



864 Broad Street – 4th Floor
Augusta, Georgia 30901-4295
(706) 826-1124 – Fax: (706) 826-4613

MARION E. BARNES
President

DANA T. BEDDEN, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

ALEX HOWARD
Vice-President

MEDIA CONTACT: Mr. Louis Svehla, RCSS Public Information Office, (706) 826-1000.

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Today, the Georgia Department of Education released updated information regarding our school system's NCLB/AYP achievement results.

With a testing participation rate of 98.5% in Richmond County Schools, it is with great pleasure that I recognize our students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and community partners for their significant progress and accomplishments during the 2008-2009 academic school year.

Last year's hard work and dedicated service have resulted in the following outcomes:

School System:

- Our students' absences over 15 days decreased from 7.7% to 6.8%.
- **Our school system's graduation rate increased by 6.7 percentage points rising from 63.8% to 70.4%.**
- Academic Achievement
 - 7 out of 8 subgroups met CRCT AYP requirements in Math.
 - 7 out of 8 subgroups met CRCT AYP in Reading/English Language Arts.
 - 5 out of 5 subgroups met the GHSGT AYP requirements in English/Language Arts.
 - 1 out of 5 subgroups met the GHSGT AYP requirements in Enhanced Math.
 - Met 815 of 864 performance targets which are officially called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) – 94%.
- RCSS Overall AYP Results:
 - 33 schools met AYP on the initial results compared to 29 last year on the initial results.
 - **42 out of 57 schools met AYP after the final GaDOE update – 73.7%.**
- RCSS continues to make progress with the percentage of schools making AYP:
 - 2007 – 70%
 - 2008 – 72%
 - 2009 – 74%

High Schools:

As with many school systems across the nation, RCSS continues to be challenged in meeting the NCLB/AYP requirements. However, I would note that our high schools continue to show significant progress toward meeting those requirements:

- Two (2) High Schools made AYP via absolute bar (Davidson and A.R. Johnson).
- One school, Westside, missed AYP via the graduation target by only .6 percent.
- **Seven high schools increased graduation rates and two maintained a 100% graduation rate for ALL students (rounded to nearest whole number):**
 - **Davidson and A.R. Johnson maintained a 100% graduation rate.**
 - **Laney increased from 31% to 57% (+26 percentage points).**
 - **Hephzibah increased from 66% to 71% (+5 percentage points).**
 - **Westside increased from 71% to 74% (+3 percentage points).**
 - **Josey increased from 46% to 63% (+17 percentage points).**
 - **ARC increased from 65% to 69% (+4 percentage points).**
 - **Cross Creek increased from 69% to 75% (+6 percentage points).**
 - **Glenn Hills increased from 60% to 67% (+7 percentage points).**
- 6 out of 7 subgroups showed an increase in the graduation rate (African-American, White, Multi-Racial, Students With Disabilities, and Economically Disadvantaged).
- High Schools met 120 out of 154 performance targets which are officially called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) – 78%.

Middle Schools:

Our middle schools have worked hard to meet the bar set by NCLB requirements. Some would liken it to climbing a steep hill. When I first arrived in Augusta, we had three middle schools make AYP. Despite many challenges and numerous obstacles, our middle grades' community of learners, teachers, support staff, and community have continued to make progress each year.

- **2008 AYP – Building Blocks for Continued Progress**
 - 5 out of 10 (50%) middle schools made AYP on the initial results.
 - 7 out of 10 (70%) middle schools made AYP after final GaDOE update.
 - East Augusta and Tutt made AYP for the second consecutive year and exited Needs Improvement.
 - Six middle schools remained in Needs Improvement. Five of the six schools were state-monitored (NI 5>): Glenn Hills Middle, Morgan Road, Murphey Charter, Spirit Creek and Tubman.
 - Middle Schools met 180 out of 189 performance targets which are officially called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) – 95.2%.
- **2009 AYP – Hard Work Paid Off**
 - 5 middle schools (50%) made AYP on the initial results.
 - **9 of 10 Middle Schools made AYP after final GaDOE update – 90%.**
 - 3 schools made AYP for the second consecutive year and exited Needs Improvement: Morgan Road, Spirit Creek and Tubman, for a total of 6 middle schools, have been removed from the needs improvement list.
 - Only 3 middle schools remain in Needs Improvement: Glenn Hills- NI 9, Langford-NI 3, and Murphey-NI 5. **All three made AYP in this past year (2008-2009).**

- Glenn Hills Middle School, Hephzibah Middle School, Segoo Middle School and Tutt Middle School students scored at or above the Absolute Bar in every subgroup in English/Language Arts and Mathematics.
- Middle schools met 170 out of 173 performance targets which are officially called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) – 98.3%.

Elementary Schools:

Our elementary schools continue to have success and make progress on meeting and exceeding the NCLB/AYP requirements. While it is clear that one of our challenges at the elementary level is the ability to maintain consistency in meeting the NCLB/AYP requirements each year as the bar continues to rise, we celebrate their success because of the following:

- 31 out of 37 elementary schools made AYP – 83.8%.
- Elementary Schools met 525 out of 540 performance targets which are officially called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) – 97%.
- NCLB has existed for 7 years
 - 14 schools have made AYP for 7 consecutive years
 - 11 schools have made AYP for 6 out of the 7 years

As I conclude, I again want to thank all our students, teachers, staff, parents, and community members who have worked hard to produce last year's success and progress. I would be remiss if I did not sound an alarm of concern regarding the challenges we face this year.

With larger class sizes, reduced supplies, resources, and human capital, and three consecutive years of budget cuts totaling approximately \$74 million dollars, our future progress and success is in jeopardy. The building blocks we have been laying may not be able to withstand the current conditions. While I am cautiously optimistic that the smartest working teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members are here in Augusta-Richmond County, I also know that at some point we will not be able to squeeze blood from a turnip, bake a cake without the milk, carve a turkey with a spoon, or make our next great American without the resources to implement the best practices.

Education matters! Education is the civil rights issue of the 21st Century. I ask for your continued and renewed support of public education in Richmond County.