THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

November 6, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream

AGENDA

A-1. Approval of the Minutes of March 21, 2023.....C. Phillip Byers

A-2. Review and Approve Laboratory Schools Evaluation Report ..... Andrew Kelly

A-3. Adjourn

DRAFT MINUTES

March 21, 2023
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream

This meeting of the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools was presided over by Chair C. Philip Byers. The following subcommittee members, constituting a quorum, were also present in person or by phone: Ray Palma, Thomas C. Goolsby, and Wendy Murphy, who was assigned to participate in the meeting by Chair Randy Ramsey for the purpose of a quorum.

Staff members present included Shun Robertson and others from the UNC System Office.

1. Approval of the Minutes of November 10, 2022 (Item A-1)

MOTION: Resolved, that the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approved the open session minutes of November 10, 2022, as distributed.

Motion: Thomas C. Goolsby
Motion carried

2. Moss Street Partnership School Laboratory School Assumption Plan (Item A-2)

The Committee on Laboratory Schools reviewed the assumption plan that was coauthored and mutually approved by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Rockingham County Schools. The plan summarized actions taken and the schedule for assumption of Moss Street Partnership School. UNC Greensboro Chancellor Franklin Gilliam and Dean Randy Penfield outlined the assumption plan and the process to execute the plan.

MOTION: Resolved, that the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approve the Laboratory Schools Evaluation Report.

Motion: Wendy Murphy
Motion carried

5. Adjourn

There being no further business and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

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Estefany Gordillo-Rivas, Secretary

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools
November 6, 2023

AGENDA ITEM

A-2. Review and Approve Laboratory Schools Evaluation Report..... Andrew Kelly

Situation: G.S. 116-239.13 requires the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools to review and evaluate the educational effectiveness of the laboratory schools for both public school students and students enrolled in educator preparation programs and report certain information each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

Background: Legislation governing the laboratory schools' initiative calls for annual reporting by the subcommittee on particular items listed in G.S. Section 116-239.13, including information about laboratory schools' demographics, admissions processes, student achievement data, educator preparation program student outcomes, best practices, and other information the subcommittee deems appropriate.

The UNC System Office has contracted with independent evaluators at the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) to review and evaluate the laboratory schools and produce an annual report for the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in accordance with statutory requirements.

The external evaluators also produce a more comprehensive evaluation report to accompany the required legislative reporting, with additional information about the laboratory schools' successes and challenges, student academic progress, student and parent attitudes toward their school, and key challenges and opportunities for the initiative as a whole.

Assessment: Subcommittee members will hear an overview of the evaluation process and its key findings and will have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the report.

The final Board of Governors report requires a vote by the subcommittee to be submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by November 15, 2023. The in-depth report from the evaluation team will be submitted as an appendix for the record.

Action: This item requires a vote by the subcommittee.

Introduction

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) passed legislation requiring the University of North Carolina System, in consultation with UNC System institution Colleges of Education (COEs), to establish laboratory schools. These laboratory schools are K-12 public schools of choice operated by a UNC System institution rather than by a local school district. Since then, nine laboratory schools have opened. East Carolina University (ECU) and Western Carolina University (WCU) opened their laboratory schools—the ECU Community School and The Catamount School, respectively—in the 2017-18 academic year. Appalachian State University, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG),[1] and the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) opened laboratory schools—the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, respectively—in the 2018-19 academic year. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) opened its laboratory school, Niner University Elementary School, in the 2020-21 academic year.

In 2021-22, Appalachian State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were approved to open and operate three new laboratory schools. In fall 2022, Appalachian State University opened a second laboratory school, the Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, a co-located school at Elkin Elementary in Elkin City Schools that currently serves grades 2-4. NCA&T opened its first laboratory school, Aggie Academy, as a STEAM school for grades 3-5 in Guilford County. Finally, UNC-Chapel Hill opened its first laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy, co-located at North Elementary School in Person County Schools. The school served students in kindergarten during its first year of operation, with plans to add a grade level each year and eventually serve students in grades K-2.

While the structure and foci of UNC System laboratory schools vary, these schools are united by a common mission and set of commitments. The mission of UNC System laboratory schools is to improve student performance in local school administrative units with low-performing schools by providing an enhanced education program for students residing in those units and to provide exposure and training for teachers and principals to successfully address challenges that exist in high-needs school settings.[2] To fulfill this mission, UNC System laboratory schools are committed to: (1) delivering high expectations to prepare students for college and life; (2) ensuring that students learn to read and communicate effectively; (3) addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students; and (4) harnessing the benefits of partnerships to strengthen learning, teaching, and school leadership. Laboratory schools serve every part of the University mission—teaching, research, and public service—and represent an innovative extension of the UNC System's presence in K-12 education.

UNC System laboratory schools must serve students in at least three contiguous grades in the K-8 grade range. The enabling legislation originally required the UNC System to establish laboratory schools in local school administrative units in which at least 25 percent of the schools were low-performing. An amendment to the enabling legislation allows the UNC System to exercise six waivers to establish laboratory schools in districts that do not meet this requirement.[3] Students are eligible to attend a laboratory school if they reside in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located and previously attended a low-performing school; failed to meet expected growth (based on one

[1] In March, the UNC Board of Governor's subcommittee on laboratory schools approved the return of the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to Rockingham County Public Schools beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

[2] N.C.G.S. 116-239.5(b)

[3] Session Law 2020-56 amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.7(a2) to increase the number of waivers the UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools may grant from three to six.

or more indicators); are the siblings of a child meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory school employees.[4] Any student residing in the district where the laboratory school is located may also enroll at a laboratory school if it is not fully enrolled by March 1 before the start of the next school year.[5]

This report is submitted on behalf of the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina System (BOG) Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools. The content of this report draws largely from findings included in an annual evaluation report commissioned by the UNC System and prepared by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)/Public Policy at UNC Chapel Hill and Public Impact, an education research and management consulting organization based in North Carolina. The annual evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact is an in-depth review of the laboratory schools—expanding upon the requirements of the enabling legislation—and is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Consistent with the enabling legislation, this report includes the information listed in the eight items below:

(1) A brief overview of each laboratory school operating in the 2023-24 academic year;
(2) Student enrollment and demographics in each laboratory school;
(3) A summary of laboratory school admissions processes and the number of students enrolled under each enrollment criteria;
(4) Public school student achievement data from each laboratory school;
(5) Public school student academic progress at each laboratory school;
(6) Information on pre-service educators in laboratory schools, including outcomes for pre-service educators who obtained clinical experiences in laboratory schools;
(7) Best practices resulting from laboratory school operations; and
(8) Other information the UNC System BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools considers appropriate.

Laboratory School Overviews

Eight UNC System institutions are currently (in the 2023-24 school year) operating laboratory schools. Although united by a common mission and commitments, these schools vary across many dimensions, including the characteristics of students enrolled, school design features, and school curricula. As such, this section provides a brief overview of each laboratory school.

Appalachian State University operates the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, a K-5 school in Walkertown, NC, previously operated by Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools. The Academy at Middle Fork opened in August 2018 with a focus on collaboration through innovative, literacy-focused teaching and learning practices. The Academy is committed to creating an innovative learning space for students and staff that challenges the status quo and reimagines what school should look like for students and teachers. The Academy at Middle Fork is implementing an innovative model where students are assigned to a grade level span in which teachers work on a team using co-teaching practices to meet the needs of all learners. Students don't just have one teacher but a team of teachers. Each grade level span has a curriculum coach and an interventionist who provide extra academic support to students. This means that students receive more individualized attention to help them meet their academic goals. In 2023-24 the staff at the Academy at Middle Fork includes a principal, an assistant principal, a director of

[4] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

[5] However, laboratory schools may not enroll more than 20 percent of students not meeting the other eligibility criteria. N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

culture and climate, a school improvement coach, a behavior support interventionist, three curriculum coaches, three interventionists, 10 classroom teachers, four specialist teachers (art, media, PE, and STEM), four EC teachers, one multilingual learner teacher, three academic tutors, a school counselor, a school nurse, seven teacher assistants, a school engagement coordinator, an administrative support and school finance specialist, an office assistant, and a school resource officer.

Appalachian State University also operates Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, a co-located school at Elkin Elementary, in Elkin City Schools, that currently serves grades 2-4. The Academy at Elkin opened in August 2022 with approximately 90 students in second through fourth grades. The school engages students in exploration-based learning by embracing growth mindset practices, promoting authentic learning experiences, incorporating service learning, fostering leadership, and increasing student agency. In 2023-24, the Academy at Elkin includes a principal, an assistant principal for instruction, an administrative assistant, five classroom teachers, three teacher assistants, an EC teacher, an interventionist, and a part-time school nurse. Additionally, the Academy at Elkin contracts with Elkin City Schools to provide specialists/enhancement teachers and other contracted positions (school counselor, multilingual learner teacher, school resource officer, and school psychologist). Several staff members are shared between both Appalachian State University laboratory schools. These include an assistant dean and director of lab schools, a director of curriculum and federal programs, an EC director, a technology support specialist, a teacher support coach, a school social worker, and a data manager.

The ECU Community School is an elementary school co-located within the South Greenville Elementary School building in Pitt County, NC. The school opened in August 2017 and serves grades K-5 in ten classrooms—one class per grade in 1 and 5 and two classrooms each for grades K, 2, 3, and 4. The ECU Community School reflects a whole-child approach by integrating health, wellness, and learning into instruction to address the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of all students. The laboratory school uses an intentional approach to build literacy and numeracy skills through the core subjects of mathematics, science, reading/English language arts, and social studies and is simultaneously focused on engaging children in learning experiences that support their curiosity, creativity, inquiry, and intellectual growth in a school environment that respects their strengths and meets their needs. In 2023-24, the laboratory school's staff includes a principal, six teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, one special education teacher/director, one special education teacher, five regular education teacher assistants, one special education teacher assistant, one full-time counselor, one full-time administrative assistant, one full-time social worker, one full-time reading specialist, and a part-time testing coordinator.

In partnership with Guilford County Schools, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) opened the Aggie Academy laboratory school in August 2022. Aggie Academy serves students in grades 3, 4, and 5 and features a culturally responsive curriculum with a strong STEAM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Arts and Math). Teachers design lessons that incorporate the 5 E's of the Inquiry-Based Learning process: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. This process teaches students to think critically and be more engaged in learning. This model also includes the integration of music, art, and PE into the general content classes. The school serves three classes per grades 3-5. Located less than ten minutes from the North Carolina A&T State University main campus, Aggie Academy students enjoy hands-on and experiential learning and benefit from the University's latest academic best practices, research, and student success initiatives. The College of Education uses a Practice-Based Teacher Education Model (PBTE) to provide multiple hands-on teaching experiences for Educator Preparation students in Aggie Academy. Aggie Academy students benefit from small group and individualized supplemental instruction from NC A&T Educator preparation students, especially in literacy and mathematics. In 2023-24, the staff at Aggie Academy includes a program director, a principal, a

STEAM instructor/coordinator, six classroom teachers, three specialty teachers (art, music, and PE), one EC teacher, one media and technology specialist, a part-time after-school director, counselor, school nurse, and one part-time social worker. The administrative staff includes a budget manager and a data manager. Additionally, NC A&T Educator Preparation students work as group leaders in the after-school Children's Defense Fund Freedom School program.

UNCC's laboratory school, Niner University Elementary School, is located on the campus of a former Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Pre-K center in west Charlotte and serves students in grades K-5, with three second-grade classes and two classes in all other grades. The school opened in August 2020 and aims to provide an option for elementary students in West Charlotte and improve the kindergarten readiness levels of students in West Charlotte neighborhoods through a partnership between the College of Education's Early Childhood program and in-home childcare providers. The school follows a traditional calendar that is aligned with CMS. Niner University Elementary School is a relationship-based and trauma-invested school that emphasizes equity and justice in the school environment, with school staff reflecting on culturally sustaining teaching practices to ensure they meet the needs of all students. In 2023-24, Niner University Elementary School's staff includes a principal, a curriculum coordinator, eleven licensed classroom teachers, six instructional assistants, three special education teachers (one of whom also serves as coordinator), an English language teacher (who also serves as the English language coordinator and the Spanish teacher), a school counselor, a social worker, a school nurse, a guidance counselor, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. The administrative staff includes a finance/data manager, an administrative office associate, and a school resource officer.

UNC-Chapel Hill's laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy (CCA), is co-located at North Elementary School in Person County and is serving kindergarten and first-grade students during its second year of operation in 2023-24 and will add a final grade next year, eventually serving students in grades K-2. With a whole-child approach to student learning, CCA will have an integrated curriculum that intentionally focuses on student well-being, social-emotional support for learning, and engagement of families and the community. CCA will be a clinical experience site for various university degree programs, from MAT students to pre-service public health and library science majors. In 2023-24, the staff at Carolina Community Academy includes a principal, six classroom teachers, three instructional assistants, one EC teacher, one instructional coach, one school counselor, one school social worker, one office manager, and a director. In addition, multiple Person County Schools employees support the lab school through elective classes and related services, along with University-wide support from faculty and staff at UNC-Chapel Hill.

UNCW operates D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA), the only K-8 school within New Hanover County Schools. Located in downtown Wilmington's Northside community, the school opened in July 2018 and operates on a year-round calendar. DCVPA has a combination class in grades 4 and 5 and one class in all other grade levels. Instruction at DCVPA is guided by the acronym PIER (Personalized, Inquiry-based, Experiential, and Reflective) and emphasizes STEM and literacy content. DCVPA is simultaneously focused on addressing the physical health and social-emotional needs of their students and uses a "kinship model" to facilitate relationship building between staff, families, and students. In 2023-24, the DCVPA staff includes a principal, an assistant principal/behavioral specialist, a data manager, an administrative assistant, an operations coordinator and liaison, an EC director, an academic and learning coordinator, 12 teachers in core content areas, four instructional assistants, two EC teachers, two EC teacher assistants, one health and PE teacher, one music teacher, an art teacher, an instructional coach, a literacy coach, an MTSS specialist, a beginning teacher support coach, a student support specialist, a speech therapist, a school psychologist, a social worker, a guidance counselor, a part-time nurse, a school resource officer, and a technology support analyst.

WCU's laboratory school, The Catamount School, is co-located on the campus of Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva, NC, and serves grades 6-8. It opened in August 2017 and is the only middle school in Jackson County. The Catamount School has adopted the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model as a framework for creating collaborative school-community relationships and improving students' learning and health. The Catamount School fosters student growth and the development of social-emotional skills through a problem-centered, experienced-based learning approach in an inclusive education environment. Special education services for EC students are provided in regular classrooms using a co-teaching model in which the EC teacher works collaboratively with the lead classroom teacher to deliver individualized instruction. In the 2023-24 school year, The Catamount School staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, four core subject-area teachers, two exceptional children (EC) teachers, an enrichment coordinator, a health and PE teacher, and two health services coordinators who serve as the school nurses and supervise School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. One of the EC teachers also serves as the MTSS coordinator. A COE faculty member serves as the Curriculum and Instruction Liaison and teaches one math class. WCU College of Education faculty members serve in several positions at The Catamount School, including as an EC administrator and a second math teacher.

Student Enrollment and Demographics at Laboratory Schools

Table 1 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 286 enrolled students, with 54 in kindergarten, 45 in 1st grade, 56 in 2nd grade, 39 in 3rd grade, 47 in 4th grade, and 45 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are above those from the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 49 percent are male, 44 percent are Black, 33 percent are Hispanic, and 21 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 92 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 30 percent of K-5 students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 29 percent are Hispanic, 15 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 61 percent are designated as low-income. [6]

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State) has 78 enrolled students, with 24 in 2nd grade, 19 in 3rd grade, and 35 in 4th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show an enrollment decrease of 13 percent for the Academy at Elkin.[7] Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 45 percent are male, 72 percent are White, 21 percent are Hispanic, and 23 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 100 percent of the Academy at Elkin students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 68 percent of the 2nd-4th grade students in Elkin City Schools are White, 22 percent are Hispanic, 15 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 48 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the ECU Community School has 117 enrolled students, with 14 in kindergarten, 19 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, 24 in 3rd grade, 22 in 4th grade, and 19 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show a modest enrollment decrease of 5 percent for the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 55 percent are male, 95 percent are Black, and 26 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23

[6] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2021-22 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2022-23 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

[7] Appalachian State and Elkin City Schools are working in partnership to determine whether the laboratory school's grade range (grades 2-4) is sustainable or whether the grade range should be modified to help with enrollment.

school year show that 82 percent of ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black, 12 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 73 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) has 85 enrolled students, with 29 in 3rd grade, 31 in 4th grade, and 25 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show an enrollment increase of 21 percent at Aggie Academy. Of these enrolled students in 2023-24, 59 percent are male, 93 percent are Black, and 11 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 43 percent of the 3rd-5th grade students in Guilford County Schools are Black and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children.[8]

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, Niner University Elementary (UNCC) has 133 enrolled students, with 25 in kindergarten, 22 in 1st grade, 21 in 2nd grade, 32 in 3rd grade, 17 in 4th grade, and 16 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show a five percent enrollment decrease. This is notable since Niner University Elementary added a new grade level in 2023-24. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 53 percent are male, 93 percent are Black, and 28 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 86 percent of the Niner University Elementary school students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 35 percent of the K-5 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 10 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 53 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) has 67 enrolled students, with 35 in kindergarten and 32 in 1st grade. The Carolina Community Academy added a grade (1st grade) in 2023-24 and as such their enrollment increased by over 100 percent relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 45 percent are male, 58 percent are Black, 16 percent are Hispanic, and 9 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 86 percent of the Carolina Community Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 32 percent of the K-1st grade students in Person County Schools are Black, 11 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 71 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 197 enrolled students, with 17 in kindergarten, 23 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, 22 in 3rd grade, 19 in 4th grade, 20 in 5th grade, 36 in 6th grade, 29 in 7th grade, and 12 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show a modest enrollment decline of 6 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 49 percent are male, 89 percent are Black, and 26 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 100 percent of the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 18 percent of the K-8 students in New Hanover County Schools are Black, 13 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 46 percent are designated as low-income.

[8] Title I data on the percentage of low-income students at the Aggie Academy are not available for the 2022-23 year.

Table 1: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools

	ASU: Middle Fork		ASU: Elkin		ECU		NCA&T		UNCC		UNCCH		UNCG	UNCW		WCU	
	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24
Total Enrollment	262	286	91	78	123	117	70	85	140	133	28	67	339	209	197	59	59
Kindergarten	46	54	---	---	19	14	---	---	26	25	28	35	54	26	17	---	---
1st Grade	55	45	---	---	21	19	---	---	31	22	---	32	73	18	23	---	---
2nd Grade	31	56	27	24	24	19	---	---	40	21	---	---	40	22	19	---	---
3rd Grade	43	39	34	19	24	24	30	29	21	32	---	---	60	19	22	---	---
4th Grade	43	47	30	35	24	22	24	31	22	17	---	---	51	22	19	---	---
5th Grade	44	45	---	---	11	19	16	25	---	16	---	---	61	25	20	---	---
6th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	34	36	12	18
7th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	17	29	23	17
8th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	26	12	24	24
Male	51.2%	49.0%	51.7%	44.9%	55.3%	54.7%	58.5%	58.8%	57.9%	53.4%	50.0%	44.8%	52.8%	49.8%	49.2%	45.8%	55.9%
White	15.3%	17.5%	71.4%	71.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	14.3%	14.9%	12.7%	3.8%	3.6%	94.9%	84.8%
Black	42.0%	43.7%	5.5%	3.9%	95.1%	94.9%	93.2%	92.9%	84.3%	93.2%	64.3%	58.2%	61.7%	90.0%	89.3%	0.0%	1.7%
Multiracial	5.0%	4.9%	1.1%	3.9%	1.6%	1.7%	2.4%	4.7%	4.3%	0.0%	7.1%	9.0%	10.0%	4.3%	6.1%	1.7%	0.0%
Hispanic	36.6%	32.5%	22.0%	20.5%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	2.4%	6.4%	3.8%	10.7%	16.4%	14.5%	1.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	0.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	3.0%	3.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	1.7%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	11.9%
Pacific Islander	0.8%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	21.8%	21.0%	29.7%	23.1%	16.3%	25.6%	12.8%	10.6%	22.9%	27.8%	10.7%	9.0%	20.1%	19.1%	26.4%	28.8%	23.7%
Low-Income	91.8%	N/A	100%	N/A	81.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	85.9%	N/A	85.9%	N/A	100%	100%	N/A	50.0%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. Most of the data in this table comes from the Principal's Monthly Report from the 20th day of the school year. The low-income data come from the 2022-23 Title I federal reporting. Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring#title-i---eligible-schools-summary-report-(essr) for those data. These Title I data are not yet available for the 2023-24 school year. N/A=not available.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 59 enrolled students, with 18 in 6th grade, 17 in 7th grade, and 24 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year enrollment is unchanged at The Catamount School. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 56 percent are male, 85 percent are White, 12 percent are American Indian, and 24 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 50 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 65 percent of the 6th-8th grade students in Jackson County Schools are White, 7 percent are American Indian, 17 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 64 percent are designated as low-income.

Laboratory School Admissions and Enrollment Priorities

As originally enacted in 2016, the enabling laboratory school legislation directed UNC System institutions to (1) consider eligible for admission any student residing in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located who was enrolled in 5a low-performing school at the time of application *and* (2) to give priority enrollment to students who did not meet expected growth in the prior school year. Failure to meet expected growth can be measured by grades, observations, diagnostic and formative assessments, state assessments, or other factors, including reading on grade level. The legislation was amended in 2017, requiring laboratory schools to consider eligible for admission any students residing in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located who were enrolled in a low-performing school at the time of application *or* who did not meet expected growth in the previous academic year. In 2018, the legislation was amended to expand admission eligibility criteria to include siblings of children eligible for admission under the 2017 criteria.[9] Additional amendments enacted in 2020 expanded the eligibility criteria to include children of laboratory school staff and allow students not meeting any of the eligibility criteria to enroll if (1) they reside in the district where the laboratory school is located; (2) the laboratory school has not reached enrollment capacity by March 1 before the following school year; and (3) these students comprise under 20 percent of the school's total capacity enrollment.[10]

Other important aspects of the admissions policies are as follows: (1) admission to laboratory schools is based on eligibility, timeliness of the application (received during the application period), capacity of the school, and the order in which eligible applications are received; (2) once students are enrolled, they are required to confirm their attendance for the following year but are not required to re-apply; and (3) kindergarten students are eligible to attend a laboratory school if they were zoned to attend a low-performing school in the district. Amendments to the laboratory school legislation enacted in 2020 create a new requirement, effective in the 2021-22 school year, that laboratory schools make reasonable attempts to ensure that the student population reflects the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of students in the district where they are located.[11]

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[9] Senate Bill 99 (Session Law 2018-5) amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 by adding a third criteria for laboratory school admission. N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(3) provides that a sibling of a child who is eligible under the original criteria set forth in §116-239.9(a)(1) and (2) shall be eligible to attend a laboratory school.

[10] Session Law 2020-56 (HB 1096) (2020) amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 by adding a fourth criteria for laboratory school admission. N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(4) provides that a child of a laboratory school employee is eligible to attend a laboratory school. House Bill 1096 also amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 adding a new §116-239.9(c2) which provides that "Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (a) of this section [setting forth admission eligibility criteria], if a laboratory school has not reached enrollment capacity in a program, class, grade level, or building by March 1, prior to the start of the next school year, the laboratory school may enroll children who reside in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located but do not meet one of the eligibility criteria…for up to twenty percent (20%) of the total capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building."

[11] Session Law 2020-56 (HB 1096) created a new N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(e) which provides that within a year of operation, a laboratory school shall make reasonable efforts in the recruitment process for the population of the

Table 2 presents data on how laboratory schools originally determined whether students were eligible to attend: previously attended/zoned to attend a low-performing school, previously low-performing themselves, a sibling of a child already attending the laboratory school, a child of a laboratory school staff member, or a post March 1st enrollee that helps the laboratory school reach capacity. Importantly, laboratory schools did not necessarily confirm all these eligibility criteria. That is, if a student previously attended a low-performing school, the laboratory school may not have assessed whether the student was also low-performing him/herself. As a result, data in Table 2 indicate how the laboratory school confirmed students' eligibility and not necessarily all the eligibility criteria that qualified students to attend a laboratory school.

Appalachian State certified that 100 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

Appalachian State certified that 82 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Elkin in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their own prior performance, 3 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance, and 15 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that 93 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 22 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 32 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 3 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

NCA&T certified that 69 percent of the students at Aggie Academy in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 12 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 6 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCC certified that 64 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 14 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 12 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 11 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNC-Chapel Hill certified that 100 percent of the students at Carolina Community Academy in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

UNCW certified that 76 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 6 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 4 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

school to reasonably reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the general population of the students residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located. A laboratory school shall not unlawfully discriminate when making admissions determinations.

Finally, WCU certified that 34 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 53 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 2 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 10 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Table 2: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements

	ASU: Middle Fork	ASU: Elkin	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	286	78	117	85	133	67	197	59
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	100.0%	0.0%	93.2%	69.4%	63.9%	100.0%	75.6%	33.9%
Previously Low-Performing Student	0.0%	82.1%	22.2%	11.8%	13.5%	0.0%	6.1%	52.5%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	0.0%	2.6%	31.6%	12.9%	12.0%	0.0%	13.2%	1.7%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	1.7%
Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	0.0%	15.4%	2.6%	5.9%	10.5%	0.0%	3.6%	10.2%

Note: This table displays information on how laboratory school students determined whether students were eligible to attend. Laboratory schools did not necessarily confirm all these eligibility criteria—i.e., if a student previously attended a low-performing school, the laboratory school may not have assessed whether the student was also low-performing. Data are for the 2023-24 academic year. Status as a low-performing student can be based on grades, observations, diagnostic and formative assessments, state assessments, or other factors, including reading on grade level.

Student Achievement at Laboratory Schools

The legislation enabling laboratory schools requires the reporting of student achievement data, including school performance grades, achievement scores, and growth at each laboratory school. These achievement data are based on student proficiency and growth on state assessments (End-of-Grade exams for laboratory schools). Proficiency measures whether students pass state assessments, while growth tracks the gains students make on those assessments. Table 3 displays these achievement data for the 2022-23 academic year. The top panel of Table 3 displays these data overall; the middle and bottom panels of Table 3 report these data for reading and mathematics separately.[12]

Overall, the top panel of Table 3 indicates that in the 2022-23 school year, three laboratory schools—the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and The Catamount School (WCU)—earned a performance grade of 'C'. The remaining five laboratory schools—the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—earned a performance grade of 'F' in 2022-

[12] These school accountability data for the 2021-22 year can be accessed here: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2021-22-school-performance-grades

23.[13] These performance grades are based on the performance score, which is a weighted average of the achievement score (80%) and growth score (20%). Achievement scores, which measure proficiency rates on state assessments, ranged from 11.5 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 55.9 (Aggie Academy). Growth scores ranged from 65.2 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 84.3 (Academy at Middle Fork). Six of the eight laboratory schools met expected growth in 2022-23.

Table 3: Student Achievement at Laboratory Schools in 2022-23

	Overall Performance Grade	Overall Performance Score	Overall Achievement Score	Overall Growth Score	Overall Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	34	21.9	84.3	Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	F	27	16.7	66.4	Not Met
ECU Community School	C	55	48.3	83.2	Met
Aggie Academy	C	61	55.9	81.7	Met
Niner University Elementary	F	39	28.2	82.6	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	34	23.5	73.5	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	22	11.5	65.2	Not Met
The Catamount School	C	56	49.1	82.0	Met
	Reading Performance Grade	Reading Performance Score	Reading Achievement Score	Reading Growth Score	Reading Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	31	23.0	64.8	Not Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	F	31	21.7	69.0	Not Met
ECU Community School	D	51	43.1	83.3	Met
Aggie Academy	C	62	57.4	78.1	Met
Niner University Elementary	D	43	33.3	83.7	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	31	21.0	72.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	23	12.0	66.7	Not Met
The Catamount School	C	62	56.6	81.4	Met
	Math Performance Grade	Math Performance Score	Math Achievement Score	Math Growth Score	Math Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	36	21.3	93.8	Exceeded
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	F	12	11.7	Not Reported	Not Reported
ECU Community School	C	59	53.4	80.2	Met
Aggie Academy	C	60	54.4	83.5	Met
Niner University Elementary	F	23	23.1	Not Reported	Not Reported
Moss Street Partnership School	F	28	17.2	70.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	22	7.5	78.3	Met
The Catamount School	D	50	41.5	81.6	Met

Note: Performance Grades range from A-F and are based on the Performance Score (Performance Scores of 85-100=A; 70-84=B; 55-69=C; 40-54=D; and 0-39=F). Performance Scores are a weighted average of the Achievement Score (80 percent) and the Growth Score (20 percent). For laboratory schools, the Achievement Score is the proficiency rate on End-of-Grade exams. The Growth Status is based, in part, on the Growth Score, and indicates whether there was sufficient statistical evidence to say that the school exceeded, met, or did not meet expected growth. North Carolina calculates these values across subject-areas and for mathematics and reading separately.

[13] The Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) did not have any school performance data in the 2022-23 year.

The middle panel of Table 3 presents school performance data in reading. In the 2022-23 school year, Aggie Academy and The Catamount school earned a 'C' performance grade; the ECU Community School and Niner University Elementary earned a 'D' performance grade; and Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned a 'F' performance grade in reading. Reading achievement scores ranged from 12 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy to 57.4 at Aggie Academy. Reading growth scores ranged from 64.8 at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork to 83.7 at Niner University Elementary. Five laboratory schools met expected growth in reading while three schools did not meet expected growth in 2022-23.

Finally, the bottom panel of Table 3 presents school performance grades in math. In the 2022-23 school year, the ECU Community School and Aggie Academy earned a 'C' performance grade; The Catamount School earned a 'D' performance grade; and Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Niner University Elementary, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned a 'F' performance grade. Math achievement scores ranged from 7.5 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 54.5 (Aggie Academy). North Carolina did not report an official math growth score or growth status for the Appalachian Academy at Elkin and Niner University Elementary in 2022-23. Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork exceeded expected growth in math in 2022-23, while the remaining laboratory schools met growth.

Student Academic Progress at Laboratory Schools

The legislation enabling laboratory schools requires the reporting of student academic progress in each laboratory school, as measured against the previous school year and against other schools in the district and statewide. To fulfill this requirement, this report includes analyses of student-level achievement data from the 2021-22 school year, when there were six laboratory schools that enrolled students who took EOG exams: the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and The Catamount School (WCU).

Table 4 displays 2021-22 student achievement data—average EOG scores, the percentage of students below and meeting/exceeding proficiency—for all non-laboratory school students statewide. Tables 5-10 display the same 2021-22 student achievement data for each laboratory school and for all other students in the district hosting the respective laboratory school. For each respective comparison (e.g., 3rd grade reading, 5th grade math), students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and Niner University Elementary (UNCC) scored lower on their EOG exams, on average, than all students statewide. Compared to all non-laboratory school students in North Carolina, students at the ECU Community School generally scored slightly lower on EOG exams. The exception is 4th grade reading, where ECU Community School students scored slightly higher. Finally, students at The Catamount School (WCU) scored higher than all other students statewide in 6th grade reading, 7th grade reading, 8th grade math, and 8th grade science.

Table 4: 2021-22 Test Score Data Statewide

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
3rd Grade Reading	111,239	538.26	54.01	45.99
4th Grade Reading	111,683	543.08	48.59	51.41
5th Grade Reading	112,331	547.73	54.19	45.81
6th Grade Reading	113,914	550.55	52.51	47.49
7th Grade Reading	118,482	552.60	51.10	48.90
8th Grade Reading	120,620	556.46	49.29	50.71
3rd Grade Math	111,100	546.41	42.65	57.35
4th Grade Math	111,640	546.33	50.05	49.95
5th Grade Math	112,283	545.73	48.68	51.32
6th Grade Math	113,823	546.00	49.63	50.37
7th Grade Math	118,399	545.84	51.32	48.68
8th Grade Math	88,083	536.41	73.63	26.37
5th Grade Science	112,237	251.41	36.87	63.13
8th Grade Science	120,329	251.49	26.57	73.43

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data from EOG exams for all non-laboratory students statewide.

Achievement data show that in the 2021-22 school year, students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and Niner University Elementary (UNCC) scored lower and had lower proficiency rates than other students in their host school district (Tables 5, 7, 8, and 9, respectively). Table 6 indicates that students at the ECU Community School generally scored slightly lower than peers in Pitt County. However, ECU Community School students scored higher than peers at South Greenville Elementary. Data from The Catamount School (WCU) show that laboratory school students scored higher than peers in Jackson County Schools (Table 9).

Table 5: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the Academy at Middle Fork

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork				
3rd Grade Reading	43	533.35	74.42	25.58
4th Grade Reading	44	536.82	75.00	25.00
5th Grade Reading	59	540.03	88.14	11.86
3rd Grade Math	43	535.63	86.05	13.95
4th Grade Math	43	535.58	93.02	6.98
5th Grade Math	59	535.39	91.53	8.47
5th Grade Science	59	241.69	77.97	22.03
All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students				
3rd Grade Reading	3876	537.07	60.06	39.94
4th Grade Reading	3873	541.50	56.62	43.38
5th Grade Reading	3965	545.82	63.63	36.37
3rd Grade Math	3864	544.88	51.92	48.08
4th Grade Math	3871	545.35	56.24	43.76
5th Grade Math	3964	544.06	57.97	42.03
5th Grade Science	3964	250.16	43.01	56.99

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and for all other Winston-Salem Forsyth County students in the same grades.

Table 6: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the ECU Community School

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
ECU Community School				
3rd Grade Reading	26	534.19	73.08	26.92
4th Grade Reading	11	543.55	45.45	54.55
5th Grade Reading	10	543.60	80.00	20.00
3rd Grade Math	26	545.08	50.00	50.00
4th Grade Math	11	544.27	54.55	45.45
5th Grade Math	10	545.20	30.00	70.00
5th Grade Science	10	246.50	50.00	50.00
All Other Pitt County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1643	537.75	57.27	42.73
4th Grade Reading	1733	542.63	52.39	47.61
5th Grade Reading	1677	546.92	58.38	41.62
3rd Grade Math	1640	547.07	39.27	60.73
4th Grade Math	1732	547.02	47.00	53.00
5th Grade Math	1677	545.47	51.04	48.96
5th Grade Science	1679	251.89	35.20	64.80
South Greenville Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	55	532.62	81.82	18.18
4th Grade Reading	45	533.84	91.11	8.89
5th Grade Reading	45	540.84	88.89	11.11
3rd Grade Math	55	544.38	45.45	54.55
4th Grade Math	45	539.29	75.56	24.44
5th Grade Math	45	539.67	84.44	15.56
5th Grade Science	45	242.49	75.56	24.44

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the ECU Community School, for all other Pitt County students in the same grades, and for students at South Greenville Elementary School (the host school for the ECU Community School).

Table 7: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Moss Street Partnership School				
3rd Grade Reading	53	531.00	84.91	15.09
4th Grade Reading	58	534.40	81.03	18.97
5th Grade Reading	68	540.44	85.29	14.71
3rd Grade Math	53	537.68	84.91	15.09
4th Grade Math	58	536.05	94.83	5.17
5th Grade Math	68	537.75	80.88	19.12
5th Grade Science	68	246.26	57.35	42.65
All Other Rockingham County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	804	535.47	68.16	31.84
4th Grade Reading	777	542.29	51.87	48.13
5th Grade Reading	797	546.96	58.85	41.15
3rd Grade Math	804	544.74	49.63	50.37
4th Grade Math	777	546.46	49.55	50.45
5th Grade Math	796	545.32	51.63	48.37
5th Grade Science	797	251.44	36.26	63.74

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the Moss Street Partnership School and for all other Rockingham County students in the same grades.

Table 8: 2021-22 Test Score Data for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy				
3rd Grade Reading	22	528.55	95.45	4.55
4th Grade Reading	20	535.65	90.00	10.00
5th Grade Reading	20	538.70	85.00	15.00
6th Grade Reading	17	545.35	82.35	17.65
7th Grade Reading	24	546.50	79.17	20.83
8th Grade Reading	31	546.97	87.10	12.90
3rd Grade Math	22	533.32	100.00	0.00
4th Grade Math	20	535.20	95.00	5.00
5th Grade Math	20	534.10	90.00	10.00
6th Grade Math	17	538.59	88.24	11.76
7th Grade Math	24	538.25	87.50	12.50
8th Grade Math	31	532.68	90.32	9.68
5th Grade Science	20	237.05	100.00	0.00
8th Grade Science	31	241.48	61.29	38.71
All Other New Hanover County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1875	539.68	46.08	53.92
4th Grade Reading	1752	544.71	42.64	57.36
5th Grade Reading	1808	548.66	49.89	50.11
6th Grade Reading	1695	551.24	49.38	50.62
7th Grade Reading	1859	553.16	49.06	50.94
8th Grade Reading	1851	557.08	45.81	54.19
3rd Grade Math	1873	547.71	38.81	61.19
4th Grade Math	1752	548.08	43.15	56.85
5th Grade Math	1808	547.39	40.04	59.96
6th Grade Math	1693	546.68	44.89	55.11
7th Grade Math	1859	546.74	47.12	52.88
8th Grade Math	1202	536.67	72.30	27.70
5th Grade Science	1808	253.75	29.65	70.35
8th Grade Science	1846	252.21	24.49	75.51

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and for all other New Hanover County students in the same grades.

Table 9: 2021-22 Test Score Data for Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Niner University Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	16	530.00	93.75	6.25
3rd Grade Math	16	537.94	87.50	12.50
All Other Charlotte Mecklenburg Students				
3rd Grade Reading	10622	537.43	57.11	42.89
3rd Grade Math	10591	546.65	43.41	56.59

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for Niner University Elementary School and for all other Charlotte Mecklenburg students in the same grades.

Table 10: 2021-22 Test Score Data for The Catamount School (WCU)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
The Catamount School				
6th Grade Reading	12	550.75	41.67	58.33
7th Grade Reading	20	556.55	35.00	65.00
8th Grade Reading	22	556.27	50.00	50.00
6th Grade Math	12	545.33	58.33	41.67
7th Grade Math	20	545.35	60.00	40.00
8th Grade Math	14	537.71	64.29	35.71
8th Grade Science	22	253.59	27.27	72.73
Math I	8	553.88	12.50	87.50
All Other Jackson County Students				
6th Grade Reading	244	549.09	58.20	41.80
7th Grade Reading	244	550.82	59.84	40.16
8th Grade Reading	268	554.49	57.84	42.16
6th Grade Math	245	544.94	54.69	45.31
7th Grade Math	245	544.20	57.96	42.04
8th Grade Math	222	537.70	69.82	30.18
8th Grade Science	267	250.59	28.46	71.54
Math I	314	547.87	47.13	52.87
Smokey Mountain High School				
Math I	211	546.76	51.66	48.34

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for The Catamount School, for all other Jackson County students in the same grades, and for students at the Smokey Mountain High School (the host school for The Catamount School).

While useful, the test score data in Tables 5-10 do not account for the unique nature of students attending laboratory schools—i.e., previously low-performing and/or attending a low-performing school. Efforts to assess laboratory school student achievement are further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on student learning and access to achievement data over time. In particular, without test scores from spring 2020, it is more challenging to isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student achievement.[14] To more rigorously assess student achievement at laboratory schools, this report includes results from two additional analyses: (1) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2021-22 with the test scores of students attending low-performing schools;[15] and (2) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2021-22 with the test scores of a matched comparison sample. [16]

Table 11 presents results of models comparing laboratory school students to other students attending low-performing schools.[17] Across all laboratory schools, the top row of Table 11 indicates that laboratory

[14] It is also challenging to isolate laboratory school impacts because DIBELS early grades reading data is not available in 2019-20 or 2020-21.

[15] The designation of low-performing school comes from the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years. That is, schools are considered low-performing for analyses only if they were designated as low-performing in 2019 and 2022.

[16] Propensity score analyses were used to match laboratory school students to comparison students within the same grade level in 2021-22. Variables in the propensity score model included student demographics, student program participation, school percent low income, and, as available, measures of prior student engagement (attendance rates and whether the student was suspended) and prior student achievement (scores on DIBELS and EOG exams in math and reading). For laboratory school students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from the year before entry into a laboratory school; for comparison sample students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from 2021.

[17] Models control for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, English learner status, and student EOG scores from the 2020-21 year. At the school level, models control for school type (i.e., elementary, middle, elementary/middle combination), percent students of color, and percent

school students score comparably to other students attending a low-performing school. These results differ across laboratory schools. There are positive results for the ECU Community School in elementary grades math, elementary grades reading, and 5th grade science; Moss Street Partnership School in 5th grade science; D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in elementary grades reading; and The Catamount School in middle grades math and middle grades reading. Conversely, there are negative results for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in three comparisons, Moss Street Partnership School in two comparisons, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in two comparisons, and The Catamount School in one comparison.

Table 11: Test Score Results--Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Grade Science	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	-0.093 (0.057)	-0.005 (0.045)	0.132 (0.087)	0.058 (0.078)	0.055 (0.119)	-0.075 (0.051)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.209**** (0.015)	**-0.076**** (0.013)	---	---	**-0.085*** (0.031)	---
ECU Community School	**0.229**** (0.029)	**0.387**** (0.022)	---	---	**0.304**** (0.062)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.032+** (0.017)	**-0.045**** (0.015)	---	---	**0.275**** (0.034)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.146**** (0.035)	**0.094**** (0.028)	0.028 (0.028)	-0.040 (0.031)	**-0.331**** (0.049)	-0.077 (0.093)
The Catamount School	---	---	**0.302**** (0.019)	**0.196**** (0.024)	---	**-0.072*** (0.033)
Observations	26,571	26,660	45,974	48,958	13,045	16,379

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the test scores of laboratory school students versus other students attending a low-performing school. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 12 presents results of models comparing the test scores of laboratory school students to a matched comparison sample.[18] A key difference between these propensity score analyses and the first set of analyses—comparing laboratory school students to students in low-performing schools—is related to the use of prior data. In the first set of analyses, the prior test scores come from 2020-21, when many of the 2021-22 laboratory school students were already attending a laboratory school. In the propensity score analyses, the prior data for laboratory school students come from the year before their enrollment in a laboratory school.

Estimates in Table 12 show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in elementary grades math, elementary grades reading, and 5th grade

low-income students. Models also include a region fixed effect, meaning we assess laboratory school student achievement in 2021-22 relative to comparable students attending low-performing schools in the same region as the laboratory school. Because these models control for 2020-21 EOG scores, data from Niner University Elementary (UNCC) do not contribute to analyses.

[18] These models control for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, English learner status, school percent low-income and the prior student engagement and achievement outcomes that were part of the initial propensity score model. These models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

science. Laboratory school students scored comparably to matched comparison sample students in middle grades. Once again, these results differ across laboratory schools. Students at the ECU Community School scored significantly higher than the matched comparison sample in elementary grades math, elementary grades reading, and 5th grade science. Students at The Catamount School (WCU) scored significantly higher than matched comparison sample students in middle grades reading. Results are negative for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in all three elementary grades comparisons, negative for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in two elementary grades comparisons, and negative for Niner University Elementary (UNCC) in one elementary grades comparison.

Table 12: Test Scores Results—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Grade Science	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	**-0.326**** (0.039)	**-0.155**** (0.042)	0.045 (0.067)	0.077 (0.066)	**-0.139*** (0.067)	0.023 (0.103)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.642**** (0.062)	**-0.268**** (0.066)	---	---	**-0.453**** (0.101)	---
ECU Community School	**0.578**** (0.086)	**0.429**** (0.120)	---	---	**0.700**** (0.204)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.304**** (0.053)	**-0.215**** (0.065)	---	---	0.051 (0.094)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.387**** (0.078)	-0.107 (0.107)	0.038 (0.075)	-0.030 (0.087)	**-0.351*** (0.138)	-0.138 (0.108)
The Catamount School	---	---	0.055 (0.120)	**0.205+** (0.105)	---	0.238 (0.198)
Niner University Elementary	-0.004 (0.133)	**-0.193+** (0.106)	---	---	---	---
Observations	2,139	2,143	650	692	814	288

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the test scores of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Taken together, the 2021-22 test score results in Tables 11 and 12 are relatively similar. This is despite differences in the analytical approaches, the comparison samples, and prior student data. Test score results for the ECU Community School were the most promising—with positive and significant results across all elementary grades subjects. There were also multiple positive test score results for The Catamount School (WCU). Results for the remaining laboratory schools indicate that their students scored lower than comparison sample students—in low-performing schools or the matched sample—in at least some grade levels/subject areas.

Educator Preparation Programs and Laboratory Schools

Laboratory schools offer pre-service teachers and school leaders an opportunity to have more in-depth and practice-based preparation experiences. Likewise, laboratory schools offer COE faculty an opportunity to refine and innovate their preparation practices based on their experiences in laboratory schools. As such, this section briefly details how UNC System institutions are integrating laboratory schools into educator preparation. The enabling laboratory school legislation also requires the reporting of (1) educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a

laboratory school and (2) outcomes for educator preparation program students completing clinical experiences in laboratory schools. This section includes educator preparation program performance data for the eight UNC System institutions that operated laboratory schools in 2022-23. Future reports to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee will provide outcome data for pre-service candidates completing clinical experiences in laboratory schools. These data will be available once a sufficient number of pre-service candidates have had clinical experiences in laboratory schools and these candidates can be connected to administrative data from NCDPI.

Integrating Laboratory Schools into Educator Preparation

With the exception of the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), which was in its first year of operation in 2022-23, all UNC System institutions operating a laboratory school in 2022-23 integrated pre-service teachers into their schools. This integration happened in two primary ways: (1) junior-year candidates in methods and practicum courses conducted observations, diagnostics, and assessments; provided individual tutoring and small-group instruction; and assisted with instructional interventions and (2) senior-year pre-service teachers had clinical experiences as either interns (intern I) or student teachers (intern II). In intern I experiences, pre-service teachers spend one or two days per week shadowing, observing, or supporting a laboratory school teacher over a semester. During student teaching, pre-service candidates spend every day of the week, over a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction.

Table 13 presents counts of the pre-service teachers and school leaders who had a clinical experience—early field, intern I, intern II—in a laboratory school in 2022-23.[19] Appalachian State placed 37 candidates in early field experiences and seven candidates in full-time student teaching experiences at Middle Fork Academy. At the Elkin Academy, Appalachian State placed one candidate into a full-time student teaching experience. ECU placed four candidates in early field experiences, three candidates in intern I experiences, and three candidates in student teaching at the ECU Community School. NCA&T placed 24 candidates in early field experiences at Aggie Academy. UNCC placed 63 candidates in early field experiences and 1 candidate into an intern I experience at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed 12 candidates in early field experiences, 10 candidates in intern I experiences, and 10 candidates in full-time student teaching at Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 47 candidates in early field experiences, 42 candidates in intern I experiences, and three candidates in full-time student teaching at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Finally, WCU placed 92 candidates in early field experiences, 10 candidates in intern I experiences, and three candidates in full-time student teaching at The Catamount School.

[19] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2022-23. ECU placed two social work interns, one marriage and family therapy intern, four speech/language interns, two psychology interns, and two occupational therapist interns at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed two school counseling interns at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed two social work interns at Moss Street Partnership School. WCU placed 12 school and clinical psychology students, 26 school counseling interns, four nursing preceptors, and four senior nursing students at The Catamount School.

Table 13: Clinical Experiences in Laboratory Schools for Educator Preparation Program Candidates

Program/Licensure Areas	Early Field Experiences	Intern I	Intern II (Full-time student teaching)
Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)			
Elementary Education	25	0	7
Special Education	5	0	0
Birth to Kindergarten	1	0	0
Art	4	0	0
Physical Education	1	0	0
Middle Grades	1	0	0
Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State)			
Elementary Education	0	0	1
ECU Community School			
Elementary Education	0	1	1
Special Education	4	0	0
Birth to Kindergarten	0	2	2
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)			
Elementary Education	24	0	0
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)			
Elementary Education	63	1	0
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)			
Elementary Education	12	10	10
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)			
Elementary Education	41	2	3
Special Education	0	34	0
Middle Grades	6	0	0
Health and Physical Education	0	6	0
The Catamount School (WCU)			
Elementary Education/Inclusive Education	43	1	0
Middle Grades	5	3	3
Secondary Math Education	4	0	0
Health and Physical Education	20	6	0
Music/Art	20	0	0

Note: For each UNC System institution, this table displays counts of the pre-service candidates who had clinical experiences in a laboratory school in 2022-23. These data are displayed by institution and program area (e.g. elementary education, special education).

In addition to providing field and clinical experiences for pre-service teacher and school leader candidates, laboratory schools provide COE faculty an opportunity to operate and manage a public school, gain direct exposure to the practical realities of teaching and leading, and further develop an understanding of the day-to-day challenges of improving outcomes for high-needs students. COE faculty have designed their laboratory school models, assisted in the hiring of laboratory school staff, planned for the integration of pre-service candidates into the school, and conducted laboratory school-based research. COE faculty with a regular presence at laboratory schools are embedded into the staff through several position types.

- Laboratory school curriculum directors are typically COE faculty based at the laboratory school who serve as liaisons between the COE and the laboratory school on curricular and instructional supports.
- Teachers or co-teachers in core content subjects.

- Faculty-in-residence who serve the laboratory school two to three days per week. Typically, they must have a focus for their residency and some COEs require interested faculty to apply for the position. Proposed work must align with the laboratory school model.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on-site at the laboratory school.
- Providing professional development supports for laboratory school staff.

Educator Preparation Program Performance Data

Table 14 displays the required reporting elements specified in the enabling laboratory school legislation for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school. These data come from the Educator Preparation Program report cards and are available on the NCDPI website. [20] The data displayed in Table 14 are for traditional programs and are for the most recent three years/cohorts.

Table 14: Educator Preparation Program Performance Data (2021-22 Report Cards)

Reporting Elements	ASU	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Mean SAT of Admitted Students	1136	1135	1037	1163	1255	1099	1176	1105
Mean ACT of Admitted Students	22.6	22.4	19.2	22.1	28.3	22.2	24.2	21.5
Mean GPA of Admitted Students	3.54	3.42	3.49	3.53	3.59	3.36	3.50	3.49
Percent Passing Praxis II Exams	69	70	48	73	95	64	70	67
Percent Licensed	71	79	73	76	63	78	69	79
Percent Employed in NC Within One Year of Program Completion	61	75	57	73	67	71	64	63
Standard 1 (Leadership): % Proficient or Above	98	97	99	97	99	96	98	96
Standard 2 (Classroom Environment): % Proficient or Above	98	97	99	96	98	95	98	96
Standard 3 (Content Knowledge): % Proficient or Above	97	96	99	96	98	95	98	95
Standard 4 (Facilitating Student Learning): % Proficient or Above	97	96	98	94	98	94	98	94
Standard 5 (Reflecting on Practice): % Proficient or Above	96	95	95	93	98	94	97	94
EVAAS: % Meets Expected Growth	71	70	60	72	68	70	73	70
EVAAS: % Exceeds Expected Growth	8	11	19	10	21	8	7	10
Graduate Survey: % 'Well' or 'Very Well' Prepared	77.0	78.0	71.0	75.0	77.0	77.0	69.0	80.0
Employer Survey: % Comparable to or More Effective Than Others	93.0	93.0	90.0	93.0	92.0	91.0	93.0	93.0

Note: This table displays educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school.

[20] https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/EPPDashboardHome_16751976831890/EPPDashboardHome?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=card_share_link

Best Practices Resulting from Laboratory School Operations

Interviews and annual status reports suggest that laboratory school and COE personnel are refining some common practices to further leverage key features of the laboratory school model. Below, these promising practices are briefly described.

Physically, Socially, and Emotionally Safe Environments for Students

Laboratory schools serve high concentrations of students who have had negative prior school experiences and who have poverty-associated needs—i.e., increased mobility, exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma, limited support networks/safety nets, lack of access to transportation, food insecurity, and unstable housing. Laboratory schools emphasize creating positive school environments and building relationships with students and families. Their focus on these objectives is most clearly demonstrated in their efforts to address basic needs and create systems of instruction and behavioral supports that foster positive school cultures. For example, as previously reported, laboratory schools employ staff and/or engage institution and community partners to (1) provide health, social work, and counseling services; (2) provide students food and clothing to meet basic subsistence needs; (3) educate staff on the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences; and (4) use positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and restorative practices to emphasize individual and community relationships.

Balanced Curriculum and Enrichment Activities

Laboratory schools ensure that students are exposed to academic instruction in all content areas—reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies—rather than a primary focus on just reading and math. Laboratory schools also emphasize experiential and/or inquiry-based learning, particularly related to STEM subjects, in which students have "hands-on" engagement through science labs or maker spaces. Further, laboratory schools prioritize enrichment activities that supplement learning and offer students alternative educational opportunities that they may not otherwise be able to access. Leveraging community partnerships and university facilities/events, laboratory schools have infused arts, history, and recreation into daily schedules and have exposed students to new experiences, ideas, and places.

COE Access to Laboratory Schools

As previously reported, laboratory schools directly expose COEs to the challenges that North Carolina public schools face, particularly in teaching low-performing student populations. They also provide schools serving high-need students access to COE resources and opportunities for in-service teachers and staff to engage in continued professional learning (e.g., professional development from COE faculty at the laboratory school or advanced certification/degree programs for laboratory school personnel). As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they are refining how they leverage these mutual benefits, primarily through the increased systematization of COE faculty and pre-service candidate engagement in laboratory schools. COEs have increasingly focused on using junior-year methods classes as a primary vehicle for engaging pre-service candidates in laboratory schools. In particular, when methods classes are taught onsite at laboratory schools, this increases the number and degree to which COE instructors and pre-service candidates are exposed to and engage directly with laboratory school teachers and students.

Other Information the BOG Subcommittee Considers Appropriate

Commensurate with the innovative scope, vision, and commitments of laboratory schools, the UNC System commissioned an evaluation of the laboratory schools intended to facilitate an in-depth assessment of their performance and contributions. Appendix A includes the in-depth evaluation report

from EPIC and Public Impact, which addresses statutorily required reporting elements and the evaluation questions listed below.

(1) How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to succeed?
(2) How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?
(3) Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?
(4) Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?
(5) Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?
(6) Do laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?
(7) How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?

To provide further information that the BOG Subcommittee considers appropriate, this section includes findings from the full laboratory school report completed by EPIC and Public Impact. In particular, this section provides rigorous analyses of student-level attendance and disciplinary data from the 2021-22 school year—i.e., the most recent year that student-level data are available. These data are important indicators of student engagement with school. To the extent that laboratory schools are improving student engagement, that may suggest that other outcomes, such as student learning, are also improving.

Table 15 presents results from two student attendance analyses: (1) comparing laboratory school student attendance in 2021-22 to the attendance of other students at low-performing schools and (2) comparing laboratory school attendance in 2021-22 to a matched comparison sample. These are the same comparisons as in the student achievement models. The outcome variable in these models is a student's attendance rate for the 2021-22 year.[21] These models control for many of the same student and school covariates as in the test score analyses. Results are relatively similar across these approaches. Overall, laboratory school students attended a slightly lower percentage of school days in 2021-22 than the matched comparison sample. Specifically, laboratory school students attended 0.70 percentage points fewer days of school. There was a statistically significant difference in school attendance between laboratory school students and comparison sample students attending a low-performing school. School-specific results indicate that students at Niner University Elementary (UNCC) attend more school than comparison sample peers; conversely, students at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) attended less school. Students at the ECU Community School attended a higher percentage of school days than a sample of comparable students attending a low-performing school.

As with the student achievement and attendance analyses, Table 16 presents results from two student disciplinary infractions analyses: (1) comparing laboratory school student suspensions in 2021-22 to the suspension outcomes of other students at low-performing schools and (2) comparing suspension outcomes in 2021-22 versus a matched comparison sample. In particular, the outcomes for these analyses are whether a student is ever suspended during the school year and whether a student receives an out-of-school suspension during the school year (2021-22). These models control for the same covariates as the student attendance analyses. Overall, the top row of Table 16 shows that laboratory school students are significantly less likely to be suspended than comparison sample students (either those attending a low-performing school or the matched comparison sample). For example, relative to those attending a low-performing school, laboratory school students were nine percentage points less likely to be

[21] These analyses are limited to the sample of students enrolled at their school for the entire 2021-22 year. Results are similar when the sample includes any student enrolled.

suspended during the 2021-22 year. School-specific results indicate that students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) were all less likely to be suspended in 2021-22. Students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy were significantly less likely to receive an out-of-school suspension.

Table 15: Laboratory School Student Attendance Results

	Percent of School Days Attended	
	Compared to Other Students in Low-Performing Schools	*Compared to a Matched Sample*
Laboratory School Students	0.146 (0.462)	**-0.688*** (0.325)
Academy at Middle Fork	0.138 (0.186)	**-0.972+** (0.565)
ECU Community School	**1.358+** (0.721)	1.012 (0.679)
Niner University Elementary	**3.486**** (0.286)	**4.547**** (0.643)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.550*** (0.233)	**-2.277**** (0.583)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	-0.911 (0.690)	-0.601 (0.674)
The Catamount School	0.154 (0.574)	-0.583 (1.239)
Observations	106,928	3,623

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the attendance rates of laboratory school students versus other elementary and middle grades students. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 16: Laboratory School Student Suspension Results

	Ever Suspended in 2021-22		Receives an Out-of-School Suspension in 2021-22	
	Compared to Other Students in Low-Performing Schools	*Compared to a Matched Sample*	*Compared to Other Students in Low-Performing Schools*	*Compared to a Matched Sample*
Laboratory School Students	**-8.99**** (3.11)	**-8.09**** (1.29)	**-6.06**** (1.12)	**-5.90**** (0.97)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-6.00**** (0.98)	**-7.38**** (2.10)	**-3.58**** (0.65)	**-4.84**** (1.16)
ECU Community School	**-12.09**** (2.63)	**-6.58+** (3.63)	**-7.83**** (1.31)	-3.14 (2.63)
Niner University Elementary	**-17.10**** (1.35)	**-15.10**** (1.48)	**-11.71**** (0.84)	**-6.72**** (1.05)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-14.41**** (1.14)	**-15.01**** (1.73)	**-5.49**** (0.77)	**-7.25**** (1.50)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	3.71 (2.84)	4.86 (3.67)	**-8.32**** (1.53)	**-6.89**** (2.59)
The Catamount School	**-10.33**** (3.68)	-3.99 (6.69)	0.91 (1.61)	-3.31 (5.64)
Observations	148,343	4,594	148,343	4,594

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the suspension outcomes of laboratory school students versus other elementary and middle grades students. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Summary

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on school operations, student learning and development, and access to evaluation data, it is difficult to fully assess the extent to which laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission to provide (1) an enhanced education program for students who are low-performing or attending a low-performing school and (2) exposure and training for teachers and school leaders to successfully address challenges in high need school settings. However, evidence to date highlights several areas of note.

After enrollment declines during the COVID-19 pandemic, given disruptions to schooling and recruitment activities, enrollment at UNC System laboratory schools has generally stabilized. Enrollment growth is notable at the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), which added a new grade level in 2023-24, and at the Aggie Academy (NCA&T). Enrollment declines at the Appalachian Academy at Elkin in 2023-24 are related to challenges in recruiting for the grade level span of the school, with both Appalachian State University and Elkin City Schools discussing potential changes for future school years. Enrollment changes—increases or decreases—are modest in size at other laboratory schools. This suggests that laboratory schools are able to effectively market and recruit and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations. As intended, laboratory schools are also primarily enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their host districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are a racial/ethnic minority or low-income.

It remains challenging to fully assess laboratory school impacts on student achievement given the characteristics of enrolled students, the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of student test

scores from 2019-20 and disruptions to early reading test score data (DIBELS/mCLASS) in North Carolina. Rigorous analyses of student-level achievement data from 2021-22 indicate that ECU Community School students scored significantly higher in elementary grades math, elementary grades reading, and 5th grade science than comparable students attending a low-performing school and a matched comparison sample. This is the second year in a row (2020-21 and 2021-22) that the ECU Community School has had positive and significant math results. There were also positive achievement results in 2021-22, relative to other students attending a low-performing school, for The Catamount School (WCU) in middle grades math and reading, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) for 5th grade science, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy for elementary grades reading. This is also the second year in a row (2020-21 and 2021-22) in which there were positive results for Moss Street Partnership School in 5th grade science and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in elementary grades reading. Conversely, multiple results indicated that laboratory school students scored lower than comparison sample students in at least some grade levels/subject areas in 2021-22. Newly released school achievement and accountability data show that six laboratory schools met expected growth in 2022-23, while two schools did not meet expected growth. Notably, the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork exceeded expected growth in math in 2022-23.

Regarding school engagement measures, rigorous analyses of 2021-22 student attendance data show that laboratory school students at the ECU Community School and Niner University Elementary (UNCC) were absent less often than comparison sample students. This is particularly important given the rising rates of chronic absenteeism in North Carolina and nationally. Students at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) were absent more often than comparison sample students. Regarding exclusionary discipline, laboratory school students were significantly less likely to be suspended (overall or out-of-school) than comparison sample students in the 2021-22 year. These results were particularly strong for Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG). The much lower rates of exclusionary discipline at laboratory schools highlight these schools' commitment to supporting the whole child and focusing on restorative justice and positive behavior supports. Likewise, survey data (included in the appendix to this report) indicate that laboratory school students are motivated, engaged, and feel positively about their school environment. These findings suggest that laboratory schools' focus on meeting whole child needs—academic, social/emotional, physical—is beneficial.

Laboratory schools offer COE faculty and candidates unique exposure to the practical challenges of teaching and leading in high-need schools, while also providing laboratory schools access to COE and university resources. This is one of the most unique aspects of laboratory schools, as they are able to integrate teacher education faculty, teacher candidates, and a range of student support personnel—counselors, nurses, social workers, speech pathologists—from the host university. As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they have refined how they engage faculty and pre-service candidates in them. In particular, laboratory schools are prioritizing deeper engagement by COE faculty. This promotes a more consistent COE presence in laboratory schools and allows faculty and laboratory schools to mutually benefit from their engagement.

Future reports to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee will continue to focus on how laboratory schools impact students' engagement with school and their academic achievement and how laboratory schools influence the practices of COEs and K-12 districts.

Appendix A

Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative

November 2023 Report

Education Policy Initiative at Carolina/UNC Public Policy: Kevin C. Bastian
Public Impact: Whitaker Brown

Introduction

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) passed legislation requiring the Board of Governors (BOG) of the University of North Carolina (UNC) System, in consultation with UNC System institution Colleges of Education (COEs), to establish laboratory schools.[1] Laboratory schools are K-12 schools operated by a UNC System institution rather than a local school district. The mission of UNC System laboratory schools is to improve student performance in local school administrative units with low-performing schools by providing an enhanced education program for students residing in those units and to provide exposure and training for teachers and principals to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings.[2] Collectively, laboratory schools are committed to delivering high expectations to prepare students for college and life; ensuring that students learn to read and communicate effectively; addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students; and harnessing the benefits of partnerships to strengthen learning, teaching and school leadership.[3] Laboratory schools serve every part of the University's mission—teaching, research, and public service—and represent an innovative extension of the UNC System's presence in K-12 education.

In 2022-23, nine UNC System institutions operated laboratory schools. East Carolina University (ECU) and Western Carolina University (WCU) opened their laboratory schools in the 2017-18 school year, while Appalachian State University, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) opened their laboratory schools in the 2018-19 school year. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) opened its laboratory school in the 2020-21 school year. The laboratory school enabling legislation required the establishment of at least three additional laboratory schools by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.[4] In 2021-22, Appalachian State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill) were approved to open and operate the three new laboratory schools. In fall 2022, Appalachian State University opened a second laboratory school, the Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, a co-located school within Elkin Elementary in Elkin City Schools currently serving grades 2-4. NCA&T opened its first laboratory school, Aggie Academy, as a STEAM school for grades 3-5 in Guilford County. Finally, UNC-Chapel Hill opened its first laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy, co-located at North Elementary School in Person County Schools. The school served students in kindergarten during its first year of operation, with plans to add a grade level each year to eventually serve students in grades K-2.

UNC System laboratory schools must serve students in at least three contiguous grades in the K-8 grade range. The enabling legislation originally required the UNC System to establish laboratory schools in local administrative units where at least 25 percent of the schools were low-performing. However, the enabling legislation allows the UNC System to exercise six waivers to establish laboratory schools in districts that

[1] N.C.G.S. §116-239.5(a).

[2] N.C.G.S. 116-239.5(b).

[3] The University of North Carolina System. (n.d.) "UNC Laboratory Schools." Retrieved from https://www.northcarolina.edu/unc-lab-schools

[4] Session Law 2020-56 amended N.C.G.S. §§ 116-239.7 (a1) to require the establishment of at least nine laboratory schools. Previously the laboratory school law required that nine constituent UNC System institutions with high-quality educator preparation programs establish laboratory schools. S.L. 2020-56 amended Section 11.6(d) of S.L. 2017-117 to require the establishment of at least six laboratory schools by the beginning of the 2020-21 school year and at least an additional three laboratory schools by the 2022-23 school year.

do not meet this requirement.[5] Students are eligible to attend a laboratory school if they reside in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located and previously attended a low-performing school; failed to meet expected growth in the previous academic year (based on one or more indicators); is the sibling of a child meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory school employees.[6] Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, any student residing in the district where the laboratory school is located may also enroll at a laboratory school if the school is not fully enrolled by March 1 before the start of the next school year.[7] Laboratory schools present opportunities to benefit low-performing students, implement new and research-based instructional strategies, enhance the preparation experiences of pre-service educators, and integrate the contributions of the university and community into the philosophy and practices of the school.

In 2018, the UNC System commissioned the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)/Public Policy at UNC-Chapel Hill and Public Impact (hereon referred to as the Evaluation Team) to conduct a five-year evaluation of the laboratory schools initiative. The intent of the evaluation is to assess whether laboratory schools benefit students and pre-service educators and to understand why laboratory schools succeed or fall short of expectations. To fulfill these objectives, the Evaluation Team submitted reports in November 2018,[8] 2019,[9] 2020,[10] 2021[11], and 2022.[12] The following report reflects the Evaluation Team's review of laboratory school implementation, operation, successes, and shortcomings. As planned, this report includes rigorous analyses of 2021-22 administrative data.

The UNC System BOG will submit its own report focusing on the statutorily required laboratory school reporting elements: student enrollment and demographics, student admissions, student achievement and academic progress, outcomes for pre-service candidates in educator preparation programs, best practices

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[5] Session Law 2020-56 amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.7(a2) to increase the number of waivers the UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools may grant from three to six.

[6] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

[7] However, laboratory schools may not enroll more than 20 percent of students not meeting the other eligibility criteria. N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

[8] Bastian, K., Kim, J., & Hassel, B. "Appendix A: Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2018 Report." University of North Carolina System. (2018). Review and Evaluation of the Educational Effectiveness of the Laboratory Schools (Year 2). Retrieved from https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/Archives/2018%20Reports%20Received/Laboratory%20Schools%20-%20Review%20&%20Evaluation%20of%20Educational%20Effectiveness.pdf . The UNC System submitted an abbreviated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in November 2017.

[9] Bastian, K., Kim, J. & Brown, W. (2019). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2019 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2019%20Reports%20Received/UNC%20Laboratory%20Schools.pdf.

[10] Bastian, K., Kim, J. & Brown, W. (2020). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2020 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2020%20Reports%20Received/UNC%20Laboratory%20Schools%20Report.pdf

[11] Bastian, K., Brown, W. & Rudd, G. (2021). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2021 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/15652

[12] Bastian, K., Brown, W., Chall, R. & Rudd, G. (2022). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2022 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/72363

of laboratory schools, and other information the UNC BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools considers appropriate.[13] This in-depth report from the Evaluation Team is attached to the UNC System BOG report as an appendix, to be submitted to the NCGA by November 15, 2023.

This report is organized to address the following evaluation questions:

(1) *How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to succeed?*
(2) *How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?*
(3) *Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and operated?*
(4) *Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?*
(5) *Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?*
(6) *Do the laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?*
(7) *How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?*

Evaluation Sample

This in-depth evaluation report focuses on the nine UNC System laboratory schools in operation during the 2022-23 school year: ECU Community School, The Catamount School (WCU), Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), Niner University Elementary School (UNCC), Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill). In particular, the qualitative analyses in this report focus heavily on the three new laboratory schools that opened in the 2022-23 year; analyses of surveys and student-level data include all nine laboratory schools.

The ECU Community School is co-located within the South Greenville Elementary School building in Pitt County and serves students in grades K-5. The Catamount School is co-located within the Smoky Mountain High School building in Jackson County and serves students in grades 6-8. The Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork serves students in grades K-5 in an elementary school formerly operated by Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools. The Moss Street Partnership School served students in grades K-5 in an elementary school previously operated by Rockingham County Schools.[14] D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA) is a K-8 school in Wilmington that occupies a former New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) middle school. Niner University Elementary School (NUES) is a K-5 school in a formerly vacant Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools building in west Charlotte. The Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin is co-located on the campus of Elkin Elementary School in Elkin County, serving grades 2-4. The Aggie Academy, operated by NCA&T and enrolling students previously enrolled in Guilford County Schools, serves grades 3-5 in a converted church in Greensboro. Carolina Community Academy (CCA) is co-located with North Elementary School in Person County Schools (PCS) and served students in kindergarten in the 2022-23 school year.

[13] N.C.G.S. §116-239.13 requires that the UNC BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools review and evaluate the educational effectiveness of the laboratory schools and report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on these seven items by November 15 of each year.
[14] In March 2023, the UNC Board of Governor's subcommittee on laboratory schools approved the return of the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to Rockingham County Public Schools beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

Data Sources and Analysis

To complete an in-depth review of the laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team relied on five main data sources: (1) interviews with university and laboratory school leadership, personnel, and partners at the three newly-opened laboratory schools in 2022-23; (2) laboratory school status reports completed by UNC System Colleges of Education (COE); (3) administrative data on students, schools, and school personnel from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI); (4) survey responses from laboratory school students, families, and personnel;[15] and (5) administrative data from COEs on educator preparation programs and pre-service candidates.

Much of the data for this evaluation report comes from interviews with and status reports completed by university leadership and laboratory school principals. Additional data for this report come from student enrollment and demographic information; official NCDPI reporting on school-level achievement;[16] surveys of laboratory school staff, students, and families; and analyses of administrative data. See Appendix A1 for further detail on the data sources, including their alignment with the evaluation questions and the timing/availability of data.

Analysis Methods

Qualitative data analyses

To assess the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team analyzed two types of qualitative data—laboratory school responses to annual status reports from all laboratory schools and interview transcripts from conversations with personnel at the three new laboratory schools—collected in April, May, and June 2023.

Previously, the Evaluation Team used two template reporting forms to collect information from laboratory schools, one for schools in their second or subsequent year of operation and another for new laboratory schools regarding activities undertaken in their last planning year. For the 2022-23 evaluation, all schools completed the same reporting form. (See Appendix A1 for further detail on the annual status reports.) In addition, the Evaluation Team conducted virtual interviews with laboratory school principals, UNC System COE leaders, and LEA representatives, as well as focus groups with roughly four to six staff members at each of the new laboratory schools. See Appendix A1 and A2 for further detail on the interview protocols and analyses of interview inputs.

Quantitative data analyses

The Evaluation Team uses quantitative data from various sources—NCDPI, UNC System COEs, and survey responses—to assess whether laboratory schools improve students' academic performance, engagement with school, and social-emotional outcomes; and whether laboratory schools are successfully marketed and managed. See Appendix A2 for further detail on quantitative data analyses.

[15] For the first time in spring 2021, the evaluation team administered staff surveys to all laboratory school instructional staff. See Appendix A1 for more information on staff surveys.

[16] Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2020-21-school-assessment-and-other-indicator-data

Findings

The following sections address each of the evaluation questions, recognizing that: (1) laboratory schools are designed to serve the unique needs of the communities they serve; (2) each laboratory school reflects the uniqueness of the UNC System institution that operates it; and (3) laboratory schools have been open for different lengths of time—one full year for Aggie Academy (NCA&T), The Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State), and Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), three full years for Niner University Elementary (UNCC), five full years for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and six full years for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU)—with several of those years disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report highlights common laboratory school features and implementation experiences arising from the laboratory school model. As appropriate, this report also highlights the ways that individual laboratory schools have implemented unique practices and includes brief snapshots of each laboratory school in Appendix A3. When leveraging data from interviews or focus groups, this report often focuses on laboratory schools that opened in 2022-23 but also distinguishes differences among laboratory schools that opened in earlier years.

How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to succeed?

As the Evaluation Team reported in 2018, leadership at the UNC System Office and leadership and personnel at UNC System institutions engaged in three sets of activities to set up laboratory schools: (1) governance and implementation oversight; (2) laboratory school selection and approval; and (3) laboratory school planning and implementation.

The UNC System now has seven years of experience in launching and supporting the development of laboratory schools. Each successive opening of laboratory schools causes the UNC System to refine its approach to governance and oversight. The establishment of three new laboratory schools at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year afforded new opportunities to learn from existing campuses in some ways while affirming other implementation challenges that UNC System institutions face to open and operate laboratory schools. The sections below describe how time and experience have influenced laboratory school governance and implementation.

Governance and implementation oversight

The legislation enabling laboratory schools directs the UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools to oversee the establishment of laboratory schools.[17] The UNC System Office, which supplies administrative support for the UNC BOG, provides implementation and oversight support for laboratory schools.

The enabling legislation also directs UNC System institution chancellors to oversee laboratory schools.[18] Generally, chancellors have appointed COE deans to lead laboratory school implementation, and deans have appointed a faculty or staff member to direct laboratory school planning and implementation

[17] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.5 and 116-239.7

[18] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8

activities.[19] This faculty or staff member frequently plays a co-director or co-principal role at the laboratory school. Since the first year of operation, regular formal and informal contact between laboratory school and COE leaders and their counterparts in host district offices, superintendents, and cabinet leadership has proven valuable in setting up and maintaining a successful partnership.

In 2019-20, the UNC System Office created a full-time executive director position responsible for coordinating supports for laboratory schools.[20] The executive director staffs the UNC Board of Governor's Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools and provides support to principals and COE deans or their designees who co-lead laboratory schools.[21] In December 2022, the existing director announced her departure from the system office, and in January 2023, a temporary director was appointed to continue coordinating supports for laboratory schools.

Communities of practice comprising staff from UNC System institutions with similar roles and responsibilities for laboratory schools also convene periodically. These communities of practice were initially organized under the direction of the UNC System Office in the first year of the laboratory school initiative. They are now organized informally by participants often in like roles (finance, legal, etc.). The UNC System Office convened laboratory school principals and COE leadership monthly, providing valuable updates and clarity around expectations for laboratory schools. In fall 2021, the Department of Public Instruction invited laboratory school leadership to the AIM conference, providing laboratory school teams an opportunity to collaborate in person and plan strategically around literacy, assessment, and partnerships. Leaders from the nine laboratory schools also convened for a two-day summit in the fall of 2022 as an opportunity for further collaboration. Laboratory school leadership continues to appreciate and request additional opportunities for collaboration, learning, and sharing of innovative practices that may benefit all schools.

The system of supports that the UNC System has established reflects the autonomy of individual system institutions under the laboratory school legislation and within the UNC System. The system institutions, and by extension, their Colleges of Education and laboratory schools, operate independently. However, they have common issues and challenges related to the operation of laboratory schools. For example, laboratory schools' unique classification as neither traditional LEA nor charter school creates challenges in the interpretation of new statutes and regulations and their application to each campus. As autonomous LEAs, most laboratory schools have continued to meet many operational and administrative demands of traditional public school districts using personnel based at the laboratory school (e.g., school principal, support staff) or the partner institution (e.g., COE dean, university-based administrative personnel). This continues to pose challenges related to capacity and system alignment, occasionally diverting school leaders' attention from school-based instructional responsibilities. With limited authority under the laboratory school legislation to govern the operation of laboratory schools, the UNC System Office has worked to provide a system of supports that encourages collective engagement. Additionally, several laboratory school leaders have strengthened relationships with their regional contact at the

[19] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b) allows chancellors to designate governance duties to other university personnel as necessary.

[20] This position is also responsible for oversight of educator preparation programs within the UNC System.

[21] The executive director serves as an informal liaison between laboratory schools, the NC Department of Public Instruction, and the Board of Governors. In spring of 2020 and the 2020-21 school year, the executive director supported laboratory schools with items such as operations and funding issues related to COVID-19, DPI's Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP), and a new statewide literacy framework. In 2021-22, the director supported with the implementation of statewide LETRS training as well as planning for the approval of the three new laboratory schools opened in 2022-23.

Department of Public Instruction to further augment communication and collaboration. One clear opportunity for learning and collaboration has emerged between the two laboratory schools operated by Appalachian State. As expected, leaders at the two laboratory schools collaborate frequently, and planning and advisory committees at the Appalachian State Academy at Elkin leaned on lessons learned from peers at the Academy at Middle Fork.

Laboratory school selection and approval

The six laboratory schools operating in 2021-22 were part of the UNC System institutions originally identified as well-situated to support a laboratory school. The UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approved ECU and WCU to create laboratory schools in November 2016. In January 2018, the subcommittee approved Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW; in October 2018, the subcommittee approved UNCC. In 2022, Appalachian State University, NCA&T, and UNC-Chapel Hill received approval to open and operate the three new laboratory schools.

During the 2020 legislative session, the laboratory school enabling legislation was amended to require that the UNC Board of Governors establish at least nine laboratory schools.[22] The change also allowed a constituent institution to operate one or more laboratory schools in one or more school districts meeting the 25 percent low-performing school threshold required for a laboratory school to open in the district.[23] Another statutory change revised the timeline for opening laboratory schools.[24] With nine laboratory schools operating in the 2022-23 school year, the Board of Governors met the current statutory obligation.[25] However, Moss Street Partnership School returned to the operation of Rockingham County Public Schools at the end of the 2022-23 school year, leaving only eight laboratory schools in operation during the 2023-24 school year.

Laboratory school planning and implementation

Except for the three new laboratory schools that opened in the fall of 2022, all schools have operated for between three and six years and are beyond the implementation challenges that laboratory schools faced in their start-up year. The three new laboratory schools learned from the first six, completing many of the same start-up tasks across school governance, operations, and finance previously completed by existing

[22] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.5(a) previously directed the UNC Board of Governors, upon the recommendation of the UNC System President, to designate at least nine constituent institutions to establish laboratory schools. Session Law 2020-56 (HB 1096) revised the statute which as rewritten provides: The Board of Governors, upon recommendation by the President, shall designate constituent institutions to submit proposals to establish at least nine laboratory schools in total to serve public school students…The Subcommittee may select a constituent institution to operate more than one laboratory school.

[23] *Id.*

[24] *Id.* In addition N.C.G.S. §116-239.7 as rewritten provides: "The Board of Governors,…shall designate constituent institutions to establish and operate a total of at least nine laboratory schools. The chancellor of each constituent institution shall adopt and submit to the [Board of Governors' Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools] a proposal to operate one or more laboratory schools in one or more local school administrative units that meet the minimum threshold for the number of low-performing schools located in a unit under G.S. 116-239.6(4).

[25] Per Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096), revisions to Section 11.6(d) of S.L. 2016-94, as amended by Section 4 of S.L. 2017-117 provide that "Notwithstanding G.S. 116-239.5, (i) at least six laboratory schools shall be established pursuant to Article 29A of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes, as enacted by this section, and in operation by beginning of the 2020-2021 school year and (ii) at least an additional three laboratory schools shall be established pursuant to Article 29A of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes and in operation by the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year."

schools. COE planning teams also faced many of the same implementation issues and challenges faced by previous planning teams.

Designing the laboratory school model. The laboratory school legislation contains some specifications regarding laboratory schools' design and strategic foci.[26] But COEs have the latitude to develop their own curriculum, assessments, and instructional practices; school schedule; school staffing models (e.g., determining staff roles and job descriptions); personnel evaluations; staff professional development; and budget. Those flexibilities help account for different features among laboratory schools related to:

- *Vision of laboratory school purpose and emphasis.* All laboratory schools emphasize strong academic support for students, leveraging partnerships (with the school of education, university, district, or local community) in the classroom experience for students, and supports for students' social, emotional, or whole-child needs in their models. However, interviews with each of the three new laboratory school leaders revealed other points of emphasis unique to each school. For example, Aggie Academy prioritized pre-service candidate integration in its first year of operation, the Academy at Elkin emphasized exploratory learning aligned with the local cultural community, and the Carolina Community Academy stressed the importance of a strong connection to the local Person County community.

- *Size, location, and facilities of laboratory school.* The laboratory schools that opened in 2017, the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU), are co-located within another district school. The laboratory schools that opened in 2018, Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), are whole schools operating in facilities that housed district schools the preceding year. The laboratory school that opened in 2020, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), operates in a formerly vacant district building. Like the first cohort of laboratory schools, two of the schools that opened in 2022, the Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State) and the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), are co-located within another district school. Students and staff at the Carolina Community Academy occupy a specific hallway/wing of the North Elementary School building, and the Academy at Elkin students and staff operate out of modular units located on the grounds of Elkin Elementary School. Aggie Academy is the first laboratory school to operate in facilities not connected to its host district, leasing its school facilities from a local church. All three new laboratory schools emphasize low student-to-instructional and support-staff ratios in their inaugural year of operation.

- *Calendar and school schedule*. Most laboratory schools, including the three that opened in the fall of 2022, align their school schedules and annual calendars with that of their host districts. UNCW's laboratory school operates on a year-round schedule that is aligned with New Hanover County Schools' year-round calendar.

[26] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.6—8 includes provisions specifying that laboratory schools serve students in at least three contiguous grade levels in the range of K-8; establish a standard course of study that sets forth the subjects to be taught and texts and other materials to be used in each grade to meet state student performance standards; conduct student assessments required by the State Board of Education; adopt a school calendar consisting of a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months; establish policies and standards for academic performance, attendance, and student conduct that comply with state policy requirements; and employ a teaching staff of whom at least 50 percent hold teacher licenses.

- *Curriculum.* All laboratory schools use the North Carolina Standard Course of Study but have taken different approaches to curriculum. Most laboratory schools have involved college of education faculty in creating curriculum and curricular resources for use in laboratory schools aligned with the unique vision for learning at each laboratory school. Both laboratory schools operated by Appalachian State employ the curriculum originally developed for the Academy at Middle Fork, creating some efficiency in opening the second campus, the Academy at Elkin.

Setting up operational supports for the laboratory school. All UNC System institutions that have established laboratory schools have effectively become their own local education agencies (LEA) serving laboratory schools as traditional district offices serve traditional district schools. Though COE teams direct laboratory school implementation and operation, they have relied on other departments within their institution to help set up school operations. Other LEA functions have been absorbed within the laboratory schools. The tasks and efforts required of non-COE system institution staff from human resources, finance, and legal departments continue to result in unaccounted costs to those other departments, especially during the first year of planning and operation. Similarly, laboratory school administrative staff taking on new tasks related to school operations are doing more work than they may have in a similar position in a traditional district school.

Generating student enrollment at new laboratory schools. Generating sufficient enrollment is a common concern and challenge among all laboratory schools. COE faculty and laboratory school personnel employ techniques designed for broad community marketing (e.g., flyers, billboards, newspaper advertisements, and presentations at youth and family community organizations' meetings) and targeted outreach to neighborhoods surrounding laboratory schools (e.g., going door-to-door to share information) (see "Marketing of laboratory schools"). For the first year of operations, two of the three new laboratory schools, the Academy at Elkin and the Carolina Community Academy, largely enrolled eligible students who had previously been enrolled in the applicable grades of the collocated schools, Elkin Elementary and North Elementary. Aggie Academy filled its inaugural class of students through word of mouth and tapping into alumni networks in the Greensboro area.

Student enrollment at the laboratory schools in years 3+ of implementation. In a typical year, several factors impact student enrollment at laboratory schools. First, the laboratory school enabling legislation specifies student eligibility criteria that limits the pool of students who can attend a laboratory school.[27] High transience among the students that laboratory schools are intended to serve also contributes to laboratory schools losing students year to year. Finally, transportation issues deter some eligible students from enrolling in or remaining at a laboratory school. Laboratory schools rely on their district partners to provide transportation, so are subject to district policies. Students living outside of laboratory school zones must arrange for their own transportation, take longer bus rides, or travel longer to reach a bus pick-up/drop-off location.

Changes made to the laboratory school legislation during the 2020 legislative session may help diminish the impact of some of these enrollment challenges. Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools that are not fully enrolled by March 1 for the upcoming year are permitted to enroll students who

[27] See N.C.G.S. §116-239.9. Originally, the law limited enrollment to students who were both low-performing themselves and previously attended a low-performing school. The law was amended in 2017 allowing lab schools to enroll students meeting either criteria. (ECU enrolled students meeting both criteria in its first two years of operation.) The law was amended in subsequent years to allow enrollment of siblings of laboratory school students and children of laboratory school employees.

live within the district but do not meet the other laboratory school eligibility criteria. These students can account for up to 20 percent of a laboratory school's total student capacity.[28] In addition, districts where laboratory schools are located were required to provide transportation to students living within the district regardless of transportation policies and practices applied to other students and schools.[29]

Hiring staff. Two laboratory schools that opened in 2022 assumed control of parts of schools that were district-run in the previous year. This had implications for hiring staff. In spring 2022, Appalachian State and UNC-Chapel Hill recruited principal and teacher applicants for their respective laboratory schools. They also invited applications from teachers and staff who had worked at the predecessor district school. NCA&T recruited local Greensboro-area teachers, though those recruitment efforts were cast more broadly, given they were taking over a new building rather than utilizing the school-within-a-school model. Ultimately, all three COEs hired school principals with prior connections to the school site or local community. These decisions reflected the value that COEs saw in laboratory school leaders having a connection to the communities that the predecessor schools served.

Laboratory schools experience challenges in hiring staff stemming from the misalignment between UNC System institutions and K-12 processes. For example, the job posting and committee review hiring structure common in university settings does not proceed at a pace that aligns with the typical interview and hiring cycle in the K-12 setting. At the same time, budget constraints meant that laboratory school teachers were hired within weeks before school started. With little time to develop a staff culture or become immersed in their curriculum before students arrived, laboratory school leaders and staff were acclimating while school was starting.

Laboratory schools in year three and beyond of implementation have continually engaged in hiring to address staff turnover. In addition to natural attrition (due to retirements, moving, or taking leave for health reasons), some teachers and staff have left these laboratory schools for lack of fit with the laboratory school mission or the needs of students served. Though laboratory schools prioritize staffing their schools with licensed and experienced teachers, some have hired beginning teachers (teachers in their first three years of teaching) who had clinical experiences at the laboratory school or otherwise demonstrate that their teaching experience, interests, and goals are aligned with the laboratory school environment. The retention of laboratory school staff from school opening to present varies significantly across campus and position, ranging from 7% to 50% depending on the campus.

Budgets. Ideally, enrollment would generate sufficient ADM funds so that laboratory schools are sustainable on state allocations and federal allotments alone. However, given the needs of the students that they serve, laboratory schools tend to have smaller class sizes and teacher-to-student ratios, particularly for younger elementary grades. Target enrollments balance these competing factors but have generally resulted in gaps between funds allocated per ADM and actual laboratory school costs. Laboratory schools receive annual supplemental revenue from the UNC System Office to support operations and rely on Colleges of Education to close budget gaps.[30] COEs that opened laboratory schools in 2022 supplemented start-up costs from their funds, as did the COEs that opened laboratory schools in

[28] Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096) added a new N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(c2) expanding student enrollment options for laboratory schools.

[29] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096).

[30] In 2020, laboratory schools also received federal emergency funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provided states funding and flexibilities to support K12 schools and local education agencies in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

prior years. In 2022-23, the three laboratory schools in their first year relied on COE and institution funding for approximately 56 percent of their operating budgets, on average. The six laboratory schools that have been in operation for between three and seven years relied on COE/institution funding for approximately 18 percent, on average, of their operating budgets in 2022-23. Recurring funding from the UNC System made up another approximately 14 percent, on average, with ADM and federal funding sources covering the remainder.

Common start-up challenges for new schools. The three COEs operating new laboratory schools in 2022-23 encountered start-up challenges stemming from several critical dynamics related to the laboratory school model, including short timelines and misaligned systems. Many of these are persistent challenges experienced by prior cohorts.

- *UNC System institutions have not traditionally operated K-12 schools.* Because universities and K-12 schools operate differently, UNC System institutions have had to set up or adapt university systems and policies related to accounting, finance, human resources, and data collection and reporting. UNC System institutions effectively serve as a school district in the management and operation of laboratory schools. They have devoted significant resources to identifying policy differences between higher education and K-12 and are working within university procedures to comply with K-12 public school system requirements. This is an ongoing process but is especially challenging in the first year of laboratory school operation, as faculty and staff at UNC System institutions learn how the North Carolina public school system operates and NCDPI adjusts its systems and processes to include laboratory schools. Faculty and staff at UNC System institutions report that the start-up supports provided by the UNC System Office have been helpful. But they also note the limited impact of these supports, given differences in policies and administrative operations across UNC System institutions.

- *Planning timelines for opening new laboratory schools.* Although the three COEs opening new schools for the 2022-23 school year had already been identified, challenges in identifying the host district partner for several schools delayed several critical planning steps until as late as February of 2022 – months before the new schools were to open. Identifying facilities, grades served, key elements of the laboratory school model, and hiring for leadership and staff at the new school were all on an expedited timeline, causing challenges for COE planning committees and university-based support staff.

- *Integration within NCDPI.* As a relatively new NC public school model, laboratory schools continue to experience difficulty integrating into NCDPI systems. While individual laboratory schools have developed relationships with their regional NCDPI point of contact, NCDPI does not have a primary point of contact for all laboratory schools—similar to the Office of Charter Schools, for example—and the UNC System Office does not have the authority to direct NCDPI to better incorporate laboratory schools into existing processes and practices. As a result, laboratory schools have often had to navigate specific implementation issues independently and have met challenges, especially during the initial start-up year.

How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?

The enabling laboratory school legislation specifies that laboratory schools shall use resources available to the constituent institution to expand opportunities for student success.[31] In practice, laboratory schools have availed themselves of additional resources through partnerships with the following: (1) host school districts; (2) other divisions of the university; (3) COE faculty; and (4) community partners. Though partnerships have become a fundamental feature of laboratory schools, successful collaborations require that laboratory school leaders have the capacity to develop and manage them. Laboratory schools vary in the degree to which partnership outreach and coordination is centralized and systematized rather than engaged in on an ad-hoc basis.

Host school districts

New school district partnerships. In consideration of experience gained in prior years of opening new laboratory schools and the guidance of the UNC System Office, COE leaders at Appalachian State, NCA&T, and UNC-Chapel Hill assessed potential host district partners for their new laboratory schools, beginning with districts with whom partnerships previously existed. Viewed as natural partners for laboratory schools, school districts provide critical supports such as access to K-12 school facilities (which the enabling laboratory school legislation did not provide), transportation and meal services, and operational supports ranging from IT and maintenance to guidance on NCDPI reporting processes. In turn, laboratory schools generally align staff salary schedules, daily school schedules, and annual school calendars to the schedules/calendars of the host district. In some cases, COEs adopt specific requirements for staff that align with that of host districts, even when it may not be necessary. This alignment helps neutralize some perceived competitive dynamics that might otherwise arise.

Once the district partners are identified, COEs have largely relied on them to identify communities where students may benefit most from attending a laboratory school. Two of the three laboratory schools that opened in 2022, the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) and the Appalachian Academy at Elkin, operate schools within existing schools. Leaders from Person County Schools, located about an hour north of Chapel Hill, coordinated with the COE to identify North Elementary School for the laboratory school site, given its status as a low-performing school with students eligible for laboratory school attendance. In coordination with leaders at Appalachian State University, the leadership at Elkin City Schools, located roughly an hour east of Boone, identified Elkin Elementary School as the laboratory school site. The Academy at Elkin largely enrolled students in grades 2-4 who had previously attended Elkin Elementary but, based on legislatively established criteria, were eligible to attend the laboratory school and would benefit from additional support in a new learning environment. Once the partnership had been established with Guilford County Schools, COE leaders from NCA&T identified a church building in the community served and located close to the University to lease as the school campus. Guilford County Schools leadership recommended that laboratory school leaders begin recruitment efforts at a district elementary school recently challenged by overcrowding. COE leadership began targeted recruitment at this school, then expanded their recruitment efforts to other schools across the district to meet enrollment goals for grades 3-5.

Benefits of partnership to laboratory schools. In 2022-23, laboratory schools continued to rely on district partners for access to K-12 school facilities (which the enabling laboratory school legislation did not

[31] N.C.G.S. §116-239.5(c)

provide), transportation and meal services, and operational supports, such as IT, maintenance, guidance on NCDPI reporting processes, health and cleaning services, as well as some building security and safety procedures. Some laboratory schools share support and specials staff with district partners, effectively transforming part-time into full-time positions. Laboratory school principals are often included in recurring district principal meetings for information sharing and collaboration. Similarly, some laboratory school staff participate in district professional learning communities and professional development opportunities.

During the 2020 summer session, the state legislature amended the laboratory school legislation to expand the supports that host districts must provide laboratory schools. Effective in the 2021-22 school year, these legislative changes provided:

- New guidance for determining costs to districts for providing facilities and other operational and maintenance services for laboratory schools;[32]
- New guidance on transportation that districts provide laboratory schools;[33]
- An expansion of mandatory supports for laboratory schools, including services for students with disabilities; child and family support services (e.g., social worker and school nurse services); health services, including dental and vision screenings, and similar health services that districts provide to other students; parent involvement coordination services; and school counselor services.[34]

These legislative changes were intended to address challenges that laboratory school leaders had previously experienced in their partnership with host districts.

Benefits of Partnership to Host District. Laboratory schools have brought resources into high-need schools, including capital improvements, expert instruction for high-need students, and professional development for district staff. For example, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education faculty were awarded a 5-year grant to support the placement and training of school counselor candidates. This will allow additional training for Person County Schools and any of their mentors who want to be involved. Other laboratory schools have included district staff not at the laboratory school in professional development provided to laboratory school personnel.

In most cases, laboratory school and district leaders anticipate that students who matriculate from laboratory schools and return to district schools will be better positioned for academic success. To date, classes of students at each elementary laboratory school except Niner University Elementary have returned to host district middle schools. Laboratory school teachers acknowledge that the autonomy afforded them in their roles at laboratory schools allows them to holistically prepare students and families to return to their host district upon leaving the school. The Catamount School (WCU) has graduated six classes of 8th graders, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has graduated five classes of 8th graders. Some of these students have enrolled in district early college high schools. Eighth graders attending The Catamount School who move into ninth grade at the high school where the laboratory school is co-located are already familiar with the facility and some of the staff. According to school leaders, this familiarity makes the transition easier for students. Likewise, many of these Catamount School graduates have already earned high school course credits (in Math I or Earth and Environmental Science).

[32] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(a) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)
[33] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(b) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)
[34] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(d) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)

District leaders from host districts of the new laboratory schools articulate hopes for similar outcomes. For example, The Academy at Elkin serves students in grades 2-4 who otherwise likely would have attended Elkin Elementary. Students in those grades who attend the Academy, as well as those that remain at Elkin Elementary, may experience more individualized attention than may have previously been possible, ensuring that all students return to fifth grade at Elkin Elementary School better prepared. Person County School leaders express hope that each successive class of 2nd-grade students at the Carolina Community Academy will enroll in North Elementary after having had a strong academic experience at the laboratory school. Finally, students attending Aggie Academy will likely return to middle schools in Guilford County Schools, and the district hopes their experience in the laboratory school will benefit them in this transition.

Opportunities for Improvement. As in previous years, communication between the laboratory school leadership, college of education faculty, faculty from the constituent institution, and host district leadership is critical during the planning phase and first year of implementation. Though all three new laboratory school leaders and partner districts appear to have strong working relationships, there may still be room to grow in establishing clear and consistent communication channels – especially early in the planning process and under short timelines.

While the Academy at Middle Fork has operated for years at a significant physical distance from the constituent university, two of the new campuses, the Academy at Elkin and the Carolina Community Academy, also opened at over an hour's driving distance from the university. This may allow the university to extend its reach outside its traditional geographic boundaries, strengthening partnerships with new districts and serving new student populations that had previously yet to be deeply connected to the COE. However, physical distance creates natural barriers to the frequency at which faculty or students enrolled at the COE or constituent university can participate in school-day activities.

One hope of laboratory schools is that they serve as a hub for sharing innovative practices or new strategies to address the needs and enhance the learning of the student populations served. Though laboratory school partnerships with host districts remain strong, the frequency of sharing practices or learning from the laboratory school to the host districts remains to be determined. The most visible demonstration of this type of learning and sharing of new practices might naturally exist on co-located campuses like the ECU Community School, the Catamount School (WCU), and the two newly opened co-located campuses, the Academy at Elkin and the Carolina Community Academy. One developing opportunity for collaboration and practice sharing is the 'sister school' concept developed in 2021-22 by the Academy at Middle Fork in partnership with a neighboring Winston-Salem Forsyth County school of similar size and demographic makeup. While this relationship was only established in spring 2022, the vision for this partnership is to facilitate the sharing of practices and resources that improve student learning and social-emotional outcomes for students at the laboratory school with sister school staff and students. Overall, leadership across laboratory schools and partner LEAs recognize opportunities for greater sharing of best practices and collaboration between the laboratory schools and their partner districts. This is an area for further development over time.

Colleges of Education

Colleges of Education (COE) are fundamental laboratory school partners. University chancellors are titular heads of laboratory schools, while COE deans (or their designees) have primary oversight responsibilities and are engaged in the day-to-day operation of laboratory schools. COE deans (and their designees) work closely with school-based leadership teams. COE faculty directly engage with laboratory school staff and

students in several forms. As planning and implementation partners, COE faculty have provided professional development relevant to specific laboratory school needs since inception. Faculty at each of the three new laboratory schools were deeply involved in the planning process – from support in the identification of facilities and grades served to the development of the mission and vision of the school, or the identification and selection of staff and the development and roll-out of curriculum used at the laboratory school. Faculty support instruction and curriculum implementation as faculty-in-residence, instructors teaching onsite methods courses, or field experience supervisors supporting COE students in clinical activities. In each role, COE faculty may provide modeling and feedback opportunities for laboratory school staff as they work with COE students. COE faculty who are deeply engaged in instruction at laboratory schools—whether working with teachers or supervising COE students—have first-hand exposure to school operations and the challenges that public schools face in meeting the needs of diverse and high-need student populations. An ongoing challenge for COEs is finding ways to increase and sustain faculty exposure and engagement with laboratory schools. This is particularly challenging given university incentive structures and COE faculty's other responsibilities.

The COE partnership has also helped laboratory schools recruit and identify teachers to work in laboratory schools. Several laboratory schools have hired teachers who earned degrees from their partner institutions. COEs are also beginning to provide a pool of graduates who had pre-service experiences at the laboratory school from which they (or other schools with similar student composition) may hire teachers.

Other divisions of the university

Partnerships within UNC System institutions provide laboratory schools with services critical to school operation and resources needed to address the needs of laboratory school students and staff. Whereas COE planning teams tend to support the coordination of partnerships as laboratory schools launch, that function becomes centralized within school-based leadership teams as laboratory schools become more established.

In 2022-23, university institutions continued to provide laboratory schools business and administrative operational support (e.g., finance and accounting, human resources, legal, and data reporting) that local educational agencies provide to traditional district schools. After several years of laboratory school operation, these functions have been systematized within university divisions and offices. Communications departments have increasingly supported laboratory schools with marketing for enrollment purposes, especially after schools relied heavily on virtual recruitment methods in response to pandemic-driven social distancing requirements.

Other institution partners help laboratory schools address non-academic student needs. Pre-service candidates from disciplines including counseling, social work, nursing, and speech therapy gain clinical intern experience by providing service-oriented support to laboratory school students and professional development for laboratory school staff on relevant topics (e.g., trauma). Students from Western Carolina University's Counseling, School and Clinical Psychology, and Nursing programs continued to be heavily involved at The Catamount School in 2022-23. Students from the nursing program at UNCW's College of Health and Human Services conducted vision screenings for students in grades 1, 3, and 6 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. University institutions also provide laboratory schools access to university-based resources that enhance some aspect of the laboratory school model, as exemplified by the integration of the Appalachia music program from Appalachian State into the Academy at Elkin in partnership with the university music department. Another example can be seen in the monthly field trips for students at

Carolina Community Academy to the UNC-Chapel Hill Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, Ackland Art Museum, Sonya Haynes Center for Black Studies, and visits to UNC athletics. Partnerships involving university staff, students, and resources beyond the constituent colleges of education have proven valuable for laboratory schools since their opening in 2017-18. These partnerships have strengthened the connection between the university and its community and brought needed resources and support into the schools for the staff and students served.

Community partners

In their first, third, fifth, and sixth years of operation, laboratory schools varied in how and the degree to which they leveraged community partners. Some laboratory schools' community partners provide primary supports, including help to address students' basic needs (e.g., backpack programs providing food for weekends), literacy development (e.g., donating reading materials, recruiting reading buddies), mental health needs (e.g., counseling services), and the expansion of enrichment activities during school (e.g., field trips to community sites) and during after school programming (e.g., activities organized by local Boys and Girls clubs). In 2022-23, several laboratory schools formed partnerships in the community to serve students in new ways. The Academy at Elkin worked closely with the local Elkin Valley Trail Association to provide student programming on the community trail system. The North Resource Room at Carolina Community Academy provides clothing and resources for students in the school who need them. Aggie Academy partnered with Freedom Schools for impactful afterschool programming for its students.

Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?

The Evaluation Team addressed this evaluation question by considering the following: (1) the marketing of laboratory schools; (2) laboratory school admissions and enrollment priorities; (3) characteristics of students enrolled in laboratory schools; (4) school design; (5) school management; (6) the perceptions of laboratory school parents and caregivers; and (7) the perceptions of laboratory school personnel.

Marketing of laboratory schools

Unlike traditional district schools serving neighborhoods or other attendance zones, laboratory schools must recruit students to enroll. Before the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools could enroll students who previously attended (or would have attended) a low-performing school, those who did not meet expected growth in the prior school year, or siblings of children meeting these criteria.[35] Additional amendments enacted in 2020 expanded the eligibility criteria of laboratory school students, applicable to students enrolling in the 2020-21 school year.[36]

Before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools typically relied on several marketing strategies to publicize laboratory schools. These included social media; recruiting events at the laboratory school, such as open houses and tours; meetings at community-based organizations, such as YMCAs and Boys and

[35] N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)

[36] Session law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096) amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 by adding a fourth criteria for laboratory school admission. N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(4) provides that a child of a laboratory school employee is eligible to attend a laboratory school. House Bill 1096 also amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 adding a new §116-239.9(c2) which provides that "Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (a) of this section [setting forth admission eligibility criteria], if a laboratory school has not reached enrollment capacity in a program, class, grade level, or building by March 1, prior to the start of the next school year, the laboratory school may enroll children who reside in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located but do not meet one of the eligibility criteria…for up to twenty percent (20%) of the total capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building."

Girls clubs; information flyers and booths at university institution events, such as Homecoming; outreach to local childcare and pre-K centers; and advertising through local print and broadcast media. Laboratory schools leverage their university affiliation in student recruitment efforts. Marketing messages focus on the involvement of university faculty in leading laboratory schools and ensuring high-quality instruction for students. Laboratory schools may often tap into local alumni networks to spread the word about the school to prospective parents. Many laboratory schools worked with COE or university institution offices that manage communications, community outreach, or marketing to deploy marketing activities more strategically (e.g., buy radio commercials during business commute time, lease billboards at key traffic areas, and develop promotional videos to use on websites, social media, and television).

Enrollment at the new laboratory schools that opened at pre-existing district schools, Carolina Community Academy and the Academy at Elkin, largely came from students enrolled at the previously existing campus. COE leaders from NCA&T reported utilizing targeted recruitment at a previously overcrowded Guilford County elementary school (as recommended by partner district leaders) and leveraging its strong local alumni base to communicate the opening of Aggie Academy to generate enrollment, given it did not open in a previously existing school building.

Laboratory school leaders recognize that as laboratory schools become established and community awareness increases, their reputations will help drive word-of-mouth referrals. Thus, strategies that aim to improve school and student performance and otherwise keep families satisfied are also important marketing and recruitment strategies, especially as these schools gain prominence in the communities they serve.

Parents and caregivers of children newly enrolled at a laboratory school in 2022-23 report that they most commonly found out about the laboratory school through friends and word-of-mouth. Websites and social media were also mentioned as sources of information about laboratory schools. When asked why they wanted their child to attend a laboratory school, parents and caregivers reported several common reasons: (1) smaller class sizes and opportunities for their child to get more individualized attention; (2) hearing about the quality/reputation of the laboratory school; and (3) the resources available through the laboratory school and its connections to the university. Approximately 86 percent of parent/caregiver survey respondents felt that the laboratory school did a good or very good job in in explaining the application and enrollment process and nearly all respondents reported that the application and enrollment process was an easy one.[37]

Laboratory school admissions and enrollment priorities

As originally enacted in 2016, the enabling laboratory schools legislation directed UNC System institutions to consider eligible for admission any students residing in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located who were enrolled in a low-performing school at the time of application *and* to give priority enrollment to students who did not meet expected growth in the prior school year.[38] Failure to meet expected growth can be measured by grades, observations, diagnostic and formative assessments, state assessments, or other factors, including reading on grade level. The legislation was amended in 2017, requiring laboratory schools to consider eligible for admission any students residing in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located who were enrolled in a low-

[37] The data in this paragraph come from a laboratory school parent and caregiver survey administered in Spring 2023.

[38] N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(1) and (2).

performing school at the time of application *or* who did not meet expected growth in the previous academic year. The amended statute no longer provides for priority enrollment for certain students. In 2018, the legislation was amended to expand admission eligibility criteria to include siblings of children eligible for admission under the 2017 criteria.[39] Additional amendments enacted in 2020 expanded the eligibility criteria to include children of laboratory school staff and allow students not meeting any of the eligibility criteria to enroll if (1) they reside in the district where the laboratory school is located; (2) the laboratory school has not reached enrollment capacity by March 1 before the following school year; and (3) these students comprise under 20 percent of the school's total capacity enrollment.[40]

Other important aspects of the admissions policies are as follows: (1) admission to laboratory schools is based on eligibility, timeliness of the application (received during the application period), capacity of the school, and the order in which eligible applications are received; (2) once students are enrolled, they are required to confirm their attendance for the following year but are not required to re-apply; and (3) kindergarten students are eligible to attend a laboratory school if they were zoned to attend a low-performing school in the district.

Amendments to the laboratory school legislation enacted in 2020 create a new requirement, effective in the 2021-22 school year, that laboratory schools make reasonable attempts to ensure that their student population reflects the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of students in the district where they are located.[41]

Table 1 presents data on how laboratory schools originally determined whether students were eligible to attend: previously attended/zoned to attend a low-performing school, previously low-performing themselves, a sibling of a child already attending the laboratory school, a child of a laboratory school staff member, or a post March 1st enrollee that helps the laboratory school reach capacity. Importantly, laboratory schools did not necessarily confirm all these eligibility criteria. That is, if a student previously attended a low-performing school, the laboratory school may not have assessed whether the student was also low-performing him/herself. As a result, data in Table 1 indicate how the laboratory school confirmed students' eligibility and not necessarily all the eligibility criteria that qualified students to attend a laboratory school.

[39] Senate Bill 99 (Session Law 2018-5) amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 by adding a third criteria for laboratory school admission. N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(3) provides that a sibling of a child who is eligible under the original criteria set forth in §116-239.9(a)(1) and (2) shall be eligible to attend a laboratory school.

[40] Session Law 2020-56 (HB 1096) (2020) amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 by adding a fourth criteria for laboratory school admission. N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(4) provides that a child of a laboratory school employee is eligible to attend a laboratory school. House Bill 1096 also amended N.C.G.S. §116-239.9 adding a new §116-239.9(c2) which provides that "Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (a) of this section [setting forth admission eligibility criteria], if a laboratory school has not reached enrollment capacity in a program, class, grade level, or building by March 1, prior to the start of the next school year, the laboratory school may enroll children who reside in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located but do not meet one of the eligibility criteria…for up to twenty percent (20%) of the total capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building."

[41] Session Law 2020-56 (HB 1096) created a new N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(e) which provides that within a year of operation, a laboratory school shall make reasonable efforts in the recruitment process for the population of the school to reasonably reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the general population of the students residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located. A laboratory school shall not unlawfully discriminate when making admissions determinations.

Appalachian State certified that 100 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

Appalachian State certified that 82 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Elkin in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their own prior performance, 3 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance, and 15 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that 93 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 22 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 32 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 3 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

NCA&T certified that 69 percent of the students at Aggie Academy in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 12 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 6 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCC certified that 64 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 14 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 12 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 11 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNC-Chapel Hill certified that 100 percent of the students at Carolina Community Academy in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

UNCW certified that 76 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 6 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 4 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Finally, WCU certified that 34 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2023-24 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 53 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 2 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 10 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Table 1: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements

	ASU: Middle Fork	ASU: Elkin	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	286	78	117	85	133	67	197	59
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	100.0%	0.0%	93.2%	69.4%	63.9%	100.0%	75.6%	33.9%
Previously Low-Performing Student	0.0%	82.1%	22.2%	11.8%	13.5%	0.0%	6.1%	52.5%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	0.0%	2.6%	31.6%	12.9%	12.0%	0.0%	13.2%	1.7%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	1.7%
Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	0.0%	15.4%	2.6%	5.9%	10.5%	0.0%	3.6%	10.2%

Note: This table displays information on how laboratory school students determined whether students were eligible to attend. Laboratory schools did not necessarily confirm all these eligibility criteria—i.e., if a student previously attended a low-performing school, the laboratory school may not have assessed whether the student was also low-performing. Data are for the 2023-24 academic year. Status as a low-performing student can be based on grades, observations, diagnostic and formative assessments, state assessments, or other factors, including reading on grade level.

Characteristics of students enrolled in laboratory schools

Table 2 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 286 enrolled students, with 54 in kindergarten, 45 in 1st grade, 56 in 2nd grade, 39 in 3rd grade, 47 in 4th grade, and 45 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are above those from the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 49 percent are male, 44 percent are Black, 33 percent are Hispanic, and 21 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 92 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 30 percent of K-5 students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 29 percent are Hispanic, 15 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 61 percent are designated as low-income. [42]

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State) has 78 enrolled students, with 24 in 2nd grade, 19 in 3rd grade, and 35 in 4th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show an enrollment decrease of 13 percent for the Academy at Elkin.[43] Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 45 percent are male, 72 percent are White, 21 percent are Hispanic, and 23

[42] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2021-22 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2022-23 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

[43] Appalachian State and Elkin City Schools are working in partnership to determine whether the laboratory school's grade range (grades 2-4) is sustainable or whether the grade range should be modified to help with enrollment.

percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 100 percent of the Academy at Elkin students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 68 percent of the 2nd-4th grade students in Elkin City Schools are White, 22 percent are Hispanic, 15 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 48 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the ECU Community School has 117 enrolled students, with 14 in kindergarten, 19 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, 24 in 3rd grade, 22 in 4th grade, and 19 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show a modest enrollment decrease of 5 percent for the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 55 percent are male, 95 percent are Black, and 26 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 82 percent of ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black, 12 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 73 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) has 85 enrolled students, with 29 in 3rd grade, 31 in 4th grade, and 25 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show an enrollment increase of 21 percent at Aggie Academy. Of these enrolled students in 2023-24, 59 percent are male, 93 percent are Black, and 11 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 43 percent of the 3rd-5th grade students in Guilford County Schools are Black and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children.[44]

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, Niner University Elementary (UNCC) has 133 enrolled students, with 25 in kindergarten, 22 in 1st grade, 21 in 2nd grade, 32 in 3rd grade, 17 in 4th grade, and 16 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show a five percent enrollment decrease. This is notable since Niner University Elementary added a new grade level in 2023-24. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 53 percent are male, 93 percent are Black, and 28 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 86 percent of the Niner University Elementary school students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 35 percent of the K-5 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 10 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 53 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) has 67 enrolled students, with 35 in kindergarten and 32 in 1st grade. The Carolina Community Academy added a grade (1st grade) in 2023-24 and as such their enrollment increased by over 100 percent relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 45 percent are male, 58 percent are Black, 16 percent are Hispanic, and 9 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 86 percent of the Carolina Community Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 32 percent of the K-1st grade students in Person County Schools are Black, 11 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 71 percent are designated as low-income.

[44] Title I data on the percentage of low-income students at the Aggie Academy are not available for the 2022-23 year.

Table 2: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools

	ASU: Middle Fork		ASU: Elkin		ECU		NCA&T		UNCC		UNCCH		UNCG	UNCW		WCU	
	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24	22-23	22-23	23-24	22-23	23-24
Total Enrollment	262	286	91	78	123	117	70	85	140	133	28	67	339	209	197	59	59
Kindergarten	46	54	---	---	19	14	---	---	26	25	28	35	54	26	17	---	---
1st Grade	55	45	---	---	21	19	---	---	31	22	---	32	73	18	23	---	---
2nd Grade	31	56	27	24	24	19	---	---	40	21	---	---	40	22	19	---	---
3rd Grade	43	39	34	19	24	24	30	29	21	32	---	---	60	19	22	---	---
4th Grade	43	47	30	35	24	22	24	31	22	17	---	---	51	22	19	---	---
5th Grade	44	45	---	---	11	19	16	25	---	16	---	---	61	25	20	---	---
6th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	34	36	12	18
7th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	17	29	23	17
8th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	26	12	24	24
Male	51.2%	49.0%	51.7%	44.9%	55.3%	54.7%	58.5%	58.8%	57.9%	53.4%	50.0%	44.8%	52.8%	49.8%	49.2%	45.8%	55.9%
White	15.3%	17.5%	71.4%	71.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	14.3%	14.9%	12.7%	3.8%	3.6%	94.9%	84.8%
Black	42.0%	43.7%	5.5%	3.9%	95.1%	94.9%	93.2%	92.9%	84.3%	93.2%	64.3%	58.2%	61.7%	90.0%	89.3%	0.0%	1.7%
Multiracial	5.0%	4.9%	1.1%	3.9%	1.6%	1.7%	2.4%	4.7%	4.3%	0.0%	7.1%	9.0%	10.0%	4.3%	6.1%	1.7%	0.0%
Hispanic	36.6%	32.5%	22.0%	20.5%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	2.4%	6.4%	3.8%	10.7%	16.4%	14.5%	1.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	0.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	3.0%	3.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	1.7%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	11.9%
Pacific Islander	0.8%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	21.8%	21.0%	29.7%	23.1%	16.3%	25.6%	12.8%	10.6%	22.9%	27.8%	10.7%	9.0%	20.1%	19.1%	26.4%	28.8%	23.7%
Low-Income	91.8%	N/A	100%	N/A	81.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	85.9%	N/A	100%	100%	N/A	50.0%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. Most of the data in this table comes from the Principal's Monthly Report from the 20th day of the school year. The low-income data come from the 2022-23 Title I federal reporting. Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring#title-i---eligible-schools-summary-report-(essr) for those data. These Title I data are not yet available for the 2023-24 school year. N/A=not available.

As of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 197 enrolled students, with 17 in kindergarten, 23 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, 22 in 3rd grade, 19 in 4th grade, 20 in 5th grade, 36 in 6th grade, 29 in 7th grade, and 12 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year, these data show a modest enrollment decline of 6 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 49 percent are male, 89 percent are Black, and 26 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 100 percent of the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 18 percent of the K-8 students in New Hanover County Schools are Black, 13 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 46 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2023-24 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 59 enrolled students, with 18 in 6th grade, 17 in 7th grade, and 24 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2022-23 school year enrollment is unchanged at The Catamount School. Of the students enrolled in 2023-24, 56 percent are male, 85 percent are White, 12 percent are American Indian, and 24 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2022-23 school year show that 50 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 65 percent of the 6th-8th grade students in Jackson County Schools are White, 7 percent are American Indian, 17 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 64 percent are designated as low-income.

School design

The laboratory school enabling legislation sets out defining characteristics of laboratory schools that distinguish them from other North Carolina public schools. Specifically, laboratory schools are set up to serve students who are low-performing or attended a low-performing school (rated D or F under the state school rating system), transform and improve teacher and school leader preparation, and operate under the governance of the UNC System. Laboratory schools present an opportunity for COE faculty at UNC System institutions to lead the development and piloting of innovative instructional and school operation practices. These innovative practices may improve the learning outcomes for students and enhance educator preparation.

Established, governed, and operated independently of each other, laboratory schools provide an opportunity for COEs to design distinctly different schools reflecting the needs of the communities they serve and the strengths and capacities of their respective UNC System institutions. However, the legislative design of laboratory schools has resulted in several common, defining characteristics. Laboratory schools serve high concentrations of high-need students and are generally located in low-resource communities. Funding amounts allocated to laboratory schools also challenge COE faculty and laboratory school administrators to think creatively about the operation of a K-12 public school.

These common defining characteristics of laboratory schools drive common goals, including (1) ensuring that students attending laboratory schools are well-served; (2) contributing to the field of education by improving approaches to instruct students and prepare future educators; and (3) improving K-12 student outcomes by identifying and modeling best practices that other North Carolina schools can adopt, particularly for high-need students. Common defining characteristics and goals drive, in turn, some common features among laboratory schools.

Physically, socially, and emotionally safe environments for students. The concentration of high-need students in laboratory schools means that school staff face an intensified demand to meet poverty-related student needs. These needs include high mobility, exposure to adverse childhood experiences and other trauma, limited support networks/safety nets, lack of access to transportation, food insecurity, and

unstable housing. Laboratory school models recognize the out-of-school challenges that impede learning and, in response, aim to address many of these issues with a focus on the "whole child." Laboratory schools employ staff and engage institution and community partners to provide health, social work, and counseling services and address the basic subsistence needs of students and families (e.g., provide food on weekends and winter clothing). Laboratory schools also educate staff on the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences, and they emphasize community and relationship building among students and staff through positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and restorative justice practices. While these themes have existed in laboratory school models since their inception, models employed by the three new lab schools in 2022-23 all continued this heavy emphasis on creating safe and supportive learning environments for the whole child. All laboratory schools used either or both PBIS and restorative practices to support behavior management and positive school culture.

Balanced curriculum and enrichment activities. Laboratory schools ensure that students are exposed to academic instruction in all content areas—reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies—rather than primarily focusing on reading and math. Laboratory schools also emphasize experiential and inquiry-based learning, particularly related to STEM subjects, in which students have "hands-on" engagement through science labs or maker spaces. Further, laboratory schools prioritize enrichment activities that supplement learning and offer students alternative educational opportunities they may not otherwise be able to access. Leveraging community partnerships and university facilities/events, laboratory schools have infused arts, history, and recreation into daily schedules and have exposed students to new experiences, ideas, and places.

New laboratory schools in 2022-23 continued to leverage partnerships with the community and the university to emphasize the importance of student enrichment opportunities. For example, the Academy at Elkin utilized "QUEST" days, monthly opportunities to leverage community partnerships and volunteers to provide students project- and exploratory-based learning opportunities. Aggie Academy teachers emphasized culturally relevant pedagogy throughout all curricula, and the school leveraged a partnership with Freedom Schools for after-school enrichment programming. Carolina Community Academy students participated in enrichment opportunities brought by monthly visits to campus-based resources at the University in Chapel Hill, including the Ackland Art Museum and the Morehead Planetarium.

Focus on literacy. Laboratory schools are particularly focused on improving teaching and learning related to literacy. In 2022-23, several COEs continued to involve faculty in the support of literacy instruction at the laboratory school.

Additionally, COEs continued to support literacy instruction at laboratory schools through graduate program offerings. ECU Community School and Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) teachers and leaders enrolled in continuing education coursework and programs in literacy at their constituent COEs. COE faculty also support laboratory school efforts to enhance literacy instruction. Additionally, all laboratory schools had staff participate in the statewide science of reading LETRS training to improve early literacy knowledge and instructional practices.

Licensed and experienced teachers. Laboratory schools continue to emphasize hiring and retaining licensed and experienced teachers. However, most laboratory schools have experienced staff turnover and have needed to hire some beginning teachers (those in their 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year of teaching) to fill those vacancies. In hiring teachers, laboratory schools sought individuals whose interests, backgrounds, or teaching strengths align with the laboratory school mission, model, and student population. Some

laboratory schools hire graduates of the COE program who had served internships or had other clinical experiences at the laboratory school as pre-service candidates.

School management

Laboratory school management reflects the university context in which they operate. Relative to traditional district settings, laboratory school leadership is less hierarchical, and teachers exercise more autonomy. Laboratory schools are managed as an extension of the COEs that have designed and overseen their implementation.

Laboratory school leadership. Laboratory school leadership teams include a site-based principal, who works with the COE dean or designee, and an instructional or curriculum director, who is often associated with the COE but based at the laboratory school. Within these leadership teams, the principal manages staff, parent, and student interactions and concerns. The COE lead generally oversees laboratory school administration and strategic and policy management. The instructional or curriculum director works with laboratory school teachers to support curriculum planning, development, and instruction and serves as a liaison between COE faculty and lab school teachers. The governance structure of laboratory schools—schools within university systems where COEs operate—means that both the principal and COE leaders may interact with other institution partners regarding human resources, finance, operations, and other administrative functions. UNCC's laboratory school leadership team presents an exception to this model, with the COE laboratory school coordinator also serving as the site-based principal.

Laboratory school staff. Laboratory schools generally have one full-time teacher per classroom and at least one class per grade level. Some laboratory schools also employ teacher assistants for lower elementary grades, sometimes shared across multiple classrooms. In the 2022-23 school year: (1) The Catamount School (WCU) had one class per grade in grades 6-8; (2) the ECU Community School had two classes per grade in grades K, 2, 3, and 4 and one class per grade in grades 1 and 5; (3) the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) had three classes per grade; (4) D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) had a combination class in grades 4 and 5 in addition to one class in all grades; (5) the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) had two to four classrooms per grade, which includes some multi-age classrooms in the lower grades (e.g., combined first and second grade); (6) Niner University Elementary (UNCC) had three classrooms in both kindergarten and first grade and two classrooms in second, third, and fourth grades; (7) Aggie Academy (NCA&T) served grades three, four, and five, with two classes per grade; (8) the Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State) had two classes for grades two, three, and four; and (9) Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) had three classes for their kindergarten grade.[45] Three laboratory schools used departmentalized instruction in 2022-23: UNCG had core content teachers for grade five and UNCW for grades 6-8. The Catamount School (WCU), the only laboratory school serving only middle grades, had five core content teachers for grades 6-8.

In 2022-23, laboratory schools provided various student supports, including administrative, counseling, student health, social work, exceptional children, and behavior management services. Laboratory schools also provided extracurricular and enrichment activities, including arts, music, and physical education. The smallest laboratory schools, Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), the ECU Community School, and The Catamount School (WCU), have the fewest number of full-time support staff employees and rely heavily on institution and district partners to provide supports. The

[45] Carolina Community Academy plans to add one grade per year, beginning in 2022-23 with Kindergarten, until the school includes grades K-2.

laboratory schools that operated whole schools (Appalachian State, NCA&T, UNCG, and UNCW) employed more support and extracurricular staff, such as school nurses, social workers, media specialists, and arts, music, physical education, and special education teachers. Appalachian State also employed teaching assistants for lower-grade classrooms since it cannot rely on pre-service candidates to provide classroom support, given the physical distance between the university campus and the laboratory schools. Opening a second laboratory school campus allowed Appalachian State to share four positions between the two schools, including the Assistant Dean & Director of Lab Schools, the Director of Curriculum and Federal Programs, the Exceptional Children (EC) Director, and a Technology Support Specialist. Niner University Elementary (UNCC) employed a teacher assistant in every classroom to provide daily small-group literacy and math instruction to all students. Three teaching assistants at Niner University Elementary pursued teaching degrees at Charlotte, including one who graduated in December 2022 and worked as a 2nd-grade teacher at the laboratory school.

Laboratory school funding. Laboratory schools rely on four primary sources of school funding: ADM dollars, allocations from the UNC System Office; support from their UNC System institution (typically, COE budgets or foundations); and Title I funds. Each of these sources may be precarious or variable: student enrollment, which drives ADM, has fluctuated over time; UNC System allocations come from fixed, recurring funds to support laboratory school implementation; UNC system institutions have supported start-up costs from funding sources not intended to support laboratory school operation; and laboratory schools require the capacity to access Title I and other federal K-12 funds.

As previously noted, the level of ADM and state financial support for laboratory schools has required that the UNC System and UNC System institutions close budget gaps. In addition, laboratory schools have made other trade-offs to contain operating costs (e.g., prioritizing supports provided in the first year of implementation, operating co-located schools, and scheduling school start and end times around the availability of district transportation). The three laboratory schools in their first year relied on COE and institution funding for approximately 56 percent, on average, of their operating budgets in 2022-23. Historically, laboratory schools have relied more heavily on COE/institution funding in the early years of operation, shifting to other recurring funding over time. For example, the six laboratory schools that have been in operation for three to seven years relied on COE/institution funding for approximately 18 percent, on average, of their operating budgets in 2022-23. Recurring funding from the UNC System made up another approximately 14 percent, on average, with ADM and federal funding sources covering the remainder.

Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of the Laboratory Schools

To assess parent/caregiver perceptions of the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a parent/caregiver survey in the spring of 2023.[46] To encourage parent/caregiver responses, laboratory schools placed links to the anonymous survey on their school websites, invited parents to complete the survey while on-site at the school, and used other established channels of communication with families. Overall, 258 parent/caregiver responses were recorded: 24 from Aggie Academy (NCA&T), 21 from the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 61 from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), 81 from the ECU Community School, 24 from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 28 from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and 19 from The Catamount

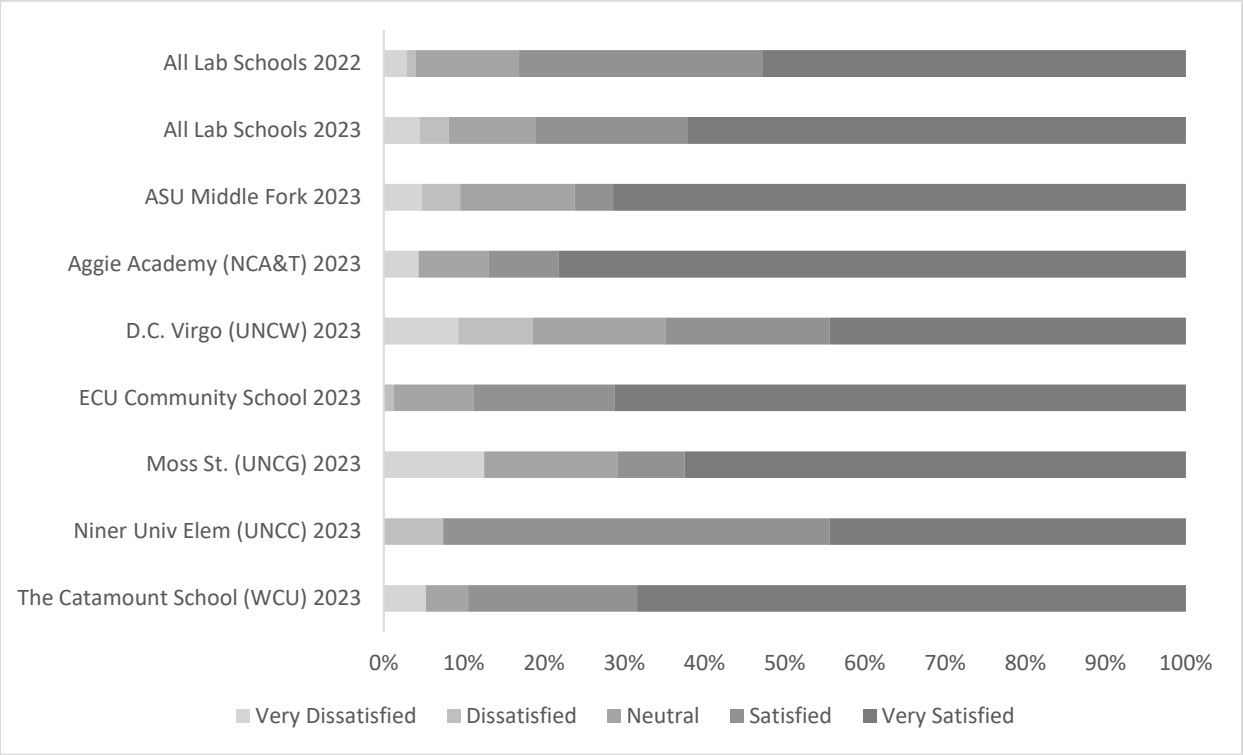
[46] This survey was previously administered in spring 2018, spring 2019, spring 2021 and spring 2022. There was no parent/caregiver survey in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

School (WCU). There were no survey responses from parents/caregivers at Appalachian Academy at Elkin or the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill).[47]

Items on the parent/caregiver survey asked respondents to assess how satisfied they were with the laboratory school, overall, and with various aspects of laboratory school operations (e.g., academic instruction, classroom management, communication with families). For the laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately, Figure 1 displays parents'/caregivers' overall satisfaction with their laboratory school. In addition, Figure 1 includes parents'/caregivers' overall satisfaction (across all laboratory schools) from spring 2022. This provides a basis for comparison for the current data.

Across all laboratory schools in 2022-23, approximately 81 percent of parent/caregiver respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their laboratory school. By comparison, the value from spring 2022 was 83 percent. However, a higher percentage of parents/caregivers reported being very satisfied in spring 2023. These percentages varied across laboratory schools, from 61 percent satisfied or very satisfied at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) to 92 percent satisfied or very satisfied at Niner University Elementary (UNCC). Please see Appendix Table A4.1 for data from each parent/caregiver satisfaction item. Pooling data across laboratory schools, the data in the top panel of Appendix Table A4.1 indicate that there is little variation in the level of satisfaction felt across different aspects of laboratory schools. The main exception to this is that parents/caregivers reported being relatively less satisfied—although still quite satisfied overall—with discipline at their child's laboratory school.

Figure 1: Parent/Caregiver Satisfaction with UNC System Laboratory Schools (2022-23)



Note: This figure displays parent responses to the survey item "How satisfied are you with your child's school?". There are 178 survey responses from the 2022 survey and 248 from the 2023 survey.

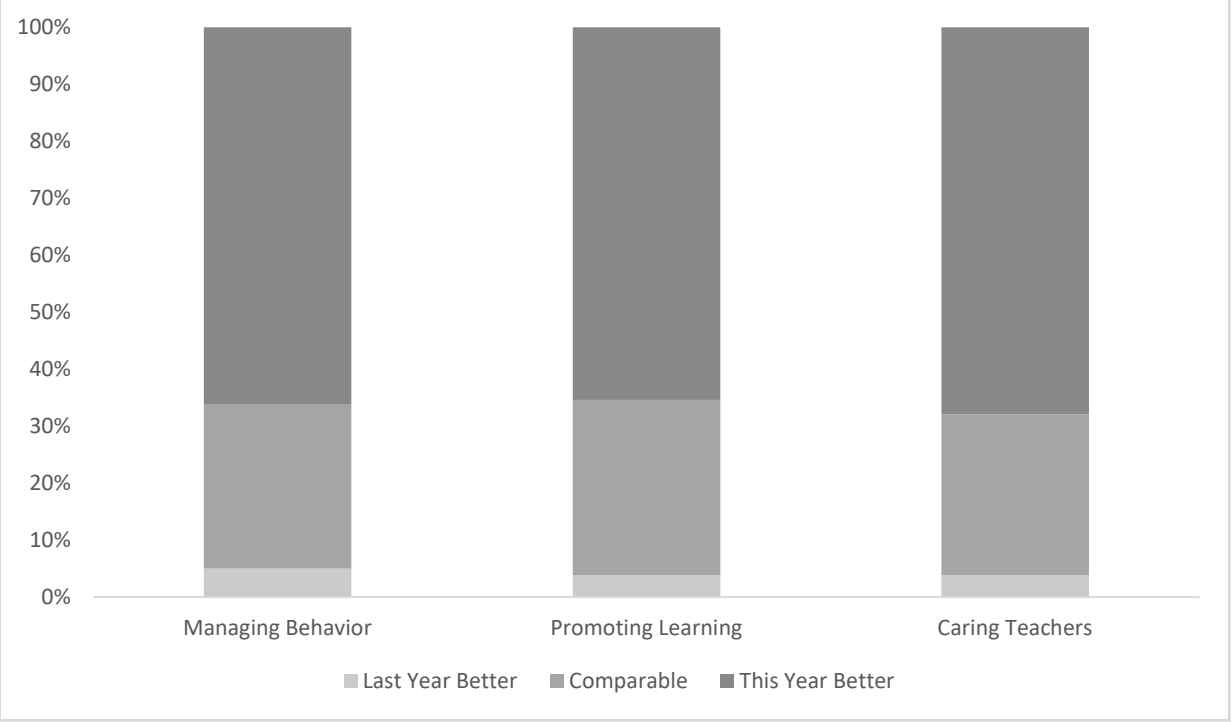
[47] The number of responses from parents/caregivers with a child attending the ECU Community School represent a majority of students enrolled at that school. The responses rates are much lower for other laboratory schools.

An additional set of survey items asked parents/caregivers to compare their child's educational experiences in the 2022-23 school year with their educational experiences in the previous school year (2021-22). For families new to laboratory schools, this compares the laboratory school to a non-laboratory school setting; for returning laboratory school families, this compares the laboratory school in 2022-23 to its operation in the previous year.

Figure 2 displays parent responses for families new to laboratory schools in 2022-23. Nearly 67 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at managing student behavior than the school their child previously attended. Likewise, approximately 67 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents, respectively, indicated their laboratory school was better at promoting learning and having caring teachers.

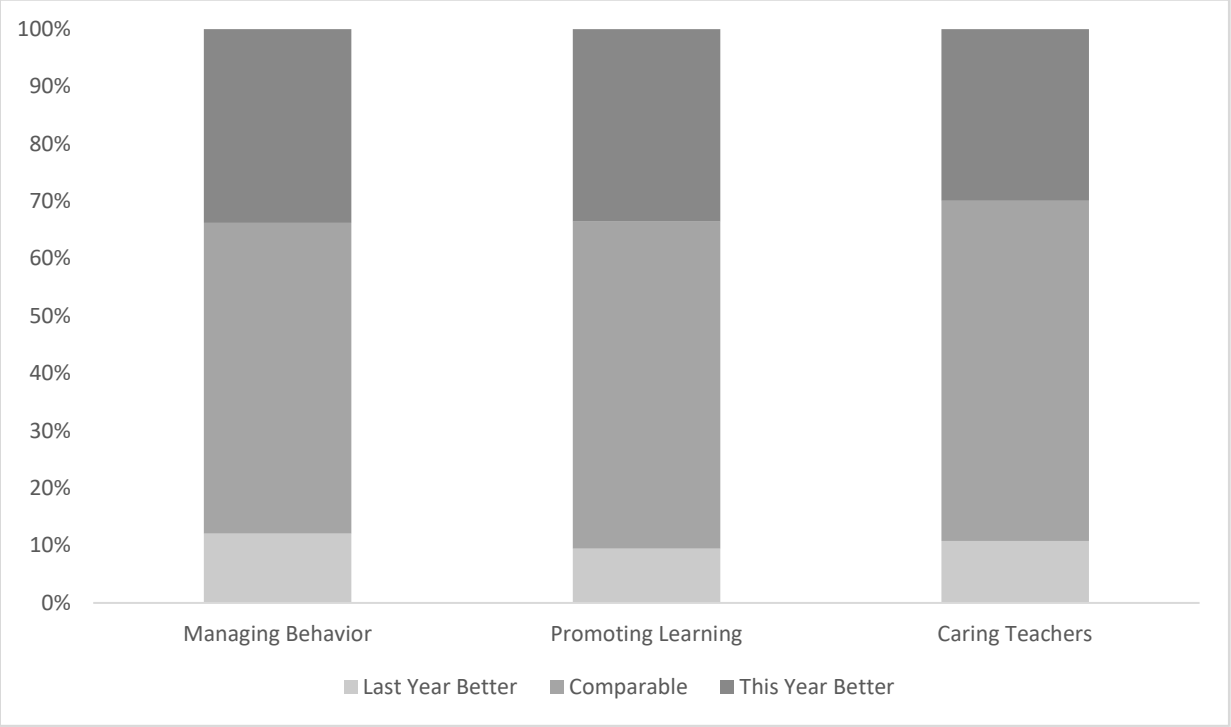
Figure 3 displays comparable data for families returning to a laboratory school in 2022-23. In the areas of managing student behavior, promoting learning, and having caring teachers, a majority of parent/caregiver respondents (ranging from 54 to 59 percent) felt that their laboratory school in 2022-23 was comparable to their laboratory school in 2021-22. Across these three areas, approximately 30-34 percent of parent/caregiver respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better in 2022-23 than it had been in 2021-22. Please see Appendix Table A4.2 for parent/caregiver survey responses disaggregated for each UNC System laboratory school.

Figure 2: Comparing School Experiences for Families New to Laboratory Schools



Note: For families new to laboratory schools in 2022-23, this figure displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2022-23 to their educational experiences in 2021-22.

Figure 3: Comparing School Experiences for Families Returning to a Laboratory School



Note: For families returning to a laboratory school in 2022-23, this figure displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2022-23 to their educational experiences in 2021-22.

Perceptions of Laboratory School Personnel

To assess how laboratory school personnel perceive the management and environment of their school, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a school personnel survey in the spring of 2023.[48] This survey was distributed to classroom teachers, teacher assistants/paraprofessionals, student services personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers), school leadership (e.g., principals, curriculum directors), and other personnel (e.g., data managers, administrative assistants). Overall, 129 personnel survey responses were received: 11 from Appalachian Academy at Elkin, 38 from Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 7 from Aggie Academy (NCA&T), 4 from Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), 14 from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), 16 from the ECU Community School, 13 from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 20 from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and 6 from The Catamount School (WCU).[49]

Items on the personnel survey asked respondents to assess leadership at their laboratory school, teaching practices, and school working conditions. Certain survey items were administered to all respondents, regardless of their role at the school. Other items were only administered to personnel in specific roles. For analyses, the Evaluation Team created summative measures for perceptions of school leadership[50] and perceptions of teaching practices at the school. In addition, the Evaluation Team presents data on

[48] This survey was administered for the first time in the spring of 2021.

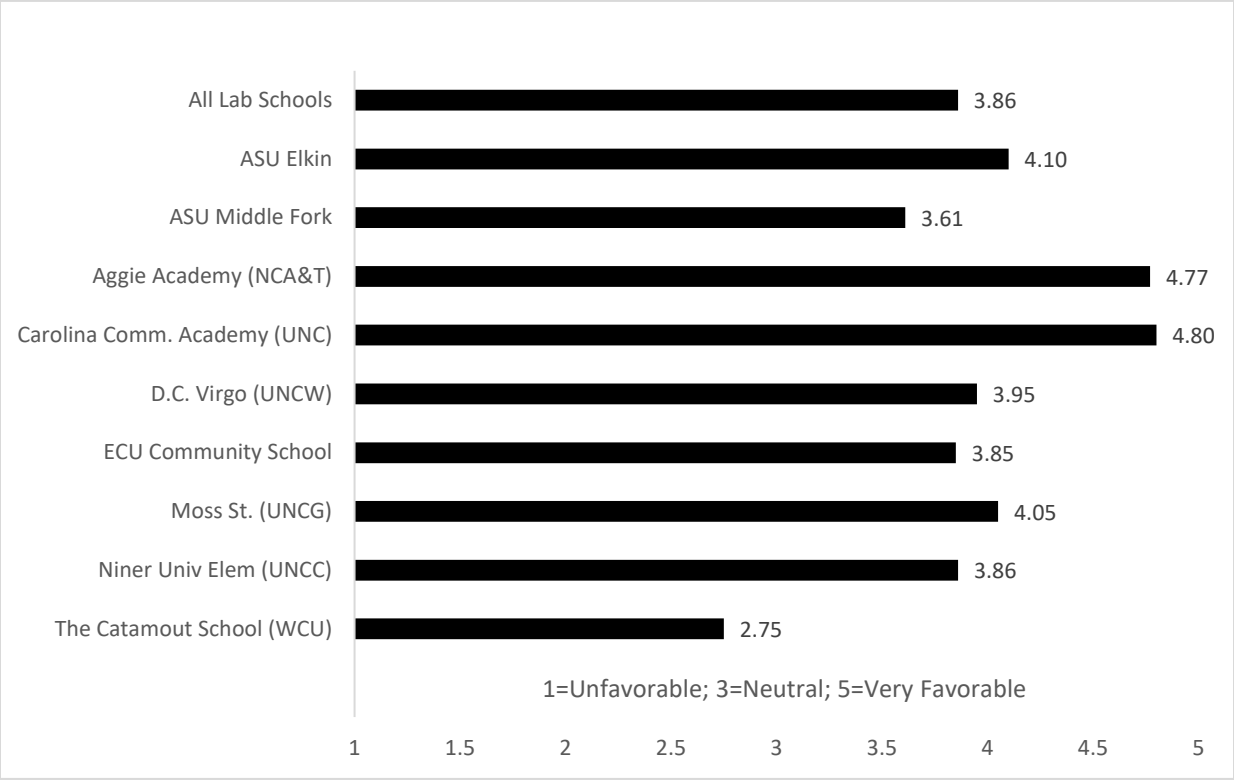
[49] The response rate was 69.2% and ranged from 40 percent at Carolina Community Academy to 100 percent at Niner University Elementary.

[50] Our analyses of perceptions of school leaders exclude responses from those school leaders themselves.

interactions between laboratory school and COE personnel and perceptions of value, respect, and belonging at the laboratory school.

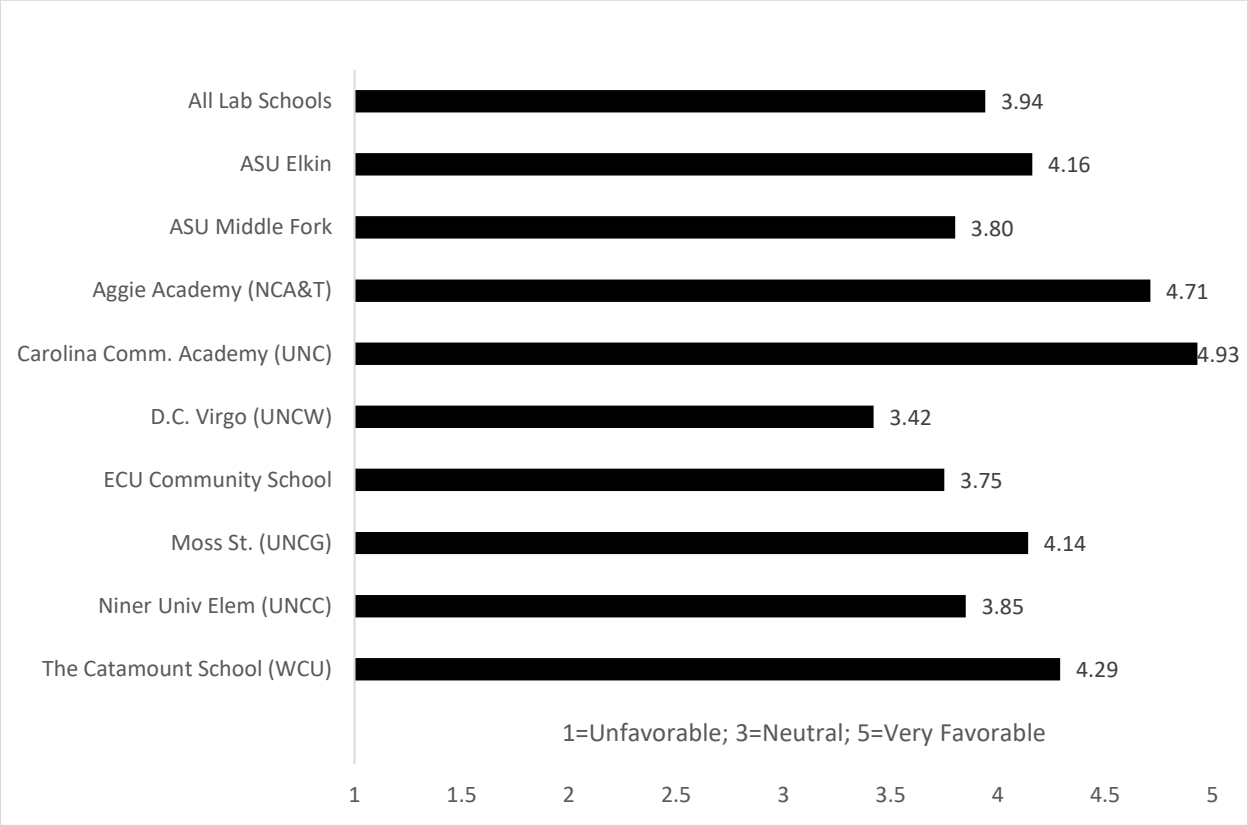
Figure 4 displays summative perceptions of school leadership at the laboratory schools. These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Overall, laboratory school personnel have somewhat favorable ratings of school leadership—i.e., an average rating of 3.86 across schools (on a 1-5 scale where '3' is neutral and '5' is very favorable—that varies from 2.75 at The Catamount School (WCU) to 4.80 at Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill). Appendix Table A5.1 presents average response values on each leadership item and for each laboratory school. Data from Appendix Table A5.1 indicate that laboratory school personnel rated school leadership most favorably in the areas of setting high standards for teaching and providing support as teachers implement what they learn in professional development. Ratings were lower in the areas of actively monitoring the quality of teaching, helping teachers figure out how to address instructional challenges, and providing guidance for classroom practice.

Figure 4: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools in 2022-23



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of school leadership.

Figure 5: Perceptions of Teaching Practice at the Laboratory Schools in 2022-23



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of teachers.

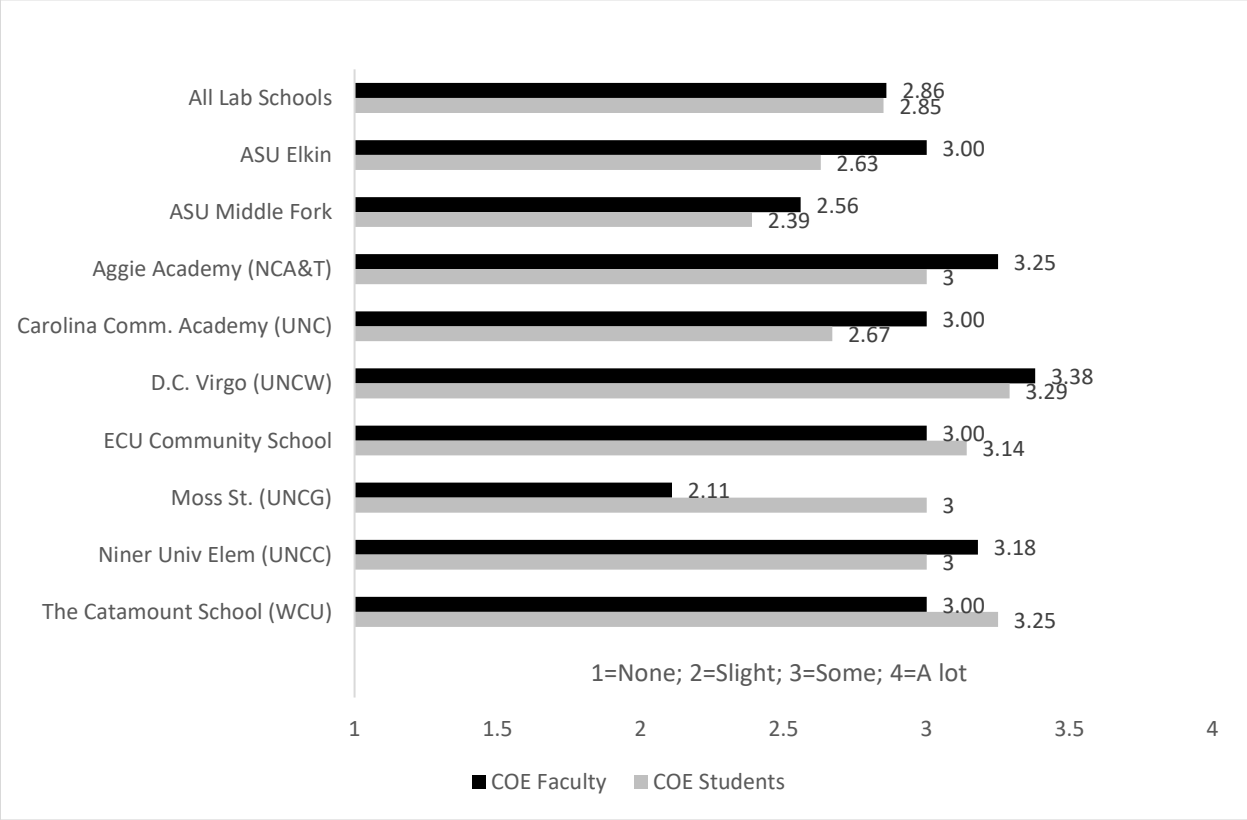
Figure 5 presents summative perceptions of teaching practice at the laboratory schools.[51] Once again, these data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. The overall rating for teaching practice at laboratory schools is 3.94 (on a scale from 1-5), with a range of 3.42 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) to 4.93 at Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill). Appendix Table A5.2 presents average response values on each teaching practice item, overall, and for each laboratory school. Data from Appendix Table A5.2 indicate that laboratory school personnel rated teaching practice most favorably in the areas of teachers having strong skills to produce student learning and in teachers being able to motivate students to think and work hard. Ratings were lower in the areas of teachers having strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems and teachers holding each other accountable for working hard.

A unique feature of laboratory schools is the extent to which laboratory school personnel have opportunities to interact with and learn from COE faculty and students. Figure 6 displays data on the extent to which those interactions contributed to teacher growth at laboratory schools.[52] These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Regarding the

[51] These teaching practice items focus on the extent to which teachers and other instructional personnel (1) hold one another accountable for working hard; (2) collaborate to revise and refine curriculum; (3) make sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels; (4) collaborate to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students; (5) have strong skills to produce meaningful student learning; (6) have strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems; and (7) are confident that they can motivate students to think and word hard.
[52] These survey items were only administered to classroom teachers at laboratory schools.

extent to which COE faculty contributed to the growth of laboratory school teachers, the average response was 2.86 (between *slight* and *some* contributions), with a range of 2.11 at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 3.38 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Regarding the extent to which COE students (e.g., pre-service teachers in practicum and field experiences) contributed to the growth of laboratory school teachers, the average response was 2.85, with a range of 2.39 at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork to 3.29 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy.

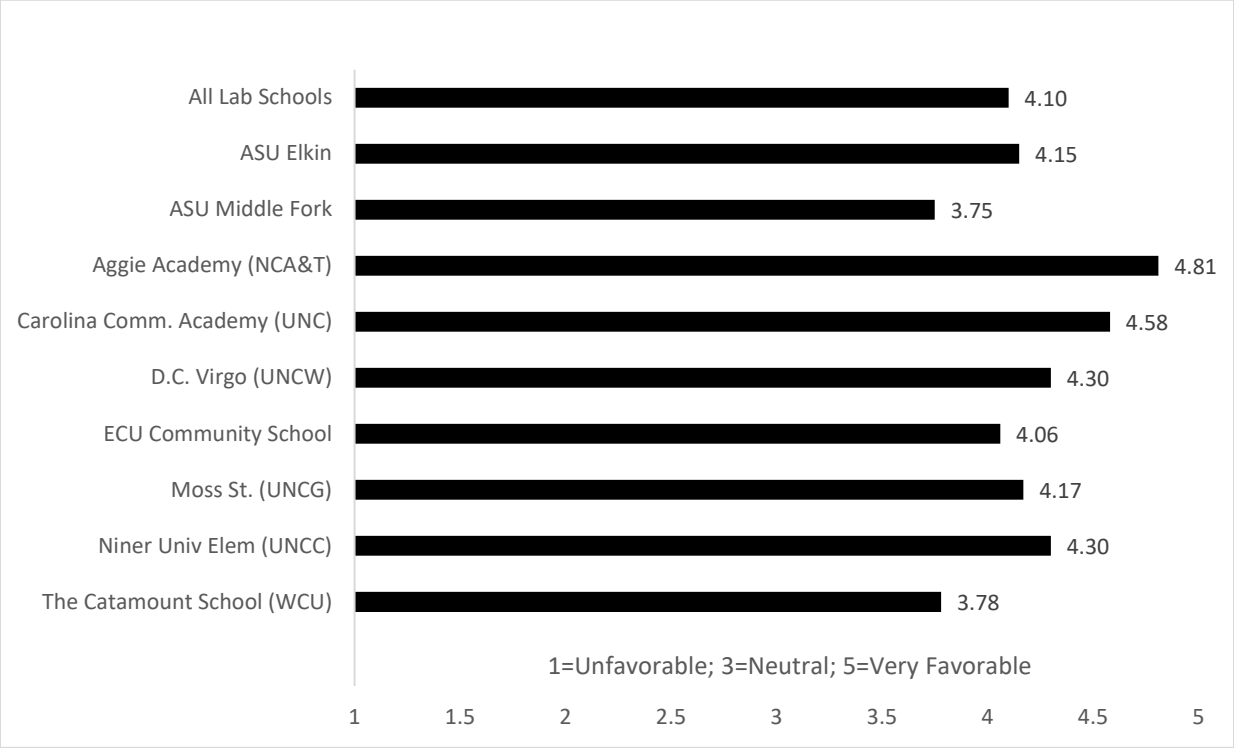
Figure 6: How Interactions with COE Faculty and Students Contribute to Growth as a Teacher in 2022-23



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding how the faculty and students at their partner College of Education contribute to their growth as teachers.

Finally, Figure 7 presents summative perceptions of the extent to which laboratory school personnel feel valued, respected, and like they belong at their schools. These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Overall, laboratory school personnel report feeling favorable—an average value of 4.10 on a 1-5 scale—regarding their summative sense of value, respect, and belonging. These ratings range from 3.75 at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork to 4.81 at the Aggie Academy (NCA&T). Appendix Table A5.3 presents average response values for each of these items and for each laboratory school.

Figure 7: Laboratory School Personnel Sense of Value, Respect, and Belonging in 2022-23



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their sense of being valued, respected, and belonging.

Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?

To examine whether laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students, the Evaluation Team typically provides two types of administrative data in this report. First, the Evaluation Team presents detailed and rigorous analyses of *student-level* achievement data from two years prior (i.e., 2021-22 for this report). These data and analyses represent a more in-depth supplement to the descriptive data on student achievement in the November 2022 report. Second, the Evaluation Team provides descriptive, *school-level* achievement data from the most recent school year (i.e., 2022-23).

In-depth analyses of 2021-22 student academic performance

Per legislative design, the six laboratory schools operating in 2021-22 enrolled many students who had previously attended a low-performing school and/or who were low-performing themselves (based on one or more indicators). This complicates efforts to isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student achievement. The nature of students attending laboratory schools—previously low-performing, attending low-performing schools—means that comparison groups must be carefully identified. Even with rigorous methods, adjustments for unobservable characteristics associated with student enrollment at laboratory schools may not be possible. Efforts to assess laboratory school student achievement are further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted the schooling, learning, and social-emotional development of many students. Furthermore, given the pandemic, there are no student test scores from 2019-20. Combined, these factors complicate efforts to isolate the impacts of laboratory schools on student achievement.

With these cautions, the Evaluation Team proceeded with two primary comparisons in its test score analyses: (1) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2021-22 with the test scores of students attending low-performing schools[53] and (2) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2021-22 with the test scores of a matched comparison sample. In Appendix A6, the Evaluation Team also displays unadjusted test scores for laboratory school students (in 2021-22) versus all other students in the laboratory schools' host LEAs. Notably, as shown in Appendix Table A6.5, eight eighth graders at The Catamount School (WCU) took Math I in 2021-22. Their average Math I score was 553.88—relative to 547.87 in Jackson County—and 87.50 percent of those students passed the exam and earned high school course credit.

Tables 3-5 present student achievement results from our first set of analyses—i.e., comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2021-22 with the scores of students attending low-performing schools. We estimate separate models for elementary grades math and reading, middle grades math and reading, 5th grade science, and 8th grade science. These models control for student demographics, student program participation, and school-level characteristics.[54] Importantly, these models also control for student EOG scores from the 2020-21 academic year. This means we assess laboratory school student achievement in 2021-22 relative to other students attending low-performing schools who had similar prior test scores. Our models also include region or LEA fixed effects, meaning we compare laboratory school students' test scores in 2021-22 to those of other students attending low-performing schools in the same region or other students attending low-performing schools in the host LEA. We present test score estimates across all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately.[55]

Table 3 indicates that in elementary grades math, the test scores of laboratory school students are lower than those for other elementary grades students attending a low-performing school in the host school district. Results by laboratory school return strong positive results for the ECU Community School. Relative to students attending a low-performing school, ECU Community School students scored approximately 20 percent of a standard deviation higher on their EOG elementary math exam. This is the second year in a row where the elementary math results for the ECU Community are positive and statistically significant. Elementary grades math results are negative and statistically significant in both models (with region or district fixed effects) for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG). Elementary grades students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy have significantly lower math scores than other students attending low-performing schools in their region. In elementary grades reading, estimates show that laboratory school students score comparably to other students attending a low-performing school. Here, there are strong positive results for the ECU Community School and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. When comparing within region, students at the ECU Community School and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy score approximately 40 and 10 percent of a standard deviation higher in elementary grades reading than other students attending low-performing schools. Conversely, there are negative and statistically significant results in elementary grades reading for the Appalachian Academy at

[53] The designation of low-performing school comes from the 2018-19 school year and the 2021-22 school year. That is schools needed be designated as low-performing in both years to be in our comparison group. The Evaluation Team made this decision given the large increase in the number of schools designated as low-performing in 2021-22 (given NC's school performance grade formula that heavily weights proficiency over growth).

[54] Models control for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, and English learner status. At the school level, models control for school type (i.e., elementary, middle, elementary/middle combination), percent students of color, and percent low-income students.

[55] Appendix Table A6.7 includes counts of the unique number of students contributing to these test score models.

Middle Fork and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG). These negative results are relatively modest in magnitude.

Table 3: Elementary Grades (3-5) Math and Reading—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Math		Reading	
	Region Fixed Effects	*LEA Fixed Effects*	*Region Fixed Effects*	*LEA Fixed Effects*
Laboratory School Students	-0.093 (0.057)	**-0.115+** (0.062)	-0.005 (0.045)	0.012 (0.057)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.209**** (0.015)	**-0.230**** (0.026)	**-0.076**** (0.013)	**-0.052*** (0.022)
ECU Community School	**0.229**** (0.029)	**0.175**** (0.023)	**0.387**** (0.022)	**0.426**** (0.025)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.032+** (0.017)	**-0.073**** (0.014)	**-0.045**** (0.015)	**-0.095**** (0.010)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.146**** (0.035)	-0.029 (0.043)	**0.094**** (0.028)	**0.141*** (0.054)
The Catamount School	---	---	---	---
Observations	26,571	26,571	26,660	26,660

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the End-of-Grade test score outcomes in elementary grades (3-5) math and reading of laboratory school students versus other elementary grades students attending a low-performing school (where a school is low-performing if it was designated as low-performing in both 2018-19 and 2021-22). +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 4 presents laboratory school student achievement results in middle grades math and reading. In math, estimates indicate that laboratory school students score slightly higher than other students attending a low-performing school—the result is significant when comparing within districts and approaching significance when comparing within regions. For example, laboratory school students score approximately nine percent of a standard deviation higher in middle grades math than other students attending a low-performing school in the host LEA. These positive middle grades math results are being driven by the estimates for The Catamount School (WCU), which has positive and statistically significant results in both models. In middle grades reading, laboratory school students perform similarly to other students attending a low-performing school. School-specific results return a positive estimate for The Catamount School relative to other students at low-performing schools in the same region.

Table 5 presents laboratory school student achievement results from the EOG exams in 5th and 8th grade science. Across all laboratory school students, there are no statistically significant results in 5th grade science and one modestly negative result in 8th grade science. School-specific results return positive findings for the ECU Community School and the Moss Street Partnership School (relative to other students at low-performing schools in the same region) in 5th grade science.

Table 4: Middle Grades (6-8) Math and Reading—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Math		Reading	
	Region Fixed Effects	*LEA Fixed Effects*	*Region Fixed Effects*	*LEA Fixed Effects*
Laboratory School Students	0.132 (0.087)	**0.086*** (0.042)	0.058 (0.078)	-0.031 (0.040)
Academy at Middle Fork	---	---	---	---
ECU Community School	---	---	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	---	---	---	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	0.028 (0.028)	0.030 (0.050)	-0.040 (0.031)	**-0.089*** (0.038)
The Catamount School	**0.302**** (0.019)	**0.189**** (0.059)	**0.196**** (0.024)	0.065 (0.040)
Observations	45,974	45,974	48,958	48,958

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the End-of-Grade test score outcomes in middle grades (6-8) math and reading of laboratory school students versus other middle grades students attending a low-performing school (where a school is low-performing if it was designated as low-performing in both 2018-19 and 2021-22). +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 5: 5th and 8th Grade Science—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	5th Grade Science		8th Grade Science	
	Region Fixed Effects	*LEA Fixed Effects*	*Region Fixed Effects*	*LEA Fixed Effects*
Laboratory School Students	0.055 (0.119)	-0.058 (0.063)	-0.075 (0.051)	**-0.076*** (0.037)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.085*** (0.031)	-0.047 (0.050)	---	---
ECU Community School	**0.304**** (0.062)	**0.215*** (0.091)	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**0.275**** (0.034)	0.022 (0.024)	---	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.331**** (0.049)	**-0.391**** (0.111)	-0.077 (0.093)	-0.088 (0.120)
The Catamount School	---	---	**-0.072*** (0.033)	-0.052 (0.134)
Observations	13,045	13,045	16,379	16,379

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the End-of-Grade test score outcomes in 5th and 8th grade science of laboratory school students versus other students attending a low-performing school (where a school is low-performing if it was designated as low-performing in both 2018-19 and 2021-22). +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 6 presents student achievement results from our second set of analyses—i.e., comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2021-22 with the scores of a matched comparison sample.[56] We estimate separate models for elementary grades math and reading, middle grades math and reading, 5th grade science, and 8th grade science. These models control for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, English learner status, school percent low income, and the prior student engagement and achievement outcomes that were part of the initial propensity score model.[57] A key difference between these propensity score analyses and our first set of analyses—comparing to students in low-performing schools—is related to the use of prior data. In our first set of analyses, the prior test scores come from 2020-21, when many of the 2021-22 laboratory school students were already attending a laboratory school. In our propensity score analyses, the prior data for laboratory school students come from the year before their enrollment in a laboratory school.[58]

Table 6: Test Scores Results—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Grade Science	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	**-0.326**** (0.039)	**-0.155**** (0.042)	0.045 (0.067)	0.077 (0.066)	**-0.139*** (0.067)	0.023 (0.103)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.642**** (0.062)	**-0.268**** (0.066)	---	---	**-0.453**** (0.101)	---
ECU Community School	**0.578**** (0.086)	**0.429**** (0.120)	---	---	**0.700**** (0.204)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.304**** (0.053)	**-0.215**** (0.065)	---	---	0.051 (0.094)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.387**** (0.078)	-0.107 (0.107)	0.038 (0.075)	-0.030 (0.087)	**-0.351*** (0.138)	-0.138 (0.108)
The Catamount School	---	---	0.055 (0.120)	**0.205+** (0.105)	---	0.238 (0.198)
Niner University Elementary	-0.004 (0.133)	**-0.193+** (0.106)	---	---	---	---
Observations	2,139	2,143	650	692	814	288

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the test scores of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

[56] See Appendix Table A7.1 for characteristics of the laboratory school sample and the matched comparison sample. The Evaluation Team used propensity score analyses to match laboratory school students to comparison students within the same grade level in 2021-22. Variables in the propensity score model included student demographics (gender, student of color status, age), student program participation (economic disadvantage, exceptional child, English learner), measures of prior student engagement (attendance rates and whether the student was suspended), measures of prior student achievement (scores on DIBELS and EOG exams in math and reading, as available), and school percent low income. For laboratory school students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from the year before entry into a laboratory school; for comparison sample students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from 2021.

[57] These models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

[58] Appendix Table A6.8 includes counts for the number of laboratory school students in our matched comparison sample analyses.

Estimates in Table 6 show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample on elementary grades EOG exams in math, reading, and 5th grade science. Specifically, elementary grades laboratory school students scored 32, 15, and 14 percent of a standard deviation lower in math, reading, and 5th grade science, respectively. As with our prior analyses (Tables 3-5), these results differ across laboratory schools. Students at the ECU Community School scored significantly higher than the matched comparison sample in elementary grades math, reading, and science. Results are negative for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in all three elementary grades comparisons and negative for Moss Street Partnership School and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in two elementary grades comparisons. There is a negative result for Niner University Elementary in elementary grades reading.[59]

Turning to middle grades EOG exams, Table 6 shows that laboratory school students scored similarly to the matched comparison sample in math, reading, and science. Results for the two laboratory schools serving middle grades students show positive results for The Catamount School (WCU) in reading.

Taken together, the 2021-22 test score results in Tables 3-5 and Table 6 are relatively similar. This is despite differences in the analytical approaches, the comparison samples, and prior student data. Test score results for the ECU Community School were the most promising—with positive and significant results across all elementary grades subjects. There were also multiple positive test score results for The Catamount School (WCU). Results for the remaining laboratory schools indicate that their students scored lower than comparison sample students—in low-performing schools or the matched sample—in at least some grade levels/subject areas.

Descriptive reporting of 2022-23 school performance data

The legislation enabling laboratory schools requires the reporting of student achievement data, including school performance grades, achievement scores, and growth at each laboratory school. These achievement data are based on student proficiency and growth on state assessments (End-of-Grade exams for laboratory schools). Proficiency measures whether students pass state assessments, while growth tracks the gains students make on those assessments. Table 7 displays these achievement data for the 2022-23 academic year. The top panel of Table 7 displays these data overall; the middle and bottom panels of Table 7 report these data for reading and mathematics, separately.[60]

Overall, the top panel of Table 7 indicates that in the 2022-23 school year, three laboratory schools—the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and The Catamount School (WCU)—earned a performance grade of 'C'. The remaining five laboratory schools—the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—earned a performance grade of 'F' in 2022-23.[61] These performance grades are based on the performance score, which is a weighted average of the achievement score (80%) and growth score (20%). Achievement scores, which measure proficiency rates

[59] Niner University Elementary is part of the matched analyses because their highest grade in 2021-22 was 3rd grade and prior scores for the matched sample analyses come from the year before laboratory school entry.
[60] These school accountability data for the 2022-23 year can be accessed here: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports#2022-23Reportscomingsoon-4468
[61] The Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) did not have any school performance data in the 2022-23 year.

on state assessments, ranged from 11.5 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 55.9 (Aggie Academy). Growth scores ranged from 65.2 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 84.3 (Academy at Middle Fork). Six of the eight laboratory schools met expected growth in 2022-23.

Table 7: Student Achievement at Laboratory Schools in 2022-23

	Overall Performance Grade	Overall Performance Score	Overall Achievement Score	Overall Growth Score	Overall Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	34	21.9	84.3	Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	F	27	16.7	66.4	Not Met
ECU Community School	C	55	48.3	83.2	Met
Aggie Academy	C	61	55.9	81.7	Met
Niner University Elementary	F	39	28.2	82.6	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	34	23.5	73.5	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	22	11.5	65.2	Not Met
The Catamount School	C	56	49.1	82.0	Met
	Reading Performance Grade	Reading Performance Score	Reading Achievement Score	Reading Growth Score	Reading Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	31	23.0	64.8	Not Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	F	31	21.7	69.0	Not Met
ECU Community School	D	51	43.1	83.3	Met
Aggie Academy	C	62	57.4	78.1	Met
Niner University Elementary	D	43	33.3	83.7	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	31	21.0	72.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	23	12.0	66.7	Not Met
The Catamount School	C	62	56.6	81.4	Met
	Math Performance Grade	Math Performance Score	Math Achievement Score	Math Growth Score	Math Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	36	21.3	93.8	Exceeded
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	F	12	11.7	Not Reported	Not Reported
ECU Community School	C	59	53.4	80.2	Met
Aggie Academy	C	60	54.4	83.5	Met
Niner University Elementary	F	23	23.1	Not Reported	Not Reported
Moss Street Partnership School	F	28	17.2	70.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	22	7.5	78.3	Met
The Catamount School	D	50	41.5	81.6	Met

Note: Performance Grades range from A-F and are based on the Performance Score (Performance Scores of 85-100=A; 70-84=B; 55-69=C; 40-54=D; and 0-39=F). Performance Scores are a weighted average of the Achievement Score (80 percent) and the Growth Score (20 percent). For laboratory schools, the Achievement Score is the proficiency rate on End-of-Grade exams. The Growth Status is based, in part, on the Growth Score, and indicates whether there was sufficient statistical evidence to say that the school exceeded, met, or did not meet expected growth. North Carolina calculates these values across subject areas and for mathematics and reading separately.

The middle panel of Table 7 presents school performance data in reading. In the 2022-23 school year, Aggie Academy and The Catamount school earned a 'C' performance grade; the ECU Community School and Niner University Elementary earned a 'D' performance grade; and Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned a 'F' performance grade in reading. Reading achievement scores ranged from 12 at D.C. Virgo

Preparatory Academy to 57.4 at Aggie Academy. Reading growth scores ranged from 64.8 at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork to 83.7 at Niner University Elementary. Five laboratory schools met expected growth in reading while three schools did not meet expected growth in 2022-23.

Finally, the bottom panel of Table 7 presents school performance grades in math. In the 2022-23 school year, the ECU Community School and Aggie Academy earned a 'C' performance grade; The Catamount School earned a 'D' performance grade; and Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Niner University Elementary, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned a 'F' performance grade. Math achievement scores ranged from 7.5 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 54.5 (Aggie Academy). North Carolina did not report an official math growth score or growth status for the Appalachian Academy at Elkin and Niner University Elementary in 2022-23. Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork exceeded expected growth in math in 2022-23, while the remaining laboratory schools met growth.

Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?

Laboratory school models prioritize social and emotional well-being), promoting a positive school culture, and creating experiential learning opportunities through physical spaces at laboratory schools or university institutions. These are key ways to support students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school. For example, the Academy at Elkin partnered with two local counseling agencies to provide mental and behavioral health services for identified students while offering experiential and hands-on learning opportunities through a partnership with the Elkin Valley Trail Association. Staff at the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) embed social-emotional learning and support for the whole child in the core curriculum, while partnerships such as Backpack Buddies support students in acquiring basic needs, from snacks to school supplies. Aggie Academy (NCA&T) emphasizes STEM curricular opportunities while ensuring all adults in the building, including teachers, support staff, and pre-service candidates, emphasize responsiveness to student culture and the broader needs of the families in their community.

To assess how laboratory schools influence students' social-emotional and school engagement outcomes, the Evaluation Team used three sources of data: responses from the Tripod student survey (from the 2022-23 academic year), administrative data on student attendance (from the 2021-22 academic year), and administrative data on student disciplinary records (from the 2021-22 academic year). Collectively, these data capture students' motivation for learning, perceptions of school/classroom climate, and engagement with school. These constructs are important to measure as they may be necessary precursors to student learning. However, it is also important to highlight potential limitations to these data and their ability fully capture student development and engagement.

Student perceptions of laboratory schools

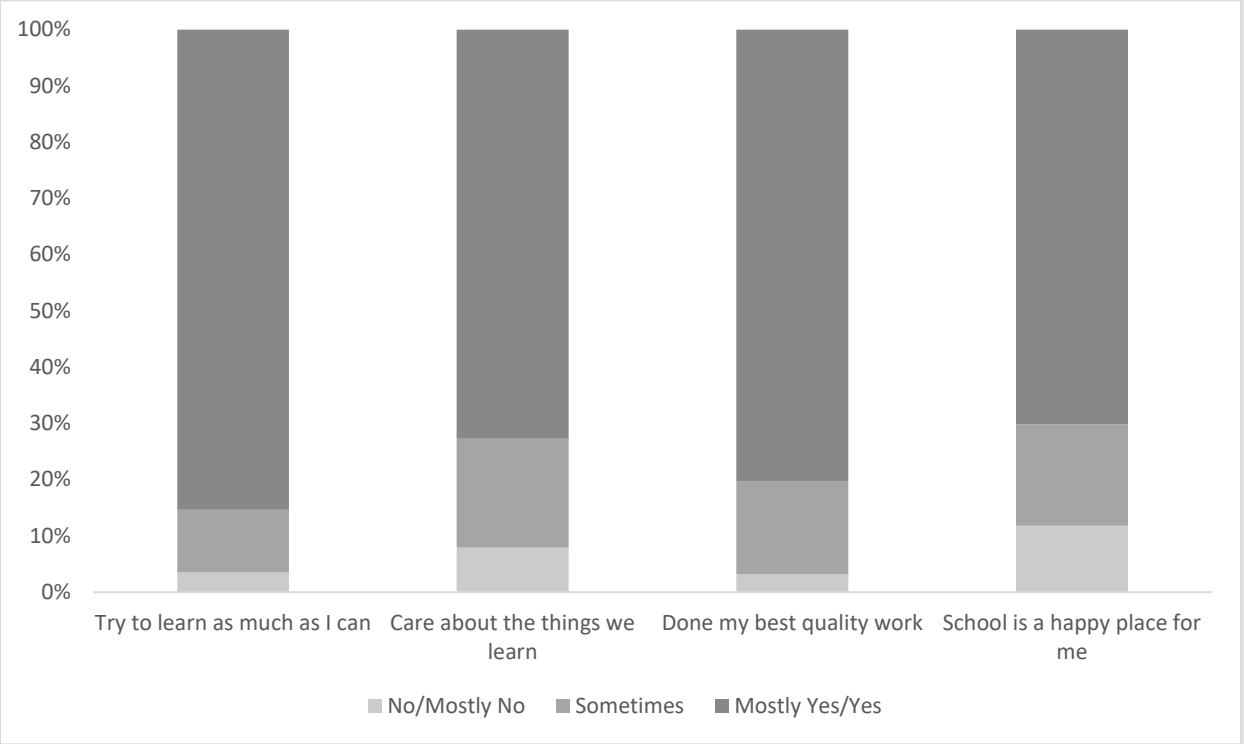
The Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer an online survey to laboratory school students in the spring of 2023. Two survey versions were used: (1) an early elementary survey taken by students in grades K-2 at the laboratory schools and (2) an upper elementary survey taken by students in grades 3-8 at the laboratory schools.[62] Overall, the Evaluation Team received 1,078 survey

[62] The upper elementary survey has additional items that are not on the early elementary survey. Both surveys include many of the same items. The key distinction between surveys is that response values range from 1-3 on the early elementary survey (no, maybe, yes) and from 1-5 on the upper elementary survey (no, mostly not, sometimes, mostly yes, yes). For common reporting, the Evaluation Team converted all responses to a 1-3 scale.

responses from laboratory school students: 44 responses from Aggie Academy (NCA&T), 228 responses from Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 77 responses from Appalachian Academy at Elkin, 154 responses from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), 116 responses from the ECU Community School, 296 responses from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 116 responses from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and 47 responses from The Catamount School (WCU). Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) did not administer the survey. Data presented in this section focus on student responses across laboratory schools; data in Appendix A8 are presented for each respective laboratory school. Given differences in student grade levels and prior educational experiences, caution is warranted when comparing survey data across laboratory schools.

For all laboratory school student respondents, Figure 8 displays responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and engagement with school. Approximately 73-85 percent of respondents indicated that they mostly or always tried to learn as much as they could, cared about the things they learned, and did their best quality work in the laboratory school. Seventy percent of laboratory school student respondents indicated that school was mostly or always a happy place for them. These survey responses values from 2023 are very similar to those from 2022. Please see Appendix Table A8.1 for data on student motivation and engagement for each respective laboratory school.

Figure 8: Laboratory School Students Motivation and Engagement with School (2022-23)

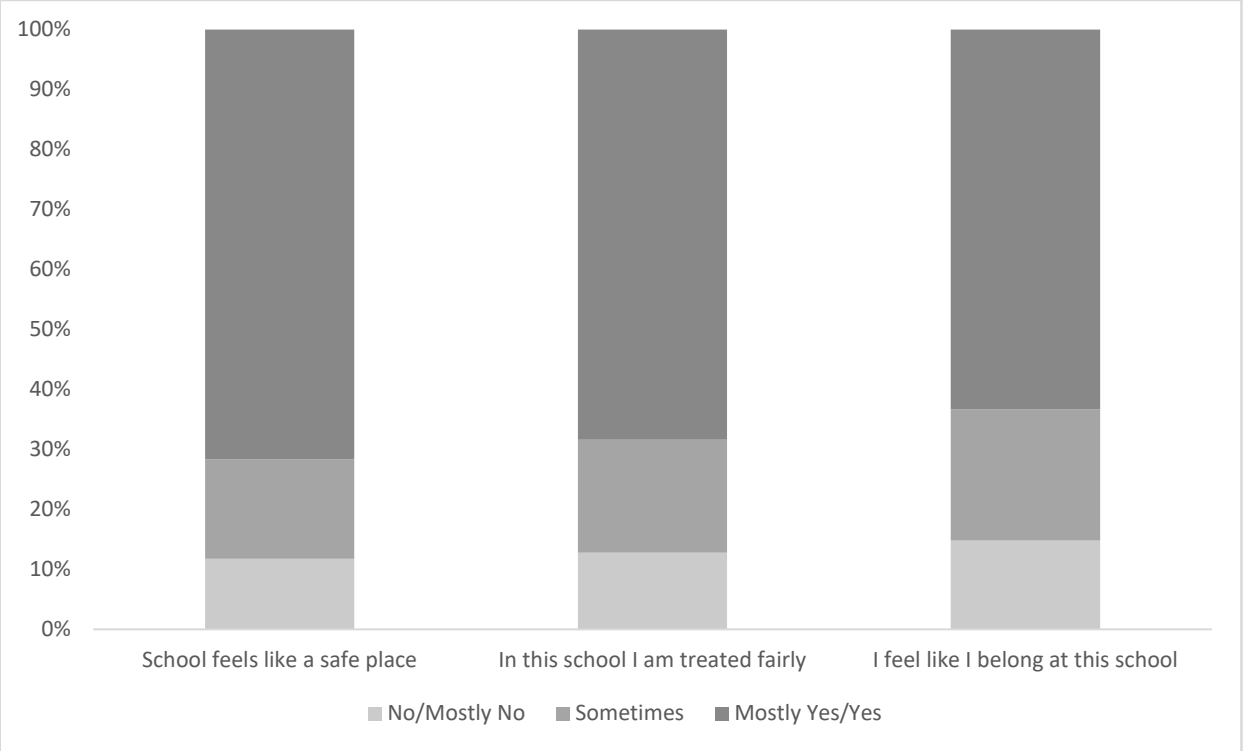


Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and their engagement with school. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'try to learn as much as I can' and 'school is a happy place for me'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all four items.

Similarly, Figure 9 displays laboratory school student responses to a set of items on school climate. In 2023, nearly 72 percent of respondents reported that school is mostly or always a safe place for them. Approximately 68 and 63 percent of respondents, respectively, indicated that they are mostly or always treated fairly at school and that they feel like they belong at their laboratory school. Once again, these

response values from 2023 are very similar to those from 2022. Please see Appendix Table A8.2 for student perceptions of school climate for each respective laboratory school.

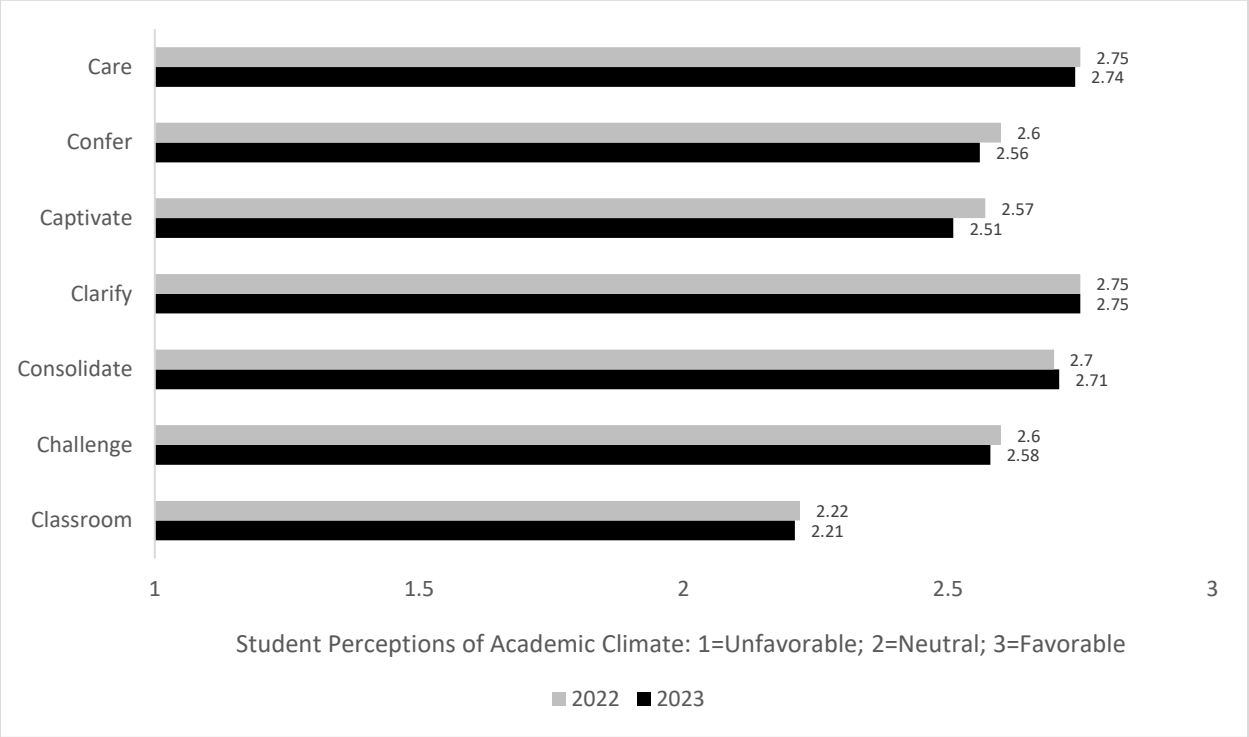
Figure 9: Laboratory School Students Perceptions of School Climate (2022-23)



Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their perceptions of school climate. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items—'school feels like a safe place to me' and 'in this school I am treated fairly'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all three items.

The Tripod student survey is best known for assessing the academic climate of classrooms and schools through survey items on the 7Cs—Care, Confer, Captivate, Clarify, Consolidate, Challenge, and Classroom Management. Essentially, these survey items allow students to rate the academic climate in their classroom/school along seven distinct dimensions. Figure 10 displays summative 7Cs data for laboratory schools, where values equal to '1' are unfavorable responses, values equal to '2' are neutral responses, and values equal to '3' are favorable responses. Figure 10 also includes comparable data from spring 2022. Overall, in spring 2023, laboratory school students were most favorable regarding the care shown for them by teachers and their teachers' ability to clarify student understanding. As in prior years, laboratory school students reported their teachers struggled most with classroom management. Relative to spring 2022, 7Cs responses were very similar in spring 2023. Please see Appendix Table A8.3 for 7Cs data for each laboratory school.

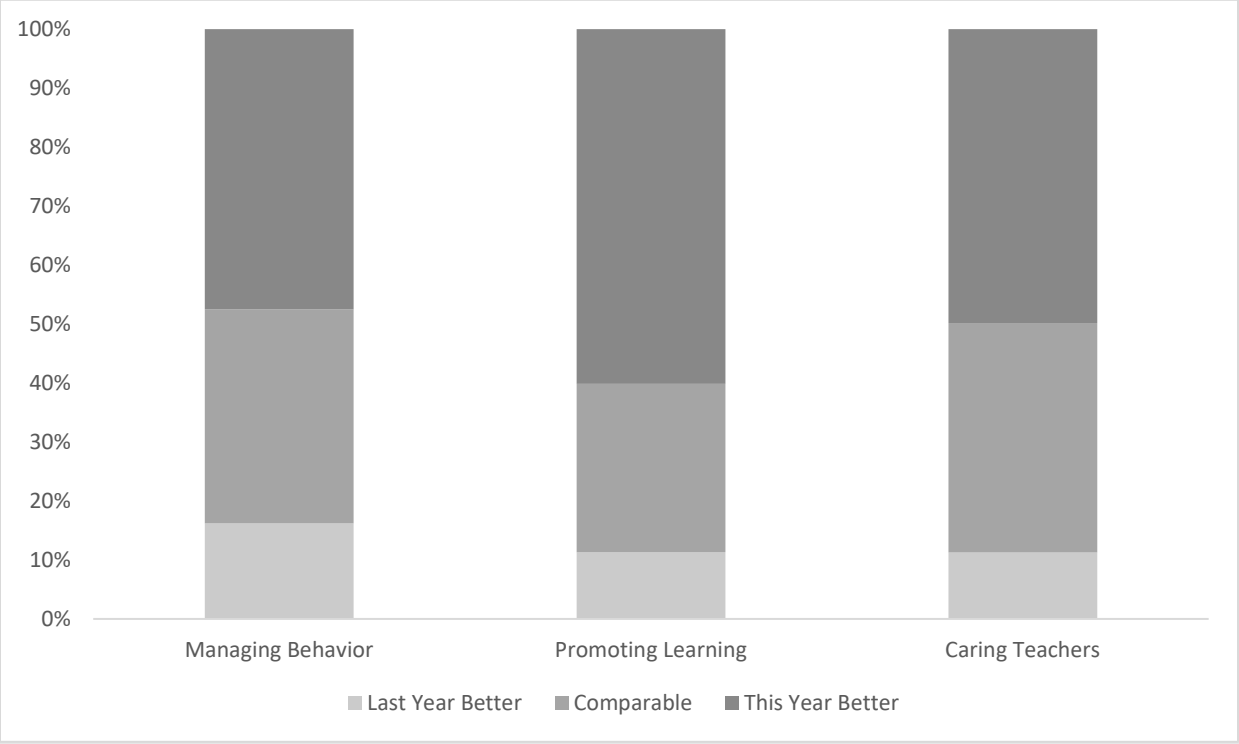
Figure 10: Student Perceptions of Laboratory School Academic Climate (Tripod 7Cs) (2022-23)



Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of survey items on their perceptions of academic climate. Specifically, this figure displays aggregate 7Cs data for laboratory school students. Each construct—e.g., Care, Confer, etc.—includes multiple survey items.

As with the Tripod parent/caregiver survey, an additional set of survey items asked laboratory school students to compare their educational experiences in 2022-23 with their educational experiences in 2021-22. Figure 11 displays responses for students *new* to laboratory schools in 2022-23. Nearly 50 percent of student respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at managing student behavior than their school in 2021-22. Approximately 60 percent of student respondents reported that their laboratory school was better at promoting learning, while 50 percent of respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at having caring teachers. Please see Appendix Table A8.4 for these responses disaggregated for each laboratory school and for students new to or returning to a laboratory school in 2022-23.

Figure 11: Comparing School Experiences for Students New to Laboratory Schools (2022-23)



Note: For students new to laboratory schools in 2021-22, this figure displays responses to survey items asking students to compare their educational experiences in 2021-22 to their educational experiences in 2020-21.

Student attendance at laboratory schools in 2021-22

Student attendance is a policy relevant measure of engagement with school that can be meaningfully influenced by teachers and schools. Therefore, the Evaluation Team assessed whether laboratory schools impact attendance. Laboratory schools may encourage attendance if they create supportive and caring environments and build strong relationships with students and families. Conversely, attendance at laboratory schools may be lower given transportation challenges or if laboratory schools are unable to build strong connections between school and home.

The unique nature of many laboratory school students—i.e., those who previously attended/were zoned to attend a low-performing school and/or were previously low-performing themselves—warrants caution in student-level analyses. In particular, groups of comparison students must be carefully identified to better isolate the relationship between laboratory school enrollment and the outcome of interest. As such, the Evaluation Team starts with descriptive data regarding student attendance at the six laboratory schools in operation in 2021-22. In more rigorous analyses, the Evaluation Team assesses whether attendance differs for (1) laboratory school students versus other students attending low-performing schools and (2) laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.

Table 8 displays student attendance rates for the 2021-22 school year—that is, the percentage of days present at a school divided by the days enrolled. The top panel of Table 8 displays attendance rates for any student enrolled at a laboratory school in 2021-22, including students who exited the school before

the completion of the year.[63] The second panel of Table 8 presents comparable data for students enrolled at a laboratory school for the entire year. Overall, the attendance rate for laboratory schools in 2022-23 was 89.73, ranging from 87.61 at The Catamount School (WCU) to 95.23 at Niner University Elementary (UNCC). Of note, the data in the second panel show that attendance rates are generally slightly higher for students enrolled at laboratory schools for the entire year.

Table 8: Attendance Rates at Laboratory Schools and Other District Schools (2021-22)

Student Groups	Student Count	Attendance Rates
All Enrolled Laboratory School Students		
Laboratory Schools 2021-22	1167	89.73
Academy at Middle Fork	275	90.72
ECU Community School	114	91.10
Niner University Elementary	122	95.23
Moss Street Partnership School	384	87.90
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	209	88.49
The Catamount School	63	87.61
Laboratory School Students Enrolled for the Entire Year		
Laboratory Schools 2021-22	1023	90.29
Academy at Middle Fork	264	90.86
ECU Community School	104	91.44
Niner University Elementary	100	95.07
Moss Street Partnership School	325	88.72
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	186	88.96
The Catamount School	44	90.60
Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled in the LEA)		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	24,657	90.70
Pitt County (K-5)	11,145	94.11
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	334	92.50
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (K-2)	46,256	91.60
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	5,227	91.35
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	17,437	91.66
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	844	88.46
Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled for the Entire Year in the LEA)		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	20,742	91.36
Pitt County (K-5)	9,271	94.74
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	246	93.52
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (K-2)	36,400	92.43
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	4,438	92.05
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	14,535	92.45
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	708	89.52

Note: This table displays attendance rates for laboratory school students and other, same-grade students in the host LEAs

The bottom panels of Table 8 present attendance rates for the same-grade students in the school districts hosting laboratory schools (or the host school for South Greenville Elementary). As above, the Evaluation

[63] The reported attendance rates for students who exit laboratory schools only consider their attendance at a laboratory school and not any other school in which they subsequently enrolled.

Team provides these data for any student enrolled in the host district and for students in the host district for the entire year. Attendance rates for Niner University Elementary (UNCC) are higher than those in the host district. Rates for the ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) are lower than those in the host district.

Table 9 presents results from student-level regression models comparing attendance rates at laboratory schools in 2021-22 to those of comparison students enrolled in low-performing schools.[64] Analyses compare the attendance rates of laboratory school students to (a) other students in low-performing schools in the same region as the respective laboratory school and (b) other students in low-performing schools in the host district for the respective laboratory school.[65] Analyses include controls for many of the same student and school covariates as in the test score analyses. Some models also include a control for the student's attendance rate in the prior year.

Across all laboratory schools, these results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in laboratory school student attendance versus other students in low-performing schools. However, results differ across laboratory schools. Students at Niner University Elementary (UNCC) have significantly higher attendance rates than peers at low-performing schools (either in the same region or the same school district). These results are rather large in magnitude—ranging from 6 to 12 more days of school attended. Conversely, students at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) have significantly lower attendance rates than other students at low-performing schools. Estimates for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) differ based on whether the comparison is to students at low-performing schools in the same region or district.

To extend the analyses shown in Table 9, Table 10 displays estimates from models that compare attendance rates for laboratory school students in 2021-22 versus a matched comparison sample. Overall, results in Table 10 show that laboratory school students have modestly lower attendance rates—by approximately 0.70 percent—than matched comparison students. This estimate translates to approximately 1.2 fewer days of school attended for laboratory school students. School-specific results indicate that Niner University Elementary (UNCC) has significantly higher attendance rates (by 4.5 percent) than the matched comparison sample. Attendance rates are significantly lower at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG).

[64] Once again, low-performing schools are identified as those designated as low-performing in both 2018-19 and 2021-22.

[65] For these analyses and the matched comparison sample analyses, the Evaluation Team limited the sample to those enrolled at their school for the entire 2021-22 year. Results are similar when the sample includes any student enrolled.

Table 9: Attendance Rates—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Compared to Students Attending Low-Performing Schools in the Same Region as the Laboratory School		Compared to Students Attending Low-Performing Schools in the Host LEA for the Laboratory School	
	Without Prior Attendance	*With Prior Attendance*	*Without Prior Attendance*	*With Prior Attendance*
Laboratory School Students	0.836 (0.796)	0.146 (0.462)	0.573 (0.911)	-0.689 (0.838)
Academy at Middle Fork	**0.350*** (0.172)	0.138 (0.186)	0.248 (0.230)	-0.282 (0.248)
ECU Community School	**2.672**** (0.712)	**1.358+** (0.721)	**-1.715**** (0.476)	**-2.944**** (0.499)
Niner University Elementary	**6.075**** (0.281)	**3.486**** (0.286)	**7.227**** (0.377)	**4.384**** (0.393)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.802**** (0.222)	**-0.550*** (0.233)	**-0.319*** (0.150)	**-0.742**** (0.134)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	1.117 (0.772)	-0.911 (0.690)	**-1.214+** (0.726)	**-3.709**** (0.574)
The Catamount School	**-1.685**** (0.613)	0.154 (0.574)	**2.449**** (0.843)	**3.955**** (0.715)
Observations	118,548	106,928	118,548	106,928

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the attendance rates of laboratory school students versus other elementary and middle grades students attending a low-performing school. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 10: Attendance Rates—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Attendance Rate Differences
Laboratory School Students	**-0.688*** (0.325)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.972+** (0.565)
ECU Community School	1.012 (0.679)
Niner University Elementary	**4.547**** (0.643)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-2.277**** (0.583)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	-0.601 (0.674)
The Catamount School	-0.583 (1.239)
Observations	3,623

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the attendance rates of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Student disciplinary records at laboratory schools in 2021-22

Student disciplinary infractions are a policy relevant measure of engagement with school that can be meaningfully influenced by teachers and school leadership. Therefore, the Evaluation Team assessed whether laboratory schools impact the likelihood of students ever being suspended during the year and the likelihood of students ever receiving an out-of-school suspension during the year. Given their focus on positive behavior supports and restorative justice, laboratory schools may be less likely to suspend students. Conversely, survey data indicate that student behavior is an area where laboratory schools (relatively) stakeholders have more concerns. As such, suspensions may be a concern.

As with the test score and absence analyses, the unique nature of many laboratory school students warrants caution in these disciplinary incident analyses. Groups of comparison students must be carefully identified to better isolate the relationship between laboratory school enrollment and the outcomes of interest. Following the analysis plan for other student-level outcomes, this section starts with descriptive data regarding student disciplinary infractions at the six laboratory schools in operation in 2021-22. In more rigorous analyses, the Evaluation Team assesses whether disciplinary incidents differ for (1) laboratory school students versus other students attending low-performing schools and (2) laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.

Table 11: Percentage of Students Being Suspended or Receiving an Out-of-School Suspension at Laboratory Schools and Other District Schools (2022-23)

Student Groups	Percentage Ever Suspended in 2021-22	Percentage Receiving an Out-of-School Suspension in 2022-23
Laboratory School Students		
Laboratory Schools 2021-22	12.69	5.50
Academy at Middle Fork	7.09	1.12
ECU Community School	11.01	5.50
Niner University Elementary	0.00	0.00
Moss Street Partnership School	5.10	4.25
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	36.84	13.16
The Catamount School	35.42	20.83
Laboratory School Students Enrolled for the Entire Year		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	11.19	5.11
Pitt County (K-5)	21.47	7.91
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	42.91	20.57
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (K-3)	6.27	0.84
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	15.63	4.83
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	10.23	4.29
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	31.17	12.39

Note: This table displays the percentage of students suspended (overall, out-of-school) for laboratory school students and other, same-grade students in the host LEAs

Table 11 displays the percentage of students ever suspended during the 2021-22 year and the percentage of students receiving an out-of-school suspension during the 2021-22. These data are displayed for laboratory school students (top panel) and for students in the same grade levels in the host LEA (bottom panel). Overall, 12.69 percent of laboratory school students were suspended at least once during the 2021-22 year and 5.50 percent received an out-of-school suspension. These values vary across laboratory schools, especially based on the age range of the students enrolled. Niner University Elementary (UNCC)

had no suspensions in the 2021-22 year; slightly more than one-third of students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and The Catamount School (WCU) (which enroll students in grades 6-8) were suspended during the 2021-22 year. Suspension rates for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary, and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) were lower than those for comparable grade levels in their host LEA. Rates at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and The Catamount School were higher than those for comparable grade levels in their host LEA.

Table 12: Suspension Rates—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Compared to Students Attending Low-Performing Schools in the Same Region as the Laboratory School		Compared to Students Attending Low-Performing Schools in the Host LEA for the Laboratory School	
	Ever Suspended	*Out-of-School Suspension*	*Ever Suspended*	*Out-of-School Suspension*
Laboratory School Students	**-8.99**** (3.11)	**-6.06**** (1.12)	**-11.39*** (4.63)	**-5.79**** (1.34)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-6.00**** (0.98)	**-3.58**** (0.65)	**-9.38**** (1.73)	**-7.06**** (1.24)
ECU Community School	**-12.09**** (2.63)	**-7.83**** (1.31)	**-26.06**** (2.80)	**-11.58**** (1.53)
Niner University Elementary	**-17.10**** (1.35)	**-11.71**** (0.84)	**-12.26**** (1.58)	**-9.73**** (1.09)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-14.41**** (1.14)	**-5.49**** (0.77)	**-25.60**** (0.69)	**-4.11**** (0.47)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	3.71 (2.84)	**-8.32**** (1.53)	**9.74**** (3.22)	-3.08 (2.29)
The Catamount School	**-10.33**** (3.68)	0.91 (1.61)	**-5.07+** (2.85)	**6.36**** (1.86)
Observations	148,343	148,343	148,343	148,343

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the likelihood of students being suspended or receiving an out-of-school suspension and compares laboratory students versus other elementary and middle grades students attending a low-performing school. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Table 12 presents results from student-level regression models comparing the likelihood of being suspended or receiving an out-of-school suspension for laboratory school students in 2021-22 versus comparison students enrolled in low-performing schools.[66] Analyses compare suspensions for laboratory schools students to (a) other students in low-performing schools in the same region as the respective laboratory school and (b) other students in low-performing schools in the host district for the respective laboratory school. As with other student-level analyses, models include controls for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptionality, limited English proficient, school type (e.g., elementary, middle), and the percentage of students of color and low-income students at the school.

Across all laboratory school students, Table 12 indicates that laboratory school students are significantly less likely to be suspended or receive an out-of-school suspension. For example, relative to students at low-performing schools in the same region, laboratory school students are nine percentage points less likely to ever be suspended during the year and six percentage points less likely to receive an out-of-school suspension. With a small number of exceptions, school-specific results are also negative and statistically

[66] Once again, low-performing schools are identified as those designated as low-performing in both 2018-19 and 2021-22.

significant. These data strongly indicate that exclusionary discipline was not a common practice at laboratory schools.

Table 13: Suspension Rates—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Ever Suspended	*Out-of-School Suspension*
Laboratory School Students	**-8.09****	**-5.90****
	(1.29)	(0.97)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-7.38****	**-4.84****
	(2.10)	(1.16)
ECU Community School	**-6.58+**	-3.14
	(3.63)	(2.63)
Niner University Elementary	**-15.10****	**-6.72****
	(1.48)	(1.05)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-15.01****	**-7.25****
	(1.73)	(1.50)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	4.86	**-6.89****
	(3.67)	(2.59)
The Catamount School	-3.99	-3.31
	(6.69)	(5.64)
Observations	4,594	4,594

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the likelihood of students being suspended or receiving an out-of-school suspension for laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

To extend the analyses shown in Table 12, Table 13 displays estimates from models that compare the likelihood of being suspended or receiving an out-of-school suspension for laboratory school students in 2021-22 versus a matched comparison sample. Overall, results in Table 13 show that laboratory school students are less likely to face exclusionary discipline practices than matched comparison sample students—i.e., eight percentage points less likely to be suspended and six percentage points less likely to receive an out-of-school suspension. These results are particularly strong at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG).

Do the laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?

COEs most often use methods and practicum courses relevant to laboratory school objectives to integrate pre-service candidates into laboratory schools. Methods instructors were frequently part of the COE curriculum team supporting the laboratory schools, and in some cases, those instructors serve as co-teachers in content areas. When methods courses were taught on-site at the laboratory school, instructors had the opportunity to demonstrate instruction for pre-service candidates, who practiced instructional techniques and strategies with small groups of laboratory school students. COEs also engaged in-service teachers through PD or other supports.

Pre-service candidates

Traditionally, COEs have provided pre-service candidates two primary ways to engage in laboratory schools. Junior-year candidates in methods and practicum courses conducted observations, diagnostics, and assessments; provided individual tutoring and small group support/instruction; and assisted with instruction or instructional interventions. Senior-year pre-service candidates had clinical experiences as

interns (Intern I) or student teachers (intern II). Pre-service candidates in intern I experiences typically spent one or two days per week shadowing, observing, or supporting a laboratory school teacher over a semester. Student teachers spent every day of the week, over a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction and support students one-on-one or in small groups. Student teachers also participated in staff meetings and professional development for laboratory school faculty.

At some laboratory schools, instructors who teach junior-year methods courses also supervise senior-year interns/student teachers. In theory, this practice enhances continuity in methods instruction, particularly when methods instructors hold their courses onsite at the laboratory school, and increases interaction between clinical educators and laboratory school students and staff. Engaging pre-service candidates can be particularly challenging for laboratory schools with great physical distance between the COE and the campus, as is the case with two new laboratory schools, the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) and the Appalachian Academy at Elkin. Appalachian State placed one elementary education intern II at the Academy at Elkin in 2022-23, while UNC-Chapel Hill's COE intentionally chose not to place student teachers at Carolina Community Academy during its first year of operation. Carolina Community Academy has MOUs in place to secure internships and pre-service placements for the 2023-24 school year. Aggie Academy's model intentionally integrated pre-service candidates into the laboratory school's first year of operation, particularly focusing on early childhood and elementary education field experiences and interns.

The Catamount School (WCU), ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) engaged pre-service candidates in other disciplines, including counseling, social work, nursing, speech/language, and inclusive education, who conducted activities or provided supports to students virtually.

COEs use several criteria to select pre-service candidates for clinical experiences at laboratory schools. Generally, COEs select pre-service candidates for clinical experiences based on their major and interest in working with diverse student populations. COEs rely on methods and practicum courses—offered in the junior year—to expose more pre-service candidates to the laboratory school model. Laboratory schools use methods classes as candidate pools to select student teachers. Selection, placement, or programmatic practices related to pre-service candidates at laboratory schools haven't yet shown significant influence on those related to placements at other traditional public schools with which the COE partners.

Table 14: Clinical Experiences in Laboratory Schools for Educator Preparation Program Candidates

Program/Licensure Areas	Early Field Experiences	Intern I	Intern II (Full-time student teaching)
Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)			
Elementary Education	25	0	7
Special Education	5	0	0
Birth to Kindergarten	1	0	0
Art	4	0	0
Physical Education	1	0	0
Middle Grades	1	0	0
Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State)			
Elementary Education	0	0	1
ECU Community School			
Elementary Education	0	1	1
Special Education	4	0	0
Birth to Kindergarten	0	2	2
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)			
Elementary Education	24	0	0
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)			
Elementary Education	63	1	0
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)			
Elementary Education	12	10	10
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)			
Elementary Education	41	2	3
Special Education	0	34	0
Middle Grades	6	0	0
Health and Physical Education	0	6	0
The Catamount School (WCU)			
Elementary Education/Inclusive Education	43	1	0
Middle Grades	5	3	3
Secondary Math Education	4	0	0
Health and Physical Education	20	6	0
Music/Art	20	0	0

Note: For each UNC System institution, this table displays counts of the pre-service candidates who had clinical experiences in a laboratory school in 2022-23. These data are displayed by institution and program area (e.g. elementary education, special education).

Table 14 presents counts of the pre-service teachers and school leaders who had a clinical experience—early field, intern I, intern II—in a laboratory school in 2022-23.[67] Appalachian State placed 37 candidates into early field experiences and seven candidates into full time student teaching experiences at Middle Fork Academy. At the Elkin Academy, Appalachian State placed one candidate into a full time student

[67] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2022-23. ECU placed two social work interns, one marriage and family therapy intern, four speech/language interns, two psychology interns, and two occupational therapist interns at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed two school counseling interns at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed two social work interns at Moss Street Partnership School. WCU placed 12 school and clinical psychology students, 26 school counseling interns, four nursing preceptors, and four senior nursing students at The Catamount School.

teaching experience. ECU placed four candidates into early filed experiences, three candidates into intern I experiences, and three candidates into student teaching at the ECU Community School. NCA&T placed 24 candidates into early field experiences at Aggie Academy. UNCC placed 63 candidates into early field experiences and one candidate into an intern I experience at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed 12 candidates into early field experiences, 10 candidates into intern I experiences, and 10 candidates into full time student teaching at Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 47 candidates into early field experiences, 42 candidates into intern I experiences, and three candidates into full time student teaching at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Finally, WCU placed 92 candidates into early field experiences, 10 candidates into intern I experiences, and three candidates into full time student teaching at The Catamount School.

Principal interns

No laboratory school hosted a school leader candidate in a formal principal internship in 2022-23.

College of Education faculty engagement with laboratory schools

Generally, COE faculty have either a regular onsite presence at the laboratory school (e.g., faculty in residence, COE faculty teaching at school) or engage with laboratory school staff on an ad hoc basis, often delivering professional development or other curricular and instructional supports. COEs have been challenged to systematize opportunities for more faculty to engage more deeply and regularly with laboratory school staff and students. COEs must manage the workload of faculty who are deeply engaged with the laboratory school and ensure their engagement is relevant and compensated. Some faculty in embedded positions are paid as members of the laboratory school staff (e.g., curriculum directors) or receive a workload offset or release equivalent to teaching one course (e.g., faculty-in-residence). Other faculty manage their laboratory school engagement in addition to their regular workload. COEs must also work with laboratory school staff to appropriately balance the number of ad hoc interactions COE faculty have with laboratory school students and teachers against the laboratory school model's priority on creating environments that seek to foster consistent relationships between laboratory school students and the adults supporting them.

COE faculty play various roles in laboratory schools. COE faculty from Appalachian State, NCA&T, and UNC-Chapel Hill helped design their respective laboratory school models, assisted in hiring laboratory school staff, and planned for integrating pre-service candidates into the school (in the case of NCA&T). Other COE faculty that regularly engaged with laboratory schools in 2022-23 were embedded into the staff through several position types.

- Laboratory school curriculum directors are typically COE faculty based at the laboratory school who liaise between the COE and the laboratory school on curricular and instructional supports.
- Teachers or co-teachers in core content subjects. For example, WCU COE faculty also serve as teacher leaders in their content areas, teaching or co-teaching classes and supporting and mentoring other laboratory school staff.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on-site at the laboratory school. For example, faculty from NCA&T collaborated with the staff to provide regular feedback to the pre-service teachers during their small group instruction.
- Faculty who teach methods courses on-site at the laboratory school. For example, several faculty from UNCC teach pre-service candidates on-site at Niner University Elementary in literacy, math, child development, and instructional design.

- Most commonly, COEs engaged their faculty in regular professional development support for laboratory school staff. For example, faculty from Appalachian State supported the principals at the Academy at Elkin and the Academy at Middle Fork with monthly principal coaching sessions. Another supported staff from both schools with literacy professional development focused on LETRS, decodable texts, and reading assessments. Faculty from ECU met regularly with teachers at the Community School to provide support in literacy, library sciences, and special education.

Other faculty have scheduled opportunities, typically coordinated through curriculum directors, to provide ad hoc instructional support to laboratory school staff during planning periods, summer institutes, and scheduled professional days (e.g., teacher workdays) on a range of topics and issues relevant to laboratory schools (e.g., STEM, literacy, SEL). Faculty may also work individually with teachers on an as-requested basis regarding particular content areas (e.g., science, math, literacy, special education) and instructional strategies.

To date, the engagement of COE faculty with laboratory schools continues to be more voluntary than systematic, posing challenges to the sustainability and consistency of faculty involvement from year to year. Without (1) course offloads or workload exchanges that allow time for COE faculty to be in or otherwise involved with laboratory schools and (2) other systematized processes for identifying and engaging faculty to serve in laboratory schools, it remains unclear whether COEs can maintain the level of faculty engagement of the initial implementation years. As more faculty rotate in and out of engagement with laboratory schools, building lasting relationships with staff and students may be more difficult.

In-service teachers

Traditionally, the laboratory school model provides various opportunities for teachers to grow professionally. As described herein, laboratory school staff work alongside COE faculty embedded in the laboratory school as instructional/curriculum directors, faculty-in-residence, or clinical supervisors and receive direct instructional support and ad hoc consulting.

In-service teachers also receive professional development from COE faculty on instructional supports (e.g., using interim assessments, standards-based report cards, differentiated instruction strategies, the science of reading, MTSS, PBIS, and restorative practices) and other university partners on topics relevant to addressing their students' holistic needs (e.g., trauma, behavior management). In 2022-23, laboratory school staff continued to receive these professional development and support opportunities across all campuses.

Laboratory school staff also have opportunities at COEs to pursue professional growth. For example, in 2022-23, the ECU Community School and Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) teachers and leaders enrolled in continuing education coursework and programs in literacy at their constituent COEs.

How have the UNC System and its constituent institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?
The early years of laboratory school implementation surfaced key concerns among stakeholders regarding the length of time COEs would operate laboratory schools and the adequacy of financial resources to serve a concentrated population of highest-need students.

In the six years since the first two laboratory schools opened, several developments have aided the growth and sustainability of the schools. Changes in the laboratory school legislation have clarified expectations at the five-year renewal mark. The ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) received

approval for renewal in 2021-22, while D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) received approval for renewal in 2022-23.[68] Likewise, laboratory schools are becoming increasingly institutionalized within university systems. The opening of a second laboratory school affiliated with Appalachian State allowed for sharing of staff, resources, and curricular materials and the alignment of pedagogical approaches and school culture norms between the two laboratory schools. Additionally, the two laboratory schools partnered for combined "Morning Meetings," field trips to campus, special student programming, and professional development for teachers. Partnerships with constituent institutions, host districts, and community organizations have strengthened over time at all schools as the laboratory schools become increasingly embedded within the communities they serve. These partnerships have proven valuable to the laboratory school's ability to support the practices of teachers, create positive and safe learning environments for students, and foster engagement of COE faculty and students with the laboratory school.

Nonetheless, laboratory schools still have challenges to address. Although COEs have made strides towards integrating the management of laboratory schools into their university systems, the misalignment of host districts or NCDPI and university systems continues to create challenges in managing certain processes like human resources and finance. As this year's report has noted, these challenges continue to be especially prevalent in a laboratory school's planning stages and first year of operation. Specific challenges have also been sustained in identifying, administering, and coordinating support for EC students at laboratory schools. As laboratory schools become better integrated into NCDPI or other statewide systems, some questions emerge regarding how laboratory schools will continue to be set up to operate autonomously in ways that continue to breed innovation.

While laboratory school leaders report strong relationships with host districts, some difficulties persist. Differences in university and host district calendars create challenges for school schedules, COE faculty and candidate engagement, and laboratory school student enrollment and transportation. Further, laboratory schools often recruit students from within existing host district boundaries. Although laboratory school leaders report that their host districts consistently support their schools, both parties draw student enrollment, and thus, ADM funding, from the same pool of prospective students. This natural conflict of interest often results in laboratory school leaders largely engaging in marketing and recruitment efforts for the laboratory school independent of their host district. While relationships appear strong between new laboratory schools and host districts at the three new laboratory schools that opened in 2022-23, these partnerships are subject to the same dynamics at the other laboratory schools, as described above.

Another opportunity for growth is how laboratory schools serve as a hub for sharing innovative practices or new strategies to address the needs and enhance the learning of the student populations served. As laboratory schools build on their partnerships with host districts, it remains to be seen the extent to which the sharing of promising practices between laboratory schools and host districts is happening with regularity. This type of learning and collaboration may most naturally exist on co-located campuses, such as the ECU Community School, The Catamount School (WCU), the Academy at Elkin (ASU), or the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill). One developing opportunity for collaboration and practice sharing is the 'sister school' concept developed in 2021-22 by the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in partnership with a neighboring Winston-Salem Forsyth County elementary school of similar size and demographic makeup. While this relationship was only established in spring 2022, the vision for this

[68] In March, the UNC Board of Governor's subcommittee on laboratory schools approved the return of the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to Rockingham County Public Schools beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

partnership is to facilitate the sharing of practices and resources that improve student learning and social-emotional outcomes for students at the laboratory school with sister school staff and students. Overall, leadership across laboratory schools and partner LEAs recognize opportunities for greater sharing of best practices and collaboration between the laboratory schools and their partner districts. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted such sharing of practices, this is an area for further development.

Additionally, the engagement of COE faculty and students with laboratory schools varies considerably—in terms of the number of COE personnel involved, the depth of their engagement, and the structures/incentives to support their work. Changes, over time, in the COE faculty and pre-service candidates who engage with the laboratory school also necessitate that laboratory school staff and students establish new relationships with COE personnel and students frequently.

Finally, funding for laboratory schools has been a fundamental challenge to each school's growth and sustainability, which has not significantly changed six years into the initiative. Constituent COEs and system institutions often invest significantly in laboratory school operating budgets, especially in the early years of operation. In general, laboratory schools are not self-sustaining on per-pupil funding allocations alone. Given the high concentration of academic and social-emotional needs at laboratory schools, state funding alone may not be sufficient to fully address student needs – a challenge shared by laboratory schools and many traditional public schools in the state. COEs continue to subsidize laboratory school budgets—sometimes by greater than 20 percent of budgets—to close gaps between ADM and other public funds and actual laboratory school operating expenditures. The COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in NC schools transitioning to remote learning in March 2020 and continuing when the 2020-21 school year began, brought some short-term relief funding. However, this does not represent a solution for the long term, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated student learning gaps.

Though laboratory school leaders voice optimism for long-term outcomes, whether laboratory schools can grow and sustain may hinge on how well they can address student needs in a changed statewide budget landscape. As a second cohort of laboratory schools has been renewed and three new laboratory schools enter their second year of operation, developing a sustainable plan for laboratory school funding will be paramount.

Summary

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on school operations, student learning and development, and access to evaluation data, it is difficult to fully assess the extent to which laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission to provide (1) an enhanced education program for students who are low-performing or attending a low-performing school and (2) exposure and training for teachers and school leaders to successfully address challenges in high need school settings. However, evidence to date highlights several areas of note.

Knowledge gained over several years of operating laboratory schools has smoothed over some of the implementation challenges that previously existed. The benefits of increased familiarity with K-12 systems and the institutionalization of operating policies and practices also accrue to newer laboratory schools. This transfer of knowledge is particularly important since the UNC System opened three laboratory schools in the 2022-23 school year. Despite this organizational learning, funding adequacy for laboratory schools remains a challenge. The UNC System and COEs continue to supplement regular public school

funding streams. Whether legislative amendments that shift costs from laboratory schools to district partners provide long-term budgetary relief to laboratory schools remains to be seen.

As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they have also refined how they engage faculty and pre-service candidates in them. Universities have integrated COE personnel into laboratory schools as leaders (e.g., curriculum directors), faculty-in-residence, informal providers of coaching and professional development for teachers, and supervisors for pre-service teachers. Likewise, COEs have integrated pre-service educators into laboratory schools through practicum, intern, and student teaching experiences. There are structures in place for COE and laboratory school interactions, and COVID-19 did not meaningfully impact that structure. However, there remains further work for COEs to institutionalize and incentivize faculty involvement for the long term.

After enrollment declines during the COVID-19 pandemic, given disruptions to schooling and recruitment activities, enrollment at UNC System laboratory schools has generally stabilized. Enrollment growth is notable at the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill), which added a new grade level in 2023-24, and at the Aggie Academy (NCA&T). Enrollment declines at the Appalachian Academy at Elkin in 2023-24 are related to challenges in recruiting for the grade level span of the school, with both Appalachian State University and Elkin City Schools discussing potential changes for future school years. Enrollment changes—increases or decreases—are modest in size at other laboratory schools. This suggests that laboratory schools are able to effectively market and recruit and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations. As intended, laboratory schools are also primarily enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their host districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are a racial/ethnic minority or low-income.

It remains challenging to fully assess laboratory school impacts on student achievement given the characteristics of enrolled students, the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of student test scores from 2019-20, and disruptions to early reading test score data (DIBELS/mCLASS) in North Carolina. Rigorous analyses of student-level achievement data from 2021-22 indicate that ECU Community School students scored significantly higher in elementary grades math, elementary grades reading, and 5th grade science than comparable students attending a low-performing school and a matched comparison sample. This is the second year in a row (2020-21 and 2021-22) that the ECU Community School has had positive and significant math results. There were also positive achievement results in 2021-22, relative to other students attending a low-performing school, for The Catamount School (WCU) in middle grades math and reading, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) for 5th grade science, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy for elementary grades reading. This is also the second year in a row (2020-21 and 2021-22) in which there were positive results for Moss Street Partnership School in 5th grade science and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in elementary grades reading. Conversely, multiple results indicated that laboratory school students scored lower than comparison sample students in at least some grade levels/subject areas in 2021-22. Newly released school achievement and accountability data show that six laboratory schools met expected growth in 2022-23, while two schools did not meet expected growth. Notably, the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork exceeded expected growth in math in 2022-23.

Regarding school engagement measures, rigorous analyses of 2021-22 student attendance data show that laboratory school students at the ECU Community School and Niner University Elementary (UNCC) were absent less often than comparison sample students. This is particularly important given the rising rates of chronic absenteeism in North Carolina and nationally. Students at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) were absent more often than comparison sample students. Regarding exclusionary discipline, laboratory

school students were significantly less likely to be suspended (overall or out-of-school) than comparison sample students in the 2021-22 year. These results were particularly strong for Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG). The much lower rates of exclusionary discipline at laboratory schools highlight these schools' commitment to supporting the whole child and focusing on restorative justice and positive behavior supports.

Survey responses show that laboratory school students, parents/caregivers, and personnel are generally satisfied and rate their laboratory school experiences positively. For example, laboratory school students rated the academic climate of their schools highly and 81 percent of parents/caregivers report being satisfied or very satisfied with their child's laboratory school. Likewise, laboratory school personnel favorably perceive the teaching and school leadership at laboratory schools.

The UNC System and UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools face upcoming challenges. These include the need to more sustainably fund laboratory school operations, finding ways to institutionalize COE faculty engagement in the long term, formalizing and strengthening avenues for the sharing of effective approaches to meet student academic and non-academic needs with traditional public schools, and addressing questions around laboratory school governance and accountability. Ongoing evaluation may be appropriate to examine how laboratory school practices and policies evolve to respond to these challenges and contribute to enhanced outcomes for K-12 students and pre-service educators.

Appendix A1: Data Sources

To complete an in-depth review of the laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will rely on five main data sources: (1) interviews with university and laboratory school leadership, personnel, and partners; (2) laboratory school status reports completed by UNC System COEs; (3) administrative data on students and school personnel from the NCDPI; (4) survey responses from laboratory school students, families, and personnel; and (5) administrative data from COEs on educator preparation programs and pre-service candidates. Below, the Evaluation Team briefly reviews each of these data sources.

Laboratory School Interviews

For each UNC System laboratory school, the Evaluation Team will conduct a full set of interviews at two time points during the evaluation. First, during the spring of a laboratory school's first year of operation, the Evaluation Team will interview COE leadership and faculty, laboratory school personnel (e.g., teachers, principals, pre-service teachers), and laboratory school partners (within the local community and from across the university). These interviews will assist the Evaluation Team in understanding how the laboratory schools have been set up, with whom the laboratory schools are partnering, how the laboratory schools are operated, and the relationships between educator preparation and the laboratory schools. The Evaluation Team conducted these interviews with ECU and WCU in April 2018; with Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW in April 2019; with UNCC in April/May 2021; and with Appalachian State, UNC-Chapel Hill, and NCA&T in May/June 2023. Second, during the last year of the first laboratory school evaluation (2022), the Evaluation Team conducted interviews with COE leadership and faculty, laboratory school personnel (e.g., teachers, support staff), and a representative from each LEA partner. These interviews allowed the Evaluation Team to assess the development and growth of the laboratory schools.

In addition to these two time periods, the Evaluation Team conducted annual interviews with laboratory school leadership during periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. In spring 2020 and 2021, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews—typically with the laboratory school principal and COE laboratory school lead—for each school. These conversations provided an opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about new programs/policies at the schools and to understand how the laboratory schools adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, to supplement interviews at each laboratory school site, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews with leadership at the UNC System Office in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023. These interviews focused on laboratory schools' planning, setup, and governance.

Laboratory School Status Reports

To complement the interviews with university and laboratory school stakeholders, the Evaluation Team collected status reports from the UNC System COEs operating laboratory schools. These status reports include a set of pre-specified questions, to be completed by the COE Dean or their designee, that allow UNC System institutions to describe: (1) the design of their laboratory school; (2) the marketing and management of their laboratory school; (3) key laboratory school partners and the services they provide; (4) the relationship between educator preparation and the laboratory school; and (5) challenges and successes in setting up and developing the laboratory school.

UNC System institutions complete a status report in their last planning year before opening,[69] and a modified version of the status report during each subsequent year of operation. In completing these reports—especially those completed after the initial round of interviews in the school's first year of operation—the Evaluation Team directs schools to focus on what is new in the current year.

Administrative Data from the NCDPI

The laboratory school evaluation will use student-level data provided by the NCDPI. Student-level data include demographics, absences, disciplinary incidents, and test scores on the state's EOG exams. With these data, the Evaluation Team will assess the demographics and prior achievement of students attending laboratory schools, whether laboratory schools improve students' test scores, and whether laboratory schools benefit students' engagement with school.

These NCDPI data are not available to the Evaluation Team for analysis until several months after the close of a school year (typically November). As a result, evaluation reports submitted in November will not include rigorous analyses and results from the most recently completed school year. Instead, these data will be included in subsequent reports.

Survey Responses

To evaluate the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will collect survey data from multiple sources. First, the Evaluation Team has contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to laboratory school students. The Evaluation Team chose the Tripod student survey because of its established validity and reliability, the alignment between survey items and aims of the laboratory school evaluation, and its flexibility in allowing the Evaluation Team to customize questions. This survey assesses students' motivation for learning, engagement with school, and perceptions of academic climate. The Evaluation Team administered this survey to students at the ECU Community School and The Catamount School in spring 2018 and to students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, and The Catamount School in spring 2019. Due to the school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Team did not collect student survey data in spring 2020. In spring 2021 and 2022, the Evaluation Team administered the survey to students attending all six operating laboratory schools. In spring 2023, the Evaluation Team made the survey available to all nine operating laboratory schools. However, the Carolina Community Academy (UNC-Chapel Hill) did not administer the survey.

Second, the Evaluation Team has contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to parents/caregivers of laboratory school students. This survey focuses on parents'/caregivers' satisfaction with the laboratory school, their perceptions of the laboratory school application process and set up, and their perceptions of school climate, services, and safety. The Evaluation Team administered this survey in spring 2018 to the parents/families of students attending the ECU Community School and The Catamount School. In spring 2019, the Evaluation Team administered this survey to the parents/families of students attending the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, and The Catamount School. Due to the school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Team did not collect student survey data

[69] ECU and WCU opened their laboratory schools before the Evaluation Team began the evaluation, and thus, they did not complete a planning year status report. Appalachian State, UNCG, UNCW, and UNCC completed this status report as will all other UNC System laboratory schools.

in spring 2020. In spring 2021 and spring 2022, the Evaluation Team administered the survey to parents/caregivers at all six operating laboratory schools. In spring 2023, the Evaluation Team made the survey available to all nine operating laboratory schools. However, there were no parent/caregiver responses for the Appalachian Academy at Elkin and the Carolina Community Academy.

For the first time in spring 2021, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to laboratory school personnel. This includes classroom teachers, teaching assistants and paraprofessionals, student services personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers), school leadership (e.g., principals, curriculum directors), and other personnel (e.g., administrative assistants). The survey focuses on perceptions of school leadership, teaching/instructional practices, and school climate. The Evaluation Team conducted these personnel surveys again in spring 2022 and spring 2023.

Administrative Data from Colleges of Education

To examine outcomes for pre-service teachers and school leaders who obtained clinical experience in laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will use administrative data on pre-service candidates provided by UNC System COEs. These candidate data will include demographics, measures of academic ability (e.g., grade point averages, SAT/ACT scores), licensure areas and licensure exam scores, time to graduation, edTPA scores, and indicators for having a clinical experience in a laboratory school. With these data, the Evaluation Team will examine the characteristics of candidates with significant clinical experiences in laboratory schools (compared to peers with more traditional preparation experiences) and link administrative data from COE and NCDPI to track these candidates into the state's public schools. The Evaluation Team will begin to incorporate these administrative data from COE into subsequent reports once there are enough pre-service candidates who have had significant clinical experiences in laboratory schools. In addition, the Evaluation Team will collect data from COEs, annually detailing the number of pre-service teachers having early field, intern I, and intern II experiences at laboratory schools. These data will also include counts of other COE pre-service interns (e.g., MSA students, counseling students) at the laboratory schools.

Appendix A2: Analysis Methods

Qualitative data analyses

To assess the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team analyzed two types of qualitative data—interview transcripts and laboratory school responses to annual status reports.

The Evaluation Team designed interview protocols for use with various stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of laboratory schools (e.g., UNC System officials, College of Education faculty, laboratory school teachers). These interview protocols are organized around the seven laboratory school evaluation questions.

To analyze the interview responses, the Evaluation Team conducted an initial review of the transcripts to identify key concepts and themes (e.g., school governance, partnerships, educator preparation) related to each of the evaluation questions. Using these key concepts and themes, the Evaluation Team developed a categorization scheme aligned with the evaluation questions to organize specific portions of the transcribed interview text. With this scheme, the Evaluation Team reviewed all interview transcripts and coded responses based on the pre-identified concepts and themes. A final review and synthesis of the interview responses, based on the developed coding scheme, revealed the critical observations and findings included in this report.

The Evaluation Team designed a report template to be submitted annually by schools in their second and subsequent years of operation, excluding the last year of the evaluation. The "subsequent operating year" status report template is organized around the seven laboratory school evaluation questions.

Quantitative data analyses

The evaluation of the UNC System laboratory schools will use quantitative data from various sources: NCDPI, UNC System COEs, and survey responses. With these data, the Evaluation Team will assess whether laboratory schools improve students' academic performance, engagement with school, and social-emotional outcomes; and whether laboratory schools are successfully marketed and managed. Below, the Evaluation Team describes several guiding principles for analyzing and reporting quantitative data on laboratory schools. These principles are designed to help the Evaluation Team perform rigorous analyses and report data meaningfully.

First, the Evaluation Team will start the analysis process by reporting student and school outcomes without making statistical adjustments. For example, the Evaluation Team may report the average End-of-Grade mathematics scores of laboratory school students and other students in the host school district. While there are limitations to this approach and its ability to isolate the impacts of laboratory schools, it does have the advantage of presenting information in a transparent and understandable manner.

Second, when analyzing administrative data for laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will present pooled results across all laboratory schools and separate results for each laboratory school. Pooling the data will provide a larger sample and return a summative measure of laboratory school effects. Separate, school-by-school analyses acknowledge the potential for variation in laboratory school impacts due to differences in setup, student demographics, partnerships, and goals across the schools.

Third, given the unique sample of students attending laboratory schools—those who were previously low-performing and/or those coming from a low-performing school—reporting of raw, unadjusted student outcomes will not isolate the impact of laboratory schools. As such, the Evaluation Team will also use administrative data from NCDPI to identify comparison samples of students and schools that more closely resemble the laboratory school population. It is likely that the Evaluation Team will use propensity score matching to create these comparison samples; other statistical approaches may also be feasible and will be examined by the Evaluation Team.[70]

Lastly, when analyzing administrative data from NCDPI, the Evaluation Team will estimate regression models that control for a rich set of individual and contextual characteristics. For example, when assessing student achievement, the Evaluation Team will use propensity score matching to identify an appropriate comparison sample and then control for individual student characteristics to more rigorously isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student performance.

[70] Other approaches include comparing laboratory school students to (1) students attending other low-performing schools; (2) students who applied to laboratory schools but were unable to attend due to over-subscription (this does not currently exist); and (3) themselves in previous years before they attended the laboratory school.

Appendix A3: Laboratory School Snapshots

Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork

Appalachian State's laboratory school, the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, is an elementary school located on the campus of the former Middle Fork Elementary School in Walkertown, NC. The campus building is leased from Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools (WSFCS) and houses grades K-5. The Academy at Middle Fork operates on the WSFCS school calendar.

In its fifth year, the Academy at Middle Fork staff included 18 classroom teachers, three EC teachers, a principal, a director of curriculum and federal programs, a director of student affairs and emergency management, a school engagement coordinator, a school improvement coach, a data manager, a technology support specialist, an instructional coach, five specials teachers (art, media, music, STEM, PE), eight teacher assistants, an EC coordinator, an administrative support and school finance specialist, a counselor, a school nurse, and a social worker.

The Academy at Middle Fork's mission is to provide a collaborative, community-forward school environment for children, teachers, principals, and families. The Academy strives to create pathways for lifelong, innovative learning for all students through the implementation of research-based practices and exemplary classroom instruction and administration. The laboratory school's key themes are honesty, integrity, kindness, and excellence (represented by the acronym "HIKE"). The school is committed to developing the whole child's social, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs in an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable environment. The Academy at Middle Fork uses a workshop approach for students in all grades and builds literacy skills in all core content areas. Students receive differentiated instruction that engages them in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The Academy at Middle Fork incorporates several distinctive practices in its laboratory school model. The Academy at Middle Fork maintains a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program as a part of its specialist rotation. In this program, students use various building materials to design engineering projects that foster creative thinking and innovative problem-solving skills. The Academy at Middle Fork has developed several community-based partnerships to support whole-child development, including partnerships with local organizations Seed to Sow, greeNest, and Kaleideum. The Academy at Middle Fork includes restorative justice, trauma-informed practices, and positive reinforcement practices as a part of its social and emotional learning curriculum to support the whole child. They partner with the Appalachian Academy at Elkin to provide enrichment programs such as field trips and community engagement days for their students.

In 2022-23, Appalachian State placed seven interns at the lab school. A total of 37 pre-service candidates in elementary, special, birth-K, art, PE, and middle-grade education had intermittent field experiences at the laboratory school. COE leaders are working to identify sustainable ways for long-term COE pre-service candidate engagement at the laboratory school. The distance between Appalachian State's campus in Boone and the Academy at Middle Fork's campus in Walkertown – approximately 90 miles – continues to present a unique challenge to lab school leaders in their efforts to engage pre-service candidates.

Appalachian Academy at Elkin

Appalachian State's second laboratory school, the Appalachian Academy at Elkin, shares a campus with Elkin Elementary School and serves students in grades 2-4. The Academy at Elkin operates on the Elkin County Schools school calendar and opened in August 2022.

In its first year, the Academy at Elkin staff included a principal, an assistant principal for instruction, an administrative assistant, six classroom teachers, three teacher assistants, an EC teacher, an interventionist, and a part-time school nurse. Additionally, the Academy at Elkin shares several staff members with Appalachian State's first laboratory school, the Academy at Middle Fork: four specials teachers (instructing students in art, music, PE, and STEM), a school counselor, a social worker, an assistant dean & director of laboratory schools, a director of curriculum & federal programs, an EC director, and a technology support specialist.

The Academy at Elkin's mission is to provide an inclusive, welcoming, and learner-centered environment focused on the whole person. The laboratory school empowers its learning community to ask questions, explore their curiosities, make connections, and develop skills for lifelong learning. The laboratory school's core values are honesty, integrity, kindness, and excellence, forming the acronym 'HIKE.' Students at the Academy at Elkin work individually and collaboratively in exploration-based curricula that promote curiosity, discovery, growth mindset, and constructivism. The Academy at Elkin creates a school environment that supports a caring culture and encourages teachers to expand their scope of leadership beyond the classroom. Staff at the Academy utilize data-informed practices, with support from ASU's Reading Education Faculty, including flexible, targeted student grouping and interventions to meet individual student needs. The school partners with families in the host school's Parent-Teacher Association to better determine the student population's needs and ensure Academy at Elkin students have a smooth transition from Elkin Elementary to the Academy at Elkin.

To fulfill this mission, the school embraces an innovative model that engages students in weekly enrichment days, daily learning labs, and frequent special programming to allow students to learn outside of the school building. The Academy embraces "QUEST" as its guiding concept. This acronym stands for question, understand, explore, share, and try, and encourages teachers and students to use an integrated, exploration-based approach to learning. The Appalachian Academy at Elkin partners with the Elkin Valley Trail Association to form the "Explore Elkin" group. This group allows students to learn in the nearby outdoor space. Many staff members and teachers hold advanced degrees and prioritize using research-based best practices in their classrooms. Utilizing intentionally smaller class sizes, Academy at Elkin students receive a lower teacher-to-student ratio, and educators provide targeted, full-day support to students with the greatest need. The Academy at Elkin embraces its mission to meet all the needs of students and connect with the community. The Academy at Elkin continues to identify local programs and resources to support students and their families, such as the Chamber of Commerce, local news and media stations, and the NC Trails Association.

In 2022-23, the Academy at Elkin hosted one second-semester elementary education student teacher from Appalachian State University. In addition, multiple pre-service teachers volunteered at the school for open houses, curriculum nights, and monthly QUEST days. Appalachian State University's Reich College of Education and other university departments frequently partner with the Academy at Elkin to provide enrichment programs for the students.

The ECU Community School

The ECU Community School is an elementary school co-located on the campus of South Greenville Elementary in Greenville, NC. In 2022-23, it served grades K-5 in ten classrooms—one class per grade in 1 and 5, and two classrooms each for grades K, 2, 3, and 4. Pitt County Schools is the partner host district for the ECU Community School.

In its sixth year of operation, the laboratory school's staff included a principal, ten teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, one special education director/teacher, one special education teacher, four teacher assistants, a full-time school counselor, a full-time administrative assistant, a full-time social worker, two full time reading specialists, and a part-time testing coordinator. In addition, in 2022-23, four ECU College of Education faculty members worked directly with students at the ECU Community School: a library sciences faculty member taught keyboarding skills and digital citizenship; a literacy studies faculty member worked with the after-school tutorial program, coordinated AmeriCorps volunteers, coordinated Sara Smiles Scholarship recipients, and worked on assessment and planning with teachers; a special education faculty member conducted in-school tutoring; and a new teacher support specialist observed classrooms and provided coaching to new teachers.

The ECU Community School acknowledges and supports the integration of health, wellness, and learning to develop the whole child. The laboratory school intentionally builds literacy and numeracy skills through the core subjects of mathematics, science, reading/English language arts, and social studies. Its long-term literacy focus includes working with the leadership team, laboratory school teachers, and other stakeholders to facilitate the development of a multi-year plan to bring evidence-based reading instruction and the use of a complementary comprehensive assessment system to scale in the laboratory school. The ECU Community School is simultaneously focused on engaging children in learning experiences that support their curiosity, creativity, inquiry, and intellectual growth in a school environment that respects their strengths and meets their needs. The school implements PBIS through weekly recognition of classes and individuals with outstanding behavior.

ECU engages students from various programs to support the laboratory school's whole-child approach. Eleven interns from the Marriage and Family Therapy, Psychology, School Social Work, Speech-Language Pathology, and Occupational Therapy departments had clinical experiences at the laboratory school in 2022-23. Additionally, the COE placed four special education pre-service candidates in early field experiences, two interns in Elementary Education, and four interns in birth-K education. The Occupational Therapy Department provided OT services (e.g. evaluations, review of results, and treatment recommendations) to the laboratory school.

Some distinct practices that the ECU Community School implements include an integrated health collaborative (IHC) approach to identify physical health and social-emotional needs and provide appropriate medical and counseling supports/referrals, an after-school literacy program, and strong university/community partnerships that support the academic, physical, and social-emotional needs of children.

Aggie Academy

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University's (NCA&T) first laboratory school, Aggie Academy, opened in August 2022 and is located in a converted church in Greensboro, NC. Aggie Academy serves grades 3-5 with two classes per grade. Aggie Academy's host district partner is Guilford County Schools, which provides child nutrition services, chartered transportation services, and two part-time staff members for the laboratory school's operation.

In its first year of operation, Aggie Academy staff included a program director, a principal, a STEAM instructor/coordinator, six classroom teachers, three specialty teachers (art, music, and PE), one EC teacher, one media and technology specialist, a part-time after-school director, counselor, school nurse, and a part-time social worker. The social worker position remained vacant during the 2022-23 school year.

With a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math), Aggie Academy's model is designed to foster innovation, collaboration, and creativity within students and provides frameworks for culturally appropriate learning and hands-on experiences. With an emphasis on community and developing the whole child, staff at Aggie Academy work to ensure that each child has all their academic and social-emotional needs met. Aggie Academy staff and leadership foster a culture of high expectations and excellence in alignment with the NC A&T brand.

Unlike many other laboratory schools, Aggie Academy does not operate at a previously existing school or a 'school-within-a-school,' instead drawing its enrollment from other elementary schools within Guilford County Schools. Aggie Academy emphasizes the importance of small class sizes to support student transitions to the laboratory school. Aggie Academy's mission prioritizes a safe and supportive learning environment to engage students in culturally sustaining learning opportunities that allow them to develop into innovators, problem solvers, and effective communicators. Aggie Academy creates an enriching and welcoming environment for students, emphasizing sustainable and restorative teaching practices alongside purposeful family and community engagement.

The university's alumni network and the partnership with the College of Education bring resources that provide additional support for students who attend Aggie Academy. The COE frequently collaborates with Aggie Academy leadership to provide educational opportunities for both undergraduate and laboratory school students. In their partnership, the NC A&T network and Aggie Academy held a STEM career fair and established several clubs and afterschool programs for Aggie Academy students. Students in the NC A&T College of Engineering created a program called Girls Like Me as STEM enrichment for laboratory school students.

In the 2022-23 school year, approximately 24 pre-service candidates from the NC A&T College of Education supported Aggie Academy staff and students. The school hosted methods classes for NC A&T students on-site to practice lessons in classrooms. Some students taught reading courses or assisted Aggie Academy teachers with their work. The College of Education has recruited this year's Aggie Academy teachers for their master's in teaching (MAT) graduate program.

Niner University Elementary

Niner University Elementary School is located on the campus of a former Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Pre-K Center in west Charlotte, NC, and, in 2022-23, served students in grades K-4 with three second-grade classes and two classes in all other grades. The school aims to provide an option for elementary students in west Charlotte and to improve the kindergarten readiness levels of students in west Charlotte neighborhoods through a partnership between the College of Education's Early Childhood program and in-home childcare providers in the area. The school follows a traditional calendar that is aligned with CMS.

In its second year, Niner University Elementary Staff included a principal, a curriculum coordinator, eleven licensed classroom teachers, six instructional assistants, three EC teachers (one of whom also serves as coordinator), an English language teacher (who also serves as the English language coordinator and Spanish elective teacher), an art teacher and coordinator, a nurse, a school counselor, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. Administrative staff included a finance/data manager, an administrative office associate, and a school resource officer.

Niner University Elementary employs multiple instructional methods, including inquiry-based instruction and guided learning. All students at NUE receive daily small-group literacy and math instruction. In this flexible grouping model, teachers utilize data to design instruction that is specific to student needs. Student-centered literacy instruction is embedded across all content areas and includes social-emotional supports. Niner University Elementary strives to create an environment that supports the whole student and that student's family and community. As an example of this outreach and support, faculty members from the College of Business at UNCC led financial literacy seminars with NUE parents, and the university's career development center provided job interview preparation tips.

At the core of the school's trauma-invested program is the Care team, which supports members of the school community experiencing difficulty, and the HeART (Helping And Responding to Trauma) team, which addresses trauma-related behavioral issues. Equity and justice are central to the school environment, and the school staff continuously reflects on culturally sustaining teaching practices to ensure that the school meets all students' needs. The professional school counselor and teachers also deliver social justice multicultural education lessons to students.

In 2022-23, UNCC had 63 teacher candidates placed at Niner University Elementary. Most were engaged in taking courses and completing early clinical experiences at the school. During after school hours, UNCC held a literacy intervention course at Niner University Elementary and this included clinical experiences. Additionally, UNCC placed five school counseling interns at Niner University Elementary and undergraduate arts education majors worked with third grade students in drama.

Carolina Community Academy

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill) opened its first laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy, in August 2022. The school is located on the campus of North Elementary School in Roxboro, NC, which is operated by Person County Schools (PCS). In 2022-23, CCA served students in kindergarten with three classrooms for the grade level. Carolina Community Academy operates on the PCS school calendar.

In its first year, Carolina Community Academy staff included a principal, three licensed classroom teachers, two instructional assistants, one EC teacher, one part-time instructional coach, a school counselor, and an office manager. One school nurse, one school psychologist, and related services were provided to CCA students as part of its agreement with PCS. The instructional assistants and electives teachers who served CCA students were PCS employees. In 2022-23, the school operated with a vacant instructional assistant and school social worker position.

The mission of Carolina Community Academy is to create a holistic, community-based environment that integrates evidence-based practices and social-emotional learning into all classrooms. Carolina Community Academy staff strives to provide its students with an opportunity to learn essential skills for emotional regulation, problem-solving, and more. The laboratory school model emphasizes a collaborative and strengths-based approach to education that provides a positive learning and teaching environment for all staff and students.

Carolina Community Academy employs data-driven decision-making in its academic approach. Teachers use common math supports, including iReady, and loosely follow the Person County Schools curriculum while utilizing classroom data to implement small-group instruction and flexible student learning schedules. With small class sizes, about ten students per teacher, the staff at Carolina Community Academy can connect deeply with students inside and outside the classroom. Teachers and instructional assistants regularly pull students for individual or small-group tutoring and can tailor lessons to student needs with an additional focus on social-emotional learning. Students receive the attention they need in a classroom, and because class sizes are small, teachers maintain close contact with families, allowing for a deeper understanding of their students.

Carolina Community Academy students benefitted from the laboratory school's connection to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill primarily through monthly field trip experiences to the campus in Chapel Hill. In 2022-23, students had access to the Ackland Art Museum, the NC Botanical Garden, and the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, as well as engagement opportunities with UNC-Chapel Hill student-athletes. Carolina Community Academy also utilizes Backpack Buddies and Just Love in Person, which provide students with snacks, meals, and school supplies when needed. The school also provides clothing and other materials to students to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed.

While there are plans to host pre-service candidates at the laboratory school in the future, in the first year of the school's operation, leaders at Carolina Community Academy decided not to integrate pre-service experiences at the laboratory school. CCA will be a clinical experience site for various university degree programs, from MAT students to pre-service public health and library science majors.

Moss Street Partnership School

The Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) was an elementary school located north of Greensboro, in Reidsville, NC, which occupied a former Rockingham County Schools (RCS) elementary school. The laboratory school served students in grades K-5, averaging approximately three classrooms per grade level. Staff and students at the Moss Street Partnership School followed the traditional RCS district calendar. As of June 2023, Moss Street Partnership School has closed, and Moss Street Elementary School has been reincorporated into the Rockingham County School System.

In its fifth year, the Moss Street Partnership School employed a director, a principal, an assistant principal, an associate director, 16 classroom teachers, four specialty teachers (dance, art, media, and PE), a school social worker, a counselor, a reading specialist, a special education assistant, and the school support staff members.

The Moss Street Partnership School used a "learner-centered, learner-led" approach, emphasizing experiential learning, inclusive education, and a collaborative environment for students and teachers. STEAM instruction was prominent at the Moss Street Partnership School. The campus featured a maker space for hands-on learning experiences. Lab school staff also participated in several enrichment professional learning series focused on integrating technology, restorative practices, culturally responsive instructional strategies, crisis intervention, innovative math pedagogy, and state-level programs. The Moss Street Partnership School partnered with the Rockingham County SHARE program to provide fresh food to 16 school families.

The school employed a full-time instructional technology consultant who assisted teachers with the incorporation of technology into their lessons. This role proved invaluable, especially during the transition to remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a fully inclusive school, the Moss Street Partnership School was oriented to the whole child, including meeting academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs. Faculty from the UNCG School of Education engaged with special education services and assisted with the transition to the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) curriculum. In support of its dual focus on academic and whole child development, the school used distinctive practices, including a standards-based report card to assess individual progression toward content mastery. The Moss Street Partnership School received an award from the state of North Carolina for academic growth during the 2021-2022 school year.

In 2022-23, UNCG placed twelve elementary pre-service candidates to complete their practicum assignments, ten elementary education interns in the first semester, and ten elementary education interns in the second semester. The Moss Street Partnership School hosted one dance intern and two social worker interns in 2022-23.

D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy

D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA) is a K-8 school in Wilmington that occupies a former New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) middle school building that previously served grades 6-8. It is currently the only K-8 school within the district and includes one class, per grade, in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7; two classes, per grade, in grades K, 6, and 8; and a combination class in grades 4 and 5.

In its fifth year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy staff includes a principal, a data manager, an operations coordinator and liaison, 14 teachers in core content areas, six instructional assistants, two EC teachers, two EC teacher assistants, one health & PE teacher, one music teacher, a media specialist, an art teacher, a beginning teacher support coach, a student support specialist, a speech therapist, a guidance counselor, a social worker, a part-time nurse, an administrative assistant, and a technology support analyst. Multiple faulty from the UNCW COE support DCVPA: one supports ELA learning in middle grades, one has a focus on multi-tiered systems of early intervention support (MTSS), one runs a Family Literacy Event and Writing Professional Development program, one that supervises fall interns, and one that supports field experiences and internships.

Learning at DCVPA is guided by the acronym PIER, which stands for Personalized, Inquiry-based, Experiential, and Reflective. Literacy instruction is based on a framework incorporating evidence-based reading instructional practices—phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The school's model also includes a heavy emphasis on STEM instruction. DCVPA is simultaneously focused on addressing their students' physical health and social-emotional needs. In 2019-20, the school shifted toward restorative practices for behavior management. To support this shift, the school provided professional learning to staff and established a Restoration Committee. In 2021-22, the school increased student support by hiring a school psychologist, guidance counselor, behavior specialist, and student support specialist. DCVPA uses a "kinship model," whereby everyone in the school community models caring behavior through teachers mentoring students, older students mentoring younger students, school staff engaging whole families, and the school/community providing essentials to students and families (e.g., food).

D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy incorporates several distinct practices into its laboratory school model, including the use of a working lab in the COE's Center for Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (CESTEM), where teachers can take laboratory school students to engage in hands-on, standards-aligned learning experiences. Finally, the laboratory school has an on-site "Parent Room," which includes a kitchen, washer/dryer, and meeting space for families.

In its fifth year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted 46 pre-service candidates, including 128 field experience placements for students in the COE. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy did not host any pre-service leaders in 2022-23.

The Catamount School

WCU's laboratory school, The Catamount School, is co-located on the campus of Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva, NC. The laboratory school occupies one wing of the main high school building. Stemming from its prior work with Jackson County Public Schools (JCPS) to establish freshman academies, WCU opened The Catamount School as a mechanism to support students' transition to high school. The Catamount School has one classroom per grade for grades 6-8 and operates on the JCPS calendar. The Catamount School is the only middle school in JCPS, which otherwise includes grades 6-8 in K-8 schools.

In its sixth year, The Catamount School staff included a principal, assistant principal, five core subject-area teachers, an enrichment & arts teacher, a Health and PE teacher, an enrichment coordinator (MTSS) who coordinates services and extracurricular activities provided by university and community-based partners, an exceptional children (EC) teacher, and two health services coordinators who serve as the school nurses and supervise School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. A COE faculty member serves as the Curriculum and Instruction Liaison and teaches one math class. WCU College of Education faculty members serve in several positions at The Catamount School, including as an EC administrator, an ELA co-teacher, and a second math teacher.

The Catamount School fosters student growth and the development of social-emotional skills (particularly resilience) through a problem-centered, experience-based learning approach in an inclusive education environment. Special education services for EC students are provided in their regular classroom using a co-teaching model in which the EC teacher works collaboratively with the lead classroom teacher to deliver individualized content area instruction. Literacy instruction also uses the co-teaching model between the inclusion instructor and lead classroom teacher and is supported by twice weekly one-on-one and small group reading intervention groups with pre-service candidates.

Nearly 80 pre-service teacher candidates had formal clinical experiences at The Catamount School in the 2022-23 school year, including pre-service candidates in middle grades, secondary math, health and physical education, and inclusive education programs (dual program in elementary and special education). In addition, pre-service candidates from other WCU programs had clinical experiences at The Catamount School, including students in school counseling and nursing.

Some distinct practices The Catamount School incorporates into its laboratory school model include the Community of Care team—COE faculty, laboratory school staff, and university partners who monitor the provision of services that support students' well-being; a school nurse who has improved the services to both TCS students and the undergraduate nursing students at the school; the use of PBIS to create and hold students and teachers accountable to behavioral expectations; a multi-tiered system of support model to comprehensively address student academic and social-emotional growth goals; the use of project-based learning to foster connections between core content and the students' communities and lived experiences; and the use of standards-based grading, which allows teachers, students, and parents to assess individual progression to content mastery.

Appendix A4: Additional Parent/Caregiver Survey Data (2022-23 School Year)

Appendix Table A4.1: Parent Satisfaction with Laboratory Schools

How satisfied are you with…	Mean (2022)	Mean (2023)	Responses (2023)	% Very Dissatisfied (2023)	% Dissatisfied (2023)	% Neutral (2023)	% Satisfied (2023)	% Very Satisfied (2023)
All Laboratory Schools								
Overall	4.29	4.31	248	4.44	3.63	10.89	18.95	62.10
Discipline at the lab school	4.11	4.11	248	5.65	6.45	9.27	28.23	50.40
Lab school interacts with you	4.35	4.30	248	5.24	3.23	8.87	21.37	61.29
Partnership with the lab school	4.22	4.28	247	4.05	2.43	10.53	27.94	55.06
Child's social and emotional growth	4.25	4.30	247	4.45	3.64	9.72	22.27	59.92
Child's academic growth	4.32	4.31	249	4.82	1.61	10.44	23.69	59.44
Child's physical development	4.21	4.26	249	4.82	2.81	10.04	26.10	56.22
Lab school communicates with you	4.30	4.27	249	5.22	3.21	11.24	20.48	59.84
Appalachian State Academy at Middle Fork (ASU)								
Overall	3.94	4.33	21	4.76	4.76	14.29	4.76	71.43
Discipline at the lab school	4.00	4.29	21	4.76	9.52	4.76	14.29	66.67
Lab school interacts with you	4.06	4.24	21	9.52	0.00	9.52	19.05	61.90
Partnership with the lab school	3.88	4.14	21	4.76	14.29	0.00	23.81	57.14
Child's social and emotional growth	4.00	4.19	21	4.76	9.52	4.76	23.81	57.14
Child's academic growth	3.81	4.10	21	9.52	4.76	9.52	19.05	57.14
Child's physical development	3.88	4.24	21	9.52	0.00	9.52	19.05	61.90
Lab school communicates with you	4.06	4.05	21	9.52	4.76	14.29	14.29	57.14
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)								
Overall	n/a	4.57	23	4.35	0.00	8.70	8.70	78.26
Discipline at the lab school	n/a	4.39	23	4.35	0.00	13.04	17.39	65.22
Lab school interacts with you	n/a	4.57	23	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35	82.61
Partnership with the lab school	n/a	4.48	23	4.35	0.00	13.04	8.70	73.91
Child's social and emotional growth	n/a	4.52	23	4.35	0.00	8.70	13.04	73.91
Child's academic growth	n/a	4.43	23	4.35	0.00	8.70	21.74	65.22
Child's physical development	n/a	4.35	23	4.35	0.00	8.70	30.43	56.52
Lab school communicates with you	n/a	4.39	23	4.35	0.00	13.04	17.39	65.22
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)								
Overall	4.42	3.81	54	9.26	9.26	16.67	20.37	44.44
Discipline at the lab school	4.42	3.69	55	10.91	10.91	9.09	36.36	32.73
Lab school interacts with you	4.58	3.93	55	7.27	7.27	12.73	30.91	41.82
Partnership with the lab school	4.36	4.06	54	3.70	1.85	12.96	48.15	33.33
Child's social and emotional growth	4.42	3.89	54	5.56	5.56	22.22	27.78	38.89
Child's academic growth	4.33	3.98	55	7.27	1.82	18.18	30.91	41.82
Child's physical development	4.50	4.00	55	7.27	1.82	14.55	36.36	40.00
Lab school communicates with you	4.58	4.07	55	5.45	5.45	12.73	29.09	47.27
ECU Community School								
Overall	4.32	4.59	80	0.00	1.25	10.00	17.50	71.25
Discipline at the lab school	4.07	4.38	79	1.27	5.06	8.86	24.05	60.76
Lab school interacts with you	4.28	4.52	79	1.27	1.27	8.86	21.52	67.09
Partnership with the lab school	4.25	4.48	79	1.27	0.00	11.39	24.05	63.29
Child's social and emotional growth	4.29	4.61	79	1.27	0.00	7.59	18.99	72.15
Child's academic growth	4.46	4.58	80	0.00	2.50	7.50	20.00	70.00
Child's physical development	4.18	4.48	80	1.25	5.00	7.50	17.50	68.75
Lab school communicates with you	4.24	4.46	80	1.25	1.25	15.00	15.00	67.50
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)								
Overall	4.30	4.08	24	12.50	0.00	16.67	8.33	62.50
Discipline at the lab school	4.00	3.79	24	16.67	8.33	8.33	12.50	54.17
Lab school interacts with you	4.56	4.21	24	8.33	8.33	4.17	12.50	66.67
Partnership with the lab school	4.37	4.21	24	8.33	8.33	4.17	12.50	66.67
Child's social and emotional growth	4.30	4.13	24	8.33	12.50	0.00	16.67	62.50
Child's academic growth	4.30	4.25	24	8.33	0.00	16.67	8.33	66.67
Child's physical development	4.48	4.25	24	8.33	4.17	8.33	12.50	66.67
Lab school communicates with you	4.48	4.08	24	12.50	8.33	0.00	16.67	62.50
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)								

Overall	4.18	4.30	27	0.00	7.41	0.00	48.15	44.44
Discipline at the lab school	4.07	4.22	27	0.00	3.70	7.41	51.85	37.04
Lab school interacts with you	4.18	4.30	27	7.41	0.00	11.11	18.52	62.96
Partnership with the lab school	4.07	4.04	27	7.41	0.00	18.52	29.63	44.44
Child's social and emotional growth	4.11	4.15	27	7.41	0.00	7.41	40.74	44.44
Child's academic growth	4.21	4.19	27	7.41	0.00	3.70	44.44	44.44
Child's physical development	4.11	4.11	27	3.70	3.70	11.11	40.74	40.74
Lab school communicates with you	4.00	4.19	27	7.41	3.70	3.70	33.33	51.85
The Catamount School (WCU)								
Overall	4.48	4.47	19	5.26	0.00	5.26	21.05	68.42
Discipline at the lab school	4.30	3.95	19	5.26	5.26	15.79	36.84	36.84
Lab school interacts with you	4.59	4.37	19	5.26	0.00	5.26	31.58	57.89
Partnership with the lab school	4.30	4.37	19	5.26	0.00	5.26	31.58	57.89
Child's social and emotional growth	4.33	4.42	19	5.26	5.26	5.26	10.53	73.68
Child's academic growth	4.41	4.53	19	5.26	0.00	5.26	15.79	73.68
Child's physical development	4.19	4.26	19	5.26	0.00	10.53	31.58	52.63
Lab school communicates with you	4.59	4.42	19	5.26	0.00	10.53	15.79	68.42

Note: This table displays parent responses to a set of survey items about their satisfaction with their child's laboratory school

Appendix Table A4.2: Comparing School Experiences

When you think about your child's school experiences this year compared to his/her school experiences last year, in which year was the school better at…	Responses	% Last Year Was Better	% Comparable	% This Year Was Better
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	7	28.57	0.00	71.43
Helping your child learn	6	16.67	16.67	66.67
Having teachers that really care about your child	6	0.00	16.67	83.33
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	14	14.29	57.14	28.57
Helping your child learn	14	7.14	71.43	21.43
Having teachers that really care about your child	14	0.00	71.43	28.57
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	14	7.14	7.14	85.71
Helping your child learn	14	7.14	14.29	78.57
Having teachers that really care about your child	14	7.14	14.29	78.57
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	17	5.88	35.29	58.82
Helping your child learn	17	5.88	47.06	47.06
Having teachers that really care about your child	17	11.76	35.29	52.94
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	31	19.35	45.16	35.48
Helping your child learn	32	9.38	53.12	37.50
Having teachers that really care about your child	32	18.75	43.75	37.50
ECU Community School—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	18	0.00	33.33	66.67
Helping your child learn	18	0.00	33.33	66.67
Having teachers that really care about your child	18	0.00	44.44	55.56
ECU Community School—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	62	6.45	58.06	35.48
Helping your child learn	62	11.29	58.06	30.65
Having teachers that really care about your child	61	6.56	65.57	27.87
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	7	0.00	57.14	42.86
Helping your child learn	7	0.00	28.57	71.43
Having teachers that really care about your child	7	0.00	28.57	71.43
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	15	13.33	53.33	33.33
Helping your child learn	15	13.33	53.33	33.33
Having teachers that really care about your child	15	13.33	66.67	20.00
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	7	0.00	57.14	42.86
Helping your child learn	6	0.00	66.67	33.33
Having teachers that really care about your child	6	0.00	33.33	66.67
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	18	11.11	66.67	22.22
Helping your child learn	18	5.56	61.11	33.33
Having teachers that really care about your child	18	22.22	61.11	16.67
The Catamount School (WCU)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	10	0.00	20.00	80.00
Helping your child learn	10	0.00	10.00	90.00
Having teachers that really care about your child	10	0.00	10.00	90.00
The Catamount School (WCU)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	9	22.22	55.56	22.22
Helping your child learn	9	11.11	55.56	33.33
Having teachers that really care about your child	9	11.11	66.67	22.22

Note: This table displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2022-23 to their educational experiences in 2021-22.

Appendix A5: Additional Laboratory School Personnel Survey Data (2022-23 School Year)

Appendix Table A5.1: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools

Leadership at this school…	All Lab Schools	ASU Elkin	ASU Middle Fork	Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	Carolina Comm Academy (UNC)	D.C. Virgo (UNCW)	ECU Community School	Moss Street (UNCG)	Niner Univ Elem (UNCC)	The Catamount School (WCU)
Communicates a clear vision for our school	3.90	4.27	3.61	5.00	4.75	3.75	4.19	4.08	3.61	3.17
Supports teachers in their efforts to improve teaching and learning	3.98	4.36	3.77	4.86	4.75	4.08	3.94	3.92	3.94	3.17
Is knowledgeable about assessment practices	4.04	4.09	3.86	4.86	5.00	4.25	4.06	4.08	4.06	2.83
Has high, ambitious goals when working with me to improve instruction	4.04	4.13	3.67	5.00	5.00	4.33	3.71	4.42	4.09	2.50
Actively monitors the quality of teaching at this school	3.63	4.36	3.39	4.71	5.00	3.67	3.31	3.58	3.67	2.33
Sets clear and measurable school-level goals for progress on instructional outcomes	3.89	4.00	3.86	4.86	4.25	3.58	3.94	3.83	3.94	3.00
Communicates effectively when giving me support	3.88	4.27	3.54	4.86	4.75	3.83	4.19	3.67	3.89	3.00
Supports me as I try to implement what I learn in professional development	4.05	4.13	3.67	4.75	4.67	4.56	4.29	4.33	3.55	3.50
Helps teachers figure out how to address particular instructional challenges	3.65	3.91	3.56	4.71	4.75	3.50	3.44	3.67	3.72	2.33
Provides helpful guidance for effective classroom practice	3.68	3.91	3.43	4.71	4.75	3.83	3.56	3.75	3.67	2.67
Is very knowledgeable about curriculum and effective instructional practices	4.01	3.91	3.77	4.86	5.00	4.25	4.19	4.08	4.11	2.50
Makes sure that professional development addresses priority instructional goals	3.92	4.27	3.54	4.43	4.75	4.17	3.94	4.17	3.83	3.50
Is willing to provide criticism	3.98	4.45	3.54	5.00	4.75	3.83	4.06	4.33	3.94	3.50
Sets high standards for teaching	4.07	4.36	3.74	5.00	5.00	3.92	3.94	4.42	4.17	3.33
Places a high priority on engaging parents as partners in helping children learn	3.90	4.27	3.51	4.71	5.00	4.25	4.06	4.17	3.50	3.33
Is willing to have difficult conversations if the result is to improve teaching and learning	3.77	4.00	3.29	4.86	4.75	4.08	3.88	4.25	3.72	2.50

Note: This table displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of school leadership. We display average response values for each leadership survey item across all lab schools and for each lab school separately.

Appendix Table A5.2: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools

	All Lab Schools	ASU Elkin	ASU Middle Fork	Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	Carolina Comm Academy (UNC)	D.C. Virgo (UNCW)	ECU Community School	Moss Street (UNCG)	Niner Univ Elem (UNCC)	The Catamount School (WCU)
Teachers here hold one another accountable for working hard	3.79	4.00	3.56	4.75	5.00	3.56	3.14	4.08	3.45	4.25
Teachers collaborate to revise and refine curriculum	4.08	4.27	3.92	4.50	4.75	3.50	3.75	4.33	4.19	4.40
Teachers make sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels	3.96	4.00	3.73	5.00	5.00	3.60	3.75	3.58	4.13	4.60
Teachers collaborate to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students	3.93	4.50	3.56	4.50	5.00	3.56	3.43	4.42	3.64	4.25
Teachers here have strong skills to produce meaningful student learning	4.27	4.82	4.17	4.71	5.00	4.08	3.88	4.17	4.22	4.67
Teachers here have strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems	3.61	3.45	3.44	4.57	4.75	2.83	3.75	4.00	3.28	4.33
Teachers here are confident that they can motivate their students to think and work hard	4.13	4.13	3.89	4.75	5.00	4.22	3.86	4.42	3.73	4.50

Note: This table displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of teachers. We display average response values for each survey item across all lab schools and for each lab school separately.

Appendix Table A5.3: Laboratory School Personnel Sense of Value, Respect, and Belonging

	All Lab Schools	ASU Elkin	ASU Middle Fork	Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	Carolina Comm Academy (UNC)	D.C. Virgo (UNCW)	ECU Community School	Moss Street (UNCG)	Niner Univ Elem (UNCC)	The Catamount School (WCU)
I feel valued at this school	4.03	4.18	3.65	5.00	4.50	4.27	3.94	4.00	4.22	3.67
I am treated with respect at this school	4.12	4.18	3.79	4.71	4.75	4.27	4.13	4.25	4.33	3.50
I feel like I belong at this school	4.15	4.09	3.82	4.71	4.50	4.36	4.13	4.25	4.33	4.17

Note: This table displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their sense of being valued, respected, and belonging. WE display average response values for each survey item across all lab schools and for each lab school separately.

Appendix A6: Additional Student Achievement Data (2021-22 School Year)

Appendix Table A6.1: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and Other, Same-Grade Students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork				
3rd Grade Reading	43	533.35	74.42	25.58
4th Grade Reading	44	536.82	75.00	25.00
5th Grade Reading	59	540.03	88.14	11.86
3rd Grade Math	43	535.63	86.05	13.95
4th Grade Math	43	535.58	93.02	6.98
5th Grade Math	59	535.39	91.53	8.47
5th Grade Science	59	241.69	77.97	22.03
All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students				
3rd Grade Reading	3876	537.07	60.06	39.94
4th Grade Reading	3873	541.50	56.62	43.38
5th Grade Reading	3965	545.82	63.63	36.37
3rd Grade Math	3864	544.88	51.92	48.08
4th Grade Math	3871	545.35	56.24	43.76
5th Grade Math	3964	544.06	57.97	42.03
5th Grade Science	3964	250.16	43.01	56.99

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and for all other Winston-Salem Forsyth County students in the same grades.

Appendix Table A6.2: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the ECU Community School and Other, Same-Grade Students in Pitt County Public Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
ECU Community School				
3rd Grade Reading	26	534.19	73.08	26.92
4th Grade Reading	11	543.55	45.45	54.55
5th Grade Reading	10	543.60	80.00	20.00
3rd Grade Math	26	545.08	50.00	50.00
4th Grade Math	11	544.27	54.55	45.45
5th Grade Math	10	545.20	30.00	70.00
5th Grade Science	10	246.50	50.00	50.00
All Other Pitt County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1643	537.75	57.27	42.73
4th Grade Reading	1733	542.63	52.39	47.61
5th Grade Reading	1677	546.92	58.38	41.62
3rd Grade Math	1640	547.07	39.27	60.73
4th Grade Math	1732	547.02	47.00	53.00
5th Grade Math	1677	545.47	51.04	48.96
5th Grade Science	1679	251.89	35.20	64.80
South Greenville Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	55	532.62	81.82	18.18
4th Grade Reading	45	533.84	91.11	8.89
5th Grade Reading	45	540.84	88.89	11.11
3rd Grade Math	55	544.38	45.45	54.55
4th Grade Math	45	539.29	75.56	24.44
5th Grade Math	45	539.67	84.44	15.56
5th Grade Science	45	242.49	75.56	24.44

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the ECU Community School, for all other Pitt County students in the same grades, and for students at South Greenville Elementary School (the host school for the ECU Community School).

Appendix Table A6.3: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the Moss Street Partnership School and Other, Same-Grade Students in Rockingham County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Moss Street Partnership School				
3rd Grade Reading	53	531.00	84.91	15.09
4th Grade Reading	58	534.40	81.03	18.97
5th Grade Reading	68	540.44	85.29	14.71
3rd Grade Math	53	537.68	84.91	15.09
4th Grade Math	58	536.05	94.83	5.17
5th Grade Math	68	537.75	80.88	19.12
5th Grade Science	68	246.26	57.35	42.65
All Other Rockingham County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	804	535.47	68.16	31.84
4th Grade Reading	777	542.29	51.87	48.13
5th Grade Reading	797	546.96	58.85	41.15
3rd Grade Math	804	544.74	49.63	50.37
4th Grade Math	777	546.46	49.55	50.45
5th Grade Math	796	545.32	51.63	48.37
5th Grade Science	797	251.44	36.26	63.74

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the Moss Street Partnership School and for all other Rockingham County students in the same grades.

Appendix Table A6.4: 2021-22 Test Score Data for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and Other, Same-Grade Students in New Hanover County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy				
3rd Grade Reading	22	528.55	95.45	4.55
4th Grade Reading	20	535.65	90.00	10.00
5th Grade Reading	20	538.70	85.00	15.00
6th Grade Reading	17	545.35	82.35	17.65
7th Grade Reading	24	546.50	79.17	20.83
8th Grade Reading	31	546.97	87.10	12.90
3rd Grade Math	22	533.32	100.00	0.00
4th Grade Math	20	535.20	95.00	5.00
5th Grade Math	20	534.10	90.00	10.00
6th Grade Math	17	538.59	88.24	11.76
7th Grade Math	24	538.25	87.50	12.50
8th Grade Math	31	532.68	90.32	9.68
5th Grade Science	20	237.05	100.00	0.00
8th Grade Science	31	241.48	61.29	38.71
All Other New Hanover County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1875	539.68	46.08	53.92
4th Grade Reading	1752	544.71	42.64	57.36
5th Grade Reading	1808	548.66	49.89	50.11
6th Grade Reading	1695	551.24	49.38	50.62
7th Grade Reading	1859	553.16	49.06	50.94
8th Grade Reading	1851	557.08	45.81	54.19
3rd Grade Math	1873	547.71	38.81	61.19
4th Grade Math	1752	548.08	43.15	56.85
5th Grade Math	1808	547.39	40.04	59.96
6th Grade Math	1693	546.68	44.89	55.11
7th Grade Math	1859	546.74	47.12	52.88
8th Grade Math	1202	536.67	72.30	27.70
5th Grade Science	1808	253.75	29.65	70.35
8th Grade Science	1846	252.21	24.49	75.51

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and for all other New Hanover County students in the same grades.

Appendix Table A6.5: 2021-22 Test Score Data for The Catamount School and Other, Same-Grade Students in Jackson County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
The Catamount School				
6th Grade Reading	12	550.75	41.67	58.33
7th Grade Reading	20	556.55	35.00	65.00
8th Grade Reading	22	556.27	50.00	50.00
6th Grade Math	12	545.33	58.33	41.67
7th Grade Math	20	545.35	60.00	40.00
8th Grade Math	14	537.71	64.29	35.71
8th Grade Science	22	253.59	27.27	72.73
Math I	8	553.88	12.50	87.50
All Other Jackson County Students				
6th Grade Reading	244	549.09	58.20	41.80
7th Grade Reading	244	550.82	59.84	40.16
8th Grade Reading	268	554.49	57.84	42.16
6th Grade Math	245	544.94	54.69	45.31
7th Grade Math	245	544.20	57.96	42.04
8th Grade Math	222	537.70	69.82	30.18
8th Grade Science	267	250.59	28.46	71.54
Math I	314	547.87	47.13	52.87
Smokey Mountain High School				
Math I	211	546.76	51.66	48.34

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for The Catamount School, for all other Jackson County students in the same grades, and for students at the Smokey Mountain High School (the host school for The Catamount School).

Appendix Table A6.6: 2021-22 Test Score Data for Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) and Other, Same-Grade Students in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Niner University Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	16	530.00	93.75	6.25
3rd Grade Math	16	537.94	87.50	12.50
All Other Charlotte Mecklenburg Students				
3rd Grade Reading	10622	537.43	57.11	42.89
3rd Grade Math	10591	546.65	43.41	56.59

Note: For the 2021-22 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for Niner University Elementary School and for all other Charlotte Mecklenburg students in the same grades.

Appendix Table A6.7: Unique Counts of Laboratory School Students in Models Comparing Student Achievement in Laboratory Schools to Student Achievement in Low-Performing Schools

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Science	8th Science
Laboratory School Students	273	276	115	123	142	52
Academy at Middle Fork	99	100	0	0	56	0
ECU Community School	20	20	0	0	10	0
Moss Street Partnership School	115	117	0	0	57	0
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	39	39	71	71	19	31
The Catamount School	0	0	44	52	0	21

Note: This table displays the unique number of laboratory school students contributing to test score estimates. These models controlled for prior achievement (2020-21) and compared laboratory school students to other students in low-performing schools. Niner University Elementary students (UNCC) do not contribute to estimates because they were 3rd graders in 2021-22 and do not have prior EOG scores.

Appendix Table A6.8: Unique Counts of Laboratory School Students in Models Comparing Student Achievement in Laboratory Schools to the Achievement of a Matched Comparison Sample

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Science	8th Science
Laboratory School Students	329	330	110	117	140	48
Academy at Middle Fork	110	111	0	0	54	0
ECU Community School	37	37	0	0	10	0
Moss Street Partnership School	128	128	0	0	60	0
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	41	41	67	67	16	29
The Catamount School	0	0	43	50	0	19
Niner University Elementary	13	13	0	0	0	0

Note: This table displays the unique number of laboratory school students contributing to test score estimates in our matched comparison sample analyses.

Appendix A7: Laboratory School and Matched Comparison Sample Students

Appendix Table A7.1: Characteristics of Laboratory School and Matched Comparison Sample Students

Groups	Student Count	Minority	EDS	SPED	Limited English Proficient	Age in Months	Prior Attendance Rate	Prior Suspension Status	Prior Year Reading Score (Std)	Prior Year Math Score (Std)	School Percent Low Income
1st Grade											
All Other Students	110,727	55.90	42.86	11.86	10.87	79.53	---	---	---	---	57.53
Lab Schools	154	92.86	62.33	16.88	10.39	79.43	---	---	---	---	90.73
Matched	589	93.38	57.89	20.71	11.54	79.70	---	---	---	---	89.33
2nd Grade											
All Other Students	113,561	56.06	42.34	12.44	11.16	91.59	---	---	---	---	57.29
Lab Schools	160	90.62	61.88	8.13	10.00	91.28	---	---	---	---	90.96
Matched	621	87.76	63.44	7.25	8.53	91.12	---	---	---	---	89.16
3rd Grade											
All Other Students	113,936	56.36	41.85	13.13	11.76	103.77	---	---	---	---	57.16
Lab Schools	162	90.12	52.47	17.28	9.26	104.17	---	---	---	---	90.48
Matched	620	87.26	51.94	15.48	10.97	104.55	---	---	---	---	89.70
4th Grade											
All Other Students	114,403	56.04	40.78	13.49	11.98	115.86	93.79	2.42	0.028	---	56.71
Lab Schools	125	86.40	62.40	16.80	11.20	116.01	92.82	11.20	-0.443	---	91.56
Matched	620	87.90	64.03	16.94	10.16	115.80	92.63	8.23	-0.460	---	91.78
5th Grade											
All Other Students	115,050	55.93	40.05	13.34	10.51	127.95	93.53	3.02	0.015	---	56.47
Lab Schools	140	89.29	49.29	19.29	11.43	127.98	92.54	10.71	-0.633	---	90.81
Matched	685	89.20	52.85	19.95	11.97	128.08	91.89	10.07	-0.616	---	91.52
6th Grade											
All Other Students	117,768	56.34	40.28	13.14	9.03	140.07	93.16	4.03	0.005	---	53.23
Lab Schools	27	59.26	74.07	18.52	0.00	139.44	89.54	18.52	-0.567	---	77.77
Matched	135	54.07	69.62	22.96	0.00	139.21	89.36	19.26	-0.669	---	76.31
7th Grade											
All Other Students	122,831	56.60	39.46	12.85	8.54	152.13	91.45	4.39	0.00	0.004	53.05
Lab Schools	43	55.81	67.44	25.58	0.00	151.35	92.15	16.27	-0.409	-0.491	76.74
Matched	215	53.02	67.91	27.44	0.00	151.33	92.09	14.88	-0.430	-0.520	76.04
8th Grade											
All Other Students	125,168	55.90	37.90	12.44	8.84	164.14	90.57	4.45	0.005	0.009	53.04
Lab Schools	50	68.00	66.00	20.00	2.00	163.70	90.56	32.00	-0.489	-0.478	79.00
Matched	248	66.13	63.31	17.74	1.61	163.19	89.92	32.66	-0.397	-0.431	79.67

Note: This table displays student demographics, prior year absence and suspension, and prior year test scores for all students, students at UNC System laboratory schools, and matched comparison sample students. The Evaluation Team used propensity score analyses to match laboratory school students to more comparable students. Not all laboratory school students have the prior year data required for these matches.

Appendix A8: Additional Student Survey Data (2022-23 Year)

Appendix Table A8.1: Laboratory School Students Motivation and Engagement with School

	Mean (2022)	Mean (2023)	Responses (2023)	% No or Mostly No (2023)	% Sometimes (2023)	% Mostly Yes or Yes (2023)
All Laboratory Schools						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.83	2.82	1032	3.49	11.14	85.37
I care about the things we learn in school	2.68	2.65	553	7.96	19.35	72.69
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.77	2.77	556	3.24	16.55	80.22
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.60	2.58	1036	11.78	18.05	70.17
Appalachian Academy at Elkin						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	n/a	2.89	72	0.00	11.11	88.89
I care about the things we learn in school	n/a	2.71	52	7.69	13.46	78.85
I have done my best quality work in this school	n/a	2.81	53	3.77	11.32	84.91
This school is a happy place for me to be	n/a	2.69	75	9.33	12.00	78.67
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.89	2.87	223	1.35	10.76	87.89
I care about the things we learn in school	2.65	2.76	109	4.59	14.68	80.73
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.79	2.77	110	2.73	17.27	80.00
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.67	2.67	224	8.93	15.62	75.45
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	n/a	2.98	44	0.00	2.27	97.73
I care about the things we learn in school	n/a	2.77	44	4.55	13.64	81.82
I have done my best quality work in this school	n/a	2.82	44	2.27	13.64	84.09
This school is a happy place for me to be	n/a	2.84	43	2.33	11.63	86.05
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.83	2.63	135	8.89	19.26	71.85
I care about the things we learn in school	2.64	2.51	74	10.81	27.03	62.16
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.63	2.67	75	5.33	22.67	72.00
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.45	2.45	136	15.44	24.26	60.29
ECU Community School						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.93	2.85	114	3.51	7.89	88.60
I care about the things we learn in school	2.73	2.65	54	9.26	16.67	74.07
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.84	2.82	55	1.82	14.55	83.64
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.71	2.50	115	13.91	21.74	64.35
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.80	2.83	284	2.82	11.27	85.92
I care about the things we learn in school	2.70	2.60	139	8.63	23.02	68.35
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.77	2.77	138	2.90	17.39	79.71
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.60	2.55	282	13.83	17.38	68.79
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.68	2.75	114	7.02	11.40	81.58
I care about the things we learn in school	3.00	2.56	34	11.76	20.59	67.65
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.69	2.74	34	2.94	20.59	76.47
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.62	2.59	114	11.40	18.42	70.18
The Catamount School (WCU)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.86	2.91	46	2.17	4.35	93.48
I care about the things we learn in school	2.64	2.62	47	8.51	21.28	70.21
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.90	2.81	47	4.26	10.64	85.11
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.50	2.57	47	10.64	21.28	68.09

Note: This table displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and their engagement with school. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'try to learn as much as I can' and 'school is a happy place for me'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all four items.

Appendix Table A8.2: Laboratory School Students Perceptions of School Climate

	Mean (2022)	Mean (2023)	Responses (2023)	% No or Mostly No (2023)	% Sometimes (2023)	% Mostly Yes or Yes (2023)
All Laboratory Schools						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.64	2.60	1,030	11.75	16.60	71.65
In this school I am treated fairly	2.54	2.56	1,025	12.78	18.83	68.39
I feel like I belong at this school	2.47	2.48	553	14.83	21.88	63.29
Appalachian Academy at Elkin						
This school feels like a safe place to me	n/a	2.69	72	6.94	16.67	76.39
In this school I am treated fairly	n/a	2.64	74	12.16	12.16	75.68
I feel like I belong at this school	n/a	2.39	54	24.07	12.96	62.96
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.69	2.69	223	8.97	13.45	77.58
In this school I am treated fairly	2.59	2.60	219	10.05	19.63	70.32
I feel like I belong at this school	2.50	2.56	108	12.04	20.37	67.59
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	n/a	2.82	44	2.27	13.64	84.09
In this school I am treated fairly	n/a	2.67	43	4.65	23.26	72.09
I feel like I belong at this school	n/a	2.79	43	6.98	6.98	86.05
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.48	2.55	134	11.94	20.90	67.16
In this school I am treated fairly	2.45	2.51	135	13.33	22.22	64.44
I feel like I belong at this school	2.27	2.35	75	18.67	28.00	53.33
ECU Community School						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.68	2.45	116	16.38	22.41	61.21
In this school I am treated fairly	2.54	2.36	113	23.01	17.70	59.29
I feel like I belong at this school	2.51	2.49	55	18.18	14.55	67.27
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.65	2.59	281	13.52	13.88	72.60
In this school I am treated fairly	2.56	2.59	283	12.01	16.96	71.02
I feel like I belong at this school	2.47	2.45	137	16.06	22.63	61.31
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.66	2.56	113	13.27	17.70	69.03
In this school I am treated fairly	2.42	2.51	11	14.41	19.82	65.77
I feel like I belong at this school	2.75	2.47	34	8.82	35.29	55.88
The Catamount School (WCU)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.72	2.49	47	14.89	21.28	63.83
In this school I am treated fairly	2.68	2.60	47	8.51	23.40	68.09
I feel like I belong at this school	2.62	2.47	47	8.51	36.17	55.32

Note: This table displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their perceptions of school climate. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'school feels like a safe place to me' and 'in this school I am treated fairly'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all three items.

Appendix Table A8.3: Student Perceptions of Laboratory School Academic Climate (Tripod 7Cs)

	Year	Care	Confer	Captivate	Clarify	Consolidate	Challenge	Classroom
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	2023	2.80	2.55	2.49	2.77	2.69	2.46	2.09
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	2022	2.77	2.64	2.56	2.78	2.75	2.63	2.23
	2023	2.81	2.62	2.61	2.80	2.77	2.64	2.25
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	2023	2.88	2.59	2.55	2.92	2.76	2.48	2.26
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	2022	2.65	2.47	2.44	2.69	2.57	2.44	2.08
	2023	2.62	2.57	2.38	2.61	2.56	2.46	2.05
ECU Community School	2022	2.83	2.56	2.72	2.87	2.75	2.63	2.31
	2023	2.64	2.45	2.55	2.77	2.75	2.64	2.22
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)	2022	2.77	.62	2.59	2.74	2.74	2.65	2.28
	2023	2.79	2.53	2.53	2.75	2.76	2.61	2.31
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	2022	2.70	2.61	2.62	2.64	2.65	2.66	2.15
	2023	2.66	2.58	2.44	2.73	2.65	2.68	2.13
The Catamount School (WCU)	2022	2.81	2.76	2.50	2.76	2.56	2.46	2.24
	2023	2.67	2.70	2.43	2.71	2.71	2.44	2.21

Note: This table presents laboratory school students' responses to a set of survey items on their perceptions of academic climate. Specifically, this table shows aggregate data for each 7C construct. Ratings range from 1-3, where 1 is unfavorable, 2 is neutral, and 3 is favorable.

Appendix Table A8.4: Comparing School Experiences

When you think about this school year compared to last school year, in which year was your school better at…	Responses	% Last Year Was Better	% Comparable	% This Year Was Better
Appalachian Academy at Elkin—Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	75	16.00	33.33	50.67
Helping you learn more	73	9.59	30.14	60.27
Having teachers that really care about you	75	8.00	45.33	46.67
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	27	14.81	37.04	48.15
Helping you learn more	28	7.14	25.00	67.86
Having teachers that really care about you	28	10.71	17.86	71.43
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	156	23.72	41.03	35.26
Helping you learn more	151	10.60	41.72	47.68
Having teachers that really care about you	154	18.18	52.60	29.22
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)—Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	43	6.98	34.88	58.14
Helping you learn more	43	4.65	25.58	69.77
Having teachers that really care about you	43	2.33	48.84	48.84
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	29	20.69	44.83	34.48
Helping you learn more	29	20.69	37.93	41.38
Having teachers that really care about you	29	24.14	44.83	31.03
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	83	24.10	43.37	32.53
Helping you learn more	81	20.99	28.40	50.62
Having teachers that really care about you	82	18.29	45.12	36.59
ECU Community School— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	15	13.33	13.33	73.33
Helping you learn more	14	7.14	21.43	71.43
Having teachers that really care about you	15	6.67	20.00	73.33
ECU Community School— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	85	27.06	43.53	29.41
Helping you learn more	82	15.85	31.71	52.44
Having teachers that really care about you	78	19.23	48.72	32.05
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	23	17.39	47.83	34.78
Helping you learn more	22	22.73	31.82	45.45
Having teachers that really care about you	22	27.27	27.27	45.45
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	213	17.37	45.54	37.09
Helping you learn more	207	13.04	38.65	48.31
Having teachers that really care about you	208	14.42	51.44	34.13
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	22	22.73	27.27	50.00
Helping you learn more	22	13.64	18.18	68.18
Having teachers that really care about you	20	10.00	35.00	55.00
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	67	35.82	28.36	35.82
Helping you learn more	63	25.40	34.92	39.68
Having teachers that really care about you	65	29.23	30.77	40.00
The Catamount School (WCU)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	25	24.00	48.00	28.00
Helping you learn more	25	12.00	32.00	56.00
Having teachers that really care about you	25	12.00	44.00	44.00
The Catamount School (WCU)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2022-23				
Helping students behave	21	4.76	61.90	33.33
Helping you learn more	21	4.76	33.33	61.90
Having teachers that really care about you	21	0.00	61.90	38.10

Note: This table displays student responses to survey items asking students to compare their educational experiences in 2022-23 to their educational experiences in 2021-22.