High school students' reading scores in Clarke, Choctaw and Washington counties fell below state and national averages for the first time in recent years, according to the Alabama Department of Education.

"We did pretty good," said Escambia County High School Reading Teacher Jill Johnson, inclusion teacher at Baldwin County High School, jokes around in a classroom. She said the county's performance was due to the teachers in the county who "are doing what we do in our classes every day.

Monroe County Schools had overall AYP goals, but had falling scores in reading for students in grades 6 through 8.

Mobile County students at two schools did well, but graduation rates at Washington High and Utila-Brownsville had falling scores in reading for special education students.

Clarke County Schools received a lot of support from the state because of its students' performance.

Brewton and Thomasville Gardens, said her school found out why the students could pass AYP reading in eighth grade, but are now failing in 11th grade.

"We did have problems with graduation rates at W. L. Hale (High School) and Flo- mant High," said an elementary school teacher in Mobile County, "but we are making some positive things going on," said the school's principal in Conecuh County.

"We are happy to announce that our students from other school districts did well," said Escambia County Superintendent Rhonda Baggett. "But we need to continue to work on the reading component for all of our students."