



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

Continually Low-Performing Schools:
2001-02 through 2002-03

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Executive Summary

The 2001 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly, in SB 1005, Sec. 29.6(d) (Session Law 2001-424), directed the State Board of Education to conduct an evaluation of the initiatives being implemented in High-Priority and Continually Low-Performing public schools across the state, as specified in SB 1005, Sec. 29.1 (Session Law 2001-424). The specific initiatives to be evaluated are focused on class size reduction and extension of teacher contracts. The overall purpose of the legislation is to study the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving student achievement in these schools.

This report details findings to date with respect to Continually Low-Performing (CLP) schools over the past two years¹. Overall, the number of schools identified as CLP has declined each year, from a high of six in the first year (2001-02) to only one in 2003-04. Although the 2001-02 Cohort of CLPs experienced mixed levels of implementation of the initiatives, as detailed in the December 2002 version of this report, the 2002-03 Cohort of CLPs did achieve the class size reductions called for in the legislation. In general, both cohorts of CLPs have also made significant progress to date on a variety of indicators, including End-of-Course test scores, performance composites, and ABCs status.

While the overall level of student performance remains relatively low in these schools, substantial progress has been made (and continues to be made) in these schools since they have received assistance under the legislative initiatives cited above. Difficulty in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, however, continues to be an issue for CLP schools. While it is difficult to say whether (or which of) the specified initiatives may have “caused” improved student achievement in the CLPs, these schools have clearly made substantial gains in recent years, to the point where there is only one school that even qualifies as a CLP school for 2003-04.

¹ The annual evaluation of the High-Priority schools initiatives is reported in a separate document.

Continually Low-Performing Schools Initiatives

North Carolina G.S. 115C-105.37A defines a Continually Low-Performing school as a school that has

- received State-mandated assistance due to low student achievement, **and**
- has been designated by the State Board of Education as “Low Performing” based on results from the state’s testing and accountability program for at least 2 of 3 consecutive years.

The first cohort of six Continually Low-Performing schools (CLPs) was identified beginning with the 2001-2002 school year. In each year, all identified CLPs to date have all been high schools (Table 1). Two schools – Northampton High School East and Northampton High School West – have been on the list twice. All other schools have been identified for only one year.

Table 1: Cohorts of Continually Low-Performing Schools, 2001-02 through 2003-04.

2001-02	
LEA	School
Halifax	Northwest Halifax High School
Northampton	Northampton High School-East
Northampton	Northampton High School-West
Robeson	Saint Pauls High School
Robeson	South Robeson High School
Warren	Warren County High School
2002-03	
LEA	School
Northampton	Northampton High School-West
Weldon City	Weldon High School
Halifax	Southeast Halifax High School
Hertford	Hertford County High School
2003-04	
LEA	School
Northampton	Northampton High School-East

The Current Operations and Capital Improvements Appropriations Act of 2001 (i.e., 2001-02 Budget Bill passed by the NC General Assembly) authorized additional funding for these CLPs to improve student achievement. Those funds could be used to reduce class size (i.e., ensure that the number of teachers allotted is no less than 1 per 20 students) and/or to extend teacher contracts by five days in 2001-02. For the 2002-2003 school year, funds could be used to extend teacher contracts for a total of 10 days, including five days of additional instruction

with related costs for other than teachers' salaries. There is some flexibility in the ways remaining funds are used. Tutors, instructional resource materials, substitute pay and travel (according to state guidelines) are options for remaining funds.

However, due to the late status of state budget approval for fiscal 2001-02, the six CLPs that year were unable to meet all of the requirements of the initiatives. Therefore, the State allowed the initial cohort of six schools to submit plans to the State Board of Education detailing how those funds would be spent during the 2001-02 school year. Those plans were evaluated and approved by the State Board of Education in 2002.

This report focuses on three specific topics: The extent to which CLPs have been able to reduce class size, a summary of what the schools have been able to accomplish to date based on assistance team feedback, and the available evidence as to whether student achievement has improved for the two cohorts of CLPs since the implementation of the initiatives.

Data collected by NCDPI in 2002-03 indicate that the majority of the CLPs did have student:teacher ratios that were at or below 1:20 in core classes as well as at or below statewide averages. The most recent data available on this issue are detailed in Section I of this report.

Data collected by the voluntary assistance teams assigned to CLPs alludes to some of the continuing challenges to improving instruction in those schools. Although significant progress has been made (e.g. all 4 CLPs in 2002-03 met their ABCs growth targets and therefore are no longer low-performing, etc.), issues related to recruiting and retaining high-quality staff remain problematic in many schools. More detailed information on these topics is contained in Section II of the report.

With respect to student achievement in CLPs, results presented in Section III suggest that they are making good progress overall on various indicators of student achievement. While it is difficult to say whether (or which of) the specified initiatives may have "caused" improved student achievement in CLPs, these schools have clearly made substantial gains in recent years, to the point where there is only one school that even qualifies as a CLP school for 2003-04.

Section I
Student:Teacher Ratio Data for Continually Low-Performing Schools
2002-03 Cohort

**STUDENT/TEACHER RATIOS FOR SPECIFIC HIGH SCHOOL SUBJECTS
SCHOOL YEAR 2002-2003**

LEA CODE	LEA NAME	SCHOOL CODE	SCHOOL NAME	SUBJECT	STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO
420	HALIFAX COUNTY	358	SOUTHEAST HIGH	ENGLISH I	16
420	HALIFAX COUNTY	358	SOUTHEAST HIGH	ALGEBRA I	12
420	HALIFAX COUNTY	358	SOUTHEAST HIGH	BIOLOGY	18
420	HALIFAX COUNTY	358	SOUTHEAST HIGH	ELP	16
420	HALIFAX COUNTY	358	SOUTHEAST HIGH	U S HISTORY	18
660	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	324	NORTHAMPTON HI-WEST	ENGLISH I	20
660	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	324	NORTHAMPTON HI-WEST	ALGEBRA I	10
660	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	324	NORTHAMPTON HI-WEST	BIOLOGY	17
660	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	324	NORTHAMPTON HI-WEST	ELP	14
660	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	324	NORTHAMPTON HI-WEST	U S HISTORY	14
422	WELDON CITY	324	WELDON HIGH	ENGLISH I	17
422	WELDON CITY	324	WELDON HIGH	ALGEBRA I	10
422	WELDON CITY	324	WELDON HIGH	BIOLOGY	17
422	WELDON CITY	324	WELDON HIGH	ELP	10
422	WELDON CITY	324	WELDON HIGH	U S HISTORY	14
460	HERTFORD COUNTY	320	HERTFORD COUNTY HIGH	ENGLISH I	19
460	HERTFORD COUNTY	320	HERTFORD COUNTY HIGH	ALGEBRA I	22
460	HERTFORD COUNTY	320	HERTFORD COUNTY HIGH	BIOLOGY	24
460	HERTFORD COUNTY	320	HERTFORD COUNTY HIGH	ELP	26
460	HERTFORD COUNTY	320	HERTFORD COUNTY HIGH	U S HISTORY	23
State Averages for 2002-03				ENGLISH I	18
				ALGEBRA I	19
				BIOLOGY	20
				ELP	20
				U S HISTORY	19

Section II

Activities in Continually Low-Performing Schools

During the 2002-03 school year, three (3) continually low-performing schools (CLPs) at Level I and one (1) Level II CLP were identified and assigned mandated State assistance teams. Level I schools are those that have been low-performing two (2) consecutive years or two years of the last three (3) years. Level II schools are those that have been low-performing three (3) consecutive years or three of the last four (4) years. Level I schools were Weldon High School, Southeast Halifax High School and Hertford County High School. The Level II school identified was Northampton County High School – West.

In addition to being served full-time by the State assistance teams through the mandated assistance process, the schools received additional funds set aside by the General Assembly to implement additional interventions that would significantly improve student achievement. These interventions may include, but are not limited to, additional days of employment for teachers and reduced class size.

All of the schools in 2002-03 implemented additional days of employment that were used for professional development for teachers. Some professional development sessions were content-specific and others dealt with school-wide issues. The schools did have difficulty reducing class size because the additional staff required were not available. In fact, many classrooms are currently managed by long-term substitutes and/or lateral entry teachers.

Other strategies that were supported by additional funds included stipends for teachers who taught in after-school tutorial programs, transportation for student participants, educational incentives for students, professional development activities, instructional support materials, substitute pay and teacher travel to events such as NCDPI's annual Minority and At-Risk Student Conference.

In addition, the CLPs in 2002-03 were provided services beyond those provided to "regular" low-performing schools. These activities were also supported by the additional funds set aside for CLP schools. Quarterly collaborative meetings were required for school improvement teams, school administrators, central office staff and the State assistance teams. The meetings included professional development sessions, problem-solving activities and leadership building activities. The culminating activity for the CLP schools was a two-day instructional institute held in June 2003. Staffs from the CLP schools, central offices and assistance teams were required to attend. The institute focused on brain biology, how students learn, and how the curriculum can be layered to differentiate for individual student needs. Time was also provided for networking, reflecting on the past year and preparing for the upcoming year.

The one CLP Level II school (Northampton West) participated in all of the above activities. In addition, an external review team visited the school on two separate occasions. The committee, composed of LEA educators and DPI staff, reviewed all facets of the school's organization and operation as well as all content areas. The external committee also examined

the work of the school's mandated assistance team. The team then wrote a formal report on their findings and recommendations. The report was shared with the superintendent, the school principal, assistance team, state superintendent and chairman of the State Board of Education. A component of the second visit was to follow up to monitor which of the recommendations from the first report had been fully implemented.

Funding for CLP schools for 2002-03 was as follows:

Southeast Halifax High School.....	\$407,507
Hertford County High School.....	\$615,639
Northampton County High School – West.....	\$238,186
Weldon High School.....	\$224,965

As in 2001-02, each CLP school in 2002-03 was required to submit a budget and have it approved prior to expending any of the CLP funds. Budget amendments also had to be approved by the Division of School Improvement before changes in expenditures could occur.

The State assistance teams were successful in removing all four (4) schools from low-performing status. However, it may prove difficult for these schools to sustain their progress because of the many challenges schools face with recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Teacher turnover, the lack of certified teachers, low expectations for teacher and student performance and a larger percentage of marginal teachers, lateral entry teachers and inexperienced teachers are the major challenges. Many of these same factors were also cited in relation to the 2001-02 CLP cohort in the previous installment of this report².

² This previous report is available online at
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/evaluation/legislative/0211_HSP13_Attach.pdf.

Section III

Achievement Results for Continually Low-Performing Schools 2000-01 to 2002-03

In general, the student achievement changes seen in Continually Low-Performing schools during the first two years of the initiative - 2001-02 and 2002-03 - are generally positive. Average performance composites have increased each year for both cohorts of CLPs (Figure 1), as has the ABCs growth status of CLP schools (Table 2). Mean performance composites of CLP schools, although they remain relatively low, have increased each year for both cohorts. In addition, all CLP schools in each cohort have made either expected or high growth under the ABCs during the year they began the initiatives. One school (Northampton West) received CLP assistance for two years before they made expected growth, and one other (Northampton East) returned to CLP status in 2002-03 one year after making expected growth. All other CLP schools have achieved and maintained expected or high growth status in the years following being designated as a CLP school (Table 2). With respect to the achievement provisions of the newly-implemented No Child Left Behind Act, however, no CLP school from either cohort met the Adequate Yearly Progress standard in 2002-03. In addition to the figures in this section, additional data on the two cohorts of CLP schools to date are available in Appendix A.

Figure 1: Mean Performance Composites for CLPs by Cohort.

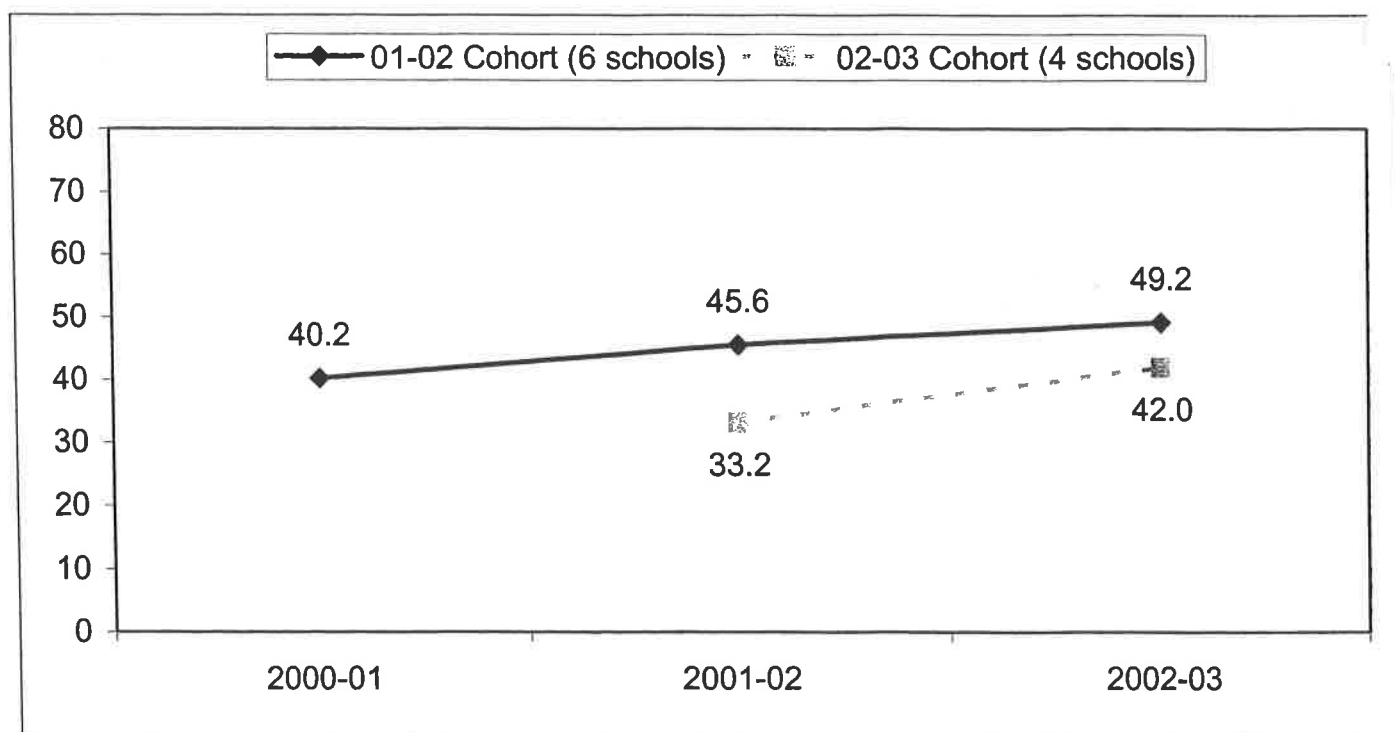


Table 2: ABCs Growth Status of CLPs by Cohort.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
2001-02 Cohort			
Northwest Halifax High School	LP	Expected	Expected
Northampton High School-East	LP	Expected	LP
Northampton High School-West	LP	LP	Expected
Saint Pauls High School	LP	Expected	High
South Robeson High School	LP	Expected	Expected
Warren County High School	LP	High	High
2002-03 Cohort			
Northampton High School-West	---	LP	Expected
Weldon High School	---	LP	High
Southeast Halifax High School	---	LP	Expected
Hertford County High School	---	LP	Expected

Note: LP = Low Performing.

In addition, average percentages of students scoring at or above grade level on selected End-of-Course tests rose as well. For the 2001-02 Cohort of CLPs, gains in average scale scores over the past two years are evident across all five core subject areas examined, with the largest gains seen in English I. In each case, the gains in the CLPs were larger than the corresponding statewide figures (Table 3).

Table 3: Selected End-of-Course Test Results for CLPs, 2001-02 Cohort.

	<u>Average EOC Scale Scores</u>				
	Algebra I	English I	Biology	ELP	US History
2000-01 (<i>year prior to CLP designation</i>)	49.8	48.0	35.0	47.6	28.1
2001-02 (<i>CLP year</i>)	51.2	47.4	48.3	44.3	29.7
2002-03 (<i>1 year post-CLP</i>)	56.8	67.2	40.8	49.1	32.4
Change, 2000-01 to 2002-03					
CLP 2001-02 Cohort	+7.0	+19.2	+5.8	+1.5	+4.3
State of NC	+1.4	+2.3	-0.1	-0.1	+0.9

For the 2002-03 Cohort, one-year gains were seen in Algebra I, English I and Biology, all of which were larger than the corresponding statewide gains between 2001-02 and 2002-03 (Table 4). In U.S. History and Economic, Legal and Political Systems, however, mean changes in scale scores were below or equal to the corresponding statewide changes. As was true for the 2001-02 Cohort, the largest gains for the 2002-03 Cohort were also in English I.

Table 4: Selected End-of-Course Test Results for CLPs, 2002-03 Cohort.

	<u>Average EOC Scale Scores</u>				
	Algebra I	English I	Biology	ELP	US History
2001-02 (<i>year prior to CLP designation</i>)	41.1	41.2	23.7	36.5	22.0
2002-03 (<i>CLP year</i>)	51.1	64.4	27.4	36.5	21.4
Change, 2001-02 to 2002-03					
CLP 2002-03 Cohort	+10.0	+23.2	+3.7	0.0	-0.6
State of NC	0.0	+2.0	-1.2	0.0	+1.0

Summary

For a variety of reasons, it is difficult to determine whether the initiatives in Continually Low-Performing schools may have “caused” higher achievement gains at this point, or which of those initiatives may be having more or less of an impact. The short period of time that has elapsed since implementation, the fact that school-level gains are based on test scores different groups of students from one year to the next, the changing cohorts of CLP schools from year to year, and the inability to control for other possible confounding factors are just some of the reasons. The analyses presented here are at best a descriptive look at achievement in these schools since the beginning of the initiatives. However, these results do suggest that Continually Low-Performing schools are making good progress overall. If these trends continue, it is very possible that there will be no longer be any Continually Low-Performing schools under the definition in the legislation, perhaps as soon as the 2004-05 school year.

Appendix A

Selected End-of-Course Achievement Results and Performance Composites for Continually Low-Performing Schools 2000-01 through 2002-03

Table 1A: Performance Composites and End-of-Course Performance for Continually Low-Performing Schools.

2001-02 Cohort

School	Performance Composite			Algebra I Mean Scale Score			English I Mean Scale Score			ELP Mean Scale Score			Biology Mean Scale Score			US History Mean Scale Score		
	00-01	01-02	02-03	00-01	01-02	02-03	00-01	01-02	02-03	00-01	01-02	02-03	00-01	01-02	02-03	00-01	01-02	02-03
Northwest Halifax High School	35.9	40.9	44.4	35.0	28.9	30.8	46.9	39.4	67.8	54.5	49.8	71.2	40.3	60.0	29.2	10.8	16.7	20.7
Northampton High School-East	45.5	49.8	39.6	71.9	53.2	48.3	52.3	55.2	61.2	56.8	65.2	48.4	35.9	56.5	54.0	26.4	30.2	26.0
Northampton High School-West	41.3	39.9	47.8	39.6	31.3	52.5	53.4	51.3	73.2	60.7	42.4	60.0	28.9	27.1	37.6	40.4	34.9	23.7
Saint Pauls High School	42.3	46.6	56.0	49.4	48.1	43.8	49.4	46.2	67.0	39.8	40.7	34.1	44.8	52.9	50.5	37.3	35.0	54.5
South Robeson High School	34.2	47.3	50.3	50.9	83.5	90.5	34.3	42.0	60.8	34.2	26.4	37.4	27.7	49.6	30.7	19.5	18.9	18.3
Warren County High School	42.0	48.9	56.8	51.9	62.1	74.9	51.8	50.2	73.2	39.5	41.4	43.2	32.1	43.5	42.8	34.1	42.2	51.2
Means	40.2	45.6	49.2	49.8	51.2	56.8	48.0	47.4	67.2	47.6	44.3	49.1	35.0	48.3	40.8	28.1	29.7	32.4

2002-03 Cohort

School	Performance Composite		Algebra I Mean Scale Score		English I Mean Scale Score		ELP Mean Scale Score		Biology Mean Scale Score		US History Mean Scale Score	
	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03
Northampton High School-West	39.9	47.8	31.3	52.5	51.3	73.2	42.4	60.0	27.1	37.6	34.9	23.7
Weldon High School	27.1	37.6	56.2	60.4	28.6	61.0	27.7	18.4	13.5	26.0	<5.0	<5.0
Southeast Halifax High School	29.7	35.7	40.5	49.6	40.7	62.4	25.4	23.7	18.4	13.0	12.2	14.1
Hertford County High School	36.2	46.8	36.5	42.0	44.2	60.9	50.5	43.7	35.8	32.9	18.8	26.5
Means	33.2	42.0	41.1	51.1	41.2	64.4	36.5	36.5	23.7	27.4	22.0	21.4