



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Annual Report on the Implementation and
Progress of the North Carolina Innovative
School District (ISD)

G.S. 115C-75.6(d)/SB522

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Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee G.S. 115C-75.6(d) – Annual Report on Innovative School District

Pursuant G.S. 115C-75.6(d), by January 15 annually, the State Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction and the ISD Superintendent shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on all aspects of operation of the ISD, including the selection of innovative schools and their progress.

Background

With the intent of improving chronically low-performing elementary schools across the state, the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) enacted legislation in 2016 to establish a new non-geographic school district—the Achievement School District (ASD). In 2017, the NCGA provided additional guidance and renamed the ASD as the North Carolina Innovative School District (ISD). The ISD operates within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) as a separate school district and is managed by a superintendent who works directly with the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education (SBE). More background information may be accessed in the January 2019 JLEOC report.

I-Zones

The ISD is also charged with partnering with districts of innovative schools to develop an innovative zone. The district may operate a group of its low-performing schools via a new management model called an Innovation Zone (I-Zone). The local superintendent and school board are granted increased flexibility by the State Board of Education, upon recommendation of the ISD superintendent, with approval for five years. Flexibility may include options such as extending the school day, altering school calendars, and instituting creative school staffing and compensation models. Matching funds of up to \$150,000 are available, an iZone Executive Director must be hired and all other governance decisions will remain with the LEA.

Operator

After a competitive bid, vetting by an external reviewer, and approval from the State Board of Education, the ISD engaged Achievement for All Children¹ to manage operations at Southside Ashpole Elementary for five years beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. The contract establishes performance metrics that defines expected progress for academic achievement, operations and school support systems.

New ISD Legislation

On November 11, 2019 Senate Bill 522/Session Law 2019-248 passed, modifying the ISD's school identification and selection procedures. In accordance with the new

¹ <http://aac.school/>

legislations, ISD Qualifying Schools have a school performance score that falls within the lowest-performing five percent (5%) of all schools and meet the following criteria:

- Receives funds under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended.
- Is governed by a local board of education subject to this Article
- Is not one of the following types of schools:
 - An alternative school
 - A cooperative innovative high school
 - A school that was in its first or second year of operation in the previous school year
 - A newcomers school (at least ninety percent of students are English language learners and enrolled for no more than one year)

Evaluation and Selection Process

The State Board of Education shall select schools for transfer into the ISD based on an analysis and evaluation of performance of qualifying schools over a three-year period as follows:

- **Qualifying List** - In the first year as an identified school of the Qualifying List, based on the previous year's data, the ISD Superintendent shall notify the superintendent and local board of education (LBE) of that school's status and provide that school's performance data, considerations for improvement, and any additional information deemed necessary by the ISD Superintendent. The LBE must inform parents of the school's status on the Qualifying School List, potential impacts, improvement plans and any other information.
- **Watch List** – If a school on the prior year's Qualifying List remains on the list in the next year, the school shall be placed on the ISD Watch List. By November 15, the ISD Superintendent shall notify the superintendent and local board of education and the local board shall notify parents.
- **Warning List** – If a school on the prior year's Watch List remains on the list in the next year, the school shall be placed on the ISD Warning List. A school shall remain on the ISD warning list until it is either no longer a qualifying school or is transferred into the ISD. By November 15, the ISD Superintendent shall notify the superintendent and local board of education and the local board shall notify parents. The local board shall hold a public hearing and a public presentation to the county commissioners.
- **Selection** – The SBE shall select a school that was on the Warning List in the previous year, and it remains a qualifying school in the current year (based on the five lowest-performing schools as measured by performance scores).

2019-2020 Qualifying List (based on 2018-2019 data)

Per this new legislation, the following 2019 Qualifying List was created:

Region		No. of Schools
1	Northeast	10
2	Southeast	5
3	North Central	21
4	Sandhills	6
5	Piedmont Triad	17
6	Southwest	9
7	Northwest	0
8	Western	1
Total		69

No school will be selected for transfer into the ISD for the 2020-21 school year. The ISD superintendent contacted each of the 2019-2020 Qualifying List school superintendents and school boards by the November 15 deadline. District superintendents must contact parents of students in schools on the Qualifying List must be notified by December 16, 2019. Superintendents will provide a copy of the parent notification letter to the ISD Superintendent.

However, the school on the qualifying list with the lowest 2019-2020 school performance score will become an innovative school and transfer into the ISD on July 1, 2020. This action will be repeated using the 2020-21 school performance scores and will result in the lowest scoring school's transfer into the ISD for the 2021-2022 school year.

2018-19 Southside Ashpole Elementary School Performance Results

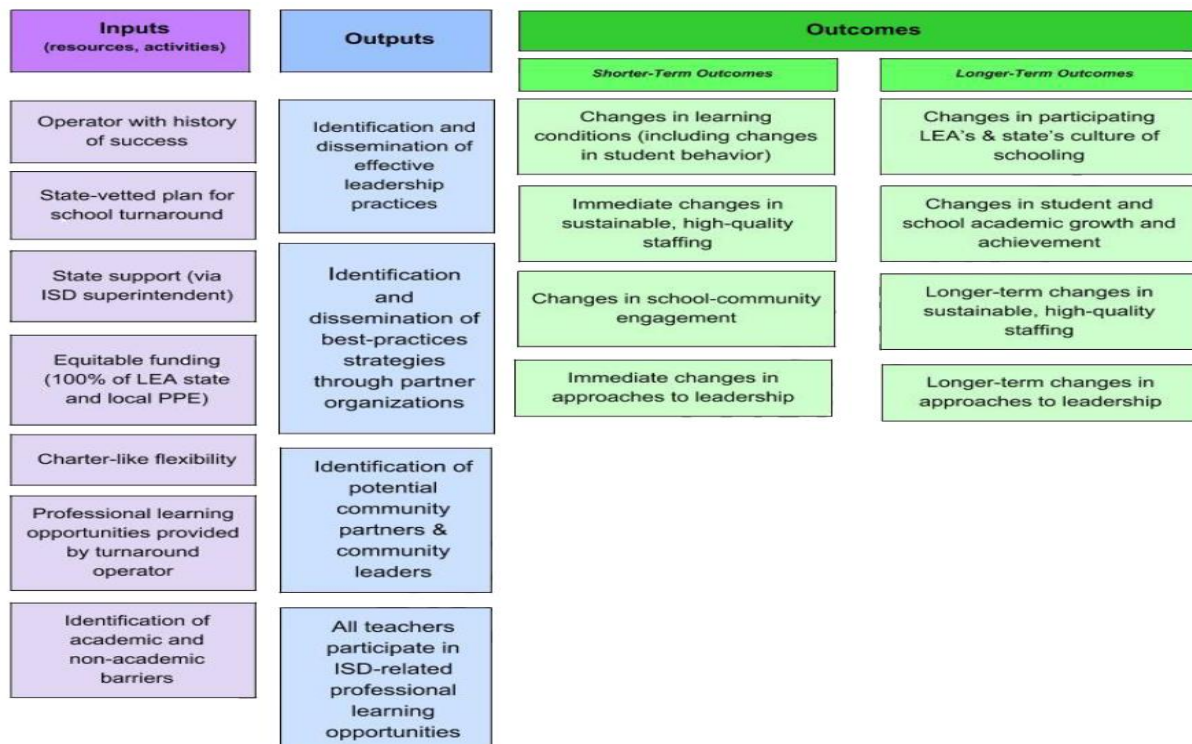
Percent EDS	78.0
School Performance Grade (SPG)	F
School Performance Score (SPS)	30
School Achievement Score (SA)	20.5
School Growth Score (SG)	68.5
School Growth Status	Not Met
School Growth Index	-2.29
Academic Assessments Score (Reading and Mathematics EOG/EOC)	21.5
Science EOG Score	14.3
Reading Letter Grade	F
Reading Overall Score (OS)	30
Reading Achievement Score (AS)	20.6
Reading Growth Score (GS)	67.4
Reading Growth Status	Not Met

Reading Growth Index	-2.52
Mathematics Letter Grade	F
Mathematics Overall Score (OS)	34
Mathematics Achievement Score (AS)	22.4

Evaluation of the Innovative School District

In alignment with the requirements in statute, the State Board of Education entered into a contract with an independent research organization, The William and Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation (Friday Institute), for the development and design of the five-year evaluation of the ISD. In 2018, the Friday Institute and the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), worked with the ISD to establish a research design that will ultimately guide the evaluation process.

The evaluation examined student and school accountability outcomes as well as additional factors that may help to inform future policy and practice. The evaluation design was completed in September 2018. The Logic Model below outlines the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the Friday Institute Evaluation:



The initial evaluation report from the Friday Institute, [Report to the General Assembly: Innovative School District \(ISD\) Evaluation - Early Results from Inaugural School \(2018-19\)](#) was submitted to the State Board in September 2019.

Broader Observations and Recommendations from Friday Institute Report

1. Year 1 results were flat, but SAES laid some groundwork for future growth

To support more rapid, transparent academic turnaround in future schools, the ISD should consider requiring Operators to:

- Pursue bolder, more comprehensive academic changes
- Consider measurements used to determine school success when choosing curricula
- Prepare annual school-level report

2. Successful turnaround takes time

As a result, the ISD should:

- Increase pre-opening planning time for Operators
- Set realistic expectations for early indicators of success

3. Successful turnaround requires cooperation and understanding across leadership entities and the community

To develop both in future schools, the ISD should:

- Establish a clearer, shared understanding of each partner's roles and responsibilities
- Identify partners with credible connections to each ISD school community

ISD Recommendations to the JLEOC

In the 2020 Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) Report and according to SL 2019-248 - SB 522, section 1.(e), the State Superintendent of Education and the ISD Superintendent shall jointly study and report on any recommendations and suggested legislative changes to the JLEOC. Since the Friday Institute could not fully evaluate the Innovative School District due to its inception of only one school, recommendations will be made in upcoming years. This report will highlight options for innovative schools, including structures and partnerships to provide the most effective options and ensure flexibility for those schools. Additionally, this report will address reforms of low-performing school models to align current statutory requirements for low-performing and continually low-performing schools with other State and federal reform efforts to create a comprehensive and efficient approach that avoids redundancies.

2019-20 School Year at Southside Ashpole Elementary

The 2019-20 school year opened with a new school director, new operator administrator and a new ISD superintendent to lead efforts to improve student growth and achievement. A community block party was held to introduce the Rowland community to the new staff, engage families and set a positive tone for the upcoming school year.

Shortly after the start of the 2019-20 school year, the Friday Institute presented their initial evaluation report on the ISD. The findings in the report are being used to help inform the work of the ISD moving forward. It is important to note, however, that when the report was presented to the State Board, the research director made clear that this year one evaluation of implementation in a single school setting does not represent overall evaluation of the ISD initiative. The table below summarizes some of initiatives that are taking place to address some of the challenges identified in the findings.

How the ISD is Addressing Challenges Identified in Friday Institute Report

Then: 2018-19	Now: 2019-20
Comprehensive Academic Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curriculum Alignments to Cover All Standards (Pacing Guides, Evaluations, etc.)• Continuous Improvement Team has been initiated to lead continuous improvement and growth for the school• Academics Team has been initiated to focus on the growth of the comprehensive academic program
Struggling Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New school director• Ten new hires including• Ongoing professional development and coaching for all staff, especially those who need extra support –• Instructional Walk-throughs for coaching support
School-Community Engagement Continues to Grow	<p>The following teams have been initiated to support this growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic Booster Team• Public Relations Team• School Climate/Culture/ Events Team, Parent/Community Advisory Team• Student Advisory Team
Top-Down Leadership Approach/On-going Tension & Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tension has already been diminished with an active, strategic, and servant leader in place• Teams are being initiated to grow leadership school-wide• A continuous improvement plan is being drafted that allows for all to have in-pu t in the new direction of the school with a focus on growth

School Activities To-Date

- August 23 Community Block Party
- August 26 First day of school for students
- August 29 ISD Collaborative with PSRC
- September 20 911 Remembrance Presentation
- September 23 Map Testing - Grades K-5
- September 30 Parent Tea
- October 2 Walk to School Day
- Oct. 8 – 11 Professional Development –
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Oct. 6 – 12 Fire Prevention Week Activities
- Oct. 14 – 18 MAP Testing, Grades K-5
- Oct. 18 PD - MAP Testing
- Oct. 28 NC Check-in #1 Grades 3-5
- Oct. 28 – Nov. 1 School Net Benchmark #1
- Oct. 29 Read to Achieve – Grade 4
- October 30 Report Cards
- Nov. 2 Profession Learning -
MAP Data Training
- Nov. 7 NSCU Friday Institute Visit
Continuous Improvement Team Meeting
- Nov. 11 Southside Ashpole teacher named finalist
for Beginning Teacher of the Year Award
- Nov. 12 UNCP – Bullying Prevention Presentation
- Nov. 13 Forestry Service Presentation
- Nov. 21 Student Advisory Meeting
- Nov. 26 Progress Reports Released
- Dec. 19 Parent Academy



Community Block Party



911 Remembrance



Walk to School Day



*Southside Ashpole teacher named
finalist for NCCAT Beginning
Teacher of the Year.*