

Scores on state and national tests released in July showed students achieving at higher levels than ever before, with Mississippi students scoring above the national average for the first time.

State Superintendent of Education Dr. Henry Johnson said student achievement in Mississippi is increasing every year, setting a positive trend line for school improvement efforts. “The school performance levels set today will serve as the baseline to measure future school improvement,” said Johnson. “Schools and communities must take these data and use them to improve their schools.”

According to the state’s new accreditation model, public school accreditation is two-fold: each school district is awarded an accreditation status based on compliance with process standards, and individual schools are assigned a performance classification based on student performance.

“Accredited” status is assigned to school districts that comply with 100% of the process standards. “Advised” status is assigned to districts that do not comply with one or more process standard. “Probation” status is assigned to districts that have previously been on an “advised” status and still do not comply with its corrective action plan. “Withdrawn” status is assigned to a

district that has previously been assigned a “probation” status and still does not comply with its corrective action plan. Process standards address the operation of the school, including policies, state and federal laws, staffing, resources and programs.

School performance classifications are as follows: Level 5 – superior-performing; Level 4 – exemplary; Level 3 – successful; Level 2 – under-achieving, and Level 1 – low-achieving. The lower performing Level 1 schools are designated as Priority Schools.

No Child Left Behind

According to the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*, schools must meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), meaning that a certain percentage of students must achieve at the proficient level or above.

While the Mississippi Accountability System evaluates schools based on expected growth and overall student achievement, NCLB focuses on the achievement of subgroups within a school. If one group does not meet AYP, the whole school does not. Therefore, a school that achieves a Level 5 rating under the Mississippi Accountability System may not meet AYP based on the performance of one subgroup of students.

About 50% of Mississippi schools did not meet all three components of AYP (reading/language arts, mathematics and other indicators). When looking at each component, 86% of schools met AYP in reading/language arts; 84% met AYP in mathematics; and 54% met AYP in the area of other indicators. Schools that do not demonstrate adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years in one of the content areas are identified as needing improvement and subject to immediate interventions – beginning with technical assistance and then more serious corrective actions if the school continues to not make AYP. This year seven schools were identified as needing improvement.

** Other indicators include growth and graduation rates.*

Mississippi Accountability System

The Mississippi Accountability System assigns accreditation levels to schools districts and performance classifications to schools, sets annual performance standards for each school, and holds educators, administrators, school board members and students accountable for student learning.

Schools not meeting achievement and growth expectations are provided technical assistance. A certain percentage of low performing schools will be designated as Priority Schools and will receive intensive assistance from teams of trained professionals. This year 10 of the 33 Level 1 schools were identified as Priority Schools.

A complete listing of school district accreditation statuses and school performance classifications is available at www.mde.k12.ms.us.

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