

# Charter school students test well

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MORGANTON – Nearly 90 percent of kindergarten and first-grade students attending The New Dimensions School are performing at- or above- and often, well above-their grade level, based on scores obtained from recently administered Metropolitan Achievement Tests.

The young students attending Burke County's first tuition-free public charter school posted scores indicating 88 percent are performing at or above grade level in reading, 92 percent at or above grade level in mathematics, and 89 percent at or above grade level in language.

"We're sincerely gratified by this evidence of student achievement," commented school director Jennifer Wilson-Kearse, M.Ed. "I'm thrilled to see that The New Dimensions School is able to teach children in a meaningful way based on what they are interested in and still get great results on a standardized test."

The New Dimensions School, which in its first year has operated four combined kindergarten/first grade classes at three community-based sites in Burke County, uses a strengths-based, interests-based approach to the education of young children. The school also uses a portfolio assessment system to gauge student progress.

"We find that the portfolio provides families with a more accurate and detailed picture or story of the progression of learning that takes place during the school year," Wilson-Kearse said. "Since we do not grade in a traditional way, parents requested that we test the children to verify they were at or above grade level. We decided to use the Metropolitan Achievement Test, a nationally normed test used in schools across North Carolina and all over the United States."

"These results are very exciting and extremely promising," commented Cindy Bellas, a

branch of the American Red Cross, who is a member of The New Dimensions School's founding board of directors. "

The New Dimensions School has announced plans to expand in the coming school year. Two multi-age kindergarten-to-second grade classes will be held at Lake James New Dimensions School; four multi-age K-2 classes will be held in Morganton; and another new K-2 class will be established at a site now being negotiated in the eastern section of the County. Two of the four classes in Morganton will provide a dual-language-immersion experience in which English-speaking students learn Spanish and Spanish-speaking children learn English.

Applications for new kindergarten, first-, and second-grade students are being accepted. For information, call the school office at 437-5753.