



Kestrel Heights School

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Dr. Mark Tracy - Executive Director

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Results of Kestrel Heights Investigation

Comprehensive Review of 2008-2016 Graduates

Durham, NC, January 9, 2017-- After careful review and analysis of the matter, the Board determined that the high school should have had better systems in place to ensure that each student was being properly advised as to the courses needed to successfully matriculate with a Future Ready Core designated transcript. During 2007-08 through 2015-16 academic years, the high school administration failed to properly vet student transcripts and align course curriculum. There was a systematic breakdown by the high school principals and counselor for the eight-year period in question and approximately 160 students were not provided the support they deserved.

The primary responsibility for these activities fall within the job descriptions of the high school counselor and the high school principal. The high school counselor is responsible for making certain that each student's educational plan is in alignment with the state mandated requirements for graduation with a Future Ready Core designation. The high school principal is the senior administrator responsible for verifying that a student has completed the necessary courses and credits to receive a high school diploma and certifying that the transcript of the student is accurate before delivery to outside institutions. The investigation period covers the

administration involving two principals and one guidance counselor; these administrators are no longer employed by Kestrel Heights.

While the Board finds that systematic errors were made throughout the eight-year period, it is unable to substantiate claims that the actions of the high school principals and counselor involved were willful, intentional, or done with malice. More to the point, the Board concludes that the actions of the high school principals and counselor lacked the requisite diligence and thoroughness expected of educated, trained, and experienced professionals. The errors made could have been avoided by simply reviewing the course alignment between the school and Durham Technical Community College; verifying course completion in the Powerschool Program during the years it was available; or manually checking each student's transcript to ensure that the student has taken all the required core curriculum courses to receive a high school diploma. These are the fundamental responsibilities of a good and efficient high school seeking to meet the needs of the students and the community it serves.

The Board cannot undo what has been done. However, by issuing this investigative report, the board and school leadership have implemented stronger verification processes that should eliminate further accountability discrepancies. Kestrel as a whole has made significant strides academically, operationally and financially over the past three years under new leadership resulting in initially being recommended for a 10-year charter renewal in November of 2016. Kestrel's students have outpaced local and state high school students by most academic and end of course measures. A significant percentage of its students go on to college or university level study. As an organization we have grown and unified our governance and management practices. We aim to be the public school of choice in Durham County as Kestrel Heights School provides, and will continue to provide, an environment where academics are emphasized, where

children are encouraged to excel and perform at their maximum potential and that promotes creativity and excellence in accordance with the Paideia Principles.

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Link to Complete Report:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B7Nq4ujDwwscmo0SDdGZjJudXc?usp=sharing>