

Schools & Schooling in North Carolina:

A Snapshot Look at Where Education Has Been And Where It Is Today

Prepared for the “The Citizen Leader
In Education” Conferences.



2002-03

Educational Milestones

In 1789 North Carolina Became the 1st State to Fund Its Public University, Chapel Hill.

In 1825 North Carolina Began Funding Public Education.



In 1840 the first public school was established in Rockingham County.

In 1901 the General Assembly established an appropriation of \$100,000 per year earmarked for education.

In 1907 the General Assembly established rural high schools.

Educational Milestones

For decades the school year was 4 months.

In 1919 it was lengthened to 6 months.

In 1933 it became 8 months.

In 1943 it became 9 months and compulsory attendance moved from age 14 to 16.



In 1912 all children between the ages of 8 and 12 were required to attend schools four months of the year.

Educational Milestones

In the Depth of the Depression North Carolina Made a Decision that Shaped Schools to Today



Confronted with schools closing their doors, the state assumed the primary funding responsibility for schools.

Educational Milestones

The state assumed responsibility for:

Salaries/fringes for teachers & administrators;

Instructional equipment and supplies;

Essentially all instructional program costs.

Counties were given responsibility for facilities.



In the face of traditional wisdom, the state enacted a sales tax to fund education.

Educational Milestones

In 1955 the U.S. Supreme Court Ordered School Integration...

...Ending decades of separate & not-necessarily equal schooling...



...Forcing black and white schools to consolidate into one.

While Integration Caused Deep Divisions in Some Southern States, North Carolina Navigated the Transition With Relative Ease

Educational Milestones

From the Sixties Until Today There Has Been A Steady Movement Toward Countywide School Consolidation

- In 1961 there were 173 School Systems
- Some Counties Had as Many as 6 Separate School Systems.



In 2002-03 there are
117 School Systems

All Major Urban Areas
are Consolidated

Educational Milestones

Remaining City Systems Include Communities Like



Asheville

Chapel Hill

Lexington

Roanoke Rapids

Weldon City

Educational Milestones

In the Early '80's Education in North Carolina (and around the nation) Become an Economic Issue

"Nation at Risk" in 1983

Governor Hunt's *Commission on Education & the Economy* in 1984

Since then Politicians of All Parties, Business Leaders, And Others Have Viewed Education as the Key for A Competitive Economy in the Future

The Impact of NAFTA, Shifts in the State's Employment Base & Growing Demands for Highly Skilled Workers Have Reinforced that Belief



Educational Milestones

The Movement for Testing & Accountability Began in 1989 And Remains the Driving Force in Education in 2002-03

The *Educational Excellence & Accountability Act Of 1989* Introduced Statewide Curriculum Standards, Statewide Testing Programs & Annual Performance Report Cards



In 1995-96, Today's ABCs Program Introduced Consequences and Rewards for Good & Bad Student Performance

It Is Not an Exaggeration to Look at North Carolina Education Having Two Major Phases . . .

Pre-Testing & Accountability
(i.e., before 1989)

And Post-Testing & Accountability
(1989 to today)



The Pre-Testing Era . . .

For the Majority of North Carolinians Education Was Not a Necessary Ticket for Jobs, Albeit Low-Paying Jobs (manufacturing, farms)

The State and the Southeast Was At, or Near, the Bottom On Educational Measures



Drop Out Rates Were High

In the '80's NC Was Last on SAT Scores

Schools Largely Performed a “Sorting” Function – Those that Would Go to College & Those that Would Not

The Post-Testing Era . . .

Schools Are Held Accountable for Performance of All Students

The Pressure is On to Succeed With Students Who Have Historically Not Succeeded in Schools



The State Is Receiving National Recognition for Progress

What Has Happened Since the Post-Testing Era Began?

In 1991, Only 51% of All Students Could Perform At or Above Grade Level on Tests of Basic Subjects like Math & Reading

In 2002, 75% are At or Above Grade Level.

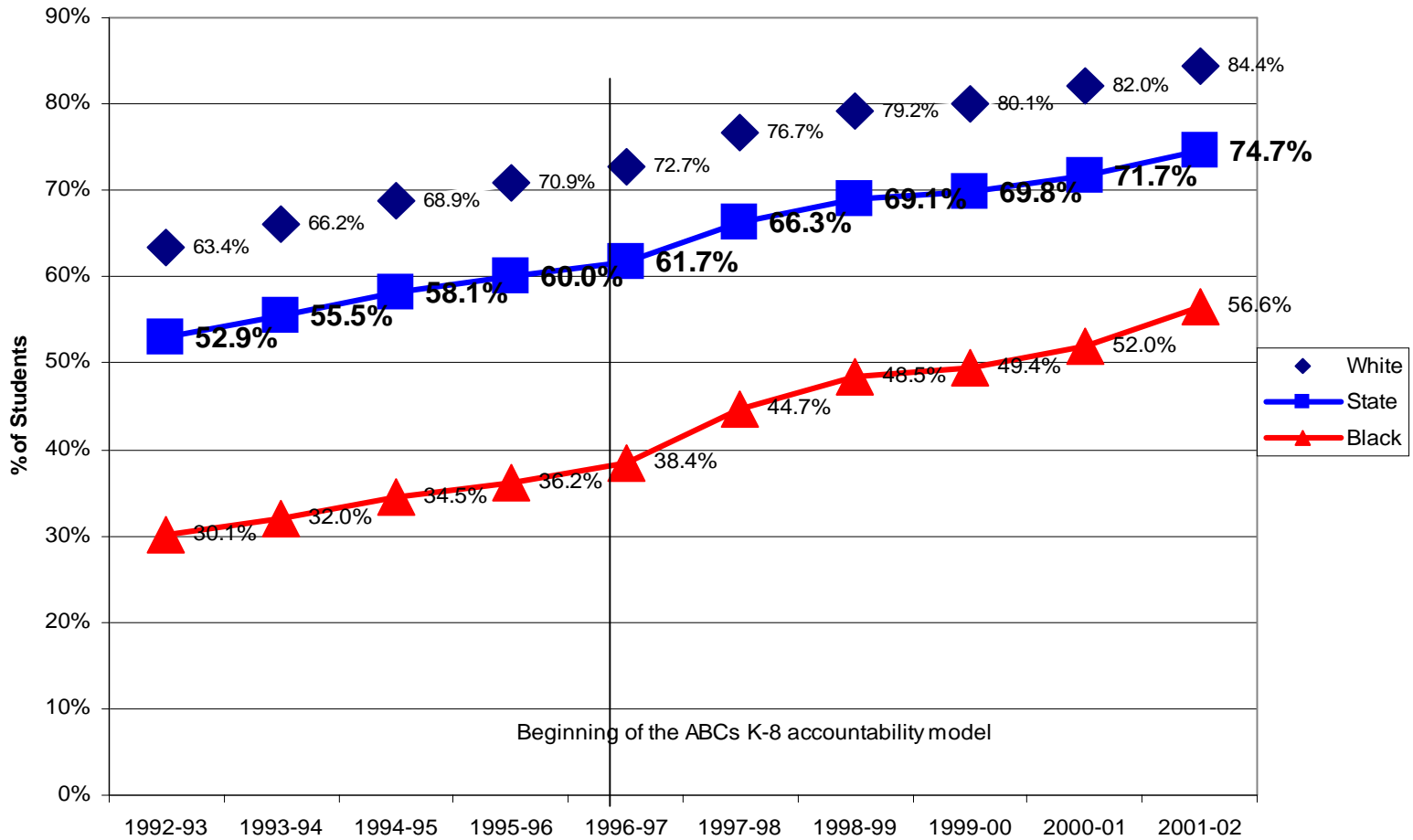
In 1991, Only 31% of Minority Students Were At or Above Grade Level



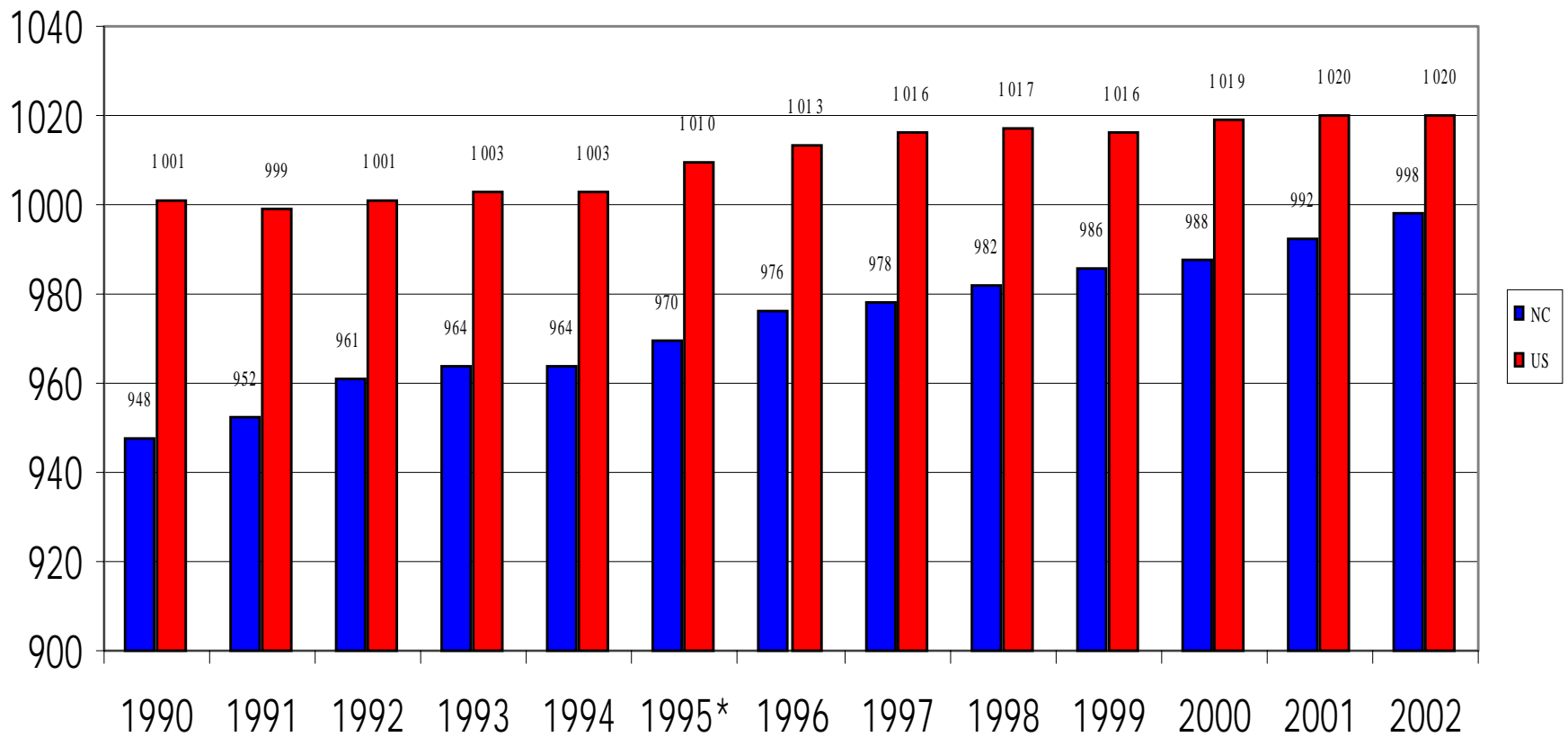
Today, 57% of Minority Students are At or Above

Since the Early '90's, North Carolina Students Have Registered the Nation's Highest Gains on SAT Tests

% of Students Scoring At or Above Grade Level, Grade 3-8



Comparison of US & NC SAT Scores



Other Things Have Changed As Well . . .

Education in North Carolina Is Big Business

\$8.4 billion a year is spent on K-12 schools.



1.32 million students.

117 School Systems that average
10,000 + students.

Two Systems with over 100,000
students each.

Nearly 84,000 teachers –
163,000 total employees.

And . . .

In most counties schools are one of the, or THE, largest employer

They typically run the largest transportation system



They are the largest provider of meals

They run the largest recreation program

A Key Question for Our Discussion Today Is . . .

“Who Runs Schools In North Carolina?”



School Governance

The Office of the Governor

(bully pulpit & budget proposals)

State Board of Education

(budget recommendations; responsible for rules and regulations, curriculum & testing)

General Assembly

(power of purse strings & frequently pass educational policies)

Local Boards of Education

(hire superintendent, propose local education budgets, determine attendance lines, can initiate major changes like year-round schooling or magnet schools or after school programs, determine resource allocations to schools, set local personnel policies, establish goals for system)

County Commissioners

(power of purse strings; approve/deny school board budget requests; set bond referendums, rarely, but can weigh in on instructional/policy issues)

While NC Is Centralized, Local Decision Makers Shape the Nature of Schools & Schooling

They set expectations.

They advocate for programs over and above state minimums.

They determine whether schools “push the envelope,” innovate or are essentially school business as usual.



They determine how much emphasis non-tested programs will have (arts, music drama, extra-curriculum, workforce preparation, etc.).

They shape recruiting & retention programs.

Local Decision Makers...

...determine attendance boundaries.

...set school calendars

...promote (or not) school building programs
and, as a result, school size



...are responsive to
parent/student/community
concerns

While All School Systems Must Follow State Curriculum Guidelines and Be Accountable for State Tests, Local Leaders, and the Caliber of Staff they Hire, Make the Difference. They can:

Set the tone for the district

Make school more than test-taking drudgery

Strategically use local resources, getting them where they are most needed and getting them where they can make the biggest difference



But It's Not an Easy Job