

Student Progress in Newport News Public Schools



In 2011, the Virginia Department of Education began implementing more rigorous standards in all subjects to better prepare students to meet national and international benchmarks for college and career readiness. At the same time, students were required to take Standards of Learning (SOL) tests online instead of using the traditional paper and pencil method.

As predicted by the state, pass rates across the state declined, creating a new starting point or baseline for future test results. As a result of the new tests and higher benchmarks, the number of schools in Virginia that did not meet accreditation standards quadrupled.

- 2012: **128** Virginia schools were not fully accredited
- 2013: **395** Virginia schools were not fully accredited
- 2014: **600 or more** Virginia schools are not fully accredited

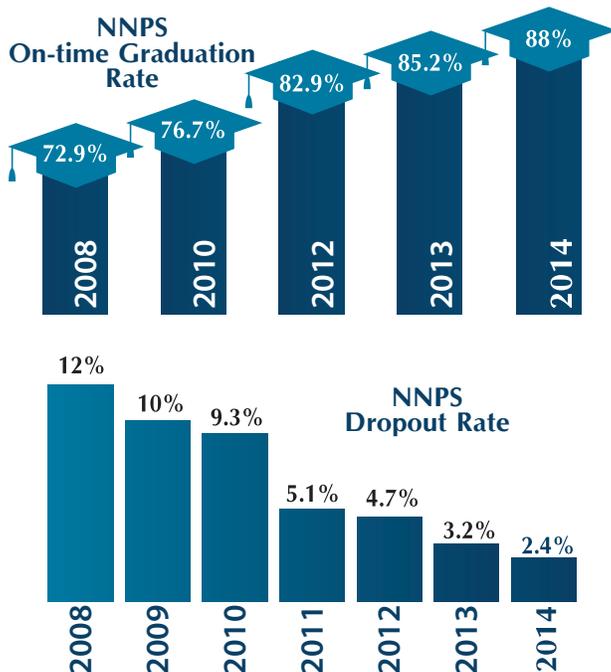
Newport News Public Schools will have eight fewer fully accredited schools this year. According to the Virginia Department of Education, the bar has been raised significantly and it is going to be a multiyear process for schools to meet the higher expectations.

The State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Steven Staples, says fewer accredited schools does not equal lower achievement:

"The increase that we will see next month in the number of schools that fall short of the state's accreditation standards must be viewed in the context of the higher standards and changing assessments. Students are not learning less; the state has raised the bar."

To reach this goal, Newport News schools are focusing on literacy and math skills, providing students with more time for extra help, and making more time for learning by giving fewer tests. Additionally, *college, career and citizen-ready* skills such as critical thinking and problem solving continue to be emphasized. Below is a look at some of the progress Newport News Public Schools is making towards meeting the higher state standards.

More NNPS students are graduating from high school and the NNPS dropout rate has decreased from 12 percent in 2008 to 2.4 percent today.



NNPS students scored higher than the state benchmarks in several areas:

- History (3rd Grade)
- Science (3rd Grade)
- Civics & Economics
- VA Studies (4th Grade)
- High School Reading
- Algebra I (Middle)
- Geometry (Middle)
- World Geography
- US History I
- US History II
- World History

Math scores are rising in NNPS:

- 8 elementary schools saw math test scores rise by 15 to 24 points

Many schools are showing progress:

- 18 schools improved performance in two to three SOL subjects
- One school improved in all four SOL subjects.

Even though one Newport News school increased on all four SOL tests, it went from fully accredited to accredited with warning.

NNPS Curriculum Supports Student Learning

Newport News Public Schools curriculum is aligned to the new SOL content, but NNPS educators go beyond teaching the minimum state standards. The NNPS curriculum combines the SOL with the district's *college, career and citizen-ready* skills (information literacy, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity & innovation, initiative & self-direction, social responsibility and collaboration) to better prepare students for success as learners, future employees and contributing citizens.

To assess student learning, SOLs and *college, career citizen-ready* skills are integrated within performance assessments or tasks that students engage in to demonstrate their understanding and application of learning goals.

School accreditation is based on student performance on SOL tests. It is one measure of achievement. NNPS students are assessed regularly using a variety of measures to demonstrate understanding and skill.