THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

November 9, 2020 at 3:30 p.m.
Via Videoconference and UNC-TV Live Stream
University of North Carolina System Office

AGENDA

A-1. Approval of the Minutes of November 5, 2019 ..... C. Philip Byers

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

A-3. Other Lab School Updates ..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

A-4. Adjourn

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

DRAFT MINUTES

November 5, 2019
University of North Carolina System Office
C.D. Spangler Building, Executive Conference Room
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

This meeting of the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools was presided over by Chair C. Philip Byers. The following committee members, constituting a quorum, were also present by phone: Darrell Allison.

Staff members present included Andrew Kelly and others from the UNC System Office.

Other guests included Dr. Kevin Bastian from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Education Policy Initiative at Carolina.

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1. Call to Order and Approval of OPEN Session Minutes (Item A-1)

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., on Tuesday, November 5, 2019, and called for a motion to approve the open session minutes of September 19, 2019.

MOTION: Resolved, that the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approve the open session minutes of September 19, 2019, as distributed.

Motion: C. Philip Byers
Motion carried

2. Review and Approve Laboratory School Evaluation Report (Item A-2)

Andrew Kelly, from the System Office, and Kevin Bastian, from UNC-Chapel Hill's department of Public Policy, discussed the Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory School Initiative Report and gave a general overview of the laboratory school network. Following the presentation of the report, the committee had a robust discussion of its findings and their implications.

MOTION: Resolved, that the Committee on Laboratory Schools approve the Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory School Initiative Report and recommend it to the full Board of Governors for a vote through the consent agenda.

Motion: C. Philip Byers
Motion carried

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

_____

C. Philip Byers, Secretary

Peter Hans
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November 15, 2020

Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee
North Carolina General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

Dear Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee:

I am pleased to submit the annual evaluation of the UNC Laboratory Schools program pursuant to G.S. 116-239.13. As part of our submission, I wanted to provide some important context for this year's evaluation.

This has been a year unlike any other in the history of the University of North Carolina System. I am grateful for your continued support of our universities and their critical mission, and to the thousands of faculty and staff who have risen to the occasion under trying circumstances. Our Lab School faculty and staff in particular deserve a great deal of credit for their creativity and flexibility in moving to remote instruction in the spring and planning for an uncertain fall. I'm especially thankful to Chancellor Sharon Gaber and the faculty and staff at UNC Charlotte, who opened Niner Elementary this fall in spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Just as COVID-19 has changed the way our Lab Schools operate, so too has it affected our ability to evaluate those schools using standard metrics—the latest student achievement data drawn from state assessments. Indeed, this past spring the pandemic led to the cancellation of state assessments and the suspension of the state accountability system. Whereas past Lab School evaluations have included the latest state assessment results, those data are simply unavailable this year.

Because student achievement data from the 2019-20 school year was not available, this year's evaluation is necessarily incomplete. Instead, the report provides additional analysis of test score data from 2018-19, when three of the Lab Schools were still in their first year of operation. As the researchers caution in the evaluation: "one year of operation . . . is not a sufficient amount of time to meaningfully assess school performance."

With that said, the data reported here provide a number of reasons to be optimistic about what future data on student proficiency and growth will show, particularly at App Academy at Middle Fork and the ECU Community School. At the schools where we are not meeting the mark, I will work closely with the chancellor and their leadership team, as well as the Board of Governors subcommittee, to address the issues.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

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We look forward to the opportunity to provide additional information on student achievement and growth at each of our Lab Schools when it becomes available. To that end, I will provide a supplemental report to this committee in the spring of 2021 to update you on our progress.

Sincerely,

Peter Hans

Enclosures

cc: Senator Deanna Ballard
Representative Hugh Blackwell
Representative Craig Horn
Drew Moretz, VP for State Government Relations, UNC System Office

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools
November 9, 2020

AGENDA ITEM

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

Situation: N.C. General Statutes § 116-239.13 (G.S.) 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. 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) and Public Impact (a nonprofit research organization) 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 they 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, 2020. 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 committee.

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, each operated by a UNC System institution rather than by a local school district. Since then, six 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), and the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) opened their 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.

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.[1] 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.[2] 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); are siblings of children meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory school employees.[3] 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 it is not fully enrolled by March 1 before the start of the next school year.[4]

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

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

[2] 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.

[3] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

[4] 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)

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 2020-21 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.

Reporting on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the laboratory schools in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years is addressed in the annual evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact (Appendix A).

Laboratory School Overviews

Six UNC System institutions are currently 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.[5]

Appalachian State University operates the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, a K-5 school located in Walkertown, NC, that was previously operated by Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools. The Academy at Middle Fork opened in August 2018 with a mission to provide a balanced education for children, teachers, principals, and families through the implementation of research-based practices and exemplary classroom instruction and school administration. The Academy at Middle Fork is committed to developing the whole child, including addressing social, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs. The Academy uses a workshop (or small group, project-based) 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. Staff at the Academy at Middle Fork includes a principal, a director of curriculum and instruction, a director of student affairs and emergency management, eighteen classroom teachers, seven teacher assistants, two English as a second language teachers, three full-time exceptional children (EC) teachers, three EC teacher assistants, one part-time EC teacher assistant, an administrative support and school finance specialist, a school nurse, and a social worker.

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 eight

[5] See the full evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact in Appendix A for a description of the laboratory schools' fall 2020 reopening strategies given the COVID-19 pandemic.

classrooms—one per grade in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 and two classrooms each for grades K and 1. 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. The laboratory school's staff includes a principal, nine teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, two EC teachers, a full-time curriculum director, seven teacher assistants, and a full-time administrative assistant. The laboratory school funds a full-time social worker, a full-time school counselor, and a full-time integrated health director. The laboratory school and its host district, Pitt County Schools, jointly fund an art teacher.

UNCG operates the Moss Street Partnership School, a K-5 school located in Rockingham County that was previously operated by Rockingham County Schools (RCS). The Moss Street Partnership School opened in August 2018 and serves students in grades K-5, averaging approximately three classrooms per grade level. Staff and students at the Moss Street Partnership School follow the traditional RCS district calendar. The school uses a "learner-centered, learner-led" approach and emphasizes experiential learning, inclusive education, and a collaborative environment for both students and teachers. As a fully inclusive school, the Moss Street Partnership School is oriented to the whole child, including meeting academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) instruction is prominent: the campus features a makerspace, and the school employs a full-time instructional technology consultant who assists teachers with the incorporation of technology into their lessons. The Moss Street Partnership School staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, a director of curriculum, an office manager, a budget and personnel director, a media specialist, an instructional technology consultant, a school social worker, a school counselor, a speech/language pathologist, twenty-four classroom teachers (including five creative arts and PE teachers), four EC teachers, and an EC teacher assistant.

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.[6] DCVPA has one class per grade level in K-5 and two classes per grade level in 6-8. 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 among staff, families, and students. The DCVPA staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, twelve teachers in core content areas, two EC teachers, and a technology support analyst. A full-time clinical social worker, funded through a partnership with the College of Health and Human Services, provides student support services. With funding through a partnership with MedNorth, a local community health provider, the laboratory school also has an on-site health clinic staffed by a certified family nurse practitioner.

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

[6] D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy typically operates under a year-round calendar but adopted a traditional calendar for the 2020-21 school year as part of its reopening plan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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. The Catamount School staff includes a principal, four core subject-area teachers, an enrichment coordinator who coordinates services and extracurricular activities provided by university and community-based partners, an EC teacher, a PowerSchool data manager, and a health services coordinator (i.e. a joint position between the COE and the College of Health and Human Sciences who serves as a nurse at The Catamount School, instructs at WCU's School of Nursing, and supervises undergraduate nursing candidates). Three COE faculty members are also staff members at The Catamount School: a COE faculty member serves as the Instructional Support Liaison and teaches one math class, another COE faculty member serves as the school's EC administrator, and a Health and Physical Education (HPE) instructor serves as the physical education teacher and coordinates and supervises HPE pre-service candidates.

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-2. In its first year, Niner University Elementary School serves four kindergarten classes, two first grade classes, and two second grade classes. The school opened in August 2020 and 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. 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. Niner University Elementary School's inaugural staff includes a principal, a curriculum coach, eight licensed classroom teachers, four instructional assistants, two EC teachers, an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, a school counselor, a social worker, a media specialist/IT facilitator, and a school nurse. Administrative staff include a finance/data manager, administrative office associate, and a school resource officer. A group of 15 COE faculty members serve on the laboratory school's Curricular Team.

Student Enrollment and Demographics at Laboratory Schools

Table 1 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 276 enrolled students, with 31 in kindergarten, 43 in 1st grade, 43 in 2nd grade, 45 in 3rd grade, 63 in 4th grade, and 51 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are similar to those from the 20th school day in the 2019-20 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, nearly 49 percent are male, 45 percent are Black, 38 percent are Hispanic, and 10 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 62 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income.[7] By comparison, 29 percent of the elementary grades

[7] When calculating the percentage of low-income students at Appalachian Academy, North Carolina does not use a 1.6 multiplier (as it does for other schools in Winston-Salem Forsyth Schools). If the 1.6 multiplier was applied to the Appalachian Academy, 99 percent of the students would be designated as low-income.

students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, and 68 percent are designated as low-income.[8]

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, the ECU Community School has 109 enrolled students, with 19 in kindergarten, 27 in 1st grade, 24 in 2nd grade, 13 in 3rd grade, 12 in 4th grade, and 14 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2019-20 school year, these data show a small decrease in enrollment at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 57 percent are male, 94 percent are Black, and 29 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 100 percent of the ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the elementary grades students in Pitt County Schools are Black and 70 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) has 73 enrolled students, with 40 in kindergarten, 19 in 1st grade, and 14 in 2nd grade. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 57 percent are male, 64 percent are Black, 12 percent are multiracial, 11 percent are Hispanic, and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children. Because Niner University Elementary School is new to open in 2020-21, Title I data are not available from the 2019-20 school year. By comparison, 35 percent of the K-2 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, three percent are multiracial, and 27 percent are Hispanic.

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) has 333 enrolled students, with 40 in kindergarten, 67 in 1st grade, 59 in 2nd grade, 66 in 3rd grade, 60 in 4th grade, and 41 in 5th grade. These enrollment values are down—by approximately 15 percent—relative to enrollment at the 20th day in the 2019-20 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 57 percent are male, 64 percent are Black, 11 percent are multiracial, 12 percent are Hispanic, and 17 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 99 percent of the Moss Street Partnership School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 17 percent of the K-5 students in Rockingham County Schools are Black, seven percent are multiracial, 14 percent are Hispanic, and 71 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 203 enrolled students, with 18 in kindergarten, 17 in 1st grade, 22 in 2nd grade, 20 in 3rd grade, 21 in 4th grade, 14 in 5th grade, 26 in 6th grade, 32 in 7th grade, and 33 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2019-20 school year, these data show a small decrease in enrollment at the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 54 percent are male, 88 percent are Black, and 21 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 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, and 59 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 43 enrolled students, with 7 in 6th grade, 19 in 7th grade, and 17 in 8th grade. These enrollment values are down—by approximately 28 percent—relative to enrollment at the 20th day of the 2019-20 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 49 percent are male, 77 percent are White, 12 percent are multiracial, five percent are Hispanic, five percent are American Indian, and 28 percent are classified as exceptional

[8] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2018-19 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2019-20 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 33 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 70 percent of the middle grades (6-8) students in Jackson County are White, 17 percent are Hispanic, four percent are multiracial, 6 percent are American Indian, and 62 percent are designated as low-income.

Table 1: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools

	ASU		ECU		UNCC	UNCG		UNCW		WCU	
	19-20	20-21	19-20	20-21	20-21	19-20	20-21	19-20	20-21	19-20	20-21
Total Enrollment	280	276	117	109	73	390	333	216	203	60	43
Kindergarten	40	31	32	19	40	67	40	17	18	---	---
1st Grade	44	43	27	27	19	67	67	22	17	---	---
2nd Grade	40	43	16	24	14	80	59	20	22	---	---
3rd Grade	61	45	12	13	---	58	66	20	20	---	---
4th Grade	52	63	15	12	---	46	60	13	21	---	---
5th Grade	43	51	15	14	---	72	41	20	14	---	---
6th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	31	26	17	7
7th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	36	32	16	19
8th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	37	33	27	17
Male	50.0%	48.6%	56.4%	56.9%	57.5%	56.4%	56.8%	54.2%	53.7%	45.0%	48.8%
White	7.1%	10.5%	1.7%	1.8%	4.1%	15.9%	13.8%	3.7%	6.4%	73.3%	76.7%
Black	46.4%	44.9%	96.6%	94.5%	76.7%	60.8%	63.7%	87.9%	88.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	5.0%	5.1%	0.9%	1.8%	6.9%	12.3%	10.8%	3.2%	1.5%	15.0%	11.6%
Hispanic	40.0%	38.0%	0.9%	0.9%	11.0%	10.8%	11.7%	5.1%	3.9%	6.7%	4.7%
Asian	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	2.3%
American Indian	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	4.7%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	13.9%	10.5%	17.9%	29.4%	13.7%	16.2%	17.4%	18.1%	20.7%	16.7%	27.9%
Low-Income	62.2%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	N/A	98.6%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	32.7%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 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 2019-20 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 2020-21 school year. N/A=not available.

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 were enrolled in a 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]

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 74 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing

[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 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.

school; 27 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 17 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; three percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and six percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity. ECU certified that 98 percent of the students enrolled at the ECU Community School in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 40 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 39 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and two percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff. UNCC certified that 70 percent of the students enrolled at Niner University Elementary School in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 16 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; one percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 12 percent qualified based on recently enacted enrollment provisions. UNCG certified that 58 percent of the students enrolled at the Moss Street Partnership School in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 26 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; one percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and two percent qualified based on recently enacted enrollment provisions. UNCW certified that 50 percent of the students enrolled at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 28 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 21 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and three percent qualified based on recently enacted enrollment provisions. Finally, WCU certified that 16 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school and 93 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance.

Table 2: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements

	ASU	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	276	109	73	333	203	43
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	74.3%	98.2%	69.9%	58.0%	49.8%	16.3%
Previously Low-Performing Student	26.8%	40.4%	16.4%	26.1%	27.6%	93.0%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	17.4%	38.5%	0.0%	13.2%	20.7%	0.0%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	2.9%	1.8%	1.4%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	5.8%	0.0%	12.3%	1.5%	2.5%	0.0%

Note: This table displays information on how laboratory schools originally 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 2020-21 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.

Ordinarily, this section would report the following data for each laboratory school operating in the 2019-20 academic year: performance grades, performance scores, achievement scores, growth scores, and growth status.[12] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures, North Carolina did not administer End-of-Grade and End-of-Course exams in spring 2020. As such, this report does not include student achievement data from the 2019-20 school year.

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. This report includes analyses of *student-level* achievement data from the 2018-19 school year, when there were five laboratory schools in operation: the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and The Catamount School (WCU).

Table 3 displays 2018-19 student achievement data—average EOG/EOC scores, the percentage of students below and meeting/exceeding proficiency—for all students statewide. Tables 4-8 display the same 2018-19 student achievement data for each laboratory school and for all other students in the district hosting the respective laboratory school. For each respective comparison, students at laboratory schools scored lower on their EOG exams than all students statewide. With two exceptions (7th and 8th grade reading at The Catamount School [WCU]), laboratory schools also had a lower percentage of students passing their EOG exams than all students statewide. Achievement data in Tables 4-7 show that students at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) scored lower and had lower proficiency rates than other students in their host school district. Table 8 shows that students at The Catamount School (WCU) scored higher in 7th grade reading, 8th grade reading, 8th grade science, and Math I than their peers in Jackson County. Notably, eight 8th grade students at The Catamount School (WCU) took Math I in 2018-19 and 75 percent of these students passed the exam and earned high school course credit.

[12] Performance grades range from A-F and are based on the performance score. 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.

Table 3: 2018-19 Test Score Data Statewide

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
3rd Grade Reading	116,126	438.75	43.88	56.12
4th Grade Reading	120,446	445.00	42.73	57.27
5th Grade Reading	121,997	449.22	45.63	54.37
6th Grade Reading	121,818	452.35	39.95	60.05
7th Grade Reading	118,543	454.81	41.20	58.80
8th Grade Reading	115,879	458.26	44.48	55.52
3rd Grade Math	116,078	548.37	35.50	64.50
4th Grade Math	120,415	548.30	42.55	57.45
5th Grade Math	121,952	547.99	39.52	60.48
6th Grade Math	121,720	548.16	41.01	58.99
7th Grade Math	118,483	548.10	41.50	58.50
8th Grade Math	81,061	538.58	64.33	35.67
5th Grade Science	121,946	253.66	27.32	72.68
8th Grade Science	115,722	252.96	21.25	78.75

Note: For the 2018-19 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data from EOG exams for all students statewide.

Table 4: 2018-19 Test Score Data for the Academy at Middle Fork

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Academy at Middle Fork				
3rd Grade Reading	49	432.49	67.35	32.65
4th Grade Reading	46	437.89	69.57	30.43
5th Grade Reading	48	441.19	79.17	20.83
3rd Grade Math	49	540.78	71.43	28.57
4th Grade Math	46	539.37	82.61	17.39
5th Grade Math	48	538.77	79.17	20.83
5th Grade Science	48	245.06	60.42	39.58
All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students				
3rd Grade Reading	4,025	437.53	48.97	51.03
4th Grade Reading	4,205	444.45	43.59	56.41
5th Grade Reading	4,366	448.62	47.53	52.47
3rd Grade Math	4,020	547.40	40.65	59.35
4th Grade Math	4,202	547.65	46.05	53.95
5th Grade Math	4,360	547.31	43.03	56.97
5th Grade Science	4,362	252.75	30.10	69.90

Note: For the 2018-19 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 5: 2018-19 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	16	422.56	93.75	6.25
4th Grade Reading	14	435.78	85.71	14.29
5th Grade Reading	14	439.21	100.00	0.00
3rd Grade Math	16	535.81	100.00	0.00
4th Grade Math	14	537.86	100.00	0.00
5th Grade Math	14	538.57	78.57	21.43
5th Grade Science	14	247.50	42.86	57.14
All Other Pitt County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,763	437.82	47.76	52.24
4th Grade Reading	1,866	444.46	45.12	54.88
5th Grade Reading	1,852	448.88	48.33	51.67
3rd Grade Math	1,764	547.83	38.95	61.05
4th Grade Math	1,864	547.74	45.82	54.18
5th Grade Math	1,850	548.09	38.92	61.08
5th Grade Science	1,851	253.81	26.53	73.47

Note: For the 2018-19 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the ECU Community School and for all other Pitt County students in the same grades.

Table 6: 2018-19 Test Score Data for the Moss Street Partnership School

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Moss Street Partnership School				
3rd Grade Reading	44	426.61	88.64	11.36
4th Grade Reading	69	435.99	82.61	17.39
5th Grade Reading	59	440.12	84.75	15.25
3rd Grade Math	44	537.39	86.36	13.64
4th Grade Math	69	538.23	86.96	13.04
5th Grade Math	58	537.40	81.03	18.97
5th Grade Science	59	240.69	88.14	11.86
All Other Rockingham County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	866	437.30	49.54	50.46
4th Grade Reading	905	443.56	45.86	54.14
5th Grade Reading	925	448.36	45.62	54.38
3rd Grade Math	865	547.71	36.42	63.58
4th Grade Math	905	548.15	41.88	58.12
5th Grade Math	924	548.10	37.12	62.88
5th Grade Science	924	253.24	25.87	74.13

Note: For the 2018-19 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 7: 2018-19 Test Score Data for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy				
3rd Grade Reading	12	431.42	75.00	25.00
4th Grade Reading	18	434.22	77.78	22.22
5th Grade Reading	25	442.92	80.00	20.00
6th Grade Reading	34	447.35	64.71	35.29
7th Grade Reading	38	446.16	68.42	31.58
8th Grade Reading	30	448.97	76.67	23.33
3rd Grade Math	12	543.08	66.67	33.33
4th Grade Math	18	534.89	94.44	5.56
5th Grade Math	25	544.00	56.00	44.00
6th Grade Math	34	543.44	61.76	38.24
7th Grade Math	38	539.47	84.21	15.79
8th Grade Math	30	534.47	83.33	16.67
5th Grade Science	25	249.36	44.00	56.00
8th Grade Science	30	246.27	43.33	56.67
All Other New Hanover County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,911	439.80	38.98	61.02
4th Grade Reading	2,029	446.23	36.52	63.48
5th Grade Reading	2,008	450.92	36.06	63.94
6th Grade Reading	2,031	453.70	34.56	65.44
7th Grade Reading	1,825	456.24	33.97	66.03
8th Grade Reading	1,895	459.40	39.37	60.63
3rd Grade Math	1,911	550.22	30.61	69.39
4th Grade Math	2,029	549.67	36.42	63.58
5th Grade Math	2,006	549.69	32.30	67.70
6th Grade Math	2,033	549.86	33.01	66.99
7th Grade Math	1,823	550.23	32.97	67.03
8th Grade Math	1,304	540.74	51.61	48.39
5th Grade Science	2,008	256.11	19.97	80.03
8th Grade Science	1,896	254.66	17.25	82.75

Note: For the 2018-19 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 8: 2018-19 Test Score Data for The Catamount School

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
The Catamount School				
6th Grade Reading	9	451.22	44.44	55.56
7th Grade Reading	23	453.65	34.78	65.22
8th Grade Reading	23	457.13	43.48	56.52
6th Grade Math	9	542.22	77.78	22.22
7th Grade Math	23	542.43	60.87	39.13
8th Grade Math	15	531.00	93.33	6.67
8th Grade Science	23	252.65	21.74	78.26
Math I	8	553.63	25.00	75.00
All Other Jackson County Students				
6th Grade Reading	290	452.36	40.34	59.66
7th Grade Reading	240	453.18	46.25	53.75
8th Grade Reading	258	456.96	50.00	50.00
6th Grade Math	290	547.26	42.76	57.24
7th Grade Math	240	545.85	50.00	50.00
8th Grade Math	190	537.64	71.05	28.95
8th Grade Science	258	251.63	22.87	77.13
Math I	273	550.46	33.33	66.67

Note: For the 2018-19 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for The Catamount School and for all other Jackson County students in the same grades.

While useful, the test score data in Tables 4-8 do not account for the unique nature of students attending laboratory schools—i.e. previously low-performing and/or attending a low-performing school. To address this concern,` Table 9 and Figures 1 and 2 display data comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2018-19 with their own scores in the previous school year(s). Scores are standardized within subject, grade, and year (across all North Carolina public school students) to show students' placement in the test score distribution. That is, if a student scores 10 percent of a standard deviation (0.100) below the statewide mean in 2017-18 and 10 percent of a standard deviation below the mean in 2018-19, the student made the average amount of growth for students. If a student's placement in the test score distribution changes, that indicates that the student made more or less growth than average.

The top panels of Table 9 present comparisons for laboratory schools in their first-year of operation in 2018-19: the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Data from the Academy at Middle Fork show that students' placement in the test score distribution was slightly higher in 2018-19 (when attending the laboratory school) than in 2017-18 (before attending at the laboratory school). For example, in 2018-19, 3rd-5th grade students at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) scored 0.67 standard deviations below the statewide mean in reading; in 2017-18, these same students scored nearly 0.76 standard deviations below the statewide mean in reading. Data from the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) show that students' placement in the test score distribution was much lower in 2018-19 (when attending the laboratory school) than in 2017-18 (before attending the laboratory school). For example, 4th and 5th grade students at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) scored one standard deviation below the statewide mean in math; in 2017-18, these same students scored 0.43 standard deviations below the statewide mean in math. Finally, data from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) indicate that students' placement in the test score distribution was generally lower in 2018-19 than in 2017-18. This is true for elementary grades reading (3-5) and math (4-5) and for middle grades reading (6-8). The exception is middle grades math (6-8), where D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students (UNCW) scored higher in the test score distribution in 2018-19.

Table 9: Comparing Test Score Data in 2018-19 and 2017-18 for Laboratory School Students

Test	Count of Students with Test Data in **Both** Periods	2018-19 Test Score (Standardized)	Prior Year (2017-18) Test Score in the Same Subject-Area (Standardized)
Academy at Middle Fork			
Reading (3-5)	140	-0.673	-0.758
Math (4-5)	93	-0.913	-0.977
Moss Street Partnership School			
Reading (3-5)	164	-0.901	-0.449
Math (4-5)	123	-1.009	-0.428
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy			
Reading (3-5)	49	-0.733	-0.603
Math (4-5)	39	-0.785	-0.476
Reading (6-8)	97	-0.657	-0.527
Math (6-8)	97	-0.608	-0.736
ECU Community School			
Reading (4-5)[13]	28	-0.918	-1.127
Math (4-5)	27	-0.952	-1.093
The Catamount School			
Reading (6-8)	50	-0.107	0.009
Math (6-8)[14]	42	-0.671	-0.409

Note: For the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and The Catamount School (WCU), this table presents students' EOG test scores (standardized) in 2018-19 and their prior scores (standardized) from the same subject-area (reading or math) in the 2017-18 school year. Not all laboratory school students have test scores in both periods.

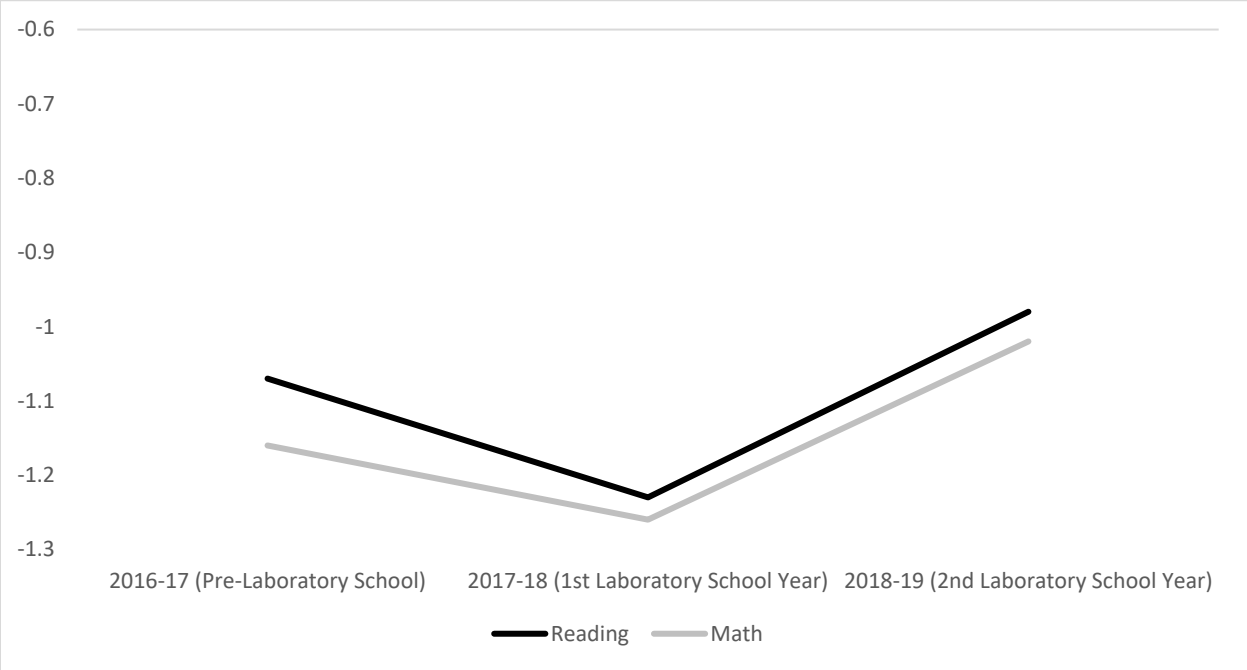
The bottom panels of Table 9 present comparisons for laboratory schools in their second-year of operation in 2018-19: the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU). For the ECU Community School, these data indicate that students' placement in the test score distribution improved in 2018-19, relative to 2017-18. Conversely, scores from The Catamount School (WCU) show that students' placement in the test score distribution in 2018-19 was lower than in 2017-18. These data for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) come from two different types of students: (1) those in their first-year at these laboratory schools in 2018-19, meaning their 2017-18 test scores are prior to their attendance at a laboratory school and (2) those in their second-year at these laboratory schools, meaning their 2017-18 test scores are also from the laboratory school. To better examine the test score trajectories of this latter group, Figures 1 and 2 display test score data from 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. This provides one year of test score data prior to their laboratory school attendance and two years of test score data from the laboratory school. Data from the ECU Community School show a drop in reading and math scores in 2017-18, followed by a rise in those scores in 2018-19. Data from The Catamount School

[13] Third grade students at the ECU Community School do not have a prior reading score because as 2nd graders at the ECU Community School they did not take the mCLASS Reading 3D exam.

[14] The number of students with current and prior year scores differs between reading and math at The Catamount School (WCU) because eight 8th grade students at The Catamount School took Math I rather than the 8th grade math EOG.

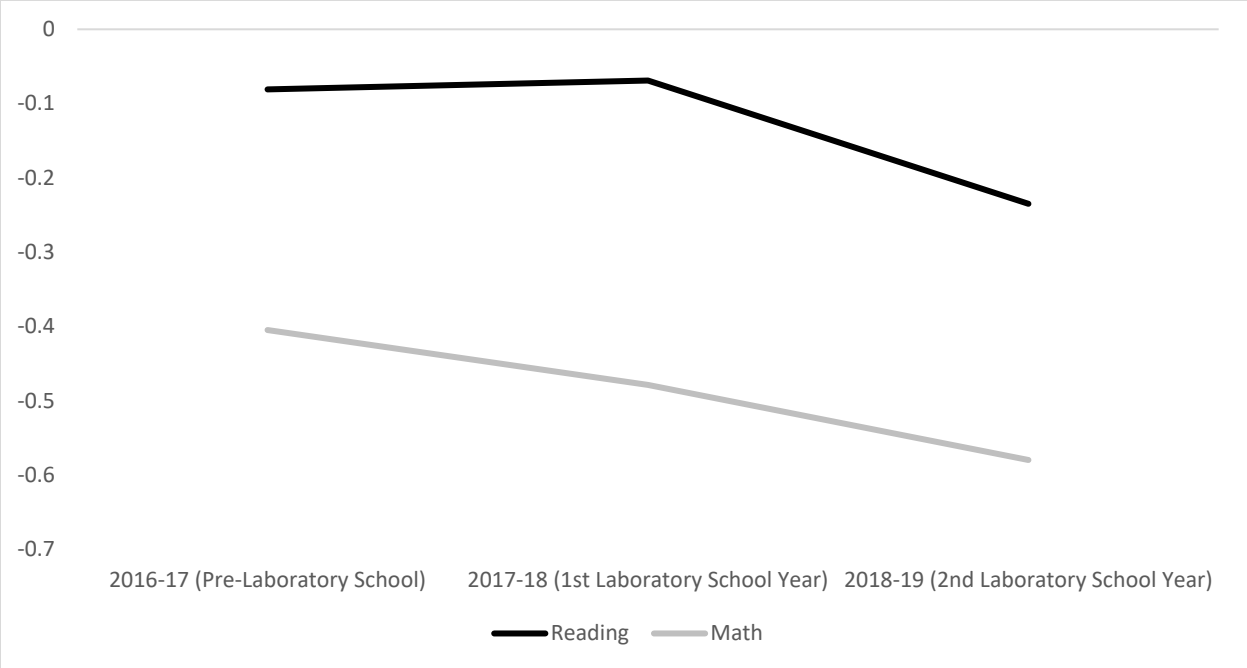
(WCU) show that reading scores were initially flat and fell in 2018-19; math scores fell between each school year.

Figure 1: Test Score Trajectories at the ECU Community School—2017, 2018, and 2019



Note: For the ECU Community School, this figure displays test score trajectories in reading and math for the cohort of students that was in 3rd grade in 2016-17, 4th grade in 2017-18, and 5th grade in 2018-19. In total, 24 students contributed to the reading trajectories and 12 students contributed to the math trajectories.

Figure 2: Test Score Trajectories at The Catamount School—2017, 2018, and 2019



Note: For The Catamount School, this figure displays test score trajectories in reading and math for the cohorts of students that (1) were in 5th grade in 2016-17, 6th grade in 2017-18, and 7th grade in 2018-19 or (2) 6th grade in 2016-17, 7th grade in 2017-18, and 8th grade in 2018-19. In total 27 students contributed to the reading and math trajectories.

As a way to further adjust for the unique nature of the students attending laboratory schools—i.e. previously low-performing and/or attending a low-performing school—Table 10 presents results from models comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2018-19 with the test scores of a matched sample of students.[15] An initial set of models compares all laboratory school and matched comparison sample students; additional sets of models return separate results for each laboratory school.

In elementary grades, estimates in Table 10 show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower on EOG exams in math, reading, and science than the matched comparison sample. However, these results differ greatly across laboratory schools. Students at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and the ECU Community School scored as well as or better than matched comparison sample students. Of particular note is 5th grade science, where students at the ECU Community School had adjusted average scores nearly 50 percent of a standard deviation higher than the matched comparison sample. Conversely, students at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in math, reading, and science. These estimates are large in magnitude and explain the overall negative results at the top of Table 10. Lastly, results show that elementary grades students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in math but performed comparably in reading and 5th grade science.

Turning to middle grades EOG exams, estimates in Table 10 show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in math and performed comparably in reading and 8th grade science. Results for the two laboratory schools serving middle grades students show negative results for The Catamount School (WCU) in math and negative results for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in reading.

Table 10: Test Scores Results—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elementary Math (4-5)	Elementary Reading (3-5)	5th Grade Science	Middle Math (6-8)	Middle Reading (6-8)	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	**-0.279**** (0.035)	**-0.177**** (0.035)	**-0.282**** (0.066)	**-0.211**** (0.045)	-0.069 (0.048)	0.034 (0.082)
Academy at Middle Fork	-0.049 (0.051)	0.067 (0.053)	0.048 (0.104)	---	---	---
ECU Community School	0.100 (0.081)	0.127 (0.104)	**0.484**** (0.113)	---	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.525**** (0.044)	**-0.432**** (0.047)	**-0.844**** (0.074)	---	---	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.273*** (0.125)	-0.147 (0.090)	0.051 (0.146)	-0.072 (0.048)	**-0.106**+ (0.056)	0.033 (0.117)
The Catamount School	---	---	---	**-0.564**** (0.073)	0.009 (0.083)	0.037 (0.113)
Observations	1,477	2,024	740	681	727	244

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.

[15] Please see Appendix A to this report for a fuller description of these analyses.

Collectively, the results presented in this section suggest that laboratory schools differed in their impact on student achievement in the 2018-19 academic year. Findings for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and the ECU Community School are promising. Students at these schools moved up in the test score distribution and scored as well as or better than the matched comparison sample. These results are especially noteworthy for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), since 2018-19 was its first year of operation. Findings show that the remaining laboratory schools, particularly the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), struggled to promote student achievement growth in 2018-19. However, one year of operation—for the Moss Street Partnership School and for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—is not a sufficient amount of time to meaningfully assess school performance.

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 schools 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 six UNC System institutions currently operating laboratory schools. 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

All five UNC System institutions operating a laboratory school in 2019-20 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 the course of a semester. During student teaching, pre-service candidates spend every day of the week, over the course of a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction.

Table 11 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 2019-20.[16] Due to the distance between Appalachian State and its laboratory school, the COE placed a limited number of teacher candidates at its laboratory school in 2019-20. Appalachian State continues to work on a long-term strategy that would

[16] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2019-20. ECU placed one marriage and family therapy intern, one school psychology intern, and seven speech-language pathology interns at the ECU Community School. UNCG placed one school counseling intern, two school social work interns, four speech-language/audiology interns, and 12 school nursing interns at the Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 12 school social work interns and six instructional technology interns at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. WCU placed two school counselling interns, one school psychology intern, and 21 school nursing interns at The Catamount School.

increase the number of students able to serve internships at the laboratory school. ECU placed 46 teacher candidates into early field experiences at the ECU Community School and had two full-time student teachers (from elementary education and early childhood) at the laboratory school. UNCG placed 31 pre-service candidates into early field experiences at Moss Street Partnership School. One health and physical education student from UNCG completed an intern I and intern II (student teaching) experience at the laboratory school in 2019-20. UNCW placed 114 pre-service candidates into early field experiences at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Because the laboratory school typically operates on a year-round schedule that does not align with the university's schedule, UNCW did not place any candidates into intern I or intern II experiences at the laboratory school. WCU placed 76 teacher candidates into early field experiences at The Catamount School. In addition, WCU placed 11 candidates into intern I experiences and one candidate, from middle grades education, into a student teaching experience (intern II) at The Catamount School. Finally, Table 11 shows that only WCU placed a school leader candidate into a formal, principal internship at its laboratory school in 2019-20. Four ECU NC Principal Fellow candidates completed projects at the ECU Community School in 2019-20, but none of these school leader candidates completed a formal, principal internship at the school.

Table 11: Clinical Experiences in Laboratory Schools for Educator Preparation Program Candidates

Program/Licensure Areas	Early Field Experiences	Intern I	Intern II (Full-time student teaching)
Appalachian State University			
Elementary Education	1	1	0
East Carolina University			
Elementary Education	46	0	1
Birth-to-Kindergarten	0	0	1
UNC Greensboro			
Elementary Education	16	0	0
Elementary/Special Education	5	0	0
Special Education	2	0	0
Education Pre-Majors (Sophomores)	8	0	0
Health and Physical Education	0	1	1
UNCW Wilmington			
Education Living-Learning Community	3	0	0
Elementary Education	32	0	0
Middle Grades Education	22	0	0
Special Education	53	0	0
Health and Physical Education	4	0	0
Western Carolina University			
Elementary Education/Special Education	55	0	0
Middle Grades Education	10	6	1
Health and Physical Education	11	5	0
Masters in School Administration	---	---	1

Note: For each UNC System institution, this table displays counts of the pre-service candidates who had clinical experiences in a laboratory school in 2019-20. 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. For example, WCU COE faculty are also laboratory school staff members who serve as teacher leaders in their content areas, teaching or co-teaching classes and supporting and mentoring other laboratory school staff.[17]
- Faculty-in-residence serve two to three days, per week, onsite at the laboratory school. 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. For example, at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) the faculty-in-residence implemented a new gifted and talented program, pulling out students one day a week and working with teachers the other. The ECU Community School had three faculty-in residence, one focused on supporting MTSS intervention and supports, another supporting middle grades collaboration, and a third supporting implementation of early literacy needs and interventions.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on site at the laboratory school.

Educator Preparation Program Performance Data

For each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school, Table 12 displays the required reporting elements specified in the enabling laboratory school legislation. These data come from the 2018-19 Educator Preparation Program report cards and are available on the NCDPI website.[18] The data displayed in Table 12 are for undergraduate teacher education programs only.

[17] Two adjunct methods instructors from WCU's COE co-teach science and language arts at The Catamount School; one tenured faculty member teaches math.

[18] https://www.dpi.nc.gov/report-cards-tests/epp-report-cards

Table 12: Educator Preparation Program Performance Data (2018-19 Report Cards)

Reporting Elements	Appalachian	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Mean SAT of Admitted Students	1204.91	1188.92	1187.50	1206.07	1181.75	1181.69
Mean ACT of Admitted Students	26.64	25.51	25.74	26.99	25.83	26.05
Mean GPA of Admitted Students	3.48	3.26	3.43	3.43	3.50	3.48
Percent Passing Professional and Content Area Exams	Not reported	95.00	95.00	90.00	94.00	100.00
Average Number of Semesters to Graduate	6.05	4.21	5.04	3.92	3.84	5.64
Percent Licensed	85.00	89.00	89.00	90.00	83.00	88.00
Percent Employed in NC Within One Year of Program Completion	55.00	73.00	73.00	70.00	64.00	66.00
Standard 1 (Leadership): % Proficient or Above	98.80	97.10	97.40	96.10	97.10	96.60
Standard 2 (Classroom Environment): % Proficient or Above	98.10	97.20	97.20	96.40	97.00	97.70
Standard 3 (Content Knowledge): % Proficient or Above	98.10	96.80	95.90	95.70	96.90	96.30
Standard 4 (Facilitating Student Learning): % Proficient or Above	98.20	96.40	95.60	93.90	96.60	97.30
Standard 5 (Reflecting on Practice): % Proficient or Above	98.50	96.50	96.70	96.30	96.60	97.00
EVAAS: % Meets Expected Growth	69.40	69.20	69.00	75.10	69.00	65.40
EVAAS: % Exceeds Expected Growth	12.40	16.00	13.00	9.80	13.10	15.40
Graduate Survey: % 'Well' or 'Very Well' Prepared	74.19	77.77	72.51	73.66	74.14	76.13
Employer Survey: Average Rating (1-5 scale)	3.51	3.42	3.50	3.40	3.42	3.50
Retention: % Remaining in Teaching After Four Years	63.42	59.67	58.04	64.77	57.68	71.21

Note: This table displays educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school. These data come from the 2018-19 Educator Preparation Program report cards (available on the NCDPI website) and are for undergraduate teacher education programs only.

Best Practices Resulting from Laboratory School Operations

Annual status reports from laboratory schools suggest that laboratory school and COE personnel are refining some common practices to further leverage key features of the laboratory school model. Over time, administrative and survey data—e.g. test scores, student attendance, student and family surveys—will clarify whether these laboratory school practices contribute to desired academic and social-emotional outcomes. However, the lack of data from the 2019-20 school year, due to the COVID-19 school closures, interrupts the timeline for determining the effectiveness of these practices. As such, the practices described below are considered promising.

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 justice practices to emphasize individual and community relationships. During the 2019-20 school year, laboratory schools further invested in these efforts. They added staff who coordinate these supports, refined or integrated academic and behavioral intervention systems intended to help promote a positive school culture, and provided school staff additional training to help implement these refinements.

Balanced Curriculum and Enrichment Activities

Laboratory schools ensure that students are exposed to academic instructional in all content areas—reading/language arts, math, science, and social students—rather than a primary focus on just reading and math. They also use community partnerships and university facilities/events to expose students to arts, history, recreation, and other supplemental learning activities that laboratory school students may not otherwise experience.

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 diverse and 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. For example, in the 2019-20 school year, COEs 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. Appendix A also includes a summary of how laboratory schools responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures.

(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?

Summary

Four years after the passage of the enabling laboratory school legislation, UNC System institutions have opened six laboratory schools, which collectively educate more than 1,000 students. It remains too early to fully assess whether laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission, especially given COVID-19 and the lack of student achievement and survey data from spring 2020. However, evidence to date highlights several areas of success and challenge.

As intended, laboratory schools are enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their host districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are economically-disadvantaged or a racial/ethnic minority. Administrative data (from 2018-19) suggest that laboratory schools differed in their impact on student achievement. Students at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and the ECU Community School moved up in the distribution of standardized test scores and scored as well as or better than a matched comparison sample. But the remaining laboratory schools, particularly the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), struggled to promote student achievement growth in 2018-19. More time is needed to meaningfully assess school performance, especially for the laboratory schools in their first year of operation in 2018-19.

Laboratory schools offer COE faculty and candidates unique exposure to the practical challenges of teaching and leading in schools and improving outcomes for high-need schools, while also providing laboratory schools with access to COE and university resources. As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they have refined how they engage faculty and pre-service candidates in them. Laboratory schools are prioritizing deeper, onsite engagement by COE faculty and are emphasizing early field experiences (as opposed to only student teaching) for teacher candidates. This allows more teacher candidates to be exposed to laboratory schools and promotes a more consistent COE presence in laboratory schools.

Given the challenges associated with COVID-19—school closures in spring 2020, remote learning in fall 2020—it may take more time to reasonably assess the performance of laboratory schools and their impact on educator preparation programs. Future reports to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee will continue to examine how laboratory school practices and policies evolve to respond to the challenges ahead and contribute to student outcomes and the enhanced preparation of pre-service teachers and school leaders.

Appendix A

Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative

November 2020 Report

Education Policy Initiative at Carolina/UNC Public Policy: Kevin C. Bastian
Public Impact: Juli Kim, Whitaker Brown, and David Gilmore

UNC
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Public Policy

PUBLIC IMPACT

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 by 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 mission—teaching, research, and public service—and represent an innovative extension of the UNC System's presence in K-12 education.

In 2019-20, five 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 requires the establishment of at least three additional laboratory schools by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.[4]

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. However, the enabling legislation allows the UNC System to exercise six waivers to establish laboratory schools in districts that 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 it is not fully enrolled by

[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.
[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)

March 1 before the start of the next school year.[7] Laboratory schools present opportunities to benefit low-performing students, to implement new and research-based instructional strategies, to enhance the preparation experiences of pre-service educators, and to 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] and November 2019.[9] The following report reflects the Evaluation Team's review of laboratory school implementation, operation, successes, and shortcomings in the period from August 2019 to March 2020, prior to the closure of all North Carolina public schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As planned, this report includes rigorous analyses of 2018-19 administrative data. Given the school closures associated with COVID-19, this report does not include certain data elements (e.g. surveys, standardized tests) that would have been collected in spring 2020. The laboratory schools' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in schools transitioning from in-person to remote learning, is addressed in Appendix A1.

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 of laboratory schools, and other information the UNC BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools considers appropriate.[10] 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, 2020.

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?

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[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/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] 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.

(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 five UNC System laboratory schools in operation during the 2019-20 school year: The ECU Community School, The Catamount School (WCU), the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). It also includes some initial reporting on Niner University Elementary School (UNCC), which opened in August 2020. 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 serves students in grades K-5 in an elementary school formerly operated by Rockingham County Schools. 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-2 school located in a formerly vacant Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools building in west Charlotte.[11]

Data Sources and Analysis

To complete an in-depth review of the laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team typically relies 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 Colleges of Education (COE); (3) administrative data on students, schools, and school personnel form the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI); (4) survey responses from laboratory school students and families and from beginning teachers and their employers; and (5) administrative data from COEs on educator preparation programs and pre-service candidates. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures, student and family survey data are not available for the 2019-20 school year. Likewise, because North Carolina did not administer standardized assessments in spring 2020, this report does not include a summary of 2019-20 school-level achievement.

Much of the data for this evaluation report comes from status reports completed by UNC System COEs and laboratory school principals. Additional data for this report come from student demographic information, interviews with laboratory school principals and university COE leaders on laboratory school responses to COVID-19, and analyses of administrative data. See Appendix A2 for further detail on the data sources, including their alignment with the evaluation questions and the timing/availability of data.

[11] Niner University Elementary School opened as a K-2 school but plans to add a grade each year to become a K-5 school by the 2023-24 school year.

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 and interview transcripts—collected in April and May 2020.

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—those run by ECU, WCU, UNCG, UNCW, and Appalachian State—and another for new laboratory schools—UNCC—regarding activities undertaken in their last planning year. (See Appendix A2 for further detail on the annual status reports.) In addition, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews with laboratory school principals and UNC System COE leaders to learn about laboratory school responses to COVID-19. (See Appendix A2 and A3 for further detail on the interview protocols and analyses of interview inputs.)

Quantitative data analyses

The Evaluation Team used quantitative data from a host of sources to assess whether laboratory schools improve students' academic performance, engagement with school, and social-emotional outcomes; whether laboratory schools are successfully marketed and managed; and whether pre-service experiences in a laboratory school (e.g., student teaching) influence early-career educators. See Appendix A3 for further detail on quantitative data analyses.

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 a short period of time—two full years for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and three full years for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU). Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) opened in August 2020.

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 A4. As related to implementation, this report also distinguishes differences among laboratory schools that opened in 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2020-21. Further, this report acknowledges the unique circumstances of the 2019-20 school year, which concluded with schools statewide providing remote learning for homebound students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main report addresses laboratory schools' operation from August 2019 to March 2020 while their response to the COVID-19 pandemic is described in Appendix A1.

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 the inaugural 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 four years of experience in launching and supporting the development of laboratory schools. Only one laboratory school, UNCC's Niner University Elementary School, opened in 2020-21, three years since the first cohort of laboratory schools launched and two years since the second cohort opened. Issues related to the school's original location, including lower than expected enrollment, and concurrent changes in leadership at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (UNCC's district partner) and at the College of Education, led UNCC to postpone launching its laboratory school until the 2020-21 school year. The additional planning time allowed UNCC to identify a school site located in a community that better aligns with the statutory student eligibility criteria. The sections below describe the ways 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.[12] The UNC System Office, which supplies administrative support for the UNC BOG, provides the implementation and oversight support for laboratory schools.

The enabling legislation also directs UNC System institution chancellors to oversee laboratory schools.[13] 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 activities.[14] Frequently, this faculty or staff member plays a co-director or co-principal role at the laboratory school.

In 2019-20, the UNC System Office created a full-time executive director position responsible for coordinating supports for laboratory schools.[15] The executive director staffs the UNC Board of Governor's Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools that convenes two or three times per year and conducts visits to laboratory schools between meetings. The executive director also regularly convenes principals and COE deans or their designees who co-lead laboratory schools.[16]

Other communities of practice comprising staff from 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.

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,

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

[13] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8

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

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

[16] When NC public schools transitioned to remote instruction in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic the UNC System Office began conducting bi-weekly meetings with laboratory school and COE leaders to ensure consistent communication and sharing of information regarding legislative changes, updates from the Department of Public Instruction, and eligibility for CARES funding.

and by extension their Colleges of Education and laboratory schools, operate independently of one another. However, they have common issues and challenges related to the operation of laboratory schools. 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.

Laboratory school selection and approval

The six laboratory schools operating in 2020-21 were part of the group of 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.

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.[17] The change also allows 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.[18] Another statutory change revised the timeline for opening laboratory schools.[19] With six laboratory schools operating in the 2020-21 school year, the Board of Governors meets the current statutory obligation.[20] Three additional laboratory schools must open by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.[21]

Laboratory school planning and implementation

First and second cohorts. Five of the six laboratory schools have operated for two to three years, and as such, are beyond the implementation challenges that laboratory schools faced in their start-up year. However, some operational issues require ongoing attention to planning and implementation.

Student enrollment. 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

[17] 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.

[18] *Id.*

[19] *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).

[20] 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.

[21] *Id.*

attend a laboratory school.[22] High transience among the students 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 fall 2020, laboratory schools not fully enrolled by March 1 preceding the next school year will be permitted to enroll students who live within the district but do not meet the other eligibility criteria. This is allowed for up to 20 percent of the school's total student capacity.[23] In addition, districts where laboratory schools are located will be required to provide transportation to students living within the district regardless of transportation policies and practices applied to other students and schools.[24]

Staff hiring. Laboratory schools have continually engaged in hiring to address staff turnover. In addition to natural attrition (due to teachers retiring, moving, or taking leave for health reasons), some teachers have left 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 as pre-service candidates or otherwise demonstrate that their teaching experience, interests, and goals are aligned with the laboratory school environment.

Budgets. Ideally, enrollment would generate sufficient ADM funds so that laboratory schools are sustainable on state allocations 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 operation but rely on Colleges of Education to close budget gaps.[25]

Third cohort. Three years after the first laboratory schools launched, the sixth, UNCC's Niner University Elementary School, opened in August 2020. Though UNCC benefitted from the planning and implementation experiences of the first two cohorts of laboratory schools (ECU and WCU opened laboratory schools in 2017-18; Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW opened laboratory schools in 2018-19) it experienced the same challenges as its peers in adapting and aligning university administrative

[22] 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.

[23] 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.

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

[25] 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.

systems (e.g., finance, human resources) with K12 systems and rules. UNCC also dealt with a unique set of challenges.

Delayed open. A series of challenges resulted in the delayed launch of UNCC's laboratory school. UNCC began discussing a location for its laboratory school with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) in spring 2017 and was approved in 2018, by the UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools, to open in fall 2019. However, lower than expected enrollment, coupled with a change in superintendents at CMS and deans at the College of Education, led UNCC to postpone launching its school. The additional year allowed UNCC the opportunity to reconsider the location of the laboratory school. Though the current campus is located farther away from the UNCC campus than originally desired, it is located in a community that better reflects the statutory eligibility criteria for laboratory school students. This minimizes enrollment challenges that other laboratory schools have had (see discussion above).

COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a statewide stay-at-home order issued in March 2020. Consequently, UNCC abandoned in-person student recruitment efforts such as door-to-door canvassing and meetings hosted at community-based organizations. UNCC also paused new staff hiring. Though UNCC had hired the majority of its teaching staff by spring 2020, the pandemic forced UNCC to transition other new staff hiring activities to online platforms. In alignment with CMS' school reopening plan, UNCC opened its school with remote learning in place (for an indefinite period).[26] (See Appendix A1 for detail on COVID-19's impact on laboratory schools.)

2020-21 school year. In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the State Board of Education required all North Carolina school districts to develop contingency plans for reopening schools in the 2020-21 school year that are aligned with state guidance for safely returning students and staff to school.[27] Laboratory schools, like all North Carolina schools, were unable to make definitive plans for school re-opening until July when the state confirmed that schools would be allowed to reopen at reduced capacity or continue full-time remote learning. All laboratory schools adopted reopening strategies aligned with their host district's approach and worked with their district partners to coordinate services (e.g., transportation, meal services) required to support in-person and/or remote instruction. Four laboratory schools reopened with remote learning for all students and two laboratory schools reopened using a "hybrid" approach that combines in-person and remote learning strategies. Given pandemic-driven uncertainties, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), which typically operates on a year-round calendar, elected to operate on a traditional academic calendar for the 2020-21 school year. Laboratory schools also worked with their university partners to adapt strategies for engaging preservice candidates and COE faculty to accommodate remote learning instruction. Five laboratory schools engaged preservice candidates in the fall semester under the supervision of COE and other university faculty and laboratory school teachers and staff. At D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and the Academy at Middle Fork

[26] As of this writing, UNCC anticipates that in person learning could resume in the second quarter, or sometime in November.

[27] On June 11, the North Carolina State Board of Education released a comprehensive guidebook for safely reopening schools in fall 2020. (See NC State Board of Education. *Lighting Our Way Forward: NC's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools.* (June 2020). NC Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z5Mp2XzOOPkBYN4YvROz4YOyNIF2UoWq9EZfrjvN4x8/preview?pru=AAABcsdvjwA*1iDZr-5T77y9JJ2lXMcxvg#). The State Board directed NC school districts to develop by July 1 reopening plans under three scenarios: Plan A or in-person learning for all students; Plan B or a "hybrid" approach combining in-person and remote learning; or Plan C or remote instruction for all students. On July 14, Governor Roy Cooper directed all schools to reopen at reduced capacity under a Plan B hybrid learning scenario. Districts were also given the option to reopen with remote learning for all students.

(Appalachian State), COE faculty serving in faculty-in-residence roles also provided specific support for virtual learning.

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.[28] 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.

Host school districts

In 2019-20 laboratory schools continued to rely on district partners for 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. Some laboratory schools share support staff with district partners, effectively transforming part-time into full-time positions.

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

- New guidance for determining costs to districts for providing facilities and other operational and maintenance services for laboratory schools;[29]
- New guidance on transportation that districts provide laboratory schools;[30]
- 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.[31]

Though it is still too early to fully assess the benefits of laboratory schools to their district partners, both parties anticipate that students who matriculate from laboratory schools and return to district schools will be better positioned for academic success. To date, The Catamount School (WCU) has graduated three classes of 8th graders and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has graduated two classes. Some of these students have gone on to enroll 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.

Laboratory schools also brought resources into high-need schools, including capital improvements, expert instruction for high-need students, and professional development for district staff. For example, WCU

[28] N.C.G.S. §116-239.5(c)
[29] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(a) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)
[30] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(b) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)
[31] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(d) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)

helped the district finance improvements to an existing multi-purpose space that its laboratory school will share with its co-located district school. The ECU Community School included South Greenville Elementary School teachers and assistants, COE students serving internships at other Pitt County Schools, and substitute teachers in various professional development offerings in spring 2019.

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/or their designees) work closely with school-based leadership teams. COE faculty engagement onsite at laboratory schools occurs in several forms. As planning and implementation partners, COE faculty have provided professional development relevant to specific laboratory school needs since inception. Faculty support instruction and curriculum implementation as faculty-in-residence, as instructors teaching onsite methods courses, or as field experience supervisors supporting COE students in clinical activities. In each of these roles, 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 other responsibilities that COE faculty have.

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 institution. COEs are also beginning to provide a pool of graduates who had pre-service experiences at the laboratory school from which they (or other low-performing schools) may hire teachers.

Other divisions of the university

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

In the 2019-20 school year, university institutions continued to provide laboratory schools business and administrative operational supports (e.g., finance and accounting, human resources, legal, and data reporting) that local educational agencies provide to traditional district schools. However, these functions have become systematized within university divisions and offices after two to three years of laboratory school operation.

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 supports to laboratory school students and/or professional development for laboratory school staff on relevant topics (e.g., trauma). University institutions also provide laboratory schools access to university-based resources that enhance some aspect of the laboratory school model. For example, access to on campus maker spaces helps some

laboratory schools emphasize experiential learning; referrals to health providers helps some laboratory schools address the physical well-being of laboratory school students.

Community partners

In their second and third years of operation, laboratory schools varied in the way and degree to which they leverage community partners. Generally, laboratory schools' community partners provide several 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).

As UNCC prepared to open its laboratory school, COE faculty from the early childhood master's degree program planned to collaborate with in-home childcare operators serving the community where the laboratory school is located. When discussing community needs with the UNCC laboratory school planning team, community leaders, residents, and operators identified a need for support and professional development to enhance these programs. The UNCC planning team envisions that work with area childcare providers will also help with student recruitment in the future.

Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?

As in previous reports, 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; and (5) school management. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures, the Evaluation Team was unable to administer a parent/family survey in spring 2020. As such, an additional section focused on parent perceptions of laboratory schools is not included in this report.

Marketing of laboratory schools

Unlike traditional district schools serving neighborhoods or other attendance zones, laboratory schools must recruit students to enroll. In the 2019-20 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.[32] 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.[33]

[32] N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)

[33] 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

Schools typically rely on several marketing strategies to publicize laboratory schools. These include 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 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.

In 2019-20, existing laboratory schools refined implementation of these strategies. For example, some laboratory schools are working with COE or university institution offices that manage communications, community outreach, or marketing and deploying marketing activities more strategically (e.g., buying radio commercial time during business commute time, leasing billboards at key traffic areas, and developing promotional videos to use on websites, social media, and television commercials).

As a startup school, UNCC relied on these strategies, but also engaged in door-to-door canvassing in neighborhoods surrounding the laboratory school. UNCC's COE also began planning an initiative to provide professional development to area in-home childcare centers to enhance their service to the community. In time, this partnership may lead to enrollment referrals to the laboratory school.

Laboratory school leaders recognize that as laboratory schools become established and community awareness of them 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.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in spring 2020 significantly curtailed in person outreach and recruitment activities prior to the 2020-21 school year. With state-imposed restrictions against large gatherings and cautions regarding face-to-face interactions, laboratory schools relied heavily on social media and print and media advertising to publicize laboratory schools. Word-of-mouth through enrolled families also became more important. Overall, COVID-19 and the associated school closures may have adversely impacted marketing, as each laboratory schools experienced declines in enrollment for the 2020-21 school year.[34] (See Appendix A1 for additional detail on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on laboratory school operations). Further, the Niner University Elementary School's inaugural enrollment did not meet the UNCC laboratory school planning team's enrollment goal. As of September, the Niner University Elementary School served 73 students, 49 percent of its projected enrollment target.[35]

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."

[34] In 2020-21, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) enrolled 99 percent of its 2019-20 enrollment; ECU Community School enrolled 93 percent; Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) enrolled 85 percent; D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) enrolled 94 percent; and The Catamount School (WCU) enrolled 72 percent. In comparison, in 2019-20, enrollment at ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School, and The Catamount School (WCU) grew over 2018-19 enrollment, by 38 percent, 0.25 percent, and 7 percent, respectively; but declined at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) by 0.7 percent and 7 percent, respectively. All the data for these comparisons come from the 20th day of each school year.

[35] In a report submitted to the Evaluation Team in March 2020, UNCC's laboratory school planning team projected enrollment of 150 students for the 2020-21 school year.

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.[36] 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. 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.[37] 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.[38]

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.[39]

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

[37] 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.

[38] 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."

[39] 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.

Table 1 presents data on how laboratory schools 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 of 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.

Appalachian State certified that 74 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 27 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 17 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; three percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and six percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity. ECU certified that 98 percent of the students enrolled at the ECU Community School in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 40 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 39 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and two percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff. UNCC certified that 70 percent of the students enrolled at Niner University Elementary School in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 16 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; one percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 12 percent qualified based on recently enacted enrollment provisions. UNCG certified that 58 percent of the students enrolled at the Moss Street Partnership School in 2020-21 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 26 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; one percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and two percent qualified based on recently enacted enrollment provisions. UNCW certified that 50 percent of the students enrolled at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 28 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 21 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and three percent qualified based on recently enacted enrollment provisions. Finally, WCU certified that 16 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school and 93 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance.

Table 1: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements

	ASU	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	276	109	73	333	203	43
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	74.3%	98.2%	69.9%	58.0%	49.8%	16.3%
Previously Low-Performing Student	26.8%	40.4%	16.4%	26.1%	27.6%	93.0%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	17.4%	38.5%	0.0%	13.2%	20.7%	0.0%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	2.9%	1.8%	1.4%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	5.8%	0.0%	12.3%	1.5%	2.5%	0.0%

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 2020-21 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 2019-20 and 2021-21 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 276 enrolled students, with 31 in kindergarten, 43 in 1st grade, 43 in 2nd grade, 45 in 3rd grade, 63 in 4th grade, and 51 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are similar to those from the 20th school day in the 2019-20 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, nearly 49 percent are male, 45 percent are Black, 38 percent are Hispanic, and 10 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 62 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income.[40] By comparison, 29 percent of the elementary grades students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, and 68 percent are designated as low-income.[41]

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, the ECU Community School has 109 enrolled students, with 19 in kindergarten, 27 in 1st grade, 24 in 2nd grade, 13 in 3rd grade, 12 in 4th grade, and 14 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2019-20 school year, these data show a small decrease in enrollment at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 57 percent are male, 94 percent are Black, and 29 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 100 percent of the ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the elementary grades students in Pitt County Schools are Black and 70 percent are designated as low-income.

[40] When calculating the percentage of low-income students at Appalachian Academy, North Carolina does not use a 1.6 multiplier (as it does for other schools in Winston-Salem Forsyth Schools). If the 1.6 multiplier was applied to the Appalachian Academy, 99 percent of the students would be designated as low-income.

[41] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2018-19 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2019-20 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) has 73 enrolled students, with 40 in kindergarten, 19 in 1st grade, and 14 in 2nd grade. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 57 percent are male, 64 percent are Black, 12 percent are multiracial, 11 percent are Hispanic, and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children. Because Niner University Elementary School is new to open in 2020-21, Title I data are not available from the 2019-20 school year. By comparison, 35 percent of the K-2 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, three percent are multiracial, and 27 percent are Hispanic.

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) has 333 enrolled students, with 40 in kindergarten, 67 in 1st grade, 59 in 2nd grade, 66 in 3rd grade, 60 in 4th grade, and 41 in 5th grade. These enrollment values are down—by approximately 15 percent—relative to enrollment at the 20th day in the 2019-20 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 57 percent are male, 64 percent are Black, 11 percent are multiracial, 12 percent are Hispanic, and 17 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 99 percent of the Moss Street Partnership School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 17 percent of the K-5 students in Rockingham County Schools are Black, seven percent are multiracial, 14 percent are Hispanic, and 71 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 203 enrolled students, with 18 in kindergarten, 17 in 1st grade, 22 in 2nd grade, 20 in 3rd grade, 21 in 4th grade, 14 in 5th grade, 26 in 6th grade, 32 in 7th grade, and 33 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2019-20 school year, these data show a small decrease in enrollment at the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 54 percent are male, 88 percent are Black, and 21 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 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 and 59 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2020-21 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 43 enrolled students, with 7 in 6th grade, 19 in 7th grade, and 17 in 8th grade. These enrollment values are down—by approximately 28 percent—relative to enrollment at the 20th day of the 2019-20 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2020-21, 49 percent are male, 77 percent are White, 12 percent are multiracial, five percent are Hispanic, five percent are American Indian, and 28 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2019-20 school year show that 33 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 70 percent of the middle grades (6-8) students in Jackson County are White, 17 percent are Hispanic, four percent are multiracial, 6 percent are American Indian, and 62 percent are designated as low-income.

Table 2: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools

	ASU		ECU		UNCC	UNCG		UNCW		WCU	
	19-20	20-21	19-20	20-21	20-21	19-20	20-21	19-20	20-21	19-20	20-21
Total Enrollment	280	276	117	109	73	390	333	216	203	60	43
Kindergarten	40	31	32	19	40	67	40	17	18	---	---
1st Grade	44	43	27	27	19	67	67	22	17	---	---
2nd Grade	40	43	16	24	14	80	59	20	22	---	---
3rd Grade	61	45	12	13	---	58	66	20	20	---	---
4th Grade	52	63	15	12	---	46	60	13	21	---	---
5th Grade	43	51	15	14	---	72	41	20	14	---	---
6th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	31	26	17	7
7th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	36	32	16	19
8th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	37	33	27	17
Male	50.0%	48.6%	56.4%	56.9%	57.5%	56.4%	56.8%	54.2%	53.7%	45.0%	48.8%
White	7.1%	10.5%	1.7%	1.8%	4.1%	15.9%	13.8%	3.7%	6.4%	73.3%	76.7%
Black	46.4%	44.9%	96.6%	94.5%	76.7%	60.8%	63.7%	87.9%	88.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	5.0%	5.1%	0.9%	1.8%	6.9%	12.3%	10.8%	3.2%	1.5%	15.0%	11.6%
Hispanic	40.0%	38.0%	0.9%	0.9%	11.0%	10.8%	11.7%	5.1%	3.9%	6.7%	4.7%
Asian	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	2.3%
American Indian	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	4.7%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	13.9%	10.5%	17.9%	29.4%	13.7%	16.2%	17.4%	18.1%	20.7%	16.7%	27.9%
Low-Income	62.2%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	N/A	98.6%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	32.7%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 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 2019-20 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 2020-21 school year. N/A=not available.

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. For example, the laboratory schools that opened in 2018-19 are former district schools serving low-income neighborhoods and experiencing declining populations. 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 student needs associated with poverty. 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/or engage institution and community partners to provide health, social work, and counseling services, and address basic subsistence needs of students and families (e.g., provide food on weekends and winter clothing). They 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.

In the 2019-20 school year, laboratory schools continued efforts to create physically safe environments for students. Several laboratory schools improved their facilities to add space or increase functionality. For example, ECU installed an eight-classroom modular unit to its campus. WCU partnered with its co-located district school to renovate a multi-purpose space that both schools will use. UNCW worked with its host district to install a playground structure and replace a kiln on the laboratory school campus.

Laboratory schools also worked to refine systems and practices focused on creating socially and emotionally safe environments for students. In 2019-20, laboratory schools used either or both PBIS and restorative practices to support behavior management and positive school culture. To integrate approaches for addressing academic and behavioral interventions, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and The Catamount School (WCU) worked to incorporate their PBIS system into a broader, multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework. The ECU Community School also enhanced its Integrated Health Collaborative (IHC), one of its primary structures for supporting student health and safety. Two new full-time positions, including a director and school counselor, expand the IHC team's capacity to coordinate and provide direct services to students and supports for instructional staff in implementing PBIS.

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.

Focus on literacy. Laboratory schools are particularly focused on improving teaching and learning related to literacy. In 2019-20, they continued to hone literacy supports for students and teachers. For example, the ECU Community School is developing a multi-year plan to train all staff on evidence-based reading instruction. Likewise, the Moss Street Partnership School's K-5 teachers worked with the school's curriculum director to develop a comprehensive literacy framework based on the essential components of literacy instruction.

In 2019-20, COEs continued to support literacy instruction at laboratory schools through graduate program offerings. UNCG's COE created an M.Ed. program cohort in literacy education with courses offered onsite at the laboratory school and taught by COE faculty working with laboratory school teachers on literacy instruction. ECU Community School, Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) teachers are enrolled in or planning to enroll in their partner COE Masters of Education literacy programs. COE faculty also support laboratory school efforts to enhance literacy instruction. For example, an ECU COE faculty member is integrally involved with the ECU Community School's work to develop a school-wide literacy plan; UNCW faculty, including the COE librarian, collaborate with D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy staff to support implementation of literacy interventions and programs.

Licensed and experienced teachers. Laboratory schools continue to emphasize hiring and retaining licensed and experienced teachers. However, some laboratory schools (ECU, UNCG, UNCW, WCU) that experienced staff turnover before the start of the 2019-20 school year hired beginning teachers (those in their 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year of teaching). In doing so, laboratory schools sought teachers whose interests, background, or teaching strengths align with the laboratory school mission, model, and student population. Some laboratory schools were able to hire graduates of the COE program who had served internships or had other clinical experiences at the laboratory school as pre-service candidates.

The laboratory schools that hired beginning teachers provided them various supports, including the statewide NC New Teacher Support Program, which provides one-on-one instructional coaching through a mentor, or their COE's own support program. For example, UNCW's First Years of Teaching Support Program provides three days of professional development on self-selected topics and is offered in collaboration with other teachers in the southeast region of the state. Though school leaders reported satisfaction with their beginning teachers, they did acknowledge that employing them reduced the number of classrooms available for pre-service candidates to have clinical experiences—given experience requirements for clinical/cooperating teachers and the desire to allow new teachers the time and opportunity to adapt to teaching in the laboratory school and addressing the needs of their students.

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 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 provides day-to-day oversight of 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 that are operated by COEs—means that both principal and COE leaders may be interacting 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, who are shared across multiple classrooms, for lower elementary grades. The Catamount School (WCU) has one class per grade. The ECU Community School has two classes per grade in grades 1 and 2 and one class per grade in grades K, 3, 4, and 5. The Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has two to three classes per grade. UNCW has one class per grade in grades K-5 and two classes per grade in grades 6-8. UNCG has multiple classrooms per grade, which includes some multi-age classrooms in the lower grades (e.g., combined first and second grade). Three laboratory schools use departmentalized instruction: UNCG has core content teachers for grade five and UNCW for grades 6-8. WCU, the only laboratory school serving only middle grades, has core content teachers for grades 6-8.

All laboratory schools provide student supports including administrative, counseling, student health, social work, exceptional children, and behavior management services. Laboratory schools also provide extracurricular and enrichment activities, including arts, music, and physical education. The smallest laboratory schools, ECU and WCU, have the fewest number of full-time support staff employees and rely heavily on institution partners to provide supports. The laboratory schools operating whole schools (Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW) employ 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 employs 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 school. Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW both employed assistant principals; ECU and WCU did not have assistant principals in 2019-20.

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 source is precarious: student enrollment, which drives ADM, has been lower than school targets; 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; scheduling school start and end times around the availability of district transportation).

In 2020, laboratory schools received one-time supports from two funding sources. The state directed $200,000 to laboratory schools for support services.[42] 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.[43] In addition, as previously noted, legislative changes in the laboratory school enabling legislation effective in the 2021-22 school year provide new guidance on costs of certain supports that district partners provide to laboratory schools.[44] These changes may reduce some operating expenses for laboratory schools and help close budget gaps. However, the impact of these new supports or the ongoing need for UNC System institutions to continue to provide their own funds or to access other funds needed to serve high-need students successfully is unclear, particularly given statewide economic uncertainties due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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—rigorous analyses of *student-level* achievement data from two years prior (i.e., 2018-19 for this report) and *school-level* achievement data from the most recent school year (i.e., 2019-20 for this report). Due to COVID-19 and the associated school closures, students in North Carolina did not take standardized, end-of-grade assessments in spring 2020. As such, this report includes rigorous analyses of *student-level* achievement data from 2018-19 but does not include summary data on the achievement of laboratory schools in 2019-20.

In-depth analyses of 2018-19 student academic performance

Per legislative design, the five laboratory schools operating in 2018-19 enrolled students who had previously attended a low-performing school and/or who failed to meet expected growth in the previous academic year (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.

[42] Pursuant to Session Law 2020-56, the UNC Board of Governors was authorized to transfer $200,000 in non-recurring funds from funds provided for the Future Teachers of North Carolina program for the 2020-21 fiscal year with the proviso that those funds not be used to create new positions or to hire additional consultants for the UNC System Office.

[43] In addition, Session Law 2020-97 provides that for the 2020-21 fiscal year, North Carolina districts will be held harmless for declines in enrollment such that the State Board of Education will not reduce allocations to school districts due to discrepancies between their actual and anticipated average daily membership.

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

With these cautions, the Evaluation Team makes the following comparisons: (1) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2018-19 with their own test scores in the previous school year(s) and (2) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2018-19 with the test scores of a matched comparison sample. In Appendix A5, the Evaluation Team also displays unadjusted test scores for laboratory school students versus all other students in the laboratory schools' host LEAs. Notably, as shown in Appendix Table A5.5, eight 8th graders at The Catamount School (WCU) took Math I in 2018-19. Their average Math I score was 553.6—relative to 550.5 in Jackson County—and 75 percent of those students passed the exam and earned high school course credit.

For the three laboratory schools in their first year of operation in 2018-19—the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—Table 3 presents laboratory school students' EOG test scores from 2018-19 and their prior scores from the same subject area in 2017-18. Scores are standardized within subject, grade, and year (across *all* North Carolina public school students) to show students' placement in the test score distribution.[45] That is, if a student scores 10 percent of a standard deviation (0.100) below the mean in 2017-18 and 10 percent of a standard deviation below the mean in 2018-19, the student made the average amount of growth. If a student's placement in the test score distribution changes, that indicates that the student made more or less growth than the average.

Data from the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) show that students' placement in the test score distribution was slightly higher in 2018-19 (when attending the laboratory school) than in 2017-18 (before enrolling at the laboratory school). For example, in 2018-19, 3rd-5th grade students at the Academy at Middle Fork scored 0.67 standard deviations below the statewide mean in reading; in 2017-18, these same students scored nearly 0.76 standard deviations below the statewide mean in reading. Data from the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) show that students' placement in the test score distribution was much lower in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18. For example, 4th and 5th grade students at the Moss Street Partnership School scored one standard deviation below the statewide mean in math; in 2017-18 these same students scored 0.43 standard deviations below the statewide mean in math. Finally, data from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) indicate that students' placement in the test score distribution was generally lower in 2018-19 than in 2017-18. This is true for elementary grades reading (3-5) and math (4-5) and for middle grades reading (6-8). The exception is middle grades math (6-8), where D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students scored higher in the test score distribution in 2018-19. (See Appendix Table A5.6 for further detail on these current year (2018-19) and prior year (2017-18) test score comparisons at each grade level.)

[45] The prior score for 3rd grade reading is the composite Dibels score (part of mCLASS) from the end of second grade. There is no prior score for 3rd grade math.

Table 3: Comparing Test Score Data in 2018-19 and 2017-18 for Laboratory School Students

Test	Count of Students with Test Data in **Both** Periods	2018-19 Test Score (Standardized)	Prior Year (2017-18) Test Score in the Same Subject-Area (Standardized)
Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)			
Reading (3-5)	140	-0.673	-0.758
Math (4-5)	93	-0.913	-0.977
Moss Street Partnership School			
Reading (3-5)	164	-0.901	-0.449
Math (4-5)	123	-1.009	-0.428
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy			
Reading (3-5)	49	-0.733	-0.603
Math (4-5)	39	-0.785	-0.476
Reading (6-8)	97	-0.657	-0.527
Math (6-8)	97	-0.608	-0.736

Note: For the Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, this table presents students' EOG test scores (standardized) in 2018-19 and their prior scores (standardized) from the same subject-area (reading or math) in the 2017-18 school year. Not all laboratory school students have test scores in both periods.

Table 4 presents test score comparisons for the two laboratory schools in their second year of operation in 2018-19—the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU). For the ECU Community School, these data indicate that students' placement in the test score distribution improved in 2018-19, relative to 2017-18. Conversely, scores from The Catamount School show that students' placement in the test score distribution in 2018-19 was lower than in 2017-18. (See Appendix Table A5.7 for further detail on these current year (2018-19) and prior year (2017-18) test score comparisons at each grade level.)

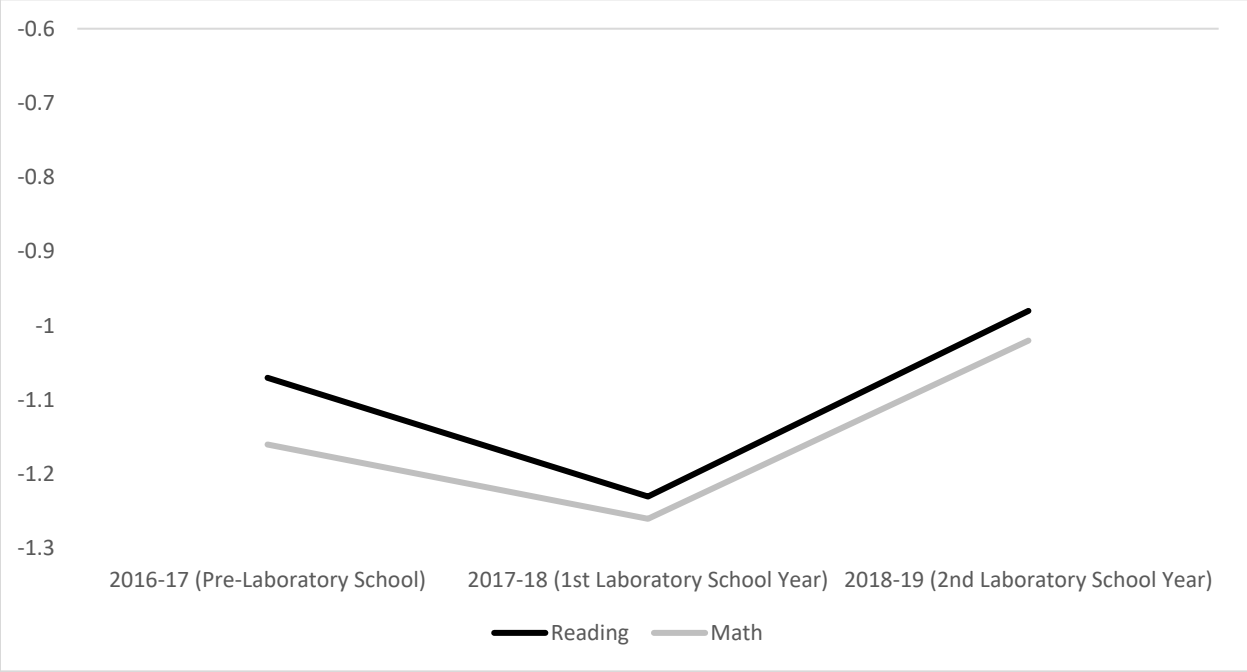
The data in Table 4 come from two different types of students: (1) those in their first-year at the ECU Community School or The Catamount School, meaning their 2017-18 test scores are prior to their attendance at a laboratory school and (2) those in the second-year at the ECU Community School or The Catamount School, meaning their 2017-18 test scores are also from the laboratory school. To better examine the test score trajectories of this latter group, Figures 1 and 2 display test score data from 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. This provides one year of test score data prior to their laboratory school enrollment and two years of test score data from the laboratory school. Data from the ECU Community School show a drop in reading and math scores in 2017-18, followed by a rise in those scores in 2018-19. Data from The Catamount School shows that reading scores were initially flat and fell in 2018-19; math scores fell between each school year.

Table 4: Comparing Test Score Data in 2018-19 and 2017-18 for Laboratory School Students

Test	Count of Students with Test Data in **Both** Periods	2018-19 Test Score (Standardized)	Prior Year (2017-18) Test Score in the Same Subject-Area (Standardized)
ECU Community School			
Reading (4-5)[46]	28	-0.918	-1.127
Math (4-5)	27	-0.952	-1.093
The Catamount School			
Reading (6-8)	50	-0.107	0.009
Math (6-8)[47]	42	-0.671	-0.409

Note: For the ECU Community School and The Catamount School, this table presents students' EOG test scores (standardized) in 2018-19 and their prior scores (standardized) from the same subject-area (reading or math) in the 2017-18 school year. Not all laboratory school students have test scores in both periods.

Figure 1: Test Score Trajectories at the ECU Community School—2017, 2018, and 2019

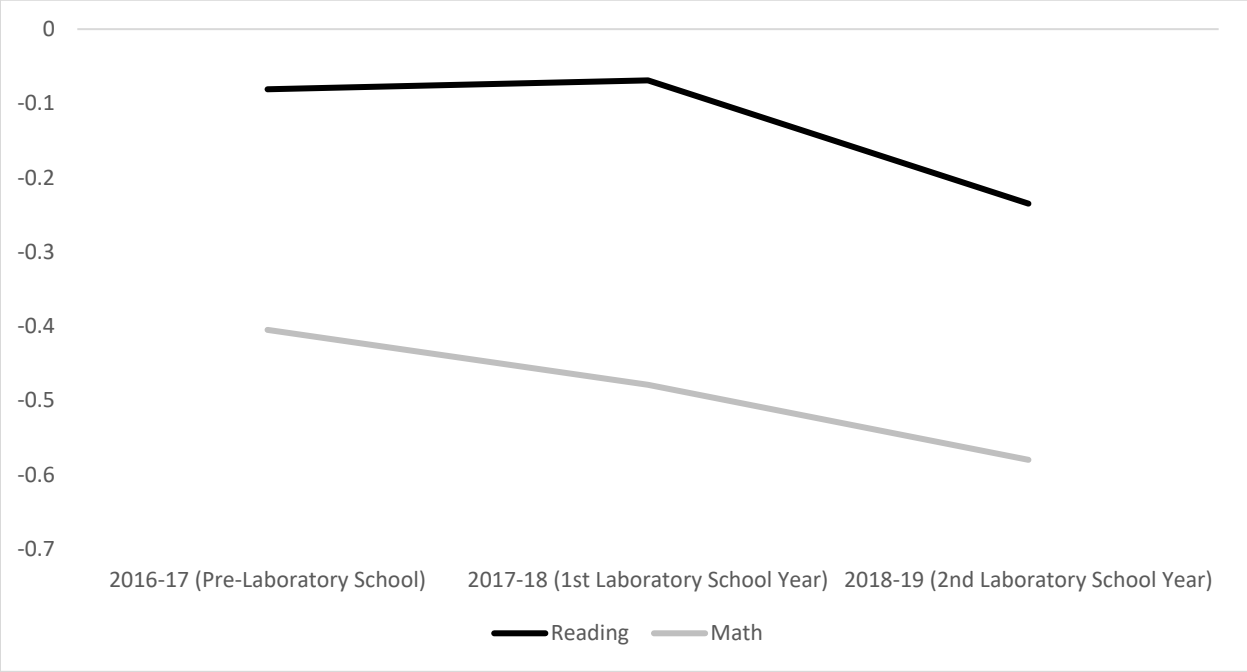


Note: For the ECU Community School, this figure displays test score trajectories in reading and math for the cohort of students that was in 3rd grade in 2016-17, 4th grade in 2017-18, and 5th grade in 2018-19. In total, 24 students contributed to the reading trajectories and 12 students contributed to the math trajectories.

[46] Third grade students at the ECU Community School do not have a prior reading score because as 2nd graders at the ECU Community School they did not take the mCLASS Reading 3D exam.

[47] The number of students with current and prior year scores differs between reading and math at The Catamount School because eight 8th grade students at The Catamount School took Math I rather than the 8th grade math EOG.

Figure 2: Test Score Trajectories at The Catamount School—2017, 2018, and 2019



Note: For The Catamount School, this figure displays test score trajectories in reading and math for the cohorts of students that (1) were in 5th grade in 2016-17, 6th grade in 2017-18, and 7th grade in 2018-19 or (2) 6th grade in 2016-17, 7th grade in 2017-18, and 8th grade in 2018-19. In total 27 students contributed to the reading and math trajectories.

To further these within-school comparisons, Table 5 presents test score data for laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.[48] In particular, the Evaluation Team estimated regression models to test whether there are statistically significant differences in the EOG scores of laboratory school versus matched comparison sample students. An initial model compares all laboratory school and matched comparison sample students; additional models return separate results for each laboratory school.[49]

In elementary grades, estimates show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower on EOG exams in math, reading, and science than the matched comparison sample. However, these

[48] See Appendix Table A5.8 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 sample students within the same grade. Variables in the propensity score model included student demographics (racial/ethnic minority, economically-disadvantaged, gender, exceptional children status, limited English proficient), measures of prior year student engagement and achievement (number of days absent, whether the student was suspended in the prior year, and prior-year test scores on DIBELS, TRC, and EOG exams in math and reading, as available), and characteristics of the prior-year school (percent racial/ethnic minority, percent economically-disadvantaged, performance composite, EVAAS growth score, and the short-term suspension rate). The Evaluation Team performed this propensity score matching for all students who were new to a laboratory school in 2018-19. For students in their second year at a laboratory school, the Evaluation Team retained the matches from the November 2019 evaluation report.

[49] In these analyses standardized test scores from 2018-19 are the outcome, the focal measure is either a 1/0 variable for laboratory school students or a set of 1/0 indicators for students at each laboratory school (with matched students as the reference group), and additional control variables including student demographics and prior year absences, suspensions, and test scores. These models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

results differ greatly across laboratory schools. Students at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and the ECU Community School scored as well as or better than matched comparison sample students. Of particular note is 5th grade science, where students at the ECU Community School had adjusted average scores nearly 50 percent of a standard deviation higher than the matched comparison sample. Conversely, students at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in math, reading, and science. These estimates are large in magnitude and explain the overall negative results at the top of Table 5. Lastly, results show that elementary grades students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in math but performed comparably in reading and 5th grade science.

Turning to middle grades EOG exams, estimates show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in math and performed comparably in reading and 8th grade science. Results for the two laboratory schools serving middle grades students show negative results for The Catamount School (WCU) in math and negative results for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in reading.

Table 5: Test Scores Results—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elementary Math (4-5)	Elementary Reading (3-5)	5th Grade Science	Middle Math (6-8)	Middle Reading (6-8)	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	**-0.279**** (0.035)	**-0.177**** (0.035)	**-0.282**** (0.066)	**-0.211**** (0.045)	-0.069 (0.048)	0.034 (0.082)
Academy at Middle Fork	-0.049 (0.051)	0.067 (0.053)	0.048 (0.104)	---	---	---
ECU Community School	0.100 (0.081)	0.127 (0.104)	**0.484**** (0.113)	---	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.525**** (0.044)	**-0.432**** (0.047)	**-0.844**** (0.074)	---	---	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.273*** (0.125)	-0.147 (0.090)	0.051 (0.146)	-0.072 (0.048)	**-0.106**+ (0.056)	0.033 (0.117)
The Catamount School	---	---	---	**-0.564**** (0.073)	0.009 (0.083)	0.037 (0.113)
Observations	1,477	2,024	740	681	727	244

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.

Collectively, the results presented in Tables 3-5 and in Figures 1-2 suggest that laboratory schools differed in their impact on student achievement in the 2018-19 academic year. Findings for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and the ECU Community School are promising. Students at these schools moved up in the test score distribution and scored as well as or better than the matched comparison sample. These results are especially noteworthy for the Academy at Middle Fork, since 2018-19 was its first year of operation. Findings show that the remaining laboratory schools, particularly the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), struggled to promote student achievement growth in 2018-19. However, one year of operation—for the Moss Street Partnership School and for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy—is not a sufficient amount of time to meaningfully assess school performance.

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

To assess how laboratory schools influence students' social-emotional and school engagement outcomes, the Evaluation Team typically relies on two sources of data: responses from the Tripod student survey and administrative data on student attendance. Due to COVID-19 and the associated school closures, the Evaluation Team did not administer Tripod student surveys in spring 2020. As such, this report includes analyses of 2018-19 student attendance data but does not include analyses of student perceptions of laboratory schools.

Student attendance at laboratory schools in 2018-19

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 same factors that warrant caution in student achievement analyses—the unique nature of laboratory school students—also present challenges for attendance analyses. In response, the Evaluation Team provides descriptive data regarding student attendance at the five laboratory schools in operation in 2018-19. In more rigorous analyses, the Evaluation Team assesses whether attendance differs for laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.[50]

Table 6 displays student attendance rates for the 2018-19 school year—that is, the percentage of days present at a school divided by the days enrolled. The top panel of Table 6 displays attendance rates for any student enrolled at a laboratory school in 2018-19, including students who exited the school before the completion of the year.[51] The second panel of Table 6 presents comparable data for students enrolled at a laboratory school for the entire year. Overall, the attendance rate for laboratory schools was 95.23—ranging from 93.92 at The Catamount School (WCU) to 95.83 at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG). Of note, the attendance rate for the ECU Community School improved from 91.97 in 2017-18 to 95.03 in 2018-19. Data in the second panel show that attendance rates are slightly higher for students enrolled at laboratory schools for the entire year.

The bottom panels of Table 6 present attendance rates for same-grade students in the school districts hosting laboratory schools (or the host school for South Greenville Elementary). As above, the Evaluation Team provides these data for any student enrolled in the host district and for students enrolled in the host district for the entire year. Attendance rates for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), the ECU Community School, and The Catamount School (WCU) are comparable to those in the host district; attendance rates are higher for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW).

[50] This is the same matched comparison sample that was part of the student achievement analyses.

[51] 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.

Table 6: Attendance Rates at Laboratory Schools and Other District Schools (2018-19)

Student Groups	Student Count	Attendance Rates
All Enrolled Laboratory School Students		
Laboratory Schools 2018-19	1,074	95.23
Academy at Middle Fork	284	94.32
ECU Community School	87	95.03
Moss Street Partnership School	405	95.83
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	242	95.67
The Catamount School	56	93.92
Laboratory School Students Enrolled for the Entire Year		
Laboratory Schools 2018-19	972	95.50
Academy at Middle Fork	272	94.60
ECU Community School	84	95.59
Moss Street Partnership School	351	96.15
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	210	95.89
The Catamount School	55	94.14
Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled in the LEA)		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	25,644	94.45
Pitt County (K-5)	11,221	95.29
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	395	93.25
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	5,529	94.03
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	18,368	94.58
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	830	93.34
Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled for the Entire Year in the LEA)		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	24,621	94.56
Pitt County (K-5)	10,545	95.48
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	289	93.13
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	5,192	94.31
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	17,415	94.78
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	795	93.45

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

Table 7 presents results from more rigorous analyses that compare attendance rates for laboratory school students versus the matched comparison sample. For these analyses, the Evaluation Team limits the sample—laboratory and matched comparison—to students enrolled at their school for the entire year.[52] Estimates in the top row of Table 7 indicate that laboratory school students have significantly higher attendance rates than matched comparison students. For example, in elementary grades, the attendance rate for laboratory school students is nearly 1.3 percent higher than for the matched sample. This estimate translates to approximately 2.2 fewer days absent for laboratory school students. Separate results, by school, show that attendance rates are significantly higher at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian

[52] In these analyses students' attendance rates from 2018-19 are the outcome, the focal measure is either a 1/0 variable for laboratory school students or a set of 1/0 indicators for students at each laboratory school (with matched students as the reference group), and additional control variables including student demographics and prior year absences, suspensions, and test scores. These models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

State), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Estimates are positive but statistically insignificant for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU).

Table 7: Attendance Rates—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elementary and Middle Grades Combined	Elementary Grades	Middle Grades
Laboratory School Students	**1.310**** (0.145)	**1.286**** (0.156)	**1.458**** (0.411)
Academy at Middle Fork	**0.508*** (0.255)	**0.474**+** (0.255)	---
ECU Community School	0.588 (0.606)	0.479 (0.596)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**1.801**** (0.202)	**1.860**** (0.199)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**2.002**** (0.332)	**2.144**** (0.446)	**1.919**** (0.516)
The Catamount School	0.622 (0.515)	---	0.506 (0.563)
Observations	3,843	3,159	684

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.

Do the laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?

In the third year of the laboratory school initiative, COEs refined their approach to integrating laboratory schools into their educator preparation programs. Most notably, COEs used methods and practicum courses relevant to laboratory school objectives to integrate pre-service candidates into laboratory schools. Frequently, methods instructors were part of the COE curriculum team supporting the laboratory school, and in some cases, these instructors served 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 in turn, practiced instructional techniques and strategies with small groups of laboratory school students. This alignment was mutually beneficial to pre-service candidates and laboratory schools. Pre-service candidates were guided in gaining experience in high-needs school settings while simultaneously providing laboratory schools with increased capacity to meet the needs of their students. Some COEs also used the pre-service candidates completing methods courses at the laboratory school as a pool for selecting students to have teaching internships at the laboratory school. Though COEs generally do not have a systematic way to engage all COE faculty with the laboratory schools, they worked to increase the number of faculty who have onsite engagement with laboratory school staff.

Pre-service candidates

In 2019-20, COEs provided pre-service candidates two primary ways for engaging 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 either 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 the course of a semester. Student teachers spent every day of the week, over the course of a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction and to support students one-on-one or in small groups. Student teachers also participated in staff meetings and professional development for laboratory school faculty.

Pre-service candidates worked under the direction of a laboratory school teacher and COE clinical supervisor. 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.

COEs are using 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—as a way to expose more pre-service candidates to the laboratory school model. Laboratory schools use methods classes as candidate pools to select student teachers.

Table 8: 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	1	1	0
ECU Community School			
Elementary Education	46	0	1
Birth-to-Kindergarten	0	0	1
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)			
Elementary Education	16	0	0
Elementary/Special Education	5	0	0
Special Education	2	0	0
Education Pre-Majors (Sophomores)	8	0	0
Health and Physical Education	0	1	1
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)			
Education Living-Learning Community	3	0	0
Elementary Education	32	0	0
Middle Grades Education	22	0	0
Special Education	53	0	0
Health and Physical Education	4	0	0
The Catamount School (WCU)			
Elementary Education/Special Education	55	0	0
Middle Grades Education	10	6	1
Health and Physical Education	11	5	0
Masters in School Administration	---	---	1

Note: For each UNC System institution, this table displays counts of the pre-service candidates who had clinical experiences in a laboratory school in 2019-20. These data are displayed by institution and program area (e.g. elementary education, special education).

Table 8 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 2019-20.[53] Due to the distance between Appalachian State and its laboratory school, the COE placed a limited number of teacher candidates at its laboratory school in 2019-20. Appalachian State continues to work on a long-term strategy that would increase the number of students able to serve internships at the laboratory school. ECU placed 46 teacher candidates into early field experiences at the ECU Community School and had two full-time student teachers (from elementary education and early childhood) at the laboratory school. UNCG placed 31 pre-service candidates into early field experiences at Moss Street Partnership School. One health and physical education student from UNCG completed an intern I and intern II (student teaching) experience at the laboratory school in 2019-20. UNCW placed 114 pre-service candidates into early field experiences at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Because the laboratory school typically operates on a year-round schedule that does not align with the university's schedule, UNCW did not place any candidates into intern I or intern II experiences at the laboratory school. WCU placed 76 teacher candidates into early field experiences at The Catamount School. In addition, WCU placed 11 candidates into intern I experiences and one candidate, from middle grades education, into a student teaching experience (intern II) at The Catamount School. Finally, Table 8 shows that only WCU placed a school leader candidate into a formal, principal internship at its laboratory school in 2019-20. Four ECU NC Principal Fellow candidates completed projects at the ECU Community School in 2019-20 but none of these school leader candidates completed a formal, principal internship at the school.

As UNCC begins placing interns, it plans to emphasize a pre-service candidate's fit with the laboratory school. UNCC will have students majoring in elementary education or double majoring in elementary and special education apply to be part of a cohort of students who have onsite methods courses at the laboratory school in 2020-21. UNCC will screen candidates from this pool for senior year internships the following year.

Principal interns

Laboratory schools place principal interns through their partner COE's Masters of School Administration (MSA) program or the NC Principal Fellows program, a scholarship loan program that funds principal intern salaries. Laboratory schools hosted fewer principal interns in 2019-20 than in 2018-19, primarily because of a lack of MSA candidates seeking placements at the laboratory school or candidates available through the NC Principal Fellows program. The physical distance from its laboratory school creates unique challenges for Appalachian State to place principal candidates in internships at its laboratory school.

Only The Catamount School (WCU) hosted a school leader candidate in a formal principal internship in 2019-20. The Catamount School's first principal intern was an MSA candidate at WCU's COE who was also a teacher at the laboratory school's co-located school (Smoky Mountain High School). In this unique set of circumstances, the principal intern completed internship requirements at both schools. He actively participated in administrative functions at The Catamount School and mentorship activities under the

[53] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2019-20. ECU placed one marriage and family therapy intern, one school psychology intern, and seven speech-language pathology interns at the ECU Community School. UNCG placed one school counseling intern, two school social work interns, four speech-language/audiology interns, and 12 school nursing interns at the Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 12 school social work interns and six instructional technology interns at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. WCU placed two school counselling interns, one school psychology intern, and 21 school nursing interns at The Catamount School.

oversight of the laboratory school principal while fulfilling other internship requirements at the host school. The ECU Community School did not host any school leader candidates in formal principal internship experiences in 2019-20. However, the ECU Community School hosted four school leader candidates—part of the NC Principal Fellows cohort at ECU—for earlier field experiences at the laboratory school. These school leader candidates completed two service-learning projects, a beginning teacher support plan and a laboratory school culture/climate audit. UNCG did not have a principal intern but hosted the COE's Principal Preparation for Educational Excellence in Rural Schools cohort at the laboratory school for three separate days of professional development on equity, innovation, systemic change, and politics of education.[54]

College of education faculty engagement with laboratory schools

COEs are increasingly systematizing ways for faculty to engage with laboratory school staff and students. 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.

COE faculty with a regular onsite 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. For example, WCU COE faculty are also laboratory school staff members who serve as teacher leaders in their content areas, teaching or co-teaching classes and supporting and mentoring other laboratory school staff.[55]
- Faculty-in-residence serve two to three days onsite at the laboratory school. 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. For example, at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) the faculty-in-residence implemented a new gifted and talented program, pulling out students one day a week and working with teachers the other. The ECU Community School had three faculty-in residence, one focused on supporting MTSS intervention and supports, another supporting middle grades collaboration, and a third supporting implementation of early literacy needs and interventions.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on site at the laboratory school.

Other faculty have scheduled opportunities, typically coordinated through curriculum directors, to provide ad hoc instructional support to laboratory school staff at 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. These interactions are reportedly mutually beneficial to COE faculty and laboratory school staff. For example, ECU COE methods instructors who teach their courses at the laboratory school may model strategies in laboratory school classrooms and in turn receive feedback from ECU Community School teachers that they use to inform their instruction with COE students. Faculty may also work with

[54] An NC Principal Fellow placed at the Moss Street Partnership School for the 2019-20 school year had to withdraw from the placement in August 2019.

[55] Two adjunct methods instructors from WCU's COE co-teach science and language arts at The Catamount School; one tenured faculty member teaches math.

laboratory schools on specific initiatives, such as research or professional development. For example, UNCG faculty and graduate students in the UNCG STEM teacher leadership collaborative produced weekly webinars and interactive sessions on STEM topics for laboratory school teachers.

As COEs continue to work to systematically increase exposure to the laboratory school across all COE faculty, they face certain hurdles. COEs must manage the workload of faculty who are deeply engaged with the laboratory school and ensure that their engagement is both 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.

In-service teachers

The laboratory school model provides various opportunities for laboratory school teachers to grow in their profession. 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 supports and ad hoc consulting.

They also receive professional development from COE faculty on instructional supports (e.g., using interim assessments, standards based report cards, differentiated instruction strategies, 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 2019-20, laboratory school staff exercised greater influence on the professional development that COE faculty provided. For example, at the ECU Community School and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), curriculum directors worked with school staff to identify topics of interest aligned with laboratory school practices and/or challenges and then coordinated COE faculty to provide professional development consistent with staff suggestions.

Laboratory school staff also have opportunities at COEs to pursue professional growth. In 2019-20 laboratory school staff were enrolled in certification or advanced degree courses at partner COEs. For example, teacher assistants may take undergraduate courses and teachers may take certification courses or enroll in graduate programs at ECU and UNCG. Appalachian State, ECU, and UNCG have teachers currently enrolled in Master in Education or Literacy programs.

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 three years since the first two laboratory schools opened, changes in the laboratory school legislation have clarified expectations at the five-year renewal. Likewise, laboratory schools are becoming increasingly institutionalized within UNC System institutions.

Nonetheless, laboratory schools still have challenges to address. Not all COE faculty or students are engaged with the laboratory school and depth of engagement varies among those who are. Changes in

the COE faculty and pre-service candidates who engage with the laboratory school necessitate that laboratory school staff and students establish new relationships with COE personnel and students on a frequent basis. Further, COEs continue to subsidize laboratory school budgets to close gaps between ADM and other public funds and actual laboratory school operating budgets. 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 is predicted to widen learning gaps and reduce state revenue. 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.

Summary

In 2016 the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation requiring the UNC System BOG and UNC System institutions to establish laboratory schools. The mission of UNC System laboratory schools is twofold: to provide an enhanced education program for students who are low-performing or attended a low-performing school and to provide exposure and training for teachers and school leaders to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings. Four years later, UNC System institutions have opened six laboratory schools that collectively serve more than 1,000 students. It remains too early to fully assess whether laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission, especially given COVID-19 and the lack of student achievement and survey data from spring 2020. However, evidence to date highlights areas of success and challenge.

Experienced 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 primarily through formal and informal communities of practice among laboratory school leaders (e.g., school principals and COE deans and designees) and staff in university administrative offices that support laboratory schools. However, funding adequacy for laboratory schools remains a challenge. The UNC System and COEs continue to supplement regular public school funding streams. Whether 2020 legislative amendments that redistributed costs borne by laboratory school district partners provide intended relief remains to be seen given the fiscal challenges schools will likely face due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they have also refined how they engage faculty and pre-service candidates in them. Laboratory schools offer COE faculty unique exposure to the practical challenges of teaching and leading in schools and improving outcomes for high-need students while also providing schools serving high-need students with access to COE and university resources. Deeper engagement by COE faculty onsite at laboratory schools and junior year pre-service candidates (most notably through methods classes) promotes consistent COE presence and exposure to learning and teaching challenges in high-need schools.

Whether and how this exposure prepares future teachers to meet student needs and improve performance in schools serving diverse student populations is not yet clear. Findings from an analysis of 2018-19 academic data, the most recently available data, suggest that laboratory schools differed in their impact on student achievement. Students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and the ECU Community School moved up in the distribution of standardized test scores and scored as well as or better than a matched comparison sample. However, the remaining laboratory schools, particularly the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), struggled to promote student achievement growth in 2018-19. More

time is needed to meaningfully assess school performance, especially for the laboratory schools in their first year of operation in 2018-19.

The UNC System and UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools face challenges in the future that may further extend the time needed to reasonably assess the performance of laboratory schools and their impact on educator preparation programs. The UNC System is charged with opening additional schools in the next two years while also facing a changed economic and budget landscape in North Carolina due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Laboratory schools, like all North Carolina public schools, face challenges associated with the COVID-19 school closures in spring 2020 and implementing variations of remote learning models in fall 2020. To the extent that the UNC System needs to identify and implement accountability strategies and measures to help laboratory schools sustain and disseminate successes they achieve, it will need to account for uncertainties that will impact laboratory school operation and performance. However, given their operational autonomy and flexibility to harness UNC System institution and other community partnerships, laboratory schools may also be uniquely positioned to respond more nimbly and innovatively to the needs of students they serve.

Accordingly, the Evaluation Team will continue to examine how laboratory school practices and policies evolve to respond to the challenges ahead and contribute to student outcomes and the enhanced preparation of pre-service teachers and school leaders.

Appendix A1: Laboratory Schools' Response to School Closure Due to Covid-19

On March 14, Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order No. 117 suspending all school activities and closing all campuses for students across the state. Laboratory schools had a complete break from school for two weeks then transitioned to remote teaching and learning for the remainder of the school year.

This appendix details the laboratory schools' response to school closure, focusing on three critical aspects: implementing remote instruction, addressing students' academic needs, and addressing students' non-academic needs. This appendix also discusses the implications of school closures for laboratory schools and their students. The Evaluation Team collected data on laboratory schools' response to COVID-19 through virtual interviews with laboratory school leadership teams in May/June 2020.

Implementing remote instruction

Establishing connections with students and families. Laboratory school staff began to plan for remote instruction immediately after schools closed. Through the remainder of the semester, staff at all schools met regularly using videoconferencing platforms, either through weekly whole-staff or professional learning community (PLC) meetings, in order to plan and share curricular resources, discuss operations, communicate with community and family members, and coordinate other critical responses to closure.

Laboratory schools developed strategies to maintain regular communication with students and their families. Methods varied across campuses and included a combination of weekly synchronous meeting times for students, automated or individual phone calls to parents, regularly scheduled office hours via Zoom, and e-newsletters. Laboratory school teachers also continued to use communication applications that they had already been using for parent outreach (e.g., ClassDojo or Remind).

Remote learning devices and internet access. All laboratory schools faced a common initial barrier in the transition to remote instruction: student access to devices and internet connectivity. Some laboratory school students had previously received devices for use at home. The Catamount School's (WCU) host district, Jackson County Public Schools, had already ensured 1:1 device access for all district students. Similarly, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) had partnered with the Kramden Institute and Live Oak Bank to distribute devices to every student in the fall. At these campuses, staff made efforts to ensure student devices were functional and up to date, distributing new devices where necessary.

At the other laboratory schools, staff reached out to families within the first two weeks to assess and document each student's home access to a device and internet. Some families already had access to devices at home, but for those without, laboratory schools partnered with either the university or host district to distribute devices (typically Chromebooks and iPads).

Because many families reported limited or no access to internet connectivity in the home, laboratory school leaders partnered with either their host district or university institution to refer families to free Spectrum services or Wi-Fi access set up in school parking lots, public libraries, or through school bus Wi-Fi hotspots. In some cases, laboratory schools distributed hotspots for use in the home.

Remote learning platforms. Laboratory school leadership teams implemented a range of supports for teachers during the transition to distance learning. Many laboratory schools worked with COE or university IT staff to provide laboratory school staff professional development on remote learning tools,

platforms, and strategies. Laboratory school teachers used a range of platforms and formats to engage students in instruction, including Google Classroom, Canvas, Schoology, Seesaw, and Zoom (for live videoconference instruction). Though most assignments were completed online, all campuses also provided a paper version of instruction available to students upon request. While a few teachers of specific courses or student groups (typically older grades) engaged in regular, synchronous, face-to-face learning via Zoom, most instruction across all laboratory schools occurred asynchronously to accommodate varying family schedules.

Addressing students' academic needs

Student attendance and engagement. Student engagement with remote instruction varied by age and point of time in the semester. On average, laboratory school leaders reported that between one-third and one-half of students engaged daily with instruction. A larger proportion of students turned in assignments when they were due. Generally, students in lower grades were more likely to regularly engage, as were older students in courses with implications for future course placement. Across all grades, laboratory school leaders reported that student engagement often began relatively high and then waned over the course of the semester.

Curricular instruction. Laboratory school leaders reported that, especially in the immediate weeks that followed school closures, most teachers reviewed previously covered standards rather than attempting to introduce new content. Some teachers addressed new content as the year progressed, especially in subjects where student performance had implications for placement in advanced coursework the following year (e.g. Math I).

The shift to remote teaching and learning limited the involvement of both COE faculty and pre-service candidates. Some faculty-in-residence continued to support laboratory school staff and students through remote teaching strategies. However, COEs generally released pre-service candidate supervisors and instructors and pre-service candidates due to the laboratory school closures and university policies. Some COEs continued to engage student teacher interns in the new remote operations of the laboratory school. In these cases, student teachers often supported laboratory school teachers with the planning and execution of synchronous and asynchronous remote learning activities, tutored students, supported teacher-led office hours, and joined virtual homeroom and staff meetings. Some laboratory schools allowed pre-service candidates to volunteer informally with their placement laboratory school as desired, but in these instances, most pre-service candidate engagement concluded within a few weeks of closure.

Addressing students' non-academic needs

While school closure has fundamentally shifted all in person learning models, it has also significantly diminished certain critical aspects of laboratory school models intended to address the needs of the whole child. Laboratory school leaders readily acknowledge that model elements premised on relationship building to support social and emotional well-being (e.g., D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy's kinship model) or promoting a positive school culture (e.g., restorative practices) or creating experiential learning opportunities that occurred through physical spaces at laboratory schools/university institutions (e.g., maker spaces) were disrupted when schools closed. A period of time to re-set and norm on these elements of laboratory school models may be needed when laboratory schools return to in-person instruction.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged laboratory schools to meet the non-academic needs of students while practicing social distancing. Each laboratory school worked with their host district to ensure continuity of

meal service for all students. Several laboratory schools became meal distribution sites for their student populations. Some laboratory schools formed new, or strengthened existing, partnerships with local community-based organizations to offer students and their families supports ranging from housing assistance and mental and physical health services to school supplies for use at home.

Schools attempted to sustain regular, though less frequent, check-ins with students and/or families via phone calls or synchronous online meetings. For example, at The Catamount School (WCU), teachers held weekly "Village Meetings" with their homerooms while staff at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) conducted social and emotional learning sessions with families over Zoom. School leaders gave teachers the autonomy to follow up and track engagement when laboratory school teachers were unable to make contact with families or noticed certain students missing check-ins or beginning to disengage with instruction. Through these check-ins and follow-ups laboratory school teachers were often able to identify student and family needs. Non-academic support teams based at several schools, including the "CARES team" at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), the student support team at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and the integrated health collaborative team at the ECU Community School continued to meet regularly to discuss students in need of additional support, field student and family referrals from teachers, and provide direct services or referrals to community based organizations. Some university partners also continued to deliver student supports remotely (e.g., virtual physical and speech therapy sessions).

Implications of school closures

While schools across the country will be grappling with the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff, students, and families for the foreseeable future, laboratory schools may face particular challenges. The Evaluation Team highlights three of these challenges below.

Student achievement. Recent research suggests that students will likely experience significant learning loss due to school closures and that learning loss may be particularly exaggerated for low-performing students—the population of students that laboratory schools are designed to serve.[56] Beyond academic learning gaps, many students may be grappling with social, emotional, and mental health challenges associated with the effects of the pandemic.[57] Laboratory school students may be disproportionately affected by these challenges given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on low-income communities and communities of color.[58] Laboratory school leaders expressed universal concern about

[56] Kuhfeld, Megan, James Soland, Beth Tarasawa, Angela Johnson, Erik Ruzek, and Jing Liu. (2020). Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. (EdWorkingPaper: 20-226). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: https://doi.org/10.26300/cdrv-yw05; Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., and Viruleg, E. (2020). Covid-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime. McKinsey and Company. Retrieved from https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/Public%20Sector/Our%20Insights/COVID-19%20and%20student%20learning%20in%20the%20United%20States%20The%20hurt%20could%20last%20a%20lifetime/COVID-19-and-student-learning-in-the-United-States-FINAL.pdf

[57] American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists. (2020, July 23). *School Reentry Considerations: Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health Amidst COVID-19*. Retrieved from American School Counselor Association: https://schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/SchoolReentry.pdf

[58] *Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups*. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-

meeting heightened student needs, both academically and otherwise, as they transitioned back to school in the fall.

Enrollment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, laboratory school leaders continued to focus on the recruitment and enrollment of new students. Prior to the pandemic, most laboratory schools used various forms of in-person recruitment strategies, including open houses and meetings held at community-based organizations. However, all laboratory schools shifted their recruitment efforts to rely exclusively on virtual outreach through laboratory school websites, social media platforms, and online enrollment portals. In spring 2020, laboratory school leaders were optimistic about enrollment and re-enrollment for the fall, noting that as of summer 2020, drops in student enrollment were no larger during the COVID-19 pandemic than in previous years (given the natural transitions in the student populations served by laboratory schools). Overall, enrollment data from the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year indicate that COVID-19 may have adversely impacted marketing, as each laboratory schools experienced declines in enrollment between the 20th day of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. In 2020-21, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) enrolled 99 percent of its 2019-20 enrollment; ECU Community School enrolled 93 percent; Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) enrolled 85 percent; D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) enrolled 94 percent; and The Catamount School (WCU) enrolled 72 percent.[59] Further, the Niner University Elementary School's inaugural enrollment was only 49 percent of the UNCC laboratory school planning team's enrollment goal.[60]

School reopening conditions. On June 11, the North Carolina State Board of Education released a comprehensive guidebook for safely reopening schools in August 2020.[61] The State Board directed North Carolina school districts to develop by July 1 reopening plans under three scenarios: Plan A, in-person learning for all students; Plan B, a "hybrid" approach combining in-person and remote learning; or Plan C, remote instruction for all students. On July 14, Governor Cooper directed all schools to reopen at reduced capacity under a Plan B or hybrid learning scenario. Districts were also given the option to reopen with remote learning for all students. All laboratory schools adopted reopening strategies aligned with their host district's approach. The Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) reopened with remote learning for all students.[62] The Catamount School (WCU) reopened using a hybrid approach for the first two weeks then transitioned to remote instruction for all students for the 7-

ethnicity.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fracial-ethnic-minorities.html

[59] In comparison, in 2019-20, enrollment at ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School, and The Catamount School (WCU) grew over 2018-19 enrollment, by 38 percent, 0.25 percent, and 7 percent, respectively; but declined at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) by 0.7 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

[60] Niner University Elementary School reported 73 students in its 20-day enrollment for 2020-21. In a report submitted to the Evaluation Team in March 2020, UNCC's laboratory school planning team projected enrollment of 150 students for the 2020-21 school year.

[61] See NC State Board of Education. *Lighting Our Way Forward: NC's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools. (June 2020).* NC Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z5Mp2XzOOPkBYN4YvROz4YOyNIF2UoWq9EZfrjvN4x8/preview?pru=AAABcsdvjwA*1iDZr-5T77y9JJ2lXMcxvg#.

[62] As of this writing, laboratory schools are implementing Plan C remote learning at least until the end of the first nine weeks of school (i.e., first quarter or grading period of the school year) or whenever returning to school is deemed "safe" at which time they will re-evaluate when to transition to their Plan B hybrid learning school reopening plan.

week remainder of the first quarter. The ECU Community School offered students three options: in-person learning at school; scheduled synchronous remote learning; and unscheduled asynchronous remote learning.

When operating under a remote learning plan for all students, laboratory schools provided regular synchronous and asynchronous instruction. They also adapted their strategies for engaging preservice candidates and COE faculty to accommodate remote instruction. Five laboratory schools engaged preservice candidates in the fall 2020 semester under the supervision of COE and other university institution faculty and laboratory school teachers and staff. The Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), The Catamount School (WCU), ECU Community School and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) engaged preservice teaching interns to support instruction. Only D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) engaged preservice leader candidates, including two Master of School Administration candidates and an NC Principal Fellow. The Catamount School (WCU), ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) engaged preservice candidates in other disciplines, including counseling, social work, nursing, speech/language, and inclusive education, who conducted activities or provided supports to students virtually. Candidates in Appalachian State's reading education master's program supported synchronous instruction for Academy at Middle Fork students through the COE's Anderson Reading Clinic. At D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) COE faculty serving in faculty-in-residence roles also provided specific support for virtual learning: two faculty-in-residence at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy focused on promoting equity in curriculum and instruction and online/blended learning and one faculty-in-residence at the Academy at Middle Fork facilitated remote instruction for the school's academically gifted students program.

Appendix A2: 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 COE; (3) administrative data on students and school personnel from the NCDPI; (4) survey responses from laboratory school students and families and from beginning teachers and their employers; 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 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 and with Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW in April 2019.

Second, during the last year of the laboratory school evaluation (2022), the Evaluation Team will conduct interviews at each laboratory school. These interviews will be scheduled with many of the same personnel as during the first phase of interviews and will allow the Evaluation Team to assess the development and growth of the laboratory schools.

In addition to interviews at each laboratory school site, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews in 2018 and 2019 with leadership at the UNC System Office. These interviews focused on the planning, set up, and governance of laboratory schools.

Laboratory School Status Reports

To complement the interviews with university and laboratory school stakeholders, the Evaluation Team will collect status reports from the UNC System COEs that are operating laboratory schools. These status reports include a set of pre-specified questions, to be completed by the COE Dean or his/her 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 will complete a status report in their last planning year prior to opening,[63] and with two exceptions, during each year of operation. Those exceptions are the two instances when the Evaluation Team will conduct on-site interviews—the first year of laboratory school operation and the last year of the laboratory school evaluation.

Administrative Data from the NCDPI

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

School personnel data for teachers and administrators include their demographics, preparation/licensure, experience, credentials (e.g., advanced degrees or National Board Certification), and when available, measures of performance (e.g., Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) estimates) . With these data the Evaluation Team will assess the characteristics of the educators working in UNC System laboratory schools. Additionally, the Evaluation Team will link these school personnel files to data provided by UNC System institutions to follow pre-service candidates (teacher and school leader) into the public school workforce. This will allow the Evaluation Team to report on the workforce outcomes (e.g., employment in North Carolina public schools, teacher effectiveness, teacher retention) of UNC System graduates and to specifically assess the outcomes of early-career educators who had significant pre-service experiences in a laboratory school.

[63] 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, and UNCW completed this status report as will all other UNC System laboratory schools.

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.

Second, the Evaluation Team has contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to parents of laboratory school students. This survey focuses on parents' 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 in spring 2020.

Finally, EPIC will continue to partner with NCDPI and the UNC System to administer two statewide surveys focused on the perceptions and practices of beginning teachers. In the spring of each school year, EPIC sends the *Recent Graduate Survey* to all first-year teachers in North Carolina public schools. This survey asks beginning teachers to reflect on the quality of their preparation and their opportunities to learn key teaching practices. At the same time, EPIC also sends the *Employer Survey* to all principals with a first-year teacher at their school. This survey asks the school principal to rate the performance of the first-year teacher. With data from these surveys, the Evaluation Team will assess whether first-year teachers who had significant learning experiences in a laboratory school perceive their preparation to be of a higher quality and whether their school principals rate them as more effective. The Evaluation Team will incorporate these data into evaluation reports once enough pre-service candidates with laboratory school experiences are in the state's teaching workforce.

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 had significant clinical experiences in laboratory schools.

Appendix A3: 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 of the 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 that are 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 a host of 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; whether laboratory schools are successfully marketed and managed; and whether pre-service experiences in a laboratory school (e.g., student teaching) influence early-career educators. Below, the Evaluation Team describes several guiding principles for how it will analyze and report quantitative data on laboratory schools. These principles are designed to help the Evaluation Team perform rigorous analyses and report data in meaningful ways.

First, the Evaluation Team will start the analysis process by reporting student and school outcomes without making any 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 set up, student demographics, partnerships, and goals across the schools. As a complement to these approaches, the Evaluation Team will also report pooled and school-specific results by the number of years the laboratory school has been open.

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.[64] Findings from these matched analyses will be the preferred results.

Fourth, when examining the characteristics of pre-service candidates and tracking them into the public school workforce, the Evaluation Team will compare pre-service candidates who had significant learning experiences in laboratory schools (e.g., student teaching, principal intern) with pre-service candidates from the same university and licensure area that did not have laboratory school experiences. For example, comparing middle grades candidates who student taught at The Catamount School versus WCU middle grades candidates who student taught elsewhere. These analyses will not be causal but may suggest whether laboratory school experiences benefit early-career teachers.

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. Likewise, when assessing outcomes for early career teachers who did versus did not have significant laboratory school experiences, the Evaluation Team will estimate a regression model controlling for teacher and school characteristics.

[64] 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 A4: Laboratory School Snapshots

This section includes brief overviews of the laboratory schools as they operated from August 2019 to March 2020 prior to North Carolina schools closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 second year, the Academy at Middle Fork staff included a principal, a director of curriculum and instruction, a director of student affairs and emergency management (formerly the behavior support coach), a data manager, eighteen classroom teachers, seven teacher assistants, two ESL teachers, three EC teachers, three EC teacher assistants, an administrative support and school finance specialist, a school nurse, and a social worker. In addition, one faculty member spent two days per week "in-residence" at the Academy at Middle Fork implementing a new gifted and talented program, working one day with teachers and one day with students in pull-out groups.

The Academy at Middle Fork's mission is to provide a balanced education for children, teachers, principals, and families through the implementation of research-based practices and exemplary classroom instruction and administration. The Academy at Middle Fork is committed to developing the whole child, including social, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs. 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, including the use of *In-Curriculum,* which facilitates an inclusive, integrated, and interdisciplinary curricular approach through 4-6-week, school-wide curricular strands. The *In-Curriculum* integrates arts, fitness, and media studies and includes materials and resources for implementation and professional development. The school has expanded its experiential education opportunities through a new Legos and robotics curriculum, along with the science lab, reading lab, and maker's space. The Academy at Middle Fork also uses PBIS and restorative justice behavior management systems.

The Academy's physical distance from Appalachian State currently precludes engagement of pre-service candidates in the laboratory school on a daily/regular basis. Since the Academy at Middle Fork is 100 miles away from the College of Education, only pre-service candidates who have living accommodations in Forsyth County are assigned there for internships. In 2019-20, Appalachian State placed one pre-service candidate who resides in close proximity to the Academy at Middle Fork for a student teaching internship. Another pre-service candidate completed a special internship in the fall intended to remediate the candidate on certain instructional practices. In addition, pre-service candidates in music, science, social studies, and leadership courses had intermittent field experiences at the laboratory school.

The COE is planning to hold certain methods courses onsite at the laboratory school, with participants becoming the pool of candidates from which the COE selects student teaching interns and with methods instructors serving as student teaching supervisors. In the meantime, the COE has increased its focus on

leveraging the laboratory school to provide professional development opportunities for in-service teachers and administrators, including participation in COE degree and certification programs. Laboratory school faculty are invited to apply to COE advanced education programs and those who are accepted and enroll can apply their learning at the laboratory school under the supervision of their COE faculty instructors.

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 2019-20, it served grades K-5, with one class per grade in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5, and two classrooms each for grades K & 1.

In its third year of operation, the laboratory school's staff included a principal, eight teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, four teacher assistants, a special education director/teacher, a second special education teacher, a part-time curriculum director, a full-time director of integrated health, a full-time school counselor, a full-time administrative assistant and a full-time social worker. The laboratory school and its host district, Pitt County Schools, jointly funded an art teacher.

The ECU Community School acknowledges and supports the integration of health, wellness, and learning to develop the whole child. 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. 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.

A majority of the schools and colleges on the ECU campus are engaged with the laboratory school to support its whole child approach. Pre-service candidates from the Allied Health, Health and Human Performance, Medical, Dental, Arts and Sciences, and Fine Arts and Communication colleges had clinical experiences at the ECU Community School in the 2019-20 school year. They supported implementation of enrichment activities focused on inquisitive and experiential learning (e.g., Pirate Play Group focused on speech/language development and early literacy and music) and family engagement activities, including home visits to determine physical and social-emotional needs and provision of supports and referrals.

Nearly 50 pre-service candidates in the elementary grades program at the ECU COE had early field experiences at the laboratory school in the 2019-20 school year. Two student teachers, an elementary education major and a birth to kindergarten major, served in internships. In addition, four school leader candidates from ECU's NC Principal Fellow cohort spent 1.5 days, per week, on the ECU Community School campus completing service projects on supporting beginning teachers and school climate/culture.

Some distinct practices that the ECU Community School is implementing include a standards-based report card to assess individual progression to content mastery; an integrated health collaborative (IHC) approach to identify physical health and social-emotional needs and provide appropriate medical and counseling supports/referrals; a modified version of the edTPA to coach in-service teachers, inform their

professional development, and create a common language for teachers to use with pre-service candidates; and a two-way, live-streamed video feed between university and laboratory school classrooms that allows pre-service candidates to observe instructional practices, classroom management techniques, and student behaviors in real-time.

Moss Street Partnership School

The Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) is an elementary school located north of Greensboro, in Reidsville, NC, that occupies a former Rockingham County Schools (RCS) elementary school. The laboratory school serves students in grades K-5, averaging approximately three classrooms per grade level. Staff and students at the Moss Street Partnership School follow the traditional RCS district calendar.

In its second year, the Moss Street Partnership School employed 24 classroom teachers (five of whom were creative arts or PE teachers), four special education teachers, a speech/language pathologist, a special education teacher assistant, a school counselor, a school social worker, a media specialist, an instructional technology consultant, a principal, an assistant principal, a curriculum director, an office manager, and a budget and personnel director. In addition, two COE faculty supported teachers and students in the school as co-directors.

The Moss Street Partnership School uses a "learner-centered, learner-led" approach and emphasizes experiential learning, inclusive education, and a collaborative environment for both students and teachers. STEAM instruction is prominent at the Moss Street Partnership School. The campus features a makerspace and the school employs a full-time instructional technology consultant who assists teachers with the incorporation of technology into their lessons. As a fully inclusive school, the Moss Street Partnership School is oriented to the whole child, including meeting academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs. Faculty from other UNCG programs including kinesiology and psychology are supporting planning for and professional development on issues such as adverse childhood experiences, trauma-sensitive interventions, restorative practices, and incorporating physical education and social learning into the curriculum. The school has engaged in professional learning on restorative practices, including on the formation of a Restorative Practice Inquiry team. In support of its dual focus on academic and whole child development, the school uses some distinctive practices including a standards-based report card to assess individual progression towards content mastery.

In 2019-20, UNCG placed one health and physical education student teaching intern for both semesters (intern I and II) at the laboratory school. Nearly two dozen juniors from the Elementary Education and Special Education majors had early field experiences at the lab school in 2019-20. A Principal Fellow was slated to join the Partnership School for a full-time year-long internship in 2019-20, but the student withdrew from the program before the start of school. The Moss Street Partnership School also hosted two year-long interns from the School of Health and Human Services in School Social Work, four semester-long interns in Speech-Language Pathology, 12 school nursing interns, and a school counseling intern. The School of Nursing will support a full-time School Health Coordinator/School Nurse at the Partnership School starting in 2020-21.

In addition, eight classroom teachers are enrolled in UNCG M.Ed. programs: seven in literacy and one in math. The principal is enrolled in UNCG's Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations Ed.D., and the instructional technology consultant is enrolled in the Teacher Education Ph.D. program.

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 that previously served grades 6-8. It is currently the only K-8 school within the district and includes one class per grade level in K-5 and two classes per grade level in 6-8. In 2019-20, the laboratory school followed a year-round calendar, which was previously implemented at the predecessor school. (The school adopted a traditional calendar for the 2020-21 school year as part of its reopening plan during the COVID-19 pandemic.) The school day runs from 7:30am to 4:30pm, driven in part by transportation services the district provides for the laboratory school. The school uses the 7:30-9:00am timeframe to provide student services before instruction begins at 9:30am.

In its second year, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy staff included a principal, an assistant principal, twelve teachers in core content areas, four teacher assistants, two special education educators, and a technology support analyst. A full-time clinical social worker, funded through a partnership with the College of Health and Human Services, provides student support services. Three Faculty-in-Residence supported the school in elementary education instruction, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) implementation, and middle grades curricular planning. Multiple faculty from the COE also regularly supported the professional learning of teachers at DCVPA.

Learning at DCVPA is guided by the acronym PIER, which stands for Personalized, Inquiry-based, Experiential, and Reflective. Teachers at DCVPA use the Rigor-Relevance framework to implement inquiry-based instruction and an experiential learning approach to help students transition from knowledge to application of content. 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 the physical health and social-emotional needs of their students. 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. 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. With funding through a partnership with MedNorth, a local community health provider, the laboratory school also has an on-site health clinic staffed by a certified family nurse practitioner. Finally, the laboratory school has an on-site "Parent Room" which includes a kitchen, washer/dryer, and meeting space for families.

In its second year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted 132 pre-service candidates ranging from freshmen to first semester seniors and Masters' of Instructional Technology (MIT) graduate students in field placements. Because the laboratory school's year-round schedule does not align with the university schedule, no student teachers were placed at the laboratory school in 2019-20. DCVPA did not have any MSA Principal Fellows placed at the school in 2019-20.

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. It operates on the JCPS calendar and contracts with the district for certain services. The Catamount School is the only middle school in JCPS, which otherwise includes grades 6-8 in K-8 schools.

In its third year, The Catamount School staff included a principal, four core subject-area teachers, an enrichment coordinator who coordinates services and extracurricular activities provided by university and community-based partners, an exceptional children (EC) teacher, a PowerSchool data manager, and a health services coordinator who serves as the school nurse and supervises School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. A COE faculty member serves as the Instructional Support Liaison and teaches one math class. A WCU Health and Physical Education (HPE) instructor serves as the physical education teacher and coordinates and supervises HPE pre-service candidates. A WCU College of Education faculty member serves as the school's EC Administrator, but does not carry a teaching load at The Catamount School.

The Catamount School fosters student growth and the development of social-emotional skills (particularly resilience) through a problem-centered, experienced-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.

More than 100 pre-service teacher candidates had formal clinical experiences at The Catamount School in the 2019-20 school year, including pre-service candidates in middle grades, 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 art education, school counseling, school psychology, clinical psychology, and speech-language pathology. WCU placed one MSA candidate at The Catamount School in 2019-20.

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; the addition of 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; and the use of standards-based grading, which allows teachers, students, and parents to assess individual progression to content mastery.

Appendix A5: Additional Student Achievement Data (2018-19 School Year)

Appendix Table A5.1: 2018-19 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	49	432.49	67.35	32.65
4th Grade Reading	46	437.89	69.57	30.43
5th Grade Reading	48	441.19	79.17	20.83
3rd Grade Math	49	540.78	71.43	28.57
4th Grade Math	46	539.37	82.61	17.39
5th Grade Math	48	538.77	79.17	20.83
5th Grade Science	48	245.06	60.42	39.58
All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students				
3rd Grade Reading	4,025	437.53	48.97	51.03
4th Grade Reading	4,205	444.45	43.59	56.41
5th Grade Reading	4,366	448.62	47.53	52.47
3rd Grade Math	4,020	547.40	40.65	59.35
4th Grade Math	4,202	547.65	46.05	53.95
5th Grade Math	4,360	547.31	43.03	56.97
5th Grade Science	4,362	252.75	30.10	69.90

Note: For the 2018-19 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 A5.2: 2018-19 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	16	422.56	93.75	6.25
4th Grade Reading	14	435.78	85.71	14.29
5th Grade Reading	14	439.21	100.00	0.00
3rd Grade Math	16	535.81	100.00	0.00
4th Grade Math	14	537.86	100.00	0.00
5th Grade Math	14	538.57	78.57	21.43
5th Grade Science	14	247.50	42.86	57.14
All Other Pitt County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,763	437.82	47.76	52.24
4th Grade Reading	1,866	444.46	45.12	54.88
5th Grade Reading	1,852	448.88	48.33	51.67
3rd Grade Math	1,764	547.83	38.95	61.05
4th Grade Math	1,864	547.74	45.82	54.18
5th Grade Math	1,850	548.09	38.92	61.08
5th Grade Science	1,851	253.81	26.53	73.47
South Greenville Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	61	427.89	86.89	13.11
4th Grade Reading	52	438.23	76.92	23.08
5th Grade Reading	49	442.18	79.59	20.41
3rd Grade Math	61	539.77	77.05	22.95
4th Grade Math	52	539.17	84.62	15.38
5th Grade Math	49	539.27	81.63	18.37
5th Grade Science	49	248.27	51.02	48.98

Note: For the 2018-19 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 A5.3: 2018-19 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	44	426.61	88.64	11.36
4th Grade Reading	69	435.99	82.61	17.39
5th Grade Reading	59	440.12	84.75	15.25
3rd Grade Math	44	537.39	86.36	13.64
4th Grade Math	69	538.23	86.96	13.04
5th Grade Math	58	537.40	81.03	18.97
5th Grade Science	59	240.69	88.14	11.86
All Other Rockingham County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	866	437.30	49.54	50.46
4th Grade Reading	905	443.56	45.86	54.14
5th Grade Reading	925	448.36	45.62	54.38
3rd Grade Math	865	547.71	36.42	63.58
4th Grade Math	905	548.15	41.88	58.12
5th Grade Math	924	548.10	37.12	62.88
5th Grade Science	924	253.24	25.87	74.13

Note: For the 2018-19 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 A5.4: 2018-19 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	12	431.42	75.00	25.00
4th Grade Reading	18	434.22	77.78	22.22
5th Grade Reading	25	442.92	80.00	20.00
6th Grade Reading	34	447.35	64.71	35.29
7th Grade Reading	38	446.16	68.42	31.58
8th Grade Reading	30	448.97	76.67	23.33
3rd Grade Math	12	543.08	66.67	33.33
4th Grade Math	18	534.89	94.44	5.56
5th Grade Math	25	544.00	56.00	44.00
6th Grade Math	34	543.44	61.76	38.24
7th Grade Math	38	539.47	84.21	15.79
8th Grade Math	30	534.47	83.33	16.67
5th Grade Science	25	249.36	44.00	56.00
8th Grade Science	30	246.27	43.33	56.67
All Other New Hanover County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,911	439.80	38.98	61.02
4th Grade Reading	2,029	446.23	36.52	63.48
5th Grade Reading	2,008	450.92	36.06	63.94
6th Grade Reading	2,031	453.70	34.56	65.44
7th Grade Reading	1,825	456.24	33.97	66.03
8th Grade Reading	1,895	459.40	39.37	60.63
3rd Grade Math	1,911	550.22	30.61	69.39
4th Grade Math	2,029	549.67	36.42	63.58
5th Grade Math	2,006	549.69	32.30	67.70
6th Grade Math	2,033	549.86	33.01	66.99
7th Grade Math	1,823	550.23	32.97	67.03
8th Grade Math	1,304	540.74	51.61	48.39
5th Grade Science	2,008	256.11	19.97	80.03
8th Grade Science	1,896	254.66	17.25	82.75

Note: For the 2018-19 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 A5.5: 2018-19 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	9	451.22	44.44	55.56
7th Grade Reading	23	453.65	34.78	65.22
8th Grade Reading	23	457.13	43.48	56.52
6th Grade Math	9	542.22	77.78	22.22
7th Grade Math	23	542.43	60.87	39.13
8th Grade Math	15	531.00	93.33	6.67
8th Grade Science	23	252.65	21.74	78.26
Math I	8	553.63	25.00	75.00
All Other Jackson County Students				
6th Grade Reading	290	452.36	40.34	59.66
7th Grade Reading	240	453.18	46.25	53.75
8th Grade Reading	258	456.96	50.00	50.00
6th Grade Math	290	547.26	42.76	57.24
7th Grade Math	240	545.85	50.00	50.00
8th Grade Math	190	537.64	71.05	28.95
8th Grade Science	258	251.63	22.87	77.13
Math I	273	550.46	33.33	66.67
Smokey Mountain High School				
Math I	149	550.00	34.23	65.77

Note: For the 2018-19 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 A5.6: Comparing Test Score Data in 2018-19 and 2017-18 for Laboratory School Students

Test	Count of Students with Test Data in **Both** Periods	2018-19 Test Score (Standardized)	Prior Year (2017-18) Test Score in the Same Subject-Area (Standardized)
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork			
3rd Grade Reading	47	-0.547	-0.475
4th Grade Reading	46	-0.672	-0.745
5th Grade Reading	47	-0.800	-1.055
4th Grade Math	46	-0.889	-0.906
5th Grade Math	47	-0.937	-1.046
Moss Street Partnership School			
3rd Grade Reading	40	-1.045	-0.391
4th Grade Reading	67	-0.849	-0.457
5th Grade Reading	57	-0.860	-0.483
4th Grade Math	67	-0.986	-0.522
5th Grade Math	56	-1.039	-0.315
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy			
3rd Grade Reading	10	-0.664	-0.520
4th Grade Reading	17	-0.945	-0.555
5th Grade Reading	22	-0.599	-0.677
6th Grade Reading	34	-0.440	-0.232
7th Grade Reading	34	-0.760	-0.786
8th Grade Reading	29	-0.792	-0.568
4th Grade Math	17	-1.325	-0.544
5th Grade Math	22	-0.367	-0.424
6th Grade Math	34	-0.474	-0.374
7th Grade Math	34	-0.904	-1.068
8th Grade Math	29	-0.417	-0.774

Note: For the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, this table presents students' EOG test scores (standardized) in 2018-19 and their prior scores (standardized) from the same subject-area (reading or math) in the 2017-18 school year. Not all laboratory school students have test scores in both periods.

Appendix Table A5.7: Comparing Test Score Data in 2018-19 and 2017-18 for Laboratory School Students

Test	Count of Students with Test Data in **Both** Periods	2018-19 Test Score (Standardized)	Prior Year (2017-18) Test Score in the Same Subject-Area (Standardized)
ECU Community School			
4th Grade Reading	14	-0.871	-1.122
5th Grade Reading	14	-0.964	-1.132
4th Grade Math	14	-1.040	-0.982
5th Grade Math	13	-0.858	-1.212
The Catamount School			
6th Grade Reading	8	0.068	-0.107
7th Grade Reading	19	-0.191	-0.064
8th Grade Reading	23	-0.098	0.111
6th Grade Math	8	-0.518	0.047
7th Grade Math	19	-0.634	-0.382
8th Grade Math	15	-0.799	-0.686
Math I	8	0.343	0.457

Note: For the ECU Community School and The Catamount School, this table presents students' EOG test scores (standardized) in 2018-19 and their prior scores (standardized) from the same subject-area (reading or math) in the 2017-18 school year. Not all laboratory school students have test scores in both periods.

Appendix Table A5.8: Characteristics of Laboratory School and Matched Comparison Sample Students

Groups	Student Count	Minority	EDS	SPED	Prior Years Days Absent	Suspended in the Prior Year	Prior Year Reading Score (Std)	Prior Year Math Score (Std)
1st Grade								
All Students	118,159	54.03	46.94	7.84	9.17	3.02	0.008	---
Lab Schools	132	81.82	74.24	11.36	11.17	10.61	-0.479	---
Matched	565	76.11	73.45	12.57	10.62	8.50	-0.323	---
2nd Grade								
All Students	117,065	53.99	46.83	9.94	8.32	3.71	0.020	---
Lab Schools	132	85.61	67.42	19.70	10.58	12.88	-0.608	---
Matched	581	86.05	68.16	19.28	10.91	12.56	-0.566	---
3rd Grade								
All Students	118,930	54.21	46.95	12.76	7.92	5.12	0.011	---
Lab Schools	115	93.04	70.43	17.39	7.91	14.78	-0.413	---
Matched	460	91.52	68.91	17.39	9.02	17.17	-0.404	---
4th Grade								
All Students	123,254	54.24	47.22	14.55	7.52	6.22	0.012	0.013
Lab Schools	140	86.42	72.14	23.57	7.79	17.14	-0.620	-0.677
Matched	608	87.17	70.72	24.01	9.04	17.43	-0.558	-0.609
5th Grade								
All Students	124,916	53.94	46.56	15.39	7.61	8.10	0.007	0.009
Lab Schools	137	87.59	63.50	18.25	8.11	25.55	-0.785	-0.695
Matched	612	85.46	68.63	18.46	8.88	25.33	-0.706	-0.645
6th Grade								
All Students	125,033	53.65	45.65	15.52	7.68	9.86	0.000	0.002
Lab Schools	39	87.18	71.79	23.08	7.13	20.51	-0.237	-0.265
Matched	196	88.78	69.90	23.47	6.87	13.78	-0.325	-0.313
7th Grade								
All Students	122,015	52.97	46.31	15.68	8.40	18.42	0.008	0.010
Lab Schools	54	64.81	64.81	16.67	7.76	25.92	-0.609	-0.833
Matched	203	69.95	64.53	17.24	8.15	32.51	-0.608	-0.656
8th Grade								
All Students	119,337	51.68	44.14	14.69	8.90	19.41	0.011	0.012
Lab Schools	51	64.71	68.63	31.37	11.02	41.18	-0.375	-0.590
Matched	198	67.17	67.17	23.23	11.35	48.99	-0.283	-0.464

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.