

# Carteret County Board of Education

## Order Closing

### Marine Science & Technologies [MaST] Early College High School

*Findings of the Carteret County Board of Education pursuant to N.C. General Statute 115C-72 based on the Study Report on the Question of Closing Marine Science & Technologies [MaST] Early College High School issued July 20, 2019 and addended July 24, 2019 and following a public hearing on the question on July 24, 2019.*

1. Marine Science & Technologies [MaST] Early College High School, known as "MaST," is a Cooperative Innovative High School formed pursuant to Chapter 115C, Article 16, Part 9 of the North Carolina General Statutes by the Carteret County Public School System and Carteret Community College and opened for a 9th Grade class of fifty students for the 2018-2019 school year.

2. Three groups of students are targeted for recruitment and enrollment in the school consisting of (a) high school students who are at risk of dropping out of school before attaining a high school diploma, (b) high school students with parents who did not continue education beyond high school, and (c) high school students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction.

3. The application to the state agencies for approval of MaST generally indicates the school will focus on marine related technologies leading to associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates and that college/university transfer credits are possible. The application specifically states:

"Carteret's maritime heritage and the College's programs and waterfront location uniquely support MaST, which would provide essential training/education to serve local aquaculture, commercial fishing, and boat manufacturing/service employers. These industries, which represent a large portion of the existing and potential county economy, face hiring challenges due to an under-qualified workforce."

4. The budget for MaST in the application to establish the school included a mix of state and local funding for the first five years of operation. The budget anticipated \$180,000.00 in special supplemental state funding annually for the first five years of operations and appropriations from the Carteret County Board of Commissioners in increasing annual sums beginning with \$138,150.00 and reaching \$690,750.00 by the fifth year of operations.

5. The MaST application was approved by the State Board of Education in late 2017 and by the State Board of Community Colleges in early 2018. Because the application included supplemental state funding, the General Assembly was required to approve creation of the school and to appropriate funds accordingly.

6. In late May or early June of 2018, the General Assembly approved opening of MaST but *did not* appropriate the supplemental special first year funding the application

anticipated. To make up the shortfall, largely through the cooperation and efforts of Carteret Community College, alternative sources of funding were arranged for the first year of the school's operation to cover the loss state special supplemental funding. The county commissioners then appropriated sufficient local funds to allow the school to open.

7. As the school was set to open in August of 2018, the Board approved a one-year pilot program to allow MaST students to participate in extracurricular sports at their attendance zone high schools.

8. MaST opened for fifty 9th Grade students in August of 2018.

9. The students and their parents, as well as the school's principal and the community college administrators considered the first year to be a significant academic success. Most of first year MaST students re-enrolled for their 10th Grade year at their early college high school.

10. Students for the new 9th Grade class at MaST for the 2019-2020 school year began applying and, upon selection, enrolling earlier this year.

11. The data in the MaST Study Report on the question of closure indicates a large number of the original class members as well as the new class members are on a pathway that would lead to a four-year college degree and that a significant number of their parents had attended college.

12. The School Board celebrates the prospect of its students seeking college or university degrees in whatever form, and recognizes that students who attend MaST have every right move on to a four year college or university after graduating from the program.

13. However, a significant part of the MaST application to the state, and therefore a significant part of the overall justification for establishing the school in the first place, was a representation that the school, as indicated above, "would provide essential training/education to serve local aquaculture, commercial fishing, and boat manufacturing/service employers," and that "[t]hese industries, which represent a large portion of the existing and potential county economy, face hiring challenges due to an under-qualified workforce."

14. This language is similar to language used for "vocational" education, which is, according to the materials in the Study Report on Career and Technical Education, a program to graduate students prepared for work in technical fields.

15. To a certain extent, the high percentage of MaST students on a pathway to a four-year college or university degree is inconsistent with the goal of providing a trained workforce to local employers in the maritime trades when the students graduate from the community college as part of "early college."

16. While it is unclear just how the "rubric" for selecting MaST students is used by administration to select students for MaST, the rubric form itself is weighted heavily in favor of high achieving students which will tend to exclude "at risk" students.

17. Partially as a result of the loss of students county-wide who moved out of the county as a result of the impact of Hurricane Florence, and other budget cuts at the state and federal levels, the Carteret County Public School System will lose funding for approximately seven and a half teaching positions for the 2018-2019 school year.

18. In June of this year, while approving the county's budget for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the county commissioners approved approximately \$245,000.00 that had been earmarked in the proposed school system's local budget for MaST, but the commissioners expressed a preference that the funds be used for retaining as many teaching positions system-wide as possible that otherwise would be lost to state and federal budget cuts.

19. \$245,000.00 of local funding will "save" approximately four teaching positions that would be otherwise be lost to our school system due to state and federal funding cuts.

20. In this year's state budgeting process, the NC State House of Representatives approved a proposed state budget that did not include the supplemental funding for MaST anticipated in the MaST application. However, the NC Senate's proposed budget bill did include such funding. Ultimately a conference committee of the two houses included the funding in a compromise budget bill and the General Assembly adopted the compromise bill in late June. But the Governor then vetoed the budget bill. As of the date of the adoption of this Order, there is no approved state budget for 2019-2020 and therefore no supplemental state funding for MaST.

21. Realizing the concerns over the lack of state funding for MaST at the beginning of the fiscal year and possibly the beginning of the school year, Carteret Community College has offered to fund the State's portion of the MaST budget for the 2019-2020 school year should the final state budget not contain such funding.

22. Nonetheless, this is the second year in a row that crucial supplemental state appropriations for the financial success of MaST are uncertain. Also, the NC House did not originally include funding for MaST and several other early colleges in this year's proposed state budget, an indication of lack of financial support from that chamber of the legislature. This, combined with a preference of the county commissioners that local funding needed for MaST's support be used to retain teaching positions at a time when the local financial support for the program needs to be increasing annually, is a forecast that adequate funding for MaST will remain uncertain for years in the future.

23. In the statements from the high school principals in the Study Report on the impact of MaST on their schools, the East Carteret principal for the 2018-2019 school year expressed concerns about adverse impacts at her school caused by MaST basically over (1) the loss of student enrollment at her school due to enrollment at MaST, (2) loss of high achieving academic students to MaST, and (3), participation of MaST students on her sports teams. The principals at the two other high schools also expressed reservations about participation of MaST students on their sports teams.

24. The majority of the members of the School Board share the East Carteret principal's concerns. Last year approximately ten percent of the students within the East Carteret attendance

zone eligible for enrollment at East Carteret in the 9th Grade enrolled at MaST. For the new school year's 9th Grade enrollment at MaST from the East Carteret attendance zone, the percentage exceeds ten percent. Within those students, there are high academic achieving students. East Carteret is a relatively small high school and can ill afford to lose student enrollment.

25. The statutory procedures to close a school require school boards to keep in mind “primarily the welfare of the students to be affected by a proposed closing.”

26. There are good and adequate programs to serve the MaST students in each of their regular attendance zone high schools of Croatan High School, East Carteret High School, and West Carteret High School. All of these high schools are high achieving with one earning an “A” and two earning a “B” on their “state report cards” and all three “exceeding growth.” Student performance at all three high school significantly exceeds the state average on the ACT tests for determining college readiness. All three high schools offer career and technical education to their students and students widely take advantage of these offerings. All three of these high schools offer Advanced Placement courses that allow students to earn college credits while in high school that are transferrable to the University of North Carolina System of universities. Approximately 600 of our high school students took AP courses last school year.

27. A considerable number of students at all three traditional high schools are “dual enrolled” at Carteret Community College through “Career and College Promise” where they can earn college credits for a degree at the college or transfer the credits to four-year colleges or universities.

28. Closing MaST will have no adverse transportation impact on a majority of the students.

29. Students with disabilities at MaST, if any, would be well served by established programs at the traditional high schools.

30. All three high schools can receive the MaST students within existing facilities and there will be no cost to the school system of accepting those students back into the traditional high schools.

31. The Board of Education is given the choice by the County Board of Commissioners to use the \$245,000.00 appropriation earmarked for MaST on the 100 students that are enrolled in the 2019-2020 school year or to use those funds to retain four teaching positions system wide.

32. There are approximately 8,100 students in the Carteret County School System including the MaST students and the welfare of each student is important to the School Board.

33. There will be adverse financial impact on Carteret Community College if MaST closes, but those impacts are largely loss future revenues.

*Conclusions drawn from the above findings.*

1. Funding uncertainties have plagued MaST since its inception. This will likely continue into the future.

2. The Carteret County Public Schools use a portion of local funding to provide teaching positions in addition to the numbers of teachers allotted by the State. This tends to lower class sizes. The School Board concludes that the best interests of the entire school system are best promoted by using this year's approximate \$245,000.00 appropriation by the county commissioners to retain four teaching positions county-wide.
3. MaST has had adverse impacts on East Carteret High School in terms of loss of student enrollment and loss of high achieving students. East Carteret is a relatively small high school and cannot afford these losses if it is to remain a high achieving school.
4. MaST appears to be attracting large numbers of students interested in four-year college or university degrees and does not appear to be focused on one of its important core missions that is to produce graduates ready to enter the maritime trades in Carteret County.
5. There are enrollment slots available in the traditional high schools for all MaST students at their attendance zone schools and excellent educational offerings and opportunities are available to the MaST students along with all 8,100 students in the school system.
6. It is the judgment of a majority of the members of the Carteret County Board of Education that the closing of MaST will better serve the educational interests of the Carteret County Public School System.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Carteret County Board of Education as follows:

1. Marine Science & Technologies [MaST] Early College High School is closed effective immediately.
2. School administrators are directed to expedite the enrollment process to bring the former MaST students back into the traditional high schools as quickly and efficiently as possible and to ensure, to the maximum extent practical, that those students have the opportunity to take course offerings irrespective of any late date of enrollment.
3. The chairman of the Board of Education will notify Carteret Community College that the Carteret County Public System is withdrawing from MaST and cancelling the program and terminating the Memorandum of Understanding approved by the School Board in June of 2018 if the college also approved and entered said agreement.

Adopted on July 29, 2019.

CARTERET COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent, Ex Officio Secretary