

# Sound Basic Education for All

## An Action Plan for North Carolina



In collaboration with Learning Policy Institute and  
The William & Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation

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## Attracting, Preparing, Supporting, and Retaining Educational Leaders in North Carolina



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# Introduction

*“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”*

*—Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, 2004*

North Carolina’s judicial system has recognized the critical role that school leaders play in providing every child with a sound basic education. In the 1997 case of *Leandro v. State of North Carolina*, the Supreme Court of North Carolina (the Court) ruled that “every child in North Carolina has a constitutionally enforceable right to an opportunity for a sound basic education in a public school.”

A subsequent ruling in 2004 outlined the requirements of a sound basic education:

1. Every child is entitled to have a competent teacher.
2. Every school must have a competent principal.
3. Every school district must have the resources necessary to adequately support these students, teachers, and principals.

The second requirement specifies that “every school (shall) be led by a well-trained competent principal with the leadership skills and the ability to hire and retain competent, certified, and well-trained teachers who can implement an effective and cost-effective instructional program that meets the needs of at-risk children so that they can have the equal opportunity to obtain a sound basic education by achieving grade level or above academic performance” (*Hoke County Board of Education v. State* 599 S.E. 2d 365 (NC 2004)).

It is this second requirement regarding leadership that is the focus of this paper. The current status of educational leadership in North Carolina, including preparation, recruitment, development, support, and retention, particularly in schools that need improvement, will be reviewed, as will best practices related to these topics. The conclusions reached at the end form the basis for recommended actions included in the comprehensive report, *Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina*.

# Background

Volumes have been written about the critical need for effective leaders at all levels of the K–12 education system — school, district, and state. Effective leaders multiply the effects of good teaching by shaping a vision of academic success for all students; creating a climate hospitable to education; cultivating leadership in others; improving instruction; and managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Mendels, 2012). The need for effective leaders is exacerbated in low-achieving schools and districts that are under federal, state, and local pressure to improve; only with talented leadership are these schools able to increase positive outcomes for all students.

One way to address the need for effective leaders in all schools is to build principal pipelines at the district and/or state level. Principal pipelines are composed of activities that districts and states undertake to ensure effective leadership in every school. The Wallace Foundation (2016) identifies key parts of a strong principal pipeline. First, the state or district adopts leadership standards and a system for evaluating and supporting leaders that is based on those standards. Principal preparation programs are developed to reflect those standards to ensure high-quality content — admission to the programs is highly selective. Selective hiring and placement procedures are used to match candidate skills and abilities with the needs of the school. On-the-job evaluation and support are used to improve teaching and learning (Turnbull, Anderson, Riley, MacFarlane, & Aladjem, 2016).

Although some districts in North Carolina have created their own pipelines, and elements of a principal pipeline are evident in the state, there is no statewide or systemic principal pipeline. An effective pipeline would:

- » Ensure access to high-quality preparation programs for all aspiring principals
- » Develop and support practicing principals with high-quality professional development that is accessible throughout the state
- » Attract and retain effective principals with administrator salary schedules that are competitive with other states and commensurate with the increased responsibilities of school administrators
- » Provide specialized training and support for leaders who are responsible for turning around under-performing schools

# Approach and Methods

A team of WestEd experts in education leadership conducted the research, investigated evidence-based practices, identified key findings, and formulated conclusions about the status of education leadership in North Carolina. The WestEd team identified the following key research questions to guide their work:

1. What is the current status of leader supply and demand?
2. What is being done to attract and prepare leaders?
3. What is being done to develop and support leaders?
4. What is being done to retain leaders?
5. What structures and processes are in place to support school improvement?

Answers to these questions also indicate which elements of a principal pipeline need to be strengthened and/or scaled.

To answer these questions, the researchers collected data from multiple sources, including:

- » Results from an online survey that was completed by 685 principals from across North Carolina.
- » Face-to-face interviews with public sector leaders and stakeholders with deep knowledge of the education leadership landscape in the state.
- » Focus groups with 50 local school district superintendents, 33 local school board members, and 5 (of the 8) Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) directors.
- » Site visits to 13 school districts during which team members interviewed multiple principals.
- » Reviews of research and literature about evidence-based practices from national sources, as well as reviews and evaluations of North Carolina-specific programs. Initial literature and documents that were reviewed are listed and summarized in Appendix A: Educational Leadership Literature Review. Additional references are cited throughout the paper and appear in the References section.
- » Reviews of presentations made to the Governor's Commission on Access to a Sound Basic Education.

# Findings

Data from the sources listed above were compiled, coded, and analyzed by WestEd researchers. From these analyses, common themes emerged that are described in the following sections. Based on the key research questions outlined above, the findings are organized around these categories: Leader Supply and Demand, Preparing Leaders, Attracting Leaders, Developing and Supporting Leaders, Retaining Leaders, and School Improvement.

## Leader Supply and Demand

Researchers at North Carolina State University (Fusarelli, 2018) have estimated that North Carolina needs at least 300 new principals each year. In 2018–19, North Carolina has 2,389 state-funded principal positions, 1,987 assistant principal positions, and 226 charter school principals for a total of 4,602 school administrators (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019b).<sup>1</sup> The annual need for new principals is due primarily to retirement and principals leaving the state and/or the profession.

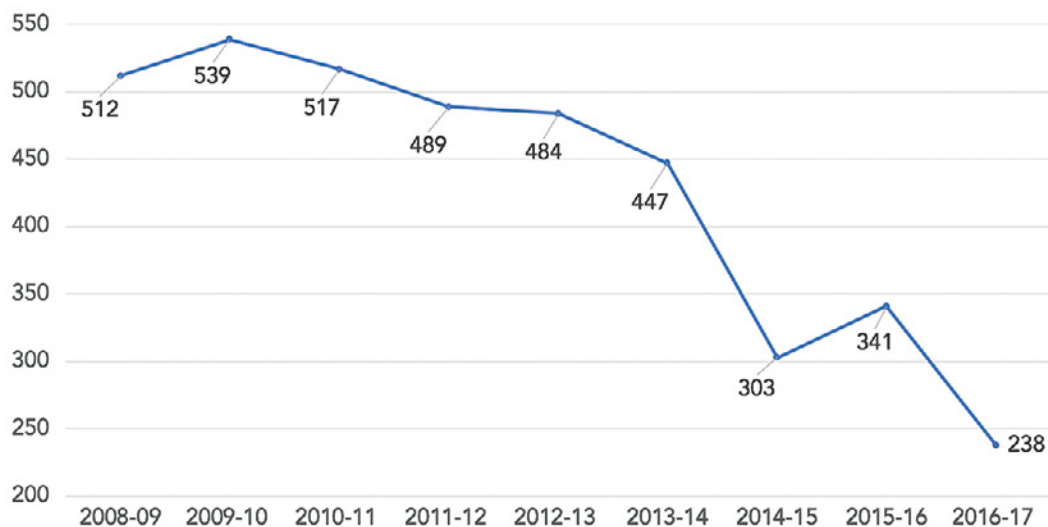
Analyses of enrollment data from principal preparation programs, as well as opinions of educational leaders gathered during interviews and focus groups, indicate that the supply of qualified principals is dwindling. Though traditionally the primary source of North Carolina public school principals, the University of North Carolina (UNC) system has in recent years provided steadily declining numbers of new principals. As Figure 1 below illustrates, the UNC system produced significantly fewer principals in 2016 than it produced in 2009 — in 2016, the system produced only 56% (238) of the principals it produced at its peak in 2009 (539).

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming a 9% turnover rate, 432 new principals would be needed annually. More accurate data that account for intra-district transfers, retirement, and people who leave the profession altogether are needed to determine the precise number of new principals needed each year.



**Figure 1. UNC System–Prepared Principals, 2008 Academic Year–2016 Academic Year**



Opinions offered by education leaders and stakeholders during focus group sessions and interviews provide some insight into the reasons for the decline in applicants to and graduates from principal preparation programs. Legislative changes to principal and assistant principal salary schedules also offer an explanation. Some leaders opine that teachers are discouraged from entering school leadership positions because they can earn more money as a teacher. They point out that financial incentives, such as for holding a master’s degree, no longer exist under the new compensation system for school administrators that went into effect in 2017. These education leaders describe that disincentives such as these in the system discourage potential candidates from becoming principals. Figure 1 shows that the decline in the number of principals prepared by the UNC system started before 2017; the most precipitous drop occurred between 2013–14 and 2014–15. However, the number of principals prepared by the UNC system hit a record low in 2016–17, when the changes to the salary schedule were about to take place.

## Preparing Leaders

Research on the preparation of principals suggests a strong link between the preparation of effective principals and gains in student achievement. King (2018) identifies quality measures for principal preparation programs that are designed to produce effective principals. The six domains/quality measures are:

- » Domain 1, Selective Candidate Admissions: Candidate admission processes in high-quality programs include a marketing strategy, active recruitment practices, high admission standards, applicant screening, and predictor assessments to ensure that the “right” candidates are selected.
- » Domain 2, Rigorous Course Content: Rigorous course content is reflected in explicit standards and learning goals and a course design that connects content, learning activities, resources, materials, and assessment

measures. Regularly scheduled course evaluations are also an indicator of rigorous course content, as is course coherence.

- » Domain 3, Varied Pedagogy: Indicators of effective pedagogy include active learning strategies, experiential learning activities, reflective practices, formative feedback, performance benchmarking, and cultural responsiveness.
- » Domain 4, Embedded Clinical Practice: Clinical practice integrates knowledge and theory learned in courses with practical application and skill development in a real-world, professional setting. Practicums, internships, residencies, and induction programs are forms of school-based experiential learning that include coaching and close supervision.
- » Domain 5, Performance Assessment: These assessments are designed to measure candidate performance against a fixed set of criteria or learning standards. They are used to evaluate whether candidates have learned a specific body of knowledge or acquired a specific skill set. Candidates who perform at or above the established expectations are considered proficient.
- » Domain 6, Tracking of Graduate Performance Outcomes: High-quality preparation programs track the performance of their graduates over time by measuring and reporting data such as the number of graduates who obtain state certification, are hired by districts as principals or assistant principals within one year of graduation, stay in positions for at least three years, and meet or exceed district expectations for performance (King, 2018).

Over the past 20 years, the North Carolina General Assembly has redesigned principal preparation programs several times. In 1993, House Bill 257 phased out existing master's in school administration (MSA) programs, created higher standards that programs had to meet to regain accreditation, and capped the number of state-funded MSA programs. The state legislature also created the Principal Fellows Program, which grants a two-year scholarship loan to eligible candidates who want to complete an MSA degree at an approved institution. In 2007, the legislature required the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) to impose higher certification standards for aspiring administrators and to hold MSA programs accountable for students' mastery of these standards. Universities were required to redesign MSA programs to comply with the new standards by July 1, 2009, in order to regain accreditation. The North Carolina Standards for School Executives include eight standards, as follows: strategic leadership; instructional leadership; cultural leadership; human resource leadership; managerial leadership; external development leadership; micro-political leadership; and academic achievement leadership.

The leadership standards also incorporate competencies, the knowledge and skills that leaders need to be successful, for example, communication, change management, conflict management, creative thinking, customer focus, organizational ability, personal ethics, and results orientation. In addition, the standards stipulate that leadership will guide innovation in North Carolina public schools as follows:

- » School professionals will collaborate with national and international partners to discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st-century learning, and understand global connections.

- » School leaders will create a culture that embraces change and promotes dynamic continuous improvement.
- » Education professionals will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success.
- » The public-school professionals will collaborate with community colleges and public and private universities and colleges to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013).

In 2008, the SBE created the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric based on the new standards for preservice candidates and required aspiring administrators to demonstrate mastery based on the rubric before being licensed. All MSA programs underwent major changes in order to comply with these requirements. These efforts are laudable and demonstrate North Carolina's commitment to rigorous standards and competencies for leaders.

The state offers multiple pathways to principal licensure. Depending on where they live, aspiring principals can choose from programs described below.

The *North Carolina Principal Fellows Program* (NCPFP) provides a competitive merit-based scholarship loan to outstanding candidates to attend 1 of 11 participating UNC system institutions and earn an MSA. After completing the MSA, Principal Fellows must seek and obtain assistant principal or principal positions in North Carolina and remain in the position for four years or repay the scholarship loan with interest (Bastian, 2017). The district from which the candidate comes must also make a commitment by paying for the Principal Fellow's health insurance and granting a leave of absence. The Principal Fellows Commission provides input and oversight to the program and implements a selective admissions process. However, not all principal preparation programs that accept Principal Fellows must comply with specific research-based quality measures. In existence since 1993, the NCPFP has produced more than 1,200 principals.

The *North Carolina Education Leadership Academy* (NELA), formerly known as the Northeast Leadership Academy, at North Carolina State University (NCSU) is a program that has been recognized by the Center for American Progress for its innovative preparation of future principals in North Carolina (Center for American Progress, 2014). Originally funded by a 2010 design grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with subsequent grant funding from the NCDPI and Race to the Top, along with two additional U.S. Department of Education grants, NELA seeks to increase student achievement by preparing and retaining principals in high-poverty, hard-to-staff, and historically low-performing schools. It features a multistep recruitment process and careful selection of participants. The rigorous program design requires a two-year commitment that includes an embedded residency in the second year. Mentor principals and coaches support participants throughout the residency, and participants receive support and networking opportunities upon graduation. NELA works closely with participating districts and tracks the progress of graduates for at least seven years. NELA has been recognized by the University Council for Educational Administration as one of five "exemplary" programs and is the foundational MSA program at NCSU.

The *Transforming Principal Preparation* (TPP) program is a competitive state-funded grant program that was authorized by House Bill 902 and launched in the spring of 2017. Designed to allow for multiple models and customized learning experiences, the six programs that have been funded also provide executive coaching during the internship, stipends for mentors, and professional learning opportunities that go beyond traditional coursework. The intent of the TPP program is to integrate components of successful principal preparation programs, such as intentional recruitment efforts, a high bar for entry, rigorous and relevant coursework, a full-time paid residency, and a focus on authentic partnership with and preparation for service in high-need schools and districts (Business for Educational Success and Transformation, 2018).

*Full-time MSA* programs also exist. These programs include coursework plus full-time principal internships paid at the salary level of an assistant principal; as will be discussed later, this salary is often lower than that of an experienced teacher. To be eligible, aspiring principals must enroll as full-time students from the beginning of the program, and tuition costs are not covered by the programs. The district that sends or hosts the candidate is not required to pay health insurance. Other MSA programs exist, as well, that do not offer paid full-time principal internships.

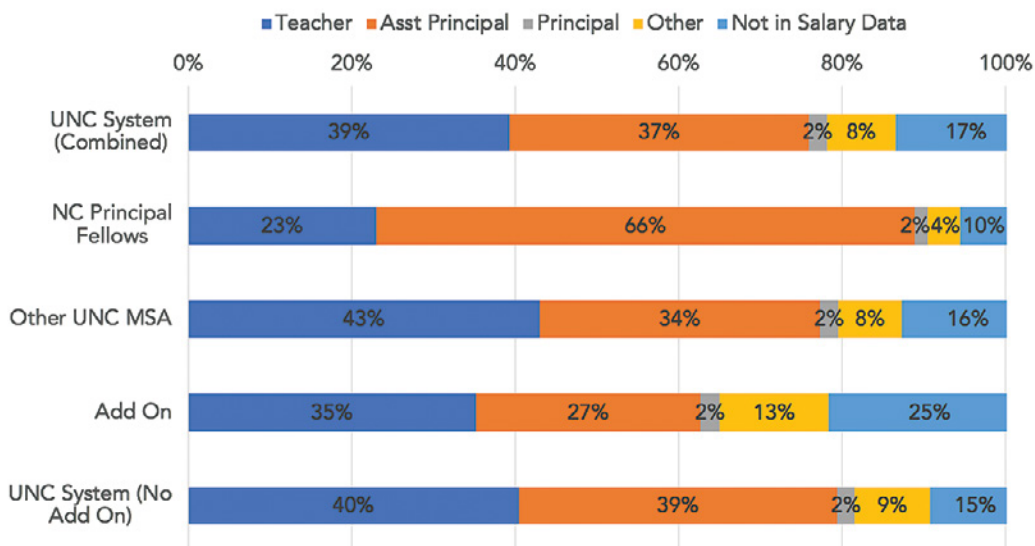
*Add-on licensure* programs allow teachers who already hold a master's degree to take coursework required for administrative licensure. Full-time residency is not required.

In a study of principal preparation programs in North Carolina, Hagan (2015) found similarities among MSA programs. It should be noted that the NELA and TPP programs do not fit the description offered by Hagan. According to Hagan, teachers self-select into the profession, with many MSA programs in North Carolina accepting nearly 100% of applicants; there is very little proactive recruitment and few selective admission processes. Requirements for Domain 1 of the quality measures, Selective Candidate Admissions processes, are not being met. By default, teachers are the primary "consumer" of principal preparation programs. Programs are incentivized, therefore, to offer the least expensive, fastest, and least rigorous options. Hagan (2015) explains that an increasing number of institutions offer programs completely online, as "add-on" programs with only a few short courses and/or as night classes while candidates also teach full time in a K–12 classroom. These approaches are not consistent with the criteria for rigorous course content, as outlined in the quality measures. Although some programs provide on-the-job training, North Carolina does not require a full-time residency for principal candidates to gain supervised practice leading a school. Some MSA programs offer a part-time internship option, and most students pursue the part-time option (Hagan, 2015). The Embedded Clinical Practice domain in the quality measures outlined above is also not consistently provided. Relationships between districts and principal preparation programs in North Carolina vary widely, according to Hagan, but are generally informal, with district feedback having very little, if any, influence upon the preparation programs' students, content, or structure. High-quality programs use feedback from the districts that hire their graduates to monitor and continuously improve the quality of their programs. With the notable exceptions of the NELA and TPP programs, all MSA programs in North Carolina have not yet met the standards for high-quality principal preparation programs.

Figure 2 below compares outcomes of graduates from the NCPFP, from an add-on program, and from other UNC MSA programs, as follows:

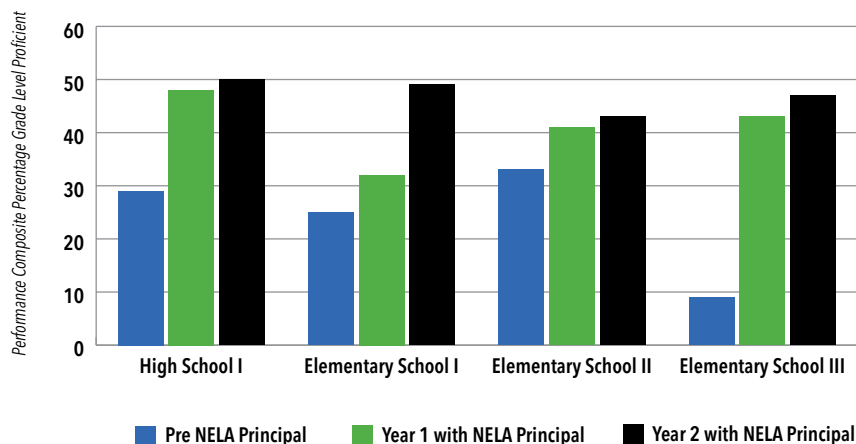
- » Graduates of the NCPFP are much more likely to assume administrative positions after training than are graduates from other programs: 39% of UNC system (combined) graduates from principal preparation programs become assistant principals or principals in the first year after graduation, whereas 68% of Principal Fellows graduates assume assistant principal and principal positions.
- » Graduates of the NCPFP are much less likely to remain in teaching positions after training: 39% of UNC system (combined) graduates from principal preparation programs remain teachers the first year after graduation. Only 23% of graduates from the NCPFP remain in teaching positions.
- » Graduates from add-on programs are most likely to have left the workforce after training and Principal Fellows are least likely: 25% of graduates from add-on programs have left the system (“Not in Salary Data”) the first year after training, whereas 10% of NCPFP graduates have left.

**Figure 2. Percentages of Graduates of UNC Principal Preparation Programs by First-Year Positions, 2016 Academic Year**



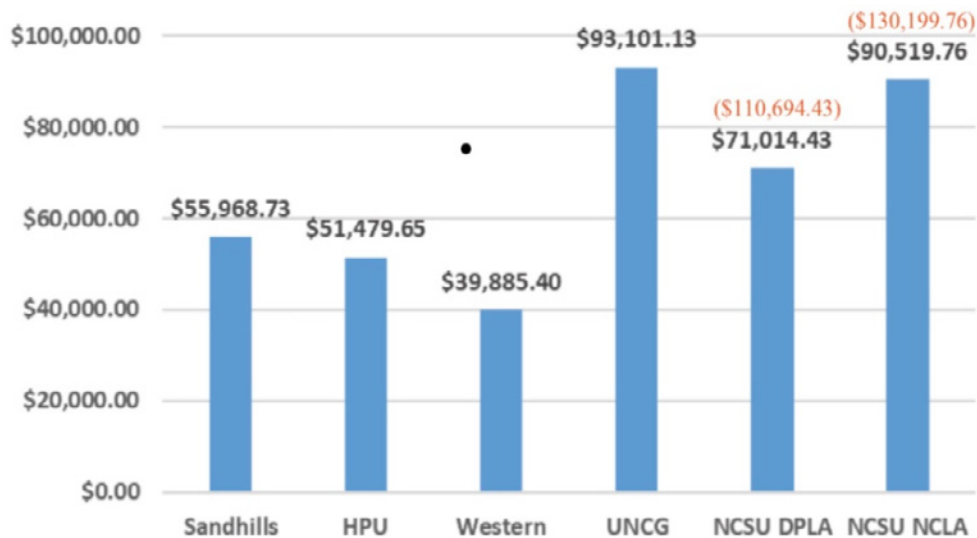
Schools with principals who have completed NELA at NCSU demonstrate positive increases in student performance. Figure 3 below shows the composite percentage of students that demonstrate grade-level proficiency over a two-year period in schools with a NELA principal (North Carolina State University, 2019). NCSU NELA principals demonstrate documented improvements during their first year, and those gains continue in schools with a NELA principal for two consecutive years. NELA originally served 13 low-wealth districts in the northeastern corner of the state. In fall 2013, when funding for the program was renewed, NCSU launched NELA 2.0, and several other partner districts joined (Center for American Progress, 2014). Across the first five cohorts, NELA has graduated 107 Fellows, 81 of whom continue to serve in NELA districts, with an additional 9 graduates serving in other districts in North Carolina. Of graduates who have completed their post-degree NELA commitment, 72% continue to work in NELA districts (Siddiqi, Sims, & Goff, 2018).

**Figure 3. Percentages of Students Demonstrating Grade-Level Proficiency in Schools With NELA Principals for Two Years, 2013–2015**



As described above, the TPP program has been in existence for only a few years, but exhibits many of the quality measures of high-quality principal preparation programs, for example, intentional recruitment efforts, a high bar for entry, rigorous and relevant coursework, a full-time paid residency, and a focus on authentic partnership with and preparation for service in high-need schools and districts. In the first two years, the six programs participating in TPP enrolled 120 students. Figure 4 below depicts the two-year cost per TPP participant at the six program locations. Assuming the provider agencies fully expend their allocations, the two-year cost for preparing 118 completers is estimated at \$66,830 per person. Of the 118 program completers, 75.4% received master’s degrees and 80.5% completed school administrator licensure requirements. And 60.8% of the completers who also became licensed secured positions as assistant principals in North Carolina schools (Sturtz McMillen, Carruthers, Lovin, & Hasse, 2018). This placement of graduates in assistant principal positions (60.8% compared with 66% in the NCPFP) reflects well on the quality of TPP. In addition, 100% of LEA representatives who were surveyed about TPP agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they were very satisfied with the overall quality of the program (Sturtz McMillen, Carruthers, Lovin, & Hasse, 2018). It is too early to tell if TPP will continue to demonstrate these and other kinds of success, such as retention and improved student outcomes over the long term, but initial results are promising.

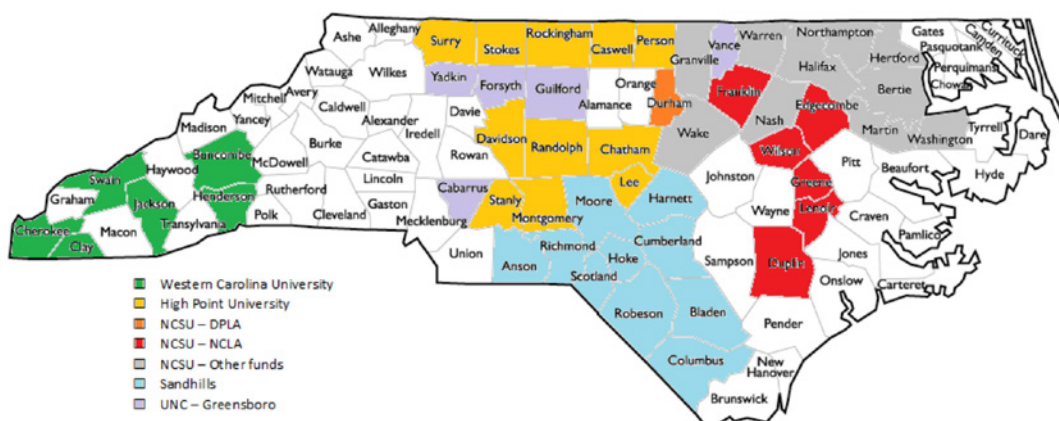
**Figure 4. Two-Year Cost per TPP Participant\***



\*An additional \$39,680 in internship salaries is paid for each participant from other state funds available for full-time MSA students

Figure 5 below shows a map of the locations of available TPP programs and partner districts throughout North Carolina by county (Business for Educational Success and Transformation, 2018). Considering this and the concentration of NELA graduates in one region of the state, there are still areas of the state where educators do not live in close proximity to high-quality principal preparation programs.

**Figure 5. Access to TPP**



The online Principal Survey administered by our team in the fall of 2018 asked multiple questions about principals' initial preparation. The majority of principals received their training through in-state programs, with the most commonly selected being university-based programs. Responses to questions about principal preparation indicate that these programs have both strengths and needs, as outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Strengths and Areas for Improvement in North Carolina Principal Preparation Programs**

Topical Areas	Strengths	Needs
<b>Developing People (Talent Management)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting teacher learning and development through observation and feedback, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and retention of teachers and other staff</li> <li>Creation of collaborative learning environments for teachers</li> <li>Roles of supplemental support personnel</li> </ul>
<b>Leading Instruction (Instructional Leadership)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using data</li> <li>Developing students' higher-order thinking skills and raising schoolwide achievement</li> <li>Selecting curriculum strategies and materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and delivering standards-based instruction</li> <li>Meeting nonacademic needs of students, e.g., social-emotional learning</li> <li>Meeting the needs of English learners</li> <li>Investing resources to support improvement in school performance</li> <li>Using evidence-based strategies for school improvement</li> <li>Focusing on early learning standards and child development</li> </ul>

Principal preparation programs in North Carolina have responded to legislative requirements for change and are trying to meet the needs of their students. Two of North Carolina's pathways to licensure appear to meet the quality measures outlined above and show promising results: the North Carolina Education Leadership Academy and the Transforming Principal Preparation program. Depending on where an aspiring principal lives, s/he may or may not have access to these high-quality preparation programs. The state of North Carolina should make every effort to fully support and expand and/or replicate these most promising principal preparation programs to all regions and aspiring principals in the state.

## Attracting Leaders

Attracting teachers to school leadership positions in North Carolina is becoming progressively more difficult. Education leaders and stakeholders who were interviewed and who participated in focus groups noted that it is particularly difficult to attract leaders to rural districts. According to stakeholders, the pipeline of teachers who want to become principals is weak, not because the quality of teachers is weak, but because the principalship is no longer attractive. In fact, several district leaders reported that it is more difficult to attract principals than it is to attract teachers, particularly in low-wealth, high-poverty areas where few qualified candidates apply.

Research from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders tells us that compensation and incentives for performance are key strategies for attracting people into the principalship and retaining them. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, North Carolina ranks 49th in the nation on principal pay; West Virginia ranks 50th (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Teachers who may aspire to be principals in North Carolina often choose not to take on the



additional responsibilities of school administration because they can earn more as teachers. Many teachers who do assume administrative positions choose to remain on the teacher’s salary schedule for the same reason — they can earn more money as teachers than they can as administrators. Using data supplied by the NCDPI, the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management estimates that 40% of administrators choose not to be paid on administrator salary schedules because they can earn more if they remain on the teacher salary schedule.

The North Carolina legislature made significant changes to school administrator salary schedules that went into effect on July 1, 2017. In the new principal compensation policy, placement on the salary schedule is based on school size, growth, and average daily membership (ADM). Principals are no longer eligible for advanced and doctoral supplements to their salaries. Principals (and other educators) hired after January 21, 2021, will not receive health benefits in retirement. Table 2 below compares base salaries of teachers with a bachelor’s degree, teachers with a master’s degree and certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and assistant principals with a master’s degree. It illustrates why school administrators choose to stay on the teacher salary schedule; teachers with a master’s degree and NBPTS certification earn more than assistant principals with a master’s degree. Given the additional responsibilities and time commitments required of assistant principals, it should come as no surprise that it is difficult to attract higher-paid teachers into demanding administrator positions that pay less.

**Table 2. Annual Salaries, 2018–19 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019a)**

Years of Experience	Teacher (BA)	Teacher (MA + NBPTS Cert.)	Asst. Principal (MA)
0	\$35,000	N/A	\$41,650
2	\$37,000	N/A	\$44,030
4	\$39,000	N/A	\$46,410
6	\$41,000	\$50,020	\$48,790
8	\$43,000	\$52,460	\$51,170
10	\$45,000	\$54,900	\$53,550
12	\$47,000	\$57,340	\$55,930
14	\$49,000	\$59,780	\$58,310
16	\$50,000	\$61,000	\$59,500
18	\$50,000	\$61,000	\$59,500
20	\$50,000	\$61,000	\$59,500
22	\$50,000	\$61,000	\$59,500
24	\$50,000	\$61,000	\$59,500

## Developing and Supporting Leaders

For principals to become more effective and grow in their profession, they need professional learning opportunities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, principals who do not receive professional development are more likely to leave their schools than leaders who did receive training (Goldring & Taie, 2014).

The online Principal Survey asked North Carolina practicing principals to identify areas in which they would like to receive more professional development. The most commonly identified areas include the areas in which principals did not feel well prepared by their leadership programs: developing systems that meet children’s needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health; leading schools that support students’ social and emotional development; and creating a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people and uses discipline for restorative purposes. Principals also desire professional development in how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance and how to design professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff.

Leaders in North Carolina have various professional development opportunities to choose from, including those described below, as well as professional development offered by individual districts.

**Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP):** Developed and delivered by the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NCPAPA), the DLP program is a cohort-based one-year experiential program that uses a blended delivery model of face-to-face and virtual convenings. Participants attend six whole-group sessions for 1.5 days every other month. These sessions are followed by online coursework, activities, and coaching, which are enhanced by small-group sharing and feedback sessions. Participants have access to principal advisers who are proven effective principals and DLP alumni. DLP’s curriculum components include: strategic leadership for high-performing schools; building a collaborative culture with distributed leadership; improving teaching and learning; maximizing human resources for goal accomplishment; creating a strong internal and external stakeholder focus; and leading change to drive continuous improvement (Williams, 2018). Of North Carolina’s 115 traditional school districts, 98 have sent at least one principal participant to the DLP program. Survey responses from direct supervisors of participating principals indicate their satisfaction with the program; they also describe positive changes in participants’ practices, which suggest improved working conditions for teachers and students. Participants and their supervisors were hesitant about making connections between participation in the DLP program and increases in student achievement (Friday Institute, 2016).

**Future Ready Leadership (FRL):** Also developed and delivered by the NCPAPA, this program provides professional learning to a diverse population of assistant principals. This cohort-based program offers six day-long sessions for participants, with sharing and networking opportunities, as well as application-based assignments, between face-to-face sessions (Williams, 2018). The sessions address these topics:

- » Understanding your role in applying the North Carolina Standards for School Executives
- » What every school leader needs to know about curriculum and instruction

- » How leaders create a healthy school culture
- » How leaders create authentic professional learning communities
- » Maximizing student and adult relationships
- » Instructional leadership that builds teacher effectiveness

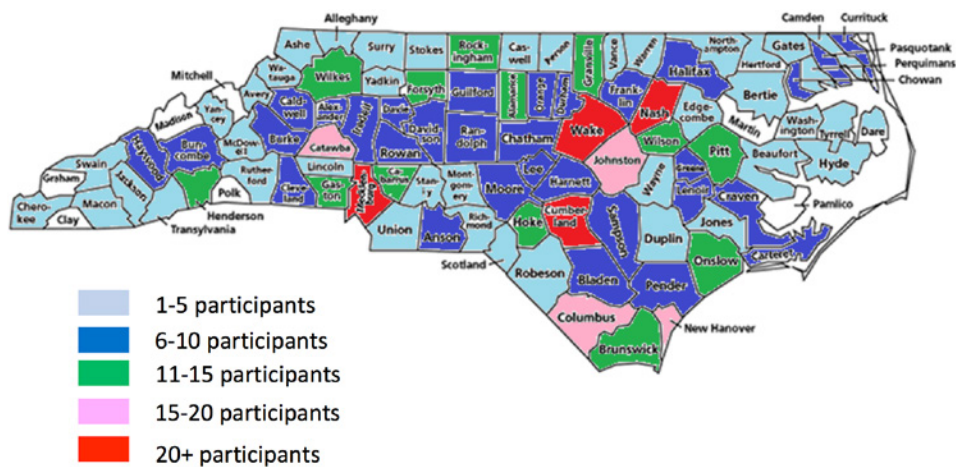
**North Carolina Leadership in Personalized and Digital Learning (NCLPDL):** A partnership of the Friday Institute and the NCPAPA, the NCLPDL coaches and guides principals through the creation of digital learning environments in their schools. Designed to prepare principals to plan and implement personalized learning in their schools, the program includes a five-session course with online and face-to-face components that enable principals to experience personalized and digital learning as learners. Learning occurs in a cohort with other principals and is facilitated by The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University (Friday Institute, 2019).

These programs are promising. However, sufficient data are not available to determine the impact of these programs on teaching and learning in participants' schools or on principal retention. The programs address many needs of practicing principals, but it is not clear if/how they address the needs identified in the Principal Survey, such as developing systems that meet children's needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health; leading schools that support students' social and emotional development; creating a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people and uses discipline for restorative purposes; investing in resources to support improvements in school performance; and designing professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff.

It is also important to note that the NCPAPA, not the NCDPI, has developed and delivers these professional learning opportunities. Since Race to the Top (RttT), the state of North Carolina has not taken a leadership role in providing comprehensive and coordinated professional development to school administrators as the NCPAPA has. Manna (2015) suggests that states would be wise to study their current priorities and better allocate resources, information, and models to give principals more access to high-quality professional development. States can take an important leadership role in planning, coordinating, and delivering high-quality professional learning opportunities to school administrators.

As with access to high-quality preparation programs, a principal's location determines whether or not she or he has access to professional development opportunities. For example, the map in Figure 6 below shows the number of DLP participants by county. Most counties across the state have fewer than five principals participating in this professional development program. Based on these data, as well as feedback from stakeholders who were interviewed and who participated in focus groups, many principals, particularly in rural and low-wealth districts, do not have access to high-quality professional development.

Figure 6. Access to DLP



Mentoring and induction programs for novice principals are another effective tool for developing and supporting leaders. Although some districts, such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg, provide induction for novice principals, it is not a consistent statewide practice. The Tennessee Department of Education provides a model for North Carolina to consider. Tennessee offers three role-specific induction academies — one for supervisors, one for principals, and one for assistant principals. All beginning leaders must successfully complete an induction academy to advance from a beginning administrator license to a professional administrator license. Participants attend four two-day sessions over the course of two years. During the academies, principals design and implement a professional learning plan aligned to the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards. They also earn credit toward certificate renewal and advancement (Matlach, 2015).

Superintendents who participated in focus groups reported that rigid state statutes prescribing the school calendar hamper their ability to provide professional development to principals and teachers alike. Effective July 1, 2013, North Carolina Senate Bill 187 revised a portion of the school calendar law (General Statute 115C-84.2) to state that “local boards of education shall determine the dates of opening and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of this section. Except for year-round schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26, and the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11” (General Assembly of North Carolina, 2012). Even though the law pertains to starting and ending dates for students, superintendents report that it is difficult to provide professional development before or after these dates. Days that were once allocated for professional development must now be used for instructional days.

When asked about professional development and support during interviews and focus groups, educational leaders opined that there is no designated professional development funding in the state budget. In fact, the state does provide some funding to professional associations to support leader development; however, the superintendents we interviewed for this study reported that funding is not adequate to support principal professional development, particularly in low-wealth districts. Some larger, higher-wealth districts are able to self-fund professional development. Title II funds that could be used for professional development are used in low-wealth districts to support beginning and lateral-entry teachers. Other than the NCPAPA-sponsored programs listed

above and what districts can provide, there is not much professional development offered at the state level, according to interviewees and focus group participants.

Stakeholders we interviewed reported that the professional development offered by the NCDPI is primarily focused on compliance and does not include leadership training. A number of states are using the optional 3% set-aside allowed under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to provide professional development to leaders. For example, the state of Maryland has offered the Promising Principals Academy since 2014. With the set-aside ESSA funds, the state is now scaling up this effort to include additional participants and to expand supports for assistant principals through an Assistant Principals Academy. Similarly, Massachusetts is investing in developing principals' instructional skills in the areas of classroom observation and feedback and in analyzing measures of student learning/teacher effectiveness (Espinoza & Cardichon, 2017). These are just a few examples of how North Carolina could take a more proactive role in developing and supporting its school leaders.

According to our focus group data, which included a focus group with some Regional Education Service Agency directors, a few of the RESAs have historically provided professional development, but their current efforts focus more on bringing role-alike groups together than providing professional development to leaders. Historically recipients of state funding, RESAs are now dependent on winning competitive grant awards and on what districts can pay them for specific professional development services.

Investing in professional learning and support for practicing principals is also an important principal retention strategy. Even the most effective programs cannot prepare principals with all the necessary knowledge typically obtained over time at various different schools throughout their careers (Matlach, 2015). Ensuring that principals have access to job-embedded, ongoing, and customized professional development and coaching can increase competence and improve retention.

## Retaining Leaders

Retaining effective school leaders is critical for a number of reasons. Research by the Wallace Foundation (2016) found that high-quality principals both hire and retain better teachers. In addition, high-quality principals improve instruction at a faster rate than other principals (Wallace Foundation, 2016). By contrast, principal turnover, or attrition, can have many unfavorable effects. In particular, Farley-Ripple, Solano, and McDuffie (2012) identified four negative outcomes associated with changes in leadership:

- » Declines in student achievement
- » Interruption of program or reform implementation
- » Low teacher morale
- » Development of a change-resistant culture

Other potential negative outcomes include an increase in teacher turnover and the costs of hiring and supporting a new principal, which can be up to \$35,000 — even excluding preparation (Matlach, 2015). In addition, it takes

time to rebuild positive momentum after a principal departs and a new one arrives. It can take up to three years to regain positive momentum in math and English language arts performance; these are years in which student growth can stagnate and students can lose out on important learning (School Leaders Network, 2014).

In North Carolina, the low-wealth, high-poverty districts tend to report higher rates of principal turnover than the state average. Data provided by the NCDPI reported that the turnover rate of North Carolina principals in 2016–17 was 8.6%. In comparison, low-wealth districts had higher turnover rates, for example, Halifax County posted a 20% one-year turnover rate in 2016–17 and Vance County’s rate was 23.5% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2017).

Studies show that principals become more effective as they gain experience and that schools experience greater achievement growth under more seasoned principals (Blanchard, Chung, Grissom, & Bartanen, 2019). Overall, North Carolina districts with a higher percentage of entry-level principals tend to have higher principal turnover rates than districts with fewer entry-level principals. According to the NCDPI 2016–17 Report Cards, 42.7% of North Carolina’s public school principals had 0 to 3 years of experience, and 15.9% of principals had 10 or more years of experience. Comparatively, 70% of principals in Halifax County had 0 to 3 years of experience, and 10% had 10 or more years of experience. In Vance County, 43.8% of principals had 0 to 3 years of experience, and only 6.3% had 10 or more years of experience (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2017).

North Carolina districts with fewer principals holding advanced degrees (any degree beyond a master’s degree) also tend to have higher rates of principal turnover compared with districts in which more principals have advanced degrees. In 2017, the percentage of public school principals in North Carolina with advanced degrees was 21.3%. That same year, Halifax County reported having no principals with advanced degrees, and Vance County had 12.5%.

Table 3 below summarizes the percentages of one-year turnover rates, years of experience, and advanced degrees held by principals in representative low-wealth districts, compared with the state averages, in 2016–17.

**Table 3. Percentages of One-Year Principal Turnover Rates, Years of Experience, and Advanced Degrees in 2016–17 (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2017)**

District	1-Year Principal Turnover Rate (%)	% of Principals With 0–3 Years of Experience	% of Principals With 4–10 Years of Experience	% of Principals With 10+ Years of Experience	% of Principals With Advanced Degrees
State of NC	8.6 %	42.7%	41.4%	15.9%	21.3%
Cumberland	10.7%	33.3%	49.4%	17.2%	16.1%
Halifax	20.0%	70.0%	20.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Hoke	0.0%	57.2%	35.7%	7.1%	7.1%
Robeson	4.8%	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	21.4%
Vance	23.5%	43.8%	50.0%	6.3%	12.5%

North Carolina districts with higher principal turnover rates, fewer experienced principals, and fewer principals with advanced degrees than the state averages tend to be low-wealth and high-poverty districts that are most in need of a stable, experienced, and highly qualified principal workforce.

The researchers' analyses of data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups found there are a number of factors working against retention of high-quality school leaders in North Carolina. Low-wealth, high-need districts are particularly challenged. Compensation and lack of district support are major factors that contribute to low principal retention.

As mentioned previously, North Carolina has enacted compensation structures that deter aspiring principals from entering the profession and staying in the profession and/or the state. When asked on the Principal Survey what would cause them to leave the principal role in their current schools in the next three years, 23.52% of principals who responded cited compensation as the major factor. Additional results of the Principal Survey indicate that 55.7% of principals "strongly oppose" or "oppose" the new principal compensation policy.

Another factor that affects principal retention is district support — 18.89% of North Carolina principals who completed the Principal Survey cited lack of district support as the primary factor that would cause them to leave. In addition, 12.04% cited work load as a major factor that would cause them to leave the principal role in their current school during the next three years; 7.59% said they would leave because of inadequate funding to meet the needs of students; and 19.44% planned to retire.

Other responses on the Principal Survey suggest additional areas of potential concern: 32% do not plan to remain a principal until they retire; 40.79% disagree that their district uses effective strategies to retain strong leaders; and 36% disagree that their district uses effective strategies to recruit and attract strong leaders.

Given the positive impact of experienced, effective principals, the shrinking pool of candidates, and the dissatisfaction expressed by both principals and superintendents, it is imperative to find creative ways to retain high-quality principals, particularly in high-need, low-wealth schools. Matlach (2015) recommends multiple strategies and policies a state can enact to increase principal retention. In addition to improving leadership preparation programs and investing in professional learning and support for practicing principals, Matlach recommends review and reform of school leader compensation structures. He also recommends that states collaborate with professional associations to determine a competitive salary point and consider state initiatives to provide additional compensation and incentives. North Carolina should immediately consider these strategies.

## School Improvement

Attracting, preparing, developing, supporting, and retaining effective school leaders is critical for all state and local education agencies that seek to improve outcomes for students. The imperative is even greater for districts with schools that have been designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools in accordance with the requirements of ESSA; these are the lowest-performing schools in the state. Leithwood (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) asserts that "there are

virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst.”

Comprehensive school improvement efforts in other states include statewide leadership academies for leaders of underperforming schools and districts. Several of these states provide examples for North Carolina to consider. Utah, for example, has structured its program around the Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement, which offers a systems framework to guide school improvement efforts (Center on School Turnaround, 2017). More than 20 states have adopted the framework. It reflects the understanding that local context and implementation influence the outcomes of any improvement initiative. It further reflects lessons learned from the federal School Improvement Grants program:

- » A successful school turnaround requires a systems approach with coherent guidance and support from the state and the district to complement the actions of the school.
- » A successful school turnaround is more than the initial jolt of bold changes in structure, authority, and personnel; it includes phases in which effective practices and processes are routinized and sustained.

In addition, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) has developed the Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) program for leaders of underperforming schools and districts from throughout the state. The goal of the program is to educate and empower principals to practice leadership behaviors that drive significant gains in student achievement. This is accomplished by developing and supporting the competencies and skills that a leader must demonstrate in order to be a transformational leader. Cohorts of principals and their leaders participate in four two-day professional development sessions each year over a two-year span. Between sessions, mentors work on site with each participant in the program. New Mexico’s program has been in existence long enough to demonstrate significant impact on student achievement. According to a report released by the NMPED in July 2017, “[A]ll PPE schools (Cohorts 1–4) achieved more than double the gains (2.19% versus 0.96%) in English language arts than the state as a whole and an improvement of more than 0.5 points over statewide math gains” (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2017).

Underperforming schools and districts in both Utah and New Mexico participated in the Southwest Turnaround Leadership Consortium that was launched in 2011. Recognizing the need to develop a pipeline of leaders with specialized training and skills to work in unique turnaround settings, leaders from the southwestern states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah and the Southwest Regional Comprehensive Center entered into an agreement with the Partnership for Leaders in Education at the University of Virginia (UVA-PLE) to provide leadership training to the lowest-performing schools and districts in these states. Over the course of three years, cohorts of participants in the UVA-PLE program engaged in intense professional development provided by the faculty of the Darden School of Business and the Curry School of Education on the University of Virginia campus and in their own districts. In existence since 2004, the UVA-PLE has identified four key levers that drive successful and sustainable school turnaround: leadership; instructional infrastructure; differentiated support and accountability; and talent management. Laser focus on these levers throughout the UVA-PLE program has contributed to average gains of 35% in proficiency on reading and math assessments in participating schools (University of



Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education, 2018). Utah and New Mexico sought to replicate the UVA-PLE model in their own states in order to reach more school and district leaders of underperforming schools.

North Carolina once had a robust system of support for schools in need of improvement that included leadership development. From 2010 through 2014, a portion of North Carolina’s \$400 million RttT grant enabled the NCDPI to intervene in an effort to improve performance in the lowest-achieving 5% of North Carolina’s schools — approximately 118 elementary, middle, and high schools. The Turnaround Schools program of intervention included a requirement that the schools submit plans that were based on a comprehensive needs assessment and a Framework for Action. The plans focused the schools on practices thought to affect student achievement, a series of professional development sessions designed to build the schools’ capacity to carry out the plans, and follow-up coaching and school-specific professional development.

The results revealed that the Turnaround Schools intervention program made a significant contribution to improved student test scores in the high schools it served. Initially, the contribution was modest, but grew progressively larger with continued participation in the program. At the middle school level, where intervention began one year after the initial intervention in the first set of 35 high schools, the impact on test scores was not large enough to be statistically significant. Because of an interruption in the flow of resources to support intervention in the elementary schools, the program at that level was not sustained long enough in a single set of schools to warrant impact assessment (Thompson, Brown, Townsend, Henry, & Fortner, 2011).

For the most part, these efforts disappeared when the RttT funding ended. Currently, the NCDPI takes a different approach to supporting high-need schools. CSI and TSI schools must complete School Improvement Plan (SIP) requirements using NCStar, a web-based tool that guides schools and districts through a process of identifying needs and finding evidence-based interventions and strategies to address those needs. LEAs are responsible for developing and implementing an SIP through NCStar for each CSI school identified. Schools identified as TSI must work in partnership with stakeholders to develop and implement their SIP. NCStar also guides users through the planning process and includes tools for monitoring the implementation of the plan as part of a continuous improvement cycle. NCStar contains research-based effective practices (indicators) and allows schools flexibility to personalize their school improvement plans to meet their distinct needs. The SIP should be a living document that drives the day-to-day activities and operations of schools in need of improvement. However, when asked on the Principal Survey about school improvement processes and structures, 31.7% of principal respondents believed the statement “The SIP is just another required document.” Processes, structures, and tools need to be in place to help principals use the SIP to guide meaningful improvements — not just fulfill compliance requirements.

The NCDPI has also established a regional structure to support high-need schools and districts. Regional case managers in eight regions of North Carolina oversee the school improvement efforts of CSI and TSI schools in their respective regions. Interviewees described a process in which each regional director and his/her team will work with their respective schools and districts to identify the unique needs of each CSI/TSI school and customize the supports they provide accordingly. No single state framework or approach to improving schools has been specified.

The Innovation School District (ISD), which also supports high-need, low-performing schools, is allowed to serve a maximum of five high-need schools per year, according to the state law that created it. In 2018–19, the ISD is serving one school. ISD schools function under the authority of the SBE and are granted the same flexibilities as charter schools. The goal is not to grow the number of schools in the ISD; rather, the goal is to generate a sense of urgency in the LEAs to create the conditions for improvement so that schools are ineligible to join the ISD.

Stakeholder feedback about school improvement structures and processes gathered during interviews and focus groups indicates that principals are essentially on their own with turning around schools. Since Race to the Top ended, the transformational support from the NCDPI has been scaled back every year. With RttT funds, North Carolina was able to pay professional development stipends for leaders who served, and turned around, low-performing schools. In the past, the NCDPI coached 45 principals on effective school improvement practices; although that is no longer the case, the NCDPI expresses a desire to provide high-quality training for leaders of low-performing schools once again. Interviewees and focus group participants also believe the state needs to ramp up support at regional locations.

There has been considerable research on the best practices coming from large-scale school improvement efforts that were part of the federal Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants programs. The research strongly indicates that a one-size-fits-all approach relying on a single program does not work. Rather, a series of evidence-based practices implemented with fidelity over time produces positive changes in student achievement, particularly in low-wealth, high-need settings.

A large body of research in education has explored practices that are effective (and ineffective) for improving student outcomes. This research can empower state and local policymakers to adopt proven educational interventions that best address the unique context of their education system. These interventions can also meet the evidence-based requirements under ESSA. ESSA defines “evidence-based” as an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates either a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes (or other relevant outcomes) based on strong, moderate, or promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study or a rationale based on high-quality research findings or on a positive evaluation that suggests the intervention is likely to improve outcomes.

The following narrative describes three kinds of commonly used interventions that North Carolina could consider using and/or scaling up based on the needs identified by the school-level data.

## High-Quality Professional Development

Changing curriculum and teaching practices requires investments in teachers’ professional learning, and some schools have shown significant achievement gains by making such investments strategically (Cohen & Hill, 2000). However, not all professional development (PD) is designed in ways that produce these effects.

A key feature of effective PD is that teachers work together on a particular set of practices over a sustained period of time. Of nine well-designed experimental or quasi-experimental investigations, Yoon and colleagues found that 14 hours or less of professional development on a given topic showed no significant effects on student

learning. The efforts that showed positive and significant effects on student achievement ranged from 14 to 100 hours, with an average of 49 hours (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

The greatest improvements in student achievement have been found to be associated with PD approaches that:

- » focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices (Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, Chiang, & Loef, 1989);
- » function as a coherent part of a school's improvement efforts — aligned with curriculum, assessments, and standards — so that teachers can implement the knowledge and practices they learn in their classrooms (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010);
- » occur in collaborative and collegial learning environments in which teachers participate in professional learning and together grapple with issues related to new content and instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995);
- » provide authentic activities rooted in teachers' inquiry and reflection about practice within the context of the curriculum and students they teach (Dunst, Bruder, & Hamby, 2015);
- » link to analysis of teaching and student learning, including the formative use of assessment data (Dunst, Bruder, & Hamby, 2015); and
- » are supported by coaching, modeling, observations, and feedback (Dunst, Bruder, & Hamby, 2015).

Through investments in time, content, authenticity, and alignment with school improvement efforts, North Carolina could significantly increase the quality of PD and student outcomes, particularly in school turnaround settings.

## Community Schools and Wraparound Services

Incorporating aspects of community schools is another research-based approach that North Carolina could use to facilitate positive student outcomes across the state. A community school is both a physical place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2019). Community schools take on a results-focused integrated approach that links high-quality academics with health and social services (i.e., integrated student supports), youth and community development, and community engagement. Particularly in schools serving low-income students, the introduction of community-school models and wraparound services has been found to improve student outcomes (Blank, Jacobson, & Pearson, 2009).

The rationale for a community school is that students need more than just high-quality instruction to achieve academic and personal success. Children need access to housing, food, and health care, as well as social and learning supports, especially in higher-poverty areas, such as the *Leandro* districts, where these necessities are not easily accessible to many families. In addition, parents and the broader community need coordinated, one-stop services so that they can easily receive assistance that ultimately supports children's development. Consequently,

many community schools offer on-site clinics that provide physical and mental health care, social welfare services, before- and after-school care, tutoring and mentoring, preschool, a focus on social and emotional learning and positive discipline approaches, and parent and community engagement. In addition, many of these services are open to all community members during the day, evening, and weekend (Harkavy & Blank, 2002).

In addition to overarching studies, certain features of such schools have been studied individually, showing positive influences on outcomes. For example, research has found significant student learning gains as a result of expanded learning time, including time for tutoring (Farbman, 2015). In addition, the frequency of parent, family, and community engagement is positively associated with improved student academic achievement, lower rates of grade retention, fewer years that students spend in special education, and gains in English language development exam scores for English learners (Castrechini & London, 2012). Wraparound academic, health, and social services are associated with improved academic outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable students (Anderson & Emig, 2014). Social and emotional learning supports and positive behavioral interventions, such as restorative justice practices, are associated with increased student academic success and lower rates of suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts (Drysfoos, 2000). Research about the effectiveness of community schools and other approaches that ensure a wide range of services for children often finds that such schools are associated with improved student outcomes, especially for the most socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Adams, 2010).

Even if North Carolina does not have the resources or capacity to develop entire community-school systems throughout the state, incorporating multiple key features of community-school services into school improvement efforts, such as expanded learning time, wraparound services, and restorative justice practices, may contribute to gains in positive student outcomes, particularly in low-performing schools.

## High School Redesign

The effective redesign of secondary schools is another intervention strategy supported by research that may be valuable to the state and could build on the Early College High School and Comprehensive Innovative High School efforts that are already successfully underway in North Carolina. Although school size and structural features are potential tools for helping schools support student attachment and learning, the results they produce depend in substantial part on how these elements are implemented. Effective redesigned schools share a number of features that influence student achievement, including personalization, a strong core curriculum for all students, high-quality “authentic” instruction, a shared school mission focused on high-quality student learning, and a professional community (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007). Although the redesign strategies discussed below hold promise for helping schools in North Carolina achieve improved outcomes, success ultimately depends on how each element is implemented.

**Small size and personalization.** A number of studies have found that, all else being equal, schools have higher levels of achievement when they create smaller, more personalized communities of teachers and students in which teachers work together and students see a smaller number of teachers over a longer period of time. This can be accomplished through smaller schools (most studies agree that outcomes are better in high schools with fewer than 900 students) or smaller functional units within schools (generally no larger than 400 students)

(Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007). This research is echoed in responses to the Principal Survey, in which principals in North Carolina reported teacher-student ratio to be one of the top five indicators of equal opportunity for high-quality education (see Appendix C: Principal Survey and Data Summary).

**Personalizing strategies contribute to higher outcomes.** Some strategies that may assist North Carolina schools with personalization include smaller class sizes, longer class periods (which are associated with smaller pupil loads for teachers), advisories (classes in which teachers meet regularly with students to advise and support students with their work), teaming (a few teachers share the same group of students and regularly discuss the students' progress), and looping (teachers stay with the same group of students for more than a year) (Lee & Smith, 1997). For example, a study of 820 high schools in the National Education Longitudinal Study found that, controlling for student characteristics, schools that restructured to personalize education and develop collaborative learning structures produced significantly higher achievement gains that were also distributed more equitably across more- and less-advantaged students (Lee & Smith, 1997). Other studies have found improved student and teacher relationships, increased student engagement, and improved student achievement as a result of these strategies (Friedlaender, Burns, Lewis-Charp, Cook-Harvey, & Darling-Hammond, 2014).

**Strong academic curriculum.** Students attending schools that emphasize academic rigor and provide a narrower range of courses (signaling greater curriculum focus and less tracking) are more likely to make greater gains in their academic achievement. Moreover, students attending such schools have lower rates of absenteeism and stronger graduation rates (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007). In fact, when students of similar backgrounds and initial achievement levels are exposed to more- and less-challenging curricula, those given the richer curriculum opportunities outperform those placed in less-challenging classes. As a corollary, students achieve at lower levels and exhibit more behavioral problems when they are tracked into classes that are academically unchallenging (Oakes, 2005). Schools that have successfully created a common curriculum for students of varying levels of initial achievement have offered other supports and interventions alongside the curriculum, such as during- and after-school help with homework and tutoring (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007).

**Authentic instruction.** The state should also consider a number of studies that have found positive influences on student achievement from what researchers call “authentic instruction” — teaching and assessment that requires students to construct and organize knowledge, consider alternatives, apply inquiry processes to content central to the discipline, and communicate effectively to audiences beyond the classroom and school — much like the expectations of new standards (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). For example, a study of more than 2,100 students in 23 restructured schools found significantly higher achievement on intellectually challenging performance tasks for students who experienced authentic instruction (Newmann, Marks, & Gamora, 1996).

Authentic instruction generally occurs through activities such as science experiments, mathematical modeling, social science inquiry, and other projects requiring in-depth study, writing, and public presentations. These activities can create high expectations throughout a school and encourage mutual teacher and student accountability for meeting expectations (Friedlaender, Burns, Lewis-Charp, Cook-Harvey, & Darling-Hammond, 2014).

**Professional community and shared school mission.** Many researchers have identified the collaboration associated with a professional community of teachers as a key element of successful schools (Darling-Hammond,

Ross, & Milliken, 2007). Bryk, Camburn, and Louis define a professional community as teachers' focus on student learning, collective responsibility for school improvement, de-privatized practice, reflective dialogue, and staff collegiality and collaboration (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999). A shared focus on student learning with common norms and practices across classrooms helps avoid goal diffusion, the fragmentation and managerial distractions that cause schools to lose focus on teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007). Faculty communication, community ownership, a common purpose, and curricular focus — all associated with developing a shared school mission — facilitate greater participation among marginal students (Howley & Harmon, 2000). A professional community encourages teachers to take responsibility for student learning and provides them with tools to do so, through collaboration around learning problems and effective teaching practices. In their study of 24 restructured schools, Newmann and colleagues found that having a strong professional community of practice is one of three commonalities among schools achieving high levels of student learning (Newmann, Marks, & Gamora, 1996). Other research suggests that a collegial professional environment for teachers produces stronger achievement and generates greater collective responsibility for school improvement and student learning (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Further, developing common goals, norms, and practices with a strong focus on teaching and learning leads to greater student engagement and student outcomes, especially for underserved students (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007). Beyond increased positive student outcomes, teachers' collaboration, community, and passion were often the primary deterrents to teacher attrition in North Carolina schools, according to our interviews and focus groups. In fact, 88.41% of principal respondents to the Principal Survey reported that a supportive school culture was an important factor in retaining teachers (see Appendix C: Principal Survey and Data Summary).

# Conclusions

This research leads to multiple conclusions for North Carolina to consider for stabilizing leadership, especially in the state’s lowest-wealth, highest-need, and lowest-performing schools. Accomplishing the *Leandro* Leadership Tenet that “every school must have a competent principal” will require a systemic, long-term commitment by the state that addresses the elements described below.

## Principal Pipeline

North Carolina has almost all the necessary elements for a high-quality principal pipeline, and they need to be brought to scale statewide. North Carolina has adopted appropriate standards for principals, the North Carolina Standards for School Executives, and evaluation procedures that reflect those standards. Models of high-quality preservice training exist in the NELA and TPP programs and need to be scaled to reach aspiring principals in all regions of the state.

However, according to educational leaders who participated in focus groups and interviews, the dwindling supply of principals makes it difficult to institute rigorous hiring procedures, especially in high-need, low-wealth districts where few qualified candidates apply; this is the one element of the principal pipeline approach that is minimally in place in North Carolina. North Carolina’s on-the-job performance evaluation, the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric, is established and aligned to standards, and there are models of professional development that provide the necessary ongoing support to assistant principals and principals, for example, DLP and FRL. Other than what districts are able to provide on their own and the programs that the NCPAPA offers, high-quality professional development is not accessible in all areas of the state. Promising programs for principal preparation, such as the NELA and the TPP, and promising principal professional development programs, such as DLP and FRL, need to be fully supported and scaled to reach principals in all areas of the state.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools successfully launched its own principal pipeline as part of the Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI). All six of the districts participating in the PPI — Denver, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Gwinnett County, Hillsborough County, New York City, and Prince George’s County — provide models that North Carolina could adapt. Smaller districts in the state that lack the resources of large urban districts could join together in a consortium to build their own pipelines. The state, through the NCDPI or another entity, should support these efforts by providing models, expertise, technical assistance, and funding to ensure a leadership pipeline that provides a career path for those educators who have the will and the skill to lead schools.

## Principal Preparation

The state should continue to support, strengthen, and expand promising principal preparation programs that already exist in North Carolina. The North Carolina Principal Fellows Program could be strengthened by requiring all programs that accept Principal Fellows to meet high standards for principal preparation programs such as those outlined in *Quality Measures™ Principal Preparation Program Self-Study Toolkit* (King, 2018). Consideration should also be given to increasing the stipends and repayment requirements for Principal Fellows. The TPP is another promising program to consider for expansion. The state should also support the continuation and expansion of the NELA at NCSU and/or the establishment of similar innovative leadership development programs throughout North Carolina.

Investments that bring all principal preparation programs up to the kind of standards outlined in *Quality Measures™* (King, 2018) and the kind of standards exhibited by the NELA and TPP programs need to be made. If the principal preparation programs at UNC institutions collaboratively select another set of research-based quality standards, those standards should be adopted. The point is that all institutions of higher education, in collaboration with their client school districts, should decide together what the standards should be for principal preparation programs and implement them consistently. An accountability system for monitoring the fidelity of implementation should also be developed and implemented to ensure consistency throughout the state.

In this process, efforts should be made to include rigorous course content that addresses gaps and current needs identified by North Carolina principals. Principal preparation programs should meaningfully address topics that practicing principals identified in the Principal Survey, such as:

- » Development and delivery of standards-based instruction
- » Culturally responsive, trauma-informed leadership
- » Meeting the social-emotional needs of students
- » Creation of collaborative learning environments for teachers
- » Early learning standards and child development
- » Roles of supplemental instructional support personnel
- » Evidence-based strategies for school improvement

Licensing and accreditation requirements should reflect the new content.



## Professional Development

Professional learning opportunities for North Carolina principals exist, but the state has not adopted a comprehensive, coordinated, statewide approach to developing and supporting leaders. Professional development of leaders is minimally supported by the state budget. Except for what the NCPAPA and the districts themselves can provide, professional development opportunities for leaders are limited, especially in rural, high-poverty areas. Statewide policies, models, and supports for novice principals (first three years), for example, mentoring and induction programs, are not required. Professional organizations have assumed many responsibilities for providing professional development to principals, and the state role is not clearly defined.

North Carolina should consider requiring and funding at least one year of mentoring and induction for novice principals. Principals in some areas of the state have coaching and mentoring available to improve their skills based on the capacity of the district they serve, whereas other principals have little or no opportunity to receive this kind of ongoing support. The state needs to address these disparities through a systemic state-funded approach to provide professional learning opportunities for principals at all stages of their careers, with specific research-based training and support for principals differentiated according to varying conditions and needs.

## Retention

Retention of effective school leaders, particularly in high-need districts, is becoming increasingly difficult. The turnover rate of school leaders in high-poverty districts is considerably higher than it is in the state as a whole.

To help attract and retain effective principals, North Carolina must improve the compensation system for administrators so that it provides incentives to enter and stay in the profession and in North Carolina. The current compensation structure deters some licensed or aspiring candidates from pursuing leadership positions. It also discourages some practicing principals from staying in the profession and/or the state. Additional incentives should be offered to principals who go to, stay at, and improve low-wealth high-need schools; incentives might include a significant salary bonus or additional credit toward state retirement for working in a low-wealth school for five years and showing gains in student achievement. A base salary with credit for years of experience and for advanced degrees should be reinstated. More ranges of school sizes should be inserted into the salary schedule, as well.

Principal salary schedules should be distinct from both teacher and assistant principal salary schedules, due to the additional responsibilities principals have. The separation should be maintained as raises are awarded. Looking at the turnover rates for principals from the NCDPI database (referenced earlier in this report) and from the focus group with school board leaders, the low-wealth districts are not able to attract and retain experienced and effective principals, due in part to compensation issues. Fixing the compensation system for administrators needs immediate attention.

In addition, district leaders do not feel supported. Rigid state requirements, such as the school calendar prescribed in state law, diminish leader and district autonomy and the ability to provide much-needed professional development. Policies that allow charters to return students to traditional schools after ADM and before state

testing, without returning any funds, make budgeting, planning, and improving at school and district levels difficult. These policies also need to be reconsidered.

## School Improvement

School improvement efforts have declined significantly since the RttT era. The statewide program of support for underperforming schools and districts once provided by the NCDPI has diminished dramatically. State funding to support leadership training and prioritize leaders of high-poverty schools and districts has disappeared. The effectiveness of the NCDPI's new regional approach to supporting school improvement, launched in January 2019, has not yet been tested. There is no consistent statewide evidence-based framework or approach to guide school improvement efforts that can be sustained over time.

To provide effective guidance to the schools and districts, North Carolina should adopt and consistently implement with fidelity a statewide research-based framework for school improvement, starting with high-need schools as a priority. The state should also develop a system for improving underperforming schools that includes model tools for needs assessment, planning, and implementation that are based on the statewide research-based framework.

As part of a more systemic approach to school improvement, North Carolina should create and fund ongoing job-embedded professional development for leaders of high-need, low-wealth schools and districts. A leadership academy of this sort should deliver content that is grounded in evidence-based practices and should provide job-embedded support to participants in the form of mentors and/or coaches. An advisory committee made up of representatives from institutions of higher education and the RESAs should be used to guide the structure and content of the academy. It should be subject to an annual review by an outside evaluator and overseen by an independent entity. Results should be reported directly to the Court. North Carolina needs to commit to a process of continuous improvement that includes monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of new initiatives such as this, improving initiatives based on results, and maintaining and scaling effective initiatives.

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# Appendix A. Educational Leadership Literature Review

## Leadership

Volumes have been written about the critical need for effective leaders at all levels of the K–12 education system — school, district, and state. That need is exacerbated in low-achieving schools and districts that are under federal (e.g., ESSA), state, and local pressure to improve.

This review summarizes what the research says and what has been reported about:

- » the qualities of effective leaders;
- » best practices for preparing effective leaders;
- » best practices for supporting and developing effective leaders, with a particular focus on principal pipelines; and
- » effective school improvement strategies.

For each of these topics, we will highlight what the literature tells us in general and for North Carolina in particular.

### Leadership Qualities

#### **Leadership Qualities: General**

Taie, S., & Goldring, R. (2017). *Characteristics of public elementary and secondary school principals in the United States: Results from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look (NCES 2017-070)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2017070>

According to the results from the 2015–2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey, 61% of public school principals have a master’s degree as their highest degree. About 2% have a bachelor’s degree or less, 27% have an education specialist or professional diploma, and 10% have a doctorate or first professional degree.

In addition, principals in public schools across the United States had an average of 6.6 years of principal experience and had been in their current principalship for 4 years on average. Comparatively, principals in charter schools had an average of 5.9 years of principal experience.

Public Impact. (2008, 2016). *School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from: [https://publicimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Turnaround\\_Leader\\_Competencies.pdf](https://publicimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Turnaround_Leader_Competencies.pdf)

Public Impact published a detailed guide of competencies for success specifically for school turnaround leaders. They describe six key areas of guidance: (1) focus on a few early wins and use the momentum; (2) lead a turnaround campaign; (3) get the right staff, right the remainder; (4) drive decisions with open-air data; (5) break organization norms; and (6) do what works and raise the bar.

This report particularly emphasizes the effective use of data for turnaround leaders. Successful turnaround leaders “personally analyze data about the organization’s performance to identify high-priority problems that can be fixed quickly” (p. 6). Then turnaround leaders use the data to form a detailed action plan for the next one to three years, including goals, steps, and individuals involved and their responsibilities. As the turnaround process continues, successful school turnaround leaders consistently and frequently measure and report interim results. They share these results with all staff and guide discussions to focus on problem solving, rather than blaming.

Successful turnaround leaders should also work to foster a positive culture about the turnaround process. Public Impact recommends that turnaround leaders communicate a “clear picture of success and its benefits” to help motivate others (p. 7). Further, turnaround leaders can help get others on board by gaining support from key influencers among the staff and community, as well as encouraging staff to “put themselves in the shoes of” the students they serve (p. 7).

The report also explains that successful turnaround leaders need to require all staff to change. School turnaround changes are not optional, especially for other leaders in the organization. Public Impact clarifies that successful turnaround leaders don’t usually replace all staff, but instead make specific changes to certain positions in order to have leaders who are committed to driving change. Often, turnaround leaders will have to deviate from existing practices and norms in order to accomplish positive changes.

As such, successful turnaround leaders must quickly react and be ready to change course when a process does not produce positive results. Public Impact recommends that turnaround leaders recognize which strategies are working and cease spending time, money, and effort on strategies that are not working. This helps ensure that the limited resources available are being used efficiently.

Although turnaround leaders should report progress regularly, it is crucial to keep the organization focused on big-picture goals as well. It is important to view smaller victories as steps on a path to a higher goal, in order to continue raising the bar for success.

## Leadership Qualities: North Carolina

Public Schools of North Carolina. (2017). *NC school report cards*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/src/>

According to the North Carolina Report Cards on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's website, in 2017, 42.7% of North Carolina principals had 0 to 3 years of experience, 41.4% had 4 to 10 years of experience, and 15.9% had 11 or more years of experience. In addition, the percentage of public school principals in North Carolina with advanced degrees (any degree beyond a master's degree) was 21.3% in 2017.

Public Schools of North Carolina. (2013). *North Carolina standards for school executives*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/district-humanresources/evaluation/standardsadmin.pdf>

In 2013, the Public Schools of North Carolina published a report detailing standards for school executives. The standards and descriptions are listed here (pp. 10–11):

- » "Communication — Effectively listens to others; clearly and effectively presents and understands information orally and in writing; acquires, organizes, analyzes, interprets, and maintains information needed to achieve school or team 21st-century objectives.
- » Change Management — Effectively engages staff and community in the change process in a manner that ensures their support of the change and its successful implementation.
- » Conflict Management — Anticipates or seeks to resolve confrontations, disagreements, or complaints in a constructive manner.
- » Creative Thinking — Engages in and fosters an environment for others to engage in innovative thinking.
- » Customer Focus — Understands the students as customers of the work of schooling and the servant nature of leadership and acts accordingly.
- » Delegation — Effectively assigns work tasks to others in ways that provide learning experiences for them and in ways that ensure the efficient operation of the school.
- » Dialogue/Inquiry — Is skilled in creating a risk-free environment for engaging people in conversations that explore issues, challenges, or bad relationships that are hindering school performance.
- » Emotional Intelligence — Is able to manage oneself through self-awareness and self-management and is able to manage relationships through empathy, social awareness, and relationship management. This competency is critical to building strong, transparent, trusting relationships throughout the school community.
- » Environmental Awareness — Becomes aware and remains informed of external and internal trends, interests, and issues with potential impacts on school policies, practices, procedures, and positions.



- » Global Perspective — Understands the competitive nature of the new global economy and is clear about the knowledge and skills students will need to be successful in this economy.
- » Judgment — Effectively reaches logical conclusions and makes high-quality decisions based on available information; gives priority and caution to significant issues; and analyzes and interprets complex information.
- » Organizational Ability — Effectively plans and schedules one’s own and the work of others so that resources are used appropriately, such as scheduling the flow of activities and establishing procedures to monitor projects.
- » Personal Ethics and Values — Consistently exhibits high standards in the areas of honesty, integrity, fairness, stewardship, trust, respect, and confidentiality.
- » Personal Responsibility for Performance — Proactively and continuously improves performance by focusing on needed areas of improvement and enhancement of strengths; actively seeks and effectively applies feedback from others; and takes full responsibility for one’s own achievements.
- » Responsiveness — Does not leave issues, inquiries, or requirements for information go unattended and creates a clearly delineated structure for responding to requests/situations in an expedient manner.
- » Results Orientation — Effectively assumes responsibility. Recognizes when a decision is required. Takes prompt action as issues emerge. Resolves short-term issues while balancing them against long-term goals.
- » Sensitivity — Effectively perceives the needs and concerns of others; deals tactfully with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict. Knows what information to communicate and to whom. Relates to people of varying ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- » Systems Thinking — Understands the interrelationships and impacts of school and district influences, systems, and external stakeholders and applies that understanding to advancing the achievement of the school or team.
- » Technology — Effectively utilizes the latest technologies to continuously improve the management of the school and enhance student instruction.
- » Time Management — Effectively uses available time to complete work tasks and activities that lead to the achievement of desired work or school results. Runs effective meetings.
- » Visionary — Encourages ‘imagineering’ by creating an environment and structure to capture stakeholder dreams of what the school could become for all the students.”

The report also describes expectations for innovative leadership and collaboration in North Carolina schools. Public school professionals should collaborate with national and international partners to gain a larger perspective and “discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st-century learning, and understand global connections” (p. 12). Further, it is recommended that school staff collaborate

with colleges and universities in the community to provide expanded education opportunities for their students. School decisions should also be made in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations. To make these changes and partnerships, it is important that school leaders foster a culture of change and continuous improvement for student success.

## Leadership: Preparation

### Leadership Preparation: General

King, C. (2018). *Quality Measures™ principal preparation program self-study toolkit: For use in developing, assessing, and improving principal preparation programs*, 10th ed. Waltham, MA: Education Development Center Inc. Retrieved from: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Principal-Preparation-Program-Quality-Self-Assessment-Rubrics.pdf>

In 2018, the Education Development Center developed a toolkit outlining “quality measures” for principal preparation programs. There are six domains that span the length of the program, from admissions to graduate performance: (1) candidate admissions; (2) course content; (3) pedagogy-andragogy; (4) clinical practice; (5) performance assessment; and (6) graduate performance outcomes.

The toolkit describes that first a comprehensive marketing strategy should be developed based on data analysis detailing the current and future market need for principals in the region, an assessment of program strengths and weaknesses, and potential market opportunities and threats. Recruitment practices, such as social media, digital presence, or event-based outreach, are part of the marketing strategy. In fact, principal preparation programs are encouraged to use intentional recruiting strategies in order to expand the ethnic and gender diversity of candidate pools. Programs should also have acceptable admission standards (including prior experience leading change, fostering collaboration, and contributing to the professional growth of others), applicant screenings, and predictor assessments (combination of cognitive ability, personality, simulation, role-play, and multi-rater assessment instruments and techniques) before candidate selection. For final candidate selection, a committee of program faculty and district staff should formally interview the finalists to determine if they are genuinely motivated, able to complete program requirements, and viewed as potential hires by the district.

The course content should be designed to develop leader competencies such as: (1) agency for change; (2) parent-community-school partnerships; (3) professional capacity building; (4) student-centered learning; (5) instructional guidance and support; and (6) culturally responsible teaching and learning. The courses should clearly articulate learning goals and successfully link content, learning activities, resources and materials, and course assessments together in an organized, logical sequence. Courses should also contain evaluations that are audited consistently to confirm that tasks and criteria correlate directly to the intended learning outcomes. The toolkit describes the pedagogy-andragogy of the programs to incorporate active learning strategies, experiential learning activities, and reflective practices. Collecting and using formative feedback and performance benchmarking are also important tools to foster learning and develop competencies. Principal preparation programs should also use culturally responsive methods to develop the competencies at the personal, instructional, and institutional levels.

The design of the clinical practice portion of the program should be developed in collaboration with academic faculty, prospective employers, and the candidates so that it is rooted in the coursework and connected to learning goals for each candidate. The clinical experiences should be based on standards and incorporate coaching, supervision, and evaluation. The placements for the clinical practice should be identified by program staff as school sites that have the resources to provide candidates with a rich, informative clinical experience.

Performance assessments should be aligned with learning targets, designed to show candidate's progress, and used to inform future instruction. The toolkit describes that assessments should "facilitate valid evaluation of complex competencies, promote learning, and are complemented with exemplars and/or models of performance" (p. 21). Assessment results should be communicated in a way that provides useful information to candidates about their mastery of learning targets. Candidates should be able to use their assessment data to control their own progress and growth throughout the duration of the preparation program.

The toolkit recommends that candidates successfully demonstrate mastery of competencies through exit exams, professional standards, and local district performance expectations in order to complete the program. Upon completion of the program, graduates are certified and licensed by the state (or moved to the next level of the process) and should be entered in school district applicant pools for principal and/or assistant principal positions. It is expected that program graduates are hired within one year of program completion and stay in the same positions in a chronically low-performing school for at least three years. The toolkit also describes that program graduates in principal or assistant principal positions should either meet or exceed expectations on district performance evaluations when beginning their position.

Gates, S., et al. (2014). *Preparing principals to raise student achievement: Implementation and effects of the New Leaders program in ten districts*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation. Retrieved from: [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR500/RR507/RAND\\_RR507.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR500/RR507/RAND_RR507.pdf)

The New Leaders program to prepare high-quality principals includes three main elements: (1) selective recruitment and admission; (2) training and endorsement; and (3) support for principals early in their tenures. The New Leaders program engages in active recruitment strategies, and all applicants undergo a rigorous, research-based admission process. The comprehensive training and endorsement is achieved through a yearlong residency-based training offered through the Aspiring Principals Program. The prospective principal works as a school leader with a mentor principal in a school district that partners with New Leaders. The final core element of the New Leaders program is the variety of supports provided to new principals through coaching, mentoring, and professional learning communities, even after they've completed the program. The New Leaders program believes that successful leadership results from "the combination of well-trained, high-quality leaders working in conditions that provide them the autonomy and supports needed to enable them to improve student achievement" (p. 106).

## Leadership Preparation: North Carolina

Business for Educational Success and Transformation. (2018). *Transforming Principal Preparation in North Carolina: Policy brief*. Raleigh, NC: Author. Retrieved from: <http://best-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Transforming-Principal-Preparation-FINAL.pdf>

A 2018 report from Business for Educational Success and Transformation reviews key qualities of successful high-quality principal preparation programs, namely, rigorous admission requirements, a cohort model, relevant and applied practical experience, and authentic partnerships between programs and school districts. However, their review of principal preparation programs in North Carolina specifically suggests that many programs do not contain these key qualities. In fact, most principal preparation programs in North Carolina accept nearly 100% of applications, with minimal recruitment efforts. Further, North Carolina does not require a full-time residency for principal candidates, meaning that most principals enter the profession without any on-the-job training. Although partnerships between principal preparation programs and school districts have varying degrees of influence, the report describes that most partnerships are informal and that the districts have limited involvement in the program's students, content, or structure.

In North Carolina, the Transforming Principal Preparation (TPP) program intentionally operates using the research-based components of successful preparation: (1) proactive, intentional recruitment efforts; (2) a high bar for entry; (3) rigorous and relevant coursework; (4) a full-time, paid residency; and (5) a focus on authentic partnerships and service in high-need districts. However, one shortcoming in some of the TPP programs was a lack of racial, gender, and age diversity.

## Leadership: Development/Pipeline

### Leadership Development/Pipeline: General

Turnbull, B., Anderson, M., Riley, D., MacFarlane, J., & Aladjem, D. (2016). *The Principal Pipeline Initiative in action*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates Inc. Retrieved from: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Building-a-Stronger-Principalship-Vol-5-The-Principal-Pipeline-Initiative-in-Action.pdf>

Turnbull and colleagues articulate a gap between research-based strategies for preparing school leaders and pipelines to principalship in school districts. They have identified four key components of a successful principal pipeline: (1) adopting standards of practice and performance to guide principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support; (2) improving the quality of preservice preparation for principals; (3) using selective hiring and placement practices to match principal candidates with schools; and (4) implementing on-the-job evaluation and support for novice principals (those in their first three years on the job).

For districts looking to create a successful principal pipeline, Turnbull and colleagues note that a powerful first step is to define standards and competencies for principals. That way, districts can actively align preparation programs, hiring criteria, and on-the-job evaluation rubrics with those district standards. This article also emphasizes the importance of using data to make preservice programs, hiring, placement, succession, and external partnerships more efficient and informative.

It is also crucial for districts to develop and implement standards-based evaluation systems for principals. Incorporating aspects such as instructional leadership, human resource management, school climate, planning, and school management and operations into evaluations can help facilitate structured, iterative conversations between principals and supervisors. This information can also be used to systemically select, induct, and coach assistant principals on the path to principalship. Turnbull and colleagues describe that districts perceived their principal pipelines through a continuous improvement lens and worked to consistently refine their systems.

For districts interested in establishing or refining their principal pipelines, Turnbull and colleagues suggest the following steps, even for smaller districts or those that don't have the same level of support as Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) districts: (1) define standards and competencies for principals; (2) make procedural changes in the hiring process, such as requiring candidates to demonstrate their skills and drawing on consultants to help identify performance tasks; (3) specifically tailor district-run preparation programs to district priorities and needs; (4) establish a sort of leader tracking system that holds valuable information for hiring and succession planning; and (5) introduce pipeline changes as a pilot in order to allow opportunities to continuously learn, revise, and grow.

Wallace Foundation. (2017). *Building principal pipelines: A job that urban districts can do*. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Perspective-Principal-Pipelines-Updated.pdf>

Similarly, the Wallace Foundation's report articulates four key components of a strong principal pipeline: (1) apt standards for principals; (2) high-quality preservice training; (3) rigorous hiring procedures; and (4) tightly aligned on-the-job performance evaluation and support. The research describes that a successful principal pipeline can have wide-reaching benefits, such as a district-level understanding of effective leadership, better alignment between principal candidates and district/school needs, and more efficient and informative performance evaluations. However, it can be difficult to completely overhaul current principal preparation programs, as well as establish meaningful on-the-job experiences for a large number of principal candidates.

As such, the Wallace Foundation describes some important considerations for districts interested in building principal pipelines. First, all involved should be guided by the idea that "effective school leadership can be a strong lever for district change" (p. 9). To begin, districts should develop standards on which to base all the various pipeline stages, as well as to form a common language to discuss leadership within the district. Next, making changes to the school staff hiring processes can have early effects and can help better align candidates with particular school needs. The Wallace Foundation also recommends that principal evaluations become a strategy for continuous principal improvement, rather than a yearly required exercise. This may require shifting the responsibilities of principal supervisors, in which case, districts may need to hire more supervisors to attend to the instructional leadership focus areas. As previously mentioned, districts should develop a leader tracking system or at least organize the data in a way to maintain records of staff accomplishments and careers. To increase the quality of the principal candidate pool, district leaders can identify effective teacher leaders or coaches with leadership potential and encourage them to participate in a strong leader preparation program.

There are also a variety of actions that states could undertake in order to support the establishment of successful principal preparation programs. States can ensure that standards for principals and supervisor standards

are up-to-date, readily available, and familiar to state employees. They can also emphasize to districts that the standards are malleable to an extent and can be tailored to their own district needs and circumstances. Further, states can leverage their accreditation power to influence university program content and standards, as well as provide funding support for aspects such as on-the-job internships and principal candidate scholarships. For hiring practices, states can make sure that licensing requirements are clear and relevant, as well as assist districts with the development of their data systems for potential candidates. States can also confirm that the performance evaluation mandated by the state is “fair, measures what principals need to know and do, and helps shape support for principals” (p. 17). If a state has a licensing renewal process, the state can make sure that the renewal helps refine the most important skills for principals and use that information efficiently to help shape district professional development. The state can also assist districts financially by paying to train personnel in new evaluation procedures, as well as establishing or facilitating an effective mentor model for new principals.

Kaufman, J., Gates, S., Harvey, M., Wang, Y., & Barrett, M. (2017). *What it takes to operate and maintain principal pipelines: Costs and other resources*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation. Retrieved from: [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2000/RR2078/RAND\\_RR2078.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2000/RR2078/RAND_RR2078.pdf)

This report from the RAND Corporation describes the launch of the PPPI in 2011 and the four key components of a principal pipeline: (1) leadership standards that guide all pipeline activities; (2) preservice preparation opportunities for assistant principals and principals (including not only the preservice training itself, but also recruitment and selection into these opportunities); (3) selective hiring and placement; and (4) on-the-job induction, evaluation, and support. Kaufman and colleagues emphasize the important benefits that could result from investments in principal pipelines, including positive changes in school climate, stakeholder satisfaction, student outcomes, teacher turnover (and the costs associated with it), and future district costs for the preparation and management of school leaders. Table A1 on page 43 outlines each principal pipeline component and the activities associated with it.

**Table A1. Principal Pipeline Activities and Subactivities, by Major Categories**

Category	Component	Activity	Subactivity	
Pipeline component	1. Leader standards	Develop or revise leader standards and secure their approval.	—	
	2. Preservice preparation	Revise the system of preservice preparation.	Develop internal, district-led preservice courses. <sup>a</sup>	Develop internal, district-led preservice courses. <sup>a</sup> Develop external program or university-based courses. <sup>a</sup> Develop screening and selection processes. <sup>a</sup> Prepare and train personnel to use the new screening and selection processes.
			Develop external program or university-based courses. <sup>a</sup>	
			Develop screening and selection processes. <sup>a</sup>	
			Prepare and train personnel to use the new screening and selection processes.	
			Recruit principal and AP candidates for preservice preparation.	
	Screen and select candidates for preservice preparation. <sup>a</sup>	—		
	Deliver preservice preparation.	Deliver internal, district-led preparation. <sup>a</sup>	Deliver external contractor- or partner-led preparation. <sup>a</sup>	
	Oversee the quality of the portfolio of preservice preparation programs.	Conduct a Quality Measures review. <sup>b</sup>	Oversee the quality of preservice preparation (beyond Quality Measures).	
	3. Selective hiring and placement	Revise the system for principal recruiting, hiring, and placement (design processes and train personnel).	Recruit principal and AP candidates.	—
			Screen, select, and support the candidate pool. <sup>a</sup>	—
			Interview and hire school leaders. <sup>a</sup>	—
			—	—
Category	4. On-the-job support and evaluation	Revise the system for providing on-the-job support and evaluation for principals and APs.	Design new on-the-job support and induction processes and courses and provide personnel training.	
			Design new evaluation processes, including technology, and provide personnel training.	
			Provide induction and first-year on-the-job PD. <sup>a</sup>	
			Provide on-the-job PD after the first year. <sup>a</sup>	
			Provide schoolwide support via teams and networks. Support the implementation of SAM. <sup>c</sup>	
Evaluate principals and APs.	Evaluate principals and APs aside from the use of the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education. <sup>d</sup>	Evaluate principals using the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education.		
Provide executive coaching and support to those who supervise and support principals.	—	—		
Systems and capacity for supporting the pipeline components	Revise the overall principal pipeline.	Develop and disseminate communication about the initiative.	—	
		Develop and maintain an LTS.	—	
		Oversee implementation of the pipeline (quality assurance).	—	
		—	—	

NOTE: LTS = leader tracking system. PD = professional development. SAM = School Administration Manager.

<sup>a</sup> Separate activity or subactivity for principals and for APs.

<sup>b</sup> Quality Measures is a tool that the Education Development Center developed, with support from The Wallace Foundation, to improve partnerships between school districts and principal preservice providers.

<sup>c</sup> SAM is a daily PD set of practices designed to help leaders increase time spent on instructional-leadership activities and reflect on impact and next steps. The National SAM Innovation Project developed it with support from The Wallace Foundation.

<sup>d</sup> The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education is a principal-evaluation tool for assessing principal behaviors. Vanderbilt University developed it with support from The Wallace Foundation.

RAND conducted an analysis of the districts participating in the PPI and their financial investments associated with participation. Interestingly, on average, districts devoted 0.4% of their current expenditures to principal pipeline activities, during a time when they were making active investments to build and operate the pipelines. These districts used the majority of their resources to improve preservice and on-the-job support and evaluation. The analysis further shows that districts spent fairly modest amounts on the development and revision of leader standards, as well as selective hiring and placement efforts. Overall, Kaufman and colleagues believe that the evidence suggests that districts do not necessarily need substantial grant funding in order to make meaningful changes to their principal pipelines.

### **Leadership Development/Pipeline: North Carolina**

Turnbull, B., Anderson, M., Riley, D., MacFarlane, J., & Aladjem, D. (2016). *The Principal Pipeline Initiative in action*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates Inc. Retrieved from: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Building-a-Stronger-Principalship-Vol-5-The-Principal-Pipeline-Initiative-in-Action.pdf>

This report specifically details the processes for establishing a principal pipeline for six districts in North Carolina that participated in the Principal Pipeline Initiative. The six districts started or expanded their own district-run principal preparation programs for assistant principals. Five districts did this in 2011–12, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg followed in 2014. Denver, Prince George’s County, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg initiated new programs, whereas Gwinnett County, Hillsborough County, and New York City made efforts to enhance their current programs.

Regarding standards, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district in particular first created an evaluation instrument and procedures, then revised the principal job description to reflect those changes. The district then refined its recruitment, hiring, and selection practices to correlate with the revised job description. Using the state standards as a foundation, Charlotte-Mecklenburg created a committee of district and building leaders and preservice partners to develop specific key competencies for district leadership. These were identified as a subset of the state standards that were priorities for their district.

All districts encouraged principals to be involved in recruitment in the form of identifying potential leaders and even assist with aspiring principal development in some cases. Some changes in hiring and selection processes took little time for staff, according to interviews. However, some challenges surfaced, including that high schools and high-need schools had very slim qualified-candidate pools from which to draw.

There was a wide spectrum of professional development options that were available to principals in all six districts. There were professional development courses and workshops, as well as opportunities for districts to partner with universities and/or other professional development providers.

In a follow-up survey, assistant principals viewed the assistant principalship as an apprenticeship, and most had applied to principal positions within the three years following the initiative. Further, Charlotte-Mecklenburg began a formal, two-year support program for new assistant principals that consisted of monthly, district-led professional development meetings on relevant topics such as instructional coaching and school improvement plans. The district also partnered with a local university to offer the Assistant Principal Academy, which helps



assistant principals recognize their opportunities for influence. And in 2014, Charlotte-Mecklenburg formed a new central office position dedicated to leadership skills development for both principals and assistant principals.

## School Improvement

### School Improvement: General

Woods, J., & Rafa, A. (2018). *Guiding questions for state school improvement efforts*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from: <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Guiding-Questions-for-State-School-Improvement-Efforts.pdf>

In this article, Woods and Rafa outline six core ideas that serve as “must-haves” for states that are involved in school improvement efforts. These necessary aspects are: (1) a vision for education for all students; (2) short-term, long-term, and interim goals; (3) trust and political will; (4) coherence among all stakeholders; (5) alignment between all pieces of education; and (6) clearly defined roles and support systems. Also provided are these specific guiding questions designed to assist states with improvement strategy discussions:

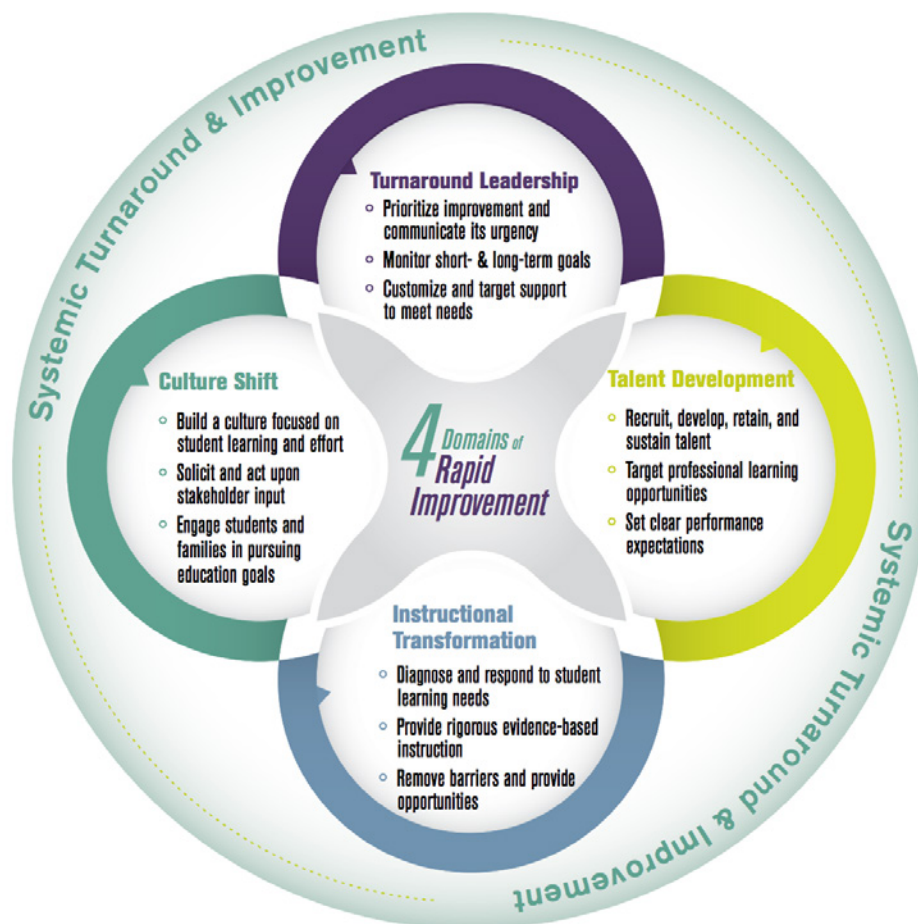
- » “How does your state provide assistance to schools or districts in crafting a feasible improvement plan with a clear scope and defined action steps?
- » When schools or districts submit an improvement plan, who reviews it? What are the criteria for approval or rejection of that plan?
- » How does your state use improvement plans to learn how to better support schools and districts?
- » What kind of support and resources does your state provide to lower-performing schools to help them improve? Who provides support?
- » When schools and districts struggle to improve after identification, what are the next, more rigorous steps to help them improve?
- » Do your state’s policies permit state-led interventions, such as innovation zones or takeovers, in lower-performing schools or districts?” (p. 3)

The Center on School Turnaround. (2017). *Four domains for rapid school improvement: A systems framework* [The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from: [https://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CST\\_Four-Domains-Framework-Final.pdf](https://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CST_Four-Domains-Framework-Final.pdf)

In this report, the Center on School Turnaround details the Four Domains framework that can be used to guide how local context and implementation influence the outcomes of improvement initiatives. Further, the framework incorporates understandings from the federal School Improvement Grants program. These understandings are that successful school turnaround requires a systems approach with meaningful collaboration and support

from the state and district and that successful school turnaround occurs when effective practices and processes become routine and sustainable in stages, rather than with a one-time overhaul of changes. Figure A1 (Center on School Turnaround, 2017, p. 3) outlines the four domains for rapid school improvement and the primary aspects of each domain. Domain 1, Turnaround Leadership, is of particular relevance.

**Figure A1. Four Domains of Rapid Improvement**



Hitt, D. H., Robinson, W., & Player, D. (2018). *District readiness to support school turnaround: A guide for state education agencies and districts*, 2nd ed. [The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from: <https://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CST-District-Readiness-to-Support-School-Turnaround.pdf>

This report specifically dives into key aspects and actions of turnaround leadership indicators of readiness and can serve as a helpful guide for district leaders.

The first step to turnaround leadership efforts is to prioritize improvement and communicate its urgency (Practice 1A). To do this, districts must commit to a turnaround, commit to positive change, and install capable, autonomous leaders. District executive leadership must also frequently and consistently monitor short- and

long-term goals (Practice 1B) through holding individuals and groups responsible for high, specific expectations and aligned goals. This increased accountability can be accomplished through revising internal reporting structures to be more frequent and provide space for meaningful feedback for change. The district should not only set high performance expectations, but also share them transparently and monitor and adjust them continuously based on schools' progress. To customize and target support to meet needs (Practice 1C), districts must build capacity, demonstrate capacity to provide support, and allocate resources to the turnaround. Districts should ensure that schools are aware of how to get support from the district, and there should be consistent, frequent district support provided to turnaround principals.

## School Improvement: North Carolina

Thompson, C., Brown, K., Townsend, L., Henry, G., & Fortner, C. (2011). *Turning around North Carolina's lowest-achieving schools (2006–2010)*. Chapel Hill, NC: Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation. Retrieved from: <https://publicpolicy.unc.edu/files/2015/07/Turning-Around-NCs-Lowest-Achieving-Schools-2006-2010.pdf>

In this report, Thompson and colleagues describe how a portion of funds from a 2010–2014 Race to the Top grant could be used to continue school turnaround efforts (the Turnaround Schools intervention) that were underway in 2006–2010. During that time, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) worked with 66 low-achieving high schools, 37 middle schools, and 25 elementary schools.

The intervention included "(1) a requirement that the schools submit plans consistent with a Framework for Action designed to focus the schools on changing practices thought to affect student achievement, (2) a series of professional development sessions designed to build the schools' capacity to carry out the plans, and (3) follow-up coaching and school-specific professional development, which continued for as long as the school's performance composite remained below 60%" (p. i).

The results from these efforts in 2006–2010 showed that the intervention initially had a modest contribution to improved student test scores in the high schools that grew larger over the time of the intervention. Unfortunately, there were some schools in the intervention that made little or no progress in successful turnaround. Thompson and colleagues determined that the turnaround efforts were hindered in these schools by inconsistently implemented reforms with no follow-through, high teacher and principal turnover, principals unable to mobilize and motivate school staff, and disintegrations in policies and procedures at both school and district levels.

Thompson, C. L., Brown, K. M., Townsend, L. W., & Campbell, S. L. (2013). *Productive connections: Interventions in low-performing districts by the NCDPI District and School Transformation Division in 2011–12*. Chapel Hill, NC: Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation. Retrieved from: <https://cerenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/DST-District-Level-Report-Y2-FINAL.pdf>

In this report, Thompson and colleagues provide an update on the NCDPI District and School Transformation Division's (DST) school turnaround efforts for 2011–12. They reiterate the goals of the turnaround initiative (p. 2):

1. Turn around the lowest 5% of conventional elementary, middle, and high schools based on the 2009–10 performance composite and grade span.
2. Turn around conventional high schools with a four-year cohort graduation rate below 60% in 2009–10 and either 2008–09 or 2007–08.
3. Turn around the lowest-achieving districts with a 2009–10 local education agency (LEA) performance composite below 65%.


The purpose of this report is to provide formative feedback to the state about the effects to date of the school turnaround efforts. The findings reveal that low-achieving districts have weak or nonexistent connections between and within system levels (central office, schools, classrooms). The DST should shift its efforts to develop and support initiatives to strengthen productive connections between these levels in order to improve efficiency, communication, and, ultimately, student outcomes. Despite this disconnection within districts, the DST did see some positive results in student achievement and high school graduation rates in some schools, which suggests that school-level interventions have had a positive influence so far.

Townsend, L., Thompson, C., & Marks, J. (2013). *Turning around North Carolina's lowest-achieving schools: Initial findings on the school leader professional development series*. Chapel Hill, NC: Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation. Retrieved from: <https://publicpolicy.unc.edu/files/2016/03/Turning-around-North-Carolina27s-Lowest-Achieveing-Schools-Initial-Findings-on-the-School-Leader.pdf>

This report is an evaluation of the Turning Around North Carolina's Lowest Achieving Schools (TALAS) initiative, specifically to assess the primary intervention strategies that the DST implements to improve low-performing schools. The DST offers three professional development strategies to schools participating in TALAS: (1) the School Leader Professional Development Series, (2) coaching (leadership and instructional), and (3) LEA- and school-level professional development. The evaluation findings in this article focus specifically on the School Leaders Professional Development Series, a yearlong program of six two-day sessions for school leaders.

The DST held six regionally based professional development sessions between June 2011 and June 2012, reaching 96 schools across 36 LEAs. Mostly principals and assistant principals participated in these sessions, but some other school staff participated if and when the content may have been relevant to their position.

The evaluation team conducted an observation of the professional development session, and all of the segments that comprised the session were rated at the highest two levels: Level 5: Exemplary Professional Development (64%) and Level 4: Accomplished, Effective Professional Development (36%). Similarly, a participant survey showed that the professional development series helped participants "understand and plan to address applicable components of the United States Department of Education Reform Models" and positively influenced participants' abilities to reevaluate the impact of school practices and procedures on learning (p. 4). Further, participants overwhelmingly agreed that the reform model components were crucial to their school's transformation efforts.



By contrast, the evaluators found that participants requested more differentiated professional development opportunities based on leadership experience level and students' level of achievement progress. In particular, the evaluation team recommended that the DST provide literacy-focused professional development with high-quality facilitators that is differentiated by school level (elementary, middle, and high school).

# Appendix B. Focus Group and Interview Questions; Summary of Responses

The following summary of key leadership themes in North Carolina was gathered from focus groups with the North Carolina School Boards Association, low-wealth district superintendents, small-district superintendents, principals, teachers, and Regional Education Service Agency directors, as well as interviews with the executive director of the North Carolina Superintendents Association, the executive director of the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association, and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction conducted in June and July of 2018.

One of the major themes that consistently arose during discussions was the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers and principals, particularly for rural districts. Most teachers, principals, and superintendents attribute this difficulty to a lack of funding, that is, they are unable to provide teachers with adequate and enticing supplements to move to rural districts. Further, it is difficult to attract new teachers and principals with incentives other than monetary because young, new educators often want to be near a city, not in a small rural town with little “downtown” activity. Many education professionals from these rural districts explain that their strategy to address this difficulty is to focus on homegrown teachers. Homegrown teachers are those who graduate or are from rural towns to begin with, and then those rural districts recruit them back to work in those schools, often through scholarships in exchange for a commitment to return to that district. Similarly, many school leaders say, somewhat jokingly, that when a new teacher starts, they will try to “get them married,” explaining that teachers who marry, have a family, or otherwise settle down in those rural towns are much more likely to stay in that district long term.

School and district leaders also described that the teacher and principal applicant pool is much shallower than even 5 to 10 years ago, forcing them to hire teachers or principals that do not have very much experience. In this way, superintendents are finding very few qualified leaders that are prepared to lead school turnaround efforts. Many attribute this to the fact that North Carolina no longer gives pay increases to educators with a graduate degree, as well to the education field’s reputation of not being as rigorous or as respected as much as other professions, which is partly due to the low pay and long hours that are expected of educators. Further,

some interviewees explained that educator preparation programs often focus too much on theory and not enough on practical application, which rarely prepares principals entering turnaround schools, since principals are essentially on their own with improvement efforts due to North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) budget cuts.

Specifically, many focus group respondents explained that teachers are discouraged from entering into school leadership positions because they can often make more money as a teacher than as an assistant principal or principal, whose salaries can be volatile. In addition, as of January 2021, new hires will not be eligible for any retirement health benefits in North Carolina, which school leaders cite as another key obstacle in recruiting new educators. Once schools do hire new teachers, many school leaders describe that the primary way they can appeal to teachers to stay is to create a culture of support and community. Many explain that they use a teacher mentor model to build relationships and help staff feel like they are an important part of the school. School and district leaders note that this type of mentor program used to have state funding, but that the funding was cut significantly, so although schools are trying to maintain these teacher mentor programs as a way to retain teachers, they do not have financial supplements to support it.

Another major barrier that school and district leaders described in the focus groups and interviews was the inflexible nature of the school calendar. The rigid school calendar makes it very difficult for low-wealth schools to provide in-service professional development. With flexibility, schools and districts could have regular professional development days throughout the year and have a schedule that works with each district's and community's particular needs. Aside from professional development, teachers and leaders also explain that the inability to modify the school calendar makes it difficult to provide additional after-school learning opportunities for remediation or enrichment outside the calendar's time frame. Similarly, many school and district leaders in the focus groups expressed a desire for more flexible funding. They explained that even eight years ago the funding was more flexible, but now it is very prescriptive about what funds can or cannot be used for, which is difficult when district, schools, and communities each have their own unique situations. In this way, school and district leaders would also like increased trust from the state level to be able to make these funding allocations and other decisions without being micromanaged.

Further, professional development opportunities come primarily from local funds. Many central offices provide professional development, but there have not been appropriate salary increases, so the professional development leaders who are teaching the supervising and training are often making less money than the teachers receiving that training. One interviewee explained that they have a curriculum that can be replicated, and during Race to the Top funding, the state had 35 trained facilitators to help deliver the curriculum. Now there are 15 to 17 trainers across the state. It would be ideal to ramp up the training with more funding and more trainers to provide professional support. There are a few principal preparation programs (Distinguished Leadership in Practice, Future Ready Leadership, and Digital Learning) developed through grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Race to the Top, American Express, and the NCDPI. Principals can apply to these programs and have their expenses covered, but unfortunately there is not enough money for all interested principals to participate. Wealthier districts, like Charlotte, tend to have more funds and resources to provide their own training and support, but many rural districts simply do not have the money to provide meaningful professional development for their teachers and principals.

# Appendix C.

## Principal Survey and Data Summary

### North Carolina Principal Survey Reformatted Question Tables 1/22/19

These questions from the Principal Survey, administered to more than 650 North Carolina principals during the fall of 2018, were selected for this summary because of their relevance to our research questions.

Q5. Principals generally feel well or very well prepared to address topics such using data and supporting teacher learning and development. The one item that had fewer teachers reporting being adequately, well, or very well prepared is in the area of supporting social-emotional learning for students.

#### Q5. How well prepared do you feel you have been to do the following?

	Very poorly		Poorly		Adequately		Well		Very well		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Analyze data to support a plan for school improvement	0.00%	0	4.02%	32	23.37%	186	42.71%	340	29.90%	238	796
Build and sustain an educational vision for a school/site	0.13%	1	1.63%	13	23.59%	188	48.56%	387	26.10%	208	797
Support teacher learning and development to improve practice	0.25%	2	3.26%	26	21.20%	169	50.56%	403	24.72%	197	797
Effectively engage faculty, parents, and stakeholders in a process of educational change	0.50%	4	7.19%	57	33.80%	268	42.75%	339	15.76%	125	793



	Very poorly		Poorly		Adequately		Well		Very well		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Support social-emotional and academic learning for students	1.76%	14	9.95%	79	34.51%	274	38.29%	304	15.49%	123	794
Redesign school features to produce better outcomes	0.88%	7	7.46%	59	31.73%	251	44.50%	352	15.42%	122	791

Respondents: 797 Answered; 50 Skipped.

Q8. Principals report being familiar with their School Improvement Plan (SIP) and believe it's a useful document. One area that stood out is that principals were more likely to disagree with the statement "the SIP has led to changes in my teachers' teaching practices" compared with other items in this list.

**Q8. Indicate your agreement with the following statements:**

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
I am familiar with most of the major points in our School Improvement Plan (SIP)	0.39%	3	0.92%	7	8.40%	64	90.29%	688	762
Our SIP is based on systematic analysis of student performance data	0.79%	6	4.47%	34	44.21%	336	50.53%	384	760
The SIP will help make us a better school over the next five years	2.50%	19	8.43%	64	47.83%	363	41.24%	313	759
The SIP has led to changes in my teachers' teaching practices	3.18%	24	13.91%	105	57.22%	432	25.70%	194	755
The SIP is just another required document	39.26%	298	29.51%	224	25.03%	190	6.19%	47	759
The SIP is not improving student learning at this school	33.95%	258	42.76%	325	18.82%	143	4.47%	34	760

Respondents: 762 Answered; 85 Skipped.

Q9. A vast majority of principals received their training through in-state programs, with the most commonly selected training being university-based programs.

**Q9. What kind of training did you receive for your certification to be a principal? Check all that apply.\***

	In-State		Out-of-State		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
University-based	86.69%	632	15.09%	110	729
District or charter management organization-based	88.54%	139	14.01%	22	157
Other (please specify below, e.g., NC Leadership Academy, NC Principal Fellow):	94.50%	206	6.42%	14	218
Third-party professional development organization	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 755 Answered; 92 Skipped.

Q12. Principals tended to use more than one source to fill teacher vacancies, with in-state preparation programs being the most common.

**Q12. Which key sources of teacher candidates do you use to fill a vacant teaching position? Check all that apply.\***

	Percentage	N Selected
Traditional teacher preparation programs (in-state)	96.81%	697
Lateral entry routes	65.83%	474
Traditional teacher preparation programs (out-of-state)	63.89%	460
Other districts	32.64%	235
Re-entrants/Retired teachers	23.47%	169
Alternative preparation programs	11.94%	86
Emergency certificates	11.39%	82
Teach for America	10.83%	78
Teacher residency programs	6.81%	49
Other (please specify)	6.67%	48

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 720 Answered; 127 Skipped.

Q13. Principals generally indicated that they use multiple strategies to retain teachers, with the most frequently mentioned strategy being “mentoring/inductions for beginning teachers.”

**Q13. What strategies do you use to retain teachers at your school? Check all that apply.\***

	Percentage	N Selected
Mentoring/induction for beginning teachers	95.97%	691
Leadership opportunities for teachers, e.g., mentor teachers	89.86%	647
Coaching for teachers	85.56%	616
Classroom autonomy and input in school decision-making	81.94%	590
Creating collegial and collaborative work environments	79.86%	575
Salary supplements	17.08%	123
Additional compensation for high-performing teachers	9.03%	65
Recruitment or retention bonuses	5.28%	38
Loan repayment	5.00%	36
Housing supports	3.89%	28
Other (please specify)	3.89%	28

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 720 Answered; 127 Skipped.

Q14. Principals indicated that a supportive school culture, mentoring and induction, high-quality teacher professional development, and opportunities for teacher advancement are helpful in retaining teachers. They also noted that teacher compensation and preservice preparation do not help retention.

**Q14. To what extent does each of the following factors help support the retention of teachers?**

	Not at all		A little		Some		A lot		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Supportive school culture	0.28%	2	0.28%	2	11.03%	79	88.41%	633	716
Mentoring and/or coaching	0.14%	1	3.91%	28	38.97%	279	56.98%	408	716
Teacher compensation	11.05%	79	12.45%	89	33.15%	237	43.36%	310	715
High-quality professional development	1.11%	8	12.78%	92	50.14%	361	35.97%	259	720
Strong preservice preparation	1.53%	11	21.08%	152	46.88%	338	30.51%	220	721
Opportunities for teacher advancement	2.23%	16	13.37%	96	54.04%	388	30.36%	218	718

Respondents: 721 Answered; 126 Skipped.

Q15. Principals reported being overwhelmingly satisfied with being a principal at their school. Most indicate plans to stay at their school and stay in the principalship even if higher-paying work comes along. A few areas that stood out as potential concerns: 32% disagree that they plan to remain principal until they retire; 40.79% disagree that their district uses effective strategies to retain strong leaders; and 36% disagree that their district uses effective strategies to recruit and attract strong leaders.

**Q15. Indicate your agreement with each of the following statements about your principalship:**

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
I am generally satisfied with being a principal at this school	0.97%	7	3.20%	23	27.12%	195	68.71%	494	719
I plan to remain principal of this school as long as I am able	4.87%	35	10.57%	76	36.58%	263	47.98%	345	719
I plan to remain a principal until I retire	13.51%	97	18.94%	136	27.72%	199	39.83%	286	718
The district I serve uses effective strategies to retain strong leaders	13.97%	100	26.82%	192	40.78%	292	18.44%	132	716
The district I serve uses effective strategies to recruit and attract strong leaders	11.76%	84	24.65%	176	45.38%	324	18.21%	130	714
I will continue being principal until something better comes along	37.69%	271	25.31%	182	27.26%	196	9.74%	70	719
If I could get a higher-paying job, I'd leave education as soon as possible	40.69%	293	31.39%	226	19.58%	141	8.33%	60	720
I think about transferring to another school	55.56%	400	20.28%	146	19.58%	141	4.58%	33	720
I definitely plan to leave the principalship as soon as I can	65.73%	470	22.94%	164	7.83%	56	3.50%	25	715
The stress and disappointments involved in serving as principal of this school aren't really worth it	48.75%	351	32.22%	232	16.11%	116	2.92%	21	720

Respondents: 721 Answered; 126 Skipped.

Q17. The most common response to how might the new principal compensation policy most impact principal respondents was “other,” and the second most common response was that “the policy will not affect me.”

**Q17. Moving forward, how might the new principal compensation policy most impact you?**

	Percentage	N Selected
Other (please specify)	29.71%	205
The policy will not impact me	25.22%	174
I will work harder as a principal	13.33%	92
I will seek to retire as soon as possible	9.86%	68
I will leave the principalship	8.99%	62
I will stay in the principalship longer	8.26%	57
I will leave to obtain principalship in another school	4.64%	32

Respondents: 690 Answered; 157 Skipped.

Q23. The most common reason cited for what would cause the principal to leave the role as principal of this school in the next three years was compensation.

**Q23. What is the major factor that would cause you to leave your role as principal of this school in the next three years? Check one.**

	Percentage	N Selected
Compensation	23.61%	165
Other (please specify)	19.60%	137
District support	19.17%	134
Retirement	17.74%	124
Workload	12.45%	87
Inadequate funding to meet the needs of my students	7.44%	52

Respondents: 699 Answered; 148 Skipped.

Q24. Principal respondents reported that they had the greatest extent of opportunities to learn about “using student and school data to inform continuous school improvement” and that the least common opportunities were to learn about “meeting the needs of English learners.”

**Q24. Since August 2015, to what extent have you had opportunities to learn about the following topics in professional development that you have participated in?**

	Not at all		To a minimal extent		Somewhat		To a moderate extent		To a great extent		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Using student and school data to inform continuous school improvement	1.47%	10	6.90%	47	20.56%	140	36.71%	250	34.36%	234	681
Engaging in self-improvement and your own continuous learning	4.26%	29	11.75%	80	25.99%	177	34.36%	234	23.64%	161	681
Creating collegial and collaborative work environments	4.99%	34	12.63%	86	28.05%	191	32.31%	220	22.03%	150	681
Leading a schoolwide change process to improve student achievement	3.38%	23	12.04%	82	25.99%	177	37.44%	255	21.15%	144	681
Helping teachers improve through a cycle of observation and feedback	2.94%	20	10.88%	74	27.94%	190	37.06%	252	21.18%	144	680
Leading instruction that focuses on raising schoolwide achievement on standardized tests	3.23%	22	12.90%	88	28.45%	194	35.04%	239	20.38%	139	682
Leading instruction that focuses on how to develop students' higher thinking skills	4.40%	30	13.20%	90	28.30%	193	35.78%	244	18.33%	125	682
Designing professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff	7.50%	51	16.47%	112	28.09%	191	31.91%	217	16.03%	109	680
Selecting effective curriculum strategies and materials	6.77%	46	16.94%	115	32.11%	218	28.72%	195	15.46%	105	679
Equitably serving all children	6.67%	45	15.56%	105	32.30%	218	29.93%	202	15.56%	105	675
Leading instruction that supports implementation of new state standards	5.43%	37	11.60%	79	30.98%	211	36.71%	250	15.27%	104	681

	Not at all		To a minimal extent		Somewhat		To a moderate extent		To a great extent		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Leading schools that support students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds	9.12%	62	22.35%	152	29.26%	199	25.00%	170	14.26%	97	680
Leading schools that support students' social and emotional development	5.75%	39	19.91%	135	28.91%	196	31.12%	211	14.31%	97	678
Creating a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people and uses discipline for restorative purposes	8.84%	60	22.53%	153	29.01%	197	26.22%	178	13.40%	91	679
Managing school operations efficiently	9.16%	62	20.83%	141	29.10%	197	27.47%	186	13.44%	91	677
Working with the school community, parents, educators, and other stakeholders	6.62%	45	18.68%	127	31.91%	217	30.00%	204	12.79%	87	680
Redesigning the school's organization and structure to support deeper learning for teachers and students	7.64%	52	22.47%	153	30.54%	208	27.61%	188	11.75%	80	681
Recruiting and retaining teachers and other staff	10.96%	74	19.11%	129	32.00%	216	26.67%	180	11.26%	76	675
Meeting the needs of students with disabilities	7.69%	52	21.01%	142	32.40%	219	28.11%	190	10.80%	73	676
Developing systems that meet children's needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health	7.50%	51	24.85%	169	30.29%	206	26.91%	183	10.44%	71	680
Knowing how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance	13.11%	89	18.70%	127	33.43%	227	24.89%	169	9.87%	67	679
Meeting the needs of English learners	16.35%	111	26.36%	179	31.22%	212	19.88%	135	6.19%	42	679

Respondents: 682 Answered; 165 Skipped.

Q51. Principals generally feel adequately or well prepared to shape teaching and learning conditions. However, the areas where they feel less well prepared are social-emotional development, restorative and other practices, and meeting other nonacademic needs of students.

**Q51. How well did your leadership program prepare you to shape teaching and learning conditions as described below?**

	Very poorly		Poorly		Adequately		Well		Very well		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Create collegial and collaborative work environments	1.15%	7	7.21%	44	46.56%	284	30.98%	189	14.10%	86	610
Work with the school community, parents, educators, and other stakeholders	1.64%	10	12.99%	79	47.20%	287	27.30%	166	10.86%	66	608
Lead schools that support students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds	2.46%	15	19.02%	116	43.44%	265	24.59%	150	10.49%	64	610
Lead schools that support students' social and emotional development	5.08%	31	26.72%	163	38.20%	233	21.80%	133	8.20%	50	610
Create a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people and uses discipline for restorative purposes	4.76%	29	27.26%	166	38.42%	234	21.35%	130	8.21%	50	609
Redesign the school's organization and structure to support deeper learning for teachers and students	3.44%	21	18.36%	112	46.39%	283	23.61%	144	8.20%	50	610
Develop systems that meet children's needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health	5.76%	35	28.29%	172	38.49%	234	19.41%	118	8.06%	49	608

Respondents: 611 Answered; 236 Skipped.



Q52. The most commonly indicated areas for desired professional development include the areas in Q51 that principals felt their leadership programs did not prepare them for: develop systems that meet children’s needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health; lead schools that support students’ social and emotional development; and create a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people and uses discipline for restorative purposes.

**Q52. In which of the following areas would you like to receive more professional development related to shaping teaching and learning conditions? Check all that apply.\***

	Percentage	N Selected
Develop systems that meet children’s needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health	57.71%	337
Lead schools that support students’ social and emotional development	51.88%	303
Create a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people and uses discipline for restorative purposes	50.86%	297
Redesign the school’s organization and structure to support deeper learning for teachers and students	44.86%	262
Work with the school community, parents, educators, and other stakeholders	39.21%	229
Lead schools that support students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds	38.53%	225
Create collegial and collaborative work environments	28.77%	168

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 584 Answered; 263 Skipped.

Q53. Most principals feel they were adequately or well prepared to develop people. One area of where teachers felt less well prepared is “know how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance.”

**Q53. How well did your leadership program prepare you to develop people as described below?**

	Very poorly		Poorly		Adequately		Well		Very well		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Help teachers improve through a cycle of observation and feedback	1.64%	10	10.69%	65	42.60%	259	32.07%	195	12.99%	79	608
Manage school operations efficiently	2.80%	17	7.91%	48	47.61%	289	29.98%	182	11.70%	71	607
Design professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff	2.96%	18	15.46%	94	44.24%	269	27.80%	169	9.54%	58	608
Recruit and retain teachers and other staff	2.47%	15	15.13%	92	47.53%	289	26.32%	160	8.55%	52	608
Know how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance	3.13%	19	16.97%	103	45.47%	276	26.19%	159	8.24%	50	607

Respondents: 608 Answered; 239 Skipped.

Q54. The top two areas related to developing people in which principals desire professional development include “know how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance” and “design professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff.”

**Q54. In which of the following areas would you like to receive more professional development related to developing people? Check all that apply.\***

	Percentage	N Selected
Know how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance	51.06%	289
Design professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff	47.00%	266
Help teachers improve through a cycle of observation and feedback	39.40%	223
Recruit and retain teachers and other staff	32.51%	184
Manage school operations efficiently	28.27%	160

*\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.*

*Respondents: 566 Answered; 281 Skipped.*

Q59. The professional development activity that principals reported to be most helpful in improving their practice was participating in a principal network, whereas mentoring or coaching by an experienced principal was reported to be the most unhelpful activity.

**Q59. How helpful was each professional development activity in improving your practice?**

	Not at all helpful		Slightly helpful		Somewhat helpful		Very helpful		Extremely helpful		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Participating in a principal network (e.g., a group of principals organized by your district, an outside agency, or online)	4.49%	27	6.32%	38	29.28%	176	38.94%	234	20.97%	126	601
Reading professional books or articles	2.53%	15	13.68%	81	35.30%	209	35.98%	213	12.50%	74	592
Mentoring or coaching by an experienced principal, as part of a formal arrangement that is supported by the school or district	8.47%	50	11.53%	68	30.85%	182	37.29%	220	11.86%	70	590
Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally	3.99%	24	8.97%	54	39.53%	238	36.88%	222	10.63%	64	602
Peer observation/coaching in which you have an opportunity to visit with other principals for sharing practice	7.21%	43	9.90%	59	32.72%	195	39.43%	235	10.74%	64	596

Respondents: 610 Answered; 237 Skipped.

Q61. The three most common reasons principals selected as barriers to dismissing poor-performing teachers in their school are (1) the length of time required for termination process, (2) the effort required for documentation, and (3) personnel policies.

**Q61. Which of the following are barriers to the dismissal of poor-performing or incompetent teachers in this school? Check all that apply.\***

	Percentage	N Selected
Length of time required for termination process	69.35%	267
Effort required for documentation	68.05%	262
Personnel policies	55.84%	215
Difficulty in obtaining suitable replacements	36.88%	142
Tenure	35.06%	135
Tight deadlines for completing documentation	19.22%	74
Termination decisions not upheld	17.14%	66
Dismissal is too stressful and/or uncomfortable for you	10.91%	42
Teacher associations or unions	9.09%	35
There are no barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers in this school	2.34%	9
Resistance from parents	2.08%	8

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 385 Answered; 462 Skipped.

Q62. The most common resources accessed to support school improvement were structures, processes, and tools provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) (e.g., NC STAR). The least common resource, aside from "Other" or "None," was the Leadership Academy.

**Q62. Which resources below have you accessed to support school improvement? Check all that apply.\***

	Percentage	N Selected
Structures, processes, and tools provided by DPI, e.g., NC STAR	73.70%	440
Professional development provided by DPI	47.24%	282
On-site coaching/mentoring	42.38%	253
Professional development provided by your RESA	32.83%	196
Structures, processes, and tools provided by your RESA	25.46%	152
Leadership Academy	21.44%	128
Other (please specify)	10.05%	60
None	4.19%	25

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 597 Answered; 250 Skipped.

Q65. The statement that principal respondents most strongly agreed with regarding the teacher evaluation system was that “the system requires too much time from principals.” The statements that principal respondents most strongly disagreed with was that “the components of the system are clear,” followed by “the system makes sense.”

**Q65. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about the teacher evaluation system in your district:**

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
The system requires too much time from principals	7.89%	47	22.48%	134	42.95%	256	26.68%	159	596
It is a fair system	9.05%	54	23.45%	140	56.78%	339	10.72%	64	597
I trust the results of the evaluation	10.59%	63	28.07%	167	53.28%	317	8.07%	48	595
It produces valid information	12.48%	74	25.13%	149	54.47%	323	7.93%	47	593
The components of the system are clear	15.42%	91	31.02%	183	45.76%	270	7.80%	46	590
It produces useful information about teachers	11.89%	71	20.94%	125	59.97%	358	7.20%	43	597
The system makes sense	14.70%	87	33.11%	196	45.78%	271	6.42%	38	592
Teachers trust the results of the evaluation	12.71%	76	33.28%	199	48.33%	289	5.69%	34	598

Respondents: 598 Answered; 249 Skipped.

Q67. The statement that principal respondents most strongly agreed with regarding their schools' placement policies for English language arts (ELA) and math was that "student placements are reviewed by the administrative team to ensure wide access to a rigorous curriculum." The statements that principal respondents most strongly disagreed with was that "the racial makeup of students enrolled in AP [Advanced Placement] and IB [International Baccalaureate] courses reflects the racial makeup of the whole school."

**Q67. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your school's placement policies for ELA and math:**

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Student placements are reviewed by the administrative team to ensure wide access to a rigorous curriculum	5.66%	31	10.95%	60	49.27%	270	34.12%	187	548
The school has explicit written criteria or policy for math placement	11.98%	66	17.60%	97	50.27%	277	20.15%	111	551
The school has explicit written criteria or policy for ELA placement	11.78%	65	19.02%	105	50.00%	276	19.20%	106	552
Student placements are reviewed by department chairs for academic appropriateness	12.29%	67	19.63%	107	48.62%	265	19.45%	106	545
The racial makeup of students enrolled in dual-credit courses reflects the racial makeup of the whole school	16.67%	78	23.08%	108	44.66%	209	15.60%	73	468
The racial makeup of students enrolled in AP and IB courses reflects the racial makeup of the whole school	17.51%	83	23.84%	113	44.94%	213	13.71%	65	474

Respondents: 556 Answered; 291 Skipped.

Q69. The statement that principal respondents most strongly agreed with regarding their schools' data from the state assessments was that it was "useful for informing school improvement planning." The statements that principal respondents most strongly disagreed with was that the data was "available in a timely manner."

**Q69. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your school's data from the state assessments:**

	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Useful for informing school improvement planning	6.67%	39	10.43%	61	53.50%	313	29.40%	172	585
Useful for informing professional development needs	7.84%	46	15.33%	90	53.15%	312	23.68%	139	587
Useful for understanding student strengths	8.03%	47	14.36%	84	53.85%	315	23.76%	139	585
Useful for understanding student weaknesses	7.68%	45	16.38%	96	52.22%	306	23.72%	139	586
Easy to access	7.68%	45	16.89%	99	55.63%	326	19.80%	116	586
Easy to understand	6.00%	35	19.55%	114	56.43%	329	18.01%	105	583
Useful for understanding the quality of teaching	8.21%	48	25.13%	147	48.89%	286	17.78%	104	585
Available in a timely manner	26.12%	152	19.76%	115	41.24%	240	12.89%	75	582

Respondents: 587 Answered; 260 Skipped.



Q70. The most frequent activity that teachers use their interim/benchmark or formative assessment data for was to “form small groups of students for targeted instruction”. The least frequent activity was to “adjust content or instructional strategies to be taught in subsequent lessons.”

**Q70. In a typical month, how often do your teachers use interim/benchmark or formative assessment data to do the following?**

	Less than once a month		Once or twice a month		Weekly or almost weekly		A few times a week		Total
	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	Percentage	N Selected	
Form small groups of students for targeted instruction	5.66%	33	19.55%	114	45.80%	267	28.99%	169	583
Tailor instruction to individual students’ needs	3.43%	20	19.90%	116	53.00%	309	23.67%	138	583
Provide feedback to an individual or groups of students	3.77%	22	22.64%	132	50.26%	293	23.33%	136	583
Adjust content or instructional strategies to be taught in subsequent lessons	3.09%	18	18.35%	107	55.23%	322	23.33%	136	583
Meet with another teacher or specialist (e.g., instructional coach, school psychologist, etc.)	6.52%	38	26.59%	155	50.09%	292	16.81%	98	583
Identify instructional content to use in class	6.68%	39	32.02%	187	50.34%	294	10.96%	64	584
Develop recommendations for additional instructional support	5.99%	35	35.45%	207	48.63%	284	9.93%	58	584
Discuss an individual student’s progress with a parent or guardian	14.11%	82	39.07%	227	37.69%	219	9.12%	53	581

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 584 Answered; 263 Skipped.

Q71. Principal respondents' most commonly selected indicators of school success to be included in a school accountability system were (1) student growth, (2) student achievement/proficiency, and (3) school climate and safety. The least commonly selected indicators were (1) post-secondary enrollment rate and (2) other.

**Q71. Which of the following are the most important indicators of school success to include in a school accountability system? You may select up to 5 indicators.**

	Percentage	N Selected
Student growth	80.34%	470
Student achievement/proficiency	56.75%	332
School climate and safety	56.58%	331
Student attendance/chronic absenteeism	36.41%	213
Achievement gaps	35.21%	206
Benchmark/interim assessment results (e.g., NC Check-ins)	32.82%	192
Family engagement	30.43%	178
Teacher attendance	30.26%	177
Access to college- and career-ready curriculum	20.68%	121
Percentage of fully certified teachers	17.26%	101
Four-year graduation rate	16.24%	95
Science achievement/growth	12.99%	76
Dropout rate	10.77%	63
English language proficiency/progress	9.40%	55
College entrance exam results (i.e., ACT or SAT)	8.38%	49
Extended-year graduation rate (i.e., 5–7 years)	7.69%	45
Suspension rate	7.69%	45
Post-secondary enrollment rate	4.27%	25
Other (please specify)	3.93%	23

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 585 Answered; 262 Skipped.

Q72. The five most commonly selected “most important indicators of equality opportunity for a high-quality education” are (1) school climate and safety, (2) access to fully certified teachers, (3) access to college- and career-readiness curriculum, (4) teacher-student ratio, and (5) student achievement/proficiency.

**Q72. Which of the following are the most important indicators of equal opportunity for a high-quality education? You may select up to 5 indicators.**

	Percentage	N Selected
School climate and safety	54.42%	314
Access to fully certified teachers	52.34%	302
Access to college- and career-ready curriculum	46.27%	267
Teacher-student ratio	44.71%	258
Student achievement/proficiency	42.29%	244
Access to teacher-support staff	35.18%	203
Access to music and arts-based programs (e.g., music/art courses, after-school music/arts activities, etc.)	34.66%	200
Student attendance/chronic absenteeism	30.50%	176
Access to gifted and talented programs	26.00%	150
Teacher working conditions	25.65%	148
Community engagement	22.88%	132
Four-year graduation rate	13.86%	80
Suspension rate	10.40%	60
Dropout rate	7.63%	44
Post-secondary enrollment rate	6.93%	40
College entrance exam participation	5.55%	32
Extended-year graduation rate (i.e., 5–7 years)	5.55%	32
Other (please specify)	3.29%	19
Teacher attendance	0.00%	0

\*Respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages may not equal 100%.

Respondents: 577 Answered; 270 Skipped.