



## Dixon Middle School

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Ms. Leigh Bizzell, Principal • Ms. Patricia Smith, Asst. Principal

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

I hope the school year has started successfully for all of you. The General Assembly has finalized the budget and the Governor has signed it into law. As a part of the budget bill, the General Assembly has made some changes to the definition of a “Low Performing School”, added a new definition and criteria for the “Low Performing District” and has given some specific guidance and direction to these schools and districts. As a parent/guardian of a student in Dixon Middle School, I am writing this letter to let you know that Dixon Middle School, has been designated as a low performing school by the North Carolina State Board of Education. As defined in G.S. 115C-105.37: “The State Board of Education shall design and implement a procedure to identify low-performing schools on an annual basis. Low-performing schools are those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth" as defined by G.S. 115C-83.15.”

The School Performance Grades are based on student achievement (80%) and growth (20%). The indicators and the proficiency standard or benchmark used for elementary and middle school achievement include:

1. Annual EOG mathematics and reading assessments in grades 3–8 and science assessments in grades 5 and 8 (Level 3 and above)
2. Annual EOC assessments in Math I

NCDPI developed and administered new state assessments based on the new North Carolina Standard Course of Study. With the development of these new assessments, focus shifted from only grade-level readiness to career and college readiness. In practical terms, this means students are expected to *master more difficult material earlier in school*, to solve problems that are *real-world questions* and to *express their ideas clearly* and with *supporting facts*. Overall, the new standards and assessments are more rigorous and therefore, students were required to obtain a greater percent correct of questions for minimal proficiency than previous years. One example, a grade 3 student taking the grade 3 ELA assessment needed to answer sixty-six percent of the questions correct on the reading to receive a proficient score on the old state assessment; under current standards, a grade 3 student must now obtain at minimum eighty-two percent correction rate in order to receive a proficient score on the current state assessment. This increase of rigor on state assessments directly relates to overall lower proficiency rates across the state.

Additionally, during the 2014-2015 all of our students receiving instruction on the standards contained within the North Carolina Standard Course of Study did not have an opportunity to take an alternate assessment (NCEXTEND 2). The NCDPI determined the NCEXTEND2 was no longer an allowable modified assessment for students in North Carolina and it could no longer be included as part their Individual Education Plan. The NCEXTEND2 was a modified, shorter version of the state EOG with more simplistic vocabulary and fewer answer choices. Students who normally would have been afforded the opportunity to take this assessment took the regular EOG state assessment with accommodations. The absence of this alternate assessment directly impacted overall school results as well as the school performance grade.

Dixon Middle School received a letter grade of a D and growth status of -3.3 and as a low performing school, is required to develop an improvement plan that specifically addresses how the school will improve both the school performance grade and school growth score. The plan will also include how the superintendent and other central office administrators in the district will work with us and monitor the progress of our school. We are already engaged in the work of refining our plan and will present the plan to our school board at their next meeting on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at 200 Broadhurst Road, Jacksonville at 10:00am. After the initial approval by our board of education, we will submit the plan to the State Board of Education for review. The State Board's designee, staff members of NCDPI's District and School Transformation division, will read each plan and provide feedback to the school. After considering the feedback from the state, our local board of education will give final approval to the plan so that the final plan for improvement can be posted on our local district website <http://onslowcounty.schoolinsites.com/> as well as the NCDPI's website ([www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org)).

Here at Dixon Middle School, we believe in educating the whole child. To achieve this goal, our staff works hard to provide not only academic instruction but also instruction on appropriate behaviors as well as a variety of extra-curricular activities. Through the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), our students are recognized and rewarded for consistently making good choices. Additionally, the faculty offers experiences such as Friends of Rachel, a program that focuses on spreading kindness and compassion throughout the community. To reach the students who enjoy acting and using creativity, DMS is in the beginning stages of our first student-led news broadcast. Students will be responsible for all aspects from gathering the stories to producing the broadcast.

Our school is focused on continuous improvement and I look forward to working with each of you as we continue to focus on providing the best education for our children. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any specific questions as we move through this process.

Sincerely,

*Leigh Bizzell*

Leigh Bizzell

