



Public Schools of North Carolina

2020 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

Virtual Public Charter School Pilot Program

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Overview

- Background and Legislation
- Student Enrollment and Withdrawals
- Course Offerings
- Student Performance
- Implementation, Administration, and Funding
- Recommendations

Background

- North Carolina Session Law 2014-100 required the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish a pilot program to authorize the operation of two virtual charter schools serving grades K-12.
- Begin with the 2015-2016 school year and continue for a period of four years, ending with the 2018-2019 school year.
- Prior to the end of the four-year pilot, Session Law 2018-5 extended the pilot program for an additional four years. The virtual charter schools pilot program is now authorized to continue through the 2022-2023 school year.
- [Pilot Legislation SL 2014-100](#)
- [SL 2018-5](#)

Reporting Requirement

The State Board shall report on the initial implementation of the pilot program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) by November 15, 2016, and on the findings from (i) five years of operation of the pilot program by November 15, 2020, and (ii) seven years of operation of the pilot program by November 15, 2022.

At a minimum, the report shall include the following:

- The number of students who have enrolled in courses offered by the schools.
- The number and types of courses offered by the schools.
- The withdrawal rate of students after enrollment.
- Student performance and accountability data.
- Information on implementation, administration, and funding for the pilot program.
- Recommendations on the modification, continuation, and potential expansion of the program.

Pilot Program Virtual Charter Schools

- **August 2015:** NC Connections Academy and NC Virtual Academy (NCVA) opened after successfully completing the Ready to Open process. NC Connections Academy has since changed its name to NC Cyber Academy (NCCA).
- **May 2019:** SBE voted to approve NC Connections Academy's amendment request to terminate its partnership with the Educational Management Organization (EMO) Pearson OBL and change its name to NC Cyber Academy, effective June 30, 2019.
- **August 2020:** Both schools are now in their sixth year of operation with two additional school years remaining in the pilot.

Pilot Legislation

- Session Law 2014-100, as amended by Session Law 2018-5, established and extended the virtual charter schools pilot program.
- Pilot legislation outlines several requirements unique to the virtual pilot charter schools, governing everything from enrollment to funding.
- The two virtual charters are subject to Article 14A of Chapter 115C.

[Pilot Legislation SL 2014-100](#)
[SL 2018-5](#)

Student Enrollment

- The pilot legislation caps enrollment at 2,592 students.
- SBE has authority to waive the maximum student enrollment threshold beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.
- Former approvals for NCVA:
 - 2019-2020 year (grow by 20%)
 - 2020-2021 school (maintain enrollment at 2,945 students) stipulated that any enrollment requests above the statutory maximum, following the 2020-2021 school year, will be subject to the school meeting academic growth.

September 2020 Enrollment Update

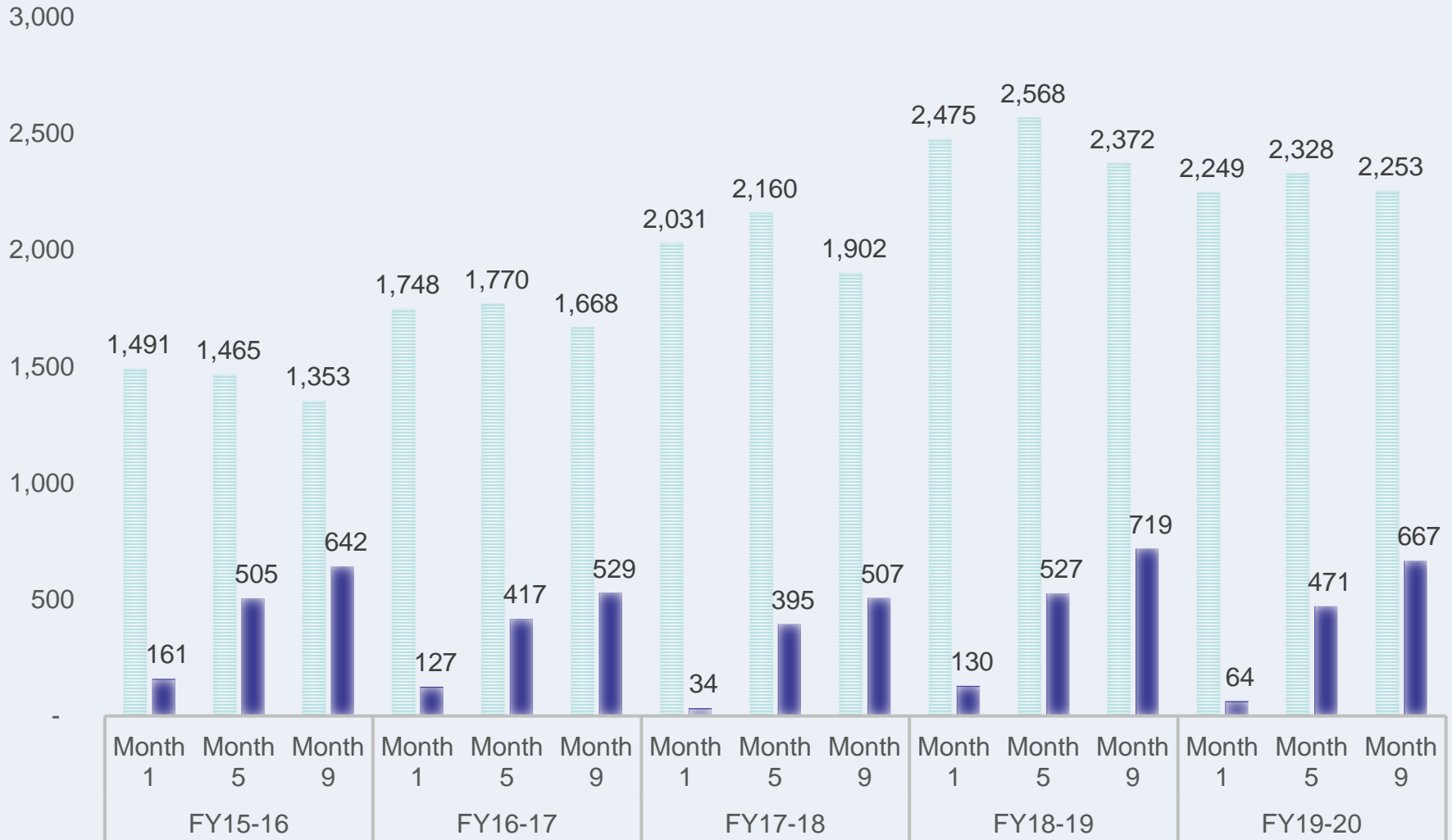
- [SL 2020-97](#)
- VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT SECTION
 - the two virtual charter schools shall be permitted to increase student enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year only as follows: (i) North Carolina Cyber Academy shall be permitted to increase its enrollment by 1,000 students and (ii) North Carolina Virtual Academy shall be permitted to increase its enrollment by 2,800 students.
 - A virtual charter school permitted an increase in student enrollment pursuant to this section shall give enrollment priority to students for the 2021-2022 school year who were enrolled in the school for the 2020-2021 school year prior to the date this act became law.
- The virtual charter schools shall provide an interim report by March 15, 2021, and a final report by November 15, 2021, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, on the impact of the increase in student enrollment permitted by Session Law 2020-97 House Bill 1105 subsection (a) of this section, including data on where students had been previously enrolled by local school administrative unit, charter school, or nonpublic school, the grade level of students, the withdrawal rate of students after enrollment, and any student performance and accountability data.

Student Enrollment – NC Cyber

- Over the course of the pilot program, NCCA has grown from a student enrollment (Membership Last Day, Month 9) of 1,353 to 2,253, which is a **cumulative enrollment increase of 66.5%**.
- The cumulative withdrawals (Month 9) have varied over time with a low of **507 withdrawals** in the 2017-2018 school year and a high of **719 withdrawals** in the 2018-2019 school year.

NC CYBER ACADEMY

Membership Last Day Withdrawals

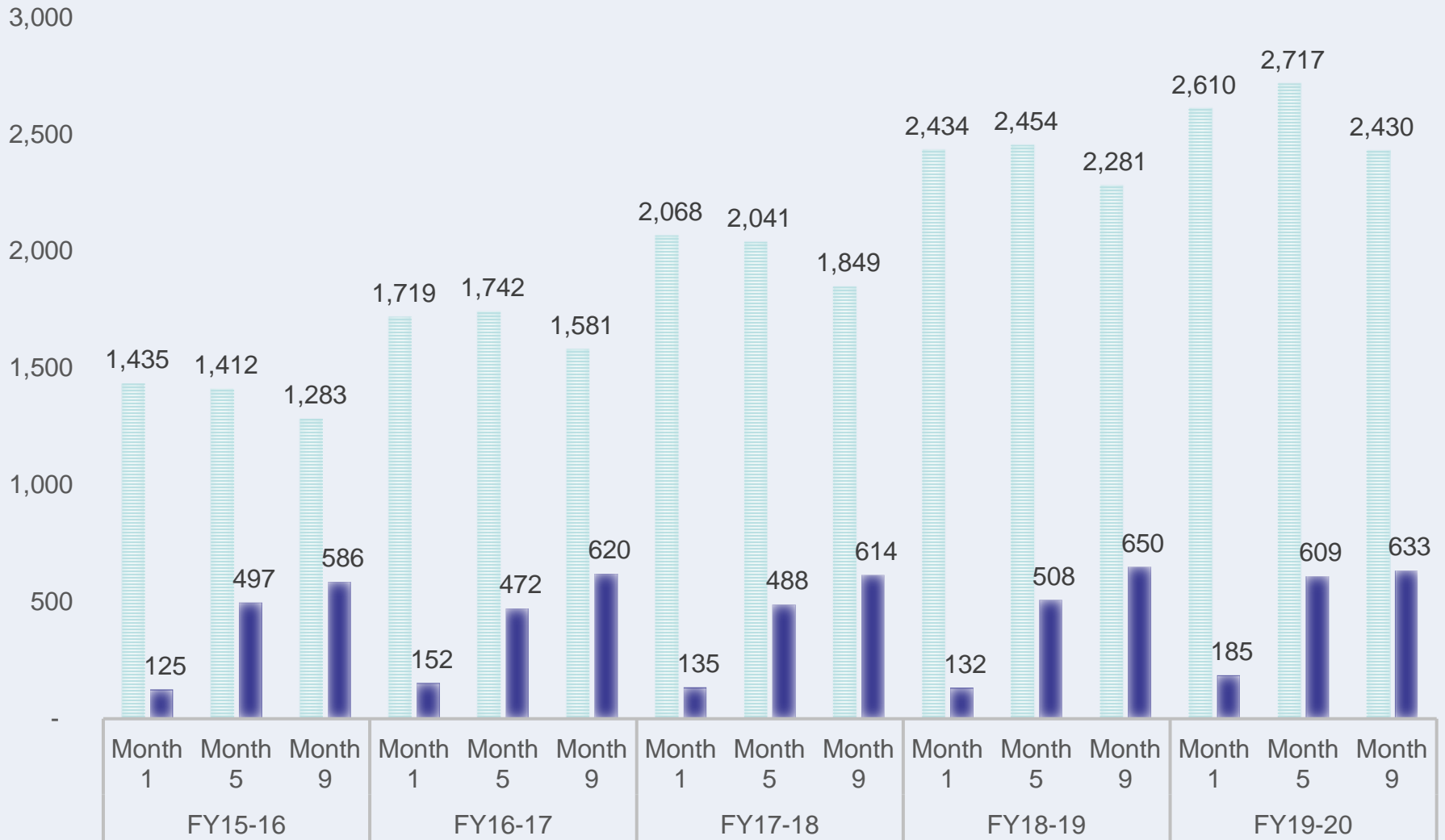


Student Enrollment – NC Virtual

- Over the course of the pilot program, NCVA has grown from a student enrollment (Membership Last Day, Month 9) of 1,283 to 2,430, which is a **cumulative enrollment increase of 89.4%**.
- The cumulative withdrawals (Month 9) have varied over time with a low of **586 withdrawals** in the 2015-2016 school year and a high of **650 withdrawals** in the 2018-2019 school year.

NC VIRTUAL ACADEMY

Membership Last Day Withdrawals



Withdrawal Rates

- Each virtual public charter school shall have a withdrawal rate below 25%. Additionally, a student enrolled in a school with the intent expressed prior to enrollment of only being enrolled for a finite period of time within the school year shall not be counted in the measured withdrawal rate. The school shall keep a written record of a student's stated intent for finite enrollment.

Session Law 2016-94 made four (4) specific changes to the virtual charters withdrawal rate beginning with the 2016-17 school year which includes additional exclusions:

1. Students who regularly failed to participate in courses who are withdrawn under the procedures adopted by the school.
2. Students no longer qualified under State law to attend a North Carolina public school, including relocation to another state.
3. Students who: (i) withdraw from school because of a family, personal, or medical reason, and (ii) notify the school of the reason for withdrawal.
4. Students who withdraw from school within the first 30 days following the date of enrollment.

NC Cyber Withdrawal Rates

Month	FY15-16			FY16-17			FY17-18			FY18-19			FY19-20		
	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9
Membership Last Day	1,491	1,465	1,353	1,748	1,770	1,668	2,031	2,160	1,902	2,475	2,568	2,372	2,249	2,328	2,253
Enrollments Cumulative	1,652	1,971	1,995	1,875	2,187	2,197	2,065	2,555	2,504	2,605	3,095	3,091	2,313	2,799	2,920
Withdrawals Cumulative	161	505	642	127	417	529	34	395	507	130	527	719	64	471	667
Finite Enrollees			25			-			-			46			-
Exempted Withdrawals			N/A			36			277			213			113
Withdrawal Rate all Enrollees			32%			31%			20%			23%			23%
Withdrawal Rate Minus Exempted Withdrawals			31%			22%			9%			15%			19%

NC Virtual Withdrawal Rates

	<i>FY15-16</i>			<i>FY16-17</i>			<i>FY17-18</i>			<i>FY18-19</i>			<i>FY19-20</i>		
<i>Month</i>	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9	M1	M5	M9
<i>Membership Last Day</i>	1,435	1,412	1,283	1,719	1,742	1,581	2,068	2,041	1,849	2,434	2,454	2,281	2,610	2,717	2,430
<i>Enrollments Cumulative</i>	1,560	1,909	1,870	1,871	2,214	2,201	2,203	2,529	2,463	2,566	2,962	2,931	2,795	3,326	3,063
<i>Withdrawals Cumulative</i>	125	497	586	152	472	620	135	488	614	132	508	650	185	609	633
<i>Finite Enrollees</i>			158			237			207			135			40
<i>Exempted Withdrawals</i>			N/A			365			388			360			350
<i>Withdrawal Rate all Enrollees</i>			31%			28%			25%			22%			21%
<i>Withdrawal Rate Minus Exempted Withdrawals</i>			23%			<1%			<1%			5%			8%

Course Offerings



- Large variety of course offerings.
 - AP/Honors
 - Occupational Course of Study
 - Electives
- Change in offerings during pilot in response to student demand and interest.

Student Performance/Accountability

- **Academic Growth**
 - Progress made over the previous year.
 - Exceeded;
 - Met; or
 - Did Not Meet.
- **School Performance Grades (SPG)**
 - A – F letter grades.
 - Overall and subgroups (must have a minimum number of scores).

Student Performance/Accountability

- **Low-Performing (LP)**

- SPG of D or F
- AND
- Met or Not Met Growth

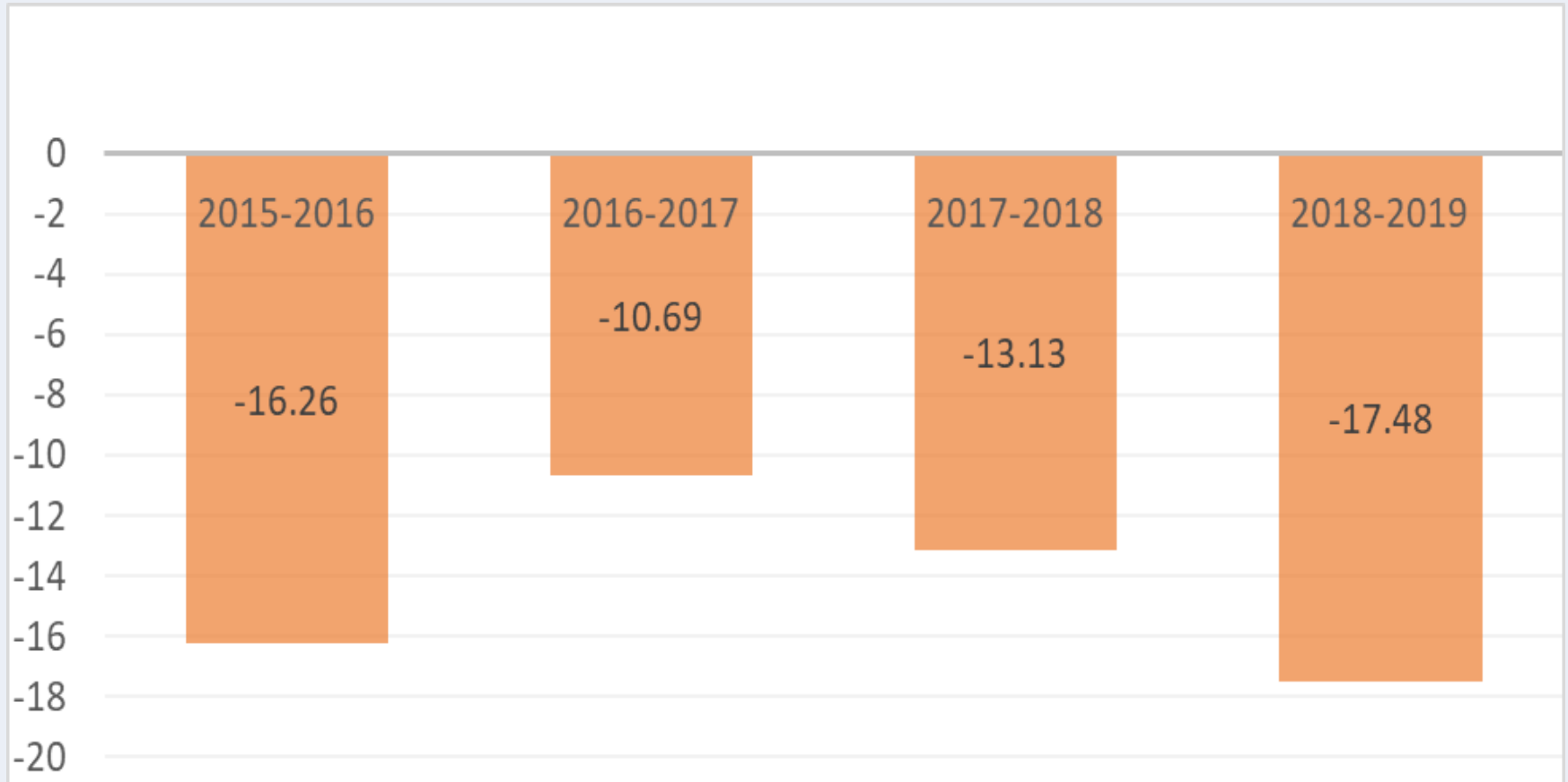
- **Continually Low-Performing (CLP)**

- Designated as low-performing for at least two of the three consecutive years.

NC Cyber SPG and Growth

	Performance Grade	Growth Status	Growth Index
2018-2019	D	Not Met	-17.48
2017-2018	D	Not Met	-13.13
2016-2017	D	Not Met	-10.69
2015-2016	D	Not Met	-16.26

NC Cyber Growth Trends



NC Cyber GLP and CCR

The percentage of students that scored Level 3 and above (Grade Level Proficient - GLP) or Level 4 and above (Career and College Readiness - CCR) on the End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) assessments is outlined below.

	Grade Level Proficiency			College and Career Readiness		
	School	State	+/-	School	State	+/-
2018-2019	46.2	58.8	-12.6	33.0	44.5	-11.5
2017-2018	52.1	58.8	-6.7	41.4	49.2	-7.8
2016-2017	54.8	59.2	-4.4	44.9	49.2	-4.3
2015-2016	51.8	58.3	-6.5	41.6	48.8	-7.2

NC Virtual SPG and Growth

	Performance Grade	Growth Status	Growth Index
2018-2019	D	Not Met	-9.48
2017-2018	D	Not Met	-6.75
2016-2017	D	Not Met	-9.46
2015-2016	D	Not Met	-16.36

NC Virtual Growth Trends

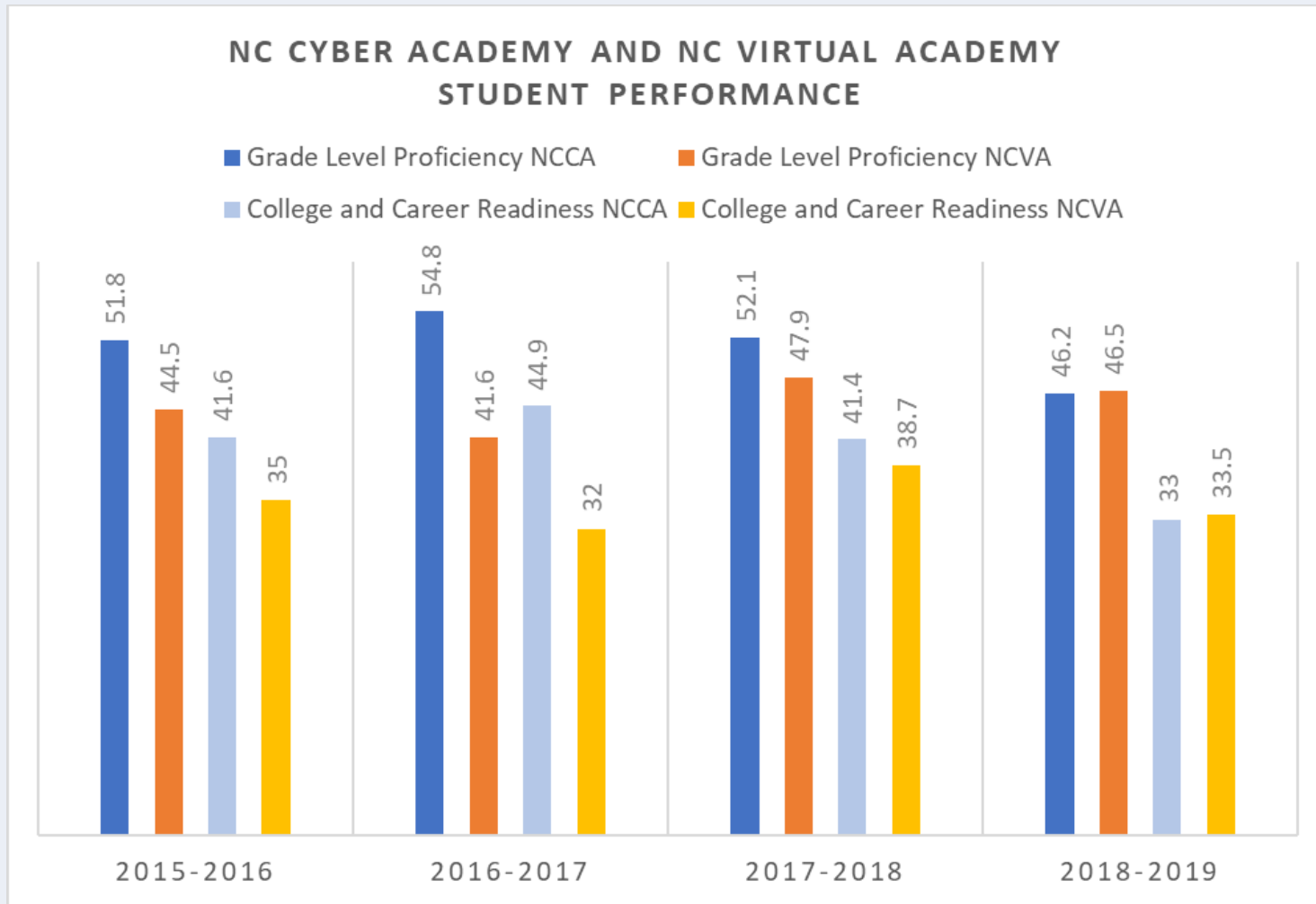


NC Virtual GLP and CCR

The percentage of students that scored Level 3 and above (Grade Level Proficient - GLP) or Level 4 and above (Career and College Readiness - CCR) on the End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) assessments is outlined below.

	Grade Level Proficiency			College and Career Readiness		
	School	State	+/-	School	State	+/-
2018-2019	46.5	58.8	-12.3	33.5	44.5	-11.0
2017-2018	47.9	58.8	-10.9	38.7	49.2	-10.5
2016-2017	41.6	59.2	-17.6	32.0	49.2	-17.2
2015-2016	44.5	58.3	-13.8	35.0	48.8	-13.8

NC Cyber Academy and NC Virtual Academy Student Performance Trends



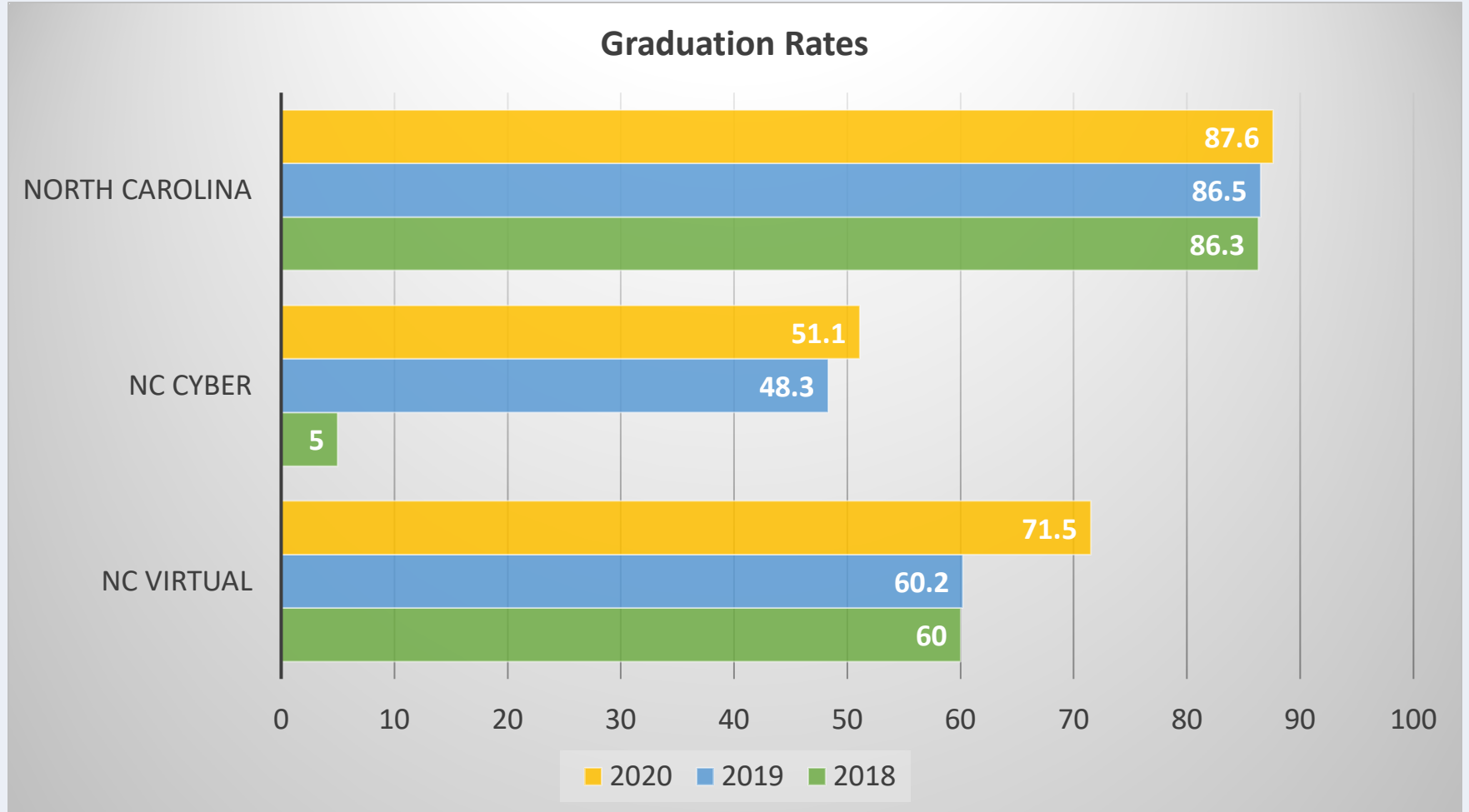
NC Cyber Subgroup Data

Subgroup	2017-2018		2018-2019	
	Growth	SPG	Growth	SPG
American Indian		I		F
Asian		B		B
Black	Not Met	D	Not Met	D
Economically Disadvantaged	Not Met	F	Not Met	F
English Learners		D		F
Hispanic	Not Met	D	Not Met	D
Two or More Races	Not Met	D	Not Met	D
Students With Disabilities	Not Met	F	Not Met	F
White	Not Met	C	Not Met	D

NC Virtual Subgroup Data

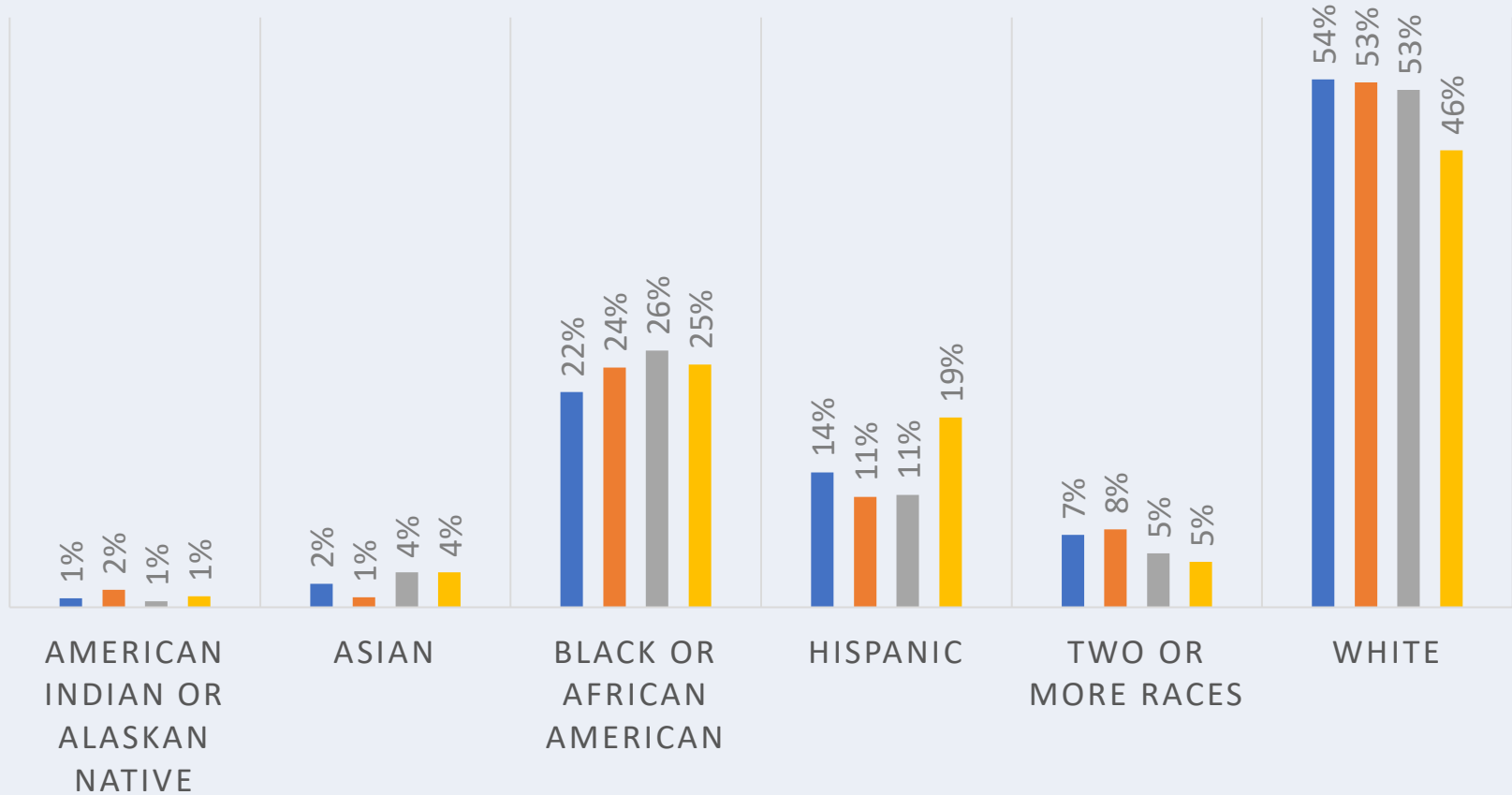
Subgroup	2017-2018		2018-2019	
	Growth	SPG	Growth	SPG
American Indian		I		I
Asian		I		C
Black	Not Met	D	Not Met	D
Economically Disadvantaged	Not Met	D	Not Met	D
English Learners		F		D
Hispanic	Met	D	Not Met	C
Two or More Races	Met	C	Not Met	D
Students With Disabilities	Met	F	Met	F
White	Not Met	D	Not Met	D

Graduation Rates



Student Demographics 2019

■ NC Cyber ■ NC Virtual ■ All Charters ■ All Traditional Public



Economically Disadvantaged Students

Snapshot Date	NCCA	NCVA	All Charters	All Traditional Publics
12/1/2016	46.36%	66.65%	33.75%	50.32%
12/1/2017	17.65%	24.39%	23.17%	44.40%
12/1/2018	17.68%	26.97%	23.48%	46.68%
12/1/2019	13.01%	21.60%	20.75%	41.37%

Students with Disabilities

Snapshot Date	NCCA	NCVA	All Charters	All Traditional Publics
12/1/2016	9.99%	10.61%	9.79%	12.26%
12/1/2017	10.50%	13.63%	10.14%	12.29%
12/1/2018	11.88%	12.83%	10.24%	12.34%
12/1/2019	12.78%	13.34%	10.59%	12.41%

Virtual Charter School Funding

Legislation provides three (3) differences in funding for the virtual charter schools and the traditional public schools and charter schools:

- Virtual charter schools are funded based on a dollars per Average Daily Membership (ADM), *but* excludes the per pupil share of low wealth and small county;
- Traditional charters are funded based on 1st month ADM, but virtual charter schools are funded based on month 1 and month 5 Membership Last Day; and
- Traditional charters receive a per pupil share of the local current expense of the LEA in which the student resides. For virtual charters this amount is capped at \$790.

State Funding

- NCCA state funding totaled over seven and one-half million dollars (\$7,650,416) during the first year of the pilot program. At the conclusion of the fifth year, state funding had nearly doubled to over fourteen million dollars (\$14,381,277).
- State funding for NCVA during its first year of operation totaled over seven and one-half million dollars (\$7,543,164) and at the conclusion of the fifth year, state funding totaled over sixteen million dollars (\$16,522,523).

State Funding – Average Per Pupil

	FY15-16	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20
LEA (Traditional Public)	\$ 5,659.19	\$ 5,766.20	\$ 5,955.23	\$ 6,254.78	\$ 6,415.33
Charter Schools	\$ 5,088.90	\$ 5,176.52	\$ 5,339.71	\$ 5,606.41	\$ 5,753.92
Virtual Charter Schools	\$ 4,926.33	\$ 5,005.12	\$ 5,163.73	\$ 5,420.81	\$ 5,560.72

Recommendations

- Focuses:
 - Academic Improvement
 - Accountability
 - Data

Recommendation (1)

Both virtual charter schools shall submit a report to the CSAB and SBE, using available internal data such as check-in data or other formative assessments, showing areas of academic growth and challenge during the 2019-2020 school year for which state accountability data is unavailable. This report should be presented to the CSAB at its February 2021 meeting.

Recommendation (2)

During the 2021-2022 school year, both virtual charter schools shall submit a report to the CSAB and SBE regarding the student experience at each school. The report shall include, at a minimum, information regarding: the instructional model(s) employed at each school; time spent actively online by students and teachers; the curriculum and software utilized at each school; student and family supports provided; sample daily student schedules of instructional days; learning coach requirements and support; and data regarding the amount of asynchronous and synchronous instruction. The report shall also include data on mobility rates among each school's student population. **In addition, both virtual charter schools shall conduct in-depth surveys of teachers, students, and families regarding stakeholder opinions on (at a minimum) school academics, culture, and support.** Survey results should include questions regarding the amount of daily time spent on instruction by students and support by learning coaches. The report and accompanying survey results should be provided to the Office of Charter Schools by July 1, 2022 for inclusion in the November 15, 2022 final legislatively required report on the virtual charter pilot program. **The CSAB strongly recommends that this report and the accompanying surveys be facilitated and written by an external evaluator with expertise in virtual learning.**

Recommendation (3)

Accountability data for the two virtual charter schools be separate from aggregate data of “all charters” for state accountability reporting purposes. There are several reasons for this recommendation. First, virtual charters were established and extended through a legislative process as opposed to the authorization and renewal process of which all brick and mortar charter schools participate. Additionally, virtual charter schools are critically different from face-to-face instructional brick and mortar charter schools and therefore merit separate data analysis and consideration.

