



# INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

143 W. Market Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

**To:** Indiana State Board of Education  
**From:** John Snethen/Brian Murphy  
**Date:** November 24, 2014  
**RE:** School Appeals

---

**Recommended action:** It is the recommendation of staff that the Board hold Lighthouse Christian Academy, King's Academy, Horizon Christian Academy, and Columbus Christian School harmless for the 2013–14 school year, and place the schools in the grade categories originally assigned by the Department using the combined model.

For the 2013-2014 school year, the Department assigned grades to Lighthouse Christian Academy, King's Academy, Horizon Christian Academy, and Columbus Christian School using a combined elementary/middle school and high school model under the belief that these four schools were not atypical. At the Board business meeting on November 4, 2014, the Board voted, pursuant to Emergency Rule 14-348(E), to define Lighthouse Christian Academy, King's Academy, Horizon Christian Academy, and Columbus Christian School as atypical schools because of insufficient cohort data. The Board then voted to apply the elementary/middle school model to these four schools and release the resulting grades.

Subsequent to the November 5 meeting, King's Academy, Columbus Christian School, and Lighthouse Christian Academy requested that they be held harmless because their grades decreased when calculated under the elementary/middle school model. These three schools are requesting that the Board place them in the grade categories as originally calculated by the Department.

It has been the past practice of the Department that when an atypical school appeals its grade, it is held harmless so that the appeal cannot result in a decrease of the school's grade. It is the recommendation of staff that the Board hold these schools harmless this year and place the schools in the grade categories originally assigned by the Department using the combined model.

Lighthouse Christian Academy  
1201 W. That Rd.  
Bloomington, IN 47403

November 21, 2014

Mr. Guffin,

We would respectfully ask the State Board of Education that Lighthouse Christian Academy be held harmless, and our score not be lowered because of the change to an atypical school configuration. Our high school has an excellent program and is an important part of our school. Therefore, we feel strongly that it should be included as part of our school grade.

Our school grade in the past has always included the high school. There have been no significant changes in our program, and we have submitted all state reports and any other information requested by IDOE. If there was going to be a change in our status, we feel that we should have received notice, and that it should have been well before the grades were made public.

There appears to be a great deal of confusion about why there was a change, and on what basis the decision was made. The requirements and reasons should have been made clear to everyone involved.

Our experience has been that in most cases revised grades are to the school's benefit. In our case, it did not lower our grade, just the score. However, we are aware that for other schools this actually lowered their grades. No matter what the score or grade we are committed to improving learning at Lighthouse Christian Academy and are already taking steps, as we do each year, to address any areas that need improvement.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Don A. Wilson  
Principal  
Lighthouse Christian Academy  
812-824-2000



# The King's Academy

1201 S. Water Street • Jonesboro, IN 46938 • 765.674.1722 • [www.kingsacademyin.org](http://www.kingsacademyin.org)

November 23, 2014

Re: Appeal the Decision to Lower A-F School Accountability Grade

To the Indiana State Board of Education:

Recently our school, The King's Academy, received a revised A-F School Accountability grade of "D" just prior to the public release of the statewide school grades. I realize the initial grade of "C" was preliminary and that the SBOE has every right to determine the policy and guidelines that determine school grades. However, I appeal to the board to consider **restoring our preliminary grade to our final grade, and hold our school harmless** in light of any policy decision that changed our school's classification, and thus our published school grade.

As you consider this request I ask that the board keep the following things in mind. Our school board was very troubled by our testing results that led to the "C" grade we received this summer ("D" in the combined elementary/middle school, and an "A" in high school). Changes were implemented this fall to more adequately meet the needs of our struggling students.

On November 6, 2014, the release date of the school grade data, we were completely unaware that our school's classification had been changed to "atypical" and that our grade would be published as a "D" rather than the "C" we anticipated.

We do not have a clear understanding as to why our school is now classified as "atypical". In discussions with personnel in the Accountability Office it was stated that our new classification stemmed from a low enrollment in our current senior class. This 2014-15 senior class has been small for the previous three years. We were evaluated as a "combined" school in these previous years without being considered "atypical".

In prior situations where the state board has revised a school accountability grade, the revision did not have a negative impact on the school's final grade. Therefore, I consider that perhaps the change in our preliminary grade was an unintended consequence of other decisions.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Tony Miner, Headmaster  
The King's Academy  
Jonesboro, Indiana

November 21, 2014

Mr. Bob Guffin:

My name is Kendall Wildey and I am the superintendent at Columbus Christian School in Columbus, Indiana. I sent you an email on November 20, 2014 requesting that an appeal of Columbus Christian's revised letter grade be put on the December state board meeting agenda.

This letter is a follow-up to that email. We would like to request an appeal of the revised letter grade in order that Columbus Christian School will be held harmless to the board's decision on November 5, 2014 due to the following rationale:

1. Our schools' accountability model was changed very late in the process and it was made public without us having any prior notice.
2. It does not appear that the unintended consequences of the last minute decision to change our grade was given due consideration.
3. The same model that was originally applied in the preliminary grade had been used in the past and wasn't considered "atypical".
4. In other cases, a revised letter grade only occurred when it was to the school's benefit and not to the school's detriment.
5. We were unaware of what even constitutes a school to meet the "atypical" configuration requirement.
6. Please know that we were not satisfied with our preliminary grade. We had already taken measures to begin improving. We had already contacted Dr. Peggy Hinckley to explore her 8-step approach for improvement. We are working hard to address student performance issues.
7. Our high school staff and students have worked hard to improve at their level and we are proud that they received a grade of "A". To not consider that at this point does not seem fair.

I would also welcome the opportunity to speak to the board in person at its next board meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

God bless,  
Kendall Wildey  
[kwildey@columbus-christian.org](mailto:kwildey@columbus-christian.org)  
812-592-2261

