

The New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

Navigating North Carolina's Bold
School Leadership Strategy





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Acknowledgements

As business leaders, BEST NC members understand the importance of great talent in their own organizations, positioning BEST NC as a natural champion for elevating educators to increase student success. Specifically, business leaders have a powerful understanding of the value of great leadership, and they recognize a critical executive position when they see it. That's why BEST NC has made school principals a top priority in our work.

At the top of BEST NC's Educator Innovation priorities for North Carolina is improving the recruitment, preparation, and compensation for principals, one of the most important - and difficult - jobs in the state. Many thanks to business leaders in North Carolina for investing in education transformation and for making this work possible.

BEST NC would like to acknowledge the many people who have contributed to the creation and expansion of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. First, we want to thank the three Race to the Top principal leadership academies for lighting the way with their pilot programs. We also want to thank the policymakers who recognized, and continue to recognize, the value of protecting and scaling this proven innovation.

Much gratitude also goes to the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission and staff who are committed to the program's continuing integrity and growth. Last, but certainly not least, thanks to the Principal Fellows program directors, researchers, and others who work so diligently to ensure we have the best principals in the country and who also provided important feedback on this report.



BEST NC is a non-profit, non-partisan coalition of business leaders committed to improving North Carolina's education system by convening, informing, and engaging state leaders to identify and advance improved education policies, programs, and initiatives. BEST NC envisions a North Carolina in which every student graduates with the knowledge, skills and behaviors to succeed in a competitive global economy. Our mission is to unite an engaged and informed business perspective to build consensus toward dramatically transforming and improving education in North Carolina.

INTRODUCTION



“

Principal quality is perhaps the most important strategy we have for improving student performance and attracting exceptional teaching talent. This is why North Carolina aims to have the best principal workforce in the country. The New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program leverages competition and best practices to support our state’s top principal preparation programs in recruiting, preparing, and supporting exceptional school leaders.

Brenda Berg
President & CEO, BEST NC

”

Principals are the success navigators for the students, educators, and staff in schools. They set the strategic vision for each school; they are responsible for establishing and maintaining a positive school culture focused on student success; they lead teams averaging 50 adults – recruiting, developing, and retaining outstanding teachers and staff; they oversee a multi-million-dollar organization; and they serve as the glue between the school and its surrounding community.

Since 2015, North Carolina has made landmark investments in principal quality, in part by creating the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3), as well as by transforming and substantially increasing the state’s principal salary structure (2017 and beyond). In 2018, BEST NC published a policy brief providing an overview of the state’s new principal preparation approach entitled *Transforming Principal Preparation in North Carolina*.

In 2019, the TP3 program was merged with the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program and rebranded as the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. This merger leveraged funding from both programs, nearly double the amount available through TP3, to expand TP3’s unique competitive grant-based model and strengthened the governance of the program.

This report builds upon BEST NC’s 2018 policy brief by examining the latest research and best practices around principal preparation, providing an update on the merged program, and recommending the next steps for expanding the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program to have a greater positive impact on students across North Carolina. This report seeks to enhance the public’s understanding of the program’s potential to transform principal recruitment and preparation in our state.



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NEW NORTH CAROLINA PRINCIPAL
FELLOWS PROGRAM ONLINE HUB**



GLOSSARY



To aid readers' understanding, below are definitions of some of the key terms that are used throughout the report. See "Structure of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program" on page 11 to see how the pieces fit together.

Grantee:

Institution of higher education or other eligible entity that receives grants from either the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3) or the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (New NCPFP).

New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (New NCPFP):

The current iteration of the Principal Fellows program which operates as a competitive grants program for principal preparation (employing the TP3 model, described below). This program is the result of the merger of the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program and the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (see "Merger with the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program" on page 7).

Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Original NCPFP):

A scholarship-based forgivable loan program supporting principal candidates who attended principal preparation programs at UNC-System institutions. This program operated from 1993 to 2021.

Principal Fellow:

Someone who has graduated from either the Original or New NCPFP program, or TP3 prior to the merger.

Principal Fellow Candidate:

A student who is enrolled in one of the New NCPFP Grantee programs.

Principal Fellows Commission:

An appointed Commission, whose membership is defined in statute, responsible for overseeing the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. The Commission is responsible for, among other things, establishing selection and renewal criteria for principal preparation programs seeking grant funding, selecting a Director of the program, and selecting Grantees. See Appendix D to learn more about the composition of the Principal Fellows Commission.

Principal Fellows Leadership Team:

The Director and staff of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. The Leadership Team is responsible for executing a vision for the program, managing day-to-day operations, and facilitating communication and collaboration between Grantees, school districts, Principal Fellows candidates, and other stakeholders.

School Leader:

Principal or assistant principal employed in a North Carolina public school.

Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3):

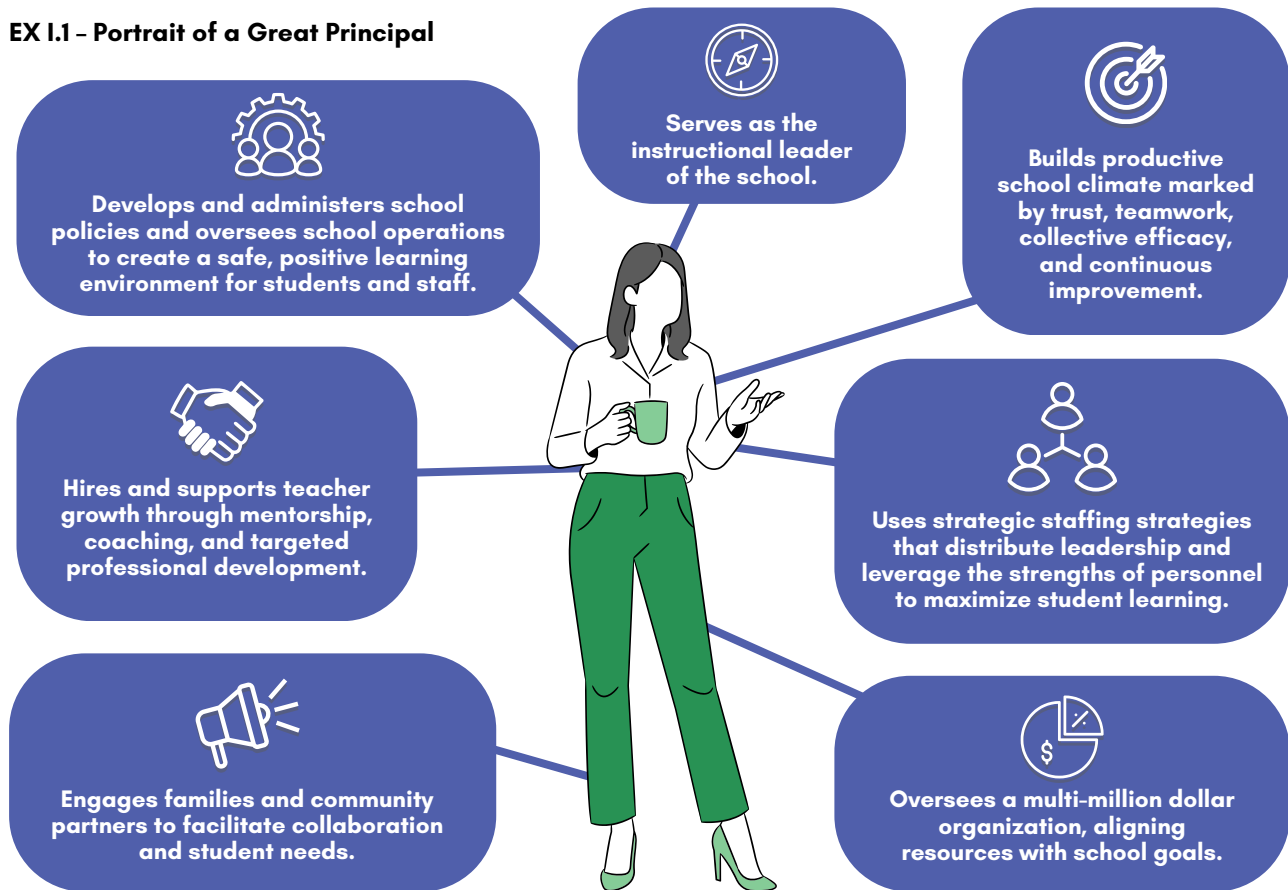
A competitive grants program that used state funds to incentivize Grantees to adopt best practices in principal preparation. TP3 enabled Grantees to prepare highly qualified school leadership candidates at no cost to the candidate. The program operated from 2015 to 2019, when it was merged with the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows program. The merger was completed in 2021.



I. IMPACT OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal holds the highest leadership position in a school and is responsible for setting the vision for the staff and students, establishing the organizational culture, providing instructional leadership throughout the building, hiring and managing an average of 50 direct reports, overseeing a multi-million dollar organization, and much more.ⁱ

EX I.1 – Portrait of a Great Principal



Source: [North Carolina Standards for School Executives](#)

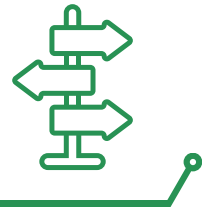
Given the breadth and depth of the principal’s responsibilities, research unsurprisingly identifies the principal as one of the most important school-based factors impacting student achievement – second only to classroom teachers.ⁱⁱ While the magnitude of principals’ impact is large, it is largely indirect – their success depends upon the ability to hire, retain, develop, and support teachers and other school staff.ⁱⁱⁱ When principals do so effectively, students and teachers thrive.

Students attending a school with an above-average principal (at the 75th percentile of effectiveness) gain the equivalent of 2.9 additional months of learning in math per year and 2.7 additional months of learning in reading per year compared to students attending a school with a below-average principal (at the 25th percentile of effectiveness).^{iv} Put into perspective, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Office of Learning Recovery estimated that students in grades 3-8 required approximately 5 additional months of instruction in reading and 11 additional months of instruction in math in order to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.^v Students who attend a school with an above-average principal stand a much better chance of making up lost ground than those who do not.

Effective principals do more than improve student achievement; they also increase the retention of effective teachers and diminish chronic absenteeism among students, each of which is positively correlated with student academic and behavioral outcomes.^{vi} Continuity of effective leadership is also critical – research finds that principal turnover has negative impacts on student achievement, teacher retention, and school climate.^{vii}

II. THE CHALLENGE:

ALIGNING PRINCIPAL PREPARATION AND THE ROLE OF THE 21ST CENTURY PRINCIPAL



Decades ago in the United States, principals were viewed primarily as supervisors, responsible for ensuring student and teacher compliance with school policies and procedures. This has not been true for some time, as the education shifts of the past half-century have placed increasing demands on the principal and have transformed the role from supervisor to visionary change leader.^{viii} It is a role that requires considerable talent, as well as rigorous, relevant preparation that provides both intensive skills development and meaningful practice on the job.

As the role of the principal evolves, so must principal preparation. Unfortunately, in the early part of the 21st century, most principal preparation programs failed to adapt and address the new demands on principals. Nationally, between 2000 and 2015, there was a significant increase in the number of institutions operating principal preparation programs (+72%) and in the number of degrees awarded to principal candidates (+102%). The largest increases in enrollment occurred in less-resourced, less-competitive institutions and the number of principal candidates graduated far outpaced the number of principal vacancies.^{ix, x}

An examination of these less-competitive institutions found that principal candidates were mostly taught by university faculty with limited experience working in school leadership, and that learning was often lecture-based and focused on theory, with little applied learning and no input from the school districts in which the aspiring principals would eventually work.^{xi} This dynamic played out in North Carolina, as well.

EX II.1 – Attributes of Principal Preparation in North Carolina Before the New NCPFP

A 2015 study undertaken by a graduate student at Duke University found that:



By default, the primary "consumer" of principal preparation programs were teachers, rather than the state of North Carolina. Programs were incentivized, therefore, to offer the least expensive, fastest option - with an increasing number offering programs completely online, as "add-on" programs with only a few short courses, and/or as night classes while candidates continued to teach full-time in a K-12 classroom.



Teachers self-selected into the principalship, with most principal preparation programs accepting nearly 100% of applicants and very few engaged in proactive recruitment.



Relationships between districts and principal preparation programs varied widely but were generally informal with district feedback having very little, if any, influence upon the preparation program's students, content, or structure.

Most principals entered the profession in North Carolina without sufficient on-the-job training. In other professions, individuals with executive potential are groomed in-house or receive a residency experience that prepares them for their new role as a leader. While North Carolina required a yearlong residency most principal candidates completed their residencies part-time and without the opportunity for meaningful, supervised practice leading a school.^{xii}



Given the self-selection of candidates into programs and the near-100% acceptance rate of applicants in many programs, this research raised concerns that North Carolina, like most other states in the nation, was accepting underqualified principal candidates. One indicator of the vast differences in principal preparation program quality at the time was the rates at which graduates went on to assume school leadership roles – data from 2016 show that some North Carolina principal preparation programs had placement rates near 80%, while others were as low as 30%.^{xiii}

In the traditional principal preparation model, the poor quality of preparation can lead to many candidates completing their training unprepared to take on a school leadership role. For instance, from 2014 to 2022, three of North Carolina’s 23 principal preparation programs graduated 1,566 candidates, making up 32% of all graduates during that time period. However, only 33% of those graduates took on a school leadership role, compared with 63% of graduates from all other principal preparation programs.^{xiv}

➤ The Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

While principal preparation in North Carolina prior to 2016 had many shortcomings, the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program was a relative bright spot in the state’s principal preparation landscape. Operating from 1993 to 2021, the Original NC Principal Fellows Program was a scholarship-based forgivable loan program for principal candidates who attended UNC-System principal preparation programs. Its graduates were more likely to enter into school leadership positions and had more positive impacts on student attendance, teacher retention, and teacher working conditions than principal graduates from other principal preparation programs.^{xv}

However, the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program fell short of implementing a comprehensive set of best practices in principal development. While Original NCPFP candidates went through an interview process for the scholarship, they were otherwise self-nominated. These candidates were able to choose from participating UNC-System principal preparation programs; however, the program’s governing body, the Principal Fellows Commission, did not ensure quality or accountability within those programs.^{xvi}

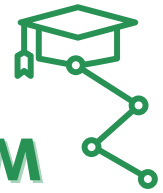
Further, the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program also did not assure leadership cohorts or full-time, paid residencies, which are key factors in best practices for school leadership development. Finally, scholarships for Principal Fellows fell short of covering all tuition costs, and participation in the program required candidates to be on leave for two years, both of which diminished participation and the selectivity of candidates in the program.^{xvii} By the 2010s, the program only graduated around 50 principal candidates per year, which was less than the number of available scholarships and not nearly enough to meet the state’s annual need for highly qualified principals.^{xviii}

Early Inspiration from *Race to the Top*

BEST NC’s engagement in the creation of TP3 was, in part, inspired by the success of the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA) at North Carolina State University. NELA was one of three regional leadership academies created in North Carolina under the federal *Race to the Top* program in 2010, alongside the Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy and the Sandhills Leadership Academy. NELA employed research-based practices in principal preparation, similar to those eventually prioritized under TP3. NELA principals served 14 rural districts in northeastern North Carolina, including seven of the ten lowest-performing districts in the state. NELA principal graduates led schools in these high-need districts to meet or exceed student growth expectations at high rates.^{xix, xx}



III. HISTORY OF TRANSFORMING PRINCIPAL PREPARATION (TP3) & THE NEW NC PRINCIPAL FELLOWS PROGRAM



➤ Founding of TP3 and Alignment with Best Practices in Principal Preparation

Recognizing the shortcomings of North Carolina’s principal recruitment and preparation system and the need to more closely align with established best practices, BEST NC worked successfully with state lawmakers in 2015 to create and provide seed funding for a new approach to principal preparation. The initiative was known as “Transforming Principal Preparation,” or TP3. Introduced in the House as HB 902, TP3 was created in the 2015 state budget with an initial investment of \$1 million.^{xxi}

The TP3 program was established in 2015 to improve student performance by leveraging competition and best practices to enable Grantees to recruit, prepare, and support the best principal workforce in the country.

The TP3 program made state funds available to Grantees through a competitive grant program, with traditional public and independent institutions of higher education, as well as non-traditional nonprofit entities eligible to apply. Through state funding, TP3 incentivized the adoption of key research-based components of successful principal preparation nationwide, including:

- Proactive, intentional recruitment efforts;
- A high bar for entry;
- Rigorous, relevant coursework;
- A full-time, paid residency;
- A focus on authentic partnerships with districts; and
- Targeted preparation for service in high-need schools and districts.^{xxii}

Key structural factors in the model that ensure these best practices in leadership development include:

- **Competition:** Leverages a competitive grant program to ensure the state’s top-tier programs are supporting a robust North Carolina principal leadership pipeline.
- **Selectivity:** Incentivizes Grantees to accept, prepare, and support the highest-quality candidates with accountability for program quality every six years through the grant selection cycle.
- **Accountability:** The State provides funding to Grantees and prioritizes a focus on the quality of the principal graduates and not on the cost/time burden on the candidate. In this model, the State becomes the primary customer of principal preparation programs, rather than the candidate (see page 6).

“I am convinced that our students deserve the very best school principals we can recruit and train. North Carolina’s recently merged Transforming Principal Preparation Program and Principal Fellows Program is intended to provide that crucial leadership for schools. We need to maintain and continue to improve these programs through the use of practices shown to produce the best outcomes for students.”

Representative Hugh Blackwell
NC House of Representatives District 86

“*My first big realization was just how powerful the yearlong internship is compared to what colleagues of mine are doing in other programs. Being on site, all the time, means that we are in place at the instant those learning experiences happen and those teachable moments occur. There is no way you could ever really plan for the depth of the experience I received.*”

Elizabeth Cross, Union County Public Schools
Graduated UNC Charlotte TP3 Fellows Program 2022

The central tenets of TP3’s design align closely with research that identifies common best practices across high-performing principal preparation programs, shifting away from traditional principal preparation in several key ways:

EX III.1 – Best Practices in Principal Preparation

	Traditional Principal Preparation		Best Practices in Principal Preparation
Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates self-select into programs with minimal vetting. • Admission is largely based upon test scores and GPA rather than demonstrated teaching excellence or leadership aptitudes. • Candidate pools do not reflect the teacher and student populations of the district. 	>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive recruitment, in partnership with local school districts, of expert teacher candidates with demonstrated leadership potential and established intention to take on a school leadership role upon graduation. • Candidates better reflect the teacher and student populations of the school district.
University-District Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates are selected without regard for school leadership pipeline needs. • Candidates self-select into preparation programs, without district input. 	>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment efforts are aligned with each district’s school leadership needs. • District plays a role in developing candidate admissions criteria and/or recommends candidates.
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coursework is focused more on theory than practice. • Instruction is lecture-based with mostly traditional written assignments in non-applied settings. • Faculty have limited experience working in school leadership. 	>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on instructional leadership, school improvement, family and community relations, management, and organizational culture. • Course content is active, including action research, field-based projects, reflective journals, and portfolios. • Performance-based assessments aligned to school leadership standards occur throughout the program. • Faculty have school leadership experience and expertise.
Program Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs are designed to minimize candidate time investment – many classes are at night and/or in online-only formats. • Candidates matriculate into the program and proceed as individuals, without the benefits of a cohort structure and without school-based coaching and mentorship. 	>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority is given to rich, personalized experiences, often in-person, including coaching and mentoring from faculty with school leadership experience and a gradual release of candidates to develop their own leadership skills. • Cohort structures are utilized to facilitate collegial support.
Residency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residency experiences are limited (sometimes 300 hours or fewer) and are random or segmented; candidates only partially experience the school principal role. • The cost burden of a full-time residency falls on the candidates, who must resign their teaching positions and work without a stipend. This creates a disincentive for a full-time residency and pushes candidates to take on shorter, less authentic residency learning experiences. 	>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation programs incorporate an immersive (1,000+ hours) residency with high-quality principal mentors, allowing for candidates to fully experience the school principal role. • Financial support (e.g., a stipend comparable to a teacher’s salary) is provided to candidates, allowing for full-time study and a commitment to principal preparation.

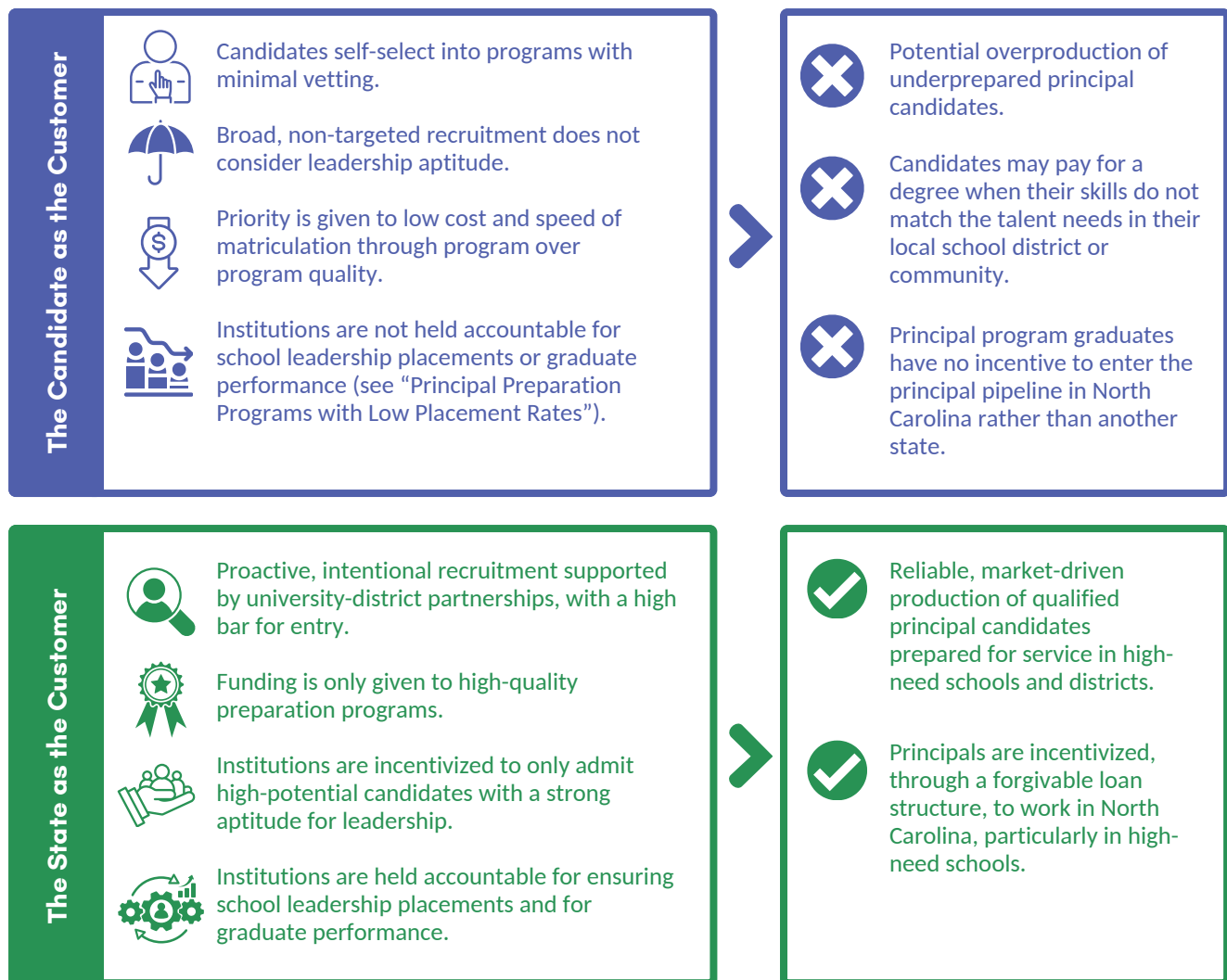
Sources: [Darling-Hammond et al. \(2007\)](#); [Education Development Center \(2022\)](#); [Wing Institute \(Accessed 2023\)](#).

➤ Founding of TP3 (continued)

The TP3 program leveraged a competitive grant process to ensure that programs receiving grant funding adhered closely to the best practices found in Exhibit III.1. In doing so, the TP3 program was able to overcome many of the challenges characterizing principal preparation in North Carolina. Grant applications open two years before the end of each grant period, allowing new Grantees ample time to establish district partnerships, recruit candidates, and hire the staff necessary to instruct students and administer the program.

An overarching focus of the TP3 approach, in addition to recognizing and rewarding the state’s most outstanding preparation programs, was to empower Grantees to flip the traditional “customer” relationship from one focused on principal candidates’ available time and ability to pay to one that centered the state’s priority to increase student achievement. By fully funding candidates’ tuition and residency, North Carolina enabled Grantees to be highly selective with new candidates and provide them with the deep, practice-based preparation they needed. No longer forced to chase tuition dollars, North Carolina’s TP3 programs were able to make serving K-12 students, schools, and districts their primary focus.

EX III.2 – The Candidate vs. the State as the Customer in Principal Preparation





➤ Initial Implementation of TP3

In 2016, following an initial planning period, the TP3 program received an additional \$3.5 million in state funding, bringing total state funding to \$4.5 million. That year, five Grantees were selected to receive the first round of funding. These programs began enrolling students in 2016 and graduated the first 117 TP3 principal graduates in 2018. Those Grantees were:

- High Point University Leadership Academy
- North Carolina State University (Durham Principal Leadership Academy & North Carolina Leadership Academy)
- Sandhills Regional Educational Consortium Leadership Academy
- UNC Greensboro Principal Preparation Program in Rural Schools
- Western Carolina University Executive Leadership Program

➤ Merger with the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

Running in parallel to TP3, North Carolina had a longstanding scholarship program for principals. Created in 1993, the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (see page 3) provided forgivable loans to principal candidates at UNC-System institutions with a qualifying Master's in School Administration program. The state invested \$3.25 million annually in the program, which graduated approximately 50 principal candidates each year.^{xxiii}

Following the successful launch of TP3, it became sensible to examine the strengths and weaknesses of TP3 and the Original NCPFP in order to reduce administrative redundancies and apply best practices from each model into one cohesive program. So, in 2019, in alignment with the recommendations of BEST NC's original TP3 policy brief, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation merging TP3 with the Original NCPFP over two years. At the time of the merger, legislative language limited the merged program to eight Grantees to ensure the program was both competitive and cost-effective.^{xxiv} The policy also revised the Principal Fellows Commission appointments (see Appendix D) to include more human resources and other leadership perspectives from both the education and private sectors.

The Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program



NCPFP

"Strong Leaders, Strong Schools"

Created: 1993

Structure: Scholarship-based forgivable loan program supporting principal candidates attending 11 of 16 UNC-System institutions

Graduates: Approximately 50/year

Budget: \$3.25 million annually

EX III.3 – Merger of the Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program and Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3)

	Original North Carolina Principal Fellows Program 2004 – 2021	Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3) 2015 – 2021	New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program 2019 – Present
Fiscal Agent	North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority	North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority	North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority
Governance	North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission	North Carolina Alliance for School Leadership Development (nonprofit entity selected through RFP process)	North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission
Funding Structure	Merit-based scholarships to individual candidates attending UNC-System principal prep programs	Competitive grants to public and private institutions of higher education and other eligible entities	Competitive grants to public and private institutions of higher education and other eligible entities
Candidate Selection	Self-selected	Active recruitment facilitated by district-Grantee partnerships	Active recruitment facilitated by district-Grantee partnerships
Customer	Candidate	State of North Carolina	State of North Carolina

After the merger, the combined program assumed the Principal Fellows name (referred to as the New NCPFP) and its commission-based governance, while retaining the competitive grant structure, university-district partnerships, and rigorous candidate selection and preparation of TP3. The merged program pooled the funds from both programs, totaling \$7.9 million. Shortly after the merger, grant terms were extended from five to six years in order to ensure Grantees could fully prepare three cohorts of principal graduates during each grant period (two years per cohort).^{xxxv}

In 2020, the New NCPFP issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) and selected three new programs, bringing the total to eight programs. These three programs, along with the five original TP3 Grantees, graduated 164 principal candidates in 2022:

- [UNC Charlotte TP3 Fellows](#)
- [East Carolina University PIRATE Leadership Academy](#)
- [North Carolina Central University Central Carolina Principal Preparation Program](#)

In 2022, a new grant cycle saw two additional programs awarded grant funding:

- [UNC-Chapel Hill UNC Leads](#)
- [Appalachian State University Principal Fellows Program](#)

Beginning with the first class of TP3 graduates in 2018, all principal graduates completed their two-year preparation in even years (2018, 2020, and 2022). This presented an employment challenge, with far fewer highly qualified principal candidates entering the pipeline in odd years. In 2022, the North Carolina General Assembly appropriated an additional \$1.5 million to use for odd-year cohorts to increase the overall number of candidates and smooth the influx of principal candidates into the pipeline, bringing total state funding to \$9.4M, or approximately \$6 per student per year. For context, and to demonstrate the high return-on-investment of this program, the current total state investment for K-12 education is around \$7,000 per student per year, and textbooks and classroom supplies cost the state around \$120 per student per year.^{xxxvi}

Why Eight Grantees?



The New NCPFP's limit of eight Grantees is based upon the premise that competition and program selectivity lead to the highest-quality principal preparation and, therefore, the best-prepared candidates entering the principal pipeline in North Carolina public schools. Initiatives in Illinois and Finland, for example, improved their principal and teacher preparation systems through increased program competition:

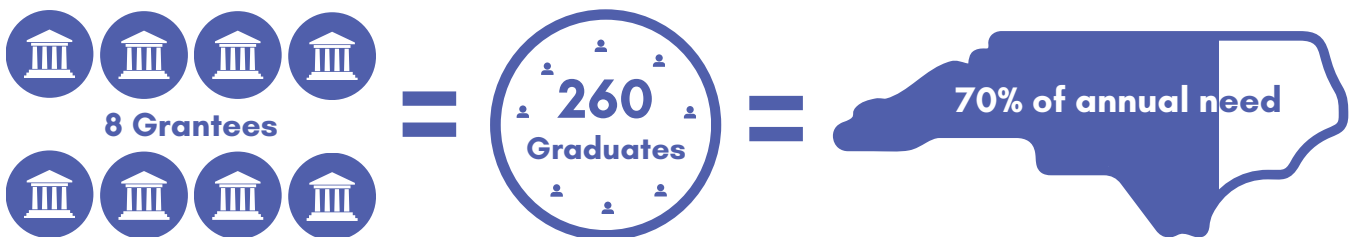
- In 2010, the Illinois General Assembly passed a sweeping overhaul of rules governing principal preparation in the state. The move came on the heels of pointed recommendations from a state-level commission, which found that many of the institutions providing degrees offered shallow curricula, weak faculty, and limited residency experiences. New rules adopted by the Illinois General Assembly required district-institution partnerships, a rigorous residency, and a host of coursework, staffing, and candidate selection stipulations. As a result, the number of institutions offering principal preparation degrees and the number of candidates shrunk, while measures of program quality (such as the breadth and depth of the residency, coursework rigor, and district partnerships) improved and candidate selectivity increased.^{xxvii, xxviii}
- In the 1970s, Finnish policymakers required that teacher preparation programs could only be established in the most competitive institutions, significantly restricting the number of teaching institutions relative to the supply of teachers they needed. They also increased the overall selectivity of teacher preparation. For instance, in 2010, there were 6,000 applicants competing for 660 primary school teacher preparation slots, meaning Finnish teacher candidates were being recruited from the top 20% of high school graduating classes, based on a combination of academics and aptitude. Following those changes, Finnish student academic outcomes surged, placing them near the top of developed nations on international tests of student achievement.^{xxix}

There are currently 23 degree-granting principal preparation programs in the state of North Carolina.^{xxx} Capping the program at eight Grantees ensures that approximately one-third of principal preparation programs in the state receive grant funding in each cycle, creating a healthy balance between accessibility, capacity, and competition. Limiting the New NCPFP to eight Grantees also increases the cost-effectiveness of state resources. Spreading funding across additional institutions would increase total overhead costs for the program.

Assume, hypothetically, that the eight current Grantees operate with 20% in overhead costs. This equates to approximately \$2 million of the current \$9.4 million annual state funding of the New NCPFP, or about \$250,000 per Grantee. Since overhead costs are, by definition, fixed, increasing the number of institutions from eight to ten would increase overhead costs by \$500,000. This increase would represent a 25% hike in overhead costs (from \$2 million to \$2.5 million) across the New NCPFP. As a result of these increased overhead costs, fewer candidates could be served within the existing budget.

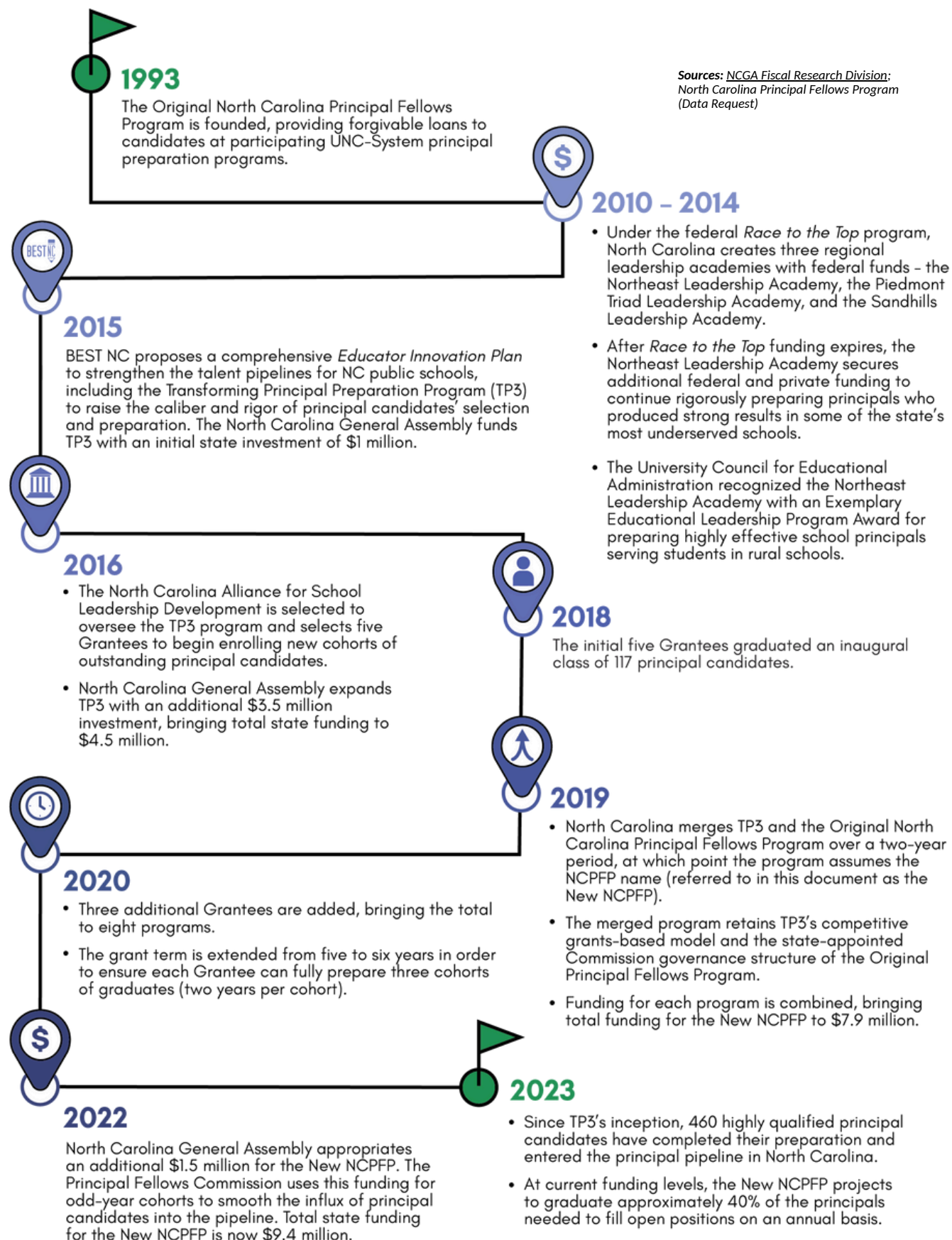
EX III.4 – How Eight Grantees Can Provide 70%* of Annual Principal Need

In a recent capacity survey of the eight current Grantees, Grantee program directors were asked to estimate the number of graduates their program could grow to serve annually within the next five to ten years without compromising quality. The eight Grantees estimated that they could graduate 260 total principal candidates by 2033, assuming state funding is available, meeting a full 70% of the state's annual need. This would translate to each Grantee supporting 2 to 3 cohorts of 10-15 candidates each year, which is a reasonable number. This also allows for 30% of principal openings to be filled by outstanding candidates from the state's remaining principal preparation programs, as well as out-of-state candidates.



*There are an estimated 360 total principal openings annually in North Carolina. This number assumes principal attrition returns to pre-pandemic levels (approximately 13%).

EX III.5 – Timeline of the TP3/New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program



Sources: [NCGA Fiscal Research Division](#); [North Carolina Principal Fellows Program \(Data Request\)](#)

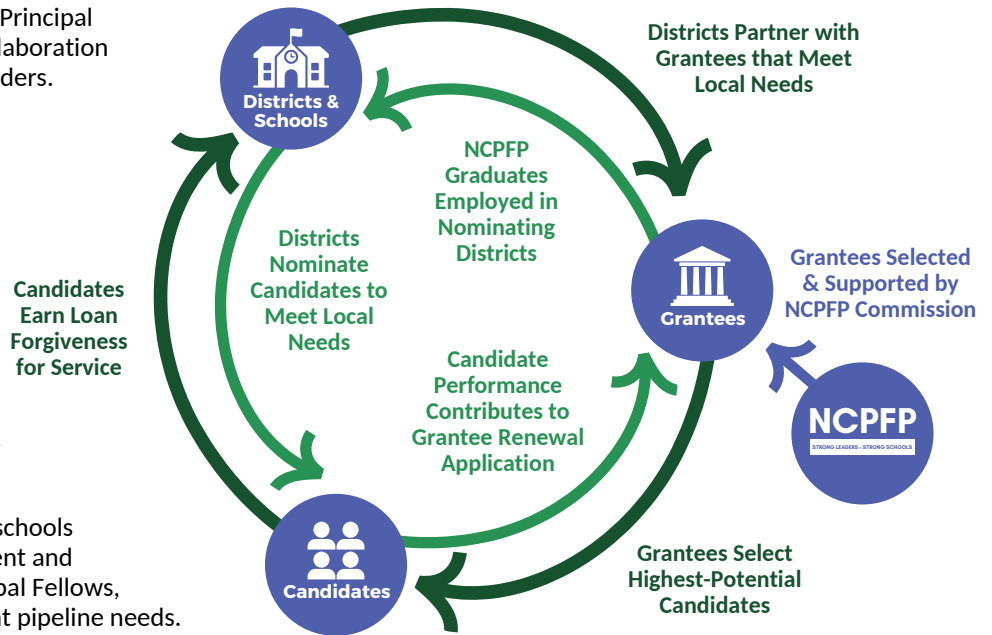
➤ Structure of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

Competitive Grants Approach

The success of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program depends upon the collaboration and leadership of a number of stakeholders.

- The Principal Fellows Commission establishes selection and renewal criteria for principal preparation programs seeking grant funding and selects Grantees, while the Principal Fellows Leadership Team executes a vision for the program, manages day-to-day operations, and facilitates communication and collaboration between Grantees, school districts, Principal Fellows candidates, and other stakeholders.
- School districts and public charter schools engage in both the initial recruitment and the ultimate employment of Principal Fellows, ensuring alignment with their talent pipeline needs.
- The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority serves as the fiscal agent for the Principal Fellows Trust Fund and monitors the implementation of forgivable loans of up to \$20,000 per year for two years to Principal Fellows candidates.
- Grantees provide world-class preparation to candidates while being held accountable, through the grant renewal process, for the ultimate success of their graduates.

EX. III.6 - New NCPFP Organizational Structure

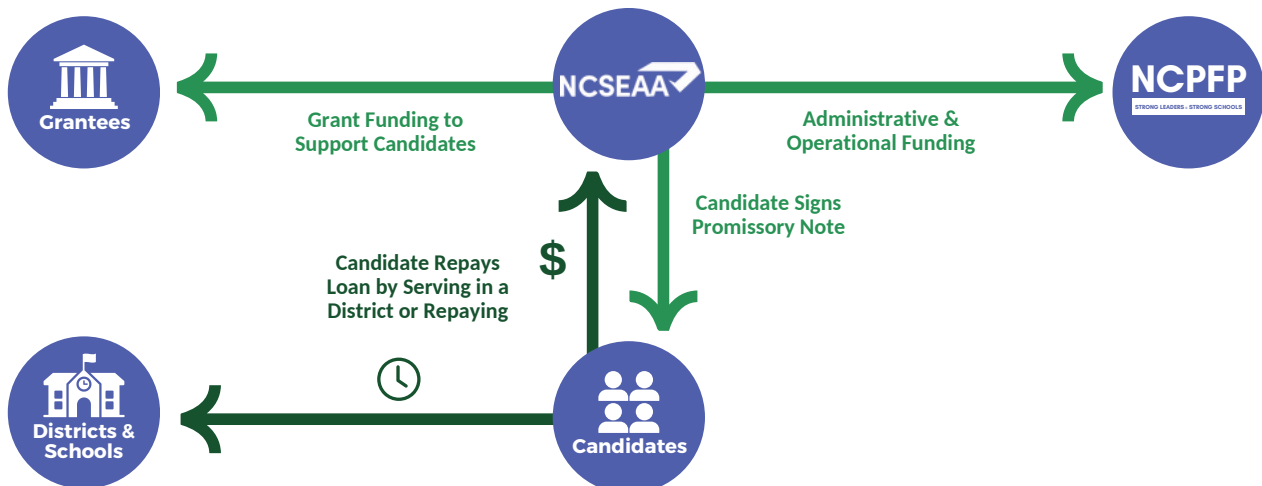


How Does Loan Forgiveness Work?

For each year a New NCPFP graduate works as a school administrator in a North Carolina public school, 25% of their total loan is forgiven. If the school qualifies as a high-need school, as defined in state statute, 50% of the loan is forgiven for each year of service.



EX. III.7 - Flow of Funding in the New NCPFP



District-Grantee Partnerships Support New NCPFP Candidates Throughout Their Preparation

Each Grantee is required to establish partnerships with school districts. The partnering school districts then recommend high-potential candidates for admission into Grantee principal preparation programs. Grantees use their funding to support all aspects of candidates' two-year educational experiences. During the first year of the program, candidates take courses while continuing in their teaching roles, then, during the second year, they take a leave of absence to complete a full-time, paid residency at a school in their district. As with all Masters of School Administration-granting institutions, New NCPFP Grantees can tap into the Masters of School Administration Intern Stipend Fund to provide candidates with a salary equivalent to their teaching salary or that of a first-year assistant principal (whichever is higher) while they complete their residency in the second year of the program.^{xxxii} Additionally, school districts and New NCPFP programs ensure candidates' access to health insurance benefits and local salary supplements during the year of their full-time residency.^{xxxiii}

Graduates earn loan forgiveness by working in a school leadership position in North Carolina public schools. Under the New NCPFP statute, for each year a graduate works as a school administrator in a North Carolina public school, 25% of their total loan is forgiven, with total forgiveness earned in four years. Additionally, loan forgiveness is accelerated if the graduate works in a school that is designated as a high-need school, with 50% of the loan forgiven each year.

Currently, all schools receiving Title I funding, all persistently low-achieving schools, and all high schools with a graduation rate of less than 75% and the middle schools which feed into those high schools qualify as high-need schools.^{xxxiii} This broad definition of high-need means 80% of all schools are considered high-need, diluting the intent of accelerated loan forgiveness in high-need schools (see Recommendation 4m).

Post-Graduate Mentoring and Ongoing Support

While principal graduates of the New NCPFP are rigorously prepared, the transition to a school leadership role is a significant responsibility. Currently, there are no formal guidelines or expectations for Grantees to provide post-graduation mentoring and support for New NCPFP graduates working as school leaders, and the availability of post-graduation mentoring is not considered for grant applications.^{xxxiv} That said, Grantees have a strong incentive to support their graduates, since the success of their graduates reflects on the quality of their program when they apply for grant renewal. As such, most Grantees do provide some ongoing support, but the methods used vary and not all Grantees provide similar levels of support for their graduates (see Recommendation 4f).



Are Independent Colleges and Universities Eligible?

YES! Since 2016, two NCICU institutions have applied for and been awarded a TP3/New NCPFP grant.

Form Follows Function

In any organization, program structure and systems should reflect the organization's long-term goals. Within the New NCPFP, the competitive grants approach and district-Grantee partnerships that characterize the program's structure are purposefully aligned with the program's core values (see Exhibit III.8). For instance, a competitive grants approach ensures "innovative and high-quality preparation," and district-Grantee partnerships support the program's ability to "attract promising school leaders" and eventually "meet a majority of the demand" in North Carolina's principal pipeline.

EX. III.8 - Core Values of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

Attract promising school leader candidates

Provide innovative and high-quality preparation through coursework, practice-based experiences in schools, and leadership coaching

Produce effective school leaders who positively impact student achievement, school working conditions, and teacher retention

Meet a majority of the demand needs for school leaders in North Carolina



Grantee Partnerships with Regional Education Service Alliances (RESAs)

One of the current New NCPFP Grantees is a partnership between Central Carolina Regional Education Service Alliance and North Carolina Central University. RESAs can help connect school district leaders and principal preparation program directors to encourage partnerships and recruitment and, in some cases, can provide funding to principal preparation programs. Principal Fellows candidates in the Appalachian State University Principal Fellows Program, for instance, benefit from \$10,000 in additional funding for professional development from the Northwest RESA.



IV. CURRENT PICTURE AND IMPACT OF TP3/THE NEW NCPFP

Since TP3's inception in 2015, TP3 and New NCPFP Grantees have set themselves apart from other principal preparation programs in the state in many ways. TP3 and New NCPFP Grantees have utilized best practices in principal preparation (see Exhibit III.1 on page 5) to recruit, prepare, and support high-quality principal candidates who graduate ready to lead efforts to improve student learning outcomes. In part because of the competition and selectivity of TP3 and the New NCPFP, Grantee programs tend to differ from other North Carolina principal preparation programs in the pool of candidates from which they draw, characteristics of the programs themselves, and the outcomes of program graduates.

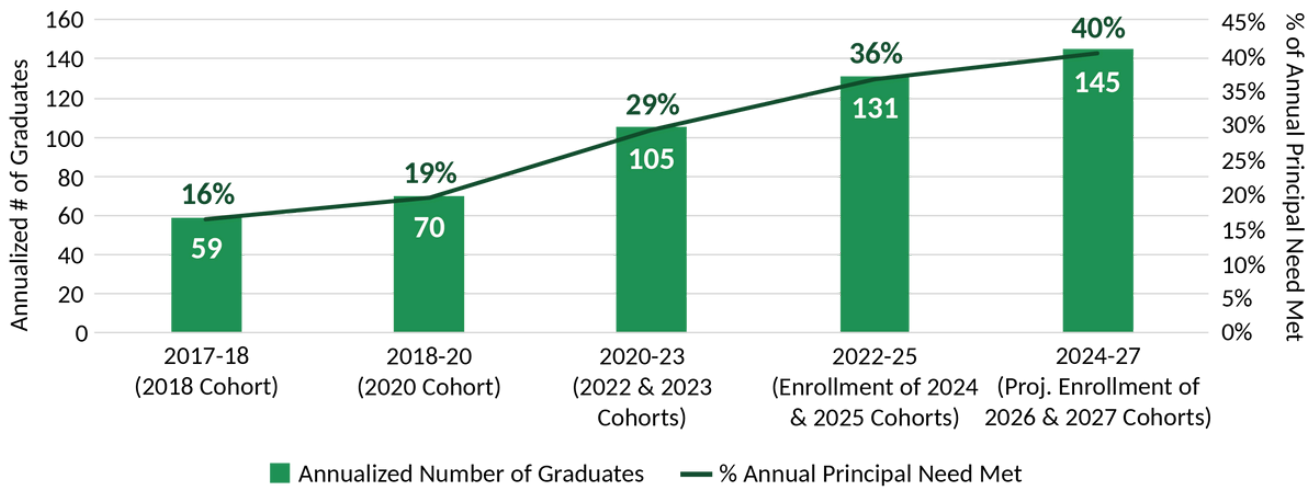
Program Impact

Program Graduates

Since TP3 was created, 467 highly qualified principal candidates have completed their preparation and entered the principal pipeline in North Carolina. For context, there are 2,760 public schools and an estimated 360 total principal openings annually in North Carolina.

At current funding levels, the New NCPFP can produce 40% of the principals needed annually in North Carolina.^{xxxv} As the program continues to grow, it is important to track principal attrition and mobility on an ongoing basis to ensure the New NCPFP can continue to meet the needs of the state over time (see Recommendation 3c).

EX IV.1 – Growth of TP3/NCPFP Over Time: Principal Candidates Graduated per Year and Estimated Percentage of Annual Principal Need Since Inception



Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)

Placement in High-Need Schools

Since 2018, of the 467 graduates of TP3/New NCPFP programs, 426 have taken on a school leadership role. 79% of those school leaders worked in a high-need school, as defined in the Principal Fellows Program statute.^{xxxvi}

Between 2018 and 2023

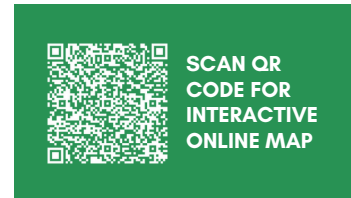
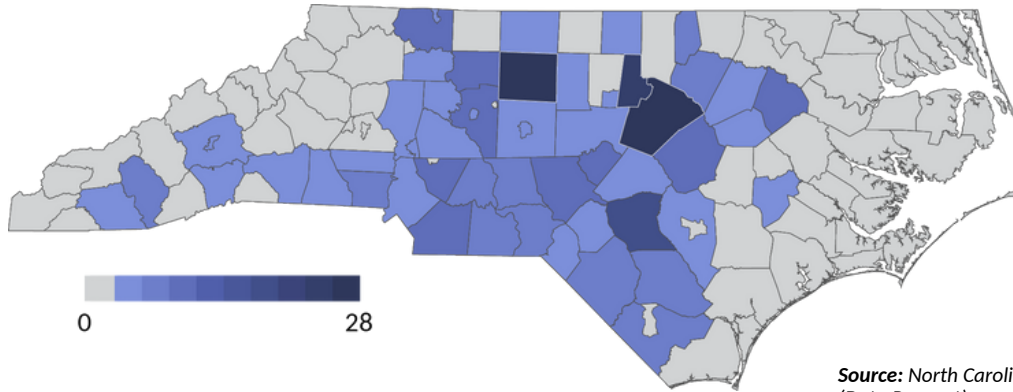
79%

of TP3/New NCPFP graduates who took on a school leadership role have worked in a high-need school.

Placement in North Carolina Public School Districts

As of 2023, 83 of North Carolina's 115 public school districts, as well as eight charter schools, have hired a TP3 or New NCPFP graduate as a school leader. Larger, more urban districts have had the greatest number of graduates placed, with Guilford County Schools having more school leaders placed – 28 – than any other public school district in the state.^{xxxvii}

EX IV.2 – TP3 and New NCPFP Graduates Placed as School Leaders in K-12 Traditional Public Schools, by District (2018 to 2023)

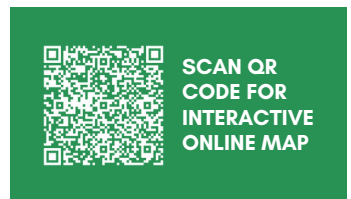
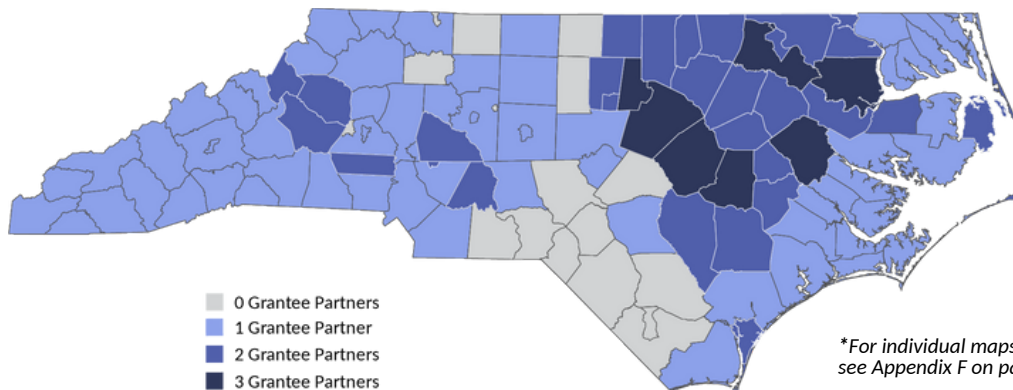


Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)

District Partnerships with New NCPFP Grantees

As of the end of January 2024, 98 of 115 North Carolina public school districts, as well as NC DPI's Office of Charter Schools, had a Letter of Commitment (LOC) that established a formal partnership with at least one New NCPFP Grantee. Currently, districts without Letters of Commitment are concentrated in the central region of the state, particularly the Sandhills region. It is important to note that any public school district can engage with any of the Grantees, regardless of whether they have an LOC already in place, so this is a problem that can be mitigated (see Recommendation 4c).

EX IV.3 – New NCPFP Partnerships with North Carolina Public School Districts (2022-23)*



*For individual maps of District-Grantee partnerships, see Appendix F on page 32.

Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

New NCPFP Grantees placed **93%** of 2022 graduates into a school leadership role in the following school year. By comparison, research finds that, typically, between 50–60% of principal preparation program graduates take on a school leadership role within five years of graduation.

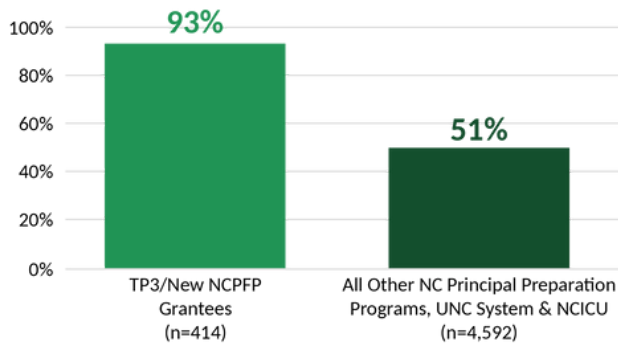


Placement in School Leadership Roles

The most compelling evidence of the effectiveness of New NCPFP programs thus far is the consistency with which graduates go on to school leadership positions, reliably filling the North Carolina principal pipeline with highly qualified candidates, initially serving as assistant principals in most cases. Research finds that, typically, between 50-60% of principal preparation program graduates take on a school leadership role within five years of graduation.^{xxxviii, xxxix, xl}

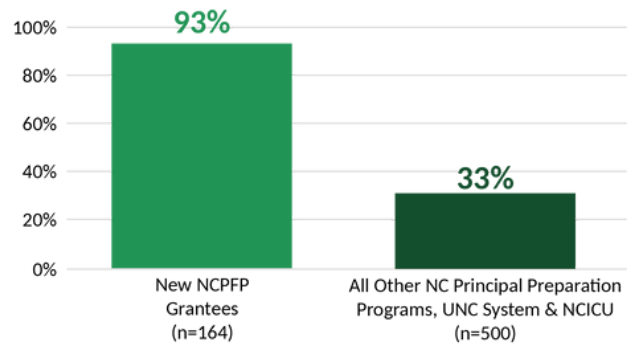
State-level data from 2014-2022 reveal that a full 93% of TP3/New NCPFP graduates were hired into a school leadership role, compared with just 51% of graduates from all other North Carolina principal preparation programs, including UNC-System and private institutions.^{xli} Focusing on just the most recent graduates, among 2022 principal preparation program graduates in North Carolina, New NCPFP candidates were almost three times more likely to move directly into a school leadership position compared with graduates of other principal preparation programs.

EX IV.4 - Percentage of Principal Preparation Program Graduates Taking on a School Leadership Role (2014 to 2022)



Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request); NC DPI (Data Request)

EX IV.5 - Percentage of Principal Preparation Program Graduates in School Leadership Role in First Year After Graduation (Class of 2022)



Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request); NC DPI (Data Request)

New NCPFP graduates being more likely than other North Carolina principal preparation program graduates to obtain a school leadership position post-graduation can be attributed to a host of factors, including:



New NCPFP graduates are more highly qualified candidates to begin with, indicated by higher evaluation scores and rates of National Board Certification (see Exhibits IV.6 and IV.7 on page 16);



New NCPFP graduates are more likely to be identified by school and district leaders for their leadership potential and recruited in the context of partnerships between districts and Grantees (see Exhibit IV.10 on page 17);



New NCPFP graduates are more intent on entering the principal pipeline, as evidenced by survey data (see Exhibit IV.9 on page 17);



New NCPFP graduates are required to serve as school leaders in a North Carolina public school within seven years of graduation or be subject to repayment of their forgivable loan; and/or



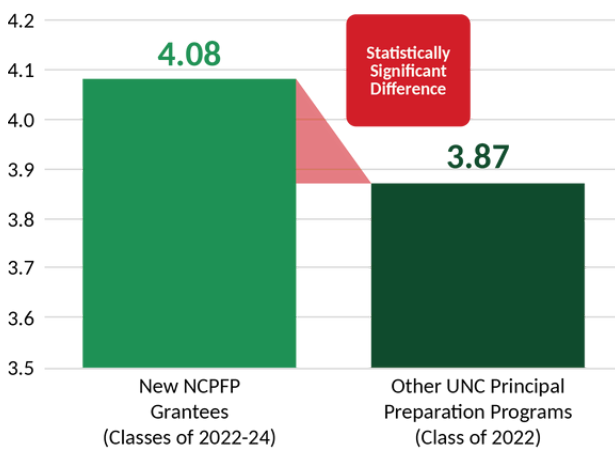
New NCPFP graduates are trained by Grantees offering the most rigorous programming, as evidenced by their selection in the competitive RFP process.

➤ Candidate Snapshot

Effectiveness as Teachers

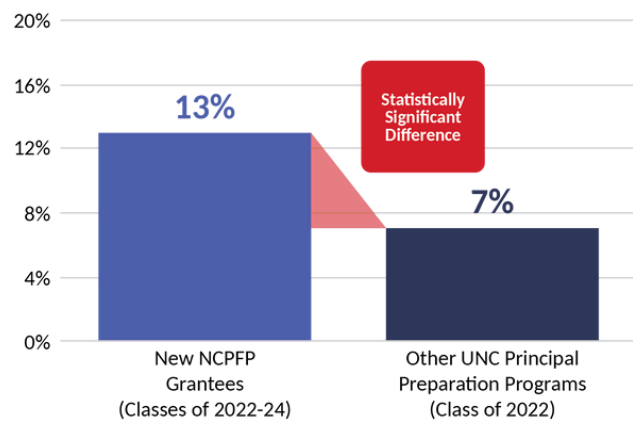
New NCPFP graduates are more likely to be effective teachers in the year before enrolling in their program, according to a study conducted by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC), which compared New NCPFP principal candidates and graduates from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 graduating classes to 2022 principal preparation program graduates at other UNC-System institutions. When they were selected, New NCPFP graduates had higher average North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) scores and were more likely to be National Board Certified. Research has found that National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) are more effective, as measured by student growth scores, than teachers who are not certified.^{xlii, xliii} Additionally, New NCPFP graduates had higher average Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) scores than other UNC-System principal preparation program graduates, but the difference was not statistically significant.^{xliv}

EX IV.6 – Average NCEES Ratings of Principal Preparation Program Graduates



Source: Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)

EX IV.7 – Percentage of National Board-Certified Teachers Among Principal Preparation Program Graduates

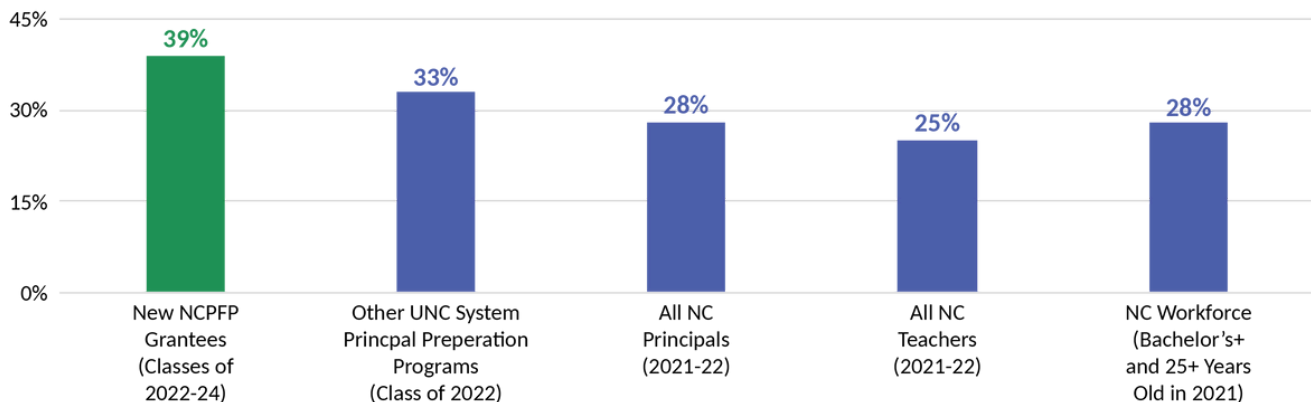


Source: Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)

Demographics

There is not a statistically significant difference between the percentage of candidates of color at New NCPFP Grantees and other UNC-System institutions. Candidates in both the New NCPFP and other UNC-System institutions are more diverse than the current principal, teacher, and college-educated workforces in North Carolina. In fact, the New NCPFP is 55% more diverse than the teacher workforce, which is the pool from which all principal candidates are drawn.^{xlv, xlvi, xlvii} This indicates that the New NCPFP is able to sustain candidate diversity.

EX IV.8 – Percentage Candidates of Color in Principal Preparation Programs Compared to North Carolina Principal, Teacher, and Total College-Educated Workforce

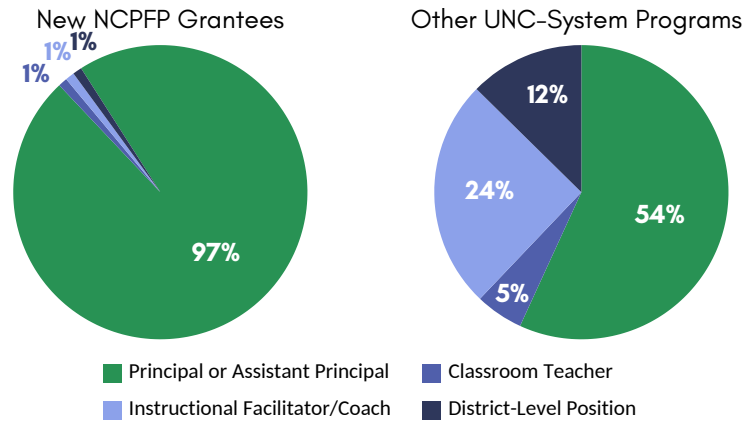


Sources: Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC); U.S. Census Bureau, Table S0201; NC DPI Statistical Profile 16

Intention to Enter School Leadership Role

Survey data collected by EPIC show that 2022 graduates of New NCPFP Grantees expressed a more clearly defined intention to enter a school leadership role in the subsequent school year than other UNC-System principal preparation program graduates. 97% percent of 2022 New NCPFP graduates expressed a desire to work as a school leader in the year after graduation, compared with 54% of 2022 graduates at other UNC-System institutions.^{xlviii}

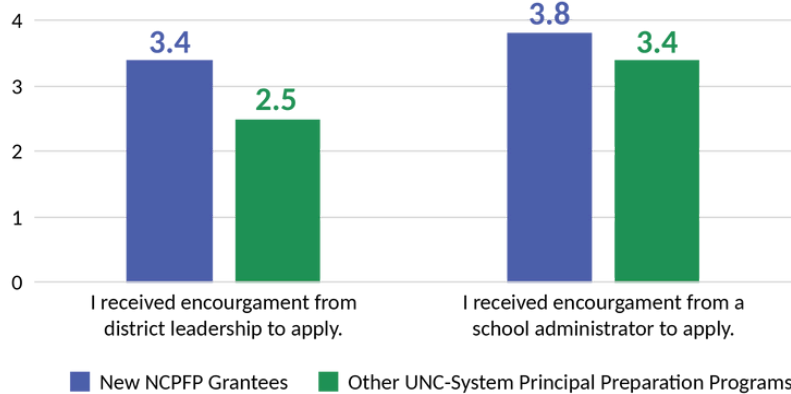
EX IV.9 – Principal Preparation Program Candidate Survey Responses: Desired Position Next School Year (Class of 2022)



Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)

Program Attributes

EX IV.10 – Principal Preparation Program Candidate Survey Responses: Active Recruitment (Class of 2022)



Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)

Active Recruitment

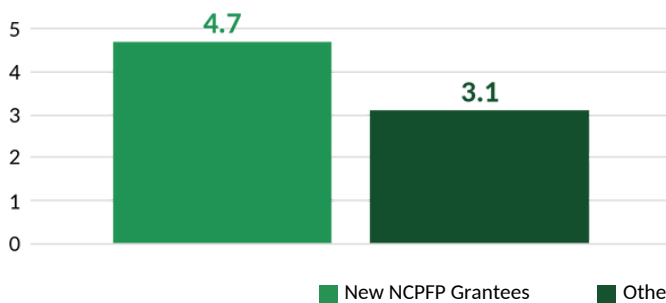
A key feature of the New NCPFP program is the active recruitment of candidates. Recent candidate perception data revealed that New NCPFP candidates are more likely to be encouraged to apply by their school districts than candidates in other UNC-System principal preparation programs. This suggests that candidates are identified for their leadership potential to a greater extent in the New NCPFP.^{xlix} That said, a recent report from EPIC found variation in program application and selection practices. Namely, some school districts were more actively involved in candidate nomination and selection than others (see Recommendation 4d).^l

Financial Support

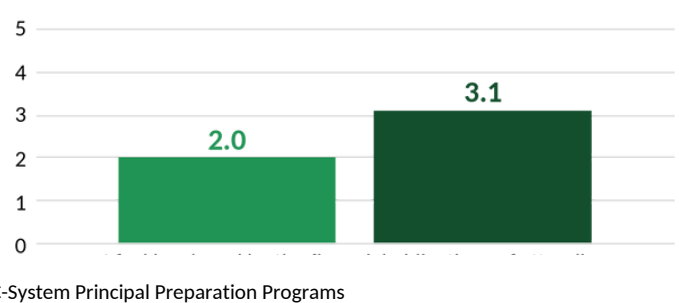
New NCPFP graduates also felt less financially burdened by their principal preparation studies, according to candidate survey data. This is likely owed to distinct program features, including the New NCPFP’s forgivable loan structure, as well as the salary-equivalent stipend that candidates receive while completing their full-time residency.^{li}

EX IV.11 – Principal Preparation Program Candidate Survey Responses: Financial Support (Class of 2022)

The availability of financial support influenced my decision to enroll in my current principal preparation program.



I feel burdened by the financial obligation of attending my principal preparation program.



Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)



My internship experience gave me the opportunity to fail forward with my mentor principal by my side. The daily reflections of my experience while journeying through the internship allowed my leadership support team to navigate my planned experiences while capturing the unplanned learning experience. Luckily for me, I was offered a job at the same school due to my job performance while on the internship.

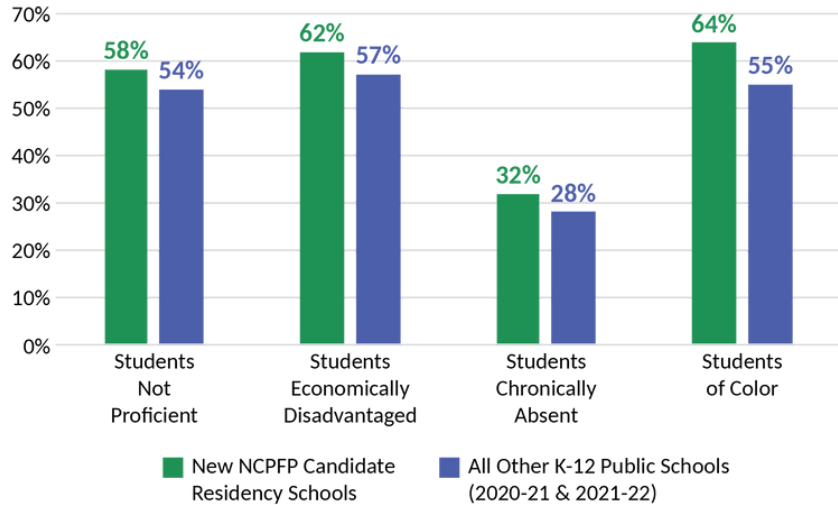
James Beasley-Mungin, Lee County Schools
Graduated UNC Greensboro Principal Preparation Program in Rural Schools 2022



Residency in High-Need Schools

By design, the New NCPFP intentionally recruits and prepares high-quality candidates to meet our state's greatest educational needs. The schools in which New NCPFP candidates complete their residency mostly reflect this priority. Schools in which New NCPFP candidates complete their residency have more students not proficient, more economically disadvantaged students, more chronically absent students, and more students of color compared to the K-12 public school student population in North Carolina (see Exhibit IV.12 to the right).ⁱⁱⁱ

EX IV.12 – Principal Residency School Traits of Principal Preparation Program Graduates



Source: Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)

Residency Placement with Effective Principals

Research finds that a full-time residency for school leader candidates is more impactful when the candidate is paired with a highly effective principal, which is why this is a priority for the New NCPFP.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ A recent EPIC report examined data on the quality of New NCPFP mentor principals, including mentor principals' years of experience, tenure at their current school, and NCEES ratings. These data provide a picture of the characteristics of mentor principals but are not explicitly tied to student outcomes (see Recommendation 3d).

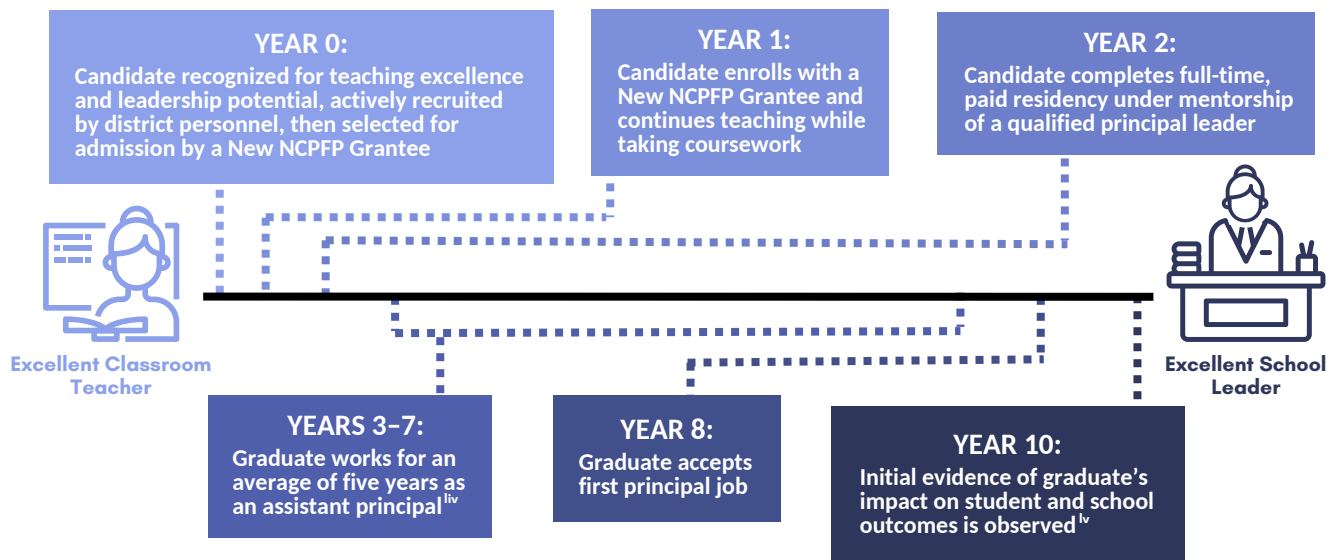
Ongoing Program Evaluation

Measuring Student Impact

As with any investment of tax dollars, it is appropriate to assess the program's return on that investment. Student performance data will eventually provide information about that return (see Recommendation 3a). However, at this time, data on the impact of TP3/New NCPFP is limited mostly to candidate placement and perceptions because student outcomes for graduates are not yet available. The length of time it takes for candidates enrolling in the program to begin having an impact on student performance as a principal is approximately 10 years (see Exhibit IV.13 on the next page).

Using this 10-year window as a baseline, it will be possible to meaningfully assess the impact of the first few cohorts of graduates on student performance around 2028, and the data will grow more robust in each subsequent year. This cycle could be shortened substantially if qualified New NCPFP graduates moved into principal roles faster. Based on their rigorous selection, preparation to be school leaders, and residency experience, Grantee program directors believe their graduates are qualified to be school leaders immediately out of the program, or soon thereafter (see Recommendation 4h).

EX IV.13 – Timeline to Principal Impact



While ongoing evaluation based on student outcomes is critically important, it can be difficult to use student outcomes data to measure program effectiveness for several reasons:

- Principals' impact on students is indirect – their primary levers for improving student performance are hiring high-quality teachers and improving the practice of existing teachers – and student performance data are most useful when a principal has been at a school for several years (see Exhibit IV.13 above).
- Additionally, we often lack objective data, other than student performance data, on which to measure principal effectiveness. Where other data – including teacher attrition and teacher and student survey data – do exist, they are often not uniform across schools and districts and may not translate across different principal experiences.
- Each principal preparation program graduates a small cohort of principal candidates, so it can take several years for a program to prepare enough principals for a meaningful statistical analysis.
- Estimates of the effect of a principal preparation program on a principal's performance are hard to disentangle from the support provided by a principal's district and/or the experience and mentorship the principal may have gained while serving as an assistant principal prior to taking on the principal role.^{lvii}

Measuring Program Cost-Effectiveness

As data on student impact become available, it will become possible to assess the cost-effectiveness of the New NCFPP program as a whole, and to compare the cost-effectiveness of programming offered by each Grantee. The cost per Principal Fellows graduate will inevitably be a part of the analysis of the New NCFPP's overall impact; however, cost per graduate should be examined with caution (for instance, include all available sources of funding, not just state funding) and should never be considered in isolation from the quality of the graduates. To ensure programs are cost-effective and not just cheap, any cost analysis must be considered alongside the effectiveness of the principals graduated by the program and Grantees (see Recommendation 3b).

Regular Monitoring & Program Evaluation of the New NCFPP

Each year, up to \$800,000 from the North Carolina Principal Fellows Trust Fund can be allocated by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority to the Principal Fellows Commission. Trust Fund dollars can be used to fund staff and other operational costs, to monitor and evaluate the program, and to provide extracurricular enhancement activities for the Program. Currently, the New NCFPP is contracting with the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) to monitor and evaluate key elements of the program, including candidate background and demographics, candidate experiences within the program, and placement of New NCFPP graduates as school leaders.^{lviii}

➤ Observed Challenges and Opportunities for Growth

In documenting current practices within the New NCPFP program, a few existing and potential challenges have been observed.

Program Cohesiveness and Visibility

New NCPFP Grantees make a concerted effort to establish cohorts of Principal Fellows candidates to ensure that candidates have opportunities to learn and grow together. However, unity amongst Principal Fellows candidates is not well-established, which is not unexpected given that this new program structure is fairly recent. Going forward, it is important for the New NCPFP to establish a brand identity and cohesiveness that extends beyond individual Grantees and unites all Principal Fellows, including candidates and alumni. In conversation with Grantee program directors, there is a shared pride in the New NCPFP and a willingness to find more ways to be united (see Recommendations 4a and 4b).

Overlapping Grants

At this time, two Grantees are receiving funds in both grant cycles (currently 2020-26 and 2022-28). This results in a scenario in which 10 grants have been issued to eight Grantees complicating the Commission's selection process (see Recommendation 4e).

Potential Impact of UNC-System Funding Formula Revision

Some Grantee program directors have expressed concern about the impact of the UNC System's recently approved performance-based funding formula. The new funding formula is intended to ensure that UNC-System institutions graduate more in-state students on time and with less debt.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ As institutional funding will no longer be directly tied to enrollment, it is possible that Grantee program support may change, including funding for overhead and tuition, creating challenges as to how many courses and opportunities can be provided within budget (see Recommendation 4g).

Program Reach Statewide

With existing funding, the New NCPFP is on pace to support about one-third of the state's principal pipeline need. This is likely the most robust principal development initiative in the nation and one of the most cost-effective investments in student achievement. However, at this level of investment, the program is not yet able to meet the majority of North Carolina's need for high-quality school leaders (see Recommendation 4i).

Sharing Innovative Curriculum and Program Elements

The purpose of the New NCPFP is to ensure that North Carolina has the best principal workforce in the country. While the competitive grants process ensures the selection of exceptional Grantees, there are invariably new policies, programs, and learnings in K-12 education that require Grantees to adapt their programming to ensure graduates are ready to lead in a rapidly changing K-12 ecosystem. While individual Grantees may adapt their curriculum, it would be more efficient if the NCPFP program can facilitate the shared development of curriculum and resources on emerging topics. However, the current NCPFP Trust Fund is not accessible to do this type of work, which could be of immense benefit to all Grantees as well as other principal preparation programs across the state (see Recommendation 4j).

Access and Competitiveness

Competition and program selectivity is at the heart of the design of the New NCPFP program. One concern is that, over time, it is possible that top-tier Grantees might become complacent and non-Grantees may stop applying. Policy and programming must evolve to ensure access, support the continuous improvement of non-NCPFP programs, and sustain healthy competition and selectivity (see Recommendation 4k).

Funding Continuity for Discontinued Grantees

Currently, principal preparation lasts two years per candidate. Based on the program cycles, the cohort of students who begin their preparation in the sixth and final year of the grant term may not have funding to complete their preparation if the Grantee is not renewed in the following grant term. Without assurance that they can support the second year of preparation for the final cohort of students, it is possible that non-renewed Grantees will not enroll a sixth-year cohort out of concern that they may not be able to provide for their second year of preparation (see Recommendation 4l).

Program Governance and Support

Currently, the New NCPFP is located within the UNC System Office and 10% of the New NCPFP's administrative funds (\$80,000) are designated to the UNC System in exchange for certain operational support. While there are many ways in which UNC-System support has been an asset to the New NCPFP, it is possible that the operational support that the New NCPFP is required to obtain through the UNC System could be procured more efficiently elsewhere. Further, given its location within the UNC-System office, there is some concern about whether the New NCPFP prioritizes UNC-System schools over independent colleges and universities (see Recommendation 4n).



V. Recommendations to Strengthen North Carolina's Commitment to High-Quality Principal Preparation

North Carolina has taken important steps forward to recruit, prepare, and support high-quality principals by merging the highly successful TP3 program with the Original NCPFP. The New NCPFP is making a significant impact on the principal pipeline in the state of North Carolina, with graduates entering school leadership roles at rates that far outpace national norms as well as other North Carolina principal preparation programs. The following recommendations seek to fortify the strengths of the current program while enhancing and expanding the program in pursuit of the goal of North Carolina having the most highly qualified principal workforce in the nation.

- **Set Clear Goals and Priorities for the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program**
- **Protect and Maintain Best Practices for Principal Recruitment and Preparation**
- **Measure What Matters**
- **Enhance and Expand the New NCPFP: Program & Policies**

➤ **1. Set Clear Goals and Priorities for the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program**

The Principal Fellows Commission and Principal Fellows Leadership Team should maintain a set of core values to serve as the compass to guide the work that lies ahead, with student success and educator quality as the program's top priorities. With these core values as the foundation, the Principal Fellows Commission should establish a vision and a strategic action plan to solidify existing best practices and extend the impact of the New NCPFP so that every child in North Carolina attends a school with a well-prepared, high-quality principal. This plan should clearly define roles for the Principal Fellows Leadership Team, Principal Fellows Commission members, Grantee program directors, and other key stakeholders. It should also specify clear goals for the program, e.g., the intended reach of the program.

The Principal Fellows Commission should also commit to thoroughly reviewing the RFP rubric for grant proposals prior to each grant cycle, ensuring a continued prioritization of best practices and that the measures and metrics receiving the greatest weight in the selection of Grantees align explicitly with the New NCPFP's core values.

➤ **2. Protect and Maintain Best Practices for Principal Recruitment and Preparation**

The most recent research on the national landscape of principal preparation reports that few states have adopted policies requiring rigorous selection, clinically rich residencies, and district-university partnerships.^{ivx} The New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program is a leader in the nation in these areas. The greatest threat to this program is if the best practices that make it so impactful are weakened. It is therefore essential that the strengths of the current program are maintained.

The following recommendations are designed to maintain and build upon existing best practices in principal preparation currently included in the New NCPFP.

2a. Maintain a Competitive Grants Approach to Ensure Top-Tier Programs are Funded

The New NCPFP should maintain the existing limit of eight Grantees, allowing the competitive RFP process to determine which programs are the highest quality and to direct funding accordingly. As mentioned above, a recent capacity survey found that eight Grantees have the capacity to prepare up to 260 graduates each year, meeting 70% of the state's annual need.

Extending grants to too many institutions diminishes competition and, in turn, the quality of candidate preparation. Expanding beyond eight Grantees will also likely increase the cost, adding the overhead of new Grantees unnecessarily. Additionally, if New NCPFP candidates are spread across too many Grantees, cohort size will become too small to be meaningful, undermining the collegial relationships that candidates rely upon during their rigorous preparation. (See "Why Eight Grantees?" on page 9).

It is important to note that policymakers and the New NCPFP will always be under pressure to increase the number of Grantees and there will always be a 'next best' applicant that is nearly as good as the lowest-scoring Grantee. Expanding to nine or ten Grantees will not relieve this pressure. If the program unnecessarily expands to nine Grantees, there will always be a tenth applicant that feels they should be included. See Recommendation 4k for another tool to help mitigate this challenge.

2b. Maintain the Rigorous, Full-Time Residency

Consistent with best practices, it is important to maintain the current New NCPFP standards for the full-time principal residency, which are reflected in the RFP from the 2022-2028 grant application cycle. That RFP required that Grantees provide Principal Fellows candidates a full-time clinical practice lasting at least 10 months, including at least 1,000 hours of residency and an additional 500 hours of learning opportunities related to that residency.^{lx} The clinical experience outlined in the RFP ensures that candidates are exposed to the full spectrum of the principalship, rather than jumping in and out as their teaching schedule allows, as is common in part-time programs.

This feature sets NCPFP programs apart from less rigorous principal preparation programs and aligns with current research that finds that full-time, job-embedded residencies are associated with increased confidence in assuming leadership roles and a deeper understanding of the complexity of school leadership.^{lxi} This research finding mirrors survey data showing that New NCPFP candidates feel more prepared to assume a school leadership role than candidates graduating from other North Carolina principal preparation programs.^{lxii}

“

My comprehensive internship afforded me time to build relationships with teachers, students, and their families. I attended every school function alongside our community. While my coursework prepared my thinking towards school leadership, my internship was unquantifiable in the value of learning how to place ideas and theories into practice. I was a part of the administrative team, having an equal and appreciated voice in decision making. This was a direct result of my daily attendance and ability to show my heart for our kids and this community.

Maggie King, Haywood County Schools
Graduated Western Carolina University Executive Leadership Program 2022

”

2c. Continue to Prioritize Leadership in High-Need Schools

Consistent with state priorities to ensure that high-need schools have access to effective school leaders, it is important to retain the current provision that enables Principal Fellow candidates to complete the service for loan repayment twice as quickly if they serve in a high-need school (two years, compared with four years if serving in a non-high-need school). Nationally, principals working in high-need schools report that they received less access to curriculum focused on instructional leadership and school improvement and fewer school-based learning opportunities during their principal preparation.^{lxiii} However, by incentivizing well-prepared, highly-qualified New NCPFP principal graduates to serve in high-need schools, North Carolina can ensure that great principals are leading our highest-need schools. The students in these schools deserve great leaders, and New NCPFP graduates have the skills – in particular, training in data-focused school improvement – to measurably improve student outcomes.

2d. Intentionally Retain Best Practices in the New NC Principal Fellows Program

In addition to those in 2a-2c, retain the following best practices in the Principal Fellows program:

- Removing cost as a burden for top talent;
- Proactively recruiting expert teacher candidates with demonstrated leadership potential;
- Ensuring Principal Fellows remain as school leaders in-state through the established loan forgiveness agreement;
- Establishing university-district partnerships that match candidate recruitment to each district’s unique school leadership needs;
- Requiring active, field-based curricula focused on instructional leadership, school improvement, family and community relations, management, and organizational culture;
- Prioritizing cohort structures to facilitate collegial support;
- Providing in-school residency experiences with a highly effective principal mentor; and
- Offering coaching and mentoring from faculty with school leadership experience, with a gradual release of candidates to develop their own leadership skills.

2e. Continue to Evaluate the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program

The evaluation of the New NCPFP by EPIC has provided the Principal Fellows Commission with valuable insights pertaining to program reach and impact, as well as the characteristics of Principal Fellows, their principal mentors, and the schools in which they complete their residencies. Written reports, as well as annual presentations to the Principal Fellows Commission and Principal Fellows Leadership Team, help to track progress, but also to illuminate gaps and opportunities to improve programming. The Principal Fellows Commission should prioritize regular, ongoing evaluation, paving the way for continuous improvement essential to the success of any program.

3. Measure What Matters

3a. Measure the Student Impact of the New North Carolina Principal Fellows Program, When Feasible

In the coming years, as the first New NCPFP graduates begin having measurable impacts on student outcomes, it will become important to refine methods and identify outcome measures for evaluating principal preparation programs and to intentionally tie grant renewals to those outcomes.

While short-term metrics like candidate satisfaction and placement rates are the best proxies for program effectiveness at the current time, in the long run, it is important to evaluate the competitiveness and effectiveness of Grantees' programs by tracking the performance of graduates, tying grant renewal to those indicators for their graduates. In the face of these challenges, policymakers, Principal Fellows Commission members, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) can take steps to prepare the way for principal performance metrics to be included in the evaluation of principal preparation programs' effectiveness:

- NC DPI should flag New NCPFP graduates in an internal database. Doing so will facilitate the tracking of schools in which graduates work, the roles graduates take on, and graduate performance.
- The Principal Fellows Leadership Team should compile a menu of New NCPFP graduate performance indicators to be used in program evaluation for future grant cycles, including measures of student growth, student absenteeism, incidents of exclusionary discipline, retention of effective teachers, and teacher perceptions of school climate.
- The New NCPFP should collaborate with NC DPI to facilitate the reporting of graduate performance indicators for all Grantees.

3b. Develop Measures of Relative Cost-Effectiveness, When Feasible

As with any state-funded program, it is essential to establish transparency and accountability. The objective is to prepare the highest-quality principals possible. When measuring the return on investment, the goal is not to simply fund the least expensive program, but to fund programs that have the highest return on investment based upon graduate performance.

One key measure in assessing a Grantee's return on investment is the cost per graduate. However, it is not appropriate to consider the cost per graduate of any New NCPFP Grantee in isolation. Cost per graduate should only be considered when it is also possible to assess the effectiveness of graduates. As described in "Timeline to Principal Impact" (Exhibit IV.13 on page 19), it takes approximately 10 years from the time a candidate enrolls in a principal preparation program until their effectiveness as a principal can be assessed fairly using a variety of student and teacher outcomes, most importantly student performance. At this time, the number of principal candidates graduated by each TP3/New NCPFP Grantee and the amount of time that has passed since those candidates have graduated are not significant enough for cost per graduate to be a meaningful metric.

When data do become available for a return-on-investment analysis, all sources of funds should be considered. Some Grantees' state-funded cost per graduate may be lower than their total cost per graduate if that Grantee is also receiving funding from federal or private grants, or from other institutional sources. Because the performance of graduates at Grantees with sizable non-state funding is not possible to replicate with only their state funding, both figures – state-funded cost and total cost per graduate – should be reported and considered.

3c. Track North Carolina's Statewide Principal Attrition and Mobility

To proactively plan to meet the demand for new school principals in North Carolina, it is important to know the scope of principal attrition (principals leaving the state and/or the profession) and mobility (principals moving from one school to another) across the state. A provision of the 2023 state budget stipulates that NC DPI shall produce an annual State of the School Administration Report that includes:

- The number of principals who left the profession without remaining in the field of education;
- The number of principals who left their current school for employment as a principal in another school in North Carolina;
- The number of principals who left their position for another type of educational position;
- The number of principals who left employment in low-performing schools;
- The number of principals who left employment to move to a low-performing school; and
- The extent to which principal attrition and mobility led to changes in school performance metrics such as student growth and student achievement.^{bxiv}

Leveraging the data in the State of the School Administration Profession Report, the Principal Fellows Commission and Principal Fellows Leadership Team should determine whether additional funds are needed to support the majority of the state's annual need for principals.

3d. Measure the Quality of Mentor Principals to Ensure an Enriching Residency Experience

Evaluation of the New NCPFP should be expanded to include an assessment of the effectiveness of mentor principals, as measured by school growth and other measures of effectiveness, as applicable. Additionally, the evaluation should, at minimum, describe – and, if possible, assess – other metrics related to principal mentorship, including:

- How districts solicit principal interest in becoming a mentor;
- District selection processes for principal mentors;
- Training provided for principal mentors by districts and/or Grantees; and
- How Grantees and school district leaders match candidates with their principal mentors.

4. Enhance and Expand the New NCPFP: Programs & Policy

New NCPFP graduates are the most highly qualified, rigorously recruited, and comprehensively prepared principal candidates in the state (see “Candidate Snapshot” and “Program Attributes” on pages 16 & 17). Therefore, an explicit goal of the New NCPFP should be, without reducing program quality, for the eight Grantees to serve the maximum number of principal candidates. This ensures a higher percentage of North Carolina’s principals are recruited and prepared by the most competitive programs and that the program remains cost-effective.

NCPFP Enhancements

4a. Ensure Consistent “North Carolina Principal Fellows” Branding Across All Grantees

Each Grantee currently has their own program brand. This creates a lack of cohesiveness and weakens the overall New NCPFP brand identity. To address this, the New NCPFP should work with Grantees to create a new logo and branding concept that allows Grantees to retain their own branding while staying attached to the overall Principal Fellows brand, such as “The XYZ Institute, a Principal Fellows Program.” By the next grant application cycle, all programs should be required in their contract to co-brand their programs as Principal Fellows programs. This will increase the visibility of the New NCPFP program across the state and will build a collective identity amongst Principal Fellows.

4b. Organize Convenings to Fortify New NCPFP Identity and Networking Opportunities

To share emerging research and foster a shared experience, the Principal Fellows Leadership Team should organize regular, in-person convenings for both Principal Fellow alumni and candidates. These convenings could be a venue for cohesive cross-institution training and would also provide valuable opportunities for current and former Principal Fellows to learn from one another. These convenings will strengthen the collective identity of the New NCPFP, facilitate the networking and experience-sharing of these exceptional leaders, and create advocates who can help recruit the next generation of school leaders into this high-quality principal preparation pathway.

4c. Ensure All School Districts Have Access to One or More New NCPFP Grantee(s)

While not all North Carolina school districts have formal Letters of Commitment with one or more Grantees (see Exhibit IV.3 on page 14), there is nothing limiting a district from utilizing the New NCPFP program to prepare its principals. Unsupported districts may not realize they have access to the NCPFP. In speaking with Grantee program directors, there is a clear willingness to serve these districts but they have no mechanism for reaching out to them other than through the Letter of Commitment process in their application.

The Principal Fellows Leadership Team should encourage district leaders to partner with one or more of the New NCPFP Grantees to help meet their school leadership needs. While some districts do not need a new principal every year, the Principal Fellows Leadership Team should work to ensure that every district has a Letter of Commitment that establishes a standing relationship with at least one Grantee.

4d. Examine Variation in Recruitment and Selection Practices Across Districts

The most recent evaluation of the New NCPFP by EPIC revealed substantial variation in recruitment and selection practices among school districts partnered with a New NCPFP Grantee. Some districts were quite involved in the nomination and selection of Principal Fellows, while others were not nearly as involved. A key component of the NCPFP is to have proactive, intentional recruitment efforts to meet the unique needs of each district. With this in mind, the Principal Fellows Leadership Team should examine best practices across districts and share guidance with districts. School districts are uniquely positioned to identify talented teachers with leadership potential, and all districts stand to benefit when those teachers become Principal Fellows.

4e. Establish Two Distinct Grant Cycles

At this time, two Grantees are receiving funds in both grant cycles (currently 2020-26 and 2022-28), complicating the Grantee selection process. For each of these two Grantees, the Principal Fellows Commission should identify a way to consolidate their two grants into one grant, with one in each grant cycle to ensure there are four Grantees in each grant cycle.

4f. Prioritize Post-Graduation Mentoring of New NCPFP School Leaders

Interviews with Grantee program directors revealed that a range of approaches are being utilized to support graduates while in their first school leadership roles. Moving forward, the Principal Fellows Leadership Team should examine these various approaches and consider issuing guidance on which best practices should be adopted by Grantees. Additionally, in its assessment of grant applications, the Principal Fellows Commission should require applicants to provide information on how they will support graduates to ensure successful transition into school leadership roles. As funds are available, the Principal Fellows Leadership Team might consider requesting a policy change so that they can use Principal Fellows Trust Fund dollars to support mentoring and support for program graduates.

4g. Study the Impact of the UNC System's Revised Funding Formula

In 2022, the UNC System Board of Governors approved a performance-weighted funding formula intended to align state funding with how well universities meet state goals for student outcomes, rather than tying funding directly to enrollment. The new funding formula will go into effect in 2024.

The Principal Fellows Leadership Team should work with Grantee program directors at public universities to identify impacts on their program's curricular offerings, and to determine any anticipated impacts on program costs.

4h. Advocate for New NCPFP Graduates to Promptly Become School Principals

The expressed purpose of this program is to prepare principals who are ready to serve in school leadership positions. New NCPFP candidates are prepared rigorously and receive a full year of residency that prepares them to enter a school leadership role upon completion of their residency. Therefore, the Principal Fellows Leadership Team should work with district leaders to ensure Principal Fellows move expeditiously into principal positions, rather than requiring several years in assistant principal positions, which are often tangential to the role of a principal.

One mechanism for doing this is for the Grantees and school district leaders to establish in their Letters of Commitment an intent for graduates who are hired to spend a maximum of two years in an assistant principal role prior to moving to a principal position. Terms in the Letter of Commitment should remain flexible to allow for extenuating circumstances, such as a district not having an open principal position. This shift in practice can be supported and facilitated by the Principal Fellows Leadership Team.

Legislative Policy Enhancements

4i. Expand New NCPFP to Meet 70% of the Annual Need for New Principals in North Carolina

Given the promising success and cost-effectiveness of the New NCPFP program, the program should be expanded to benefit the majority of students and schools in North Carolina. At scale and with eight grantees, New NCPFP Grantees can graduate 70% of the principals needed annually in North Carolina, while allowing flexibility in the market for principals to continue to be prepared outside of the New NCPFP.

Given current turnover rates, in order to graduate 70% of needed principals, the New NCPFP would need to roughly double the number of candidates that are expected to graduate in 2024-25 (to ~250/year). This expansion will require approximately \$8-9 million in additional recurring funding. Phasing in funding over time – for instance, \$4-4.5 million in 2025 and another \$4-4.5 million in 2027 – would align with existing grant cycles and ensure that expansion does not compromise quality.

With two to three cohorts of 10-15 candidates each, this growth can continue to be supported by eight Grantees, thus maintaining the competitive design of the model. Potential cost-per-candidate savings may also be realized as overhead costs are shared across more students, without compromising the core principles of the program (see “Why Eight Grantees?” on page 9).

4j. Use NCPFP Trust Fund for Innovative Principal Preparation Curriculum and Research

Currently, state statute allows a few narrow uses of the NCPFP Trust Fund outside of issuing grants to selected Grantees. The uses of the Trust Fund should be broadened to allow the New NCPFP to share successful practices in recruitment, curriculum, assessment, and residency with principal preparation programs across North Carolina.

This would allow principal preparation programs, as a whole, to more rapidly adapt to new challenges in K-12 education, as well as provide professional development in emerging topics in school leadership, such as Advanced Teaching Roles or the Science of Reading. In leading this work, the New NCPFP would extend its impact beyond the eight Grantees and would increase the capacity of all principal preparation programs in the state. Sharing might occur via convenings, webinars, online modules, or some other medium.

4k. Provide Development Grants to “Runner Up” Grantee Applicants to Encourage Innovation

To maintain the competitive aspect of the NCPFP, the number of Grantees receiving grant funding should remain limited to eight (see “Why Eight Grantees?” on page 9). That said, there is a value in fostering a culture of continuous improvement among all of North Carolina’s principal preparation programs. For example, the NCPFP regularly shares best practices with all principal preparation programs in the state.

Additionally, the NCPFP program should award a Development Grant to the “runner up” applicant in each grant cycle to incentivize programs to continuously improve and to reapply in a future cycle. These should last up to six years, at a maximum value of \$50,000 per year, and should be tied to a Principal Leadership Development Plan submitted by the recipient. The Principal Fellows Commission should ensure that each Development Grant recipient adheres to their Principal Leadership Development Plan, which should cite strategies that will improve specific components of principal preparation, such as recruitment, curriculum, residency, or post-graduate mentoring.

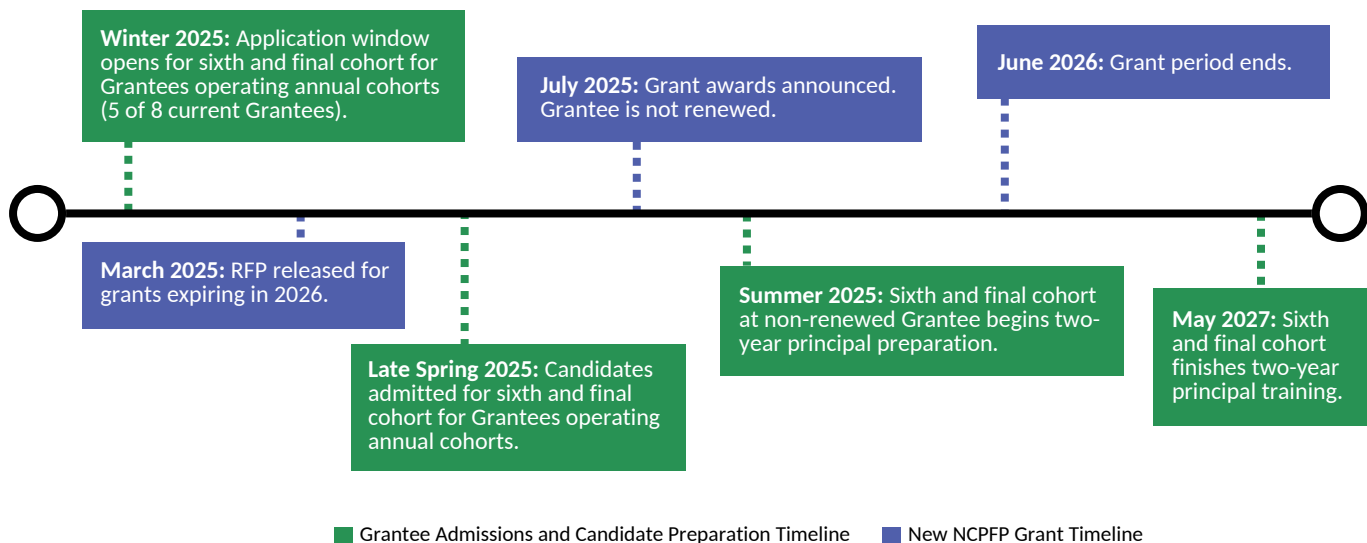
The creation of this new type of grant would require legislation but the funding could be provided from existing NCPFP Trust Fund resources.

4l. Guarantee Final Cohort Funding for New NCPFP Grantees that are Not Renewed

Since the New NCPFP is a competitive grant program, it is expected that some grants may shift during the grant application process. It is important to ensure that outgoing Grantees can serve all of their enrolled cohorts through to graduation and, if they enroll cohorts annually, can enroll Principal Fellow candidates for the sixth and final year of the grant term.

Currently, five of eight New NCPFP Grantees enroll cohorts annually.^{lv} In order to enroll candidates for the sixth and final year of their grant term, these programs would need to begin accepting applications early in the penultimate year of the grant term but would not find out if their grant funding had been extended until several months later (see Exhibit V.1 below).

EX V.1 – New NCPFP Grant and Admissions Timeline for a Non-Renewed Grantee



Legislatively guaranteeing funding for the year immediately following the end of a six-year grant cycle would allow candidates who enroll in a New NCPFP program in the sixth year of its grant to be able to complete their preparation unencumbered and would allow New NCPFP Grantees to maintain proactive recruitment practices entering the sixth and final year of their grant term. This could be done with no new money by granting the Commission the authority to use existing Trust Fund resources to support non-renewing Grantee programs up to one year beyond the contract. The Commission already has the authority to fund grants, so the legislative request is for a minor extension beyond the contract term.

4m. Clarify the Definition of “High-Need” Schools

As a way to encourage employment in high-need schools, loan forgiveness for New NCPFP is accelerated if graduates work in a high-need school. However, the current definition of “high-need” is overly inclusive, with 80% of all schools identified as high-need. The broadness of the definition undermines the intent of allowing for accelerated loan repayment for service in schools that have a greater need than most other schools. To incentivize graduates to work in the truly highest-need schools and to ensure the integrity of the accelerated loan forgiveness structure, the state should assign a more rigorous definition to high-need schools.

It may be prudent to align this new definition with the state’s low-performing school definition, which includes all schools earning a School Performance Grade of D or F that met or did not meet student growth expectations.^{bvi} For reference, in 2023-24, 29% of all North Carolina public schools were low-performing schools.^{bvii} Additionally, for the purposes of loan forgiveness, a school’s high-need status should be determined in the year the New NCPFP graduate is hired, and Principal Fellows should continue to receive accelerated loan repayment even if a school’s performance improves during their tenure, thereby eliminating the school from high-need status.

4n. Monitor the Impact of the NCPFP Administrative Host Location

The New NCPFP is currently located within the UNC System Office. While the relationship between the UNC System and the New NCPFP is strong and productive, this organizational structure may create confusion about whether the program prioritizes UNC-System schools over independent colleges and universities. Further, the New NCPFP program is obligated to pay a 10% administrative services fee to the UNC System for operational support when it might be more agile and cost-effective to procure such services elsewhere. The state should monitor the impact of the program’s placement and evaluate whether changes are needed to ensure the program can fulfill its mission and operate at the most efficient level possible.



Conclusion

As the role of the principal has become increasingly complex over the past half-century, the connection between effective school leadership and student success has become abundantly clear. North Carolina’s innovative approach to school leadership development, beginning in 2015 with TP3 and continuing today with the New NCPFP, has positioned our state as a national leader in the recruitment and preparation of excellent principals. Data reveal that New NCPFP graduates are the most highly qualified, thoroughly vetted, and rigorously prepared school leaders entering the principal pipeline in North Carolina.

Owing to a competitive grants approach that prioritizes programs implementing best practices in principal preparation, the New NCPFP has graduated principal candidates who are taking on school leadership roles at rates well beyond other principal preparation programs in our state and across the nation. With continued investment, key policy advancements, and strategic program leadership, within 10 years, the New NCPFP can graduate 70% of all principals needed each year.

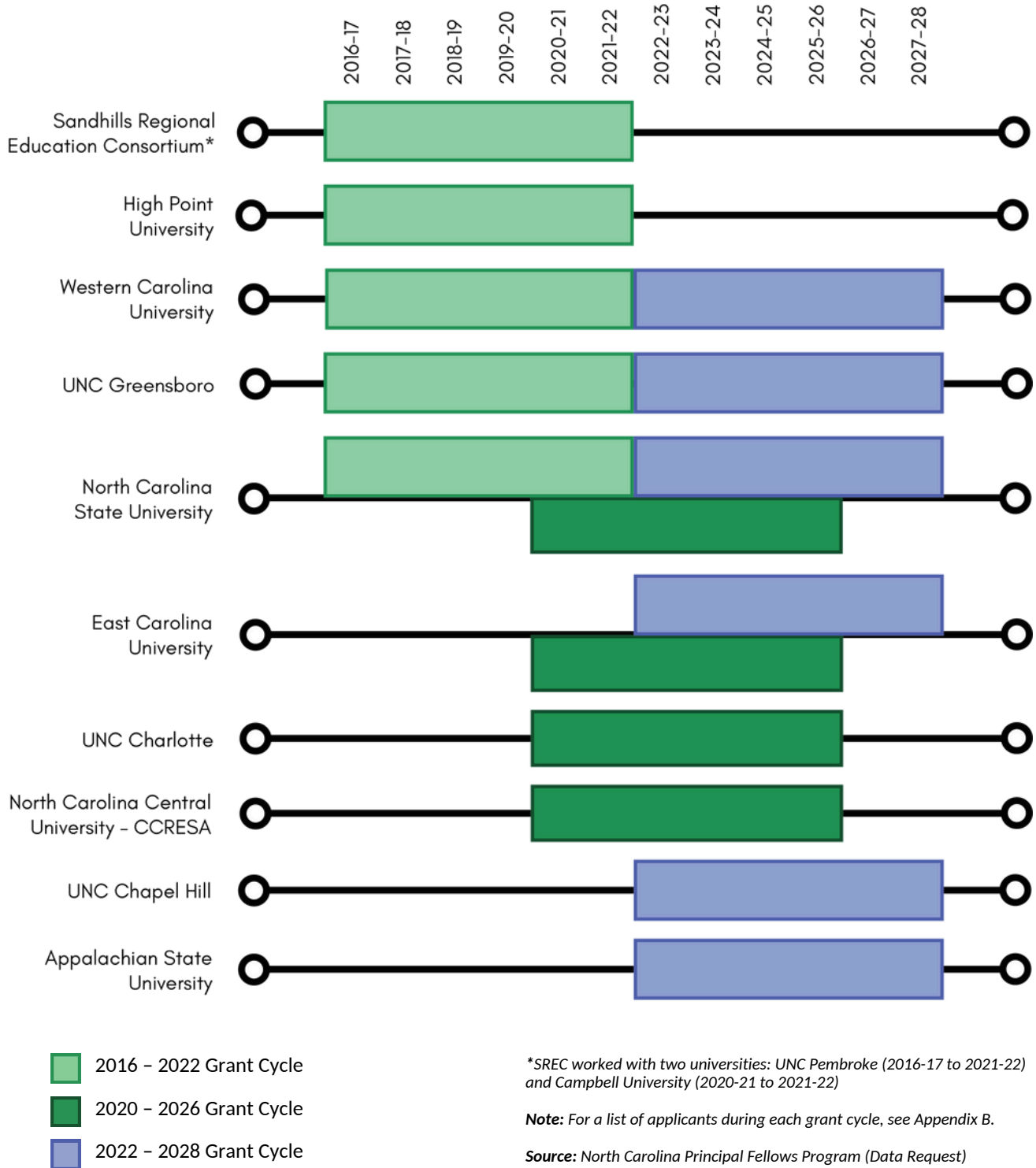
North Carolina is well on its way to having the best principal workforce in the nation!

VI. Appendices



Appendix A:

TP3/New NCFPP Grant Awards (2016 to 2028)



Appendix B:

New NCPFP Grant Funding and Cohort Sizes (2020-26 and 2022-28 Grant Cycles)

	Grant Term	# of Cohorts	# of Principal Fellows	Average Cohort Size	Grant Amount	Grant Funding per Principal Fellow
Appalachian State University	2022-28	3	45	15	\$2,935,460	\$65,232
East Carolina University	2020-26	14	180	13	\$10,192,725	\$56,626
North Carolina Central University - CCRESA	2020-26	5	61	12	\$5,861,874	\$96,096
North Carolina State University	2020-26; 2022-28	8	137	17	\$11,367,284	\$82,973
UNC Chapel Hill	2022-28	5	60	12	\$4,293,372	\$71,556
UNC Charlotte	2020-26	6	92	15	\$4,854,508	\$52,766
UNC Greensboro	2022-28	3	60	20	\$4,470,974	\$74,516
Western Carolina University	2022-28	5	75	15	\$4,126,258	\$55,017

Source: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)

Appendix C:

Grant Applications for TP3 and the New NCPFP (2016-22, 2020-26, & 2022-28 Grant Cycles)

2016 - 2022 Grant Cycle	2020 - 2026 Grant Cycle	2022 - 2028 Grant Cycle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Point University NC State University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durham Principal Leadership Academy (DPLA) North Carolina Leadership Academy (NCLA) Sandhills Regional Education Consortium UNC Greensboro Western Carolina University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appalachian State University East Carolina University Fayetteville State University NC A&T State University NC Central University NC State University** UNC Chapel Hill UNC Charlotte UNC Wilmington 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appalachian State University East Carolina University** Elizabeth City State University Fayetteville State University High Point University NC A&T State University NC State University** Sandhills Regional Education Consortium (w/ UNC Pembroke and Campbell University) UNC Chapel Hill UNC Greensboro University of Mount Olive Western Carolina University

Note: In the chart above, applicants in black received TP3 and/or New NCPFP grants. Applicants in gray did not receive a grant award.

**Already a Grantee; grant funding used to prepare additional candidates.

Sources: North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (Data Request); North Carolina Alliance for School Leadership Development

Appendix D:

Composition of the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission

As defined in **North Carolina G.S. 116-74.41**, the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission is comprised of 15 members, each serving a four-year term.

1. **One member of the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina**, appointed by the chair of that board.
2. **One member of the State Board of Education**, appointed by the State Board chair.
3. **One dean of a school of education**, appointed by the President of The University of North Carolina.
4. **One dean of a school of education**, appointed by the President of the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities.
5. **One public school teacher**, appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
6. **One public school principal**, appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
7. **A local superintendent**, chosen by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
8. **One member to represent business and industry**, appointed by the Governor.
9. **One local school board member**, appointed by the chair of the State Board of Education.
10. **One human resources expert from the private sector**, appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
11. **The chair of the Board of the State Education Assistance Authority**, or the chair's designee.
12. **The director of the Program**. The director shall chair the Commission.
13. **The Executive Director of the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals' Association**, or his or her designee.
14. **The President of the Personnel Administrators of North Carolina**, or his or her designee.
15. **The President and Chief Executive Officer of North Carolina Business Leaders for Education (BEST NC)**, or his or her designee.

Source: North Carolina General Statutes

Appendix E:

North Carolina Standards for School Executives – Summary

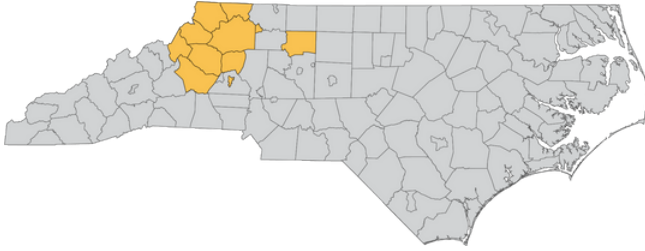
Standard	Summary Statement
Standard 1: Strategic Leadership	School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.
Standard 2: Instructional Leadership	School executives will set high standards for the professional practice of 21st century instruction and assessment that result in a no-nonsense, accountable environment. The school executive must be knowledgeable of best instructional and school practices and must use this knowledge to cause the creation of collaborative structures within the school for the design of highly engaging schoolwork for students, the on-going peer review of this work and the sharing of this work throughout the professional community.
Standard 3: Cultural Leadership	School executives will understand and act on the understanding of the important role a school's culture contributes to the exemplary performance of the school. School executives must support and value the traditions, artifacts, symbols and positive values and norms of the school and community that result in a sense of identity and pride upon which to build a positive future. A school executive must be able to "reculture" the school if needed to align with school's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning, and purpose. Cultural leadership implies understanding the school as the people in it each day, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the school's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals.
Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership	School executives will ensure that the school is a professional learning community. School executives will ensure that processes and systems are in place that result in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development, and retention of a high-performing staff. The school executive must engage and empower accomplished teachers in a distributive leadership manner, including support of teachers in day-to-day decisions such as discipline, communication with parents, and protecting teachers from duties that interfere with teaching. They also must practice fair and consistent evaluation of teachers. The school executive must engage teachers and other professional staff in conversations to plan their career paths and support district succession planning.
Standard 5: Managerial Leadership	School executives will ensure that the school has processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations and scheduling that result in organizing the work routines in the building. The school executive must be responsible for the monitoring of the school budget and the inclusion of all teachers in the budget decisions so as to meet the 21st needs of every classroom. Effectively and efficiently managing the complexity of everyday life is critical for staff to be able to focus its energy on improvement.
Standard 6: External Development Leadership	A school executive will design structures and processes that result in community engagement, support, and ownership. Acknowledging that schools no longer reflect but in fact build community, the leader proactively creates with staff opportunities for parents, community, and business representatives to participate as "stockholders" in the school such that continued investments of resources and good will are not left to chance.
Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership	The school executive will build systems and relationships that utilize the staff's diversity, encourage constructive ideological conflict in order to leverage staff expertise, power, and influence to realize the school's vision for success. The executive will also creatively employ an awareness of staff members' professional needs, issues, and interests to build social cohesion and to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision-making.
Standard 8: Academic Achievement Leadership	School executives will contribute to the academic success of students. The work of the school executive will result in acceptable, measurable progress for students based on established performance expectations and using appropriate data to demonstrate growth.

Source: [North Carolina Standards for School Executives](#)

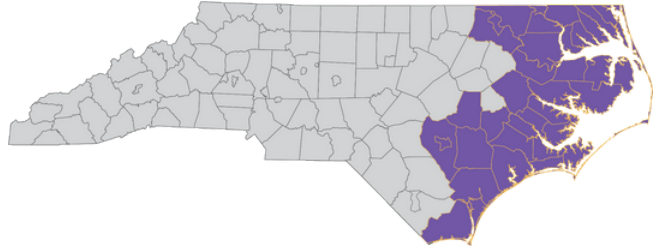
Appendix F:

District Partnerships of New NCPFP Grantees (2023-24)

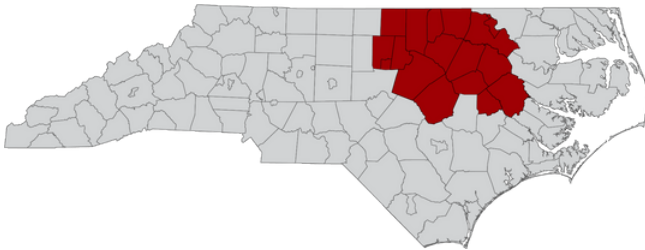
Appalachian State University



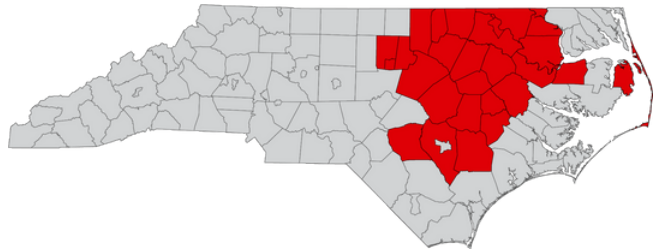
East Carolina University



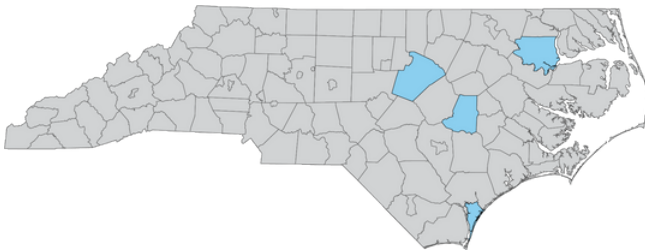
North Carolina Central University/CCRESA



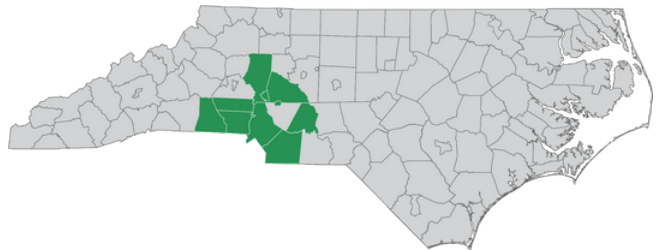
North Carolina State University



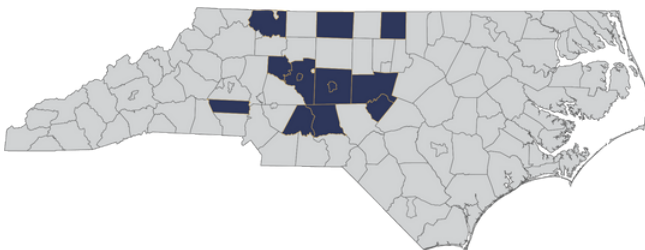
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill*



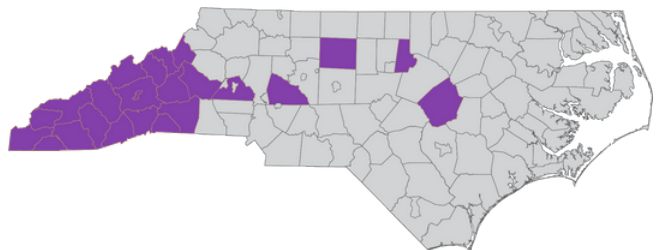
University of North Carolina Charlotte



University of North Carolina Greensboro



Western Carolina University



*UNC-Chapel Hill also partners with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Office of Charter Schools.

Source: [North Carolina Principal Fellows Program](#)

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