



## Horry County Schools

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **AYP ratings decline although schools make progress**

Despite improvements in student performance on the test that serves as the cornerstone for elementary and middle school Adequate Yearly Progress ratings, few Horry County schools met their 2008 federal goals under the No Child Left Behind Act. Among the district's 34 elementary and middle schools, three met AYP. Due to concerns over possible computation errors, high school and district ratings were not included in the report released by the South Carolina Department of Education, but are expected to be released next week.

While disappointing, the results of the ratings were predictable due to ever-increasing proficiency goals established by No Child Left Behind. The proficiency goal for students in all subgroups rose by more than 20 points to above 57 percent on English language arts and math. South Carolina's targets for "Adequate Yearly Progress," like those of other states, are rising quickly in order to meet NCLB's requirement that all students – including those who come from low-income families, speak limited English or have learning disabilities – score "Proficient" on state math and English language arts tests by 2014.

Under NCLB, each state gets to set its own definition for proficiency. South Carolina continues to be nationally recognized as having one of the top three toughest proficiency standards in the nation. Each state sets its own definition for academic proficiency under NCLB, and a number of independent national research studies have shown that South Carolina's definition is far more rigorous than other states. The studies indicate that students who score proficient in many states would score at Basic or Below Basic levels in South Carolina.

The AYP ratings send confusing messages about school performance as some schools appear to be making progress in one area of accountability yet fall behind in

another. Earlier this year, reports show that more HCS students met and exceeded state academic standards in 2008 on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test. District students showed improvements in 12 of 24 scoring categories among students meeting state standards with gains made in three out of six grade levels in math, English/language arts, science and social studies. Seventh grade students made gains in every subject area tested.

The percentage of district students scoring Proficient and Advanced showed gains in 21 out of 24 categories with gains made in every grade among students scoring Proficient and Advanced in social studies and in five out of six grades in math, English language arts and science. Students in seventh and eighth grades made gains in all four subject areas.

### ***HCS AYP ratings***

For 2008, three of 34 elementary and middle schools met AYP. Eight schools missed only one objective, and seven others missed only two objectives. All elementary schools met objectives for English language arts among “all” students and students on “free or reduced” lunch. Twenty one of 24 elementary schools met objectives for math for “all” students, while 19 of 24 schools met math objectives among students receiving free or reduced lunch.

Among the district’s 10 middle schools, seven met English language arts objectives for “all” students. All middle schools met objectives in math for “all” students. Across the district, the objectives most frequently missed were those among disabled students, who are required to take grade level tests.

The three schools that made AYP are Seaside Elementary, Midland Elementary and Socastee Elementary. A complete listing of elementary and middle school AYP ratings is available through [www.horrycountyschools.net](http://www.horrycountyschools.net).

### ***Background information on NCLB***

NCLB requires schools and districts to break out their performance data into a number of student "subcategories" that include ethnicity, special education, poverty and limited ability with English. The more demographic categories a school has, the more goals it must meet. If even one subcategory of students doesn't meet its goal for that year, or if more than five percent of those students weren't tested, the school does not meet AYP for that year.

Among HCS elementary and middle schools, the number of subcategories ranges from as many as 29 at Myrtle Beach Middle School, Forestbrook Middle School and Myrtle Beach Intermediate School to as few as 13 at Midland Elementary School.

For "Title I schools" – those that receive federal Title I funds because they have a significant number of students from economically disadvantaged families – not meeting AYP carries considerable consequences. When a Title I school misses the same subject

area performance target for two years consecutively, the school is designated in "Needs Improvement" status.

For schools identified as being "Needs Improvement" status, parents must be offered the choice of sending their children to another school in that district that is not in "Needs Improvement" status. A second year in "Needs Improvement" (third year of not meeting AYP) requires the school to offer supplemental services such as student tutoring, as well as the choice option. The parent may request either of these options. More severe consequences follow for Title I schools that continue to be designated as "Needs Improvement."

Like South Carolina's home-grown Education Accountability Act, NCLB relies on Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) scores to determine performance ratings for elementary and middle schools. High school performance data come from student performance on the new exit examination, the High School Assessment Program.

In order to meet AYP this year, South Carolina elementary and middle schools must have had 58.8 percent of their students Proficient in English language arts, up from 38.2 percent last year. In math, 57.8 percent had to be Proficient, up from 36.7 percent last year.

High school goals jump upward next year, from 52.3 percent to 71.3 percent proficient in English Language Arts and from 50 to 70 percent proficient in math.