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North Carolina Shows Gains in Education Outcomes, Policy

High School Graduation Rate Outpaced the Nation

Atlanta, Georgia — July 12, 2016 — North Carolina continues to improve public education by several key measures, according to a new report from the Southern Regional Education Board.

[**Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace**](#) reports on recent growth on outcomes and policy activity in the SREB region. The reports show the 16-state SREB region leading the nation on early childhood education access and quality, narrowing some achievement gaps between racial and ethnic groups, and surpassing the national average for high school graduation rates. Yet the report's demographic and student achievement data foreshadow the difficult job states face: getting more students college- and career-ready so they can become successful adults and states can meet future workforce needs.

This report focuses on the region's progress — and on determining what it will take to help each state accelerate pace.

Notable outcomes for North Carolina students

- The state-funded pre-K program met all 10 of the National Institute for Early Education Research standards of quality — one of six programs in the nation to do so.
- Fourth-graders *outperformed* the nation in reading and math achievement on NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) at the Proficient level. They *outpaced* the region and nation in gains in reading at the Proficient level.
- Eighth-graders *outperformed* the nation in math achievement on NAEP at the Proficient level.
- North Carolina's high school graduation rate outpaced the nation in growth — and exceeded the national rate.
- The percentage of graduating seniors who took an AP exam while in high school increased at a rate that outpaced the national rate.
- The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshmen who entered public, four-year colleges and universities topped the national and regional rates.

Strong policy in North Carolina

- The state's learning standards are aligned from birth through grade 12.
- The state is one of 10 in the nation — all in the SREB region — that require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs.
- The state has career-academic and readiness standards for career and technical education

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Higher graduation rates are great news for North Carolina and other states, said SREB President Dave Spence. "Far too many of these high school graduates are still unprepared for college-level work, though. States need to renew their focus on closing this readiness gap and hold schools accountable for being sure students have the skills they need."

[North Carolina: Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace](#) details:

- state demographic and income trends
- student achievement from pre-K through postsecondary
- priorities for teacher evaluation and educational technology

SREB monitors progress of its 16 states on the SREB Challenge to Lead Goals for Education adopted by state leaders to help the region lead the nation in educational progress at all levels.

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The Southern Regional Education Board works with 16 member states to improve public education: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Based in Atlanta, SREB was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to help leaders in education and government advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region.

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