

# spotlight

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## THE PARENTAL PREROGATIVE

*How ‘parent-friendly’ are school districts in North Carolina?*

**KEY FACTS:** • This report develops a system to evaluate school districts on how “parent-friendly” they are. In other words, to what extent do North Carolina’s school districts provide children a sound, basic education in a stable and safe school environment that is responsive to the needs of children and the concerns of parents?

• In general, North Carolina’s school districts are not parent-friendly organizations. While a handful of school districts fare reasonably well in the final ranking, the highest score was a 3.5 or a B+.

• School districts in western North Carolina generally fared very well in the ranking, while those in the Triad, Triangle, Charlotte, and northeastern regions fared poorly. Eight of the ten most parent-friendly school districts are located in western North Carolina.

• In general, smaller school districts are more parent-friendly than large school districts. Most of the top-performing school districts enroll between 1,000 and 5,000 students.

• Without the threat of losing its clientele to competitors, many schools and school districts behave like the monopolies they are — focused on strengthening the organization’s position and goals, rather than meeting the needs of students and parents. Genuine accountability to parents begins with school choice.

• Further research will be required to pinpoint the combination of factors that contribute to their success, but district size and high quality administrative or teaching staffs (or both) appear to be outstanding reasons why districts fared well in this ranking.

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**W**hat do parents want from their child’s school district? In this ranking, I have separated the answer into four general areas, based on data available from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, and North Carolina Office of the Governor (see the appendices for a more detailed explanation of the methodology and data used in this ranking).

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Those four areas for evaluating what parents want from their child's school district are:

*1. Administration*

- a. How well did administrators communicate with teachers and parents?
- b. How bureaucratic was the school district?

*2. Teachers*

- a. How stable was the teacher workforce?
- b. How many teaching position vacancies remained at the beginning of the school year?

*3. Safety* — how safe were the schools in the school district?

*4. Performance*

- a. How well did the school district perform on state tests?
- b. How well did students in the district perform on the SATs?
- c. What percentage of district students graduated high school in four years?

**Results**

In general, North Carolina's school districts are not parent-friendly organizations. While a handful of school districts fare reasonably well in the final ranking, the highest score was a 3.5 or a B+. Most school districts earned a C or D, and five school districts earned Fs (see **Table 1**, following two pages).

School districts in western North Carolina generally fared very well in the ranking, while those in the Triad, Triangle, Charlotte, and northeastern regions fared poorly. Eight of the ten most parent-friendly school districts are located in western North Carolina.

In general, smaller school districts are more parent-friendly than large school districts. Although large counties like Union and Buncombe were ranked in the top 30 districts, most of the top-performing school districts enrolled fewer than 5,000 students. Yancey, Polk, Dare, Ashe, Asheville, Beaufort, Martin, Cherokee and Clay counties had fewer than 5,000 students enrolled. Nevertheless, Lincoln (12,017 students) and Catawba (17,332 students) counties had student enrollment that was near or above the 2006-07 state average of 12,055 students (see **Tables 2-7**, pages 5-8).

**Conclusion**

With no threat of losing its clientele to competitors, many schools and school districts behave like the monopolies they are – focused on strengthening the organization's position and goals, rather than meeting the needs of students and parents. Indeed, one need not look further than the low regard that many teachers and administrators have toward parents to find evidence of this organization-first mentality. Genuine accountability to parents begins with school choice.

Even in a state with as little public school choice as North Carolina, a handful of school districts in North Carolina distinguish themselves as providing superior learning environments. The 19 districts that earned a "B" excelled in at least three of the four domains. Further research will be required to pinpoint the combination of factors that contribute to their success, but the school districts that fared well in this ranking were generally small districts with stable, high-performing teaching staffs.

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**Table 1. Enrollment, Domain Grades, Final Grade, and Rank (top districts in bold)**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Needy %</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<b>Polk</b>	<b>2,399</b>	<b>50.06</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Cherokee</b>	<b>3,613</b>	<b>56.13</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Clay</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>42.65</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T-3</b>
<b>Dare</b>	<b>4,843</b>	<b>23.72</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T-3</b>
<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>12,017</b>	<b>39.34</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T-3</b>
<b>Yancey</b>	<b>2,530</b>	<b>52.92</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T-3</b>
<b>Ashe</b>	<b>3,264</b>	<b>52.30</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T-7</b>
<b>Mount Airy</b>	<b>1,709</b>	<b>50.79</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T-7</b>
<b>Elkin</b>	<b>1,208</b>	<b>32.62</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Carteret</b>	<b>8,104</b>	<b>37.72</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>10</b>
Alleghany	1,560	62.50	C+	B+	B	B-	2.83	B	T-11
Richmond	8,036	65.64	A	B+	A	F	2.83	B	T-11
Camden	1,864	25.80	C	C+	A-	B	2.75	B	T-13
Catawba	17,332	38.58	B-	B	C	B+	2.75	B	T-13
Martin	4,133	62.45	A	C	A	D	2.75	B	T-13
McDowell	6,434	57.15	C	B	A	C	2.75	B	T-13
Surry	8,621	53.65	A	B	D	B	2.75	B	T-13
Rutherford	9,915	56.45	A	A-	C	D	2.68	B-	18
Yadkin	6,137	45.76	C+	B+	B-	C+	2.65	B-	19
Asheville	3,730	47.61	C	C	B	B	2.50	C+	T-20
Beaufort	6,265	68.44	A	C	B	D	2.50	C+	T-20
Burke	14,055	47.61	C+	B	C	B-	2.50	C+	T-20
Cleveland	16,760	50.05	A	C	D	B	2.50	C+	T-20
Graham	1,202	51.41	C	C	A	C	2.50	C+	T-20
Macon	4,239	66.64	B-	B	C+	C	2.50	C+	T-20
Stokes	7,228	37.34	B	C	C	B	2.50	C+	T-20
Union	34,254	30.74	B	C-	C	B+	2.50	C+	T-20
Watauga	4,486	31.99	B	A	F	B	2.50	C+	T-20
Alexander	5,650	40.85	C	A	C-	C	2.43	C+	T-29
Buncombe	25,418	38.37	C	B-	C	B	2.43	C+	T-29
Chapel Hill/Carrboro	11,060	21.67	F	C	A-	A	2.43	C+	T-29
Davie	6,523	36.64	C	C	B	B-	2.43	C+	T-29
Mooresville	5,228	31.66	B	C	C	B-	2.43	C+	T-29
Sampson	8,015	68.61	B	B-	C	C	2.43	C+	T-29
Stanly	9,581	45.61	B	A-	D	C	2.43	C+	T-29
Transylvania	3,757	43.60	C	B-	D	A	2.43	C+	T-29
Avery	2,028	61.44	D	B+	B	C	2.33	C+	T-37
Hertford	3,371	72.20	B	D+	A	D	2.33	C+	T-37
Iredell-Statesville	20,792	37.06	B	C	C	C+	2.33	C+	T-37
Wayne	19,214	59.76	B	C+	B	D	2.33	C+	T-37
Davidson	20,427	32.00	C-	B	C	C+	2.25	C	T-41
Haywood	7,785	41.81	B	C	D	B	2.25	C	T-41
Madison	2,610	51.26	C	B	C	C	2.25	C	T-41
Moore	12,190	41.46	B-	C+	D	B	2.25	C	T-41
Wake	127,460	33.73	C	C	D+	A-	2.25	C	T-41
Washington	2,053	80.22	D	C+	A	C-	2.25	C	T-41
Cabarrus	25,521	33.85	C	C	C	B-	2.18	C	T-47
Caldwell	13,010	43.41	C	A-	D	C	2.18	C	T-47
Columbus	6,933	67.27	C	C	A-	D	2.18	C	T-47
Duplin	8,833	69.39	B	D	B	C-	2.18	C	T-47
Mitchell	2,192	53.70	B-	A	F	C	2.18	C	T-47
Rockingham	14,179	49.14	C	B	C	C-	2.18	C	T-47
Whiteville	2,547	64.19	C-	C	A	D	2.18	C	T-47
Wilkes	9,972	56.61	C	C	C	B-	2.18	C	T-47

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Needy %</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Gaston	31,677	50.46	C	C+	B	D+	2.15	C	T-55
Henderson	12,792	43.00	C	C	C+	C+	2.15	C	T-55
Caswell	3,248	55.82	C	C+	C	C	2.08	C	T-57
Harnett	17,912	52.28	C	C+	B	D	2.08	C	T-57
Pender	7,667	53.87	D+	C-	B	C+	2.08	C	T-57
Randolph	18,689	42.88	C+	C	C	C	2.08	C	T-57
Currituck	4,044	24.53	D-	C	B-	B-	2.03	C	61
Bladen	4,821	78.93	C	C+	B-	D	2.00	C	T-62
Chatham	7,574	43.99	C	C	C	C	2.00	C	T-62
Craven	14,538	51.59	C	C	C	C	2.00	C	T-62
Cumberland	52,346	56.42	B	C	D	C	2.00	C	T-62
Gates	2,031	46.68	F	A	C	C	2.00	C	T-62
Newton/Conover	2,902	54.10	A	D	D	C	2.00	C	T-62
Clinton	3,148	64.45	D	B-	C	C	1.93	C	T-68
Jones	1,270	76.54	C	D	B-	C	1.93	C	T-68
Person	5,633	50.72	D	C	B-	C	1.93	C	T-68
Lexington	3,064	85.67	C+	D	B+	D	1.90	C	T-71
Nash–Rocky Mount	17,904	57.19	C+	C	C	D+	1.90	C	T-71
Jackson	3,633	48.72	B-	D-	C	C	1.85	C	T-73
Montgomery	4,460	67.49	D-	B	C	C-	1.85	C	T-73
Kannapolis	4,780	65.02	C+	C	D	C	1.83	C	T-75
Onslow	22,787	42.34	D	D	B	C+	1.83	C	T-75
Swain	1,801	54.41	D	D+	B	C	1.83	C	T-75
Asheboro	4,415	57.76	C	D	C	C	1.75	C	T-78
Guilford	69,677	49.74	C	D	C	C	1.75	C	T-78
Rowan-Salisbury	20,700	48.02	C	C	C	D	1.75	C	T-78
Johnston	28,984	38.96	C	F	C-	B	1.68	C-	T-81
Pitt	22,217	54.09	B-	C+	F	C-	1.68	C-	T-81
Roanoke Rapids	2,925	45.13	C-	B	D-	D	1.60	C-	83
Forsyth	50,206	47.40	B	D	D	D+	1.58	D+	T-84
Hyde	638	64.42	F	C+	C	C	1.58	D+	T-84
New Hanover	23,781	43.38	D	D+	C	C	1.58	D+	T-84
Scotland	6,733	70.83	D	C	C	D+	1.58	D+	T-84
Alamance-Burlington	22,202	45.95	D	D	C	C	1.50	D+	T-88
Brunswick	10,230	59.76	D	C	D-	C+	1.50	D+	T-88
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	127,639	47.65	C	F	C	C	1.50	D+	T-88
Edenton/Chowan	2,493	54.83	D	D	C	C	1.50	D+	T-88
Franklin	8,187	51.85	C	C	F	C	1.50	D+	T-88
Orange	6,782	32.60	D	D	F	A	1.50	D+	T-88
Weldon	1,009	88.31	A	F	D	D	1.50	D+	T-88
Wilson	12,376	62.67	C+	D+	D	D+	1.48	D+	95
Lenoir	9,648	60.39	C	D-	D+	C-	1.43	D+	T-96
Pamlico	1,510	52.58	D	C-	F	B	1.43	D+	T-96
Greene	3,249	72.85	C	D+	C+	F	1.40	D+	98
Hickory	4,465	55.39	C	F	D	C+	1.33	D+	99
Granville	8,756	48.24	D	D	C	D	1.25	D	T-100
Lee	9,258	55.96	D	D	D	C	1.25	D	T-100
Robeson	23,730	80.57	C	C	D	F	1.25	D	T-100
Tyrrell	597	68.68	D	D	F	B	1.25	D	T-100
Bertie	3,098	92.35	F	F	A	F	1.00	D	T-104
Northampton	2,934	83.20	D	C-	F	D+	1.00	D	T-104
Perquimans	1,721	69.32	F	F	C	C	1.00	D	T-104
Halifax	4,736	82.56	B-	D	F	F	0.93	D	107
Anson	4,103	73.80	D-	C-	D	F	0.85	D	108
Hoke	7,146	67.14	F	F	C+	D	0.83	D	T-109
Pasquotank	6,119	57.64	F	D+	C	F	0.83	D	T-109
Durham	31,299	50.56	D	F	D	F	0.50	F	T-111
Thomasville	2,507	66.45	F	F	C	F	0.50	F	T-111
Warren	2,783	75.71	F	D-	F	D	0.43	F	113
Edgecombe	7,385	74.30	F	F	D	F	0.25	F	114
Vance	7,764	77.16	F	F	F	F	0.00	F	115

**Table 2. School Systems with over 35,000 Students**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Wake	127,460	C	C	D+	A-	2.25	C	1
Cumberland	52,346	B	C	D	C	2.00	C	2
Guilford	69,677	C	D	C	C	1.75	C	3
Forsyth	50,206	B	D	D	D+	1.58	D+	4
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	127,639	C	F	C	C	1.50	D+	5

**Table 3. School Districts with 14,101 to 35,000 Students**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Catawba	17,332	B-	B	C	B+	2.75	B	1
Cleveland	16,760	A	C	D	B	2.50	C+	T-2
Union	34,254	B	C-	C	B+	2.50	C+	T-2
Buncombe	25,418	C	B-	C	B	2.43	C+	4
Iredell-Statesville	20,792	B	C	C	C+	2.33	C+	T-5
Wayne	19,214	B	C+	B	D	2.33	C+	T-5
Davidson	20,427	C-	B	C	C+	2.25	C	7
Cabarrus	25,521	C	C	C	B-	2.18	C	T-8
Rockingham	14,179	C	B	C	C-	2.18	C	T-8
Gaston	31,677	C	C+	B	D+	2.15	C	10
Randolph	18,689	C+	C	C	C	2.08	C	T-11
Harnett	17,912	C	C+	B	D	2.08	C	T-11
Craven	14,538	C	C	C	C	2.00	C	13
Nash-Rocky Mount	17,904	C+	C	C	D+	1.90	C	14
Onslow	22,787	D	D	B	C+	1.83	C	15
Rowan-Salisbury	20,700	C	C	C	D	1.75	C	16
Johnston	28,984	C	F	C-	B	1.68	C-	T-17
Pitt	22,217	B-	C+	F	C-	1.68	C-	T-17
New Hanover	23,781	D	D+	C	C	1.58	D+	19
Alamance-Burlington	22,202	D	D	C	C	1.50	D+	20
Robeson	23,730	C	C	D	F	1.25	D	21
Durham	31,299	D	F	D	F	0.50	F	22

**Table 4. School Districts with 7,701 to 14,100 Students**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Lincoln	12,017	A	B-	B	B	3.18	B	1
Carteret	8,104	C	A-	C	A-	2.85	B	2
Richmond	8,036	A	B+	A	F	2.83	B	3
Surry	8,621	A	B	D	B	2.75	B	4
Rutherford	9,915	A	A-	C	D	2.68	B-	5
Burke	14,055	C+	B	C	B-	2.50	C+	6
Chapel Hill/Carrboro	11,060	F	C	A-	A	2.43	C+	T-7
Stanly	9,581	B	A-	D	C	2.43	C+	T-7
Sampson	8,015	B	B-	C	C	2.43	C+	T-7
Moore	12,190	B-	C+	D	B	2.25	C	T-10
Haywood	7,785	B	C	D	B	2.25	C	T-10
Caldwell	13,010	C	A-	D	C	2.18	C	T-12
Wilkes	9,972	C	C	C	B-	2.18	C	T-12
Duplin	8,833	B	D	B	C-	2.18	C	T-12
Henderson	12,792	C	C	C+	C+	2.15	C	15
Brunswick	10,230	D	C	D-	C+	1.50	D+	T-16
Franklin	8,187	C	C	F	C	1.50	D+	T-16
Wilson	12,376	C+	D+	D	D+	1.48	D+	18
Lenoir	9,648	C	D-	D+	C-	1.43	D+	19
Lee	9,258	D	D	D	C	1.25	D	T-20
Granville	8,756	D	D	C	D	1.25	D	T-20
Vance	7,764	F	F	F	F	-	F	22

**Table 5. School Districts with 4,461 to 7,700 Students**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Dare	4,843	C	A-	B	A	3.18	B	1
McDowell	6,434	C	B	A	C	2.75	B	2
Yadkin	6,137	C+	B+	B-	C+	2.65	B-	3
Stokes	7,228	B	C	C	B	2.50	C+	T-4
Beaufort	6,265	A	C	B	D	2.50	C+	T-4
Watauga	4,486	B	A	F	B	2.50	C+	T-4
Davie	6,523	C	C	B	B-	2.43	C+	T-7
Alexander	5,650	C	A	C-	C	2.43	C+	T-7
Mooreville	5,228	B	C	C	B-	2.43	C+	T-7
Columbus	6,933	C	C	A-	D	2.18	C	10
Pender	7,667	D+	C-	B	C+	2.08	C	11
Chatham	7,574	C	C	C	C	2.00	C	T-12
Bladen	4,821	C	C+	B-	D	2.00	C	T-12
Person	5,633	D	C	B-	C	1.93	C	14
Kannapolis	4,780	C+	C	D	C	1.83	C	15
Scotland	6,733	D	C	C	D+	1.58	D+	16
Orange	6,782	D	D	F	A	1.50	D+	17
Hickory	4,465	C	F	D	C+	1.33	D+	18
Halifax	4,736	B-	D	F	F	0.93	D	19
Hoke	7,146	F	F	C+	D	0.83	D	T-20
Pasquotank	6,119	F	D+	C	F	0.83	D	T-20
Edgecombe	7,385	F	F	D	F	0.25	F	22

**Table 6. School Districts with 2,601 to 4,460 Students**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Cherokee	3,613	A	B	A-	B	3.43	B+	1
Ashe	3,264	C	A	C-	A	2.93	B	2
Martin	4,133	A	C	A	D	2.75	B	3
Macon	4,239	B-	B	C+	C	2.50	C+	T-4
Asheville	3,730	C	C	B	B	2.50	C+	T-4
Transylvania	3,757	C	B-	D	A	2.43	C+	6
Hertford	3,371	B	D+	A	D	2.33	C+	7
Madison	2,610	C	B	C	C	2.25	C	8
Caswell	3,248	C	C+	C	C	2.08	C	9
Currituck	4,044	D-	C	B-	B-	2.03	C	10
Newton/Conover	2,902	A	D	D	C	2.00	C	11
Clinton	3,148	D	B-	C	C	1.93	C	12
Lexington	3,064	C+	D	B+	D	1.90	C	13
Montgomery	4,460	D-	B	C	C-	1.85	C	T-14
Jackson	3,633	B-	D-	C	C	1.85	C	T-14
Asheboro	4,415	C	D	C	C	1.75	C	16
Roanoke Rapids	2,925	C-	B	D-	D	1.60	C-	17
Greene	3,249	C	D+	C+	F	1.40	D+	18
Bertie	3,098	F	F	A	F	1.00	D	T-19
Northampton	2,934	D	C-	F	D+	1.00	D	T-19
Anson	4,103	D-	C-	D	F	0.85	D	21
Warren	2,783	F	D-	F	D	0.43	F	22

**Table 7. School Districts with 500 to 2,600 Students**

<i>District/LEA</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Polk	2,399	A	B+	B-	A	3.50	B+	1
Yancey	2,530	B	A	C	A-	3.18	B	T-2
Clay	1,353	B	A	C	A-	3.18	B	T-2
Mount Airy	1,709	B-	B	C	A	2.93	B	4
Elkin	1,208	D+	B+	B	A	2.90	B	5
Alleghany	1,560	C+	B+	B	B-	2.83	B	6
Camden	1,864	C	C+	A-	B	2.75	B	7
Graham	1,202	C	C	A	C	2.50	C+	8
Avery	2,028	D	B+	B	C	2.33	C+	9
Washington	2,053	D	C+	A	C-	2.25	C	10
Whiteville	2,547	C-	C	A	D	2.18	C	T-11
Mitchell	2,192	B-	A	F	C	2.18	C	T-11
Gates	2,031	F	A	C	C	2.00	C	13
Jones	1,270	C	D	B-	C	1.93	C	14
Swain	1,801	D	D+	B	C	1.83	C	15
Hyde	638	F	C+	C	C	1.58	D+	16
Edenton/Chowan	2,493	D	D	C	C	1.50	D+	T-17
Weldon	1,009	A	F	D	D	1.50	D+	T-17
Pamlico	1,510	D	C-	F	B	1.43	D+	19
Tyrrell	597	D	D	F	B	1.25	D	20
Perquimans	1,721	F	F	C	C	1.00	D	21
Thomasville	2,507	F	F	C	F	0.50	F	22

**Table 8. Top Performing Counties (by domain)**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Performance</i>
1	Polk	Yancey	Whiteville	Chapel Hill/Carrboro
2	Cleveland	Clay	Washington	Dare
3	Lincoln	Watauga	Bertie	Ashe
4	Beaufort	Mitchell	Richmond	Mount Airy
5	Martin	Ashe	Graham	Transylvania
6	Cherokee	Alexander	McDowell	Polk
7	Rutherford	Gates	Hertford	Elkin
8	Richmond	Rutherford	Martin	Orange
9	Surry	Stanly	Camden	Carteret
10	Newton/Conover	Carteret	Chapel Hill/Carrboro	Yancey
11	Weldon	Dare	Columbus	Wake
12			Cherokee	Clay



## Appendix 1: Methodology

For the methodology, I adapted Paul Peterson and Frederick Hess’s method for assessing state proficiency standards as given in their “Few States Set World-Class Standards,” *Education Next* 8:3 (Summer 2008), pp. 70-73.

The grades reported here are based on a number of measures provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. I standardized each variable and computed the mean and standard deviation for each school district. I then determined how many standard deviations each district was above or below the average on each variable. I averaged the standard deviations for all variables in the domain and assigned grades distributed so that 10 percent of the school districts would earn As, 20 percent Bs, 40 percent Cs, 20 percent Ds, and 10 percent Fs. School districts that had standard deviations within 0.10 of the lowest or highest next letter grade received a minus or plus sign.

The grade point average (GPA) was calculated by using a standard point scale for each of the letter grades: A (4.0), A- (3.7), B+ (3.3), B (3.0), B- (2.7), C+ (2.3), C (2.0), C- (1.7), D+ (1.3), D (1.0), D- (.70), F (0.0). Each letter grade was assigned a point value and averaged; e.g., Duplin County received grades of B (3.0), D (1.0), C (2.0), and C- (1.7). The average (7.7 points divided by four grades) is 1.93. The scale for the final grade is as follows: A (4.0 – 3.6), B (3.5 – 2.6), C (2.5 – 1.6), D (1.5 – 0.6), and F (0.5 – 0.0). In the example above, Duplin County’s average falls within the C range.

## Appendix 2: An Explanation of Domains and Variables

For the purpose of this study, four domains — four areas that parents care about the most — and eleven variables were selected for analysis.

### 1. ADMINISTRATION

Communication with students and parents	From the 2008 Teacher Working Conditions survey. Percentage of teachers who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents.
Bureaucracy	Total number of consultants, clerical staff, and “other” professionals as a percentage of total staff for the 2006-07 school year.

### 2. TEACHERS

Returning teachers	Number of teachers who taught in the school district in 2005-06 as a percentage of the total number of teachers for the 2006-07 school year.
Turnover	Percentage of teachers who left their teaching positions during the 2006-07 school year.
Vacancies	Number of vacant positions on October 20, 2007 as a percentage of the total number of teachers for the 2006-07 school year.

### 3. SAFETY

School crime and violence	Acts of school crime and violence (per 1,000 students) during the 2006-07 school year.
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### 4. PERFORMANCE

End-of-grade reading score	Average (composite) scale score for students in grades 3–8 who took North Carolina’s 2006-07 end-of-grade reading test.
End-of-grade math score	Average (composite) scale score for students in grades 3–8 who took North Carolina’s 2006-07 end-of-grade math test.
Four-year graduation rate	Percentage of students who started ninth grade during the 2002-03 school year and graduated during the 2006-07 school year.
Adequately Yearly Progress targets met	Percentage of student subgroups under the No Child Left Behind law who met proficiency requirements on 2006-07 state tests.
SAT score	Grand total 2006-07 SAT score, including math, reading, and writing sections.

The administration domain included results from a 2008 Teacher Working Conditions survey question on administrative communication with students and parents. The more teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that the administration does a good job communicating with students and parents, the better the school system did on this measure. Also included in this domain was the number of extraneous personnel, including consultants and clerical staff, as a percentage of the total number of faculty and staff in the district. This measure is important because larger school bureaucracies make it more difficult for parents to solve problems and assist in their child's learning process.

The teacher domain included measures related to the stability of the teacher workforce. School systems that maintain few teaching vacancies, prevent turnover, and specifically ensure that teachers return to the school system score higher than those with volatile teaching staffs. While this measure does not assess the quality of teachers in the school system (the performance measure does that), it does provide one measure of the relative stability of the educational environment provided by the schools within the state's school systems.

Clearly, parents demand a school system that strives to maintain a safe and secure learning environment. The safety domain includes the number of violent acts per 1,000 students during the 2006-07 school year.

Finally, parents want their school system to provide their children an adequate education. The performance domain includes SAT scores, student performance on state reading and math tests, and the percentage of students who enter ninth grade and graduate four years later. AYP targets met, which represent the performance of student subgroups (ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, etc.) on state tests, were also included.

Data sources include the following:

- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:** *Statistical Profile 2007; 2006–2007 Selected Financial Data; Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, 2008; Annual Report on Dropout Events and Rates, 2006–2007; Teacher Vacancy Report, Fall 2007; Annual Report on the Reasons Teachers Leave the Profession, 2006–2007; and The North Carolina 2007 SAT Report.*
- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Internet Resources:** *Graduation Rates (2003-04 Entering 9th Graders Graduating in 2006-07 or Earlier); ABCs AYP Results, 2006–2007; ABCs Testing Results; Full-Time Personnel (by LEAs, years, race, gender and Assignment Categories); and 2006–2007 Free and Reduced Priced Lunch.*
- **North Carolina Office of the Governor, Internet Resources:** *Teacher Working Conditions Initiative, 2008; and NC School Report Cards.*