



## ***First Ward Creative Arts Middle School: Where Learning is An Art!***

11/17/25

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am writing this letter to notify you that First Ward Creative Arts Middle School has been dually designated as both a North Carolina Low-Performing school and a federally identified Additional Targeted Support & Improvement (ATSI) 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.” Legislation (G.S. §115C-83.15) passed during the 2013 long North Carolina General Assembly session 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.

School Performance Grades are based on 80 percent of our school’s achievement score (student proficiency) and 20 percent on students’ academic growth. At First Ward Creative Arts Middle School, our achievement score for the 2025-26 school year is based on how well the students from First Ward Creative Arts Academy (K-5) performed on Grades 3–5 Mathematics, Grades 3–5 English Language Arts/Reading, Grade 5 Science. First Ward Creative Arts Academy received a School Performance Grade of D for the 2024-2025 school year and a growth designation of Did Not Meet for the 2024-2025 school year, and as such, First Ward Creative Arts Middle School is now designated as a ATSI/LP school.

In addition, per the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1111(d)(2)(C), schools receive the federal identification of TSI-AT in North Carolina by having one or more of the following subgroups receive a subgroup performance grade score at or below the lowest 5% of schools across the state during the 2024-25 academic year; and being identified as a consistently underperforming subgroup for the previous year. Subgroup performance scores are provided for the following subgroups of students: (1) Students with Disabilities, (2) Economically Disadvantaged, (3) Black, (4) White, (5) Hispanic, (6) Asian-Pacific Islander, (7) Multi-racial, and (8) English Learners.

As a dually designated ATSI and NC low-performing school, First Ward Creative Arts Middle School is required to develop a comprehensive improvement plan that specifically addresses how the school will improve student achievement. The plan will also include strategies that our district will employ to support First Ward Creative Arts Middle School’s improvement efforts. The comprehensive improvement plan will address the following areas:

- Standards-aligned Instruction
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Instructional Leadership
- Recruitment & Retention of Effective Teachers
- Data-Driven Decision Making

We have set the following goals for First Ward Creative Arts Middle School using 2024-2025 data from our current students:

- ***The percent of students scoring College and Career Ready (CCR) on reading End of Grade assessments in grades 6-8 will increase from 51% in SY2024-25 to 56% in SY2025-26. (Aligns to A2.04 and B3.03 and CMS Goal 2)***

- ***The percent of students scoring College and Career Ready (CCR) on Math 1 assessments will increase from 50% in SY2024-25 to 55% in SY2025-26. (Aligns to A2.04 and B3.03 and CMS Goal 3)***
- ***Duty-Free Instructional Planning Time for Teachers: The NC SBE's statutory provision 115C-105.27(b)(7) requires all schools to have a plan to provide duty-free instructional planning time for every teacher under G.S. 115C-301.1, with the goal of providing an average of at least five hours of planning time per week (A2.04). (Supported through Indicators A4.06, E1.06)***
- ***The percent of students scoring Grade Level Proficient (GLP), in Reading on End of Grade assessments in grades 6-8 will increase from 68% in SY2024-25 to 73% in SY2025-26. (Aligns to A4.01, B3.03, D1.02 and CMS Guardrail 1)***
- ***The school will retain 90 % of its highly effective classroom teachers throughout the 2025-26. (Aligns to C3.04 and CMS Guardrail 4)***

Here are some strategies that First Ward Creative Arts Middle School will be implementing to improve student outcomes:

- Standards-aligned planning, lesson design, and PLCs with instructional leadership team members
- Data-tracking for all academic content areas to monitor student progress on curricular checkpoints
- Targeted in-class small group instruction to solidify understanding in key areas of daily instruction
- SOAR time (academic enrichment) for additional small group instruction to reinforce past concepts
- Classroom walkthroughs and coaching support for all teachers by the instructional leadership team

Parent engagement is at the heart of our school improvement efforts. Here are some ways you can help:

- Ensure you and your child know the academic expectations for your child this school year.
- Contact your child's teacher or grade level administrator to set up conferences as needed.
- Make sure that your child is prepared and attends school each day.
- Monitor your child's homework and academic progress on Canvas and Infinite Campus.
- Keep track of upcoming important events on the Firebird Focus calendar and ParentSquare.
- Volunteer or join the PTO.

Additionally, listed below are a few resources available to help:

- K-12 standards in academic subjects: [www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/)
- State student achievement test results: [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/)
- N.C. School Report Cards: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/data-reports/school-report-cards>
- Graduation requirements: [www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements/](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements/)

We are committed to improving student performance. 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. Our Arts program is thriving and we are excited about continuing to offer the opportunities for our scholar-artists to learn, grow, and display their incredible skills and talents in all aspects of the Arts as well as in their academic performance. The intent of receiving these designations is to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. We're excited about this school year and are working to make it a success for your child.

If you have questions about the content of this letter, please contact Selestine Young, Principal, at [selestine.crowder@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:selestine.crowder@cms.k12.nc.us) or (980) 343-5485.

Sincerely,

***Selestine Young***  
***Principal***  
***First Ward Creative Arts Middle School***