



WASHINGTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

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Ms. Yanisha Mann
Superintendent

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NCDPI Office of Charter Schools
6307 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6307

To Whom It May Concern,

I appreciate the opportunity to give input about the impact of a charter school being added in Washington County.

In order to add some background to my vision as Superintendent of Washington County Schools, I am sharing that I'm a homegrown product of WCS who has returned home to help grow my community. I have worked in other school districts from Charlotte-Mecklenburg to Edgecombe, at NC Department of Public Instruction and in conjunction with Northeast Leadership Academy and the Friday Institute to help provide equity and access to school children and families.

As a 2nd year superintendent, my board and I feel we will most likely address all the concerns of this community with time. We are aware of our community needs. Our board is preparing for community meetings about theme based learning at all levels. Elementary schools will be themed around dual language and Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math (STEAM) schools. The middle school will be a STEM school introducing Robotics and Coding. The high school will have a strong Career and Technical Ed focus requiring students to be credential before graduation. The early college will be focused on students obtaining an associate's degree with guaranteed enrollment to many of our state universities. #WCSisReady!

Upon initial reading of this elaborate charter application, I would love to partner with this group instead of dividing resources to ensure all our students and family's needs are met. The application, however, has significant information that is untrue or misleading, but it also has the ability to meet the needs of some parents of WCS scholars. Here are some items of concern:

- **“Due to consolidation by the local LEA where they have already closed the Creswell High School and plan for the same of Creswell Elementary at the end of this school year” (p 5)**
 - School closure for Creswell Elementary School (CES)- INCORRECT-we have closed the high school due to paying about \$12,000 per child at this school site with 120 students. This was compared to \$6,000-\$7,000 at all other sites with a traditional school focus. This school also had 1 teacher teaching 6-12 ELA, 1 teacher teaching 6-12 Science, 1 teacher teaching 6-12 History, and 2 teachers teaching 6-8 and 9-12 math.
 - Initially the board considered closing the elementary school (CES) but, due to the longer travel distance for elementary school students, this decision was dismissed. Schools in this area are not overcrowded and will remain open with ONLY 1 teacher per grade level PK-5, and one K/1 class due to enrollment. In the 16-17 year this school met growth and in 17-18 this school exceeded growth.

- **“The consolidation forces students to be bused 30 minutes across the county to the school location of the underperforming. This is a huge stressor to families. It takes away school choice and being able to attend school in your own hometown.” (p. 5)**
 - Yes, Washington County Schools (WCS) is low performing, like several high poverty, rural school systems in Northeastern NC. WCS has also met growth or exceeded growth at all sites in the 17-18 school year except for the high school which missed making growth by 0.9%. (They were at 69.1%.)
 - Busing routes all over NC are much longer than 30 minutes. This is within the state average and there are rural counties in the mountain where students are bused to school with a 2 hour 30 minute commute. We have students in our school system who travel from Creswell to Martin County for the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology School (NERSBA), which we already support. This commute is an additional 15 minutes by car beyond the county line.
 - Our county commissioners supported the consolidation of our schools as a means to save funding in a county with declining population to build a centralized PK-13 site in the county in the future.

- **“Although this is a declining population, many of the families still in this LEA have chosen homeschool or to attend neighboring county schools or private schools as an alternative means to a better education.” (p.9)**
 - With a total population of around 1600 students in Washington County, 1,369 Pk-12 students attend WCS, about 150 are homeschooled, and about 81 attend a private or charter school in a neighboring county due to a variety of reasons including employment in other locations.

- **Pages 9-12, note the uniqueness of curriculum to be offered to students.**
 - While these are admirable aspirations that we share for all of our student to be involved with problem based learning, learning agriculture, and spending each day in front of highly qualified teachers, this is not a reality at this time. While it sounds typical to be able to find 14 high qualified teachers for PICS, national news and local graduation rates in our universities attest to the difficulty in finding candidates. Our local private and charter schools in other counties also struggle with this task. This area of eastern NC has a difficult time attracting highly qualified staff and has suffered years of missing teachers to support the academic needs and social emotional needs of our students. We have worked strategically this year to partner with international teacher programs to ensure each school has qualified teachers and we have also implemented a “grow our own” Teacher Cadet program in the high schools. We have also had a year long posting for an Agricultural position at the high school which has not been filled after searching at several universities as well as local veterinarian sites for assistance. I am not sure how much support or connection this group has to qualified teachers, but I will note it is not easy to locate them. We could not find an agricultural teacher for our school site with a search for over 8 months.
 - I am also very perplexed to find that this group feels adding units, kits, and field trips to farms will make them innovative. These are things already done by the public schools in this area. The greater issue in this area is a lack of resources and mental help supports for students in high-trauma impacted communities such as Washington County. While we only had 3 students in our alternative learning program for the 17-18 school year, we do still have students with high levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Due to this, we have recently acquired several grants which we have been funded to bring in social workers and have connected with a partner (ECU) to recreate an evidence based TRAUMA-informed model to decrease the impact of this exposure for our students.

- **“Students who fail to make adequate progress will be recommended for further evaluation. (PEP to IEP recommendation form included in appendices).” (p 22)**
 - Unfortunately, based on our neighboring districts experiences when charters open, they retain only students who are able to meet a set criteria and return those who do not after funding has been allotted. With funding impacts from ADM alone, this would put us at a deficit of \$195,307.20 as seen in the image below. For us, this is 5 classroom teachers,

which is **almost the whole population of Creswell Elementary School** which we have kept open to support students in this area. Not to mention the separation of community resources, loss of the CES site for current CES families, issues with equity, and lack of access that will evolve around creating a sub-group of "choice-endowed" children. This will take away from the other's parent's choice in this area to attend public schools.

- This charter does not acknowledge the need for psychologist, school social workers, and mental health supports. Which ultimately means that only student that we can manage behaviorally will be maintained. Having a **"30 minute block for MTSS"** (p. 21, para 1) is not only a misunderstanding of the MTSS program goals, but a critical insight into how students who are struggling will be supported.

Washington County Schools									
New Charter School Impact on Local Funding									
10/11/2018									
Grade	Students	County			County			F&F	Total
		Appropriation	F&F	Appropriation Loss	Loss	Loss	Loss		
K	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
1st	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
2nd	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
3rd	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
4th	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
5th	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
6th	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
7th	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
8th	20	\$ 86.90	\$ 3.52	\$ 1,738.00	\$ 70.40	\$ 1,808.40			
	180			\$ 15,642.00	\$ 633.60	\$ 16,275.60			
							12 Months	\$ 195,307.20	

- **P 17-18 Instructional Materials**

- Note: each of these resources are in current use at the CES site: Journeys, grade leveled reading kids, Journeys Reading program, Go Math! There is not differentiation in the resources that will be used by this school versus the ones currently being used in the school system now. These are also basic/ standard things used in other school systems. In addition to this, WCS does also provide a district wide Math and ELA program that diagnoses current level performance and individualized instruction catered to students in the 17/18 to 20/21 school years. We focus on tiered levels of intervention and supports for academic, social-emotional, and operational/safety of all students.
- PICS also seems to regurgitate the desire to have a strong agricultural focus but minimally show innovation or attention to the detail of what this agricultural experience will entail other than kits and site visits/field trips. As a former K-5 Teachers with a Science background, a review of the NCDPI curriculum will detail a focus on agriculture in the standards starting at grade 6. Everything prior to 6th grade builds a foundation with knowledge about organisms, earth systems and structures, forces and motion, etc. A stronger focus for an agriculture school would be better fitted to a middle school environment and we already have a HS agriculture focus in our area with NERSBA. PK-5 are also the grade levels where we are exploring and students are transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn.

- **Staff Discrepancies**

- Page 39, 61
 - The budget include 1 cafeteria worker who also does Custodial/ Maintenance/ and Food Servicing
- P 42. and P. 44 "EC/ELL/AIG Specialist (Master's in Exceptional Education, ELL or Gifted plus 3 years of Teaching Experience"

- “The School staff will include a certified specialist for EC, ELL and Gifted students. “but, only 2 EC teachers are listed.
 - P 43- Assistant Principal Added to Staff
 - Not in year 1 or 2 budget
 - P 44 “The Principal will work with the Licensure Director”
 - No licensure director in budget
 - Personnel
 - Several positions for staffing of only 250 students
- **“Due to the closure of their local schools, Washington County has a surplus of school buses that would be suitable for use and available.” p 55**
 - We only closed 1 school with 120 students. We do not have any additional buses. Those same 3 buses are now used to bring students to the consolidated sites.
- **“Also with the recent consolidation of Washington County schools, parents have chosen to get children released from their own county school system, some having to face hardships to do so, just for them to have school choice and are having to drive them to another district for school!” p 56**
 - Prior to consolidation we had 71 students already requesting to attend school in another district
 - After consolidation we had 39 additional students requesting to attend school in a different setting
 - Of these students 25 were from the Creswell community.
- **“In the highly unlikely event that the lease is terminated prior to the opening of school, Creswell High School located at 115 Middle St, Creswell, NC 27928 is currently operating at 50% of facility capacity and is only 2 miles away from the anticipated location of the school.”**
 - WCS does plan to use the current facility to partner with the county to provide Emergency Medical Services, we currently host regional meetings with DPI for NE schools at this site, and we are currently considering moving central office staff to this site.

I am by no means opposed to school choice, but it would be a critical mistake in our younger children’s lives to experiment with schools who are learning to use buzz words to separate and divide our community. With several other charters already planning to open up in our area, such as ones in Bertie and Perquimans, we hope their needs can be met with the variety of diversity already present in this area. If this school is still to be opened after all the information shared, the one consideration I ask is that they be required to maintain all students they enroll. It is already a complex matrix of school funding trying to support the varied needs of our students. To gain additional students in the year with additional needs really subtracts from the plans that we have for our individual students to be successful.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this information. I hope you will give us time to improve with the new leadership in place or to support us working with these charter leaders to make the items they want to happen occur right here the schools already created. We look forward to making our schools all schools that are steered with consideration in our community.

Sincerely,



Q. Yanisha Mann
 Superintendent
 Washington County Schools