



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) as amended by SB522

Date Due: January 15, 2021
Report # 4
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2020-2021

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION VISION: Every public school student in North Carolina will be empowered to accept academic challenges, prepared to pursue their chosen path after graduating high school, and encouraged to become lifelong learners with the capacity to engage in a globally-collaborative society.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MISSION: The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is to use its constitutional authority to guard and maintain the right of a sound, basic education for every child in North Carolina Public Schools.

ERIC DAVIS

Chair: Charlotte – At-Large

JILL CAMNITZ

Greenville – Northeast Region

TODD CHASTEEN

Blowing Rock – Northwest Region

ALAN DUNCAN

Vice Chair: Greensboro – Piedmont-Triad Region

REGINALD KENAN

Rose Hill – Southeast Region

DONNA TIPTON-ROGERS

Brasstown – Western Region

DAN FOREST

Lieutenant Governor: Raleigh – Ex Officio

AMY WHITE

Garner – North Central Region

J. WENDELL HALL

Ahoskie – At-Large

DALE FOLWELL

State Treasurer: Raleigh – Ex Officio

OLIVIA OXENDINE

Lumberton – Sandhills Region

VACANT

At-Large

MARK JOHNSON

Secretary to the Board: Raleigh

JAMES FORD

Charlotte – Southwest Region

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Mark Johnson, State Superintendent :: 301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825

In compliance with federal law, the NC Department of Public Instruction administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.

Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination issues should be directed to:

Ronald Paxton, Director of Human Resources, NCDPI

6301 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-6301 / Phone: (984) 236-2220 / Fax: (984) 236-2347

Visit us on the Web: www.dpi.nc.gov

1020

Table of Contents

Background 4

 I-Zones 4

 Operator 4

New ISD Legislation 5

 Evaluation Process 5

 School Years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 5

 School Years 2023-2024 and Beyond 5

 School Lists 5

 2019-2020 Qualifying List (based on 2018-2019 data) 6

2019-20 Southside Ashpole Elementary School Performance Results 7

Evaluation of the Innovative School District 7

 Broader Observations from Friday Institute Report 8

 Recommendations from Friday Institute Report 8

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). Starting in May 2017, Dr. Eric Hall served as the founding Superintendent. Ms. LaTeesa Allen was selected to replace Dr. Hall in September 2018 and Dr. James Ellerbe has served as the third ISD Superintendent since July 2019. Additional background information may be accessed in the January 2020 JLEOC report.

I-Zones

The ISD may also partner with local educational agencies (LEA) of innovative schools to develop an innovative zone. The district may request to 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 may be granted increased flexibility by. Upon recommendation of the ISD superintendent, the State Board of Education may provide the LEA with additional flexibilities such as extending the school day, altering school calendars, and instituting creative school staffing and compensation models for five years. Matching funds of up to \$150,000 are available, an i-Zone Executive Director must be hired and all other governance decisions will remain with the LEA. The current LEA I-Zone has not been established at this time.

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. Due to the additional requirements associated with COVID-19, the SBE and AAC mutually agreed to end the contract in November 2020.

¹ <http://aac.school/>

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 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 newcomer's school (at least ninety percent of students are English language learners and enrolled for no more than one year)

Evaluation Process

School Years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023

Require, for each year from 2021-2022 through 2022-2023, that the SBE transfer to the ISD the lowest scoring qualifying school in the State, based on the school performance score.

School Years 2023-2024 and Beyond

Beginning with selection of schools for the 2023-2024 school year: Schools would be placed on two lists before being transferred into the ISD.

School Lists

Year 1 – Watch List

Notice would be given to the superintendent and LBE of the status, along with performance data and considerations for improvement. The LBE must notify parents of (a) the school's status, (b) potential impacts of the designation, (c) plans for improvement, and (d) any additional information deemed necessary by the local board.

Year 2 – Qualifying List

If the school was on the qualifying list the year before, and still meets the definition of a qualifying school, the school would be moved to a watch list. Notice would be given to the superintendent and LBE of the status, along with performance data and considerations for improvement. The LBE must notify parents of (a) the school's status, (b) potential impacts of the designation, (c) plans for improvement, and (d) any additional information deemed necessary by the local board.

Year 3 – Warning List

If the school was on the watch list in the prior year, and still meets the definition of a qualifying school, the school would be moved to a warning list. The school would remain on the warning list until it is either (a) no longer a qualifying school or (b) is transferred to the ISD. Notice and considerations for improvement would be provided, and the LBE

would hold a public hearing (in the school's first year on the warning list only) to share information with parents and employees about potential impacts of the designation, including the possibility of becoming an innovative school, and plans for improvement of the school.

The ISD Superintendent, or designee, would also present at the public hearing to provide information to parents, teachers, and community members on the ISD selection process, as well as resources for comprehensive support and improvement to assist in plans for improvement of the school.

The LBE would also present information at a regularly scheduled public meeting to the county commissioners on the school's performance and efforts by the LBE to improve the school's performance. The ISD Superintendent would also be provided the opportunity to present as part of that meeting.

Year 4 – Selection

If the school (a) was on the warning list in the prior year; (b) still meets the definition of a qualifying school; and (c) is one of the lowest 5 schools that meet the criteria in (a) and (b), as measured by school performance scores, the SBE must select the school to transfer to the ISD.

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

In the spring of 2019, the SBE elected not to transfer a new school for the 2019-2020 school year. Per the new legislation, the following 2019 Qualifying List was created:



Region	No. Qualifying 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

Rural	42
Urban	27

North Carolina State Board of Education Districts



The ISD superintendent contacted each of the 2019-2020 Qualifying List school superintendents and school boards by the November 15 deadline. District superintendents were required to notify parents of students in schools on the Qualifying List by December 16, 2019. Superintendents provided a copy of the parent notification letter to the ISD Superintendent.

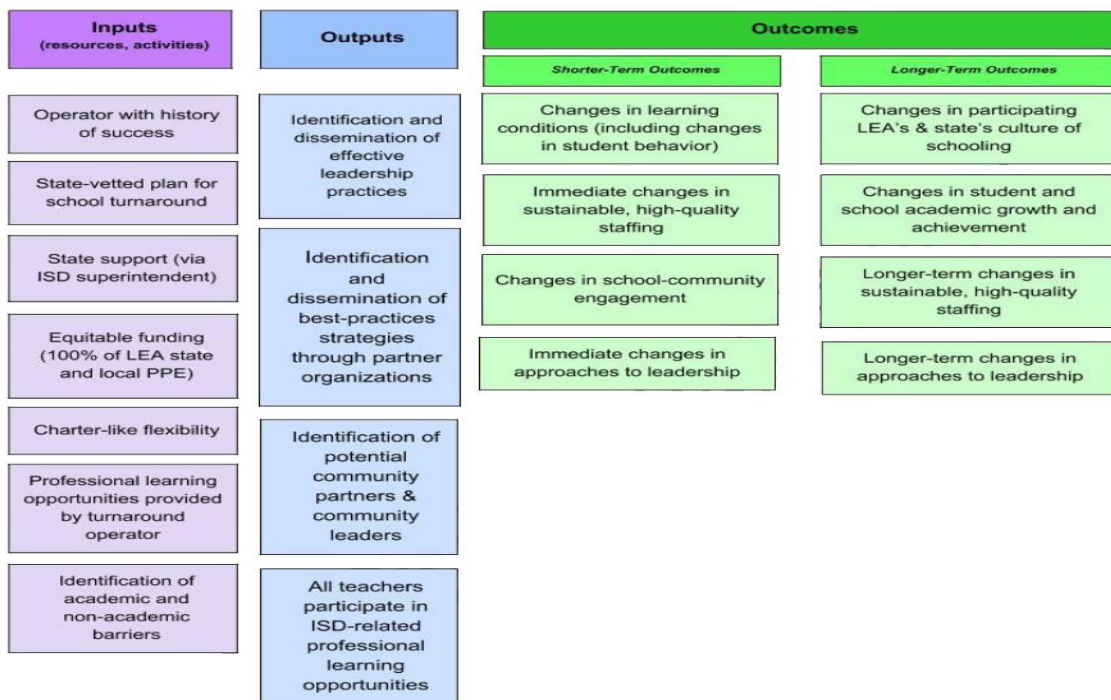
The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a waiver for state and federal testing. As a response to the coronavirus crisis and the lack of data, no schools were transferred into the ISD for the 2020-21.

2019-20 Southside Ashpole Elementary School Performance Results

Along with all public schools in North Carolina, Southside Ashpole Elementary closed in March 2019 and therefore no new accountability data is available.

Evaluation of the Innovative School District

In alignment with the requirements in statute, the State Board of Education entered 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 most recent evaluation report from the Friday Institute, [Report to the General Assembly: Innovative School District \(ISD\) Evaluation – Second Year Results from Inaugural School \(2019-20\)](#) was submitted to the State Board in July 2020.

During the 2019-20 school year, the ISD continued to be represented by a single school, it remains important to distinguish between the evaluation of the overall ISD initiative and the evaluation of the implementation of the ISD in a single school setting. With only one school in the ISD for Year 2, the evaluation team continues to strongly caution against evaluating the effectiveness of the initiative based on outcomes from a single school. Like

all other North Carolina public schools, Southside Ashpole's building closed in early spring 2020 in response to the coronavirus outbreak. The evaluation team was able to complete all planned visits to the school and also administer all planned surveys; however, since no state tests were administered for 2019-20, there is no new information in this report about quantitative measures of academic achievement for Year 2.

Broader Observations from Friday Institute Report

In Year 2, the following changes to the school's approach to improving achievement, learning conditions, community engagement and culture and were noted:

- A building-wide change in focus from proficiency to growth
- Greater attention to data-driven instruction
- Teachers across grade levels indicated that they had more flexibility in materials and instructional approaches
- Staff believed student discipline improved based on new approaches and larger post-ISD student population
- More Year 2 students agreed they enjoyed coming to school
- More parents agreed that attending school regularly is "absolutely essential" for academic success
- Parents felt more comfortable talking to administrators and teachers than they did in Year 1
- Most parents agreed the school provided clear information about student learning
- Parents felt more welcome at the school
- Parent volunteerism increased slightly
- Teachers indicated a shift to a "family-oriented" environment
- More students reported that they enjoyed going to school and believed they were treated fairly and respectfully
- Parent belief that their children were safe at school grew steadily
- An observable change in the school administration's organization, openness, visibility, and communication

Recommendations from Friday Institute Report

1. Address the disconnect between curricular freedom and state standards-based assessments
2. Measure progress for legacy students and new ISD students separately
3. Create a robust Theory of Change to support the ISD structure
4. Address the challenges of managing a district remotely
5. Minimize untenable tensions across leadership levels