

Review of District Conversion Charter Schools December 16, 2020

The following district conversion charter schools were identified as having two consecutive letter grades of D or F from the three most recent years that letter grades were assigned:

1. Academies of West Memphis
2. Blytheville High School: A New Tech School
3. Harrisburg College and Career Prep
4. Hot Springs Junior Academy
5. Hot Springs World Class High School
6. Osceola STEM Academy
7. Warren Middle School

The identified schools were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What factors contributed to the D or F letter grade?
2. What are your current challenges?
3. What is the plan for addressing those challenges? (If plan is outlined in the District Support Plan or School Improvement Plan, please provide the link to the plan)

Academies of West Memphis (10-12)

1. What factors contributed to the D or F letter grade?

- Students entered 10th grade at approximately 13% percent ready on the ACT Aspire.
- Students did not meet the projected value added scores.
- Decreased enrollment in computer science courses

2. What are your current challenges?

- Due to the pandemic, our Critical Reading teacher resigned midyear; therefore, the Critical Reading program has been suspended until a qualified teacher is hired.
- Our 10th grade students come to us at approximately 13% ready in ELA, math, and science.
- Reading comprehension and foundational math skills are low; based on NWEA and STAR data, 70%-80% of our 10th grade students are on a 4th or 5th grade level.
- Approximately 52% of our students are virtual learners who have not received any personal teacher interaction since March 13, 2020.

3. What is the plan for addressing those challenges? (If plan is outlined in the District Support Plan or School Improvement Plan, please provide the link to the plan)

- All three junior highs have implemented Critical Reading classes on their campuses. Students enrolled in these classes are given the DRA each semester, which shows progress in reading comprehension and fluency. The Critical Reading program will be reimplemented at AWM when a qualified teacher is hired.
- AWM has adopted the use of NWEA in replacement of STAR testing.
- AWM will administer the NWEA assessment in the Fall, Winter, and Spring to all 10th grade students. The NWEA assessment will provide data that addresses targeted areas of deficiencies. Interim data will drive skill-specific interventions in English, math, and science instruction.
- Literacy and Math Interventionists/Coaches are being utilized to address specific needs for 10th grade students through PLCs and RTIs.
- Math Ready and Science Ready classes are provided for students who have scored in need of support on the ACT Aspire.
- E2E consultants are utilized for additional support in English, math, science, and history.
- Additional computer science courses (i.e. Coding, CyberSecurity, Robotics, and eSports) have been offered to increase student enrollment.



HOT SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Response for Hot Springs Junior Academy

1. What factors contributed to the D or F letter grade?

There are several factors that have contributed to the letter D grade at HSJA for the past three years. The total index score has decreased from 62.91 (2017) to 60.52 (2019). During the 2019-2020 school year, HSSD district-level administrators did an analytical review of the complete ESSA index for HSJA and determined the following:

- HSJA was using Read 180, Math 180, and System 44 as school-based curriculum rather than an intervention program. Only students who were proficient on ACT Summative Assessments were exposed to the grade level curriculum. The weighted achievement three-year trend for HSJA has declined from 50.06 (2017) to 45.05 (2019), with significant declines in the subpopulations of Black students and Students with Disabilities. The school was put on Additional Targeted Support SY 2017-2018 for the decline in weighted achievement scores for Students with Disabilities. With a weighted achievement score below 50, the school has struggled to maintain a level of academic proficiency for the identified subpopulations. The school score is in the lower achievement, lower growth quadrant; this supports students not being exposed to grade level curriculum.
- The SQSS indicator score decreased over the three-year trend from 45.82 (2017) to 38.04(2019). Every subpopulation group saw a decrease in the SQSS area that includes student engagement (attendance), reading at grade level (ACT Summative Reading), Science Achievement (ACT Summative Science), and Growth in Science Achievement. The factors that contributed to this decline are students not being exposed to grade level curriculum, an error in the attendance reporting for the 2018-2019 SY, and ineffective strategies for close reading strategies and science content that is needed for students to be successful on the 7th and 8th grade ACT Summative Assessment.
- Administrative leaders had a lack of understanding of the ESSA School Index and the factors that contributed to the overall score. Although the school was in year 2 of ATS for the special education subpopulation, there were several indicators that should have been addressed as the school saw declining achievement across the core content areas.
- Lack of understanding and limited implementation of the PLC Process, Leader in Me, and 5 goals created in the conversion charter application.

The core district leadership team hosted reflective conversations during the 2019-2020 school year with the HSJA administrative team to discuss the declining efforts. The team met monthly and data became the indicator for growth and measurement of student achievement. A spreadsheet was created to show the school how weighted achievement, value-added growth, and SQSS all impact the overall ESSA score. The spreadsheet allowed the school leaders to manipulate the data and determine the best efforts in moving their school to the next letter grade.

2. What are your current challenges?

This question will be answered from the COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 perspective:

Non-COVID-19 Related

- HSJA was accepted into the year 4 Cohort of the PLC Pilot. During their needs assessment, it was apparent that the staff challenges included: 1) not understanding the functions of a PLC team, 2) how to use CFA's and write them to assess current proficiency of student mastery, and 3) using data to determine instructional strategies for student achievement.
- Attendance documentation in eSchool for cycle pulls. We determined during the 2018-2019 school year that the SQSS attendance declined due to errors in entering attendance codes in eSchool. This continues to be a challenge to ensure the codes entered for student attendance are correct during the times of the cycle pulls.
- Ensuring teachers have access to curriculum that provides rigor, relevance, and mastery of learning.

COVID-19 Related

- Attendance of virtual students has been a challenge that could directly impact the SQSS score of the coming year and accountability scores. We have charged the building administrators with creating a plan to engage virtual students.
- Quality of assignments turned in for both traditional and virtual students.
- Teacher stress and burnout due to the nuances of the pandemic.

3. What is the plan for addressing those challenges? (If plan is outlined in the District Support Plan or School Improvement Plan, please provide the link to the plan)

HSJA has worked with their PLC Coach and district-level leaders to revise the goals of the campus to focus on student learning and mastery. You can find the HSJA PLC Goals [here](#). The school improvement plan can be found on our district website [here](#).

Alongside the creation of goals, the district administrative team meets with HSJA administrators monthly to look at data to determine the next steps taken. Each meeting focuses on data from NWEA, CFAs and ACT Aspire Interim Assessments in Reading, Science, and Mathematics. Administrators are also asked to identify where students are in the PLC process and look at multiple forms of information, i.e., attendance, discipline, and any other SEL factors that would contribute to students not being successful.



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Response for Hot Spring World Class High School

1. What factors contributed to the D or F letter grade?

HSWCHS has made improvements over the three-year trend reported on the 2018-2019 ESSA School Index report. During the release of the 2017-2018 ESSA School Index report, school administrators did an in-depth analysis of the four reported categories to predict the most beneficial areas for improvement. The school needed an overall index score between 61.10-67.95 to move from a letter grade of D to C. The school earned 60.99 in 2017-2018, 0.11 of a point to move letter grades in one year's time. The school worked to educate the staff on the ESSA School Index score categories. Please see a review below:

- The school grew 3 points on weighted achievement from 2017 (33.39) to 2019 (36.04) by starting the PLC process led by campus administrators who were knowledgeable in effective teams using the Learning by Doing book to maximize instructional time and gain traction. Teachers started to align curricular standards and developed power standard curriculum documents to focus on effective teaching in every classroom.
- Value-Added Growth saw an increase of 2 points from 2017 (77.86) to 2019 (80.37) by focusing on moving students from the In Need of Support, Close and Ready categories. This growth was subtle, but there is evidence of the school trending in a forward direction.
- The graduation rate was an area that would take time to overcome due to past practices such as the leadership of 4 principals, all of whom had their own methods for this. While we have not met our initial goal of increasing the graduation rate each year by 2% to meet the state average of 86.9%, we have learned a lot about *how* to track and properly document students who move in/out of our district. Part of the issue in having a quality method of keeping appropriate data for our graduation rate was that through the 2018-2019 school year we still had students who had been reclassified for not earning the appropriate number of credits in a year. We stopped this practice in the school year 2017-2018. Additionally, in 2017-2018 we began tracking students and keeping comprehensive data, noted in the students' entry/ withdraw tab of eSchool.
- SQSS is where we saw a significant decline; thus, resulting in not moving from a grade level of D to a C for 2017-2018 or 2018-2019. During the 2017-2018 school year, the attendance was calculated at 100%. That year we were on a modified

version of the previous year's flex mod schedule that ended in students not earning credits and other areas that influenced the school to change to a 4 period A/B block. That change of schedule in eSchool caused attendance to not be marked correctly resulting in a 61.44 decline of points earned for student engagement from 100% to 38.56.

2. What are your current challenges?

- Moving students to grade-level mastery. Growth from NWEA shows that students are moving in the right direction, but the school is in a situation where current students may not have received grade-level learning opportunities in 7th and 8th grade due to the reasons identified in the HSJA response.
 - Math- lack of growth, vertical articulation (*we changed course sequence*). Students do not hold the foundational math skill set to grow in the areas of Algebra and Geometry.
 - Reading/ELA- The school is working to develop a culture of reading. Mrs. Shipman, library media specialist, has book clubs, and through the CLSD grants, the school is starting a "One campus, One book" campaign. Students have fundamental vocabulary issues that the school is trying to address with close reading strategies and the integration of Science of Reading strategies in all ELA courses.
- Attendance documentation in eSchool for cycle pulls is still a challenge we face. We determined during the 2018-2019 school year that the SQSS attendance declined due to errors in entering attendance codes in eSchool. This continues to be a challenge to ensure the codes entered for student attendance are correct during the times of the cycle pulls. This year will be a challenge due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Graduation Rate is an area the school is still working on. Our district is very mobile with students entering from various schools across the state as well as students who come to Ouachita Children's Center and the Juvenile Detention Center, both located in our district boundaries. These students are highly mobile and rarely stay with our schools, many are here for less than 40 days. We have put some protocols in place to help with ensuring students are on track in addition to a robust credit recovery program that has helped keep students on track.

3. What is the plan for addressing those challenges? (If plan is outlined in the District Support Plan or School Improvement Plan, please provide the link to the plan)

Many of the plans to address the challenges, overcome the three-year trend of earning a D on the ESSA School Index, and meet the goals of the Conversation Charter are outlined in the new Charter Application found [here](#) and School Improvement Plan found [here](#).

HSWCHS has made great strides over the last 5 years as a conversation charter school. The letter grade of a D does not reflect the work, value, and implementation of programming that has happened to ensure students leave with a value-added diploma.

Osceola STEM Academy (5-8)

- What factors contributed to the D or F letter grade?
 - 53% of students in Need of Support in Reading
 - 79% of students are not reading on grade level
 - Low student engagement
 - High number of economically disadvantaged students
- What are your current challenges?
 - Large number of teachers on waivers/non certified
 - Lack of certified teacher applicants
 - Parental engagement
 - Student participation in virtual learning
 - Consistent instruction due to pandemic
 - Loss of instruction due to student discipline factors
- What is the plan for addressing those challenges? (If plan is outlined in the District Support Plan or School Improvement Plan, you can just include the link)

[District Support Plan](#)

In addition to the approaches outlined in the District Support Plan, Osceola STEM Academy has implemented the following strategies:

- RISE-
 - All teachers have completed their respective RISE pathway. Osceola STEM Academy principal has completed RISE Assessor certification.
 - Teachers engage in ongoing Science of Reading professional development.
- Teacher Recruitment/Support
 - Waiver teachers are enrolled in an approved licensure program. Osceola School District provides supplemental support to all waiver teachers through the Crowley's Ridge Educational Coop.
 - Purchased curriculum specific professional development to support teacher's growth.
- Parental Engagement
 - District community liaisons are collaborating with community stakeholders and narrowing the gap between school/ parents.
 - Osceola School District partnered with Engage Arkansas
 - A minimum of 10 data specific/intentional parent involvement opportunities.
- Additional Support for Struggling Learning
 - Staff restructuring and new hires for intense student interventions.
 - Purchased additional curriculum resources to address specific student weaknesses.

Warren Middle School (6-8)

Contributing Factors for Letter Grade

Warren Middle School has determined the contributing factors to be the number of students that are reading below grade level. We feel there is a direct correlation between our Science, Math, and Reading scores. Overall on the ACT Aspire, we had 26.78% of our students reading at grade level. Our Science Achievement scores reflected 25.5 % of our students scored ready or exceeding. Since this number is relatively close to the number scoring ready or exceeding in Reading, we concluded our issue with reading has a direct impact on the Science Achievement. Though our student achievement data was higher for Math, we feel the deficit in on grade level reading has a direct impact on the math scores. We found our student achievement data to be consistent in data from the ACT Aspire, NWEA MAP interim, and classroom assessments. Disaggregated data from the Spring 2019 ACT Aspire showed the following:

Reading				
Grade	Exceeding	Ready	Close	Need of Support
6th	11%	13%	21%	55%
7th	4%	18%	25%	54%
8th	6%	28%	25%	41%

English				
Grade	Exceeding	Ready	Close	Need of Support
6th	21%	34%	35%	11%
7th	23%	34%	27%	15%
8th	28%	26%	27%	20%

Math				
Grade	Exceeding	Ready	Close	Need of Support
6th	6%	43%	32%	19%
7th	9%	21%	26%	42%
8th	13%	21%	30%	36%

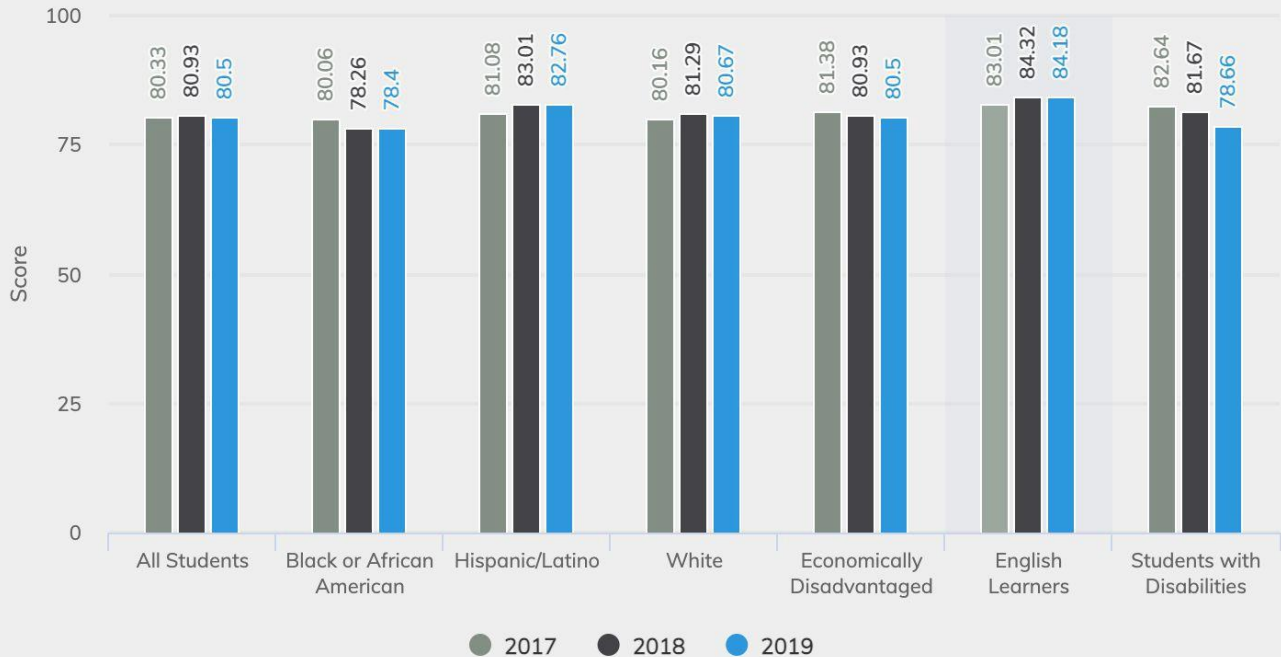
Science				
Grade	Exceeding	Ready	Close	Need of Support
6th	7%	19%	22%	52%
7th	8%	14%	19%	59%
8th	6%	20%	19%	55%

Though the weight achievement score was low, we did have a school value-added growth score of 80.5. This indicates that our students are showing growth.

School Content Value-Added Growth (VAS) and ELP Growth					
	ELA Value-Added Score	Math Value-Added Score	Content Growth Score	ELP Growth Score	School Overall Value-Added Growth Score
Score	78.81	80.93	79.87	90.5	80.5
Number of Students	351	351	351	22	373

Additionally, our 3-year trend data of School Value-Added Growth shows that we have consistent student growth score around 80. This trend supports that students are continuously making progress year to year.

School Value-added Growth Score by Subgroup for 2017 - 2019



We conducted additional diagnostic tests to determine the root cause of the number of students who were not reading on grade level. We met monthly with our Educational Cooperative Reading Specialist to plan for screening, analyzing results, and planning for instruction and curriculum. We had a large population of students who needed additional support in phonics and decoding. These two areas became a focus in our school. Our Math and Science teachers worked directly with their respective Educational Cooperative Specialist as well as the Reading Specialist to incorporate reading strategies in each content area. Additionally, our Math teachers attend Math Quest training, incorporated strategies into their instruction, and worked with a Math Quest Coach. Our 2019-2020 School Improvement Plan details our goals (same goals that are in our charter plan) and action steps for improving the number of students reading on grade level as well as the number of students scoring exceeding or ready in all content domains on the ACT Aspire. Here is the link to view our school improvement plan https://docs.google.com/document/d/12emHG6ZeqU4DqeyQpZn0oZ-vC2z7ulvZ_U87C-cllUQ/edit#. This plan was followed, monitored, and adjusted last year. Below will detail the progress that was made prior to school being dismissed in March due to COVID-19.

Progress on Charter Goals:

Improvement Progress:

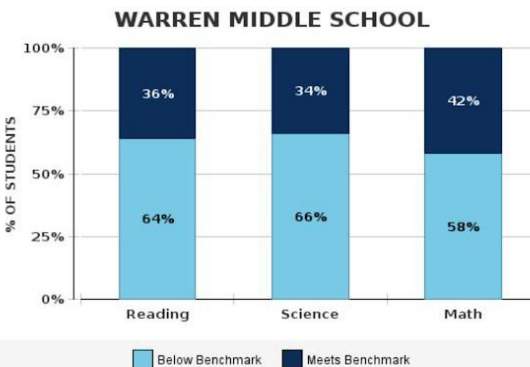
Results from ACT Aspire Interim taken February 2020:

The results from the ACT Aspire Interim taken in February indicated that we were making progress in the number of students meeting the benchmark. Overall we had 36% of our students meeting the benchmark for Reading which indicates we are increasing the number of students reading on grade level. As stated earlier, we felt our students reading level on grade level had a direct impact on our Science results. The data indicated that we had improvements in Science. We had 34% of students meeting benchmark in Science. This was aligned to the number of students meeting

benchmark in the area of Reading.

The results from the ACT Aspire Interim data for Math showed improvements, too. We had 42% of student meet benchmark. This was an improvement from the ACT Aspire summative assessment by 2%.

These small improvement indicated the strategies we implemented were effective. We do feel if we had taken the ACT Aspire in Spring 2020 improvement would have been shown. The chart below shows from the ACT Aspire Interim taken in February 2020.



Grades
(3)

Grade	English	Reading	Science	Math
Grade 6		67% 33%	68% 32%	55% 45%
Grade 7		65% 35%	64% 36%	57% 43%
Grade 8		61% 39%	67% 33%	62% 38%

Due to COVID-19 school closure, we were unable to administer the ACT Aspire or end-of-year diagnostic assessments to give us a true measure of progress toward our goals. Upon returning to school this fall, we did give our students a diagnostic assessment.

These results showed that over 30% of our students are reading on or above grade level. This would support an increase of 4% of students reading on grade level. Below is a snapshot of the diagnostic assessment results. Considering the dismissal of school in March, this fall assessment indicator revealed that growth had occurred even with the prolonged lack of instruction. Table 1 represents the overall number of students reading on or above grade level, those reading 1 year behind, and those 2 or more years behind. We still are seeing gains of improvement as seen in the ACT Aspire Interim given in February 2020 in the area of Reading.

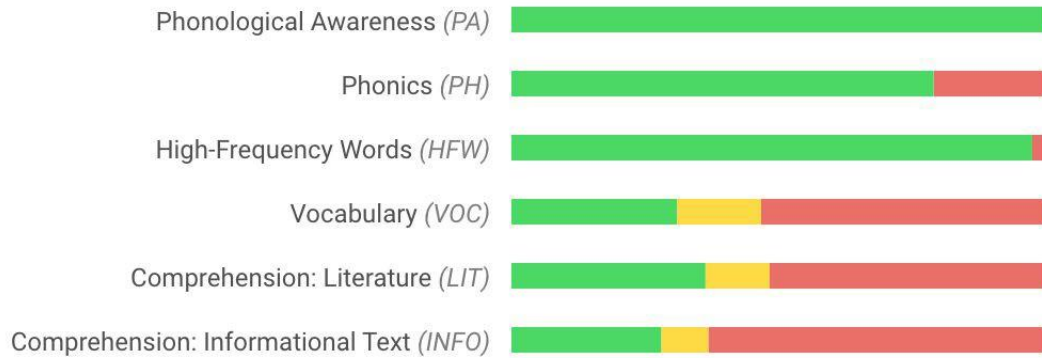
Table 1



The results of the diagnostic assessments showed great improvement in your focus areas of phonics and decoding, which is represented in table 2. Table 2 shows the percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations by the following domains: Phonological Awareness, Phonics, High-Frequency Words, Vocabulary, Literature Comprehension, and Informational Text Comprehension. This data reflects that our efforts of focusing on phonics and decoding in the 2019-2020 school year resulted in improvement even with the school closure. 100% of our students have to meet the beginning of the year expectations in the area of phonological awareness, 79% met the beginning of the year expectations in phonics, 98% met the beginning of the year expectations for high-frequency words, 31% met the beginning of the year expectations for vocabulary, 36% met beginning of the year expectations for literature comprehension, and 28% met the beginning of the year expectations for informational text comprehension. This data gave us great insight into the success of our focus for the 2020-2021 school year. You will find our action plan for addressing vocabulary and comprehension in our 2020-2021 school improvement plan linked later in this report.

Table 2: Placement by Domain

Placement By Domain



Achievements in the 2019-2020 School Year

Warren Middle School was the first school in the state to achieve High Reliability School Level 1 certification in January 2020. Below you will find our certification and press release.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Warren Middle School achieves Level 1 certification in Marzano High Reliability Schools™

Bloomington, Ind., [January 24, 2020] Warren Middle School is pleased to announce the achievement of Level 1 certification in Marzano High Reliability Schools™. Level 1 certification means Warren Middle School has created a “Safe, Supportive, and Collaborative Culture,” which is the foundation for every level that follows. Without such a culture, student achievement will be compromised. Day-to-day school operations are addressed and evaluated in Level 1.

The high reliability school (HRS) program was created by Marzano Resources to help transform schools into organizations that take proactive steps to ensure student success. Using a research-based five-level hierarchy, along with leading and lagging indicators, educators learn to assess, monitor, and confirm the effectiveness of their schools.

This framework, based on 50 years of educational research, defines five progressive levels of performance that a school must master to become an HRS—where all students learn the content and skills they need for success in college, careers, and beyond.

“As you move through the levels, it represents a complete transformation in how schools are run,” says CEO Robert J. Marzano.

Schools must collect data and validate their performance to climb each level of the hierarchy. Certification is determined by Marzano Resources analysts in cooperation with school data teams.

Using the HRS framework and indicators, schools can drive sustained, positive, and significant impacts on student achievement by synthesizing multiple complex initiatives into one harmonious system.

About Marzano Resources

Built on the foundation of Dr. Robert J. Marzano’s 50 years of education research, Marzano Resources supports teachers and administrators through customizable on-site professional development, educator events, virtual coaching, books, videos and online courses. Our associates and authors are thought leaders in the field of education and deliver research-backed guidance for all major areas of schooling, including curriculum development, instruction, assessment, student engagement and personalized competency-based education.

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In addition, Warren Middle School was recognized by the Office for Education Policy for High Overall Growth for the Southeast Region and for High Math Growth in the Southeast Region for high growth on the ACT Aspire 2018-2019 assessment. Below you will find our award.



Current Challenges

As with all schools, Warren Middle School is facing a new set of challenges with COVID-19. While we still work diligently to increase the academic achievements of our students, we are embracing the challenges of reopening schools and following guidelines to ensure the safety of our students and staff. We started the year with 32% of our student population attending school in a virtual setting. Currently, we have 23% that are learning virtually. Current challenges that we are encountering and have created action plans to address are listed below:

- Reopening schools for the 2020-2021 School Year

- Providing virtual and on-campus learning opportunities for all students
- Ensuring safe learning environments for all students and staff with an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases
- Supporting teachers, students, and families in blended learning
- Securing substitutes for teachers who are quarantined for extended periods of time
- Providing support for students who are quarantined for extended periods of time
- Providing support to students and families who are struggling to stay engaged in virtual learning
- Providing support to students who are virtual but not completing assignments or attending virtual lessons
- Providing social and emotional support to teachers, students, and families
- Planning for and teaching standards that did not get address due to school closure last year and standards for the current grade level

Plan for addressing challenges

Our current plan for addressing the challenges we currently face, as well as, our plan for improving our student's academic achievements can be found in our 2020-2021 [School Improvement Plan](#).