



PARENT LETTER — School Performance Grade of D — Low Performing School

September 30, 2024

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Legislation (G.S. §115C-83.15) passed during the 2013 long session of the North Carolina General Assembly provides parents with an additional measure of school performance in the form of School Performance Grades. Beginning with the 2013–14 school year, the annual North Carolina School Report Cards display a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each school in the state.

The School Performance Grades are based 80 percent on our school's achievement score (student proficiency) and 20 percent on students' academic growth. At **Hillside High School**, our achievement score for the 2023–2024 school year is based on how well our students performed on **NC Math 1, NC Math 3, English II, and Biology, and additional indicators including English Learner Progress, ACT/ACT WorkKeys, Math Course Rigor, and the 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate.**

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that **Hillside High 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 identify low-performing schools on an annual basis. Low-performing schools are those that earn an overall 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."

Hillside High School received a School Performance Grade of D and a growth designation of Not Met for the 2023–2024 school year. Although we are committed to improving this score, it is important to remember that just as no one single score or grade tells the whole story of a student, neither does it tell you everything about the performance of a school or the opportunities that our school provides. **Below is a listing of programs that espouse Hillside's mission:** "Hillside High School commits to inspire students to become globally aware citizens, lifelong learners, and responsible leaders in their communities. This will be accomplished by creating challenging learning experiences that emphasize collaboration, critical thinking, and respect for all people."

Hornet Academy is a transitional freshman program designed to create a smaller personal learning community that will foster high academic achievement and high expectations for behavior. Hornet Academy also provides a comprehensive system of support for all freshmen to navigate high school successfully and graduate on time.

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a college preparatory program, whose mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing ALL students for college and career readiness, and success in a global society. When enrolled in the AVID program, students enhance their skills through writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading. AVID encourages its students to enroll in academically rigorous courses such as honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, in addition to participating in at least one extracurricular activity.

Students enrolled in the **Business and Finance Academy (BFA)** focus on a concentrated study of the financial services industry. Under the umbrella of BFA, students have the option to choose **ONE** of the following pathways: **(1) Academy of Information and Technology, (2) Academy of Finance, or (3) Business Management.** BFA is a member of the National Academy Foundation (NAF), a leader in the movement to prepare young people for college and career success. This paves the way for a smooth transition from high school to advanced training programs, and eventually to careers in banking and finance or related fields.

JROTC encourages growth and excellence in leadership, character, academic achievement and physical fitness while preparing students for life after high school, preparing them for enrollment, enlistment, or employment. JROTC is an integral part of Hillside and the Durham community. We have an active Color Guard, Drill Team and Raider Team.

The **International Baccalaureate (IB)** Programme provides students the opportunity to participate in a rigorous college level course of study, practice critical thinking, get involved in the community and develop their special talents with an international perspective. The IB Programme gives each student the chance to earn college credits based on the scores earned on a series of assessments and exams that are taken during the senior year. Students in 9th and 10th are in the Middle Years Programme; 11th and 12th are in the Diploma Programme.



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We also offer students a nest of opportunities that are extracurricular in the form of our **Clubs & Organizations** that enhance academic, artistic, and athletic skills and pursuits of varied interests. Please explore our school's website at www.hillside.dpsnc.net for further details.

As a low performing school, we are required to develop a School Improvement Plan (hereafter SIP or 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, November 7, 2024 where the plan will be presented for approval. The final plan will be available for review via our Hillside High School Improvement Plan webpage at <https://www.dpsnc.net/Page/7425>.**

One of our top priorities for 2024–2025 is to improve our School Performance Grade. There are a number of key programs we have in place to help improve student performance. These include the following **drafted** SIP goals:

- (2024-2025 Goal #1): Hillside High School students will improve their proficiency and performance by 10% on state exams, CTE assessments, ACT Work keys, AP exams, and IB exams
- (2024-2025 Goal #2): Hillside High School will increase its graduation rate from 80% to 85%.
- (2024-2025 Goal #3): The number of juniors earning a composite score of 19 or higher on the State ACT will increase from 14% to 45%.
- (2024-2025 Goal #4): Hillside High School teachers will achieve a Teacher Effectiveness rating of "met" or "exceeds" growth, with the percentage of teachers earning these ratings increasing from 84% to 88%.
- (2024-2025 Goal #5): English Learners (EL students) will meet their targets on the ACCESS test, with the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency increasing from 9% to 35%.
- (2024-2025 Goal #6): Hillside High School will increase the percentage of students who feel a strong sense of belonging from 43% to 53%, as measured by the Panorama Climate Survey.
- (2024-2025 Goal #7): Hillside High School will foster a positive school culture that prioritizes teacher well-being, professional growth, and job satisfaction, leading to improved teacher retention.

We hope you will closely follow your student's academic progress and work with his or her teacher(s) to help ensure they stay on track academically. Working together as a team, we can improve not only how well our students are performing individually, but how our school is performing as a whole. There is nothing more important to administrators and teachers at Hillside High School than ensuring students are ready for the next step in their academic careers. I look forward to working with you to make sure your student is on track for success.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding our School Performance Grade and how we plan to improve, please don't hesitate to contact Mr. Joshua Mallory, Hillside High School Principal via email at Joshua_Mallory@dpsnc.net or Ms. Keshetta Henderson, Hillside High School SIP Process Manager at Keshetta_Henderson@dpsnc.net.

Sincerely,

Joshua L. Mallory, Principal
Hillside High School
3727 Fayetteville Road, Durham, NC 27707
919-560-3925
joshua_mallory@dpsnc.net

