

# Ohio's schools climb to 5th best in nation

## Broad assessment bestows B-minus

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BY CATHERINE CANDISKY

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Here's something you haven't heard before.

Ohio's public-school system is ranked fifth best in the nation.

That's right. We are No. 5.

Ohio earned its highest rating ever on the well-regarded and closely watched report cards issued each year since 1997 by *Education Week* newspaper.

"When I saw the results, it was one of those moments when you could scream alone in the car," said state Superintendent Deborah L. Delisle.

She credited the efforts of students and educators across the state and an intense focus on improving academic performance.

Despite a challenging economy, she said, "People are working really hard -- educators, students -- and Ohio's focused work on improving student learning is working."

Ohio, which received a grade of B-minus, continued its climb from sixth place last year and seventh the year before.

The national average among the 50 states and District of Columbia was a C.

For the second year in a row Maryland ranked No. 1 and was the only state to receive a B-plus. The District of Columbia ranked last with a D-plus.

The analysis is conducted by the nonprofit Editorial Projects in Education Research Center of Bethesda, Md., which publishes *Education Week*.



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**Gahanna second-grader Trevor Hansen, center, calculates a math question in his head while taking the second-grade achievement test at Jefferson Elementary on Tuesday.**

The 2010 rankings are based on six broad categories -- including student achievement, school funding and curriculum standards -- and more than 150 indicators such as graduation rates, teacher licensure requirements and family income.

Education spending in Ohio, the subject of years-long debate, received mixed results. The state ranked sixth in the nation for the percentage of taxable resources spent on education but 33rd for funding uniformity among districts.

Ohio received its highest mark -- third in the nation -- for grade-by-grade guidelines on what students should know, tests to measure performance, and policies for improving schools.

The state ranked 10th for policies to link primary and secondary schools with early learning, college and work. Ohio was recognized for giving high-school students the opportunity to earn college credits and, beginning with the Class of 2014, Ohio will be one of only three states with college-prep requirements for a high-school diploma.

Ohio topped the national average with 45 percent of fourth-graders and 36 percent of eighth-graders scoring at proficiency or above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress last year.

However, the Buckeye State fell below the average for the percentage of students attending schools where algebra is taught by eighth grade or with math teachers who have more than 10 years of experience. Students in high-poverty schools are even less likely to have experienced math teachers, the report found.

Ohio, like every other state, also continues to have a significant poverty-based gap in math achievement, meaning that poor students score lower on national math assessments than children from more well-to-do families.

Ohio ranked 25th for a student's chances for success, and the dismal state economy may be partly to blame.

The state fell below the national average in several categories making up this score, including percentage of adults with two- or four-year post-secondary degrees, annual income of adults, and percentage working full-time, year-round jobs.

"We don't have direct control over that. But we have to remain committed to working to lift the education level of all students in the state, and long-term, hopefully, that will have an impact on a lot of

## The best and worst

Ohio's education system is fifth best in the nation, the state's highest ranking ever in an annual report card issued today by *Education Week*. Ohio has moved up a slot in each of the last two years.

### HIGHEST

#### Rank, state

1. Maryland
2. New York
3. Massachusetts
4. Virginia
5. Ohio

### LOWEST

#### Rank, state

47. Mississippi
48. South Dakota
49. Nebraska
50. Nevada
51. District of Columbia

Source: *Education Week's* Quality Counts 2010

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## How Ohio scored

In its annual report on the nation's schools, *Education Week* grades and ranks states and the District of Columbia on six criteria. How Ohio compares with the national average (in parentheses):

CATEGORY	GRADE	SCORE	STATE RANK
<b>Chances for success</b>	C (C+)	79.3 (78)	25
<small>Includes parent education levels, preschool enrollment, high-school graduation rate, adult employment rate.</small>			
<b>Standards, assessments and accountability</b>	A (B)	97.2 (84.2)	3
<small>Examines tests used to measure student performance, how well they are aligned to curriculum standards, and incentives, assistance and sanctions used to hold schools accountable.</small>			
<b>Teaching</b>	C+ (C)	78.8 (73.3)	14
<small>Includes requirements for initial license, how teachers are evaluated, and salaries and incentives.</small>			
<b>School finance</b>	C+ (C)	77.4 (75.5)	18
<small>Evaluates how much is spent on education and how funding is distributed among students.</small>			
<b>Transitions and alignment</b>	B- (C)	82.1 (75.2)	10
<small>Measures efforts to connect K-12 system with early learning, higher education and work force.</small>			
<b>K-12 achievement</b>	C- (D+)	72.4 (69.4)	14
<small>Examines student performance in math and reading, poverty-based achievement gaps and high-school graduation rate.</small>			
<b>Overall</b>	B- (C)	81.2 (75.9)	5

Source: *Education Week's* Quality Counts 2010

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those factors," Delisle said.

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