



STATE OF FLORIDA

Office of the Governor

THE CAPITOL

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0001

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CONTACT: JACOB DIPIETRE
(850) 488-5394 or
MELANIE ETTERS
(850) 245-0413

GOVERNOR BUSH ANNOUNCES RISING SCHOOL GRADES

~More Florida schools earning higher grades under Bush education plan~

TALLAHASSEE—Governor Jeb Bush and Commissioner of Education John Winn today announced that, despite tougher standards, close to three quarters of Florida's public schools are high performing. Even with Florida's increased standards for writing and the inclusion of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in the calculation, 66 percent of schools achieved an "A" or "B" grade with 463 schools improving their grade.

"High expectations continue to yield rising student achievement. Each time we raise the bar in education, Florida's students and teachers surpass the challenge to achieve higher standards," said Governor Bush. "Having close to three quarters of our public schools performing at high levels demonstrates Florida's education plan is improving schools, strengthening accountability and leading to rising student achievement."

Even with the addition of learning gains for SWD and LEP students included in this year's grading, top school grades remained consistent with 2004 rankings -- 1253 schools earned an "A" and 589 received a "B" grade. Just 12 percent of schools received a "D" or "F" grade. Last year, learning gains for SWD and LEP students were not included in school grades. Learning gains, which are a critical component of the A+ Plan, are designed to help individual students make progress.

"As expectations for school performance increase, Florida schools continue to rise to the occasion," said Commissioner Winn. "In 1995, we had 158 low-performing schools. We have raised the bar three times since then, and still cut the number of low-performing schools in half. Floridians should be proud of the performance of our teachers, students, and schools."

Florida has raised performance standards three times over the last six years. In 1999, Florida raised education standards by introducing the A+ grading system.

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Standards were again raised in 2002 with the implementation of learning gains. This year, the State Board of Education raised the proficiency level in writing to 3.5 on a 6-point scale, and included SWD and LEP students in the learning gains components. Because of the new and higher standards and the inclusion of all schools, the number of “F” schools rose from 49 last year to 78 – less than 3 percent of all public schools statewide.

As a part of a new partnership with the United States Department of Education to streamline the state and federal education programs toward a seamless system, Florida was granted a new Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) designation that recognizes the outstanding achievement of “A” and “B” schools. High performing schools that miss one or more of the 30 AYP criteria will be designated as *Provisional AYP* while working toward full compliance.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, Florida has 1,111 schools making Adequately Yearly Progress this year compared to 719 schools last year, and 825 “A” and “B” schools designated *Provisional AYP*. Since 2003, the number of schools making AYP doubled from 534 to 1,111 and the number of schools not making progress declined from 2,473 to 1,169. Of the 1,253 schools receiving an “A” grade, 1,174 met at least 90 percent of the criteria for AYP.

United States Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings recently approved the following flexibility for Florida’s AYP calculation under No Child Left Behind:

- Allows Florida’s top “A” and “B” schools to receive a *Provisional AYP* designation to better align with Florida’s A + Plan and maximize student achievement.
- Modifies proficiency targets to increase annually instead of every three years.
- Requires subgroup size to represent at least 30 students and 15 percent of the school population or 100 students.
- Provides an adjustment for the students with disabilities subgroup.

Despite the two-week testing delay caused by the 2004 hurricanes and the need to reprogram No Child Left Behind plan amendments to take effect this year, the Florida Department of Education is releasing school grades and AYP earlier than ever before. Providing the information ahead of schedule gives parents more time to consider choice options and superintendents, principals, and teachers additional time to prepare for next year.

Parents will receive a school report card that provides a comprehensive look at their child’s school, with results under state and federal standards, as well as information on spending at the school level. For more information, visit www.myflorida.com or <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org>

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