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Governor Pawlenty Unveils “Accountability on a Stick”

School report cards available online and at State Fair.

(St. Paul, MN) Governor Tim Pawlenty and Education Commissioner Cheri Pierson Yecke kicked off the Minnesota State Fair by announcing that school report cards are now available on the Department of Education Web site and at their booth at the Minnesota State Fair.

“These report cards contain a comprehensive look at our schools in an easy to read format for parents and taxpayers,” said Governor Pawlenty. **“I encourage everyone to come to the Fair or check the Internet to see how their child’s school is performing.”**

The report card uses a five-star rating system for academic achievement in two academic areas. Each elementary school will receive a star rating for both math and reading. Middle schools and high schools will not receive star ratings until next year when an academic indicator is available for these schools.

A school’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) designation under the *No Child Left Behind* law is the first factor used to determine a star rating. For instance, schools that have not made AYP for one year are given a two-star rating and schools that have not made AYP for two consecutive years are given a one-star rating. If a school does not make AYP, it cannot receive higher than a two-star rating.

Once a school meets the AYP requirement, there are several other factors used to determine whether they will be a three, four or five star school:

- The school has 10% or fewer of its students scoring at the lowest levels on state tests.
- The school performs among the top 25% of comparable schools (based on the percentage of test takers eligible for free and reduced priced lunch)
- The school performs in the top 10% of similar size schools.

(More)

- The school has 30% or more students scoring at the highest level on state tests.

Three-star schools are those that make Adequate Yearly Progress. Four-star schools make AYP and also meet the criteria in one of the above categories. Five-star schools make AYP and also meet the criteria in at least two of the above categories.

The breakdown of schools in Minnesota provides a distribution of schools in the various ratings, with the majority of schools earning three-star ratings:

Reading

Five Stars	114 schools
Four Stars	120 schools
Three Stars	604 schools
Two Stars	58 schools
One Star	25 schools

Math

Five Stars	92 schools
Four Stars	97 schools
Three Stars	649 schools
Two Stars	58 schools
One Star	25 schools

Commissioner Yecke noted the report card measures much more than AYP status under the federal law and includes a “Taxpayer’s Report” on school finance, academic opportunities, staff and student demographics, and information on parent satisfaction.

“The goal of this report card was to give parents the ability to look at information about their entire school, not just the results of one test,” added Commissioner Yecke. **“The uniformity of the report card also allows parents to compare their school to any other school in the state.”**

The elements of the school report card include:

- Academic achievement, which has as one component the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status for each subgroup of students for math and reading as required under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Schools will receive a rating from one to five stars based on their AYP status, how they compare to similar schools in the state, and the percentage of students achieving above or below grade level.

- Academic opportunity, which shows the opportunities in addition to regular classroom activities that allow students to grow and excel. Examples of academic opportunities include gifted and talented programs, science fairs, on-line learning, and Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes.
- School safety refers to incidents involving discipline deemed most serious such as the possession of firearms, illicit drugs and assault. It also looks at the school safety promotion efforts of schools.
- Student participation reports several elements including attendance, hours of instruction, dropout rate and graduation rate.
- Staff characteristics includes data about school staff, including the number of licensed professionals (teachers, paraprofessionals, support specialists, library/media specialists), their education level (Masters, Doctorate), and average teacher salaries.
- Student demographics includes the breakdown of the student population by ethnic group, Limited English Proficient (LEP) status, special education, and free/reduced price meals.
- Parent satisfaction and open enrollment includes the ratio of students transferring in and out of the district under the open enrollment system and whether or not a school surveys parents and students on their satisfaction with the school.
- A report to taxpayers includes a breakdown of revenues and spending at the school district level, along with the current debt level.

Several elements of the report card do not have data at this time so they will appear as placeholders until a data collection system is created. Many of the elements also contain trend data over the last several years so parents can see how this year's data has changed over time.

Fairgoers will be able to view and print out the report card for their schools at the Department's booth during the fair. The information will also be available on the Department's Web site under the *Schools and Districts* section at <http://education.state.mn.us>.