

# Superintendent News

WARRICK COUNTY SCHOOL CORPORATION  
ADMINISTRATION CENTER

This Edition:

School Accountability  
Questioned

School Grades Changed

## Who's Accountable for Accountability?

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This summer the Associated Press reported a disturbing story related to Indiana schools and the new A-F Accountability measures enacted under former Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Tony Bennett. The AP uncovered numerous e-mails sent from Dr. Bennett to his staff regarding the letter grade assigned to Indianapolis Charter School, Christel House. Christel House, founded by Christel DeHaan, initially earned a C grade, but in e-mails to DOE staff, Bennett urged them to "find solutions" to raise that grade to an A. To make matters worse, Christel House was cited time and time again by Dr. Bennett as the shining example of the good work being done by charter schools in Indiana. It also did not hurt that Christel DeHann was a huge GOP contributor, and that she personally contributed over \$130,000.00 to Dr. Bennett's unsuccessful 2012 re-election campaign. Christel House had earned a C grade, primarily for poor Algebra scores. (66% of Christel House students failed the End of Course Algebra Assessment) One Bennett e-mail read "They need to understand that anything less than an A for Christel House compromises all of our accountability work. We may well lose Pence on this as well..." Following these e-mails at least two "tweaks" to the accountability computations were made by DOE staff, and Christel House was issued an A grade. On August 1, 2013, as the e-mails were made public and the story published, Dr. Bennett resigned from his position as Florida Education Commissioner, all the while professing his innocence.

The fact that Dr. Bennett felt obligated to "change grades" not only calls into question his integrity, but the integrity of the entire A-F accountability process. Moving Christel House to an A grade is only the tip of the iceberg. Seriously, does anyone think a school in which 66% of their students fail the algebra exam could really be considered an A school? Sorry, but that performance certainly doesn't add up to an A grade in my mind. As a matter of fact, with that kind of performance, Christel House should have been ecstatic to have a C! Just think how other schools in our state, schools that were actually taken over by for-profit companies, feel about these revelations. And yes, these are the same for-profit companies that are spending millions of dollars in Indiana to privatize education. What other "scores" or grades were changed and manipulated to benefit Dr. Bennett and his reform efforts? The entire mess stinks of politics! Hopefully, more information will be presented and the truth will be shared with the public. For now parents, teachers, and Hoosiers are simply left to wonder what's next, and openly question the entire accountability process. The real problem in all of this is that vouchers, privatization, charter schools, and the other "reform" measures touted by Bennett, aren't really educational reform. They are not new ideas. Vouchers and charter schools have been around for many years, and the research is consistent. Vouchers have never improved education! The research on charter schools is just as telling. The vast majority of public schools score as well, or higher than charter schools. The research is there. Research is science, it cannot be manipulated by politicians or self-serving leaders like Tony Bennett. Why do legislators ignore research and listen to politicians like Tony Bennett? For as long as they do, our educational programs and the educational services we provide kids will continue to be less than they could be. And in my opinion, that's the real shame of Dr. Bennett's sham.

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