

# Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee Discusses Innovative School District And College Prep Programs

*By Jacqueline Wyatt for NCASA*

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee met Tuesday for an update on the Innovative School District, Cooperative Innovative High School funding Changes and Career and College Program funding, among other topics.

## **North Carolina Innovative School District**

Dr. Eric Hall, Superintendent of the NC Innovative School District (ISD), gave an in-depth presentation on the ISD, a group of schools being operated by a “qualified operator as authorized by the State Board of Education,” due to having a history of low performance. The district has entered an agreement with Robeson County Schools to operate Southside Ashpole Elementary School, the first ISD school in the state, and the district expects to select 4 others in the coming years.

He stated that there are currently over 500 low-performing schools in North Carolina, 468 of which are “recurring” in that status. He also explained that 251,831 students are enrolled at low-performing schools.

Dr. Hall went on to explain the criteria used for recommending schools across the state to join the ISD program, including performance data for the school over three years and the overall district data. Phases for transitioning a school to the ISD include: Consideration → Evaluation → Selection → Engagement → Partnership → Transition.

Lastly, Dr. Hall said he will be selecting a private operator for the ISD school by April 15, and that operator will help navigate school performance data by having “a record of results in improving performance of persistently low-performing schools” and have “a credible and specific plan for dramatically improving student achievement in a low-performing school.”

Representative D. Craig Horn (R-Union), who co-chairs this committee, thanked Dr. Hall for his perseverance in focusing on the goal of “helping the kids and schools that are struggling.” He stated that Dr. Hall was “pushing water up a hill” when he began the job of increasing productivity and success of the low-performing schools he has worked with. Committee members asked Dr. Hall about parent involvement, which he had briefly discussed as one of the pillars of the success of Southside Ashpole Elementary and as one of the successes of the Innovative School District program.

Committee members also addressed the upcoming choice of an ISO by asking Dr. Hall meticulous questions about budget, criteria, and the future of the study, as well as specific information on the full set of five schools, as mandated by the General Assembly, that the ISD program will work with in the future. To view Dr. Hall’s fact sheet, click [here](#). To view Dr. Hall’s PowerPoint presentation, click [here](#).

## **Career and College Promise (CCP) and Cooperative Innovative High School (CIHS) Study Report**

Ms. Sneha Shah Coltrane, Director of the Division of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and Dr. Lisa Eads, Program Coordinator for Early Childhood and Public Service Technologies in the Career and College Promise for the NC Community College System, addressed the committee about the Career and College Promise (CCP) and Cooperative Innovative High School (CIHS) funding changes. The study presented by Ms. Coltrane and Dr. Eads was requested of DPI by the General Assembly last year.

Due to running low on time, Ms. Coltrane and Dr. Eads expedited their presentation directly to the costs of the CCP and CIHS programs. A breakdown of how those dollars were spent, including positions, supplies, and materials, can be found in the presentation, linked [here](#).

Ms. Coltrane stated that last year, the funding formula for these programs moved to a tiered system. Stating the following:

Based on Commerce Economic Tiers:

- CIHS in Tier I received \$275,000 in recurring funds, except as follows:
  - Virtual CIHS received \$200,000 in recurring funds.
  - The Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience received \$310,000 in recurring funds.
- CIHS in Tier II received \$200,000 in recurring funds, including a virtual CIHS.
- CIHS in Tier III received \$180,000 in recurring funds and \$20,000 in nonrecurring funds for the 2017-18 fiscal year. CIHS in Tier III receive \$180,000 in recurring funds for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

This included a reduction in funding for these programs. After the tiers had been introduced, DPI performed a survey of all schools and found that 12% of schools were able to cover most or all the reduction costs with funding from other sources, while 53% were not able to find funds to cover those reductions. As a result, 30 CIHS schools had to reduce staffing, 65 CIHS schools reduced professional development, and 33 CIHS schools reduced paying for textbooks.

According to Ms. Coltrane, the key legislative recommendations and considerations are minimal for the Career and College Promise program. However, for the Cooperative Innovative High School Pathway, it is recommended that the General Assembly consider supplying supplemental funding, which is necessary for successful operation of CIHS programs. The second key recommendation is consideration of an Economic Tier Designation of the region where each CIHS is located and total student enrollment of each CIHS.