

MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Improvements in an area's economic and community development are closely tied to the educational outcomes of its secondary school system, as has been repeatedly confirmed by academic research. How successful are our secondary schools in preparing our youth for their roles in adulthood?

New information on the performance of our K-12 educational system is now available. The Achievement Level Index (ALI) is a newly-developed measure quantifying, for purposes of comparison, the outcomes of schools and school districts. Another new development is a refined set of estimates of school districts graduation, completion, and dropout rates.

In 2003, the Department initiated a new student assessment program and a new school level accountability system based on achievement and growth. Under the new system, achievement levels are assigned on the basis of student test scores, while performance levels take into account graduation, completion and dropout rates, among other variables.¹

Achievement Level Index

A school's achievement level index (ACI) is based on the scores of students on tests gauging performance in language, mathematics and reading. Test scores are used to calculate a Basic Achievement Index and a Higher Achievement Index. These two indexes are combined in an overall Achievement Level Index (ALI), a three-digit number ranging from 100 to 600. This in turn is used for assessing achievement by district. Table 1 relates District Achievement Level to ALI values obtained through averaging school ALIs. Level 1 is "Low-Performing" and Level 5 is "Superior-Performing".

School Performance Classification

School dropout and graduation rates, as well as changes over time in student achievement levels, are important factors that need to be taken into account when assessing the performance of our educational system, in addition to achievement as measured by the ALI index (Table 1). The District Performance Classification system fulfills this function. Each school is assigned a School Performance Classification, consisting of a value from 1 through 5; school performance throughout a district is then aggregated to determine the District Performance Classification.

A school's performance classification takes into account completion rates for students by entering class year and gains in student test scores, as well as achievement level. For example, a school with a level 3 achievement level (ALI) could be classified as having a level 4 performance if it had a low dropout rate and the improvement in student scores exceeded expectations set by the Department of Education.

Table 2 is a compilation of selected statistics for each Mississippi school district; schools within each Performance Classification are shown sorted alphabetically. District Performance Level 1 is "Low-Performing" and Level 5 is "Superior-Performing". The table (columns 6 and 7) shows that Mississippi has 11 Level 5 school districts, but 19 Level 2 school districts.

Column 3 presents district educational expenditures per pupil 2005/2006 school year (based on average daily attendance or ADA), which range from a low of \$5,787 in North Pike district to \$19,261 in Bay St. Louis-Waveland. Column 4 gives dropout rate estimates. Mississippi had a dropout rate of 26.6% in the 2004/2005 for the cohort that entered school in fall of 2001 -- this estimate is from the first four-year report of the Mississippi State Department of Education that presents student information based on tracking cohorts.²

Table 1. **SCHOOL DISTRICT ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL BASED ON ACHIEVEMENT INDEXES**

Level 1 District	Low-Performing	Average ALI = Value between 100 and 199
Level 2 District	Under-Performing	Average ALI = Value between 200 and 319
Level 3 District	Successful	Average ALI = Value between 320 and 449
Level 4 District	Exemplary	Average ALI = Value between 450 and 519
Level 5 District	Superior-Performing	Average ALI = Value between 520 and 600

SOURCE: Mississippi Department of Education, *Achievement Level Index*, October 2006. See text.

Mississippi has a higher proportion of high school dropouts than other states, and lower graduation rates as well. Ideally, each person that enters the first grade of school would graduate twelve years later with a high school diploma. Unfortunately, the U.S. as a whole has low school graduation rates and high dropout rates, with some states performing more poorly than others.

The accompanying map shows the relative achievement levels of schools by county, which provides another indication of where efforts to improve our educational system are most needed. [To obtain the county achievement level index, the ALI of each school district within a county was weighted by the student enrollment in that district to calculate the county's ALI.]

While little is known about the relationship between Mississippi's school district level ratings compared to other states or national ratings, it is clear that we must strive to increase the number of districts ranked as Superior-Performing (Level 5) or Exemplary (Level 4), while reducing the number of Level 2 (Under-Performing) districts.

References

For more information about the ALI index, school and district performance, graduation, completion and dropout calculations, see documents posted at the website of the Mississippi Assessment and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS) located here: <http://orsap.mde.k12.ms.us:8080/MAARS/index.jsp>

Notes

1. Mississippi first implemented a performance-based accreditation system in 1986. In 1996, in addition to providing measures of accreditation for each district, the Department of Education also assigned an index number to each district, based solely on student performance.

2. Mississippi Department of Education, 4-Year Final Report for Cohort SY0102G09. Once a cohort number is established at the school, district and state level, dropout and other data collected through the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) is then available for use by school leaders, policy makers, economic developers and others. [The dropout rate based on cohort data is not a measure of graduation rate rates, since, for example, a student may complete four years of high school without graduating. Different measures exist for graduation rates. Independent estimates of the 2004 Mississippi high school graduation rates range from 62.7% (computed using the averaged freshman graduation rate for the 2004 graduating class)³ to 58% (computed using the cumulative promotion index for the graduating class of 2004⁴ – that is, 58% represents the percentage of students entering in fall of 2001 who graduated in spring of 2005 from that school).

3. U.S. Department of Education procedure for reporting state level graduation rates.

4. Urban Institute, Education Policy Center method.

Table 2. **SELECTED DATA ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

School District	Calculated District Enrollment	All Funds Expenditures Functions 1000-3999 Divided by ADA	4-yr. Dropout Rate Estimate for School Years 2001/2002 to 2004/2005	District Average ALI Value	Number of Schools in District	District Performance Classification
LEVEL 5						
Biloxi Public	5244	\$12,802.82	17.8	525	10	LEVEL 5
Booneville	1443	\$6,641.11	6.5	529	2	LEVEL 5
Enterprise	873	\$7,101.56	3.6	522	3	LEVEL 5
Kosciusko	1771	\$6,978.90	8.1	524	4	LEVEL 5
Long Beach	2742	\$9,971.63	23.2	532	5	LEVEL 5
New Albany	2109	\$7,659.72	15.9	527	3	LEVEL 5
Ocean Springs	4737	\$7,744.98	13.3	522	6	LEVEL 5
Pass Christian	931	\$13,730.73	5.7	539	3	LEVEL 5
Petal	2908	\$7,615.26	26.5	532	3	LEVEL 5
Pontotoc City	1802	\$6,740.24	15.1	524	3	LEVEL 5
Water Valley	1352	\$7,544.94	32	524	2	LEVEL 5
LEVEL 4						
Amory	1423	\$6,976.59	28.4	489	3	LEVEL 4
Bay St. Louis-						
Waveland	1441	\$19,260.62	24.3	474	5	LEVEL 4
Claiborne County	1969	\$7,632.25	8	495	3	LEVEL 4
Clinton Public	4197	\$6,589.54	23.9	508	6	LEVEL 4
Columbia	1919	\$8,076.26	4.3	459	4	LEVEL 4
Corinth	1546	\$7,951.23	23.5	517	4	LEVEL 4
DeSoto County	26348	\$6,264.17	12.5	489	25	LEVEL 4
Forrest County						
Agricultural	602	\$8,963.30	30.3	507	1	LEVEL 4
Grenada	4765	\$7,071.67	35.7	467	4	LEVEL 4
Gulfport	4326	\$11,336.26	22.2	458	10	LEVEL 4
Hancock County	4180	\$9,279.43	24.9	462	6	LEVEL 4
Harrison County	12113	\$8,796.62	28.4	474	17	LEVEL 4
Hinds County	5444	\$6,535.63	20.5	462	8	LEVEL 4
Jackson County	7195	\$7,954.76	32	518	11	LEVEL 4
Jones County	8031	\$7,421.25	25.1	485	11	LEVEL 4
Lafayette County	2375	\$8,345.00	16	459	3	LEVEL 4
Lamar County	7517	\$7,363.48	19.4	497	10	LEVEL 4
Lauderdale Count	6626	\$7,471.99	26.1	476	9	LEVEL 4
Leland	1125	\$8,659.25	22.5	472	3	LEVEL 4
Lincoln County	3017	\$6,177.85	23.6	469	4	LEVEL 4
Lumberton Public	824	\$7,769.99	28.2	450	2	LEVEL 4
Madison County	9201	\$7,267.44	15	472	14	LEVEL 4
Nettleton	1394	\$7,273.60	20.6	471	3	LEVEL 4
Newton County	1893	\$7,815.10	23.4	506	2	LEVEL 4
North Pike	2001	\$5,786.87	29.7	481	3	LEVEL 4
North Tippah	1345	\$7,426.78	14.6	485	4	LEVEL 4
Oxford	2620	\$8,013.87	18.8	490	4	LEVEL 4

(Level 4 Continued)

School District	Calculated District Enrollment	All Funds Expenditures Functions 1000-3999 Divided by ADA	4-yr. Dropout Rate Estimate for School Years 2001/2002 to 2004/2005	District Average ALI Value	Number of Schools in District	District Performance Classification
Pascagoula	6704	\$10,196.58	29.6	462	16	LEVEL 4
Pearl Public	3207	\$7,332.49	30.6	468	4	LEVEL 4
Pearl River County	2304	\$6,731.08	26.9	460	3	LEVEL 4
Pontotoc County	3219	\$6,706.04	5.9	512	6	LEVEL 4
Poplarville Separate	1551	\$8,229.11	20.5	481	3	LEVEL 4
Prentiss County	2219	\$8,089.55	11.4	475	6	LEVEL 4
Rankin County	15097	\$7,199.87	17.3	471	21	LEVEL 4
Richton	722	\$7,925.61	32.9	507	2	LEVEL 4
Senatobia	1864	\$6,358.71	12.7	508	3	LEVEL 4
South Tippah	2818	\$6,972.24	21.6	464	5	LEVEL 4
Tishomingo Co.	3315	\$7,354.72	13.8	500	6	LEVEL 4
Tupelo Public	7129	\$8,622.94	27.9	493	12	LEVEL 4
Union County	2720	\$6,898.54	8.7	505	4	LEVEL 4
Union Public	895	\$6,831.32	23.4	517	1	LEVEL 4
Webster County	1874	\$7,569.04	20.5	464	4	LEVEL 4
Winona Separate	1392	\$7,973.42	19.3	460	2	LEVEL 4
Tishomingo Co.	1392	\$7,973.42	19.3	460	2	LEVEL 4
Tupelo Public	2304	\$6,731.08	26.9	460	3	LEVEL 4
Union County	2375	\$8,345.00	16	459	3	LEVEL 4
Union Public	1919	\$8,076.26	4.3	459	4	LEVEL 4
Webster County	4326	\$11,336.26	22.2	458	10	LEVEL 4
Winona Separate	824	\$7,769.99	28.2	450	2	LEVEL 4
LEVEL 3						
Aberdeen	1375	\$9,162.03	32.5	354	5	LEVEL 3
Alcorn	3815	\$8,024.34	18.6	409	10	LEVEL 3
Attala County	1369	\$8,398.18	17	370	4	LEVEL 3
Baldwyn	951	\$7,732.58	25.6	443	3	LEVEL 3
Benton County	1346	\$8,195.94	22.2	389	3	LEVEL 3
Brookhaven	2297	\$7,691.28	16.6	418	4	LEVEL 3
Calhoun County	2618	\$7,656.98	17.8	395	7	LEVEL 3
Carroll County	1035	\$8,709.50	31.1	347	3	LEVEL 3
Chickasaw	525	\$8,337.27	11.1	379	1	LEVEL 3
Choctaw County	1763	\$8,714.47	31.4	418	4	LEVEL 3
Clarksdale	3610	\$7,024.64	20.1	332	9	LEVEL 3
Cleveland	3657	\$8,236.53	24.3	434	10	LEVEL 3
Coahoma County	1820	\$8,370.71	37.1	341	5	LEVEL 3
Columbus	4967	\$8,252.76	26.3	362	10	LEVEL 3
Copiah County	3038	\$6,829.51	28.8	384	4	LEVEL 3
Covington	3398	\$7,623.24	12.8	387	6	LEVEL 3
Drew	652	\$9,319.64	24.7	327	3	LEVEL 3
Durant	623	\$7,457.66	18.8	366	1	LEVEL 3
East Jasper	1228	\$8,836.77	4.5	321	2	LEVEL 3
Forest Municipal	1609	\$7,397.99	40.5	383	3	LEVEL 3

(Level 3 Continued)

School District	Calculated District Enrollment	All Funds Expenditures Functions 1000-3999 Divided by ADA	4-yr. Dropout Rate Estimate for School Years 2001/2002 to 2004/2005	District Average ALI Value	Number of Schools in District	District Performance Classification
Forrest County	2488	\$8,044.54	27.7	446	6	LEVEL 3
Franklin County	1163	\$8,944.40	12.1	375	3	LEVEL 3
George County	4184	\$7,411.57	32.1	435	8	LEVEL 3
Greene County	2034	\$7,798.27	26.3	444	5	LEVEL 3
Greenville Public	7288	\$8,190.64	25.2	390	14	LEVEL 3
Greenwood	3152	\$8,795.90	35.2	380	6	LEVEL 3
Hattiesburg	4676	\$9,680.09	30	371	9	LEVEL 3
Hinds County	241	\$14,185.61	43.9	365	1	LEVEL 3
Hollandale	902	\$11,004.75	41.9	343	3	LEVEL 3
Houston	1388	\$7,146.43	40.6	432	3	LEVEL 3
Indianola	2238	\$7,672.82	33.3	320	5	LEVEL 3
Itawamba County	3779	\$6,773.38	34.8	445	6	LEVEL 3
Jackson Public	32115	\$8,632.90	32.4	372	55	LEVEL 3
Kemper County	1357	\$8,483.52	26.4	375	3	LEVEL 3
Laurel	3099	\$9,172.52	25.6	355	6	LEVEL 3
Lawrence County	2396	\$8,302.81	21.2	441	5	LEVEL 3
Leake County	3325	\$7,469.76	34.3	404	7	LEVEL 3
Lee County	5452	\$7,393.01	26.5	416	10	LEVEL 3
Leflore County	3053	\$7,968.88	36.6	371	7	LEVEL 3
Louisville	2908	\$8,178.31	44.9	384	6	LEVEL 3
Lowndes County	5448	\$7,000.29	24	409	9	LEVEL 3
Marion County	2556	\$7,873.77	19	359	7	LEVEL 3
Marshall County	3473	\$6,641.69	34.2	337	7	LEVEL 3
McComb	2263	\$9,160.12	30.3	342	4	LEVEL 3
Meridian Public	6730	\$8,855.80	36.4	376	12	LEVEL 3
Monroe County	2494	\$7,593.19	21.9	412	4	LEVEL 3
Montgomery	497	\$10,461.03	48	392	2	LEVEL 3
Moss Point	3257	\$11,164.77	38	394	8	LEVEL 3
Mound Bayou	696	\$8,713.25	21.7	363	2	LEVEL 3
Natchez-Adams	3621	\$8,544.28	32.4	331	4	LEVEL 3
Neshoba County	3097	\$6,678.70	29.4	428	3	LEVEL 3
Newton Municipal	1081	\$8,922.38	39.8	395	3	LEVEL 3
North Bolivar	810	\$11,558.50	33	358	3	LEVEL 3
Noxubee County	2172	\$9,122.08	34.4	382	5	LEVEL 3
Oktibbeha	833	\$12,990.55	32.7	332	4	LEVEL 3
Perry County	1411	\$8,796.80	7.6	429	4	LEVEL 3
Philadelphia	1103	\$8,995.33	25.6	377	3	LEVEL 3
Picayune	3436	\$8,281.20	30.6	402	6	LEVEL 3
Quitman	1788	\$7,937.19	25.7	379	3	LEVEL 3
Scott County	3909	\$6,748.96	29.7	418	7	LEVEL 3
Shaw	697	\$9,294.75	16.2	350	2	LEVEL 3
Simpson County	4253	\$7,325.35	21.9	377	7	LEVEL 3
Smith County	3149	\$7,256.59	22.5	416	4	LEVEL 3
South Panola	4025	\$7,420.19	18.8	404	5	LEVEL 3
South Pike	2052	\$8,590.81	39.1	405	5	LEVEL 3
Starkville	3009	\$8,917.53	36.1	371	5	LEVEL 3

(Level 3 Continued)

School District	Calculated District Enrollment	All Funds Expenditures Functions 1000-3999 Divided by ADA	4-yr. Dropout Rate Estimate for School Years 2001/2002 to 2004/2005	District Average ALI Value	Number of Schools in District	District Performance Classification
Stone County	2748	\$8,730.40	14.8	424	4	LEVEL 3
Sunflower County	1855	\$7,809.39	34.5	350	7	LEVEL 3
Tate County	2847	\$6,949.67	26.6	356	5	LEVEL 3
Tunica County	2323	\$10,509.45	31.7	337	5	LEVEL 3
Vicksburg-	9204	\$7,857.96	37.9	392	13	LEVEL 3
Walthall County	2310	\$7,222.89	15.3	375	5	LEVEL 3
Wayne County	3899	\$7,531.29	29.9	449	6	LEVEL 3
West Jasper	1717	\$7,967.33	31	400	4	LEVEL 3
West Point	2612	\$6,967.65	41.8	374	4	LEVEL 3
Western Line	2073	\$7,593.55	32.1	391	4	LEVEL 3
Wilkinson County	1589	\$8,193.95	31.4	371	4	LEVEL 3
Yazoo County	1875	\$8,553.73	29.3	411	4	LEVEL 3

Level 2

Amite County	1500	\$8,089.70	43	280	3	LEVEL 2
Benoit	311	\$13,036.55	17.4	266	1	LEVEL 2
Canton Public	2727	\$7,891.77	61.7	285	3	LEVEL 2
Coahoma	305	\$9,825.26	45.6	282	1	LEVEL 2
Coffeeville	679	\$9,640.90	31.3	309	2	LEVEL 2
East Tallahatchie	1566	\$7,870.72	31.7	284	3	LEVEL 2
Hazlehurst City	1805	\$7,330.29	34.1	304	3	LEVEL 2
Holly Springs	1329	\$8,466.22	29.9	267	2	LEVEL 2
Holmes County	3479	\$7,449.21	22	285	6	LEVEL 2
Humphreys County	1845	\$8,440.81	27	317	4	LEVEL 2
Jefferson County	1480	\$8,692.25	18.5	276	3	LEVEL 2
Jefferson Davis	2135	\$8,802.51	29	309	4	LEVEL 2
North Panola	1850	\$8,283.84	38.8	258	5	LEVEL 2
Okolona	820	\$8,977.78	45.1	288	2	LEVEL 2
Quitman County	1549	\$8,588.99	26.1	243	3	LEVEL 2
South Delta	1315	\$9,379.12	39.8	277	3	LEVEL 2
West Bolivar	1056	\$8,639.38	30.8	308	3	LEVEL 2
Tallahatchie	1034	\$10,039.51	22.3	257	2	LEVEL 2
Yazoo City	2314	\$7,441.48	38.2	296	3	LEVEL 2
MISSISSIPPI	469506	\$7,996.15	26.6	410	53	

ADA = average daily attendance.

SOURCE: Mississippi Department of Education, May 2007.