



Beaufort County Schools

Don Phipps, Ed.D., Superintendent

321 Smaw Road

Washington, North Carolina 27889

252-946-6593

[www.beaufort.k12.nc.us](http://www.beaufort.k12.nc.us)

November 7, 2016

Dr. Deanna Townsend-Smith  
Lead Consultant  
NCDPI Office of Charter Schools  
6303 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-6303

Dear Dr. Townsend-Smith,

Beaufort County Schools (BCS) wishes to provide you, the Charter Schools Advisory Board (CSAB), and the State Board of Education (SBE) with information regarding the potential impact of the Inner Banks Innovation Academy (IBIA) on Beaufort County Schools (BSC), a rural LEA with a current enrollment of 7,081 students in grades PreK-13. The district operates 14 schools, including an alternative school and an early college high school. In 2016-17, 76% of BCS students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. The LEA maintains a fleet of 117 yellow buses and 19 activity buses and operates special shuttle buses to the Beaufort County Ed Tech Center Alternative School (ETC), Beaufort County Early College High School (BCECHS), and the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience (NERSBA) in Martin County, NC. In 2015-16, the Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rate was 88.5%, exceeding the statewide rate of 87.5%.

An additional 392 school-age children residing in Beaufort County attend one of seven publicly-funded charter/regional schools (brick-and-mortar or virtual). Three private schools are located in Beaufort County with a total enrollment of 359 students in 2015-16 and an additional 26 private schools are located in the six contiguous counties. NCDPI estimated 328 homeschools operated in Beaufort County in 2015-16, with an enrollment of 509. Clearly, Beaufort County families are well-served by a variety of educational options.

While the Mission Statement of IBIA includes the provision of a “personalized learning program,” the Strategic Plan for Beaufort County Schools likewise includes a goal to provide a personalized education for every student. This will be accomplished through the use of both face-to-face and computer-based services and interventions, many of which are the same as those proposed by IBIA. BCS is in Cohort 3 of the statewide MTSS implementation and all schools will have implemented Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) by the end of the school year. BCS students currently utilize iReady, Fuel Education, and the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) programming and products, as well as other online tools and resources that support individualized instruction. Every BCS facility offers high speed wireless Internet connectivity. The Early College High School operates on a 1:1 instructional computing

model and the remaining schools have approximately one computer per student although some of these devices are below current standard and will be replaced as funds permit.

We pride ourselves on the pursuit of equity in all decisions affecting students and is acutely aware of the economic challenges faced by the majority of Beaufort County families. BCS high school students can enroll in tuition-free community college courses through the state's Career and College Promise (CCP) program and BCS has used local and grant funds to purchase community college textbooks for student use, as the cost of textbooks could be prohibitive for some students and families. The LEA maintains video conferencing classrooms in all three traditional high schools, to which Beaufort County Community College (BCCC) broadcasts live college courses to eliminate the need for students to travel to the college campus, as transportation can be a barrier to participation. Between Fall 2006 and Fall 2015, there was a total of 1,070 student enrollments in BCCC courses delivered via the video conferencing system. Students with personal transportation can enroll in numerous other BCCC courses available on the community college campus, including those with hands-on or lab components. Among the 42 students who graduated from the Beaufort County Early College High School in 2016, 34 had simultaneously completed an Associate's Degree at no cost to the student or family.

BCS offers high school students a wide range of hands-on and virtual Career and Technical Education courses in numerous Career Clusters. In 2016-16, BCS students earned a total of 1,850 industry credentials and 109 students earned Career Readiness Certificates (CRC) of "Silver or Higher." Through a grant from the state's Education and Workforce Innovation Fund (EWIF), we have established the following three Career Academies to prepare students for employment and/or postsecondary education/training. Students can transfer among high schools to pursue their career goals. Additional Academies will be established before the EWIF grant expires in 2019:

- Firefighting/EMS/Public Safety Academy at Southside High School
  - 2014-15: 94 students enrolled, 205 industry credentials earned
  - 2015-16: 70 students enrolled, 112 industry credentials earned
- Automotive/Transportation Technology Academy at Northside High School
  - 90 students enrolled, NATEF credentialing to begin in 2016-17
- Digital Arts/Industrial Design at Washington High School
  - New in 2016-17

While IBIA plans to "recruit a student body for our school that reflects the community's racial composition and its economic segments from poor to upper income," its charter school application includes scant details as to how the school will ensure equity of access to educational programming. For example, a statement on Page 10 touts the "unique ability" of blended learning to "extend learning beyond the school day, but page 14 notes that "Each student would have a device assigned to him or her during the day, but the device would stay at school at

night.” For students without access to devices and connectivity at home, it is unclear how the IBIA’s blended learning model will extend learning beyond school hours for all of its students.

In the section on Page 50 that deals with the Transportation Plan, IBIA “will ensure that no child will be denied access to the school due to a lack of transportation.” IBIA plans to purchase two school buses to provide transportation for students living throughout Beaufort County and neighboring counties, an attendance area that may exceed 1,000 square miles. Community bus stops are being considered rather than door-to-door service. With few buses and a large catchment area, long bus routes can be anticipated with early morning pick-up and late afternoon arrival. If IBIA reaches its enrollment goal of 342 in Year 5, only one third of students could potentially ride a bus to school.

Since 2005-06, Beaufort County Schools has steadily and consistently increased choice, personalization, and individualization in our educational programming. The following is a partial list of new initiatives that have been launched in the past decade, targeting the needs of different student populations:

- The Beaufort College Academy teleconferencing-based distance learning program at three BCS high schools (2005-present);
- Beaufort County Early College High School at Beaufort County Community College (2008-present);
- Pathways dropout prevention and recovery program at the Ed Tech Center Alternative School (2008-present);
- Career Academies at three BCS high schools (2014-present);
- Therapeutic and educational day treatment program (2015-present)
- Virtual school options for homebound and long-term suspended students (2016).

During this same interval, the dropout rate has fallen by 65% and the five-year graduation rate has increased by 48%. We attribute these positive outcomes to the recognition that one method of instructional delivery or educational environment does not optimize success for all students. While BCS leadership recognizes and supports the value of educational choice, the programming offered by the Inner Banks Innovation Academy will not substantively increase the options currently available to students and families in Beaufort County.

Our ability to continue increasing personalization, promoting equity, and expanding educational options will be negatively impacted if the projected number of 342 students exit our schools and enroll in IBIA. The loss of these students would force a reduction in personnel and limit our ability to provide the instructional tools and technologies required to operate a 21<sup>st</sup> century school district. As a traditional LEA, we would like the same opportunities as IBIA to be innovative, progressive and creative in our instructional design and delivery. It is difficult, however, to engage in strategic, long-term planning under the ubiquitous threat and pressure from outside entities that seek to diminish further our student enrollment and revenue.

With plans to introduce new educational options in 2017-18, we ask that BCS be given the opportunity to deploy our plans in a deliberate manner and within a reasonable time frame to achieve lasting success. As our plans appear very similar to those proposed in the IBIA Charter School Application, we hope that the Charter Schools Advisory Board (CSAB), and the State

Board of Education (SBE) will consider the information provided in this Impact Statement while evaluating IBIA's 2016 Charter School Application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Phipps". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Don Phipps, Ed.D.  
Superintendent