

**RESOLUTION OF
THE WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGARDING THE PRELIMINARY PLAN OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS
IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AS “LOW PERFORMING”**

WHEREAS, the Appropriations Act (hereinafter “the Act”) of 2015, N.C. Sess. Laws 2015-241, amended N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-105.37(a) to require the State Board of Education to identify as “low-performing” any schools that received “a performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of ‘met expected growth’ or ‘not met expected growth’ as defined by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-83.15.”

WHEREAS, on October 1, 2015, the State Board of Education identified 29 schools in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools as “low-performing” according to the identification criteria in the Act.

WHEREAS, by amendment to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-105.37(a1), the Act requires the Superintendent “submit to the local board of education a preliminary plan for improving both the school performance grade and school growth score [of low-performing schools], including how the superintendent and other central office administrators will work with the school and monitor the school’s progress.”

WHEREAS, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education strongly opposes the “low-performing school” identification criteria set out by the North Carolina General Assembly for two reasons: 1) it relies on a flawed school performance grade calculation assigned by the State Board of Education, and 2) it fails to distinguish a school that has met expected growth from a school that has not met expected growth.

WHEREAS, the school performance grade calculation formula used by the State Board of Education is 80 percent proficiency and 20 percent student growth. This formula puts too great a weight on proficiency and fails to account for other significant factors that impact student learning.

WHEREAS, during the 2014-15 school year, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education released its own school performance grade calculation to better reflect student growth from one year to the next and the challenges of poverty. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education believes its formula results in a more appropriate comparison of schools in a large, urban school district.

WHEREAS, to calculate a school’s WS/FCS school performance grade, the State’s grade was increased one letter grade if the school met or exceeded its growth goals, and the grade was given a ‘+’ if more than 85% of a school’s students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Based on the State’s formula, 32 schools received a grade of D or F in 2014-15. Based on the WS/FCS performance grade formula, 22 schools received a grade of D or F in 2014-15.

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education’s school performance grade calculation is not an accurate measure of student performance in schools. The North Carolina Department of

Public Instruction acknowledges this in a January 2015 publication entitled, *2014 READY ACCOUNTABILITY BACKGROUND BRIEF SUPPLEMENT: North Carolina School Performance Grades*:

School Performance Grades are one component parents and the school community may use to determine how students in their school are doing in comparison to those in the district and across the state. It's also important for parents to consider student performance on end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments as well as the other indicators that the state uses to determine college and career readiness.

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education's school performance grade calculation results in a flawed measure of schools, and as such it should not be the primary factor used to identify "low-performing" schools.

WHEREAS, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education also disagrees with the "low-performing school" identification criteria set out by the North Carolina General Assembly because it fails to distinguish schools that have met expected growth from schools that have not met expected growth.

WHEREAS, it is also contradictory for the North Carolina General Assembly to require schools to "exceed expected growth," while simultaneously relying on a school performance grade calculation that diminishes the impact of student growth to only 20% of the school performance grade formula. If student growth is so critical in determining whether a school is low-performing or not, it needs to be a larger part of the school performance grade formula.

WHEREAS, schools that are meeting or exceeding expected growth should be commended; school growth demonstrates that the students in the school are progressing toward proficiency.

WHEREAS, schools that have met expected growth should never be identified as "low-performing."

WHEREAS, of the 29 WS/FCS schools identified by the State Board of Education as "low-performing," 12 met expected growth in the 2014-15 school year.

WHEREAS, the State's identification of schools as "low-performing" based on a severely flawed formula, and those identifications are largely inaccurate.

WHEREAS, the WS/FCS must provide support to schools based on its data and its best understanding of what schools need.

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION as follows:

1. Superintendent Beverly Emory's preliminary plan for improving both the school performance grade and school growth score of low-performing schools, including how the superintendent and other central office administrators will work with the school and monitor the school's progress, is a continuation of the work started during the summer of 2014.
2. In July 2014, WS/FCS introduced a set of goals and priorities that would drive all district decisions going forward:

Goals

- By 2020, 90 percent of third-grade students will read on or above grade level.
- By 2018, our graduation rate will be 90 percent.
- By 2018, we will close the achievement gap between subgroups by 10 percentage points while increasing the performance of all subgroups.

Priorities

- Provide all schools and departments the differentiated support they need to reach the full potential of the Continuous Improvement Process to maximize student outcomes
- Train and support individuals to be strong instructional leaders and hold them accountable for achieving district goals.
- Equip staff to support struggling students.
- Intentionally engage our parent and community partners in understanding, supporting and advocating for our district goals in service of students.

3. WS/FCS stakeholders have worked relentlessly to make sure everything done since July 2014 fits into this framework.
4. In July 2014, WS/FCS also announced its cultural aspiration of becoming an organization of *high expectations and high accountability in a psychologically safe environment*.
5. The process adopted by WS/FCS to achieve these goals and priorities is a **continuous improvement process**. Every school and department in WS/FCS built an improvement plan that includes data-driven strategies to target the district's priorities.
6. Dr. Emory's plan includes (but is not limited to) the following district initiatives:
 - a. **Professional Learning Teams (PLTs)**. Professional Learning Teams are the WS/FCS models for professional learning communities. All schools (including those identified as "low-performing") are required to hold weekly PLT meetings to support the collaborative work of schools and teachers. The Program Manager for School Improvement and Professional Learning Team coaches are responsible for supporting and monitoring the implementation of this initiative. Monitoring occurs through quarterly assessments, and checks the strategies schools are using for fidelity. WS/FCS also conducts an annual survey of teachers and principals to determine effectiveness.

- b. **Early Release Days.** WS/FCS implemented Early Release Days in 2014. Early Release Days are used for school-level professional development guided by central-office personnel. All schools (including schools identified as “low-performing”) must provide to the district a strategic use of the six early release days. The Early Release Days plan incorporates the district's Continuous Improvement Model as a core practice for school improvement. The Program Manager for School Improvement is responsible for supporting and monitoring the implementation of this initiative. Monitoring occurs through the review of early release day plans and administrator and teacher surveys.

- c. **School Improvement Plan Review Process.** In the spring of 2015, WS/FCS created the School Improvement Plan Review Process (“SIP Review Process”). This process involves a team approach to school improvement planning. The School Support Teams are comprised of central office instructional coaches and program managers. These School Support Teams provide support to schools by reviewing SIPs and providing feedback and support on goals, strategies, action steps, data analysis and the determination of priorities. The School Support Teams also conduct Learning Walks for the schools they support to identify best practices in instruction. The School Support Team and their facilitators are responsible for the SIP Review initiative. Monitoring is achieved by bi-annual reviews of SIP plans, annual data analysis review and the Learning Walks. Each school will have three monitoring visits per year from its SIP Review Team.

- d. **School Support Meetings.** In the summer of 2015, Dr. Emory began a data-driven, differentiated, targeted support model for schools in keeping with the first priority: to “[p]rovide all schools and departments the differentiated support they need to reach the full potential of the Continuous Improvement Process to maximize student outcomes.” Dr. Emory identified 31 schools for targeted support; these schools had either 1.) not met expected growth for two consecutive years; or 2.) not met growth for one year and had less than 50 percent proficiency. Each of these 31 schools were part of a school support meeting attended by the school’s principal; central office program managers; research, evaluation and data specialists; Executive Director of Instructional Services; Assistant Superintendents of School Administration; the Chief Academic Officer; and Dr. Emory. These 31 school support meetings gave principals the individualized opportunity to dig deep into their school’s data, to problem-solve with key central-office support personnel, and to receive advice on how they can prioritize high-yield strategies to improve student performance and growth based on their specific school data.

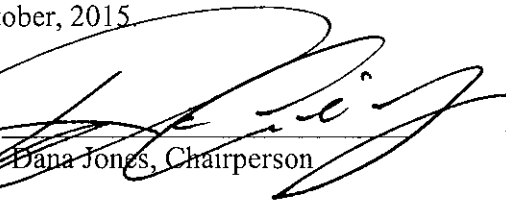
- e. **Instructional Planning.** In fall 2015, Dr. Emory determined that one non-negotiable, universal high-yield strategy should be used in all schools, and differentiated support for implementing this strategy should be targeted where it is needed most. Dr. Emory chose lesson planning and delivery, as these are critical to improved student outcomes. District support includes professional

development and support to principals and teachers. All schools have developed implementation plans to focus each school's respective work. The Assistant Superintendents are responsible for this initiative, and the monitoring process is tied into the bi-annual reviews of School Improvement Plans.

- f. **Analysis of Data.** In the Fall of 2015, the universal high yield strategy selected for administrative development was data analysis and application. Effective data analysis of various performance measures such as proficiency and growth are expected outcomes. The ability to take the data and convert it to actionable, research-based strategies is critical to improved outcomes. Administrators will receive differentiated, in-depth training utilizing their own school data. Effective analysis and application of school data will be assessed and feedback shared during the three monitoring visits described in 6.c.
7. WS/FCS is committed to continuing the work it began in 2014. WS/FCS is relying on data and research that suggest performance grades and school growth scores for all schools, including the 29 identified as "low-performing" on October 1, will be positively impacted as long as the district stays engaged in the continuous improvement process and initiatives described in this plan.
8. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education has considered rejecting, modifying or approving the Superintendent's Preliminary Plan as described herein, and hereby resolves to **APPROVE** this plan.

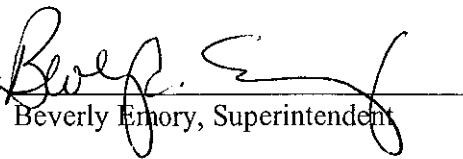
Adopted by the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education; this, the 27 day of October, 2015.

By:



Dana Jones, Chairperson

Attest:



Beverly Emory, Superintendent

Draft Date: 10/21/15

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