



INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

TO: Rachelle Gardner, Chief Operating Officer, Hope Academy; Linda Gagy, Principal, Hope Academy
FROM: Brian Murphy, Hearing Officer
RE: Hope Academy, 2015–16 Letter Grade
DATE: January 25, 2017

Finding: Hope Academy should be given a “no grade” designation for 2015–16.

I. Facts

Hope Academy (“Hope”) filed an appeal of an F grade for 2015-16 and asserts it should receive a “no grade.” Hope serves a small special population in grades 9-12 with the mission of providing a safe, sober, and challenging experience for students who share a commitment to their education. Hope did not have enough students for a performance score, so its F grade for 2015-16 was based solely on multiple measures (graduation rate and college and career readiness).

Hope’s graduation rate, factored into its 2015-16 grade, was 65%, with no waivers. All students received a Core 40 Diploma. Although Hope has a partnership with Ivy Tech to offer its students dual credit opportunities, few of Hope’s students are typically able to take advantage of these offerings. Hope earned zero college and career readiness points in its 2015-16 grade.

II. Argument and Analysis

Hope asserts that the added burden of dual credit, vocational education, and advanced placement courses and testing, which would result in college and career readiness points, is not in the best interests of Hope’s students. Hope stated that in most cases it works to facilitate instruction, pared down to core classes, with a focus on behavioral or addiction treatment. In addition, many students enter Hope behind on credits.

Cynthia Roach, the State Board’s Senior Director of Accountability & Assessment, stated:

While the rule was designed to allow for multiple measures to be a stand-alone domain, the intent was to allow for school corporations who had an upper grades high school consisting of only grades 11 and 12 to be able to receive a grade. In the case of Hope Academy, this school enrolls students in Grades 9-12, and without the ability to include Performance in the calculations for those students in Grade 10, it is really not possible to get an accurate picture of this school.

The population being served are students who are also dealing with sobriety and behavioral health issues. According to data provided by Hope Academy, the majority of these students enroll already behind in credits. That, combined with their small size, are factors which impede their ability to have students meet the College and Career Readiness calculation.

For these reasons, Hope’s F grade should be changed to a “no grade”, and the “no grade” should be published in accordance with IC 20-31-8-6(b).