



**NORTH CAROLINA**  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

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Final External Evaluation of Innovative School  
District (Status Update)

*Session Law 2016-110*

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**Date Due: February 15, 2023**  
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2022-2023

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## **Background**

The North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation in 2016 to establish a new non-geographic school district: the North Carolina Innovative School District (the ISD). In January 2018, the Public Schools of Robeson County School Board voted unanimously to approve the transfer of Southside-Ashpole Elementary School to the ISD. Over the course of the next several years, there have been numerous changes (e.g., managerial, operational, and noteworthy turnover with administrators and teachers in particular). In addition, no other schools were selected for transfer into the ISD. Pursuant to Senate Bill 105/SL 2021-180, the North Carolina State Board of Education approved a plan to transition Southside-Ashpole Elementary School back to the Public Schools of Robeson County, effective July 1, 2022.

## **Final External Evaluation**

Session Law 2016-110 requires that a final external evaluation be submitted to the General Assembly. The funding that had been earmarked for that purpose had been carried forward for multiple years, likely due to pandemic and the uncertainty of the ISD (i.e., whether more schools would be added) but ultimately reverted. The Department of Public Instruction had to identify a viable alternative, which took more time than expected.

## **Status**

A collaboration with the Duke Sanford School of Public Policy has been established, and a team of evaluators hopes to complete the evaluation **before June 30, 2023**. It is important to note, however, that the initial –and only external evaluation to date– underscored, “ [The] ISD is an initiative, but Southside Ashpole is only a single school that (to date) has presented a single response in a single setting in a single year to the possibilities of that initiative. Whether the school succeeds or fails ultimately may define success or failure for the initiative as a whole, but perhaps unfairly so: A single school’s single-year experiment should not bear the burden of representing a full, multi-school, multi-year implementation (p. 31).”