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Serving Anson County and the Municipalities of Ansonville, Lilesville, McFarlan, Morven, Peachland, Polkton and Wadesboro.

Anson County's Unemployment Rate Dropped to 6.3% in December

Anson County's unemployment rate for December was 6.3 percent. In November the rate was 6.6 percent. Statewide the unemployment rate for December was 5.2 percent.

Anson's total labor force in December was 10,355. Of that number 9,700 were employed and 655 were unemployed. In November the total labor force was 10,527, with 9,834 employed and 693 unemployed.

If you look closely at the numbers you will see that in December, compared to November, Anson County had 172 less people on the total workforce, 134 less employed, and 38 less unemployed. The lower 6.3% unemployment rate is accurate, but in actuality Anson County had 134 less employed citizens in December than in November.

In December 2013 the unemployment rate in Anson County was 7.7%. In December 2012 it was 11.8%, in December 2011 it was 12.1%, and in December 2010 it was 12.4%.

Unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in 56 of North Carolina's counties in December, increased in 28, and remained unchanged in 16.

Graham County had the highest unemployment rate at 12.3 percent while Chatham County had the lowest at 3.8 percent. Eleven of the state's metro areas experienced rate decreases while three remained unchanged. Among the Metro areas, Rocky Mount at 7.7 percent experienced the highest rate and Asheville at 4.0 percent had the lowest. The December not seasonally adjusted statewide rate was 5.2 percent.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates decreased in 99 counties and remained unchanged in one. All 14 metro areas experienced rate decreases over the year.

The number of workers employed statewide (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in December by 56,196 to 4,321,765, while those unemployed decreased 9,022 to 238,904. Since December 2013, the number of workers employed statewide increased 5,942, while those unemployed decreased 66,923.

Protest of Fracking and Local Coal Ash Dumping is Set for Thursday

Pee Dee W.A.L.L. calls for community veto on fracking and dumping Duke Energy's coal ash in Anson County

In a release from Pee Dee W.A.L.L.: On Thursday, February 12 at 2 p.m. members and supporters of the Pee Dee W.A.L.L. will gather in front of the Anson County Courthouse in uptown Wadesboro for a "Preserve Democracy" action and to call for a community veto power over fracking and Duke Energy's plans dump coal ash at the Waste Connections dump in Polkton. They will also petition local governments for the ability to veto projects that threaten landowner rights and public health.

School Board Meets Monday, Feb. 16

The Anson County School Board will hold its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Monday, February 16 at the Charles Riddle Staff Development Center, located at 320 Camden Road in Wadesboro.

The meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. with a Closed Session immediately following the opening of the meeting. Open Session to the public will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Doris Smith is Recipient of Ada Ford Singleton Award



The third Ada Ford Singleton Award was presented to Mrs. Doris Smith for Inspirational Support to Ada Ford Singleton during her 30 years of service as president of Anson County's NAACP. This award was presented by Rev. Charles Ford, Sr., Chairman of the Ada Ford Singleton Biography Committee, on Sunday, February 1 at First Baptist Church in Wadesboro.

Ford said, "This was the most emotional award I've given out. I could not hold back the tears, because along with giving my mother inspirational support Mrs. Smith, at her own expense, made sure she looked very beautiful in her last months of life. I will always be grateful to her because she didn't have to do it, but did so out of the love in her heart for Mother. May God continue to bless Mrs. Smith, for truly she is a virtuous woman."

Chamber of Commerce and SPCC Present Seminar

Recordkeeping and taxes for your small business

The Anson County Chamber of Commerce and South Piedmont Community College invite you to attend their upcoming seminar on recordkeeping and taxes for your small business. It will take place on Thursday, February 12, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Lockhart-Taylor Center in Room 222.

The guest speaker is a small business owner who is an outstanding, dynamic and passionate speaker on the ins and outs of finance, recordkeeping and taxes for your small business. He will be recording and teaching you what you need to do to get ready to file your taxes, and what information you need to prepare for year end. If you have accounting, taxes and recordkeeping questions, he is the one who can help give you the answers and make sure your books are in order.

Contact Lisa Rolan for any questions at 704-993-2424 or Irolan@spcc.edu.



Peachland-Polkton Elementary School Terrific Kids

Peachland-Polkton Elementary School held its Terrific Kids Celebration for the second 9 weeks on Tuesday, February 3. Pictured are the students who were recognized for this honor.

- From left, front row: Gregory Helms, Dalton Williams, Brody Martin, Destinii Tanner, Lucy Thao, Bryson Buchanan, Victoria Petrill and Billy Thao.
- Second row: Bethany Smith, Jocelyn Parker, Averie Hyatt, Eli Williams, Will Griffin, Zariah Little, Charlie Dennison, Caroline Drake, Hazelynn Her and Makayla Townsend.
- Third row: River Pearson, Payton Buckingham, Kirsten Greene, Ashley Murphy, Andrew Hill, Justin Morton, Chloe Drake, Natalee Griffin, Demarius Hough and Travion Little.
- Forth row: Jourdan Tupper, Jeremiah Hicks, Jayla Sturdivant, Ashley Burgess, Khamoni Robinson, Conner Parker, Davis Wright, Brooklyn Lear, Wesley Hildreth and Eli Campbell.
- Fifth row: Taylor Murphy, Alexis Morgan, Mason Hyatt, Marelle Austin, Cameron Bailey, Adrian Coleman, Trey Nicols, Malatsia McPhatter and Cameron Lockhart. Not Pictured: Elizabeth Jones, Jesus Gomez-Lopez and Elizabeth Preston

North Carolina Public Schools Performance Grades for 2013-14

North Carolina's first School Performance Grades have been released, and 65.4 percent of elementary and middle schools earned a grade of C or better. For high schools, which have additional indicators of career and college readiness included in their grade, 88.8 percent earned a grade of C or higher.

In addition, of the schools with a growth status, 79.5 percent of elementary schools met or exceeded academic growth goals, 73.1 percent of middle schools met or exceeded academic growth goals, and 69.5 percent of high schools met or exceeded academic growth goals. In Anson County, five elementary schools exceeded growth for the 2013-14 school year. The Growth Index scores ranged from 2.34 – 5.04 resulting in the schools earning the maximum 17-18 points each for growth.

State Superintendent June Atkinson said the first round of letter grades illustrated the need for growth to play a role equal to performance. "Growth is the most important indicator of a school's impact on students' learning. I plan to work with legislators this session to see if we can modify the formula so that it provides a letter grade for both student achievement and growth." As the Superintendent of Schools in Anson County Freeman said, "I am very proud of the growth accomplishments the majority of our schools have reached."

This new letter grade system now in place provides an additional method for parents to interpret the test data that has been available since October 2014. State Board of Education Chairman Bill Cobey said, "The State Board will be considering how to assist schools that received a letter grade of D or F. We have requested funding from the General Assembly to support school turnaround efforts and professional development for teachers so that we can continue intervention services for the lowest-performing schools."

As required by state legislation, the School Performance Grades are based 80 percent on the school's achievement score and 20 percent on students' academic growth. However, growth is used in situations in which the growth benefits the overall school results. In that case, a school may choose to use the School Achievement Score only to determine the performance score and grade. All public schools, including charter, receive grades. The academic growth made in the Anson County Schools during the 2013-14 school year is the most appropriate reflection of the hard work and accomplishments achieved by each individual school.

The School Performance Grades, which reflect student performance during the 2013-14 school year, were presented to State Board of Education members during their monthly meeting. Legislation passed during 2013 requires the inclusion of School Performance Grades as part of the North Carolina School Report Cards that also were released today.

Of the state's 2,565 public schools and public charter schools, 2,424 received School Performance Grades. The 141 schools not included in the report may not have any tested grades or may have a transient or very small student population. Typically these schools are K-2 schools, special education schools, alternative schools and hospital schools. Following is the overall distribution of those grades for both public school and public charter schools.

In Anson County, four of our schools or 40%, which aligns with the state, received a Performance Grade of C with all four either "Meeting" or "Exceeding" Growth. Four schools received a grade of D with two of these two schools "Exceeding" Growth. One of these four schools had our system's highest growth index score of 5.04. Two schools received a grade of F, yet one of those schools earned the "Exceeded" Growth status.

In nearby Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools and statewide, nearly one-third of the schools received a D or F.

School Performance Grades are included on the North Carolina School Report Cards (www.ncpublicschools.org/src) under the School Performance Section. Each school's academic performance page includes the school's performance grade and student performance on other key academic measures. K-8 schools also receive a separate letter grade for reading and math performance.

Elementary and middle schools' achievement scores are based only on test scores. These include end-of-grade reading and mathematics tests at the 3-8 grade levels; an end-of-grade science test at grades 5 and 8, and if applicable, end-of-course tests in Math I and Biology. Our elementary and middle school End-of-Grade achievement scores range from 53.3% to 29.5% in the proficient range.

The high school achievement score is based on student performance on Math I, English II and Biology end-of-course tests, and on the percentage of students who score 17 or above on The ACT (UNC System's minimum composite score requirement), the percentage of students who achieve a Silver Certificate or better on the ACT WorkKeys, the percentage of students who successfully complete Math III, and the school's four-year cohort graduation rate. End-of-course achievement scores in the Anson County high schools range from 47.2% to 26.1% proficient. ACT proficient scores range from 62.2% to 27.9%. Our Cohort Graduation Rate has continued to improve with rates from 84.8% to >95% and our Math Course Rigor percentages are all greater than 95%.

For schools receiving an F letter grade, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction will evaluate its district and school transformation resources and identify schools where it may provide district assistance to help those schools improve. The department has nearly 20 years of experience in successfully assisting low-performing schools to build leadership and teaching capacity for improvement.

"One letter grade cannot reflect all of the positive things happening in a school. It's important for parents to talk to a school's principal and teachers and to look at all of the school measures reflected in the North Carolina School Report Cards to determine how their child's school is doing in comparison to others in the district and across the state," Atkinson said. Thus far, Superintendent Freeman is impressed with the newly developed data driven School Improvement Plans being implemented at all Anson County Schools. These plans are designed to ensure improvement in each targeted area.

Although this is the first year of School Performance Grades, North Carolina has had school-based accountability since 1996. The end-of-grade tests have been given to elementary and middle school students since 1993. These scores reflect only the second year of the READY accountability model with its strong focus on career and college readiness and its more rigorous standards.

There are a number of materials available online to help explain the School Performance Grades including a Background Brief and responses to Frequently Asked Questions. These documents can be accessed on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction website – www.ncpublicschools.org – under Highlights.

Overall Performance Grade	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
A	132	5.4%
B	582	24%
C	1,003	41.4%
D	561	23.1%
F	146	5.4%
Total	2,424	100%

* Due to rounding, the percent of schools will not total 100%.