



Torchlight Academy Response

2/28/22

Requests and Responses Outline

September	October	November	December	January	February	March
20 th – Surprise EC Monitoring Visit – Unannounced EC Site Audit	7 th – EC Monitoring Report Received	19 th – Requested to attend CSAB Meeting	1 st – GEER Interview	4 th – 21 st CCLC Documents due	8 th – Beginning Teacher Licensure Response Due	
	18 th – Response to EC Monitoring	24 th – ESSER GEER Documents Submitted	7 th - CSAB Meeting Regarding EC	5 th – Responses due for Noncompliance Notification	9 th – BTL Response Due	1 st – Student Accounting Response Due
	28 th – Beginning Teacher Licensure Audit		16 th – SBE Hearing and subsequent Level 3 Noncompliance Notification	13 th – 21 st CCLC Monitoring	23 rd – Unannounced Student Accounting Audit	2 nd – ESSER and Consolidated Additional Information Due
				21 st - ESSER GEER Response Due	24 th – Fiscal Monitoring Report & ESSER Request	
				24 th – 21 st CCLC Questioned Costs		

Topics of Discussion



History of Torchlight
Academy



Consolidated
Monitoring Submission



21st CCLC Submission



ESSER Review



ADM Reporting



Fiscal Management



EC (Other
Presentation)



Benefits of
Management
Company

Torchlight Academy Past



Founded in 1999



2001-2002 School Year with
less than 40% of students
grading at or above grade
level



Cynthia McQueen hired as
Principal in 2002, previously
serving as Broughton High
Vice Principal



First year of 60 students, K-5



Torchlight Academy Present



Operating 20+ Years



Among Highest Growth
Rates of All Schools in the
State of NC



Minority Percentage > 99%



Serves Approximately 600
students K-8



THE NEWS & OBSERVER
North
Raleigh
News

MARKET PLACE



Now open: A look inside North Raleigh's newest hot spot — Triangle Town Center. **PAGE 4N**

leona Bloom: Let's hear it
for comfortable shoes.
PAGE 4N

NORTH VIEWS

Phil Dickerson: Second grade is a time to appreciate bionic women and Powerpuff Girls. **PAGE 2N**

NORTH NEWS

Martin House: A business built around birds and flowers. **PAGE 3N**



CYCLISTS | FIGHTING LIKE DOGS AND ... GOOBERS?



On most any Saturday morning at Blue Jay Point County Park, you'll see bicycle riders pedaling in packs. The Road Dogs take things fast, while the North Raleigh Ride Group - aka the Goochers - are just a bit slower.

STAFF PHOTO BY JIM HUNTER

Ailing school reborn

Northeast Raleigh Charter Academy changes its name, location and leadership for the upcoming school year.

BY DELAWESE FULTON

STAFF WRITER
RALEIGH - The beleaguered Northeast Raleigh Charter Academy seems to have taken the advice of a former teacher and is starting anew.

Northeast Raleigh Charter has changed its name, relocated to downtown Raleigh and hired a new principal.

Cynthia McQueen, a one-time New York journalist and a former vice principal at Broughton High School, has taken the helm of the school, which has been re-

McQueen becomes the school's third principal in eight months. Founder Rose McNeill resigned in December and was replaced by Leon Frank, who left the school within a few months.



**Torchlight
Academy
Principal
Cynthia
McQueen**

Former teacher JaMelia Baylor-Strou said last month that she left the school after two years because it became too much for her.

"I think it could be a great school. However, I feel ... you should clear out and start anew," Baylor-Stroud said.

McQueen knows the school's history. Her granddaughter went there for a period before changing schools. McQueen declined to discuss why.

Still, the 20-year educator is determined to rebuild the school's image as she says she is dedicated to providing her students with a quality education.

"Our children are brilliant," McQueen said. "They can excel. It's just a matter of having the right atmosphere."

SEE TORCHLIGHT, PAGE 10N

**A BIKE TREK
WITH A PURPOSE**



North Raleigh's Stephen Crissman, left, and his pal Adam Larson, a star of MTV's "Road Rules," just completed a monthlong cross-country bicycle expedition to raise awareness about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Both men have been diagnosed with the condition.

FREE TIME - PAGE 6N

Rivals of the road

Ride groups offer choice: competitive or supportive?

By KATHY WAITS
CORRESPONDENT

RALEIGH—If you want to pedal your bike through the rural country roads north of Raleigh and you'd like company on your journey, then you're in luck.

ONLINE Check out the North Carolina Bicycle Club's Web site at www.ncbicyclist.com.

Just before lunchtime at Blue Jay Point County Park on any Saturday morning, you might see a very fit group of cyclists sipping fluids after completing their morning ride of 53 miles at 19 miles an hour.

These are not the Road Dogs, known to fellow Raleigh cyclists as those who relish racing away and leaving their riding buddies alone on roads in Granville, Durham, Franklin and Vance counties.

100-378615, PAGE 7N

re a crucial cog in schools

School Turnaround

FORCHLIGHT ACADEMY

RANKS



ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG 167 NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS



JANUARY 18, 2018



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STAYING TRUE TO "THE DREAM"—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s National Holiday was celebrated in many different ways on Monday. Pictured here are NC Representative Chris Malone (left) and Torchlight Academy Owner Don McQueen (right), who got their hands wrist deep in painting chores at Torchlight Academy in Raleigh. [Contributed Photo]



First Congregational Church
Dr. M. R. Smith, Sr.
Pastor-Teacher



ASSOCIATION BOARD OF ADVISORS



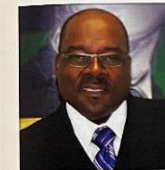
Carroll Reed (Southern Wake)



Ivonne Reed
(Langtree Charter Academy)



Rudy Swofford (Summerfield)



Simon Johnson (Quality Education)



Natalie Brozy (Roxboro Community)



Dave Machado (Lincoln Charter)



Kirby McCrary (Millennium)



Cynthia McQueen (Torchlight)



Antoinette Ellison
(INVEST Collegiate)



Stephen Hester
(Bethel Hill Charter)



Jennifer Lucas
(Voyager Academy)

Not Pictured:

Melanie Williams
(PreEminent)

Rhonda Dillingham
(Uwharrie)

SBE Nominations


North Carolina General Assembly
House Of Representatives

REPRESENTATIVE BOBBIE RICHARDSON
3TH DISTRICT

OFFICE: 1217 LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
16 W. JONES STREET
RALEIGH, NC 27601-1098
PHONE: (919) 718-3022
FAX: (919) 784-3334
EMAIL: b00286@ncleg.gov
DISTRICTS: FRANKLIN & NASH COUNTIES

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE AND JOB DEVELOPMENT, VICE CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND NATURAL & ECONOMIC RESOURCES
EDUCATION K-12
ELECTIONS
JUDICIARY IV

March 24, 2015

Governor Pat McCrory
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

To the Honorable Pat McCrory,

I write this letter to recommend Dr. Cynthia McQueen to the NC Board of Education.

Dr. McQueen has vast educational experience as a teacher, guidance counselor, principal, and superintendent. In addition, her mother, father and husband are all educators. This is, I believe, a narrative about her commitment to education.

I also believe she would be a much-needed voice for charter schools on the state board. She is currently the principal at Torchlight Academy, a Raleigh charter school that caters to disadvantaged youth, where she has led admirably.

Dr. McQueen is a passionate advocate for education and children. I believe her addition to the BOE would strengthen the board.

Sincerely,



Rep. Bobbie Richardson

cc: Dr. Cynthia McQueen



James West
Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 550 Raleigh, NC 27602

Tel 919 856 5573
Fax 919 856 5699

March 12, 2015

The Honorable Pat McCrory, Governor
116 West Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603

Re: Letter of Support for Dr. Cynthia McQueen

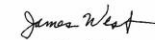
Dear Governor McCrory:

I am extremely pleased to write this letter of support for Dr. Cynthia McQueen nominee to the North Carolina State Board of Education. I have had the opportunity to observe and work with Dr. McQueen in her capacity as Principal at Torch Light Academy Public Charter School and as a leader in the community. Her leadership, personal mastery and empirical creativity make her an excellent choice for this important position.

Her perspective and experience in working successfully with at-risk students would be a tremendous asset to the vision and values needed on the State Board of Education. She has worked to instill positive youth development skills needed to help youth to become productive citizens. Dr. McQueen has a clear perspective and vision of the educational needs and issues for North Carolina. She will help to position North Carolina to become a leader of innovation and excellence in education.

I fully support Dr. McQueen's nomination to The North Carolina State Board of Education. Regardless of her assignment, she performs superbly and with distinction.

Sincerely,



James West, Chairman
Wake Board of County Commissioners



Consolidated Monitoring Submission Timeline

- Initial Report from DPI Provided 4/15/21
- Responses Timely Provided 5/27/21
- Significant turnover among DPI Monitoring Staff – Torchlight Monitor Retired
- New Monitor Made contact not knowing of 5/27/21 submission in December of 2021
- Additional Documentation Requested 2/17/22 and timely submitted
- Final documentation to be provided 3/2/22



21st CCLC Submission

- Initial Request to Review 21st CCLC Cohort 14 on December 20, 2021
- BASS Report comingles Cohort 13 and 14 – Torchlight Operating 2 different Programs for 2 different grade levels
- Torchlight only provided supporting documentation for Cohort 14 as requested by DPI
- DPI deems that we had disallowed costs and that we did not provide supporting documentation
- DPI could have reconciled if they reviewed CCIP to see the differences
- Torchlight provided Cohort 13 Documentation
- No Feedback provided to date



21st CCLC Submission – Cohort 14 Request

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Melba Strickland** <Melba.Strickland@dpi.nc.gov>

Date: Fri, Dec 3, 2021 at 6:08 PM

Subject: 92L Torchlight Academy -- 21st CCLC Program - Cohort 14 FMR Notification Letter

To: Teri Clarke <tclarke@tlaedu.org>, Torchlight Academy <torchlight_director@gmail.com>

CC: LaTricia Townsend <LaTricia.Townsend@dpi.nc.gov>, Susan Brigman <Susan.Brigman@dpi.nc.gov>, Tara Powe <Tara.Powe@dpi.nc.gov>, Ashton Moss <Ashton.Moss@dpi.nc.gov>, Eric Rainey <Eric.Rainey@dpi.nc.gov>

Please see attached.

Melba Strickland

Administrative Assistant

Federal Programs

NC Department of Public Instruction

Telephone (W) 984-236-2795

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ESSER Review

- Findings related to PRC's 165, 169, 170, 171, and 181 were presented to the school
- PRC's 171 and 181 were approved a week before the time of submission – so no funds had been spent. Unclear why there were findings.
- Additional documentation was provided for PRC's 165 and 169 to support the conversation from our interview
- The totality of the response from Torchlight listed the policies and procedures of the school as well as the original applications in CCIP which detailed how grants would be measured.



ADM Reporting

- School was provided ADM Report on 2/25/22
- DPI stated findings based upon their statement that they were, “unable to rely on the data recorded in PowerSchool.”
- The analysis by DPI is flawed in that it compares a headcount, which is a snapshot, to an ADM, which is an average of a designated period. Such comparisons are statistically inappropriate and cannot be used to measure proper data input or financial instability when combined. Moreover, the report did not take into account the usual timing of data entry when their data was taken, i.e. before the School could perform its daily PowerSchool entries for attendance. Similarly, the report fails to account for absences due to COVID-19 that have yet to be reported and corrected and other factors affecting the headcount.



ADM Reporting continued

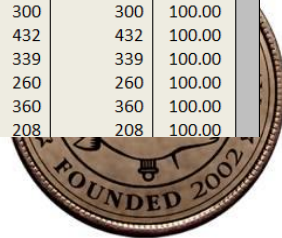
- PMR 1 of 601 students, current count of 575 (<5% ADM decrease)
- 86 students absent. ADA to ADM Ratio of 85%
 - DPI compares PMR Month 1 to the number of students present
 - This ADA to ADM ratio is within the norm of schools across the state (Next Slide) – especially considering truancy is well documented to be higher among economically disadvantaged populations and the COVID pandemic is causing absences at a much higher rate. Southeast Raleigh High is an almost identical number
 - Many schools have reported 100% ADA to ADM ratios for multiple years, which is highly improbable at best, especially considering online learning last year
 - Student Accounting Manual reflects that error within 5% is an acceptable rate, missing 17 students out of 575 is less than 3%
 - Further, the number of students being taught online is over 20 students, which could explain this discrepancy



ADM Reporting Continued

1	LEASch	LEA	LEA	Sch	School	Grade				2020-2021		
2	No.	No.	Name	No.	Name	Span				ADA	ADM	RATIO
72	640340	640	Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	340	Tar River Academy	05-12				49	60	81.67
73	340486	340	Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools	486	Parkland High	09-12				1,024	1,252	81.79
74	960335	960	Wayne County Public Schools	335	Goldsboro High	09-12				394	481	81.91
75	560350	560	Macon County Schools	350	Union Academy	07-12				73	89	82.02
76	260321	260	Cumberland County Schools	321	Douglas Byrd Middle	06-08				476	580	82.07
77	130333	130	Cabarrus County Schools	333	Performance Learning Center	06-12				87	106	82.08
78	680335	680	Orange County Schools	335	Partnership Academy	09-12				23	28	82.14
79	360336	360	Gaston County Schools	336	Bessemer City High	09-12				419	510	82.16
80	640306	640	Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	306	Baskerville Elementary	0K-05				258	314	82.17
81	320388	320	Durham Public Schools	388	W G Pearson Elementary	PK-05				323	393	82.19
82	940316	940	Washington County Schools	316	Plymouth High	09-12				199	242	82.23
83	760352	760	Randolph County School System	352	Randleman Middle	05-08				695	845	82.25
84	960386	960	Wayne County Public Schools	386	Spring Creek High	06-12				567	689	82.29
85	110372	110	Buncombe County Schools	372	Johnston Elementary	0K-04				172	209	82.30
86	340427	340	Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools	427	Kingswood School	0K-12				28	34	82.35
87	600311	600	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	311	Ashley Park PreK-8 School	0K-08				304	369	82.38
88	780393	780	Public Schools of Robeson County	393	Red Springs Middle	05-08				508	615	82.60
89	410319	410	Guilford County Schools	319	T Wingate Andrews High	09-12				499	604	82.62
90	780342	780	Public Schools of Robeson County	342	Lumberton Senior High	09-12				1,409	1,701	82.83
91	340376	340	Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools	376	Forest Park Elementary	PK-05				422	509	82.91
92	250372	250	Craven County Schools	372	West Craven High	09-12				704	849	82.92
93	660325	660	Northampton County Schools	325	Gaston Middle	05-08				83	100	83.00
94	600448	600	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	448	Martin Luther King Jr Middle	06-08				685	825	83.03
95	420358	420	Halifax County Schools	358	Southeast Halifax High	09-12				142	171	83.04
96	650328	650	New Hanover County Schools	328	Forest Hills Global Elementary	0K-05				361	434	83.18
97	640326	640	Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	326	D S Johnson Elementary	03-05				327	393	83.21
98	320374	320	Durham Public Schools	374	C C Spaulding Elementary	PK-05				189	227	83.26
99	880330	880	Transylvania County Schools	330	Rosman Middle	06-08				189	227	83.26
100	390314	390	Granville County Schools	314	Center For Innovative Learning	06-12				10	12	83.33
101	540318	540	Lenoir County Public Schools	318	Lenoir County Learning Academy	PK-12				50	60	83.33
102	790330	790	Rockingham County Schools	330	J E Holmes Middle	06-08				525	630	83.33
103	420340	420	Halifax County Schools	340	Inboden Elementary	PK-05				177	212	83.49
104	960318	960	Wayne County Public Schools	318	Carver Heights Elementary	0K-05				349	418	83.49
105	600514	600	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	514	Ranson Middle	06-08				777	930	83.55
106	510342	510	Johnston County Schools	342	Four Oaks Middle	06-08				419	501	83.63
107	660320	660	Northampton County Schools	320	Gaston Elementary	PK-04				144	172	83.72

1	LEASch	LEA	LEA	Sch	School	Grade				2020-2021		
2	No.	No.	Name	No.	Name	Span				ADA	ADM	RATIO
40	920386	920	Wake County Schools	386	Crossroads FLEX	09-12				141	141	100.00
41	120310	120	Burke County Schools	310	Burke Middle College	11-12				142	142	100.00
42	160309	160	Carteret County Public Schools	309	Bridges School	0K-11				10	10	100.00
43	180323	180	Catawba County Schools	323	Catawba Rosenwald Educational Center	0K-12				4	4	100.00
44	190501	190	Chatham County Schools	501	Chatham School of Science & Technology	09-11				86	86	100.00
45	230323	230	Cleveland County Schools	323	Cleveland Innovation	0K-12				79	79	100.00
46	250321	250	Craven County Schools	321	Early College EAST High	09-13				199	199	100.00
47	260347	260	Cumberland County Schools	347	Cumberland International Education Center	09-12				288	288	100.00
48	260413	260	Cumberland County Schools	413	Howard Learning Academy	05-08				10	10	100.00
49	260449	260	Cumberland County Schools	449	Ramsey Street High	09-12				6	6	100.00
50	290315	290	Davidson County Schools	315	Davidson Early College	09-12				134	134	100.00
51	320353	320	Durham Public Schools	353	Middle College HS @ DTCC	11-12				172	172	100.00
52	330326	330	Edgecombe County Public Schools	326	Edgecombe Early College High School	09-13				200	200	100.00
53	410395	410	Guilford County Schools	395	Early College at Guilford	09-12				199	199	100.00
54	410464	410	Guilford County Schools	464	Haynes Inman Education Center	PK-12				73	73	100.00
55	410569	410	Guilford County Schools	569	STEM Early College @ NC A&T	09-12				186	186	100.00
56	430341	430	Harnett County Schools	341	Harnett Early College (HCEC)	09-13				106	106	100.00
57	490325	490	Iredell-Statesville Schools	325	Discovery Program at The Spoke	0K-12				25	25	100.00
58	510325	510	Johnston County Schools	325	Johnston County Schools Career Center	09-13				189	189	100.00
59	530358	530	Lee County Schools	358	Warren Williams Elementary	PK-05				4	4	100.00
60	540317	540	Lenoir County Public Schools	317	Lenoir County Early College	09-13				193	193	100.00
61	600334	600	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	334	Cato Middle College High	10-13				161	161	100.00
62	600404	600	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	404	Harper Middle College High	11-13				171	171	100.00
63	600443	600	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	443	Levine Middle College High	11-13				236	236	100.00
64	670300	670	Onslow County Schools	300	Onslow Early College	09-10				202	202	100.00
65	700306	700	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	306	Central Elementary	0K-05				300	300	100.00
66	700314	700	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	314	Northside Elementary	0K-05				432	432	100.00
67	700316	700	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	316	J C Sawyer Elementary	0K-05				339	339	100.00
68	700318	700	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	318	Pasquotank Elementary	0K-05				260	260	100.00
69	700320	700	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	320	P W Moore Elementary	0K-05				360	360	100.00
70	700328	700	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	328	Weeksville Elementary	0K-05				208	208	100.00



Fiscal Management

- Increase of funds and COVID funds exposed deficiencies across the organization's financial management system
- The depth of these deficiencies have become clear over the last 2 months as reports from DPI have been filed
- Torchlight takes the stance that while it has spent dollars appropriately and has documentation to support those expenditures, it must reform its financial management system to be more quickly reviewable and accessible



Fiscal Management Corrective Action

- Torchlight to hire dedicated CFO that will complete LINQ, BASS, and other DPI trainings to ensure timely and accurate coding into LINQ



Benefits of Management Company

- Since the management company was hired, the school has exceeded growth every year
- The first year the management company was hired, the school ranked as the top growth charter school in the state 2016-2017



Torchlight Academy Academics

<u>Year</u>	<u>Performance Composite</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Academic Growth Status</u>
2016	56	C	Exceeded
2017*	64	C	Exceeded
2018	56	C	Exceeded
2019	61	C	Exceeded



Final Considerations: Keep the School Open and Allow the Corrective Action Plans to Be Fully Implemented



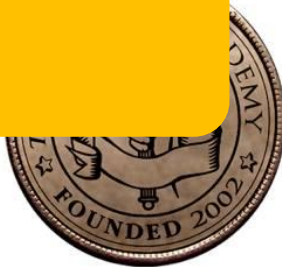
CSAB recognize the low-performing schools surrounding Torchlight Academy and the school's significant performance above Wake County Schools for the population served



To avoid irreparable harm to a majority minority student population by forcing them to attend lower-performing schools



Request SBE enter Compliance Agreement with Torchlight for continued monitoring and assistance



North Carolina

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, at the Session of 1830-31

Chapter VI. An act to prevent all persons from teaching slaves to read or write, the use of figures excepted.

Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write, has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of the State: Therefore,

[I.] *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That any free person, who shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any slave within this State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or shall give or sell to such slave or slaves any books or pamphlets, shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in this State having jurisdiction thereof; and upon conviction, shall, at the discretion of the court, if a white man or woman, be fined not less than one hundred dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars, or imprisoned; and if a free person of color, shall be fined, imprisoned, or whipped, at the discretion of the court, not exceeding thirty-nine lashes, nor less than twenty lashes.*

II. *Be it further enacted, That if any slave shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any other slave to read or write, the use of figures excepted, he or she may be carried before any justice of the peace, and on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to receive thirty-nine lashes on his or her bare back.*

III. *Be it further enacted, That the judges of the Superior Courts and the justices of the County Courts shall give this act in charge to the grand jurors of their respective counties.*

Don McQueen and Dr. Cynthia McQueen represent Black Excellence, and as a result, represent numerous violations of the “slave codes”. These codes forbid Black families, Black accumulation of property and wealth, Black education and any and all activities that conflicted with the dominant white society’s view of Black people as an inferior race. In fact it was the nefarious slave master who once owned Fredrick Douglass, Hugh Auld, who greatly feared and loathed Black education and what it would produce of Black self-pride and uplift. He is reported to have said the following:

