North Carolina Innovative School District:

Second-Year Results from Inaugural School (2019-20)

Prepared for the North Carolina Innovative School District

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Executive Summary

With the intent of improving the performance of chronically low-performing elementary schools, 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). The ISD supports two distinct management strategies for school improvement: third-party management and local-level Innovation Zone (I-Zone) management. The first strategy transfers low-performing schools from their local education agencies (LEAs) into the ISD, where they are operated by an independent Operator. In the second strategy (I-Zones), an LEA with at least one school under ISD management can operate other low-performing schools in the LEA with flexibilities similar to those enjoyed by Operators.

In 2017, the ISD considered 48 elementary schools across 21 LEAs for the first cohort of ISD schools, ultimately selecting Southside-Ashpole Elementary in Robeson County. Public Schools of Robeson County declined the option to establish an I-Zone. Southside-Ashpole opened as an ISD school for the 2018-19 academic year and remained the only ISD school in 2019-20.

Special Cautions for the Year Two Report

Because the ISD in 2019-20 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 as a whole based on outcomes from a single school*.

In addition, readers are reminded that, 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.

Academic Growth and Achievement

In Year 2, there were two notable changes to the school's approach to improving achievement:

- A building-wide change in focus from *proficiency* to *growth*; and
- Greater attention to data-driven instruction.

There also was mounting evidence to suggest that future academic outcomes analyses for any ISD school should reflect several important caveats, including acknowledgement that:

- Academic growth for students inherited from the pre-ISD era likely will exhibit different academic growth trajectories than will students new to an ISD school; and

- Sometimes-significant year-to-year student population changes will limit the ability to assess grade-level growth across years accurately.

In terms of curriculum, teachers across grade levels were more likely than they were in Year 1 to indicate that they had some flexibility in terms of the materials and instructional approaches they could use for covering the curriculum. However, differences between the Operator's chosen curriculum and the state standards used to assess progress continues to be a challenge.

Learning Conditions and Student Behavior

Overall, staff believed that student discipline improved at Southside-Ashpole in Year 2, with some of that improvement attributable to a new approach to discipline, but some also attributable to a larger proportion of students without pre-ISD Southside-Ashpole experiences.

More Year 2 students (93% [fall 2019] / 81% [spring 2020], versus 72% [Year 1]) agreed that they enjoy going to school, and parents grew in their agreement (74% [fall 2019]; 79% [spring 2020]) that attending school regularly is "absolutely essential" for academic success.

School-Community Engagement

More parents agreed in Year 2 that they felt comfortable talking to administrators and teachers than they did in Year 1. Most parents (79% [fall 2019]; 86% [spring 2020]) also agreed that the school provided clear information about what their children were learning in school. Parents said that they felt more welcome at the school than they did in Year 1. Teachers and staff attributed the improvement to the community's appreciation for and comfort with new school leadership. Parent volunteerism increased but not as much as hoped, and staff noted that there were pockets of parents who remain wary of the ISD concept.

School Culture

Overall School Culture

Teachers attributed overall positive changes in school culture to:

- A shift to what many termed a "family-oriented" environment;
- A higher level of positivity among staff and students; and
- A change in the school administration's organization, openness, visibility, and communication.

Similarly, more students in Year 2 than in Year 1 reported that they enjoyed going to school (53% [fall 2019] / 62% [spring 2020] versus 39% [Year 1]) and believed they were treated fairly (86% [fall 2019] / 90% [spring 2020] versus 77% [Year 1]) and with respect (100% [fall 2019] / 95% [spring 2020] versus 78% [Year 1]). Parent belief that their children were safe at school grew steadily (79% [fall 2019] / 100% [spring 2020] versus 65% [Year 1]).

Sustainable, High-Quality Staffing

Administrators noted that turnover, while not substantial, was enough to allow for the school to strengthen the quality and cohesiveness of the staff as a whole. Teachers noted that both administrator and mentor teacher classroom walkthroughs were more frequent, and that evaluations were more consistent and complete in Year 2. Teachers also received support from the state's New Teacher Support Program and expanded professional development opportunities that were better aligned to the needs of the staff.

The most persistent potential challenge to the retention of high-quality staff remained the significant time commitment required at Southside-Ashpole, due both to the demands of meeting the needs of the student population and the extended length of the school day.

Leadership Opportunities

Faculty and staff agreed almost universally (100% [fall 2019]; 96% [spring 2020]) that opportunities for leadership were plentiful, and that their participation was encouraged. The primary vehicle for these leadership opportunities was an extensive number of teacher- and staff-led committees, which, while popular, did require significant investments of time.

Broader Observations & Formative Recommendations for the ISD Initiative as a Whole

In addition to addressing the questions established for the formal evaluation, and with full acknowledgement of the challenges of drawing conclusions about the initiative as a whole from data from a single school, the evaluation team made several broader observations across the course of the ISD's first two years, as well as some recommendations related to those observations for stakeholders to consider as the ISD prepares to expand to more schools.

1. Address the Disconnect between Curriculum Freedom and State Standards-Based Assessments

Without alignment between an ISD school's curriculum and the state's standards-based testing, measurement of academic progress will continue to be difficult to estimate accurately. Policy-makers should resolve the issue either by: a) requiring ISD schools to adhere to curricula that directly support state standards; or b) evaluating academic progress at each ISD school independently, using tests that reflect each school's curriculum.

2. Measure Progress for Legacy Students and New ISD Students Separately

A consistent theme across faculty and staff has been that Southside-Ashpole is two schools: One for students new to the building, and one for students with a history in the building that pre-dates ISD. We believe there is merit in this characterization and that it is likely to be true for future ISD schools as well. We recommend that assessments of an ISD school's progress be disaggregated, when reasonable, to reflect the progress of these groups separately as well as jointly. While it is reasonable to expect that the conversion to an ISD school should help all students, regardless of their prior experience with the school,

breakdowns by length of student tenure may help to identify positive trends that otherwise might not be discernible in whole-school trends during a school's first few years in the ISD.

Necessary Conditions for Successful Continuation of the ISD Initiative

The evaluation team also believes that there are three additional structural challenges that are likely to surface in other schools as they are added to the ISD—challenges only partially resolved by recent legislative changes[1]—and that need to be addressed in order for the ISD to achieve success.

3. *The ISD Structure Needs to be Supported by an Underlying Robust Theory of Change*

   Without a vetted and tested theory of change to guide turnaround at ISD schools, the success or failure of any given ISD school likely will continue to hinge on the strengths of the individuals leading each school.

4. *The ISD Structure Needs to Address the Challenges of Managing a District Remotely*

   Successful administration of a geographically fragmented district requires identification of and solutions for novel, geographically-related administrative challenges with which the state has little previous experience from which to draw.

5. *The ISD Structure Needs to Minimize Untenable Tensions across Leadership Levels*

   Reflecting a finding shared in our Year 1 report, there remains a persistent disconnect between what the Operator and the state see as an ISD school's defined flexibilities—a disconnect that is likely to persist as other Operators join the ISD.

We highlight these three challenges without any intention of nullifying the improvements the staff and administration made at Southside-Ashpole during Year 2 and the successes that were derived from those improvements, nor of nullifying the hard work and dedication of the state office or of the Operator. We highlight them because we believe that what transpired at Southside-Ashpole over its first two years as an ISD school—both the bad and the good—was largely a result of factors that are not unique to the ISD approach: There is as yet little evidence to suggest that the current initiative structure will, on its own, lead to the initiative's intended outcomes at any given ISD school without significant modifications to that structure.

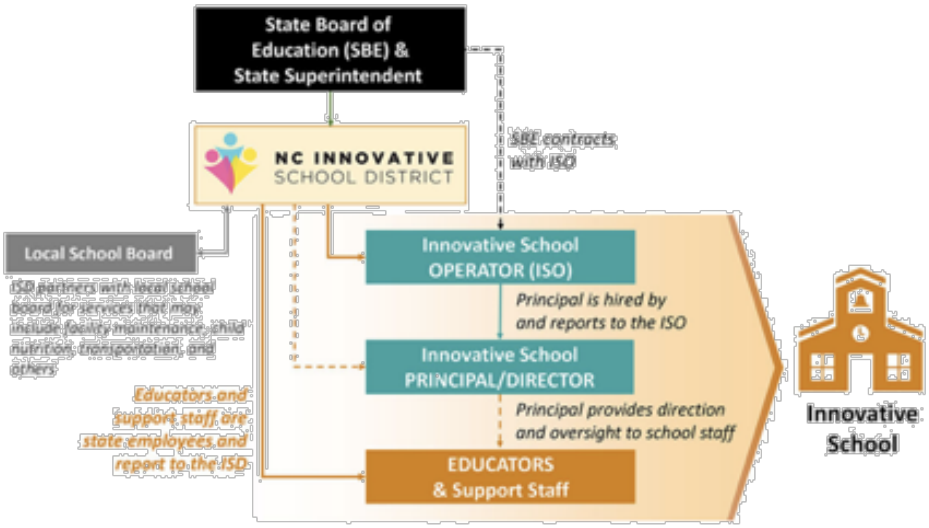
[1] Session Law 2019-248; https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2019/S522

Introduction

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. In 2017, the NCGA provided additional guidance for the district and changed its designation to the North Carolina Innovative School District (the ISD).[2] Operating within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) as a separate North Carolina school district, the ISD is managed by a superintendent who works directly with the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education. Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of the operational structure of the ISD.

Figure 1. Operational Structure of the ISD



Vision and Mission of the ISD

The ISD's ***charge*** is to work with identified schools and their communities to foster accountable, data-driven partnerships designed to promote and implement a shared vision of equity and opportunity for students in those schools.

The ***vision*** of the ISD is to be a bold, unapologetic leader in transforming low-performing schools in North Carolina. Its intent is to establish its leadership role through the creation of strong community partnerships, strategic coalitions, and the innovative implementation of data-informed practices.

[2] Evaluation-relevant components of the legislation and links to the full enacting legislation are included in **Appendix A**.

The ***mission*** of the ISD is to improve student achievement by creating innovative conditions in partnership with communities across North Carolina, with a focus on equity and opportunity in low-performing schools. The ISD intends to accomplish this by:

- Re-defining (expanding the definition of) what a "good" school is;
- Aligning local and state expectations for schools—honoring community needs for their schools while also acknowledging state needs for the school;
- Creating conditions for innovation (school-, community-, and policy-level) that will facilitate NC to broaden its perspective on how to transform all lower-performing schools;
- Raising awareness and changing expectations at the school/community level (among parents, community representatives, and other local stakeholders);
- Creating a sense of urgency and accountability at both the state and local levels, which will help re-prioritize the state's approach to education;
- Empowering local-level stakeholders to act on that urgency; and
- Conducting the work with a Research-Practitioner Partnership mindset.

To meet this vision and mission, ISD leadership has designed two distinct management strategies for school improvement: third-party management and local-level I-Zone management.

Third-Party Management

Original Structure. The first strategy involves transferring low-performing schools from their local education agencies (LEAs; North Carolina's formal term for traditional local school districts) into the ISD, where they are operated by an Innovative School Operator (ISO). In 2017, the ISD superintendent identified 48 elementary schools across 21 LEAs that qualified for consideration for the first cohort of ISD schools. In 2018, ISD identified 14 schools (eight of which also had been identified the previous year) across nine LEAs. In 2019, ISD initially identified 12 schools (five of which also had been identified in one or more earlier years) across 10 LEAs (**Appendix B**), but that list of identified schools was revised in November 2019, as a result of passage of Session Law 2019-248,[3] which included changes in the identification process (see *2019 Forward*, below, for more details about this change). *Before passage of the bill*, identification had been based on four criteria:

- Include all or part of grades K-5;
- Earned an overall school performance score in the lowest five percent (5%) of all schools in the state in the prior school year;

[3] Senate Bill 522; https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2019/S522

- Did not exceed expected growth in at least one of the prior three school years and did not meet expected growth in at least one of the prior three school years; and
- Did not adopt one of the already-established reform models available via state statute in the previous school year.

After passage of the bill, the identification criteria were streamlined considerably:

- A school with a school performance score in the lowest-performing five percent (5%) of all Title I public schools.[4]

By general statute, ISOs are described as "entities" and fall into two broad categories:

1. The entity has a record of results in improving performance of low-performing schools or improving performance of a substantial number of low-performing students within a school or schools operated by the entity in this State or other states.
2. The entity has a credible and specific plan for dramatically improving student achievement in a low-performing school and provides evidence that the entity, or a contractual affiliate of such an entity, is either currently operating a school or schools in this State that provide students a sound, basic education or demonstrating consistent and substantial growth toward providing students a sound, basic education in the prior three school years.

Examples of eligible entities include:

- Established local, state, or national non-profit with a proven school turnaround record;
- College or university that employs a proven turnaround school leader(s);
- Proven/credible charter management/education management organization;
- Corporation/business with a credible plan and a proven turnaround school leader or leaders; and
- Proven school turnaround leader who creates her or his own entity.

2017. After several rounds of review, Southside-Ashpole Elementary school in Robeson County ultimately was chosen for transfer into the ISD for the 2018-19 school year. After a competitive bid, vetting by an external reviewer, and approval from the State Board of Education, the ISD engaged Achievement for All Children[5] to manage operations at the school for five years. The contract establishes performance metrics that define expected progress for improvement in student achievement.

[4] Exceptions include alternative schools, cooperative innovative high schools, new schools, and schools that explicitly serve new-arrival English language learners on a short-term basis.
[5] http://aac.school/

The ISD superintendent managed partnerships between Achievement for All Children, parents and families, the LEA, and other community partners.

2018. The ISD identified Carver Heights Elementary School in Wayne County as the second ISD school; however, the North Carolina General Assembly overturned the identification[6] and Carver Heights remained a part of Wayne County Public Schools. In January 2019, the North Carolina State Board of Education approved "Restart" status for the school, which means that Wayne County Public Schools is responsible for the school's academic turnaround. As a result, no new schools were identified for transfer for the 2019-20 school year; however, if Carver Heights does not show academic improvement over the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, it can be turned over to the ISD thereafter.

New Structure: 2019 Forward. As noted above, in September 2019, the ISD identified 12 schools for consideration for the 2020-21 school year, but before the State Board of Education acted on these recommendations, the passage of SL 2019-248 led to a reconsideration of that list, as well as of the effective dates for new school inclusion in the ISD.

The new legislation requires schools to go through a three-year process from the time of first qualification before joining the ISD. During that three-year window, a qualifying school can be removed from ISD consideration if it demonstrates academic improvement. In addition, the legislation expands school operator eligibility to include the possibility of management by the Department of Public Instruction.

One result of these changes was that the ISD revised its 2019 list of schools for consideration. In November 2019, the ISD identified 69 schools; all 12 of the schools selected earlier in the year remained on the list (**Appendix B**). Based on the new timeline, most of the schools on this list would not be eligible for transfer to the ISD until the 2023-24 school year (with final identification taking place during the 2022-23 school year), with one exception. Per SL 2019-248, and as amended by SL 2020-03,[7] one overall lowest-performing school will be selected in fall 2021 for the 2022-23 school year. **Appendix C** includes more details about the changes enacted via SL 2019-248.

I-Zones

The second ISD strategy involves a more comprehensive effort with a partnering LEA that is hosting an ISO as part of the first strategy. In this second optional scenario, the participating LEA can propose operating a group of its low-performing schools via a new management model called an Innovation Zone (I-Zone). In the I-Zone, the local school superintendent and school

[6] North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2018-145 (https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2017/Bills/Senate/PDF/S469v8.pdf)

[7] North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2020-03, enacted in response to the spring 2020 coronavirus outbreak (https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/Senate/PDF/S704v6.pdf); SL 2019-248 originally called for identification of a school in fall 2020 for the 2021-22 school year as well, but with state tests cancelled for spring 2020, identification would not have been possible using current criteria.

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. If an I-Zone is approved by the State Board of Education, the ISD superintendent provides up to $150,000 in matching funds (matched 1:1 by the LEA) for up to five years to support the effort. The schools in an approved I-Zone are led by an Executive Director and her or his team. While the Executive Director's appointment requires the approval of the ISD superintendent and the State Board of Education, all other governance decisions remain with the LEA. I-Zone school goals are to exceed expected growth by the last two years of their five-year contract. The ISD superintendent can transfer management of any I-Zone schools that do not meet expected benchmarks during the last two years to the approved ISO partner that already is working in the LEA as part of the first strategy.

Public Schools of Robeson County declined the option to establish an I-Zone when Southside-Ashpole was selected, so as of this report, no I-Zones have been established.

Evaluation of the ISD

To ensure that progress in its schools is evaluated effectively, the ISD partnered with an independent evaluation development team—composed of staff from the Friday Institute at North Carolina State University and RTI International—to develop a multi-year plan for assessing outcomes of the initiative. The ISD partnered with the Friday Institute to conduct the evaluation. While it is possible that future participating LEAs will exercise their option to establish I-Zones, the scope of the current evaluation is limited to the first strategy—third party management by an ISO. I-Zone schools will be included in a special category of comparison schools for the quantitative analyses, should any participating LEAs establish I-Zones.

The ISD is responsible for submitting an annual report to the State Board of Education and the General Assembly (due by November 15 each year). The annual report includes information related to student performance, school-level operation, and overall ISD operation and management, with a focus on the following measured outcomes, as identified by statute (see **Appendix A** for more details):

- Public school student **enrollment** in each ISD School, including student demographics (Headcount);
- Public school student **admissions processes** and the number of students enrolled under the admissions category at each partnering ISD school (Compliance Monitoring);
- Student **achievement data**, including school performance grades and student achievement scores and student growth scores, at each ISD school (Longitudinal Academic Monitoring [Raw Values over Time]);
- Student **academic progress** in each ISD school as measured against the previous school year and against other schools located in the local school administrative unit and statewide (Quantitative Analysis);

- Student **discipline** data in each ISD school as measured against the previous school year and against other schools located in the local school administrative unit and statewide (Longitudinal Academic Monitoring)
- **Best practices** resulting from ISD school operations (Qualitative); and
- Other information the ISD superintendent, State Superintendent, and State Board of Education considers appropriate.

The ISD annual report is based in part on an annual report developed by the evaluation team; the current document is the second of these reports.[8]

In addition to the legislatively-mandates components of the public reports, the stakeholder version of the report also includes evaluations of some aspects of **non-test score-based student performance**, school-level **operation**, and overall ISD **management** and operation, as outlined in a preliminary logic model constructed with the ISD leadership team (**Appendix D**).

[8] The first report is posted at:
https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=190747&MID=5817

Evaluation Questions, Measurable Outcomes, and Analyses

Evaluation Questions

The enacting legislation outlines several key outcome measures for the evaluation (**Appendix A**). The legislation charges the selected ISO to: set clear goals related to higher academic outcomes for students; create safe and positive learning environments for children; ensure parent and community engagement; efficiently and effectively use taxpayer dollars; empower and equip teachers and school leaders to meet the goals; and hold ISD teachers and school leaders accountable to meet those stated goals. The ISO is directed to enter into an agreement with each school principal regarding specific goals for each school.

The evaluation development team worked with the ISD superintendent's team to construct an evaluation strategy that retained all of the required ISO goals and also integrated additional goals to enable evaluators to arrive at a richer and more complete understanding of the outcomes of the initiative. Through multiple meetings with the ISD superintendent's team, the evaluation development team identified specific program goals and outcomes. Through an overall mission and vision statement for the ISD initiative, the superintendent's team expanded the ISD's legislatively-required commitments, and the evaluation development team incorporated that vision into a logic model for the overall initiative (a summary is included in **Appendix D**) that graphically represents how ISOs and schools will fulfill those commitments. The ISD superintendent's team identified short- and longer-term outcomes for ISD schools in the following areas: student academic outcomes, learning environments, parent and community engagement, school culture, leadership, and academic and fiscal accountability.

Using the overall ISD logic model, the evaluation development team constructed a set of questions to guide the evaluation:

Q1. Does the ISD improve student- and school-level academic growth and achievement?

Q2. Does the ISD improve learning conditions, including changes in student behavior?

Q3. Does the ISD contribute to changes in school-community engagement?

Q4. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the culture of schooling both in and outside of the ISD?

> *Q4a*. Does the ISD contribute to an overall change in the culture of schooling in ISD schools?
>
> *Q4b*. Does the ISD change approaches to ensuring sustainable, high-quality staffing in ISD schools?
>
> *Q4c*. Does the ISD change approaches to leadership in ISD schools?

Q4d. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the culture of schooling in partnering LEAs, non-participating LEAs, and/or across the state overall?[9]

The evaluation plan developed to address these questions meets the legislative requirements, while also providing greater breadth and depth of information in areas of importance to ISD leadership.

Measurable Outcomes

The evaluation development team next identified measurable outcomes that align to the overall goals and commitments of the initiative. Measurable outcome statements are listed below by evaluation question. Outcome statements in **red** address evaluation components highlighted in the enacting legislation, and statements in **black** provide important additional context for all measured outcomes. Statements in ***grey italics*** address evaluation components identified by ISD leadership as areas of interest for their own internal evaluation efforts; due to budget constraints, only some of these can be addressed in each annual report.

Q1: Does the ISD improve student- and school-level academic growth and achievement?

- ISD schools achieve and maintain performance scores at or above a C.
- ISD schools' academic outcomes compare favorably to eligible but non-identified schools.
- ISD students demonstrate academic proficiency.
- ISD schools demonstrate academic growth.
- ISD students exhibit more growth than students at matched a) local schools (possibly including I-Zone schools), b) transformational schools, and c) considered but non-selected schools; also vs statewide growth averages.

Q2. Does the ISD improve learning conditions, including changes in student behavior?

- *ISD student support services meet statutory requirements.* [Not addressed by this evaluation]
- ISD schools establish a safe and positive learning environment.
- ISD schools experience reduction of behavioral referrals.
- ISD schools experience reduction of student absenteeism and/or increased attendance.

Q3. Does the ISD contribute to changes in school-community engagement?

- Community engagement grows in ways that are attributable to the ISD.

[9] Evaluation sub-question 4d is for internal ISD evaluation planning only; questions and data collected related to this question are not part of the formal evaluation. See note below re: **red** and ***grey italics*** text.

- *Formal relationships are established between ISD schools and community representatives.* [Not addressed by this evaluation]
- *In-kind supports and services provided to ISD schools change in positive ways.* [Not addressed by this evaluation]

- Parent engagement grows in ways that are attributable to the ISD.
  - *ISD parents/guardians understand academic expectations and standards.*
  - *ISD parents/guardians understand connections between student engagement and academic outcomes.*
  - *ISD parents/guardians participate more frequently in the life of the school.*
  - *ISD parents/guardians participate in the academic life of their own students.*
- ISD school staff and community member feelings of empowerment grow in ways that are attributable to ISD school-community engagement efforts.

Q4. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the culture of schooling both in and outside of the ISD?

Q4a. Does the ISD contribute to an overall change in the culture of schooling in ISD schools?

- *ISOs lead diffusion of best practices across ISD schools.* [Not addressed by this evaluation]

Q4b. Does the ISD change approaches to ensuring sustainable, high-quality staffing in ISD schools?

- *The ISD implements process to build a local, sustainable teacher workforce pipeline.* [Not addressed by this evaluation]
- ISD schools recruit effective staff.
- ISD schools retain effective staff.
- ISD schools create an effective structure for holding staff accountable.
- *ISD schools promote a culture of professional learning among teachers.*

Q4c. Does the ISD change approaches to leadership in ISD schools?

- ISD schools exhibit fiscal efficiency and effectiveness (included in formal evaluation reports when provided to the evaluation team by ISD leadership).
- *ISD schools are led by effective school administrators.*
- *ISD schools adopt effective leadership strategies.*
- *ISD schools establish a diffused leadership model that includes teacher leadership.*

Q4d. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the culture of schooling in partnering LEAs, non-participating LEAs, and/or across the State overall?

- *ISD leadership encourages diffusion and replication of strategies identified as effective practices to partnering LEAs.* [Not addressed by the evaluation]
- *Non-participating LEAs demonstrate leadership-level changes in approaches to school leadership.* [Not addressed by the evaluation]

Data Collection and Analysis

Thoroughly addressing these evaluation questions and measuring these outcomes requires a mixed-methods approach that incorporates quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources. While some of the questions focus on the performance of students in ISD schools, others examine the ways in which these schools operate and the extent to which they engage their local communities. Table 1 provides a high-level crosswalk between the evaluation questions and the relevant sources of data.

Table 1. Data Sources Matched with Evaluation Questions

Source of Data	***Related Evaluation Questions***
North Carolina administrative and Report Card data	1, 2, 4b, 4c
Student surveys	2
Parent surveys	2, 3, 4c
Practitioner surveys	3, 4a, 4b, 4c
Practitioner focus groups	3, 4b, 4c
North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey	2

Appendix E provides a complete crosswalk between evaluation questions, measurable outcomes, indicators, and data sources; the previous evaluation report[10] includes additional details about the data collected from each source and connections between those data and the evaluation questions.

Because only one school opened in the first year, the evaluation plan was constructed on the premise that the first full baseline year would be the 2019-20 school year (the year in which multiple ISD schools were scheduled to open); however, as noted above, the identification of a second school (to be brought into the ISD for the 2019-20 school year) was overturned. As a result, the evaluation team recommends that the original intent to classify 2019-20 as the baseline year for ISD be modified, with *each school's first year* (regardless of start year) classified as a "baseline year," the second year of operation designated as the "growth year,"

[10] Stallings, D. T., Rosof, L., Halstead, E., Knapp, L., and Rice, O. (2019). *North Carolina Innovative School District Evaluation Commitments*. Prepared for the North Carolina Innovative School District. (submitted to the North Carolina State Board of Education, January 9, 2019; not posted online)

and the third year of operation designated as the "measurable trend" year. In addition, in future reports, the evaluation team recommends that results be reported both for all ISD schools and for all ISD schools minus the first identified school, on the premise that all subsequent ISD schools will learn early implementation strategies from the first school's baseline year (i.e., implementation for all other ISD schools should reflect more accurately the final vision for the ISD initiative than did the first ISD school in its inaugural year).[11]

Analyses of North Carolina Administrative and Report Card Data

The full set of administrative data typically only become available to evaluators several months after the end of each school year (usually no earlier than December); therefore, full analysis and initial reporting of results from administrative data typically occur in spring and early summer of *the following school year*. Since only one ISD school opened in the inaugural year (2018-19), the evaluation team treated administrative data analyses included in the first report as ***preliminary*** and ***formative*** only. Because a second school was not incorporated into the ISD for the 2019-20 school year, the current evaluation contract ended (June 2020) well before the availability of most school-level results for 2019-20, and the coronavirus outbreak eliminated testing for 2019-20, ***the evaluation team was able to incorporate only a handful of new (2019-20) administrative data into this second report***—none of which includes updated student academic outcomes. In addition, because the ISD once again was comprised of only one school in 2019-20, this report does not include statistical analyses of available academic outcome results.[12] Table 2 shows an anticipated timeline for administrative data analysis (table has been revised to reflect the new schedule for adding schools), pending continuation of the current evaluation; **Appendix F** includes details about recommendations for analyses once more data become available and more schools are added to the ISD.

Table 2. **Revised** *Timing of Analysis of Administrative Data*

Analysis Year:	***2018-19***	***2019-20***	***2020-21***	***2021-22***	***2022-23***	***2023-24***
Inaugural School (opened 2018-19)	—	$C_{0[2018\text{-}19]}$ COMPLETED FA19	~~$C_{0\text{-}1[2019\text{-}20]}$~~ NO C_1 YEAR DATA	$C_{0\text{-}2[2020\text{-}21]}$	$C_{0\text{-}3[2021\text{-}22]}$	$C_{0\text{-}4[2022\text{-}23]}$
Second ISD School (opens 2022-23)	—	—	—	—	—	$C_{0[2022\text{-}23]}$
Comparison School Analysis	—	✓	×	✓	✓	✓

Key: C=Collect and Analyze; Subscript #=Student Cohort (0=Baseline [first year of operation as ISD school], 1=Growth year, 2 and 3=Measurable Trend years)
Note: Data collection is delayed by one year. Anticipated completion of analysis is ***spring*** of indicated year.

[11] This recommendation has become even more important with the passage of SL 2019-248, which ensures that every other ISD school will enter the ISD under policy conditions that are distinctly different from the conditions experienced by the first ISD school during its first two years (**Appendix C**).
[12] Without at least two ISD schools, any statistical analyses—in addition to being mathematically under-powered—would reflect the successes and struggles of one school only, and not of the ISD as a multi-school initiative.

The first ISD school is an elementary school with grades Kindergarten through grade 5. For students between grades 3 and 5, the evaluation team collects end-of-grade examination data. For grades K through 2, in order to capture early reading growth, the evaluation team originally proposed to collect mCLASS reading diagnostic examination data; however, due to changes in the diagnostic tool used,[13] collection of early-grade academic outcomes data was suspended pending clarification from ISD officials regarding a preferred alternative strategy for analyzing changes in reading outcomes for students in those grades.[14] It is important to note that early-grade formative instruments are not designed for summative assessment, so any results presented in future evaluation documents should be reported with all appropriate caveats.

All reporting of academic outcomes is at the grade or school level (no individual student-level data are being collected) and includes Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) scores and School Report Card grades.

Comparison Schools

Because the North Carolina administrative data include all students in the state's public school system, the evaluation team had several different options for defining comparison groups. The team opted to compare the first ISD school not only to results from other elementary schools in the ISD school's original LEA (Public Schools of Robeson County), but also to two statistically-identified comparison schools with student, teacher, and school characteristics very similar to those of the first ISD school (Table F1, **Appendix F**; see **Appendix G** for more information about the matching process) before its conversion to the ISD. For one evaluation question (Question 1), there is a legislative requirement to compare the average growth of each ISD school with the average growth of all other qualifying (but not selected) schools; as result, the group of schools designated as qualifying but not selected serve as another comparison school pool (**Appendix B**).

Surveys

To compensate for the limitations in administrative data, the evaluation has been strengthened by the inclusion of multiple qualitative data sources, the most efficient and dynamic of which are the survey instruments developed for multiple audiences (**Appendix H**). The evaluator developed a common pool of survey items from which were created student, educator, and parent surveys. While each survey audience was not able to respond to each item, development of a common pool of questions enhanced opportunities for cross-survey analyses for items included in two or more survey instruments. As noted above, data collection for the 2018-19 school year was limited to spring only, but starting with the 2019-20 school year, the

[13] In July 2019, NCDPI contracted with iStation to provide reading diagnostic services beginning in January 2020.
[14] One alternative is to use Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) formative assessment results (see ***Academic Growth and Achievement*** section, below, for more details about MAP testing) for lower-grade students, but as of this writing no MAP results have been provided to the evaluation team.

team was able to conduct each survey twice a year (fall and spring). Full results are located in **Appendix I.**

Student Surveys. The evaluator developed a survey instrument for students in grades 3 through 5 to capture changes in student perceptions of school safety (physical, social, and emotional) and the overall school learning environment.

Parent Surveys. To determine the extent to which parents understand the ISD concept and are satisfied with their families' experiences, the evaluator developed a survey instrument for administration to each ISD school's parent/guardian population each semester. The survey focuses on parents' perspectives on learning conditions, including changes in their own students' behavior, awareness of perceived changes in school-community engagement, and changes in school leadership. Questions about school safety capture information about parents' perceptions of the physical as well as social and emotional well-being of their children while at school. Questions about a positive learning environment probe for responsiveness of leadership to parents' concerns. Questions about school-community engagement reveal parent knowledge about academic expectations and standards, opportunities for student engagement, level of parent engagement, and perceptions of school leadership.

Educator Surveys. The evaluator also developed an educator survey instrument to be administered to staff and teachers at each ISD school during the fall and spring semesters. The educator survey focuses on ISD contributions to school-community engagement, as well as ISD approaches to sustainable, high-quality staffing and school leadership. Questions about school culture and school-community engagement capture information about staff perceptions of ISO-provided support for implementation of best practices and for dealing with parents and the community. The survey also gathers information about staff perceptions of accountability, culture of professional learning, and both school and teacher leadership.

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions (TWC) survey[15] is administered statewide in the spring of every even-numbered year by NCDPI and supplements the data collected in the recommended practitioner survey with additional data that are comparable over time with responses from other schools. Spring 2020 marks the first year the after the advent of the ISD that the TWC has been administered. However, 2020 results were not released prior to the completion of the current report.

Focus Groups

To supplement educator survey data, the evaluation team conducted focus groups of a representative sample of the educators who are involved in ISD school operations in fall 2019 and in spring 2020 and will continue to conduct such focus groups each academic year for the length of the evaluation. Educators included classroom teachers and assistants, school staff,

[15] https://asqnc.com

and school and state-level administrators. These focus groups allowed the evaluation team to address more deeply questions about school culture, leadership, accountability, empowerment, parental and community engagement, and the learning environment created through ISD schools (and how those environments serve students' needs).

Results from the Second Year of Implementation

We begin this year's results section with the same general reminder we included at the beginning of last year's results section: There is an important distinction between the evaluation of the ISD *initiative* and the outcomes of that initiative in a *single school setting*. The ISD in 2019-20 once again was represented by a single school—not the projected full complement of five schools. Measurement of the impact of the *initiative as a whole* should be based on outcomes at all of those schools, with an expectation that performance across those five schools would reflect variability in the levels of success experienced at each.

Therefore, the evaluation team once again *strongly cautions against evaluating the effectiveness of the initiative as a whole based on two-year outcomes from a single school*. As noted in the previous section, the evaluation team considers the 2018-19 implementation year to be a pilot year and the 2019-20 implementation year to be the true baseline year, with the ISD, its original Operator and school, and future Operators and schools all able to (and expected to) benefit from the lessons learned during the first school's start-up years.

In addition, while the evaluation team understands that it has become common practice in North Carolina for most examinations of school quality to focus on a review of test scores, we believe that the lack of test score data for the 2019-20 school year as a result of cancellation of state testing in spring 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak does not devalue the largely qualitative nature of this year's evaluation. Instead, we believe the non-test data sources described above still provide a deep, qualitative assessment of Year 2 at Southside-Ashpole. Furthermore, we believe these findings reveal avenues for strengthening ISD implementation in subsequent years, which we discuss in greater detail in the **Recommendations for the ISD Initiative as a Whole** section at the end of the report.

General Context for the Year Two Evaluation

Many of the school's educators indicated that, for them, much of Year 2 was about responding to the challenges left behind at the end of Year 1:

> The expectations have gotten higher. . . . [W]e have to play catch-up for what we didn't do last year. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> [E]verybody's working together. . . . [I]t's like a puzzle being put together, and the puzzle's filling in. . . . [Everything we are doing is] to try to just fit all the pieces to the puzzle, but everything that's being done, it's just to help make [our] school better. Morale is better, everything's better, and it just keeps improving. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

In several different ways, that dedication to responding to lingering challenges resulted in a number of observable, mostly positive differences between Year 1 and Year 2. In some cases, these differences also can be attributed either directly or indirectly to changes in school and Operator leadership.

We are caution to conclude, however, that *all* of these changes are a result of renewed energy or new leadership—some of the improvement also likely is a result of "letting the house settle," so to speak. Readers should bear in mind that school and Operator staff had no planning time before the start of Year 1, and Year 1 also was characterized by a significant amount of within-year leadership transition at all levels. While planning time for Year 2 was not much longer for the new leadership than it had been for the previous leadership, Year 2 educators at least had the Year 1 experiences to guide them during their initial planning and transition period.

The uniqueness of the Southside-Ashpole experience as the first ISD school notwithstanding, we suggest that stakeholders and policy-makers think of the combined two-year period as an overall argument for providing more planning time before opening a new ISD school, as well as for designating Year 1 at any ISD school as a pilot year, with Year 2 being the baseline year and Year 3 being the first year to measure changes in outcomes. This recommendation is reflected in the ***Data Collection and Analysis*** section, above.

Academic Growth and Achievement

Q1: Does the ISD improve student- and school-level academic growth and achievement?

Review of Results from Year One

> *The Southside-Ashpole Operator implemented new mathematics and Language Arts curricula—Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) and Eureka Math—in 2018-19. Most teachers liked the curricula and said they provided the structure and content necessary for improving student knowledge and skills, but some believed many students were not academically ready at the start of the school year to benefit fully. Teachers also noted that some North Carolina Standards were not covered by the new curricula.*
>
> *Overall, academic performance for Southside-Ashpole in 2018-19 changed little from performance over the four years preceding ISD placement. There appeared to be gains in mathematics alongside losses in reading; however, when we compared results for the same students across two years (e.g., 2018 Grade 3 vs 2019 Grade 4) instead of results for the same grade level (e.g., 2018 Grade 3 vs 2019 Grade 3), mathematics gains were less compelling.*

Year Two Academic Outcomes

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.

Since test scores were not available for Year 2, we focus here instead on educators' approaches to improving academic outcomes.

A Focus on Growth over Proficiency. The academic conversation across all grades at the school—from the principal through to the support staff—has evolved from focusing on proficiency (which typically is low at an ISD-qualifying school and can be demoralizing) to focusing on growth (for teachers and students alike). This transition includes an emphasis on student portfolios, teacher-student conversations about growth, and even school-sponsored "Growth Parties."

> [W]e discuss student data . . . as a staff or maybe in our teams. And basically what we're talking about is . . . [helping] our students . . . understand what it means to grow, to have that growth, [as well as] what it means to be proficient. . . . Last year, they didn't know what it means to grow with a score or be proficient, and now they do. And how we know that they do is because they're coming up to us and telling us about, "I made such and such growth on our [formative test], and this is where I need to be by the next time I take our math assessment." (Support Staff, Spring 2020)

> [B]efore, all [the students] knew was [whether they were] proficient or not, and that made them feel so bad about themselves. . . . So now they get excited. Even though they may be on the lower level, they're seeing that they're going up and that makes them very happy. (Support Staff, Spring 2020)

> [The principal] wants to see . . . growth . . . in the students as well as the teachers. . . . [H]e wants . . . faculty and staff to grow as well as the students. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Data-driven Instruction. In order to keep the focus on growth, student test data—and how to use it effectively—has become a more prominent feature not just in core subject area classroom planning but also in Specials classrooms, with students, and even with parents.

> I'm trying to always implement how I can incorporate the writing, incorporate the reading, incorporate the math [into my Specials classes]. But [the focus on student data] . . . helps [even more] with the pullout time because [core teachers are] telling you specifically, "Hey, Johnny is suffering in this area. This is where I need you to help him out." (Specials Teacher, Spring 2020)

MAP Testing (Tracking Skills Growth alongside Proficiency). The focus on student data inevitably requires testing. At Southside-Ashpole, that has translated into the required state benchmark tests (NC Check-Ins) and state end-of-grade tests, but also Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth tests.[16] Teachers have received training on how to incorporate MAP testing data into their planning, but some question whether the additional round of tests is worth the instructional time lost.

> We've had training on [MAP], how to . . . really use those [scores] effectively to support growth between each [state] benchmark. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

[16] https://www.nwea.org/map-growth/

> I think we do it a little bit too much. . . . We [already] have Check-Ins, state tests. So for example, next week, instead of doing our [regular] instruction, we're going to be doing MAP tests. Then the week after that, we're going to be doing [more] tests. . . . So, that's two weeks of instruction time. . . . (Teacher, Spring 2020)

MAP tests are not directly aligned with state standards, but NWEA has completed a concordance that links their products with North Carolina third through eighth grade standards. Though requested for Year 1 and Year 2, MAP results for neither year have been shared with the evaluation team.

Additional Caveats for Future Academic Outcome Analyses

Academic Growth in Legacy Students versus New Students. Paralleling a note from our first report, Southside-Ashpole educators once again distinguished between the challenges of working with students relatively new to Southside-Ashpole and the challenges working with students who attended Southside-Ashpole before its conversion to an ISD school. We believe it is important to highlight this distinction once again, as it likely will characterize any future ISD conversions as well. Though their perceptions have not been uniform, most Southside-Ashpole educators believe that the transition to the ISD setting has been less challenging academically for students with little to no pre-ISD experience at the school; students who had been at Southside-Ashpole for several years prior to the conversion have had a much harder time adjusting to the new expectations and new approaches to teaching and learning.

> I love it if the kids start off with [our curriculum] in kindergarten, [but] the kids I have now . . . have not, so it's been a struggle. . . . I've been struggling—not teaching it, but getting the kids to understand it. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> I feel like, academically, it has not been fair for the [older] students, because [their Southside-Ashpole experience has been] almost like buying a new car, and you pay for this new car all the way up until you're halfway done with the car, and [then] the car company said, "You know, I'm taking this car back and I'm going to give you another car, and it's going to be [more expensive]." (Teacher, Spring 2020)

Challenges Comparing Academic Growth across Years. As a result, we continue to caution against using an ISD school's overall proficiency or growth scores to assess the impact of the initiative until at least the majority of the tested students at the ISD school have been with the school for at least three years (for example, long enough for tested fifth graders to have been at the school since the start of formal state End-of-Grade testing [third grade]).

In addition, we remind readers that the population at Southside-Ashpole—as likely will be the case for any future ISD schools—remained in flux in Year 2, with student transfers in and out of the school making comparisons between (for instance) last year's fourth grade class and this year's fifth grade class (with nearly one in three of the Year 1 fourth graders leaving before the start of their fifth grade year) challenging (Table 3, following page).

Table 3. Student Turnover Rate, by Grade, Year 1 to Year 2

ISD Y1 Population (2018-19)

Grade	*Total*	*New to School*	*Returned*		*Did Not Return*	
KG	50	23*	27*	79.4%	7*	20.6%
1	47	7	40	83.3%	8	16.7%
2	46	12	34	81.0%	8	19.0%
3	45	12	33	82.5%	7	17.5%
4	42	5	37	86.0%	6	14.0%
5	39	3	36	83.7%	7	16.3%
	269	62	207		43	

ISD Y2 Population (2019-20)

Grade	*Total*	*New to School*	*Returned*		*Did Not Return*	
KG	46	46	---	---	---	---
1	37	0	37	74.0%	13	26.0%
2	40	4	36	76.6%	11	23.4%
3	40	4	36	78.3%	10	21.7%
4	34	0	34	75.6%	11	24.4%
5	32	3	29	69.0%	13	31.0%
	229	57	172		58	

* Southside-Ashpole had pre-school students in 2017-18 (34 students)

Note: Pre-ISD Total Population (2017-18) = 258 (292 including Pre-School)

These caveats should be kept in mind not only for the quantitative results referenced in the Year 1 report and any subsequent reports but also for the qualitative sections that follow—while changes between Year 1 and Year 2 are attributable in part to changes made by school and Operator staff, they also are attributable in part to changes in the student and staff populations. In other words, Year 1 Southside-Ashpole and Year 2 Southside Ashpole are not wholly comparable schools.

Curriculum

As we did in the Year 1 report, we begin our qualitative investigation of some of the possible factors behind the Year 2 academic outcomes and the changes between Year 1 and Year 2 with a brief review of the ongoing adoption and implementation of the school's new curricula.

Before the start of the 2018-19 school year, Southside-Ashpole implemented new mathematics and Language Arts curricula. The curricula—Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) and Eureka Math—were chosen by the Operator. Since none of the teachers at Southside-Ashpole had used either curriculum before, the school and Operator had planned to provide professional

development throughout the year to support implementation of both curricula; however, some teachers indicated during Year 1 focus groups that professional development was not sufficient.

Strengths. Though not a change from Year 1, it is important to note that teachers across grade levels indicated that they have some flexibility in terms of the materials and instructional approaches they can use for covering the curriculum. The difference in Year 2 appears to be that communication about that flexibility was more consistent from leadership. In addition, Specials teachers collectively have made a concerted effort to incorporate academic core curriculum elements into their lessons, primarily in support of the larger school effort to raise growth scores.

> [Whole staff meetings have been] geared towards, of course, the test scores but also how to implement classwork and different things we can do in our Specials class to make sure that [the students are] getting all the content. . . . It helped just because . . . we had never seen students' test scores and how that may affect what that student does [in] art, music or PE. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Core teachers share their lesson plans, which helps Specials teachers to make connections between the core curriculum and what is being taught in Specials classes. Specials teachers noted that, as a result, they have discovered a number of ways in which their curricula and the core curriculum connect.

Challenges. As noted in Year 1, however, the disconnect between the Operator's chosen curriculum and the state standards continues to be a challenge. This disconnect has been most pronounced in lower grades, science, and social studies.

> CKLA does not align with what we're being tested on. It does not align with our standards. For instance, ...[a]t the beginning of the year, we had a unit [on a particular social studies topic], and that unit was, like, five weeks long. So [for] five weeks out of a nine-week block . . . you want me to spend time on [this particular topic, even though it is] nowhere on our state test? [T]hat's five weeks that I have . . . taken away from good instruction I could have been giving to focus on a curriculum that does not align with anything that we're [tested on]. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> There is some good to it. But if we're going to be about growth and positive change, we really have to be in align[ment] with . . . [the] real-life tests we want these kids to do well on, and in order to do well on them we have to teach a curriculum that's going to be in align[ment with] what they're trying to [measure] on this test. [But] I [don't mean that we should] teach to the test. That's not what we do. . . . [A]fter this test is long gone, I want you to be able to know punctuation. I want you to know grammar. I want you to know how to indent a paragraph. I want you to know these things. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> The curriculum is not aligned with North Carolina standards. . . . [in particular, t]he social studies curriculum and the science curriculum, especially for the lower grades. . . . [O]ut

> of the 12 units . . . that we have to teach for CKLA, three of them align with the [state] standards. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

In addition, some teachers indicated that, while they think the curriculum is good, it does not lend itself well to differentiation.

> [T]o meet the needs of the children, the curriculum that we're using is great. I mean, it's Common Core Knowledge, and it is filled with knowledge. It is *filled* with knowledge. The one thing that I don't like about it is it does not really allow for differentiated instruction. It's just not . . . organized the way I would like for a curriculum to be organized. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

We note these challenges not to posit that the chosen curriculum is on its own ineffective or inappropriate but instead to suggest that state officials consider the ramifications of allowing, on the one hand, total curriculum freedom for ISD school Operators while, on the other hand, holding their schools accountable via state tests that measure progress on state standards that their chosen curricula may not support.

Learning Conditions

Q2. Does the ISD improve learning conditions, including changes in student behavior?

Review of Results from Year One

> *The Operator and administration at Southside-Ashpole introduced new student behavior policies and procedures in 2018-19, but, in parallel with the observations above about student academic adjustments, teachers indicated that some older students—as well as some teachers—struggled to adjust to the changes. Some teachers acknowledged that they instituted their own classroom-level discipline policies and procedures. Students were split regarding their comfort at school, with only about half of responding students agreeing that they felt safe at school (59%) or had an adult to help them if they were bullied outside of school (54%), and only two-thirds agreeing that they had an adult to help them if they felt threatened at school.*

Student Behavior and School Safety

Overall, staff believe that student discipline improved at Southside-Ashpole in Year 2—"Discipline is great this year" (Teacher, Fall 2019)—with at least some of that improvement attributed to a new approach to discipline that has more staff and administration on the same page than was the case during Year 1. A key factor—both in the improvement in behavior and in the greater alignment between staff and administration—appears to be a more measured approach to discipline that includes a wider array of disciplinary outcome options.

> I think [administration is] thinking about the kid's education before [they] dish[] out a consequence. I've worked at schools where they were really quick to suspend, and

> that's not always the best route to take, because if you have children that are struggling, keeping them out of school was not going to help them, and I think that [they] seriously consciously think[] about that before [they] give[] the consequence. Not that they don't get a consequence, but it doesn't always lead to suspension. (Staff, Fall 2019)

> [L]ast year, [misbehaving students] might just be in the office, just sitting, instead of having instruction going on. You don't see that [this year]. . . . You don't see students in an office, you don't see them being bounced constantly to somebody else's room to just sit for the whole day. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

Some teachers also contend that another difference in Year 2 has been staff changes from Year 1:

> [T]his year, we seem to have more qualified teachers that can handle their discipline as well as their class[es]. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

However, as they did in Year 1, and once again similar to their observations about the differences between the *academic* successes of older and younger Southside-Ashpole students, teachers and staff also indicated that improvements in student behavior are attributable to a change in the number of pre-ISD students still at Southside-Ashpole.

> I think last year some of our issues stemmed from our students being older, so now that we have a younger group of students, I think that's what's made [discipline] a little bit better as well. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

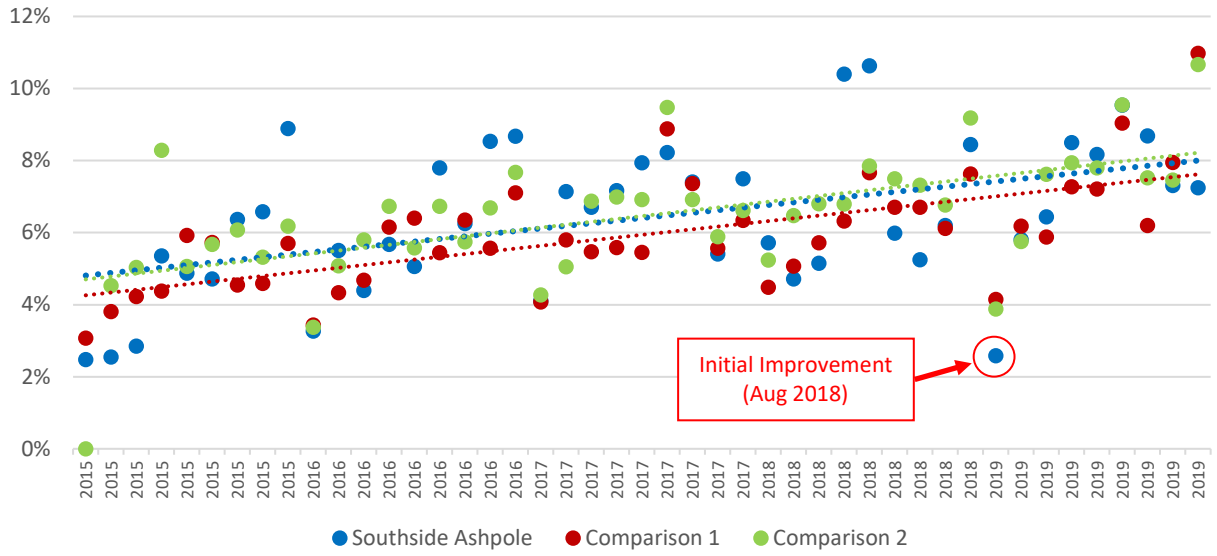
Better behavior also may reflect changes in broader areas like overall school safety. In Year 2 surveys, more students reported feeling safe at school (93% in the fall; 95% in the spring) than they did in Year 1 surveys (59%), and more also reported that they believe that they can go to a teacher/adult in the building if they are being bullied or threatened (80% [fall] / 81% [spring], versus 67% [Year 1]).

Student Attendance

The Year 1 report showed that, ahead of conversion to ISD (school years 2014-15 through 2017-18), the multi-year student absenteeism trajectory for Southside-Ashpole was similar to that of its closest comparison schools—that is, high (relative to other elementary schools) and trending upward across school years. This report was completed well before the end of Year 2, and attendance figures for Year 2 are largely unmeasurable after February 2020, due to school closure as a result of the Spring 2020 coronavirus outbreak, so we are able to provide only a retrospective look at Year 1 student attendance here, along with some qualitative indicators about attendance in Year 2.

Year 1 attendance initially showed signs of significant improvement over pre-ISD attendance rates, but those initial improvements quickly gave way to familiar patterns of higher rates that also increased across the year (Figure 2, following page).

Figure 2. Pre- and Post-ISD Student Absentee Rates, by Month, Southside-Ashpole and Comparison Schools, 2014-15 through 2018-19



Even with incomplete data for 2019-20, we encourage state officials to review early-year attendance figures to determine whether this multi-year trend persisted in Year 2 or showed any signs of improvement.

There were a few Year 2 indicators that attendance may, indeed, have improved. For instance, one bus driver contended that the students on her bus appeared to be more interested in going to school than they did in Year 1:

> I drive the children this year and they're more interested in coming to school than [they were] last year. . . . [Our administration] does a lot to bring that [positive] atmosphere to the school. . . . and then when that happens, the children, they like coming to school. . . . (Staff, Fall 2019)

Perhaps more compellingly, student surveys supported her observations, with more Year 2 students (93% [fall] / 81% [spring], versus 72% [Year 1]) agreeing that they enjoy going to school.

Parent surveys also suggest a growing value among parents in the importance of making sure that their students get to school, with three out of four (74%) in fall 2019 agreeing that attending school regularly is "absolutely essential" to their children's success, with the level of agreement growing to four out of five (79%) in spring 2020.

On a somewhat related note, even though there was an overall dip in enrollment between Year 1 and Year 2 across all grades (down to 229 [at the time of this report] from 269 in Year 1), enrollments in lower grades started to climb across Year 2, which teachers took as a good sign that people were beginning to see positive changes in the school:

> We've gained more students [since the fall]. . . . [T]hat's exciting to me because people are seeing a change in our school, so they want to bring their kids here. I think that's a very big bonus. (Lower-Grade Teacher, Spring 2020)

Teacher Attendance

Equally as important as student attendance is teacher attendance, with the enacting legislation making a special point to require measurement of teacher absenteeism and chronic absenteeism at ISD schools. Eleven of Southside-Ashpole's 15 teachers (73%) returned for Year 2. In addition, during Year 2, there was only one teacher personnel change. Three of the five Year 1 Education Partners (instructional support staff) returned for Year 2, as did the school's counselor and one Exceptional Children teacher. A second Exceptional Children position was added for Year 2, with a different person filling that position in fall 2019 and spring 2020. A Technology Facilitator position also was added by spring 2020.

Data on historical and current teacher absenteeism rates were not available for inclusion in this report.[17]

Faculty and staff noted that a contributing factor in high teacher attendance in Year 2 was a shared perception of a change in the overall atmosphere at the school:

> [The school atmosphere this year is] more positive. . . . It's more enjoyable this year, being able to do your job and . . . it makes a difference having the help [we need]. You look forward to it. It's not a dread of, "Hey Lord, here's another day. Just let's get through." It's just a more positive atmosphere. . . . (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> When you have administration that is . . . active . . . and interactive, it makes you want to come to work. I mean, I'm telling you, [grade level] can be stressful, but [not] when you have administration who is right behind you, boosting you. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

School-Community Engagement

Q3. Does the ISD contribute to changes in school-community engagement?

Review of Results from Year One

> *Both the ISD and Southside-Ashpole made changes to how the school engaged with parents and the community, and a high percentage of surveyed parents reported that they felt welcomed at the school (82%), felt comfortable talking with administrators (71%), and felt comfortable talking to teachers (76%). However, only about half of all*

[17] In a September 2019 presentation to the State Board of Education (https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=188144&MID=5735), the ISD provided some preliminary teacher attendance data for the start of the 2019-20 school year.

parents (53%) indicated that the school provided them with clear information about what their children were learning in school.

Changes in Year Two

Strengths. Overall, several signs indicate that parent engagement continued to improve in Year 2. One important ingredient in this trend is better parent familiarity with the school and its processes—in part a result of time and exposure, but also of ongoing work in this area on the part of the school. More than eight out of ten parents agreed in fall 2019 that they felt comfortable talking to administrators (89%) and teachers (84%), and both of those numbers increased by spring 2020 (100% and 93%, respectively)—all up from spring 2019.

At the classroom level, teachers believe this comfort stems from parents knowing teachers better in Year 2 and becoming more familiar with and supportive of teacher expectations.

> I think the parents have gotten more of a feel [for] us. . . . I think the biggest thing for me is being willing to speak with the parents and let them know what's going on with their student in school. For me, I think it's more [about forming] personal, one-on-one relationships. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Another important contributing factor appears to be improvement in the school's communications with parents. Teachers noted that communications were clearer, more frequent, and more diverse in format in Year 2, including the addition of a monthly newsletter.

> I think there's more communication this year versus from last year. We do utilize our calling system a lot more than what we did last year, as far as calling out and sending messages to the parents. Of course, we did send notes home last year[, and w]e are still continuing doing that this year, but our teachers, a lot of them have apps on their phones now that [give them an additional] way of communication with the parents[. S]ome of them didn't do that last year. So there's more communication this year than there was last year with parents. (Staff, Fall 2019)

Parents notice the difference, with 79% agreeing in fall 2019 that the school provides clear information about what their children are learning in school, climbing to 86% in spring 2020—much higher than numbers from the previous year (a little more than half).

That improved communication has helped parents feel more welcome at the school, with 94% agreeing in fall 2019 that they felt welcomed, increasing to 100% of survey respondents in spring 2020.

> The parents feel like they have the freedom to come out and be accepted more this year. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> I love when I walk in [to the school] and this team . . . up front . . . their smiles are so welcoming. You feel like you belong here and you should come in, and we get the same feedback from the community. People that come in and they say, "It's so much

> different. . . . [Y]ou can talk to the people. They're approachable," and last year they didn't feel that. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Teachers at all grade levels reported that the tone was set early on, when the school opted for a block party instead of a traditional open house to start the year.

Finally, many teachers and staff attribute the improvement in parent relations to the community's appreciation for and comfort with school leadership. The school Director, in particular, made significant efforts to form those connections through both direct and indirect actions.

> [The approachability of the director] does [make a difference], because he made them feel welcome and the door was open for them to enter any time. . . . (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> He also sees the need in the community, like . . . in December[, when he arranged to take students to see Santa. He sees and he knows that there are kids here that, if we don't take them to see Santa, they won't get to see Santa. He knows the need in the community because he's from an area like this. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Challenges. There are at least two persistent school-parent relationship challenges, however. The first challenge is achieving a critical mass of parent volunteers, though current trends indicate that may no longer be a challenge by the end of the school's third year. The school made strides in 2019-20, with parent volunteering formalized and organized, and with numbers increasing across the year, but participation has not yet reached optimal levels.

> We've . . . had more volunteers to come in and help us out this year. . . . [W]e've tried. We've had parent nights and things like that, and [now] some of them are involved. We have volunteer programs and whatnot for our classrooms. . . . I would honestly say the school is really trying and we've done a lot [to try to increase parent participation]. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

The second challenge is the much larger problem of overcoming persistent pockets of wariness in the community about the ISD concept—a wariness strengthened in part by the tensions that characterized the second half of Year 1.

> Because of [their] past experiences [with] the school and the history that led up to ISD being formed here, a lot of the parents have said negative things to each other around the children. So, because of those conversations, they're kind of standoffish when it comes to the things we're trying to do. . . . [You've] got to understand, this is a whole new faculty and staff here, whole new administration, [running the school in] a whole new way. So, they're used to what happened last year, year before that, and prior to the state coming in. [T]rying to [increase] that morale in them again is hard. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Both challenges are important at the individual school level, but they are much more important at the global ISD level, and point up one of the major stumbling blocks any new ISD school likely will encounter upon opening: Overcoming the doubts and fears stirred up by the conversion of what may have been perceived as a school owned by the community to a school now "owned" by outsiders.

School Culture

Q4. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the culture of schooling both in and outside of the ISD?

Q4a. Does the ISD contribute to an overall change in the culture of schooling in ISD schools?

Q4b. Does the ISD change approaches to ensuring sustainable, high-quality staffing in ISD schools?

Q4c. Does the ISD change approaches to leadership in ISD schools?

In addition to the lack of ISD-era data for measuring longitudinal changes in the culture of the school, the majority of teachers and administrators did not work at the school in previous years, so most only had access to limited information for making before-and-after school culture comparisons. The notes below represent observations from administrators, teachers, and parents primarily related to changes within the ISD time period across the first two years, with additional comments about changes from the pre-ISD period added when feasible.

Review of Results from Year One

Overall School Culture*. Only a few members of the 2018-19 staff had been at Southside-Ashpole in previous years, so most estimates of cultural changes were speculative at best. Even so, there was general agreement among teachers and administrators that there were positive shifts in student attitudes and behaviors. This positive shift was counterbalanced by a growing division among faculty and staff as the year progressed, with some looking to the principal for leadership and others to state-level ISD administration.*

Staffing*. The Operator had a limited amount of time before school opened to assemble a cohesive team of teachers. Teachers added that a lack of support staff and professional development opportunities could impact retention of high-quality staff going forward. Teachers highlighted the availability of classroom resources in particular as one positive area of staff support.*

Leadership Opportunities*. Most teachers (83%) indicated that they were encouraged to take on leadership roles, but one administrator acknowledged that, by the end of the year, leadership primarily was top-down, with limited opportunity for teacher or parent involvement in school decision-making. While most teachers felt that they could approach school leadership with concerns, there also was ongoing tension with respect to some administrative decisions.*

Overall Changes in the Culture of the School: Year Two

Teachers. From the evaluation team's first visits in fall 2019, it was very apparent that the culture of the school had improved from its low point near the end of Year 1. To some extent, this improvement can be attributed to school maturation, but much of the changes were a result of, first, complete leadership turnover at all levels (school, Operator, and state), and, second, intentional efforts to address several of the variables that weakened the school's culture during the second half of Year 1. Staff at all grade levels were quick to share their appreciation of and, in some cases, relief about the notable changes.

> [J]ust walking into the school last year, I could just feel the tension in the school. This year, it's like the weight's been lifted and . . . I don't feel the tension when I walk through the front door anymore, and I want to come to work. (Other Staff, Fall 2019)

> [I]t's nice to fix what the reputation thing was last year. . . . [a]nd show all the good we're doing . . . this year. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> The culture in my opinion is [even] more positive [in Spring 2020] and going into the direction that we feel like a good school should have. . . . (Teacher, Spring 2020)

One of the specific reasons for the change cited by staff at all grade levels is a shift to what many termed a "family-oriented" environment—not just in terms of the value placed on incorporating students' families into daily school life, as noted above, but also the growing feeling of camaraderie among staff.[18]

> I would say our school culture is very family-oriented. Very family-oriented. It's close-knit. Everyone gets along. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> You've got . . . someone that cares. Every one of my [fellow teachers says], "How are you doing? I've thought about you. . . ." Yeah, it's more community. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> You feel like you're family. . . . And you're appreciated, what you do here. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

Most teachers also cited a higher level of positivity, not just among staff but also among students, with each group feeding off of the other's growing enthusiasm.

> I think the whole atmosphere of the employees [has] changed. When you have positive employees and employees that want to motivate the students, then the attitudes of the

[18] As some teachers noted, however, there remains room for improvement in this area, with a few teachers still uncertain of their place in the school as a whole—a carry-over from comments made during Year 1 focus groups: "[S]ome of the teachers don't respect [other teachers]" (Teacher, Fall 2019); "[There] is a certain sector [of teachers] . . . . that come together as a group to collaboratively rebel" (Teacher, Spring 2020).

> students will change. You will see improvement in the attitudes of the students. (Staff, Spring 2020)
>
> The staff grow as much as the students grow. It makes you want to just do more and just be more positive and just make yourself much . . . better. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Teachers and staff also suggested that part of the cultural change is attributable to changes in the students themselves, and in their parents—sometimes because of their positive responses to changes at the school, but also sometimes because the population of the student body is slowly changing as the school loses older students with more pre-ISD experiences at Southside-Ashpole.

> I think the students are more motivated this year . . . to come to school. . . . (Staff, Fall 2019)
>
> I think last year some of our issues stemmed from our students being older, so now that we have a younger group of students, I think that's what's made the culture a little bit better as well. (Teacher, Fall 2019)
>
> [L]ast year there [were] parents that were here that felt they could express their opinion in a violent manner. I have not seen or heard of anything of that nature happening this year, but I think it's because they know . . . they've got rules that you have to abide by and that's the way it is. You know, when your administration is on time and your teachers are on time, your parents can't come in and start screaming at the children in the cafeteria because there's no adult in there. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

By far, however, the most important change in teachers' minds has been the change in the school administration's approach to managing the school. They identified at least three different ways in which administration has positively and directly impacted the school's culture: better organization and consistency; more visibility and openness; and improved communication. In terms of communication in particular, there is a general sense that a greater effort is being made to ensure that all staff know what is coming up for the school, as well as what is going on currently across the school. We include here more quotes from teachers and staff than we do in other sections of this report to better capture the breadth of these opinions:

> I would say [the school is] a lot more organized. . . . [and e]verybody seems to like it a little bit more. (Teacher, Fall 2019)
>
> Any concern that we've had, it's always addressed [by administration] within a day or two, you know? I mean, it's not weeks on end. . . . Quick response is a big thing. (Teacher, Fall 2019)
>
> There was a lot of talk [from administration at the start of the year] about how we could . . . voice our opinions and be a part of the change in this school. And I think the follow-through from fall 'til now is wonderful. (Staff, Spring 2020)

> [Administration is] visible. [The Director] walks the hallway. (Teacher, Fall 2019)
>
> Everything's just communicated better this year. Everybody actually emails you for opportunities and talks to you about opportunities that are out there. (Teacher, Fall 2019)
>
> [Administration] always sends out a weekly memo [about] what to expect every week. . . . And we . . . meet with our staff every Tuesday. Right after school. And you'd better be on time. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Survey responses reflect in particular the perceptions of the school administration's openness to input, with 88% (fall) and 96% (spring) agreeing or strongly agreeing that school leadership asks for staff opinions, and with 94% (fall) and 96% (spring) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they believe they can bring concerns about curriculum, policy, or other decision to someone in school leadership.

Parents and Students. In general, parents and students appear to share the impressions of teachers and staff that school culture has improved. More students in Year 2 than in Year 1 reported that they enjoyed going to school (53% [fall 2019] / 62% [spring 2020] versus 39% [spring 2019]). They also were more likely to indicate that they believed they were treated fairly (86% [fall 2019] / 90% [spring 2020] versus 77% [spring 2019]) and with respect (100% [fall 2019] / 95% [spring 2020] versus 78% [spring 2019]) by adults at their school.

The sense among surveyed parents that their children were safe at the school continued to grow steadily (79% [fall 2019] / 100% [spring 2020] versus 65% [spring 2019]).

Administrators. An administrator summarized how this overall cultural shift may be helping to impact the school academically as well:

> [W]hat I noticed . . . is that[, while another administrator and I] were in an instructional meeting, . . . [the administrator's] radio went off only twice. And that says a lot. Because once you've got that culture and that climate piece in place, you can focus on instruction, you can get in those classrooms and do the observations, you can support the teachers, you can pull students and have those academic conversations. (Administration, Fall 2019)

Changes in Approaches to Ensuring Sustainable, High-Quality Staffing: Year Two

Recruitment. As noted in the summary of Year 1 results above, perhaps the greatest Year 1 challenge was assembling a cohesive team of teachers on a very short timeline. The timeline for the Operator and school administration in Year 2 was a little more forgiving, as was the task of filling all vacancies before the start of the year. Of the 15 Year 1 classroom teachers, only four left or were dismissed between Year 1 and Year 2, and three of the school's five classroom support staff (Educational Partners) carried over from Year 1 to Year 2 as well. There was similar consistency in other instructional and student support roles. As administrators noted,

the turnover, while not substantial, was enough to allow for the school to strengthen the quality and cohesiveness of the staff as a whole:

> One of the biggest factors [in the change between Year 1 and Year 2] was . . . the loss of some staff from the initial year. . . . [W]ith both of us coming in new as administrators, [it was a plus] to be able to hire new staff whose vision more clearly aligns with the vision that [we] want to carry out here at the school. (Administration, Fall 2019)

> I was deliberate and intentional about reaching out to folks within the area who I knew had been able to show results, or who may know of someone who can show results, and that helped out a lot. That way it wasn't just, "Let's just see what's out there and hope somebody applies. . . ." [With a] school like this, you can't hope that someone will apply. You've got to go out and seek those people out. (Administration, Fall 2019)

Observations. The structure for supporting staff and helping them to grow as educators also changed for Year 2. Most teachers noted that classroom walkthroughs were much more frequent in Year 2, with some teachers reporting multiple walkthroughs each day. A few teachers noted that feedback related to those walkthroughs did not become more prevalent until the spring.

> [W]e have our formals where we have the meeting before an evaluation where you go and talk to your administrator [ahead of time and t]hey give you some sort of check sheet to go by. And then you have your smaller ones, your impromptus. Every day is an impromptu evaluation here because our [administrators a]re always circulating. . . . [We s]ee them every day . . . at least three times a day. . . . It's a positive interaction. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

This frequent walkthrough approach was not limited to administrators only; teachers also were encouraged to observe each other's classes.

Formal Evaluations. Administrators used the state evaluation tool for formal evaluations (four or five per year, regardless of years of experience), as well as an internal tool for walkthroughs. All teachers are trained on the rubrics, and teachers in mentor roles use them for their own walkthroughs of their mentored teachers. In general, teachers reported that evaluations were more consistent and complete during Year 2 than they had been during Year 1.

Other Supports. In addition to more frequent and more rigorous evaluations, teachers also had access to a number of in-classroom supports. For beginning teachers, those supports largely came in the form of assigned in-school mentors (a common practice across the state, but not a part of the structure of support during Year 1), as well as a coach affiliated with the University of North Carolina-Pembroke's (UNC-P) chapter of the state's New Teacher Support Program. Experienced teachers also noted an increase in their in-class support:

> I was by myself the majority of the time [last year]. My assistant was pulled, transferred quite a bit for our front office and other places throughout the school. Thus far, this

> year, [that] has only [happened] one time. . . . I've had more support in the classroom than what I had last year and that's made a difference. I just pray it continues. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Professional Development. The third significant change to sustaining high-quality staffing was the expansion of professional development opportunities. Nearly every teacher (94% in the fall; 96% in the spring) agreed or strongly agreed that the professional development offered by the school was relevant to their needs (up from 59% in spring 2019), and several reported that the professional development available to them was more expansive.

> We have the opportunity to go and get help, have the opportunities to go to different conferences to better ourselves. . . .It's just a lot more opportunities. It's opportunity and support. . . . (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Of importance to several teachers, during Year 2 they had support (in terms of both time and funding) for finding and pursuing their own professional development opportunities.

> I think we have more opportunities here for professional development than I've ever had[, and] I have worked at three different school districts. (Staff, Fall 2019)

In addition to what they found on their own, the professional development offered to all teachers was diverse and frequent. One of the topics offered during Year 2 that was singled out by teachers was their training on social-emotional development (provided by UNC-P faculty), which some teachers cited as being significantly impactful on their approach to teaching.

> [UNC-P] did a PD a couple weeks ago about . . . social-emotional well-being. That PD kind of opened my mind to a lot of different aspects that someone who's not brought up in this sort of environment would ignore. It's things that I've been awakened to culturally. . . . A lot of the kids here come from single-parent backgrounds. . . . They need that social-emotional [support]. If they're not getting it at home, at least we can implement it somehow in the school. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

In addition, teachers had access to training directly related to the school's approach to curriculum (CKLA training), assessment (MAP training), and teacher evaluation.

> [With respect to t]he [evaluation] rubric that we have decided on, I . . . have background in training the teachers on those indicators and descriptors in those rubrics. . . . [I]f I do professional development one week on standards and objectives, I'm also here to go in and do observations, looking at that particular indicator. . . . I can go back, differentiate my PD, and work with those teachers that need a little bit more assistance on it. . . . [W]hat's key is that follow-up and that support. Because I find that if teachers feel like they're supported, they're more apt to implement new instructional strategies, or new technology strategies, because they feel like they've got that support. And it's okay if you try it and it doesn't work—we're here to sit down and reflect, and see how we can tweak things to make it work for students. (Administration, Fall 2019)

Not everyone agreed, however, that all of the Year 1 professional development challenges and shortcomings had been resolved. Several teachers commented that the in-school professional development may have exchanged depth for breadth, with training in some critical areas of development need (such as the ones noted above) coming at the expense of little to no training in other areas of need (such as classroom management and Eureka math).

Challenges. There were at least two challenges at Southside-Ashpole in Year 2 with respect to sustaining high-quality teaching that may be useful for planners in the next round of ISD schools to consider as they design their approaches to transforming their schools.

The most persistent potential challenge to the retention of high-quality staff remains the significant time commitment required of teachers at Southside-Ashpole—a challenge that may appear in other ISD schools as well, if their plans include extended school days. In addition to an extended day (Southside-Ashpole's school day is longer than a traditional school day), some teachers noted that the demands on their time during the day wore on them.

> But I do want to say that my biggest concern is just time. It's a lot and . . . I know this is pretty much everywhere[, not just at Southside-Ashpole, and] I . . . was expecting it here, but it would be nice to have [more] people come in and assist. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> I think they should bring more people in. Like . . . [more] TAs [teacher assistants] to help out [and help] manage . . . class size and stuff like that. And when I say TAs I mean specifically subject-matter TAs. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

In addition to the high time demand experienced by all staff, non-core teachers in particular were stretched thin, with each of them called upon to provide academic support for students struggling in core subject classes. These additional responsibilities often cost them their available planning and personal time.

> So, we kind of aid the teachers. . . . like maybe [in] reading, or if a child is having trouble with spelling. Yesterday . . . one of the teachers . . . wanted me to take a few students out just to help them with adding because they were having some trouble with that. . . . So, of course we know we have to do [some of our] planning outside of work as well, but our planning period's so small. . . . [I]f I want to do something specific for [my class] today, how do I fit that in the schedule if I'm doing this, that, and the other? (Teacher, Fall 2019)

The second issue is one common to educators everywhere, but one that still merits consideration in the context of ISD, given the added challenges of finding, recruiting, and retaining high-quality staff who can help turn around one of the persistently lowest-performing schools in the state: teacher compensation.

> I think that we have some very highly-qualified educators here, I do. [But] I think that because our job is [more challenging relative to a job in a] normal setting, I do think

> there should be a financial incentive to it. . . . [W]e opted to come into turmoil. So [to get others to] tak[e] the turmoil and turn it around, I think that there should be some extra incentive. . . . (Teacher, Fall 2019)

ISD schools share the same budget limitations as all other public schools, but the added demands of the turnaround challenge may merit careful thinking on the part of policy-makers and Operators with respect to whether and to what degree some of those limited resources may need to be redirected to staff pay in order to attract and retain the teachers they will need to be successful in their turnaround efforts.

Changes in Approaches to Leadership: Year Two

Another Year 2 observation shared almost universally among faculty and staff (100% in the fall and dropping only fractionally to 96% in the spring) was that opportunities for leadership are plentiful, and that participation is encouraged by school leadership. Many teachers (83%) shared similar impressions in Year 1, but for the most part those leadership opportunities either never were initiated or faded as the year went on. In Year 2, however, the opportunities appeared to match the intent.

The primary vehicle for these leadership opportunities was an extensive number of teacher- and staff-led committees.

> We have committees we didn't have last year. Staff have much more input on what's happening in the building and how it should happen. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> And when you have those committee meetings, the [administration] is there, but [administration is] just *there*. I mean, [the administrator is] part of the group[, but] it's not like it's a dictatorship where the leader says, "This is what we're going to do, and this, and this." You know, they want your input. We work together as a whole team to come up with something that everybody is happy with. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Overall, faculty and staff appeared to value and appreciate the opportunities provided by the committees. In particular, teachers and staff said the committees gave them more opportunities to get to know one another and learn how to work together, as well as opportunities to feel like they have a voice in school decision-making.

> [B]uilding these different committees that we have now this year has given our employees, our teachers, a chance to speak out and voice their opinions about things, where last year they were not [able to do so]. . . . This year, they voice their concerns, they talk about their likes, their dislikes, and they talk about how we can improve different things that's going on in our school [as a result of] having these committees. (Staff, Spring 2020)

> Well, the committees . . . give the staff the opportunity to get to know other staff better. And . . . if you know somebody better, you don't mind working with them. You

> know, our relationship is growing. . . . [W]e're getting to know each other in our committees. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

Teachers indicated that the end result was not only greater leadership distribution but also an improvement in overall school morale.

The committee approach to distributing leadership had some drawbacks, however, the most important of which was the time required—and as the commodity most often cited by teachers as being in shortest supply at the school, this drawback was not inconsequential.

> It's a lot more work. (Teacher, Fall 2019)

> It's a lot of work. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

> We meet a lot. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

Recommendations for the ISD Initiative as a Whole

Beyond the success or failure of any single school within its jurisdiction, the central question the ISD faces is, "What is required to establish, build, and run a non-contiguous school district?" The formative recommendations below, derived from the findings described in earlier sections, are intended to help inform the state's efforts to address that question.

As a reminder, and as this report and the Year 1 report have repeated often, because the first years of ISD evaluation were based on data collected from one school only, most of the formative findings presented above are relevant only at the individual school level.

Even given the limitations of a single-school sample size, however, the first years of evaluation work also continued to produce findings that may be useful for ISD implementers and other stakeholders, potential participating schools and districts, and potential operators more broadly. Though last year's and this year's formative recommendations are more general than those presented earlier in this report, the same caveats apply: Because they are based on only two years of observations and data collection, on data collected at only one school, and on data from the first two years of operation—each year under a different administration—the degree of confidence with which we assert their relevance to ISD more broadly—whether now or in the future—is limited.

We begin this final section with a review of the formative recommendations we made in the first report, followed by new formative recommendations based on our Year 2 evaluation work. We end the report with identification of what we believe are three necessary conditions that must be met in order for the ISD initiative to inspire the outcomes at any of its schools—current or future—for which the initiative was formed in the first place.

Review of Year One Formative Recommendations

- *Despite flat Year 1 test results, Southside-Ashpole did appear to make limited strides toward supporting future academic growth, particularly in early grades. To support more rapid and more transparent academic turnaround in future ISD schools, the ISD should consider requiring Operators to:*
    - *Propose and pursue bolder and more comprehensive academic changes;*
    - *Consider the measurements that will be used to determine school success when choosing curricula, and the degree to which they do and do not align; and*
    - *Prepare annual school-level reports.*
- *Successful turnaround takes time. As a result, the ISD should:*
    - *Increase pre-opening planning time for Operators; and*
    - *Set realistic expectations for early indicators of success in the early stages of school conversion.*

- *Successful turnaround also 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 (including establishment of a common definition of "charter-like flexibility"[19]); and*
    - *Identify partners with credible connections to each ISD school community.*

New Formative Recommendations from Year Two

Address the Disconnect between Curriculum Freedom and State Standards-Based Assessments

Our first set of formative recommendations is an extension of recommendations made in the Year 1 report. There is merit in letting the Operator choose a curriculum that best fits the Operator's proposed approach to school turnaround. There is also, however, a legislative mandate to quantitatively evaluate progress at ISD schools. Without some alignment between the ISD school's curriculum and the state's standards-aligned (as opposed to standards-neutral, skills-based) measures of academic progress, measurement of the degree to which an ISD school is making progress academically with students will continue to be difficult to estimate accurately. The problem will be compounded as more schools enter the ISD, each with its own curriculum.

- As long as ISD schools continue to have the freedom to choose their curricula, and as long as their success continues to be measured at least in part against state standards, as part of their application process, Operators should develop documents that demonstrate alignments between the curricula they choose and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study
- In addition, Operators should include in their proposals plans for how they will provide the supplementary instruction and materials necessary to close any gaps between their curricula and state standards.
- Ultimately, however, policy-makers should resolve the issue either by: a) requiring ISD schools to adhere to curricula that directly support state standards; or b) evaluating

[19] The most relevant statute—***115C-75.7. Selection of innovative schools*** (https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-75.7.pdf)—does not include the phrase "charter-like flexibility"; however, this phrase was the phrase used most often by each leadership entity (Principal, Operator, and state Agency) during focus groups and interviews conducted for this evaluation to define—differently—the Operator's parameters. Subsection (e) ("Waivers for Innovative Schools") states in part: "[I]nnovative schools shall be required to comply with, at a minimum, the statutory requirements for charter schools as provided in Article 14A of this Chapter. . . . [T]he State Board of Education may grant a requested waiver of State laws or rules for an innovative school pursuant to this subsection, except for a waiver of State laws or rules applicable to children with disabilities and any of the other requirements set forth in this subsection."

academic progress at each ISD school independently of all other ISD schools, using tests that directly reflect the curriculum in place at each school.

Measure Progress for Legacy Students and New ISD Students Separately

Our second formative recommendation is related to the first, in that it addresses another aspect of the measurement challenge. Across our two years at Southside-Ashpole, a consistent theme in the observations and reflections of current and past faculty and staff has been that the school has been in many ways two schools: One school for students new to the building and to the post-ISD structure, and one school for students with a long history in the building that pre-dates the presence of the ISD. We believe there is merit in this characterization and that it is likely to be true for future ISD schools as well.

By most accounts, on both quantitative and qualitative measures, the responses of these two groups of students to the school's new structure and approach have been quite different, and not surprisingly so. Students new to a school do not arrive at the beginning of a new school year with well-developed schema for how they will interact with the components of that school—from staff to curricula to behavioral expectations to general school procedures. Consequently, they develop those schema and their approach to interacting with that school environment based on the structures put in place by the post-ISD school community. On the other hand, students with more experience at the pre-ISD version of the school will find it much more challenging to make the necessary adjustments to experience success in what can at times seem like a radically different environment.

For example, several upper-grade teachers reported in Year 1 and Year 2 that many of their students struggled to adjust to the new curriculum because their prior academic exposure had not prepared them for success in a new curriculum environment. With so many other challenges to address at a chronically failing school, they contended that there were few opportunities to help those students close enough academic gaps to benefit from the curriculum. On the other hand, teachers in lower grades were consistently positive across years in their assessment of their impact on their students.

Therefore, for at least the first two or three years of each ISD school's existence, we recommend that assessments of the school's progress be disaggregated, when reasonable, to reflect the progress of these two student groups separately, in addition to being assessed jointly. While it is reasonable to expect that conversion to an ISD school should help all students, regardless of their prior experience with the school, and while school outcomes always should be assessed at the school level as well, additional breakdowns by length of student tenure at the school may help to identify positive trends in certain areas or with certain sub-populations that otherwise might not be discernible in the outcomes of the school as a whole during its first few years in the ISD.

Necessary Conditions for Successful Continuation of the ISD Initiative

We believe that the formative recommendations above and in the Year 1 report are necessary for improving the overall success of the initiative, but they are not sufficient. Therefore, as we close out this Year 2 report and our two-year evaluation, we believe it is both appropriate and imperative to also surface three additional challenges that are not specific to Southside-Ashpole in particular but that our time at Southside-Ashpole has suggested may be embedded in the underlying structure of the initiative as a whole. Because all three are related to the overall structure of the ISD initiative and not to implementation specifics at the first ISD school, nor to implementation choices made by any individual associated with the ISD, current or past, we believe that addressing all three will be necessary before the ISD initiative as a whole—not just individual ISD schools in specific years—will be able to succeed.

We recognize that the state already has made significant changes to the structure of the initiative as a result of Session Law 2019-248 (**Appendix C**), but most of these changes only begin to address the underlying tensions that have dogged the initiative across its first two years. Though (as we have acknowledged throughout both evaluation reports) our experience has been limited to only one small school over a limited amount of time, we believe that these structural concerns are significant enough to recommend that the state consider ending the ISD initiative unless all three are addressed.

The ISD Structure Needs to be Supported by an Underlying Robust Theory of Change

This report highlights several successes at Southside-Ashpole during Year 2, both in terms of improvements in student learning conditions and in school working conditions. In almost every instance, however, this success is not a result of structural elements unique to the ISD. Had placement in the ISD been the mechanism, at least some of these changes likely would have at least started to manifest during Year 1. The changes at Southside-Ashpole in Year 2 are attributable almost exclusively to changes in school personnel.

Without a vetted, tested, and detailed Theory of Change to guide turnaround at ISD schools—to implement successfully the Vision and Mission described in the **Introduction**—the success or failure of any given ISD school likely will continue to hinge on the strengths of the individuals leading each school.[20] By their nature, ISD schools are fragile educational ecosystems in which even the slightest change can cause disruptions (whether positive or negative) more significant than the disruptions similar changes would make in schools with fewer academic challenges. The dramatic differences between Year 1 and Year 2 at Southside-Ashpole offer direct evidence of this volatility (which, fortunately for Southside-Ashpole, was positive volatility). As a

[20] The preliminary Logic Model included in **Appendix D** was used to guide the development of the evaluation and is not a Theory of Change. In addition, it was created before the beginning of the initiative and has not been revisited, modified, or expanded to reflect learnings from the first two years of the initiative.

consequence, any successes achieved under one leadership regime are in no way guaranteed to continue, should leadership change once again.

In its current incarnation, ISD is less a comprehensive initiative or intervention and more a re-staffing strategy. Consequently, the outcomes at Southside-Ashpole in Year 2 likely were achievable under a number of different extant turnaround options that include the option to change staffing (for example, designation as a Restart school, conversion to a Laboratory School, or conversion to a charter school).

Southside-Ashpole's transformation from Year 1 to Year 2 can provide a good starting-point—but only a starting-point; there will be no one-size-fits-all solutions for all ISD schools—for ISD stakeholders to begin to piece together a more robust theory of change that can help to guide ISD officials and potential Operators in the development of proposals and plans for future ISD schools. Without this broader, more comprehensive, and shared understanding of a collection of integrated components that constitute and set apart the ISD approach to school turnaround, each ISD school's fate is likely to continue to be just like Southside-Ashpole's: largely dependent on the appropriateness of the pairing of the people tasked with leading each school with the unique challenges of that school.

The ISD Structure Needs to Address the Challenges of Managing a District Remotely

Among all of North Carolina's attempts over the past several decades to find workable and sustainable solutions to turning around chronically low-performing schools, the ISD is unique in at least one aspect: It is the state's first instance of a physical school district that not only is not geographically contiguous but also is managed remotely. In an era in which much of our work can be handled virtually, it may seem that the issues of managing a school district remotely might not be significant. There are several ways, however, in which remote management still presents a significant challenge.

The first is simply timely and expedient resolution of the day-to-day issues that confront all school districts, whether traditional, virtual, or geographically dispersed. At Southside-Ashpole, these issues have ranged from the minor—such as resolving a problem with a single paycheck or getting all of the permissions needed to conduct a field trip—to the major—such as addressing licensure issues or resolving contract issues for food services and transportation. While all are solvable remotely, the lack of a physical connection between the state office and the school made challenges like these more challenging to resolve than they might have been in a traditional district.

More importantly, though, the geographic separation has (understandably) reduced the level of direct interaction between the district office and the school—a problem that is only likely to increase as other geographically-separated schools are added to the ISD. The results of this lower level of direct interaction are two-fold.

First, there is a growing belief among school personnel at all levels that it is not easy for the district office to understand both the challenges and the successes of the school without being

able to engage directly more often. Again, this perception is likely to grow as more schools are added, resulting in even less time available for district staff to interact directly with school staff. The end result is that some staff now feel like their school is becoming less of a state priority:

> Personally, I feel like . . . [t]he state does not make a priority to come down . . . and really see what's going on, because it's one thing to be out there making these executive decisions about a school in a demographic that you know very little about . . . [if] you don't actually know what's going on in the school. You don't know the culture of the school. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

Whether their concerns are accurate or not—and our interactions with state officials indicate that they are not—is not the issue; the issue is that they have these concerns at all.

The second, deeper result of the reduced amount of interaction has been a growing feeling among some staff that they are not really part of a larger district but instead more of a semi-autonomous colony. As one teacher simply put it:

> My goodness, it seems like we're all alone. (Teacher, Spring 2020)

We share none of this to suggest that the perceptions of these teachers are accurate estimations, or that anyone involved with the ISD has been reticent in her or his duties with respect to contact and interaction. Instead, we raise the issue to highlight that successful administration of a novel approach to forming and running a school district (in this case, forming and running a geographically fragmented district) requires ongoing identification of and solutions for novel administrative challenges with which the state and individual schools have little previous experience. As indicated by the staff's growing feelings of isolation, the problems that can arise from a failure to acknowledge and address this challenge can start to become severe. The final challenge we identified demonstrates more clearly what that severity can look like.

The ISD Structure Needs to Minimize Untenable Tensions across Leadership Levels

One of our recommendations in the Year 1 report was to establish a clearer, shared understanding of each partner's roles and responsibilities. The challenges that inspired that recommendation not only remained in Year 2, but—despite turnover in each key state, Operator, and school leadership role—in some cases arguably worsened, suggesting that the problem is not one that is resolvable simply by changing personnel but is instead ingrained in the fabric of the ISD structure itself. At the root of the issue is a persistent disconnect between what the Operator and the state see as an ISD school's defined flexibilities.[21]

Much of the related Year 2 tensions at the leadership level were the same as those covered in the Year 1 report—again, despite changes in each of the people in those roles. New for Year 2 was a clear indication that the ongoing tensions were beginning to penetrate down to the staff

[21] As noted earlier, the legislative changes in SL 2019-248 only partially address some of these disconnects.

level, with some staff commenting that they sometimes felt caught in the middle of the ongoing disagreements, and that they were suffering as a result. Perhaps ultimately even more damaging was evidence that staff were beginning to misattribute at what level and by what entity the decisions that affect their teaching lives—such as the curriculum chosen and the length of the school day—were being made.

The end result is that, by the midpoint of Year 2, educators at all levels of the initiative felt disconnected from and at odds with each other, with each entity growing in its distrust. At some point, that division is likely to affect the whole reason for the ISD in the first place—the students in a chronically low-performing school.

When we identified this issue in our Year 1 report, it was with the belief that the tensions were specific to either the school or the personalities involved. Because these tensions increased in Year 2, even with new leadership across the board, we raise the possibility that the problem lies in the not-yet-fully-defined structure of the initiative itself.

We highlight these three challenges without any intention of nullifying the improvements the staff and administration made at Southside-Ashpole during Year 2 and the successes that were derived from those improvements, nor of nullifying the hard work and dedication of the state office or of the Operator. We highlight them because we believe that what transpired at Southside-Ashpole over its first two years as an ISD school—both the bad and the good—was largely a result of factors that are not unique to the ISD approach: There is as yet little evidence to suggest that the current initiative structure will, on its own, lead to the initiative's intended outcomes at any given ISD school without significant modifications to that structure.

Limitations and Next Steps

Limitations to Qualitative Analyses

With only one school and two years of implementation data on hand, rigorous quantitative analyses of the ISD are not yet possible. **Appendix F** outlines the quantitative approach that could be taken for future evaluations (should additional schools join the ISD and should the state continue to evaluate their success), as well as the limitations associated with the procedures described.

In the meantime, the surveys, interviews, and focus groups conducted during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years provided valuable information about Southside-Ashpole that could not be captured by quantitative measures. However, three factors continue to limit the conclusions that can be drawn from these sources:

- Potential differences between student and parent survey respondents and non-respondents;
- The small number of teachers and administrators; and
- The lack of multi-year data, including historical data.

Differences in Student and Parent Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents

With only a single, small school in the ISD for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, there continued to be few students and parents available to answer surveys. Only 19 parents in the fall, and 15 parents in the spring,[22] representing 27 and 19 students (in fall and spring, respectively) of Southside-Ashpole's approximately 200 students, chose to take the survey in 2019-20. It is possible that this group of parents is not representative of all Southside-Ashpole parents (e.g., perhaps these parents are more involved in their children's school lives); therefore, their survey responses may not reflect the broader opinions of all Southside-Ashpole parents. Likewise, only 15 students in the fall, and 21 students in the spring, in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade received the necessary parent permission to take the student survey *and* were in school on the day when the survey was administered. Again, these students may not be representative of the entire student body for a number of different reasons.

[22] The spring 2020 communications about the parent survey were sent out after the school building had closed in response to the coronavirus outbreak. While the number of parent responses was not notably lower in spring 2020 than it had been in previous semesters, it was the lowest of all three administrations, with the timing of the survey likely being at least partially responsible.

Small Size of Teacher, Administrator Samples

Similar to the first issue, there were only a few teachers and administrators to speak to about the ISD. Although almost every teacher and administrator was interviewed and/or surveyed for this report, they collectively represent a limited number of voices.

Lack of Multi-Year Data

Unlike the quantitative data in the report, which is standard data routinely collected by the state each year, most of the qualitative data were collected exclusively for the ISD evaluation. With only two years of collection so far, we can start to tease out possible trends, but no definitive changes over time are identifiable yet. This limitation is compounded by the fact that very few of the teachers and administrators involved with the ISD were sufficiently familiar with Southside-Ashpole prior to the ISD to be able to comment about changes since the school's conversion.

Next Steps: School Year 2020-21 Forward

As noted earlier, the ISD is not scheduled to incorporate a second school until the 2022-23 school year. As a result, with a shrinking return on investment with respect to the additional information beneficial to the ISD as a whole that can be extracted from a third year of work at a single school, the evaluation work is being suspended until further notice.

Appendix A: Evaluation Outcomes Required by the Enacting Legislation

The enacting legislation is Session Law 2016-110 (House Bill 1080),[23] which created North Carolina General Statute §115C-75 (Article 7A).[24] Outcome measures below were identified in §115C-75.11 and §115C-75.12.

1. School academic growth, performance scores and grades
    a. School overall performance score (target: C or better)
    b. School-level overall growth score (annual)
    c. School-level annual percentage growth (year-to-year)
    d. School-level overall performance scores (ISD vs comparison schools)
    e. School-level overall growth scores (ISD vs comparison schools)[25]
    f. School-level mathematics performance and growth by subject area (ISD vs comparison schools)
    g. School-level reading performance and growth by subject area (ISD vs comparison schools)
2. Schools establish a safe and positive learning environment
    a. Proportion of students who feel safe at school
    b. Proportion of students with positive perceptions of learning environment
    c. Proportion of staff who feel safe at school
    d. Proportion of staff indicating positive impressions on related Teacher Working Conditions Survey items
    e. Proportion of parents who feel school is safe
    f. Proportion of parents who feel that the school is responsive to their concerns
3. Community engagement grows in ways that are attributable to the ISD
    a. Description of the process of identifying valuable external partners
    b. Annual list of partners and description of services they provide, including level of partnerships (time commitment, financial commitment)
4. Parent engagement grows in ways that are attributable to the ISD
    a. Description of the process of identifying valuable external partners

[23] https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/PDF/H1080v6.pdf
[24] https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_115C/Article_7A.html
[25] Note: Legislatively-mandated target: exceeds average growth of all other qualifying schools

   b. Parent perceptions of the school academic expectations and standards
   c. Parent perceptions of connections between student engagement and academic outcomes
   d. Parent perceptions of their own participation in academic life of their students
5. ISD school staff feelings of empowerment grow in ways that are attributable to the ISD school-community engagement efforts
   a. Staff perceptions of empowerment
   b. Parent perceptions of empowerment
6. ISD school creates an effective structure for holding staff accountable
   a. ISO protocol for teacher evaluation
   b. Staff perceptions of staff accountability process
7. ISD schools exhibit fiscal efficiency and effectiveness
   a. Annual school operating costs, compared to average operating costs for similarly-sized new schools and/or new charter schools

Appendix B: Identified Schools, 2017-2019

School District	School	Decision Year 2017	2017-18 Notes	2018	2018-19 Notes	2019A*	2019B*^	Notes
Alamance-Burlington Schools	Broadview Middle						●	
	Graham Middle						●	
	Harvey R Newlin Elementary	●						
	Hillcrest Elementary	●		●	*Finalist*			
Anson County Schools	Wadesboro Elementary					●	●	
	Wadesboro Primary	●					●	
Buncombe County Schools	Johnston Elementary					●	●	
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	Allenbrook Elementary						●	
	Bruns Avenue Elementary	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*				●	
	Druid Hills Academy						●	Changed name from Bruns Academy (1819)
	James Martin Middle						●	
	Ransom Middle						●	
	Renaissance West STEAM Acad.			●				
	Walter G Byers School	●						
Cleveland County Schools	Graham Elementary						●	
Craven County Schools	J T Barber Elementary						●	
Cumberland County Schools	Teresa C Berrien Elementary					●	●	
Duplin County Schools	Wallace Elementary	●						
Durham Public Schools	C C Spaulding Elementary						●	
	Eastway Elementary	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*					
	Eno Valley Elementary	●		●				
	Fayetteville Street Elementary	●					●	
	Glenn Elementary	●	*Finalist*					
	Lakewood Elementary	●	*Finalist*					
Edgecombe Co Public Schools	Phillips Middle						●	
	Stocks Elementary	●		●		●	●	
Granville County Schools	Northern Granville Middle						●	
Guilford County Schools	Ceasar Cone Elementary	●					●	
	Fairview Elementary			●	*Finalist*			
	Ferndale Middle						●	
	Gillespie Park Elementary						●	
	Gillespie Park Elementary	●						
	Montlieu Academy of Technology						●	
	Vandalia Elementary			●			●	
	Washington Elementary	●						

Legislative Changes (SL 2019-248; SL 2020-03)

* Original list of identified schools (2019A) replaced by revised list of Qualifying schools (November 7, 2019; 2019B), as a result of SL 2019-248; revised 2019 list decision year=2022-23 (for 2023-24 school year)

^ Per SL 2020-03 (https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2019/S704), one overall lowest-performing school will be selected in fall 2021 for the 2022-23 school year

School District	School	Decision Year 2017	2017-18 Notes	2018	2018-19 Notes	2019A*	Legislative Changes (SL 2019-248; SL 2020-03) 2019B*^	Notes
Guilford County Schools	Welborn Middle						●	
	Wiley Accelerated/Enrichment						●	
Halifax County Schools	Everetts Elementary STEM Acad.						●	
	Scotland Neck Elem. Ldrshp. Acad.						●	
Harnett County Schools	Wayne Avenue Elementary					●	●	
Hertford County Schools	Ahoskie Elementary	●					●	
	Riverview Elementary	●						
Iredell-Statesville Schools	N B Mills Elementary						●	
Johnston County Schools	North Johnston Middle						●	
	Selma Middle School	●					●	
Lenoir County Schools	Northeast Elementary	●						
	Rochelle Middle						●	
Martin County Schools	*East End Elementary*	●						Merged; became South Creek (1819)
	Edna Andrews Elementary	●						
	South Creek Elementary					●	●	
Nash Rocky Mount Schools	Baskerville Elementary						●	
	D S Johnson Elementary						●	
	Fairview Elementary						●	
	J W Parker Middle						●	
	Rocky Mount Middle						●	
	Spring Hope Elementary						●	
	Williford Elementary	●	*Finalist*	●	*Finalist*		●	
New Hanover County Schools	A H Snipes Acad. of Arts & Design	●						
	R Freeman School of Engineering						●	
Northampton County Schools	Conway Middle						●	
	Gaston Middle	●		●	*Finalist*	●	●	
	Willis Hare Elementary	●	*Finalist*					
Pasqutank County Schools	P W Moore Elementary						●	
	Pasquotank Elementary						●	
Pitt County Schools	Grifton	●						
	South Greenville Elementary	●					●	
Public Schools of Robeson Co	Fairmont Middle						●	
	Lumberton Junior High						●	
	Orrum Middle	●					●	
	R B Dean Elementary	●	*Finalist*					Merged w/Townsend Middle School (1920)
	Rex-Rennert Elementary						●	
	Rosenwald Elementary	●						

* Original list of identified schools (2019A) replaced by revised list of Qualifying schools (November 7, 2019; 2019B), as a result of SL 2019-248; revised 2019 list decision year=2022-23 (for 2023-24 school year)
^ Per SL 2020-03 (https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2019/S704), one overall lowest-performing school will be selected in fall 2021 for the 2022-23 school year

School District	School	Decision Year 2017	2017-18 Notes	2018	2018-19 Notes	2019A*	2019B*^	Notes
Public Schools of Robeson Co	Southside Ashpole Elementary	●	***Selected (SY 1819)***					
	Townsend Middle	●					●	
Thomasville City Schools	Liberty Drive Elementary	●						
Union County Schools	Walter Bickett Elementary	●						
Vance County Schools	E M Rollins Elementary						●	
	Vance County Middle						●	
Wake County Schools	Barwell Road Elementary						●	
	Bugg Elementary						●	
Wayne County Schools	Brodgen Primary	●						
	Brogden Middle	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*	●		●	●	
	Carver Heights Elementary	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*	●	***Selected (SY 1920); de-selected by NCGA***			
	Dillard Middle						●	
	Eastern Wayne Elementary	●						
Weldon City Schools	Weldon Elementary Global Acad.						●	
Wilson County Schools	B O Barnes Elementary					●	●	
	Margaret Hearne Elementary	●				●	●	
	Vick Elementary	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*					
Winston-Salem Forsyth Co Schools	Ashley Academy			●			●	
	Ashley Academy	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*					
	Diggs-Latham Elementary	●						
	Easton Elementary						●	
	Forest Park Elementary	●		●				
	Gibson Elementary	●						
	Hall-Woodward Elementary			●	*Finalist*			
	Ibraham Elementary					●	●	
	Kimberly Park Elementary			●			●	
	Kimberly Park Elementary	●	*Dropped fm consideration; fed aid*					
	Middle Fork Elementary	●						Converted to Lab School (1819)
	North Hills Elementary	●						
	Old Town Elementary	●				●	●	
	Petree Elementary						●	
	Philo-Hill Magnet Academy						●	
	Winston-Salem Preparatory Acad.						●	

Legislative Changes (SL 2019-248; SL 2020-03)

* Original list of identified schools (2019A) replaced by revised list of Qualifying schools (November 7, 2019; 2019B), as a result of SL 2019-248; revised 2019 list decision year=2022-23 (for 2023-24 school year)
^ Per SL 2020-03 (https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2019/S704), one overall lowest-performing school will be selected in fall 2021 for the 2022-23 school year

Appendix C: Summary of New ISD Legislation (SL 2019-248)

Major Changes to ISD Legislation in SL 2019-248[26]

Senate Bill 522 (2019-2020 Session), which became a Session Law on November 11, 2019, includes several changes to ISD structures and procedures.

Summary of Major Changes

- The criteria for inclusion in the ISD are revised:
    - Any Title I schools in the lowest 5% in terms of performance can be considered for qualification, regardless of grade range and geographic location; and
    - Only new schools (open one or two years), alternative schools, cooperative innovative high schools, and schools primarily dedicated to educating recently-arrived English language learners are excluded.
- The process for selecting an innovative school is updated: Schools go through a three-year process from the time of qualification to selection for the ISD (***qualifying***, ***watch***, ***warning***, and then ***selection***). The ISD Superintendent is required to help qualifying schools make improvements (with a goal of removing the school from consideration) during that time.
- The State Board of Education (SBE) can establish criteria for the selection of independent school turnaround consultants who provide support for schools before they are ISD schools (i.e., while they are on the ***qualifying***, ***watch***, or ***warning*** lists).
- The list of IS operators is expanded to include the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and Local Boards of Education other than the Board that originally governed the selected school.
- The responsibility for certain decisions is shifted: IS operators are required to work *in collaboration with* (rather than independently or in consultation with) the ISD Superintendent on several major decisions, including the hiring and firing of principals.
- I-Zone schools are no longer automatically selected into the ISD if they fail to exceed growth expectations in their fourth and fifth years in an I-Zone.
- Local Board of Education members who have an immediate family member employed by the LEA at a qualifying school must recuse themselves of any action by the board related to that school.

[26] https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2019/S522

Additional Details

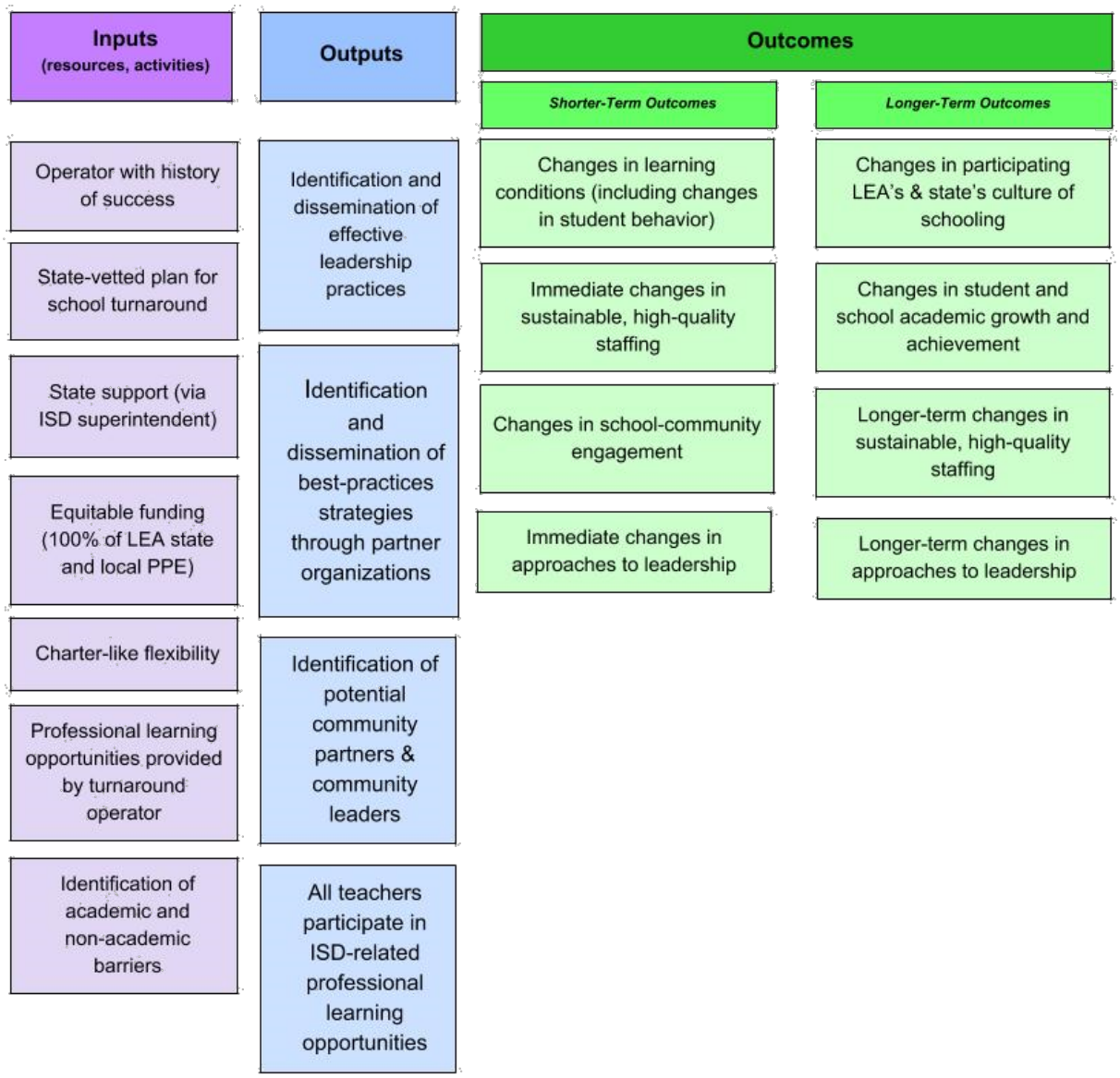
The evaluation process (currently called the selection process) becomes a three-year period during which schools are evaluated and the public is updated annually:

- In the first year after a school has been identified as qualifying, the school will be placed on the ISD ***qualifying*** list; the local board of education must notify parents of the school's status, the potential impact and implications of the new status, and the school's improvement plan.
- If a school on the qualifying list in the prior year remains a qualifying school in the next year, the school will be placed on the ISD ***watch*** list; again, the local board of education must notify parents of the school's status, the potential impact and implications of the new status, and the school's improvement plan.
- If a school on the watch list in the prior year remains a qualifying school in the next year, the school will be placed on the ISD ***warning*** list. The local Board of Education will hold a public hearing and present at a local public county commissioners meeting.
- If a school on the warning list remains a qualifying school in the next year, and is one of the lowest five qualifying schools on the warning list, the school will be selected by the SBE as an innovative school, beginning the next year.
- With the support of the ISD superintendent, Local Education Agencies can ask that one of their ***qualifying*** schools be transferred into the ISD ahead of formal selection, if there are fewer than five schools currently in the ISD.

The SBE must ensure that schools on any list are "engaged in strategies . . . for comprehensive support and improvement." The ISD Superintendent must assist local Boards of Education in "identifying funding, strategies, and partners for the comprehensive support and improvement efforts."

IS operators must work in collaboration with the ISD Superintendent—not independently or in consultation with the ISD Superintendent—to make decisions about: a) hiring and removing the school's principal; and b) entering into MOUs with the local Board of Education to address facility and capital expenditures, transportation, and services for children with disabilities.

Appendix D: Original Logic Model (2018)



Appendix E: Crosswalk: Evaluation Questions, Measurable Outcomes, Indicators, and Data Sources

Evaluation Question	Measurable Outcome	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
Q1: Does the ISD improve ***student- and school-level academic growth and achievement***?	ISD schools achieve and maintain performance scores at or above a C	School overall performance score (target: C or better) (*Note: Overall combined measure of achievement and growth*)	North Carolina administrative data
	ISD students demonstrate academic proficiency	Student cohort proficiency, by grade, subject area, and sub-group	North Carolina administrative data
	ISD schools demonstrate academic growth	School-level overall growth score (annual) School-level annual percentage growth (year-to-year)	North Carolina administrative data
	ISD schools' academic outcomes compare favorably to eligible but non-identified schools	School-level overall performance scores (ISD vs comparison schools) School-level overall growth scores (ISD vs comparison schools) (*Note: Legislatively-mandated target: exceeds average growth of all other qualifying schools*) School-level mathematics performance and growth by grade and sub-group (ISD vs comparison schools) School-level reading performance and growth by grade and sub-group (ISD vs comparison schools)	North Carolina Report Card data
	ISD students exhibit more growth than students at matched a) local schools (possibly including I-Zone schools), b) transformational schools (e.g., Restart schools), and c) considered but non-selected schools; also vs statewide growth averages	Student cohort growth score, by grade, subject area, and sub-group	North Carolina administrative data

Key: ***Red text***= measurable outcome for evaluation elements highlighted in enacting legislation; ***ST***=Short term outcome (1-3 years); ***LT***=Long term outcome (4+ years)

Evaluation Question	Measurable Outcome	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
Q2. Does the ISD improve ***learning conditions***, including changes in student behavior?	ISD student support services (Exceptional Children services, etc.) meet statutory requirements	Description of EC plan (outlining the full continuum of services to meet the special education and related services needs of students with disabilities) Proof of a highly-qualified and licensed special education teacher(s) and/or director Identification of sources for external EC service providers (e.g., school psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech language pathologist, audiologist, etc.) Evidence of on-site/accessible, appropriate instructional supports for students with disabilities (as indicated in IEPs) Statement of school policies for EC, incorporating all required elements to meet Federal and State regulations (e.g., discipline, confidentiality, accountability, maintenance of effort, security and confidentiality of EC Student Special Education files, etc.) Address transportation (as a related service) for EC students who may have this as a component of their IEP	Annual school report
	ISD schools establish a safe and positive learning environment	***Safe*** Proportion of students who feel safe at school ***Positive*** Proportion of students with positive perceptions of learning environment	Student survey
		Safe Proportion of staff who feel safe at school ***Positive*** Proportion of staff indicating positive impressions on related Teacher Working Conditions Survey items	NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
		Safe Proportion of parents who perceive that school is safe ***Positive*** Proportion of parents who feel that the school is responsive to their concerns	Parent survey

Key: ***Red text***= measurable outcome for evaluation elements highlighted in enacting legislation; ***ST***=Short term outcome (1-3 years); ***LT***=Long term outcome (4+ years)

Evaluation Question	Measurable Outcome	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
Q2 (cont.). Does the ISD improve ***learning conditions***, including changes in student behavior?	*ISD schools experience reduction of behavioral referrals*	Description of school's approach to discipline and changes over time	School-level annual report
		Counts of disciplinary infractions and suspensions, by demographic group, including changes over time Counts of disciplinary infractions and suspensions, relative to previous/feeder school	North Carolina administrative data
	ISD schools experience reduction of student absenteeism and/or increased attendance	Description of school's responses to attendance problems/truancy	School-level annual report
		Daily attendance rate and count of chronically absent students, including changes over time Daily attendance rate and count of chronically absent students, relative to previous/feeder school	North Carolina administrative data
Q3. Does the ISD contribute to ***changes in school-community engagement***?	Community engagement grows in ways that are attributable to the ISD • Formal relationships are established between ISD schools and community representatives • In-kind supports and services provided to ISD schools change in positive ways	Description of the process of identifying valuable external partners Annual list of partners and description of services they provide, including level of partnerships (time commitment, financial commitment) *If evaluation budget supports*: Descriptive report of offsetting services or additional value in services provided; where available, budget data on any financial offsets arising from partnerships	School-level annual report
	Parent engagement grows in ways that are attributable to the ISD	Annual list of parent/guardian involvement in school events	School-level annual report

Key: ***Red text***= measurable outcome for evaluation elements highlighted in enacting legislation; ***ST***=Short term outcome (1-3 years); ***LT***=Long term outcome (4+ years)

Evaluation Question	Measurable Outcome	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
Q3 (cont.). Does the ISD contribute to ***changes in school-community engagement***?	• ISD parents/guardians understand academic expectations and standards • ISD parents/guardians understand connections between student engagement and academic outcomes • ISD parents/guardians participate more frequently in the life of the school • ISD parents/guardians participate in the academic life of their own students	Parent perceptions of the school academic expectations and standards Parent perceptions of connections between student engagement and academic outcomes Parent perceptions of their own participation in academic life of their students	Parent survey
	ISD school staff and community member feelings of empowerment grow in ways that are attributable to the ISD school-community engagement efforts	Staff perceptions of empowerment	Practitioner survey Practitioner focus group
		Parent perceptions of empowerment	Parent survey
Q4. Does the ISD contribute to ***changes in the culture of schooling*** both in and outside of the ISD?			
Q4a. Does the ISD contribute to an overall change in the ***culture of schooling in ISD schools?***	*ISOs lead diffusion of best practices across ISD schools*	Plan for diffusion of best practices	School-level annual report
		Staff perceptions of ISO-provided guidance for implementation of best practices	Practitioner survey
Q4b. Does the ISD change ***approaches to ensuring sustainable, high quality staffing in ISD schools***?	*The ISD implements process to build a local, sustainable teacher workforce pipeline (LT)*	Description of teacher recruitment and retention processes	School-level annual report
	ISD schools recruit effective staff (LT)	State teacher evaluation data Teacher absentee rates, including chronic absentee episodes and changes over time	North Carolina administrative data (NCEES)

Key: ***Red text***= measurable outcome for evaluation elements highlighted in enacting legislation; ***ST***=Short term outcome (1-3 years); ***LT***=Long term outcome (4+ years)

Evaluation Question	Measurable Outcome	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
Q4b (cont.). Does the ISD change ***approaches to ensuring sustainable, high quality staffing in ISD schools***?	ISD schools retain effective staff (LT)	Staff turnover rate, including changes over time Staff turnover rates (ISD vs comparison schools)	North Carolina administrative data
	ISD school creates an effective structure for holding staff accountable (ST)	ISO protocol for teacher evaluation	School-level annual report
		Staff perceptions of staff accountability process (*Note: Accountability default: state evaluation process*)	Practitioner survey Practitioner focus group
	The ISD promotes a culture of professional learning among teachers (ST)	Annual list of professional development opportunities (plus attendance figures)	School-level annual reports
		Staff perceptions of school-level culture of professional learning	Practitioner surveys Practitioner focus group
Q4c. Does the ISD change ***approaches to leadership in ISD schools***?	*ISD schools are led by effective school administrators* (ST)	**(ISD to define in partnership with the evaluator effective leadership and related measurement; default: North Carolina administrator evaluation tool)**	North Carolina administrative data (NC administrator evaluation data)
		Parent perceptions of school administration leadership	Parent Survey
		Staff perceptions of school administration leadership	Practitioner survey Practitioner focus group
	ISD schools adopt effective leadership strategies (ST)	**(ISD to define in partnership with the evaluator; see above)**	School-level annual report
		(ISD to define in partnership with the evaluator; see above)	Practitioner survey Practitioner focus group
		(ISD to define in partnership with the evaluator; see above)	Parent Survey
	ISD schools exhibit fiscal efficiency and effectiveness (ST)	Annual school operating costs, compared to average operating costs for similarly-sized new schools and/or new charter schools	North Carolina administrative data School-level annual report (annual budget report)
	ISD schools establish a diffused leadership model that includes teacher leadership (LT)	Description of teacher leadership model Evidence of teacher leadership model implementation	School-level annual report
		Staff perception of the teacher leadership model	Practitioner survey Practitioner focus group

Key: ***Red text***= measurable outcome for evaluation elements highlighted in enacting legislation; ***ST***=Short term outcome (1-3 years); ***LT***=Long term outcome (4+ years)

Evaluation Question	Measurable Outcome	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
Q4d. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the ***culture of schooling in partnering LEAs, non-participating LEAs, and/or across the State overall*****?**	*ISD leadership encourage diffusion and replication of strategies identified as effective practices to partnering LEAs*	Plan for diffusion of best practices to partner LEAs	School-level annual report
		Actions taken by partner LEAs that are attributable to ISD efforts	Interviews with neighboring LEA staff/superintendents
	Non-participating LEAs demonstrate leadership-level changes in approaches to school leadership	Actions taken by non-partnering but originally eligible schools (principals) reflect best practices identified by the ISD Actions taken by non-partnering but originally eligible LEAs (superintendents and local school boards) reflect best practices identified by the ISD	Document/policy scan of the eligible but non-participating schools/LEAs

Note on pre-intervention data: When possible, use 2016-17 data for pre-intervention data baseline, since these are the data upon which Ashpole was selected; similar logic for data upon which next cohort of schools were selected.

Key: ***Red text***= measurable outcome for evaluation elements highlighted in enacting legislation; ***ST***=Short term outcome (1-3 years); ***LT***=Long term outcome (4+ years)

Appendix F: Comparison School Analysis Procedure

Given the quantitative analysis limitations described in the main body of this report and limits imposed by the evaluation budget, the evaluation development team hosted a quantitative analysis summit in April 2018 with independent experts to discuss reasonable quantitative options for this evaluation. Based on that consultation, the evaluation development team proposed the following recommendations for the quantitative analysis component of the evaluation; the evaluation team elected to follow these recommendations.

Comparative Interrupted Time Series

Because of such limiting factors as the small size of the ISD initiative, summit participants recommended an ***interrupted time series*** design for the final quantitative analyses. To prepare for this analysis, the evaluator collected multiple quantitative indicators for every school in the state for the four years before the first school was transferred into the ISD. In addition, the evaluator collected the same indicators for the first year of operation of the first school and will continue to collect these same indicators through the end of the evaluation. Eventually (once a school has been in ISD for at least two but preferably three years), the main analyses will examine whether there were any changes in trend lines for the key student and teacher outcomes after ISD inclusion. To strengthen this design, the evaluator will include comparison groups, making it a ***comparative interrupted time series***.

Because the interrupted time series analysis relies on analyzing changes over time, the evaluation team initially will conduct ***difference-in-differences*** analyses (which, though not as compelling in terms of their ability to model changes over time, do allow for single-year analyses) for the first two outcome years (the Baseline and Growth years).

Comparison Schools

The summit participants identified four potential groups from which comparison schools could be selected. As noted in the ***North Carolina Administrative Data*** section, above, the first includes the next-in-line schools that were announced publicly as being eligible for ISD inclusion, but ultimately were not selected (**Appendix B**). The second group includes schools that were not eligible for ISD inclusion but are similar to the schools selected for the ISD on multiple relevant measures (**Appendix G**). The third group includes other schools from the ISD school's original LEA, when such comparisons are relevant. The final potential comparison group includes any schools selected for an I-Zone within the participating LEA. The analyses included in the first reports for this evaluation use the first two groups only (the original LEA of the first participating school opted not to petition to run other schools in an I-Zone). The full list of comparison schools is included in Table F1 (following page), but the identity of the two statistically-matched comparison schools has been masked.

Table F1. Historical Academic Outcomes Data for Inaugural ISD School and Comparison Schools

ID	Name	LEA	2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		**2018-19**		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	**2018-19**	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	**2018-19**
	ISD Schools																					
780408	Southside-Ashpole Elementary	Robeson	F	36	F	35	F	27	F	29	F	30	29.4	23.6	18.4	20	20.5	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
	Statistically-Matched Elementary Schools																					
340368	Matched School A	LEA A	F	29	F	33	F	33	F	39	F	36	17.5	20.7	22.1	28.8	26.6	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
800346	Matched School B	LEA B	F	36	D	40	F	29	F	25	F	26	31	34.5	22.2	18.1	17.1	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
	ISD Finalist Schools																					
320320	Glenn Elementary	Durham	F	39	F	36	F	37	D	50	D	42	29.4	30	32.3	41	35.4	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met
320339	Lakewood Elementary	Durham	F	38	F	35	F	35	F	37	C	55	29.5	26.9	28.2	28.8	46.1	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
640396	Williford Elementary[27]	Nash Rocky Mount	D	41	F	37	F	26	F	30	F	34	31	27.4	19	19.6	*	Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	*
660360	Willis Hare Elementary	Northampton	D	49	D	48	F	36	D	51	D	49	44.5	43.1	31.1	43.8	41.6	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met
780390	*R B Dean Elementary*[28]	*Robeson*	*F*	*34*	*F*	*36*	*F*	*36*	*D*	*40*	*D*	*43*	*23.1*	*29.3*	*29.5*	*29.4*	*33.9*	*Met*	*Not Met*	*Not Met*	*Met*	*Met*
	Other Elementary Schools on ISD Selection List																					
10354	Harvey R Newlin Elementary	Alamance-Burlington	D	40	D	42	F	37	D	42	D	43	28.8	32	30.7	34.8	34.5	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met
10358	Hillcrest Elementary	Alamance-Burlington	D	50	D	47	F	34	F	34	D	42	41.7	40.6	29.8	28	34.9	Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met
40330	Wadesboro Primary	Anson	F	36	F	39	D	43	D	40	F	37	26.3	28	33.2	29.3	29.1	Met	Met	Met	Met	Not Met
292316	Liberty Drive Elementary	Thomasville City	D	52	D	53	D	42	D	47	D	41	47.3	48.5	38.6	38.7	36.7	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met
310388	Wallace Elementary	Duplin	D	49	D	47	D	41	D	52	D	47	44.1	43.6	35.8	42.3	42.3	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Exceeded	Not Met
320315	Eno Valley Elementary	Durham	F	37	F	37	F	36	F	38	D	50	27.9	29.8	25.5	29.4	40.7	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Exceeded
320344	Fayetteville Street Elementary	Durham	D	43	D	44	F	38	D	46	D	40	33.1	36.6	32.4	37.6	30.1	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met
330354	Stocks Elementary	Edgecombe	F	30	F	33	F	32	F	34	F	37	21.8	23.8	20.5	23	28.4	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Not Met
340376	Forest Park Elementary	Winston-Salem Forsyth	D	40	F	32	F	29	F	33	D	41	34	26.6	17.2	23.5	29.7	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met
340380	Gibson Elementary	Winston-Salem Forsyth	F	37	F	30	F	35	D	45	D	54	28.4	24.7	24.8	34.6	44.8	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Exceeded
340430	Diggs-Latham Elementary	Winston-Salem Forsyth	F	36	D	44	F	39	D	41	D	43	29.9	38.2	33.6	36.9	36.9	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
340447	Middle Fork Elementary[29]	Winston-Salem Forsyth	F	33	F	31	F	34	F	30	D	40	27.1	23.5	22.9	22.1	28.9	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Met
340462	North Hills Elementary	Winston-Salem Forsyth	D	42	D	49	F	37	F	39	D	48	33.2	41.8	31	33.8	37.7	Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Exceeded
340476	Old Town Elementary	Winston-Salem Forsyth	D	43	D	49	D	42	D	43	F	39	39	42	37.5	37.8	34.7	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
410349	Ceasar Cone Elementary	Guilford	F	33	F	36	F	34	F	39	F	36	21.8	27.2	25.3	29.4	29.1	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met
410385	Gillespie Park Elementary	Guilford	F	29	F	37	F	33	D	43	D	40	21.8	26.5	24.6	31.3	32.1	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Exceeded	Met
410586	Washington Elementary	Guilford	F	38	D	41	D	41	F	39	D	44	30.8	31.8	32.1	28.5	32.7	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded
460308	Ahoskie Elementary	Hertford	D	42	D	47	D	41	D	40	F	39	35.3	40.1	36.3	37.5	36.4	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
460332	Riverview Elementary	Hertford	D	40	D	46	D	42	D	49	D	51	30.2	40.1	37	46.2	49.2	Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
540325	Northeast Elementary	Lenoir	F	34	D	40	D	42	D	47	D	42	25.7	32.9	31.8	39.1	33.8	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met
580316	East End Elementary[30]	Martin	F	33	F	37	D	40	D	48	F	39	25	26	30.5	40.2	33.1	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Not Met
580320	*Edna Andrews Elementary*[31]	*Martin*	*D*	*41*	*D*	*44*	*F*	*35*	*F*	*35*			*33.5*	*35.7*	*27.6*	*24.2*		*Met*	*Met*	*Not Met*	*Met*	

[27] Reduced grade span from PK-5 to PK-2 (2018-19)
[28] Merged with Townsend Middle School; grade span extended to PK-8 (2019-20)
[29] Converted to Lab School (ID=34Z000; 2018-19)
[30] Merged with Edna Andrews and changed name to South Creek (2018-19)
[31] Merged with East End to become South Creek (2018-19)

ID	Name	LEA	2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		**2018-19**		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	**2018-19**	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	**2018-19**
600574	Walter G Byers School	Charlotte-Mecklenburg	F	36	F	39	F	38	D	45	D	52	27.8	29.5	28.1	34.2	42.9	Not Met	Met	Met	Exceeded	Exceeded
650384	A H Snipes Acad of Arts/Design	New Hanover	F	39	D	41	F	35	D	41	D	43	29.6	32.2	27.5	32.8	34.8	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met
740352	Grifton	Pitt	D	42	D	46	F	34	D	46	D	54	31.7	37.1	28.5	34.8	46.8	Met	Met	Not Met	Exceeded	Met
740390	South Greenville Elementary	Pitt	F	35	D	41	D	41	F	38	F	34	26.8	31.3	30.6	26.8	25	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
780394	Rosenwald Elementary	Robeson	F	33	F	28	F	35	D	45	D	43	23.8	19.3	25.3	34.8	32.7	Met	Not Met	Met	Exceeded	Met
900370	Walter Bickett Elementary	Union	F	39	D	46	F	38	D	50	D	54	33.7	36.6	32.6	39.7	45.8	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Exceeded	Exceeded
960314	Brodgen Primary	Wayne	F	38	D	48	D	42	D	42	D	48	29.3	38.9	35.6	34	37.4	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
960329	Eastern Wayne Elementary	Wayne	D	46	D	48	D	41	D	48	D	49	36.8	39.7	36.3	38.9	42.4	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met
980356	Margaret Hearne Elementary	Wilson	D	45	D	45	F	37	D	54	F	35	35.5	38.4	30	47	30.4	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met
	Other Robeson County Elementary Schools																					
780320	Deep Branch Elementary	Robeson	F	34	D	47	D	51	D	53	D	53	27.2	37.6	42.8	45.9	45.1	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
780322	East Robeson Elementary	Robeson	B	71	B	74	B	77	B	78	A	85	65.9	68.3	73.4	73.7	82.7	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded
780328	Green Grove Elementary	Robeson	C	58	C	61	C	55	C	64	C	66	52	57.1	49.1	59.8	62.9	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
780329	*J C Hargrove Elementary*[32]	*Robeson*	*F*	*36*	*D*	*44*	*D*	*44*	*D*	*51*	*D*	*45*	*25.3*	*34.2*	*37.2*	*42.9*	*35.3*	*Met*	*Met*	*Met*	*Met*	*Met*
780340	Long Branch Elementary	Robeson	D	46	D	46	D	49	C	57	C	59	36.6	37.1	41.3	49.7	53.3	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded	Met
780344	Magnolia Elementary	Robeson	F	35	F	37	D	43	D	44	C	59	26.9	29.1	35.3	36	49.3	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Exceeded
780356	Oxendine Elementary	Robeson	D	42	D	44	D	42	D	53	D	53	34	33.2	35	42.8	44.7	Met	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded	Exceeded
780360	Parkton Elementary	Robeson	D	49	D	53	D	52	D	53	D	41	41	44.2	46.3	46	36.8	Met	Exceeded	Met	Met	Not Met
780364	Pembroke Elementary	Robeson	D	42	D	52	D	45	D	51	D	53	35.5	41.8	38.6	42.9	47.3	Not Met	Exceeded	Not Met	Exceeded	Met
780374	Peterson Elementary	Robeson	F	38	D	43	F	34	D	43	D	44	27.8	32.4	28.3	36.6	39	Met	Exceeded	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
780376	Piney Grove Elementary	Robeson	D	46	C	55	D	51	D	48	D	41	40.7	49.6	49	45.4	38.2	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
780384	Prospect Elementary	Robeson	D	49	D	48	D	48	D	53	C	59	42.4	44.2	43.8	45.6	51.4	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
780392	Rex-Rennert Elementary	Robeson	D	43	F	34	F	35	D	40	D	40	30.7	24.6	25.6	27.5	28.4	Exceeded	Met	Met	Exceeded	Met
780398	Rowland Norment Elementary	Robeson	D	51	C	64	C	58	C	60	C	61	43.5	58.3	50.8	54.4	56.1	Met	Exceeded	Exceeded	Met	Met
780400	St Pauls Elementary	Robeson	D	45	D	46	D	47	D	49	D	41	32.5	35.2	37.6	40.2	35.9	Exceeded	Exceeded	Met	Met	Not Met
780407	Tanglewood Elementary	Robeson	C	65	B	76	B	73	B	78	B	73	61.5	72.8	70.6	78	70.1	Met	Exceeded	Met	Met	Met
780412	Union Chapel Elementary	Robeson	D	50	D	49	D	47	D	54	D	45	41.7	40.4	41.6	44.3	39.4	Exceeded	Met	Not Met	Exceeded	Not Met
780416	Union Elementary	Robeson	C	57	D	52	D	54	C	59	C	59	48.2	47.7	46.3	50	51.8	Exceeded	Met	Met	Exceeded	Exceeded
780417	W H Knuckles Elementary[33]	Robeson	F	36	F	37	F	38	D	44	D	45	24.7	27	27.9	34	36.1	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded	Met

[32] Merged with W H Knuckles; reduced grade span from PK-4 to PK-3 (2019-20)
[33] Merged with J C Hargrave; reduced grade span from PK-4 to PK-3 (2019-20)

Limitations to Quantitative Analyses

Per the enacting legislation, there is high demand for a defensible, quantitative assessment of the direct impact of the initiative on student and teacher outcomes. There are, however, at least four factors that significantly limit the strength of the quantitative analyses being conducted for this evaluation:

- The small number of schools included in the initiative;
- Potential differences in governance across ISD schools;
- The initiative timeline; and
- The lack of randomization of impacted students and educators.

Number of Schools

The ISD selected only one school for the 2018-19 school year, and no schools will be brought into the ISD for the 2019-20 school year. Measures of changes in teacher behavior, teacher quality, and student outcomes are reportable (as we have begun to do in this report), but with teachers and students distributed across only a handful of schools by the third year of the program—and most in schools that will have been involved with ISD for only one year—results of the statistical analyses of these measures must be reviewed with extreme caution. The challenge is compounded by the second and third issues below.

Differences across ISD School Governance

By statute, schools in the ISD can be governed by different ISOs, meaning that there are likely to be substantial differences in school-level goals and strategies, once more schools are brought into the ISD. If schools are operated in vastly different ways, combining data from multiple ISD schools in an attempt to conduct stronger analyses of impacts on larger groups of teachers and students may be advisable only for estimating the overall impact of the *presence of the policy*—not for estimating the impact of different implementations of the policy across sites.

Initiative Timeline

At its heart, the ISD is about creating new school cultures. We know from studies of changes in even single school culture variables (for example, changes in principal leadership) that schools often experience a regression in outcomes for at least a year before even a highly successful program begins to show positive results.

Randomization

The characteristics of students who attend ISD schools will differ across schools. Furthermore, the ISD does not determine student admission by some form of randomization (e.g., via lottery). Since randomization of admission is unlikely, direct comparisons of student and teacher outcomes are likely to be misleading as a result of the different motivations of students

and teachers who choose to learn or teach in ISD schools, both relative to one another and relative to traditional public schools. None of these factors prevents evaluators from determining meaningful and/or statistically significant *correlations* between program initiative factors and outcomes of interest, but it does prevent evaluators from identifying any *causal* links between program characteristics and student and educator outcomes.

Appendix G: Comparison Matching Procedures

School Matching and ITS

An important key to a strong non-experimental analysis design is identification of a comparison group of non-impacted entities (in educational research, usually schools or individuals) that most closely resembles the group of impacted entities, to reduce what is known as selection bias. Selection bias occurs when the impacted entities take part in the intervention for one or more (often unseen) shared reasons that may themselves be the cause of differences between outcomes for that group and outcomes for the comparison group—not the cause of participation in the initiative being studied. In other words, "[d]ifferences in outcomes between the treatment and comparison group may be due to pre-existing or unobserved differences between the two groups, rather than to the effect of the program being evaluated" (Somers et al. 2013, p. 1).[34]

With only about 2,600 schools in North Carolina, and with the constant background noise of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting initiatives in operation in any of them at any given time, it can be challenging to identify a reasonable comparison group of schools to help strengthen the analyses of outcomes for the subset of schools impacted by a given policy—in this case, impacted by the introduction of the ISD. In addition, in North Carolina there is the added challenge of identifying whether a given school—whether an ISD school or a potential comparison school—and its staff have been exposed to similar programs in the recent past. For example, in recent years, many of the schools on the ISD consideration list (Appendix B) have been impacted directly or indirectly by the work of the state District and School Transformation team, which was tasked with identifying and assisting the turnaround of the lowest-performing schools in the state, meaning that in many cases, either the introduction of the ISD initiative is not a new concept or the impacts of previous initiatives in potential comparison schools still linger. As a result, while we continue to take great care in our selection of comparison schools, we also will continue to present all conclusions from our analyses with a strong word of caution.

Propensity Score Matching

Linden (2015), Rubin (2001),[35] and others recommend using a statistical process known as ***propensity score matching*** (PSM) for identifying members of comparison groups for analyses like the ones we proposed to use (**Appendix F**). Many researchers suggest that the specific PSM

[34] Somers, M., Zhu, P., Jacob, R., and Bloom, H. (2013). The Validity and Precision of the Comparative Interrupted Time Series Design and the Difference-in-Difference Design in Educational Evaluation. Working Paper. New York and Oakland, CA: MDRC.

[35] Linden, A. (2015). Conducting Interrupted Time-Series Analysis for Single- and Multiple-Group Comparisons. *The Stata Journal*, *15*(2): 480-500; Rubin, D. B. (2001). Using Propensity Scores to Help Design Observational Studies: Application to the Tobacco Litigation. *Health Services and Outcomes Research Methodology*, *2*(3-4): 169-188.

strategy—and there are several—matters much less than does the choice of variables on which schools are matched (see, for instance, Hallberg et al. 2018[36]). In addition to including pre-intervention measures of the outcomes of interest as part of the matching process (in our case, student testing outcomes), our matching also includes demographic covariates that change over time or are likely to have been impacted by historical changes outside the scope of the initiative, to reduce the influence of those factors on analyses of the outcomes of interest (Hallberg et al. 2018).

Based on the findings of Somers et al. (2013), since we have a large candidate pool of schools relative to the treated schools, and since we have more than two years of pre-intervention test data, we use a ***radius matching*** (propensity scores within 0.25 SD of each treatment school's score) strategy, which matches each treatment school to several schools within a given propensity score range, increases the size of the comparison pool, and likely has little impact on bias because of the depth of pre-intervention data available for matching.

[36] Hallberg, K., Williams, R., Swanlund, A., and Eno, J. (2018). Short Comparative Interrupted Time Series Using Aggregate School-Level Data in Education Research. *Educational Researcher*, *47*(5): 295-306.

Appendix H: Survey Instruments

Educator Survey

Demographic Items

1. Did you work at Southside-Ashpole Elementary School, in any position, for all or part of last school year? [Yes, No]
2. What grade(s) do you teach this year? If you do not teach a specific grade, please list your position under "Other." [Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Other (please specify)]
3. I identify as: [Female, Male, Other, I decline to answer]
4. I identify as:
    - **Two or more races/ethnicities** - A person who identifies with two or more of the below.
    - **American Indian or Alaska Native** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
    - **Asian** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, including for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, or Vietnam.
    - **Black or African American** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
    - **Hispanic or Latino** - A person having ethnic origins in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula, including the Caribbean.
    - **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
    - **White** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
    - **I decline to answer**

Teacher & Staff Experience Items

For each statement, select the response that best matches how much you agree with the statement. If you do not have enough information to form an opinion on an item, or if an item does not apply to your situation, select “Do Not Know or Not Applicable.” If you have enough information to form an opinion but are split between “Agree” and “Disagree,” select “Neutral.”

At Southside-Ashpole this year . . .
[Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Do Not Know or Not Applicable]

1. I have opportunities to participate in grade-level and school-level planning committees.
2. School leadership encourages teachers and staff to take leadership opportunities.
3. School leadership asks me for my opinion.
4. If I have a concern about a curriculum, policy, or other decision, I feel comfortable talking to someone in school leadership.
5. I have a say in choosing the curriculum I use in my classroom.
6. All staff members are treated equitably.
7. I feel connected to the community my school serves.
8. I communicate with parents/guardians on a regular basis.
9. I have parent/guardian volunteers in my classroom.
10. I use student data to improve instruction.
11. There is a process in place to help all staff members improve.
12. The professional development offered by my school is high-quality.
13. The professional development offered by my school is relevant to my needs.
14. I have enough time in my schedule each week for lesson planning.
15. I have time set in my schedule to plan and collaborate with other teachers and staff.

Parent Survey

Demographic Items

1. What grade(s) is your child/are your children in this year at Southside-Ashpole Elementary School? If you have more than one child at Southside-Ashpole, select all of the grades that apply. [Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
2. Did your child/any of your children attend Southside-Ashpole Elementary School for all or part of last year? [Yes, No]
3. I identify as:
    - **Two or more races/ethnicities** - A person who identifies with two or more of the below.

- **American Indian or Alaska Native** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, including for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, or Vietnam.
- **Black or African American** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- **Hispanic or Latino** - A person having ethnic origins in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula, including the Caribbean.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **White** (Not Hispanic or Latino) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- **I decline to answer**

Parent/Guardian Experience and Opinion Items

For each statement, select the response that best matches how much you agree with the statement. If you do not have enough information to form an opinion on an item, or if an item does not apply to your situation, select "Do Not Know or Not Applicable." If you have enough information to form an opinion but are split between "Agree" and "Disagree," select "Neutral." If you have more than one child at Southside-Ashpole Elementary School this year, select the response that best matches how you feel in general about your experience with the school this year.

At Southside-Ashpole this year…
[Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Do Not Know or Not Applicable]

1. My child is sage at school.
2. If my child feels threatened at school, adults at the school will help him/her.
3. If my child is bullied outside of school (for instance, online), he/she can get help from an adult at school.
4. If I tell my child's teachers about a concern with my child (for instance, related to academic challenges, behavior issues, etc.), they will try to address my concern.
5. If I tell the school administrators about a concern with my child ((for instance, related to academic challenges, behavior issues, etc.) or the school, they will try to address my concern.
6. I feel comfortable talking to my child's teachers.

7. I feel comfortable talking to administrators at my child's school.
8. I know what to do when problems arise with my child in school.
9. I feel welcomed at the school.
10. The school provides me with clear information about what my child is learning in school.
11. The school provides me with clear information about how to support my child's learning at home.
12. I have a good idea of how my child is doing in school.
13. I regularly talk to my child about what he/she is learning in school.
14. I assist my child with his/her homework.
15. The school has helped me learn new ways to help my child grow and develop in school.
16. *[The primary language we use at home is: (English, Spanish, Other [please specify])]*
17. The school communicates with me in the language my family uses at home.

For each statement, select the response that comes closest to describing how often you do each activity. If you do not have enough information to form an opinion on an item, select "Do Not Know." If you have more than one child at Southside-Ashpole Elementary School this year, select the response that best matches how you feel in general about your experience with the school this year.

As a parent of a child/children at Southside-Ashpole, during this school year, how often have you done each of the following activities?
[Never, Once or Twice, Once Every Few Months, Monthly, Weekly or More]

18. Meet in person with teachers at your child's school
19. Visit your child's school
20. Participate in decision-making groups, committees, or advisory councils at your child's school

For each statement, select the response that comes closest to describing how important you feel each activity is. If you do not have enough information to form an opinion on an item, select "Do Not Know."

How important is each of these to your child's/children's success in school?
[Absolutely Essential, Very Important, Of Average Importance, Slightly Important, Not Important At All, Do Not Know]

21. Attending school regularly
22. Completing homework regularly

Student Survey

Circle the answer that best matches how much you **agree** with each statement. If you are **not sure how you feel** about a statement, circle **"I Don't Know."** If you agree with the statement some of the time and disagree some of the time, circle **"Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree."**
[Agree, Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree, Disagree, I Don't Know]

1. I feel safe at my school.
2. If I feel threatened at school, adults at my school will help me.
3. If I am bullied outside of school by someone from my school (in person or online), adults at my school will help me.
4. Overall, adults at my school treat students fairly.
5. Adults in my school treat me with respect.
6. Adults at my school listen to students.
7. At my school, teachers care about students.
8. Adults at my school are available if I need help.
9. In general, I enjoy going to school.
10. Most teachers take time to answer my questions.
11. Most teachers grade my assignments and tests fairly.

Appendix I: Survey Results

Survey Response Key:

SD:	Strongly Disagree
D:	Disagree
N:	Neutral
SA/SD:	Sometimes Agree, Sometimes Disagree
A:	Agree
SA:	Strongly Agree
IDK/NA:	I Don't Know/Neutral

Parent/Guardian and Student Common Questions

Q1 My child is safe at school. / I feel safe at my school.

		SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	SD + D	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	Parent/Guardian	6%	18%	12%	47%	18%	0%	24%	12%	65%	*17*
	Student*	–	11%	22%	59%	–	9%	11%	22%	59%	*46*
Fall 2019	Parent/Guardian	0%	0%	26%	42%	32%	0%	0%	26%	74%	*19*
	Student*	–	0%	20%	73%		7%	0%	20%	73%	*15*
Spring 2020	Parent/Guardian	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*15*
	Student*	–	0%	48%	48%	–	5%	0%	48%	48%	*21*

Q2 If my child feels threatened at school, adults at the school will help him/her. / If I feel threatened at school, adults at my school will help me.

		SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	Parent/Guardian	12%	12%	24%	35%	18%	0%	24%	24%	53%	*17*
	Student*	–	13%	9%	67%	–	11%	13%	9%	67%	*46*
Fall 2019	Parent/Guardian	0%	5%	11%	37%	42%	5%	5%	11%	79%	*19*
	Student*	–	0%	7%	93%	–	0%	0%	7%	93%	*15*
Spring 2020	Parent/Guardian	7%	0%	7%	47%	40%	0%	7%	7%	87%	*15*
	Student*	–	0%	14%	81%	–	5%	0%	14%	81%	*21*

Q3 If my child is bullied outside of school (for instance, online), he/she can get help from an adult at school. / If I am bullied outside of school (in person or online) by someone from my school, adults at my school will help me.

		SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	Parent/Guardian	18%	0%	18%	35%	24%	6%	18%	18%	59%	*17*
	Student*	–	17%	15%	54%	–	13%	17%	15%	54%	*46*
Fall 2019	Parent/Guardian	0%	5%	16%	42%	16%	21%	5%	16%	58%	*19*
	Student*	–	7%	0%	80%	–	13%	7%	0%	80%	*15*
Spring 2020	Parent/Guardian	0%	7%	20%	33%	40%	0%	7%	20%	73%	*15*
	Student*	–	5%	10%	71%	–	14%	5%	10%	71%	*21*

*The student survey uses a limited response set: Agree, Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree, Disagree, and I Don't Know. Here, Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree is recorded as Neutral.

Parent

Q1 My child is safe at school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	18%	12%	47%	18%	0%	24%	12%	65%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	26%	42%	32%	0%	0%	26%	74%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*15*

Q2 If my child feels threatened at school, adults at the school will help him/her.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	12%	12%	24%	35%	18%	0%	24%	24%	53%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	5%	11%	37%	42%	5%	5%	11%	79%	*19*
Spring 2020	7%	0%	7%	47%	40%	0%	7%	7%	87%	*15*

Q3 If my child is bullied outside of school (for instance, online), he/she can get help from an adult at school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	18%	0%	18%	35%	24%	6%	18%	18%	59%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	5%	16%	42%	16%	21%	5%	16%	58%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	7%	20%	33%	40%	0%	7%	20%	73%	*15*

Q4 If I tell my child's teachers about a concern with my child (for instance, related to academic challenges, behavior issues, etc.), they will try to address my concern.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	0%	29%	29%	35%	0%	6%	29%	64%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	5%	11%	42%	37%	5%	5%	11%	79%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	7%	36%	57%	0%	0%	7%	93%	*14*

Q5 If I tell the school administrators about a concern with my child (for instance, related to academic challenges, behavior issues, etc.) or the school, they will try to address my concern.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	6%	29%	35%	24%	0%	12%	29%	59%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	5%	5%	47%	37%	5%	5%	5%	84%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	7%	14%	79%	0%	0%	7%	93%	*14*

Q6 I feel comfortable talking to my child's teachers.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	6%	18%	35%	41%	0%	6%	18%	76%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	16%	42%	42%	0%	0%	16%	84%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	7%	0%	29%	64%	0%	7%	0%	93%	*14*

Q7 I feel comfortable talking to administrators at my child's school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	12%	18%	47%	24%	0%	12%	18%	71%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	11%	47%	42%	0%	0%	11%	89%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	21%	79%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*14*

Q8 I know what to do when problems arise with my child in school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	6%	6%	41%	47%	0%	6%	6%	88%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	5%	42%	53%	0%	0%	5%	95%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	36%	64%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*14*

Q9 I feel welcomed at the school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	0%	18%	47%	35%	0%	0%	18%	82%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	5%	47%	47%	0%	0%	5%	94%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	29%	71%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*14*

Q10 The school provides me with clear information about what my child is learning school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	0%	41%	24%	29%	0%	6%	41%	53%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	5%	16%	47%	32%	0%	5%	16%	79%	*19*
Spring 2020	14%	0%	0%	43%	43%	0%	14%	0%	86%	*14*

Q11 The school provides me with clear information about how to support my child's learning at home.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	0%	47%	18%	29%	0%	6%	47%	47%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	11%	16%	42%	32%	0%	11%	16%	74%	*19*
Spring 2020	7%	0%	7%	50%	36%	0%	7%	7%	86%	*14*

Q12 I have a good idea of how my child is doing in school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	0%	29%	41%	24%	0%	6%	29%	65%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	11%	58%	32%	0%	0%	11%	90%	*19*
Spring 2020	7%	0%	0%	43%	50%	0%	7%	0%	93%	*14*

Q13 I regularly talk to my child about what he/she is learning in school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	6%	0%	47%	47%	0%	6%	0%	94%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	32%	68%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*14*

Q14 I assist my child with his/her homework.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	0%	12%	41%	35%	12%	0%	12%	76%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	11%	32%	47%	11%	0%	11%	79%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	7%	29%	64%	0%	0%	7%	93%	*14*

Q15 The school has helped me learn new ways to help my child grow and develop in school.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	6%	6%	29%	29%	24%	6%	12%	29%	53%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	5%	32%	32%	32%	0%	5%	32%	64%	*19*
Spring 2020	7%	0%	7%	36%	50%	0%	7%	7%	86%	*14*

Q16 The primary language we use at home is:

	English	*Spanish*	*Other*	*n*
Spring 2019	100%	0%	0%	*17*
Fall 2019	89%	11%	0%	*19*
Spring 2020	100%	0%	0%	*14*

Q17 The school communicates with me in the language my family uses at home.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	0%	6%	53%	41%	0%	0%	6%	94%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	11%	32%	58%	0%	0%	11%	90%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	7%	93%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*14*

Q18 During this school year, how often have you… Met in person with teachers at your child's school?

	Never	*Once/Twice*	*Once Every Few Months*	*Monthly*	*Weekly or More*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	47%	18%	24%	12%	*17*
Fall 2019	5%	37%	11%	16%	32%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	14%	29%	29%	29%	*14*

Q19 During this school year, how often have you… Visited you child's school?

	Never	*Once/Twice*	*Once Every Few Months*	*Monthly*	*Weekly or More*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	12%	24%	24%	41%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	26%	11%	5%	58%	*19*
Spring 2020	0%	14%	14%	36%	36%	*14*

Q20 During this school year, how often have you… Participated in decision-making groups, committees, or advisory councils at your child's school?

	Never	*Once/Twice*	*Once Every Few Months*	*Monthly*	*Weekly or More*	*n*
Spring 2019	77%	12%	6%	6%	0%	*17*
Fall 2019	53%	16%	5%	5%	21%	*19*
Spring 2020	21%	29%	29%	7%	14%	*14*

Q21 How important is attending school regularly to your child's success in school?

	Absolutely Essential	*Very Important*	*Of Average Importance*	*Slightly Important*	*Not Important At All*	*Do Not Know*	*n*
Spring 2019	71%	24%	0%	0%	0%	6%	*17*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	26%	74%	0%	*19*
Spring 2020	79%	21%	0%	0%	0%	0%	*14*

Q22 How important is completing homework regularly to your child's success in school?

	Absolutely Essential	*Very Important*	*Of Average Importance*	*Slightly Important*	*Not Important At All*	*Do Not Know*	*n*
Spring 2019	71%	24%	0%	0%	0%	6%	*17*
Fall 2019	5%	0%	5%	42%	47%	0%	*19*
Spring 2020	64%	21%	7%	7%	0%	0%	*14*

Q23 Did your child/any of your children attend Southside-Ashpole Elementary School for all or part of last year?

	Yes	*No*	*n*
[Spring 2019]	*N/A*	*N/A*	---
Fall 2019	100%	0%	*19*
Spring 2020	93%	7%	*15*

Note: In Spring 2019, the 17 responses represented 23 students; in Fall 2019, the 19 responses represented 27 students; in Spring 2020, the 15 responses represented 19 students.

Student

Q1 I feel safe at my school.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	11%	22%	59%	9%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	20%	73%	7%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	48%	48%	5%	*21*

Q2 If I feel threatened at school, adults at my school will help me.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	13%	9%	67%	11%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	7%	93%	0%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	14%	81%	5%	*21*

Q3 If I am bullied outside of school by someone from my school (in person or online), adults at my school will help me.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	17%	15%	54%	13%	*46*
Fall 2019	7%	0%	80%	13%	*15*
Spring 2020	5%	10%	71%	14%	*21*

Q4 Overall, adults at my school treat students fairly.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	16%	13%	64%	7%	*46*
Fall 2019	7%	27%	60%	7%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	29%	62%	10%	*21*

Q5 Adults in my school treat me with respect.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	13%	11%	67%	9%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	7%	93%	0%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	10%	86%	5%	*21*

Q6 Adults at my school listen to students.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	13%	28%	57%	2%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	40%	53%	7%	*15*
Spring 2020	5%	19%	68%	14%	*21*

Q7 At my school, teachers care about students.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	7%	7%	78%	9%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	7%	93%	0%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	19%	81%	0%	*21*

Q8 Adults at my school are available if I need help.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	9%	11%	72%	9%	*46*
Fall 2019	7%	27%	67%	0%	*15*
Spring 2020	10%	24%	62%	5%	*21*

Q9 In general, I enjoy going to school.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	24%	33%	39%	4%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	27%	53%	7%	*15*
Spring 2020	14%	19%	62%	5%	*21*

Q10 Most teachers take time to answer my questions.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	24%	22%	48%	7%	*46*
Fall 2019	7%	13%	73%	7%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	38%	62%	0%	*21*

Q11 Most teachers grade my assignments and tests fairly.

	D	*A/D*	*A*	*IDK*	*n*
Spring 2019	7%	9%	78%	7%	*46*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	73%	27%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	19%	76%	5%	*21*

Q12 Grade

	3	*4*	*5*	*n*
Spring 2019	33%	33%	35%	*46*
Fall 2019	27%	47%	27%	*15*
Spring 2020	19%	62%	19%	*21*

Q13 Did you go to Southside-Ashpole last school year (for all or some of the school year)?

	No	*Yes*	*n*
[Spring 2019]	*N/A*	*N/A*	---
Fall 2019	0%	100%	*15*
Spring 2020	0%	100%	*21*

Teachers

Q1 I have opportunities to participate in grade level and school-level planning committees.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	8%	8%	42%	42%	0%	8%	8%	83%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	12%	82%	6%	0%	0%	94%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	19%	73%	8%	0%	0%	92%	*26*

Q2 School leadership encourages teachers and staff to take leadership opportunities.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	8%	8%	58%	25%	0%	8%	8%	83%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	4%	23%	73%	0%	0%	4%	96%	*26*

Q3 School leadership asks me for my opinion.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	8%	17%	8%	3%	25%	8%	25%	8%	28%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	12%	6%	82%	0%	0%	12%	88%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	4%	0%	23%	73%	0%	4%	0%	96%	*26*

Q4 If I have a concern about a curriculum, policy, or other decision, I feel comfortable talking to someone in school leadership.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	8%	8%	17%	25%	42%	0%	17%	17%	67%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	6%	18%	76%	0%	0%	6%	94%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	4%	23%	73%	0%	0%	4%	96%	*26*

Q5 I have a say in choosing the curriculum I use in my classroom.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	9%	18%	18%	36%	9%	9%	27%	18%	45%	*11*
Fall 2019	24%	6%	24%	0%	47%	0%	29%	24%	47%	*17*
Spring 2020	4%	12%	0%	27%	46%	12%	16%	0%	73%	*26*

Q6 All staff members are treated equitably.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	27%	9%	27%	27%	9%	27%	9%	55%	*11*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	29%	71%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	12%	19%	69%	0%	0%	12%	88%	*26*

Q7 I feel connected to the community my school serves.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	8%	25%	42%	17%	8%	8%	25%	58%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	12%	41%	47%	0%	0%	12%	88%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	12%	23%	65%	0%	0%	12%	88%	*26*

Q8 I communicate with parents/guardians on a regular basis.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	0%	0%	58%	42%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	41%	59%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	4%	4%	27%	65%	0%	4%	4%	92%	*26*

Q9 I have parent/guardian volunteers in my classroom.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	42%	17%	17%	17%	8%	42%	17%	33%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	6%	18%	47%	6%	24%	6%	18%	53%	*17*
Spring 2020	8%	8%	19%	35%	19%	12%	16%	19%	54%	*26*

Q10 I use student data to improve instruction.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	0%	0%	42%	58%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	6%	24%	59%	12%	0%	6%	82%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	31%	58%	12%	0%	0%	89%	*26*

Q11 There is a process in place to help all staff members improve.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	0%	42%	50%	8%	0%	0%	42%	58%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	0%	24%	76%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	31%	69%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*26*

Q12 The professional development offered by my school is high-quality.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	8%	25%	58%	8%	0%	8%	25%	67%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	12%	29%	59%	0%	0%	12%	88%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	0%	38%	62%	0%	0%	0%	100%	*26*

Q13 The professional development offered by my school is relevant to my needs.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	8%	33%	42%	17%	0%	8%	33%	58%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	0%	6%	35%	59%	0%	0%	6%	94%	*17*
Spring 2020	0%	0%	4%	31%	65%	0%	0%	4%	96%	*26*

Q14 I have enough time in my schedule each week for lesson planning.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	25%	33%	25%	17%	0%	25%	33%	42%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	6%	0%	35%	35%	24%	6%	0%	71%	*17*
Spring 2020	4%	4%	4%	46%	31%	12%	8%	4%	77%	*26*

Q15 I have time set in my schedule to plan and collaborate with other teachers and staff.

	SD	*D*	*N*	*A*	*SA*	*IDK*	*SD + D*	*N*	*A + SA*	*n*
Spring 2019	0%	8%	25%	33%	33%	0%	8%	25%	67%	*12*
Fall 2019	0%	6%	12%	35%	47%	0%	6%	12%	82%	*17*
Spring 2020	4%	0%	0%	38%	50%	8%	4%	0%	88%	*26*

Did you work at Southside-Ashpole Elementary School, in any position, for all or part of last school year?

	Yes	*No*	*n*
[Spring 2019]	*N/A*	*N/A*	---
Fall 2019	71%	29%	*17*
Spring 2020	*77%*	23%	*26*

Note: In Spring 2019, the survey was sent to grade-level and specials teachers only. In Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, the survey was sent to all instructional staff and non-administration office staff.

Appendix J: Recommended School-Level Annual Report Components

Q2. Does the ISD improve learning conditions, including changes in student behavior?

- Description of Exceptional Children (EC) plan (outlining the full continuum of services to meet the special education and related services needs of students with disabilities)
- Proof of a highly-qualified and licensed special education teacher(s) and/or director
- Identification of sources for external EC service providers (e.g., school psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech language pathologist, etc.)
- Evidence of on-site/accessible, appropriate instructional supports for students with disabilities (as indicated in IEPs)
- Statement of school policies for EC, incorporating all required elements to meet Federal and State regulations (e.g., discipline, confidentiality, accountability, maintenance of effort, security and confidentiality of EC Student Special Education files, etc.)
- Address transportation (as a related service) for EC students who may have this as a component of their IEP
- Description of school's approach to discipline and changes over time
- Description of school's responses to attendance problems/truancy

Q3. Does the ISD contribute to changes in school-community engagement?

- Description of the process of identifying valuable external partners
- Annual list of partners and description of services they provide, including level of partnerships (time commitment, financial commitment)
- If evaluation budget supports: Descriptive report of offsetting services or additional value in services provided; where available, budget data on any financial offsets arising from partnerships
- Annual list of parent/guardian involvement in school events

Q4a. Does the ISD contribute to an overall change in the culture of schooling in ISD schools?

- Plan for diffusion of best practices

Q4b. Does the ISD change approaches to ensuring sustainable, high quality staffing in ISD schools?

- Description of teacher recruitment and retention processes
- ISO protocol for teacher evaluation
- Annual list of professional development opportunities (plus attendance figures)

Q4c. Does the ISD change approaches to leadership in ISD schools?

- Annual school operating costs, compared to average operating costs for similarly-sized new schools and/or new charter schools
- Description of teacher leadership model
- Evidence of teacher leadership model implementation

Q4d. Does the ISD contribute to changes in the *culture of schooling in partnering LEAs, non-participating LEAs, and/or across the State overall*?

- Plan for diffusion of best practices to partner LEAs

Key: ***Red text***=indicator for legislatively-highlighted outcomes

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