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## Report ranks Pass Christian schools among nation's best

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By Brad Kessie - [bio](#) | [email](#)

PASS CHRISTIAN, MS (WLOX) - Pass Christian educators have always challenged their students to climb as high as they can. Their hard work in the classroom just paid big dividends. Pass Christian is the only star school district in south Mississippi.

"The bar has been raised tremendously," Pass Christian Superintendent Sue Matheson said.

The Mississippi Department of Education just changed the way it grades its schools. Instead of striving to be level five, school systems are now vying for the title of star district. And instead of comparing districts within the state, the new accountability system grades Mississippi schools with classrooms around the nation.

Because Pass Christian earned star district status, the middle school threw a victory party Friday.

"That's a team effort, and everybody's contributing to that," Pass Christian Middle School Principal Joe Nelson said. "It's the one thing that I think is the greatest asset that we have here."

At the other end of the accountability spectrum is Moss Point. It has the only school system along the coast judged to be at risk of failing. In fact, Moss Point's Kreole Elementary is the only south Mississippi school that received a failing grade in the 2009 report.

Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum Janice Thomas sent WLOX News a statement concerning the accountability results. In it, she said, "We are proud of the fact that we had several schools to show growth, but we also understand there is work to be done. With this being the first year for the new accountability model, we now have a base to build upon. We are working toward success to ensure that we continue to graduate empowered world-class citizens."

Here's more from that report. Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Long Beach, and Ocean Springs all received "high performing" marks. Their students tested above the national average.

George County, Gulfport, Hancock County, Harrison County, Jackson County, Pascagoula, Pearl River and Stone County schools got "successful" grades, meaning they're better than most state schools, but not as good as some of the best around the country.

Greene County, Picayune and Poplarville schools all fell in the "academic watch" category, because their test scores didn't show the necessary growth potential.

When state educators released these findings to the media, they emphasized that growth was a critical component to this new grading system, because that's the only way students can improve, and schools can achieve the goals they're after.

"Truly, it's just a lot of hard, hard work," Matheson said.

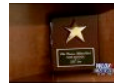
By becoming a star, Pass Christian's students reached the school system's lofty goals. But nobody seems ready to climb down the mountain just yet.

"You know, it's almost like winning the over championship, the

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**MS schools receive accountability ratings**  
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national championship. We're just working hard to go back to the finals and win it again," Nelson said.

To see exactly how your child's school district, and your child's individual school fared in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability review, click on the links below:

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