



1. How does NCEA identify its Higher Performing Schools?

NCEA uses two measures to identify Higher Performing Schools: growth of students at the school and/or absolute achievement of students at the school using the state's assessment data. The measures identify schools serving similar student populations that outperform their peers. Additionally, schools must have academic growth that is greater than expected for three consecutive years to make the NCEA Higher Performing Schools List.

Absolute achievement levels are based on the percentage of students who met the advanced performance level on the Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Examinations (ABE). Where applicable, the Grade 11 Literacy Examination performance data is also included. For a more complete description of the analysis, please visit our Higher Performing Methodology page at www.nc4ea.org.

2. Why does NCEA use the advanced performance level on the ABE?

NCEA and ACT research consistently shows that students who only meet a state's passing/proficient performance level during their K-12 experience do not graduate high school ready for college or careers.* In many states these performance levels are too low to reflect student mastery of skills and concepts. Therefore, NCEA uses the higher advanced performance level to provide a more accurate measure of students' preparedness towards postsecondary opportunities.

*Please see They Can Pass, but Are They College Ready? (http://nc4ea.org/files/dqc_state_ccr-10-09-08.pdf) for more details.

3. Which students were included in the analysis?

Two different measures were used for the analysis: growth and absolute performance. Depending on the measure and the grade span of a school, the following groups of students were used:

- Continuously enrolled students to determine higher performing for Grade 3
- Students enrolled for a full academic year to determine higher performing growth for Grade 4 and up
- Continuously enrolled students to determine higher performing absolute performance for all grades

Continuously enrolled students are defined as those students who have been enrolled in a school for at least three years. If a student's grade level does not allow for three years of continuous enrollment data to be collected (e.g., a 7th grader at a Grade 6 to 8 campus), continuously enrolled students are those who have been enrolled in the district at least three years and at the school as long as the grade span allows. For students enrolled in charter schools, this last requirement changes because charter schools exist as separate districts; student data for previous years in the same district would not be available. Therefore, the requirement for continuous enrollment in the district requirement is dropped. Please see the Higher Performing Methodology page on our website for more details.

4. Why are some schools excluded from the 2010 NCEA Higher Performing Schools List?

There are two main reasons why a school does not appear on the NCEA Higher Performing Schools List:

- **Ineligible Schools**

We use data provided by the Arkansas Department of Education to compile our Higher Performing Schools List. At times, too few students are available to rank a school. In addition, the following categories of schools were not included in the analysis:

- New schools that opened after Fall 2007. The NCEA Higher Performing Schools List is based on schools that are consistently higher performing, and our analysis requires three years of ABE data—2008, 2009, and 2010.
- Schools with no state-tested grades. Since we use state assessment data, we cannot conduct analysis for those grades that are not state-tested. For example, a PreK-2 school would have no tested grades.
- Schools with too few students enrolled for a specified period of time. For more details, please see Question 3 and the Higher Performing Methodology page on our website.

- **Student Performance Levels Did Not Qualify**

If a school is eligible but did not make the 2010 List, then its student performance levels did not meet our requirements as listed below:

- The school's percentile rank in NCEA's performance criteria was not high enough to be included.
- The school's performance was not consistent across the three years included in the analysis.
- The school did not meet state standards as follows:
 1. The school did not make AYP for all tested subjects in the latest year.
 2. The school did not test at least 90 percent of students for the other subjects in the latest year.

5. What makes the NCEA Higher Performing Schools List unique from other high performing lists or state accountability reports?

The NCEA Higher Performing Schools List recognizes a select group of schools identified by using one of two measures (please see Question 1: How does NCEA identify its Higher Performing Schools?).

The specific metrics used by NCEA for its analysis are different from the state's accountability measures.

- **Proficient vs. Growth**

Beyond looking at the proficient grade-level performance measure on the ABE or Grade 11 Literacy Examination, NCEA considers a school's student academic growth based on two criteria:

- Student performance compared to the previous year (for the Grade 11 Literacy analysis we use the Grade 8 Literacy Examination).
- Above-typical growth for what is expected for the student and school demographic group.

Thus, the analysis takes into account the range of performance and improvement of students who are performing well above or below the proficient level.

- **Higher Standard of Achievement**

The percentage of students reaching the advanced performance level on the ABE is used rather than the state's proficient performance level.

- **More than Snapshot Performance**

The NCEA Higher Performing Schools List is based on three years of school performance data—2008, 2009, and 2010 school years. State ratings are typically based on a single year of data.