

FROM
THE OFFICE
OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT



August 22, 2019

The Honorable Eric C. Davis, Chairman
North Carolina State Board of Education
6302 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6302


Dear Chairman Davis:

As part of the North Carolina State Board of Education's (NC SBE) ongoing efforts to address longstanding equity concerns in our public schools, I encourage the NC SBE to reconsider its stance on not including student retest data in its EVAAS growth calculations for teachers and schools. I further request that NC SBE reconsider its position on disallowing the results of the high school retests for students' final course grades. At this time, if a student retakes either or both the Biology or English II EOC, the higher score cannot be used to improve his/her final course grade. This discourages high school students from participating in the summer re-administration of EOC exams.

In June, Guilford County Schools (GCS) took advantage of the option to provide remediation and enrichment to our students - at no small cost - followed by the summer re-administration of EOGs and EOCs. In Reading, 92 schools re-administered reading assessments (grades 3-8), of which all 92 (100%) improved their grade level proficiency rates from spring to summer. In Science, 87 schools re-administered science assessments (grades 3-8), of which 85 (97.7%) improved their grade level proficiency rates from spring to summer. In Biology, 22 schools re-administered the assessment, of which 19 (86.3%) improved their Biology proficiency rates. In English II, 24 schools re-administered the assessment, of which 20 (83.3%) improved their English II proficiency rates.

Given the fairly high percentages of students who were able to improve their EOG and EOC performance with remediation/enrichment activities and given that most of these students were from high-poverty schools, it becomes an equity issue to include these results in proficiency calculations but not student grades or teacher and school growth calculations as is current NC DPI practice. While I am sure it is an unintended consequence, the decision to include the retest scores in proficiency measures but not in growth calculations negatively impacts high-poverty schools, disproportionately and given the strong correlation between poverty and low student achievement.

While this correlation is well-documented in the research nationally, we see this same correlation between poverty and student outcomes on standardized achievement tests statewide and in GCS, where the correlation is nearly 1 to 1 ($r = -0.85$ for GCS for 2017-18). In other words, schools with higher student poverty levels have more students scoring at Levels 1 and 2 on EOGs and EOCs. Therefore, the potential impact of this policy is greater for teachers, schools and districts with the highest numbers of



students living in poverty, and the greatest concentrations of poverty in single classrooms, grade levels and schools.

As these calculations have significant impact on learning outcomes for students and on performance evaluations for our educators and school leaders, as well as on parent and public perception regarding teacher and school efficacy, we respectfully ask that the State Board of Education reconsider its policies and include summer re-administration results in EVAAS growth calculations and toward the recalculation of final course grades in Biology and English II.

In the interest of all children,



Sharon L. Contreras, PhD
Superintendent

cc:

The Honorable Mark Johnson, Superintendent
N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Dr. Beverly Emory, Deputy Superintendent for District Support
N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Ms. Donna Dougherty, Senior Research & Evaluation Coordinator
N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Ms. Katherine Joyce, Executive Director
N.C. Association of School Administrators

Dr. Ed Dunlap, Jr., Executive Director
N.C. School Boards Association

Ms. Leanne Winner, Director of Governmental Relations
N.C. School Boards Association

Ms. Rachelle Johnson, Executive Director
N.C. Association of Educators

Dr. Lillie Cox, Executive Director
Piedmont Triad Education Consortium

Dr. Tim Markley, Chair, N.C. Large District Consortium
Superintendent, New Hanover County Schools

Ms. Edna Wallace
Project Leader, N.C. Large District Consortium

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