



September 12, 2017

Dear Parents,

In compliance with State Law, we're writing to inform you of our NC School Performance Grade (School Report Card Grade), which was made available late last week.

Historically, new charter schools often experience low performance grades during their first several years. This is impacted by the influx of new students into a new curriculum, and compounded by the reality that many parents make a switch to a new school because they are not satisfied with their student's academic results at a previous school. The NC Department of Public Instruction states that "Because the model weighs performance more heavily than it weighs academic growth, a school with many students who entered school unprepared or behind their peers academically may have an overall proficiency rate that is low. This is true even if teachers in the school have helped students make academic growth that is more rapid than the state's growth rate. Because growth is weighted as just 20 percent of the school's grade, schools that serve many students who are not yet performing at grade level may receive lower grades overall." (Source: School Performance Grades Questions and Answers: NC Department of Public Instruction, Communication and Information Services Division, January 2015). State employees providing oversight for charter schools are well aware of this and have communicated that they are not alarmed to see a new charter receive a C, D, or F on their early performance grades; as this is more indicative of the starting benchmark for the school than of the results produced. Integrating students into a school is a process, and does not occur overnight.

If the State tested our Kindergarten, First, and/or Second grade students during the 2016-2017 school year, most of whom have been with us for either their entire education or a significant portion thereof, we would expect to receive an 'A' grade for the school, and certainly no lower than a 'B', as supported by our standardized IOWA test results. However, those students are not tested by the State. As it stands, the State begins performance testing in Third grade. At the testing date, nearly 40% of our Third-grade students had received 1 year of instruction at Youngsville Academy, and none of the students had received more than 2 (as it was our second year of operation). That means Youngsville Academy's letter grade for 2016-2017 is based upon 20% of our student population who received 60% of their education at other schools.

So, what is the best measurement for whether a new school is successful? Academic growth. If we can demonstrate, which we can, that our school is adding value and improving the relative percentile ranking of our students compared to their peers in other schools, we can demonstrate that the school is achieving success and heading in a positive direction. This is supported both by objective testing data (IOWA's) and subjective parent attestations, e.g. 'We've seen such a difference in our student since he/she came to the school!'

After that background information, onto the actual Performance Grade (reflective of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade EOG in 2016-2017):

The good news: Youngsville Academy 'met' its EVAAS (Education Value-Added Assessment System) goal, which means that students at the school are academically improving. The YA system of instruction is producing results. Technically, YA had the best growth rate of any elementary school in the county.





The not-so-good/bad news: Youngsville Academy received a 'D' on its first Performance Grade. A grade based solely on 39 of our 200 students and their performance on the third grade EOG.

A much better measure will come when we receive our next grade – for the 2017-2018 school year.

Ultimately, while there may be many 'reasons' why we have seen the current performance grade on our first report, **there can be no excuses for ever receiving a 'D' again. We're proud of the accomplishments of our students, and are confident that future grades will be increasingly more reflective of the overall quality and direction of our education.** We have great students at all grade levels, and are excited about their potential for continued development in our school.

Here are some of the concrete steps we are taking to ensure movement towards an 'A':

- Early identification of students who need remedial support to help them catch up to their grade-level peers (Including programs oriented towards students who are new to the school).
- Increasing the frequency of student data reviews, to ensure rapid identification of gaps.
- Two-week summer reading camps for students who need additional reading support.
- Practice tests to increase comfort with test format and terminology.

In addition to these steps, we will continue working with the majority of our student population who are at or above grade level to ensure that they continue to academically thrive. Our current third graders recently took their BOGs and we were exceptionally pleased with the results.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. The future is bright for our students and school.

Sincerely,

Larry Henson  
Principal and Founder  
Youngsville Academy