

## State Report Cards: More Than Just Test Scores

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that states annually publish education information about schools and districts in the form of a report card. A common misconception is that these report cards only include information on test scores and how well students are performing on statewide academic assessments.

The truth is that there is much more to state report cards than just test scores. While academic achievement information is included on report cards, the information made available on these report cards allow you to gain deep insights into a school's educational experience that goes far beyond test scores.

The list below outlines information that is required on state report cards. There are a definition of terms on the back of this page.

School environment	Teacher qualifications
High school graduation rates	Advanced coursework <sup>1</sup>
Per-student spending	College enrollment rates <sup>2</sup>
Preschool enrollment <sup>3</sup>	School Improvement
Assessments for students with disabilities	Assessment Participation Rates
Student achievement data	English language proficiency of English language learners
Student growth	

As you can see, state report cards contain much more information than just test scores. With access to this information, you have the tools to see where your child's school is doing well and where it may need assistance. You can use this data to celebrate achievements and advocate for improvements to ensure that your child has the best and most supportive learning environment possible. States can, and often do, include more information than what is just required to meet the needs of families in their state.

To learn more about state report cards and how to use them as a tool to advocate for improvements, check out our ESSA webpage at [PTA.org/ESSA](https://pta.org/ESSA).

<sup>1</sup> Advanced coursework data is only included in high school report cards.

<sup>2</sup> College enrollment rates are only included in high school report cards.

<sup>3</sup> Preschool enrollment data is only included in early childhood school report cards.



## Definitions of Terms<sup>4</sup>

**School environment** – information about the school’s atmosphere. States can measure this differently, but it may include disciplinary information, chronic absenteeism and attendance rates and student, teacher or parent satisfaction surveys.

**Teacher qualifications** – information on the experience of teachers including the percentage of teachers who are inexperienced, are not fully certified or are not teaching in the subject where they were certified.

**High school graduation rates** – the number and percentage of students who graduated from high school. The graduation rate may be reported for 4, 5 and even 6 years.

**Advanced coursework** – the number and percentage of students enrolled in advanced coursework.

**Per-student spending** – the amount of money that is spent broken down by each student. This includes money spent on instruction, building and personnel costs. This is also commonly referred to as per-pupil expenditures.

**College enrollment rates** – the number of students who enroll in a public or private post-secondary institution such as a college or trade school.

**Preschool enrollment** – the number of students enrolled in preschool programs.

**School improvement** – information on schools targeted to receive school improvement funds including the names of schools and districts receiving funds, the amount of funds received, and the types of improvement strategies implemented in each school.

**Assessments for students with disabilities** - the number and percentage of students by grade and subject who are assessed using an alternate state assessment specifically designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

**Assessment participation rates** – the percentage of students that participated in the state test.

**Student Achievement Data** – the number and percentage of students who met or exceeded the expectations on the state test in a particular subject.

**English language proficiency of English language learners** – the number and percentage of students that are learning the English language and have met the expectations for reading, writing and speaking English as measured by the state’s English language assessment.

**Student growth** - measures how much students have improved from the last school year based on their own individual performance. Each state has a different way of calculating and defining student growth or progress. To learn more about student growth measures, check out: [Parents Deserve Clear Information about Student Growth in Schools](#) – a resource from National PTA and Data Quality Campaign (DQC).

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<sup>4</sup> These definitions are adapted from pages 53-56 of the U.S. Department of Education’s non-regulatory informational document [Opportunities and Responsibilities for State and Local Report Cards Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act](#).

