



## Natchitoches Parish School Board

### Frequently Asked Questions Regarding District Accountability

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Superintendent Dr. Derwood Duke and the Natchitoches Parish School Board would like to extend thanks to the faculty, staff, administration, parents, and school community for their dedication to the children of Natchitoches Parish. School Performance Scores were released this week, and Natchitoches Parish students showed significant growth in achievement. The district has grown 10.6 points bringing them from an 83.9 to a 94.5, and this could not have happened without hard work and dedication in the schools as well as support provided by parents and community members. Our schools are the heart of our community, and we are so very pleased to have made such enormous gains this year. The increases represent more than just numbers. They solidify the notion that more of our students can read, write, and utilize problem-solving skills proficiently, and this is the most rewarding facet related to our test scores. We believe in the children of Natchitoches Parish, and our teachers are working harder than ever to face the challenges of the new programs and initiatives being placed on them. This is evident in the fact that thirteen out of fifteen of the schools in the district showed marked improvement this year, and four schools (Magnet, Lakeview High School, Natchitoches Central High School, and NSU Middle Lab) were awarded highest honors for their growth by the Louisiana Department of Education this school year. To the faculty and staff, we say thank you for the work you have done, and we believe the best is yet to come. To the parents and the school community, we say we appreciate the support you have shown for our administrators and teachers. No one person or entity can take credit for the gains made this year. Rather, the extreme progress that has been made is a direct result of all of us working together for a common goal-to improve the quality of education for our children. We look forward to working closely with all of you again this school year, and we are confident that we as a community will once again reap the benefits of supporting our schools and our children.

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding District Accountability

- **How much did the district gain this year?** 10.6 index points from an 83.9 to a 94.5 (a D to a C).
- **How does the state determine how much growth a school makes?** It looks at how many more children are proficient (mostly). It also factors in attendance, graduation rates, dropout rates, and etc., but the bulk of the scores come from how well students are performing.
- **What is the difference between a “Growth SPS” and a “Transitional Baseline”, and which one counts?** The one year growth differs from the SPS baseline scores in that it is only what a school or district did in one year. It is the growth a school made for that one particular year. The SPS score is calculated by averaging the year before with the current year. As far as which one counts, they both do. A school is rewarded for gains made in one year, but the actual SPS score is the two-year transitional average score. That will change after this year. Schools will receive only scores they made for one year.
- **How did the schools get the label of “Top Gains”?**The schools that made “Top Gains” got that label because they met their growth targets this year.
- **I noticed there were schools who gained more points than some of the schools who received Top Gains. How does this happen?** Growth targets for higher performing schools are lower because they are already achieving proficiency or higher ratings, and have more difficulty finding areas in need of growth. The state requires low performing schools to gain at least 10 points to be considered “Top Gains” because they have much farther to grow. We had two lower- performing schools that barely missed getting that label-L.P. Vaughn missed it by .2 points (they gained 9.8 and needed 10). Cloutierville missed it by 1.6 points (They gained 8.4 points and needed 10).
- **How was the district able to gain so many points this year?** Growth began in the summer when schools and district leaders looked at data from the previous testing year. They looked at programs and strategies for targeting weaknesses, and realized no one program would produce exactly what was needed. Therefore, they began creating schedules and providing professional development that outlined each school’s Action Plan. The teachers then began implementing the Action Plan and strategies as well as tracking students to determine whether or not they were progressing. If students didn’t, they were placed in recovery programs where teachers worked with them to help gain those skills.
- **What is involved in the recovery process?** Providing recovery time requires a great deal of a teachers because they have to, in essence, create several sets of strategic and individualized lesson plans for the different levels of students in her class during recovery times and have a system in place to determine whether students are mastering the skills.
- **When does this occur?** Skill Recovery in most schools is time that has been added to a teacher’s schedule that allows her to provide additional instruction for those students who are not showing mastery of their Grade-Level Expectations outlined by the LDOE. For example, most schools have added an additional math block (Students get two hours of math, instead of the 60 minutes required by Bulletin 741). There is also an additional 30-90 minutes of intensive reading instruction, depending on the students’ needs, provided in the schedule for students who need to go back and regain crucial skills that were missed.
- **What do students who do not need recovery or RTI do during those times?** The teacher creates “enrichment” activities for those students that require them to utilize much more complex, problem-solving skills related to grade-level expectations they have already mastered. In other words, they “bump up the rigor” in the tasks that the students are required to master during those additional minutes.