Elementary Wins Drive Decatur City Schools to Repeat Record High Report Card Score



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Decatur City Schools is celebrating an 89 overall score on the 2025–2026 State Report Card, matching its highest-ever district mark set last year.

“The biggest thing that jumped out to me was that it’s an 89 as a district again, and that’s two years in a row,” said Dr. Mark Christopher, Supervisor of Accountability at Decatur City Schools. “Last year was the highest the district had ever had, and we’re repeating that.”

“I am extremely proud of all of our teachers and support staff for their hard work,” said Dr. Michael Douglas, Superintendent of Decatur City Schools.

Elementary Schools Lead the Way

Elementary campuses across the district drove significant gains on this year’s report card, with 6 of the district’s 12 elementary schools earning an “A.”

“Our teachers and principals are working consistently to help all students grow, which is reflected in our Growth and Proficiency categories on the state report card,” said Dr. Wanda Davis, Elementary Curriculum Supervisor.

"The State Report Card gives us a chance to see how our schools are doing, celebrate our successes, and find ways to improve," said Mrs. Michele Gray King, Decatur City Schools Board President.

Leading the district were the magnet programs Benjamin Davis Elementary and Leon Sheffield Elementary, both scoring 99. Leon Sheffield has consistently ranked among the top elementary schools in Alabama, maintaining scores of 95 or higher over the past five report cards.

Austinville Elementary School provided one of the standout success stories of the year, earning a score of 90 ("A"). As a Title 1 school serving a student body with a 73% poverty rate and 50% English Learner (EL) enrollment, Austinville's climb from a score of 77 just two years ago highlights effective instructional leadership and steady progress.

"Austinville Elementary should get a state award...for what they've done, honestly," Dr. Christopher noted. "Their reading and math instruction is just phenomenal."

Other Title 1 elementary campuses also demonstrated strong performance and improvement:

- **Oak Park Elementary posted an 11-point increase in a single year, rising to an 85 ("B").**
- **Frances Nungester Elementary bounced back with an 11-point gain of its own, climbing to an 87 ("B").**
- **Banks-Caddell Elementary reached an 87 ("B"), while Woodmeade Elementary scored an 88 ("B").**

"The commitment to best practices in planning, instruction, collaboration, and implementation is paramount to helping students achieve their academic goals," said Dr. Davis. "We will continue to focus on our district initiatives, such as implementing the Science of Reading components, increasing our reading volume, using best practices in early numeracy, and participating in STEM-related activities. Our goal is to consistently adhere to the best strategies for promoting learning among our students."

Secondary Schools and District Progress

At the secondary level, Austin Junior High School led the middle school tier with an 85 ("B"), marking five consecutive years of earning 100% of its available growth points. Austin Middle posted a 79, Decatur Middle scored a 77, and the high school campuses, Austin High and Decatur High, earned scores of 82 and 76, respectively.

"Educating 'Every Child, Every Day' will always be our focus and our commitment," said Mrs. Anita Clarke, Supervisor of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction.

"As Board President, I am proud of our students, teachers, staff, and our school administration. The report card shows the hard work of our entire school district," said Mrs. King. "While we are pleased, we know there is more work to do."

District leaders emphasized that secondary performance metrics on the state report card represent a specific snapshot, as high school academic achievement scores rely primarily on 11th-grade ACT results. Meanwhile, broader successes—such as expanding Advanced Placement (AP) passage rates, dual-enrollment college credits, and career-technical credentials earned through the Career Academies of Decatur (CAD)—continue to equip students for direct entry into higher education and the workforce.

"We are proud to celebrate a 96% graduation rate and a 95% College and Career Readiness Rate. These achievements reflect the hard work and commitment of our students, educators, administrators, and school community at large. Our goal is for every student to graduate with a purpose and plan for success, whether that be post-secondary or the workforce," said Mrs. Clarke.

Key indicators such as College and Career Readiness (CCR) and Graduation Rates reflect delayed data. For example, the district's 2026 report card graduation metrics reflect the 2025 graduating class, while the Class of 2026 has already achieved an updated graduation rate of 97%, which will be reflected on future report cards.

"While we celebrate this achievement, we recognize that our work is never finished. We remain committed to providing high-quality instruction, creating meaningful learning opportunities, and ensuring that every student has the support and resources needed to succeed," said Dr. Yvette Evans, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction & Personnel. "This grade represents more than a number; it reflects the collective efforts of a school community working together toward academic excellence. We are grateful for everyone who plays a role in making Decatur City Schools a place where students can learn, grow, and thrive. We will continue to build on this success as we strive for even greater accomplishments."

"We will continue focusing on student learning, supporting students who need extra help, and giving teachers the tools they need to help EVERY child succeed," added Mrs. King.

Celebrating a Diverse, Growing System

As one of the most demographically diverse school systems in Alabama, Decatur City Schools continues to show that strong instructional culture, dedicated educators, and targeted student support lead to sustained academic success.

"Our 89 shows that a very diverse community can have a successful public school system," Dr. Christopher said. "Continued growth as you look at our scores—we're not a district on the downside. We want to be an A, and we're going to be one."

The push for excellence remains front and center for district leadership as Decatur City Schools sits right on the threshold of top-tier state distinction.

Superintendent Dr. Michael Douglas emphasized that the system is hovering just fractions of a point away from reaching an overall "A" grade, noting that the numbers behind the report card highlight real, everyday progress in every classroom. "This report card proves that Decatur City Schools is moving in the right direction, and we aren't stopping until we cross that finish line."

"Every year, our district data improves, and we won't be satisfied until all schools and the district are an 'A,'" said Dr. Douglas.

For Decatur City Schools, the message is loud and clear: the record-matching score is a major milestone, but the drive toward district-wide excellence is far from over.