THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

October 26, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Live Stream
University of North Carolina System Office
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

## AGENDA

A-1. Approval of the Minutes of September 14, 2021 ..... Jimmy Clark

A-2. Lab Schools Evaluation Report ..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

A-3. Request to Establish a Laboratory School: Appalachian State University ..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

A-4. Request to Establish a Laboratory School: North Carolina A&T State University ..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

A-5. Adjourn

# DRAFT MINUTES

September 14, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
Via Video Conference and PBS Live Stream
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: Reggie Holley and Jimmy Clark.

Chancellors present were Sherri Everts, Kelli Brown, and Todd Roberts.

Staff members present included Dr. Andrew Kelly, Dr. Laura Bilbro-Berry, and others from the UNC System Office.

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**1. Approval of the Minutes of November 9, 2020 (Item A-1)**

**MOTION:** Resolved, that the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approved the open session minutes of November 9, 2020, as distributed.

**Motion:** Reginald Holley
**Motion carried**

**2. Renewal of East Carolina University Community School (Item A-2)**

The committee heard a presentation by ECU College of Education Dean Art Rouse and ECU Community School Principal Tracy Cole on the ECU Community School. The presentation served as an update to the committee on the progress of the ECU Community School.

**MOTION:** The chair called for the approval of the renewal of the East Carolina Community School for an additional five-year term.

**Motion:** Jimmy Clark
**Motion carried**

**3. Renewal of The Catamount School (Item A-3)**

The committee heard a presentation by Western Carolina Dean of Education Dr. Kim Winters and Catamount School Principal Angela Lunsford on The Catamount School. The presentation served as an update to the committee on the progress of The Catamount School.

**MOTION:** The chair called for a motion to approve the renewal of The Catamount School for an additional five-year term.

**Motion:** Jimmy Clark
**Motion carried**

There being no further business and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

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Reginald Holley, Secretary

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools
October 26, 2021

## AGENDA ITEM

A-2. Review and Approve Laboratory Schools Evaluation Report..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

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

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

The UNC System Office has contracted with independent evaluators at the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) 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 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, 2021. The in-depth report from the evaluation team will be submitted as an appendix for the record.

**Action:** This item requires a vote by the subcommittee.

# Appendix A

# Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative

## November 2021 Report

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

## 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 2020-21, six 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] In October 2021, Appalachian State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill submitted proposals to open and operate the three new laboratory schools. These schools are awaiting approval at the time of writing this report.

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

[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)

where the laboratory school is located may also enroll at a laboratory school if the school is not fully enrolled by March 1 before the start of the next school year.[7] Laboratory schools present opportunities to benefit low-performing students, 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] 2019,[9] and 2020.[10] The following report reflects the Evaluation Team's review of laboratory school implementation, operation, successes, and shortcomings. As planned, this report includes rigorous analyses of 2019-20 administrative data (as available). Given the school closures associated with COVID-19, this report does not include quantitative analyses of certain data elements (e.g., standardized tests) that would have been collected in spring 2020.

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.[11] 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, 2021.

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?*

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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/Archives/2018%20Reports%20Received/Laboratory%20Schools%20-%20Review%20&%20Evaluation%20of%20Educational%20Effectiveness.pdf . The UNC System submitted an abbreviated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in November 2017.

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

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

[11] 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.

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

## Evaluation Sample

This in-depth evaluation report focuses on the six UNC System laboratory schools in operation during the 2020-21 school year: The ECU Community School, The Catamount School (WCU), the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC). 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-3 school located in a formerly vacant Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools building in west Charlotte.[12]

## Data Sources and Analysis

To complete an in-depth review of the laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team 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, families, and personnel[13]; and (5) administrative data from COEs on educator preparation programs and pre-service candidates.

Much of the data for this evaluation report comes from interviews with, and status reports completed by, university leadership and laboratory school principals. Additional data for this report come from student demographic information, official NCDPI reporting on student achievement,[14] surveys of laboratory school staff, students, and families, and analyses of administrative data. See Appendix A1 for further detail on the data sources, including their alignment with the evaluation questions and the timing/availability of data.

[12] Niner University Elementary School opened as a K-2 school in 2020-21 but plans to add a grade each year to become a K-5 school by the 2023-24 school year.
[13] For the first time in spring 2021, the evaluation team administered staff surveys to all laboratory school instructional staff. See Appendix A1 for more information on staff surveys.
[14] Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2020-21-school-assessment-and-other-indicator-data

## Analysis Methods

### *Qualitative data analyses*

To assess the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team analyzed two types of qualitative data—laboratory school responses to annual status reports and interview transcripts—collected in April and May 2021.

The Evaluation Team uses two template reporting forms to collect information from laboratory schools, one for schools in their second or subsequent year of operation and another for new laboratory schools regarding activities undertaken in their last planning year. For the 2020-21 evaluation, all schools completed the same reporting form. (See Appendix A1 for further detail on the annual status reports.) In addition, the Evaluation Team conducted virtual interviews with laboratory school principals and UNC System COE leaders.[15] See Appendix A1 and A2 for further detail on the interview protocols and analyses of interview inputs.

### *Quantitative data analyses*

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

## 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—one full year for Niner University Elementary (UNCC), three full years for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and four full years for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU).

This report highlights common laboratory school features and implementation experiences arising from the laboratory school model. As appropriate, this report also highlights the ways that individual laboratory schools have implemented unique practices and includes brief snapshots of each laboratory school in Appendix A3. 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 2020-21 school year, which began with many schools statewide providing remote learning for homebound students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Where relevant, this report addresses the effect of the pandemic on laboratory schools.

[15] In prior years, the evaluation team conducted a 'site visit' to first-year laboratory schools and their constituent institution to interview a range of stakeholders regarding first-year planning and implementation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team conducted this visit to Niner University Elementary (UNCC) remotely through virtual interviews and focus groups with UNCC faculty and students and Niner University Elementary staff.

***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 five 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. 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.[16] The UNC System Office, which supplies administrative support for the UNC BOG, provides implementation and oversight support for laboratory schools.

The enabling legislation also directs UNC System institution chancellors to oversee laboratory schools.[17] 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.[18] 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.[19] The executive director staffs the UNC Board of Governor's Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools and provides supports to principals and COE deans or their designees who co-lead laboratory schools.[20]

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, and by extension their Colleges of Education and laboratory schools, operate independently of one

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

[17] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8

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

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

[20] The executive director serves as an informal liaison between laboratory schools, the NC Department of Public Instruction, and the Board of Governors. In spring of 2020 and the 2020-21 school year, the executive director supported laboratory schools with items such as operations and funding issues related to COVID-19, DPI's Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP), and a new statewide literacy framework.

another. However, they have common issues and challenges related to the operation of laboratory schools. For example, laboratory schools' unique classification as neither traditional LEA nor charter school creates challenges in the interpretation of new statutes and regulations and their application to each campus. 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. In October 2021, Appalachian State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill submitted proposals to open and operate the three new laboratory schools. These schools are awaiting approval at the time of writing this report.

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.[21] 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.[22] Another statutory change revised the timeline for opening laboratory schools.[23] With six laboratory schools operating in the 2021-22 school year, the Board of Governors meets the current statutory obligation.[24] However, three additional laboratory schools must open by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.[25]

[21] 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.

[22] *Id.*

[23] *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).

[24] 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.

[25] *Id.*

*Laboratory school planning and implementation*

**COVID-19 and school reopening in 2020-21.** 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 aligned with state guidance for safely returning students and staff to school.[26] Laboratory schools, like all North Carolina public 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. 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. 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. The Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) opened the year with remote learning for all students. The Catamount School (WCU) reopened using a hybrid approach, which it maintained throughout the year with occasional adjustments to fully remote instruction in response to periods of increased COVID-19 community spread. The ECU Community School offered students three options: in-person learning at school; scheduled synchronous remote learning; and unscheduled asynchronous remote learning.

By late fall of 2020, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) had joined The ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) in offering a hybrid, in-person learning option. Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and Niner University Elementary (UNCC) remained in remote-only environments until March of 2021, at which point all laboratory schools returned to offering in-person instruction in alignment with their host district. All laboratory schools offered a year-long remote-only option for students whose families opted not to participate in in-person or hybrid learning environments.

All laboratory schools opened the 2021-22 school year with full-time, in-person instruction, aligned with the beginning of the year plans of schools in each host district.

**First and second cohorts.** Five of the six laboratory schools have operated for three to four 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, many of which were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Student enrollment.* In a typical year, several factors impact student enrollment at laboratory schools. First, the laboratory school enabling legislation specifies student eligibility criteria that limits the pool of

[26] On June 11, 2020, 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, 2020, 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, 2020, 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.

students who can attend a laboratory school.[27] 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 ultimately help diminish the impact of some of these enrollment challenges. For example, beginning in the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools that are not fully enrolled by March 1 are permitted to enroll students who live within the district but do not meet the other laboratory school eligibility criteria. These students can account for up to 20 percent of a laboratory school's total student capacity.[28] In addition, districts where laboratory schools are located were required to provide transportation to students living within the district regardless of transportation policies and practices applied to other students and schools.[29]

However, pandemic conditions during spring 2020 and the 2020-21 school year likely depressed, at least initially, the effect of these enrollment related legislative changes. The pandemic resulted in a statewide stay-at-home order issued in March 2020. Consequently, all laboratory schools abandoned in-person student recruitment efforts such as door-to-door canvassing and meetings hosted at community-based organizations. Recruitment efforts largely shifted online using social media, often with the support of constituent university communications departments. According to 20-day enrollment data from Fall 2020, enrollment in laboratory schools declined by approximately 28 percent in 2020-21 compared to the previous year.[30] Only the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) maintained previous year school-wide enrollment without a significant (greater than five percent) decline. Importantly, these data indicate that most of the enrollment losses at each campus occurred in the first grade the school services (grades K or 6) or in the last grade the school services (grades 5 or 8). Student enrollment for other grades generally show smaller declines, and in some cases, increases.

These data indicate that laboratory schools may have had challenges recruiting new families to replace the students who aged out of their school as they transitioned to middle school or high school. While the enrollment of each respective class of students remained largely intact, the incoming class of students at

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

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

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

[30] National data indicate that K-12 enrollment dropped by roughly three percent in 2020-21 compared with the 2019-20 school year. Nationally, K enrollment declined by 13 percent. See Mahnken, Kevin. "New Federal Data Confirms Pandemic's Blow to K-12 Enrollment, with Drop of 1.5 Million Students; Pre-K Experiences 22 Percent Decline." *The 74 Million*, 28 June 2021, www.the74million.org/article/public-school-enrollment-down-3-percent-worst-century/. K-12 schools in North Carolina experienced an enrollment decline of approximately 3.8%; NC Kindergarten enrollment declined by approximately 10.5%. See Pendharkar, Eesha, and Maya Riser-Kositsky. "Enrollment Data: How Many Students Went Missing in Your State?" Education Week, Education Week, 22 July 2021, www.edweek.org/leadership/enrollment-data-how-many-students-went-missing-in-your-state/2021/07.

the lowest grade level served often was not large enough to replace the outgoing class or to account for the attrition of a few students from each class.

Data from the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year show that enrollment has stabilized, and for several laboratory schools, has substantially increased. This suggests that laboratory schools were able to resume effective marketing and recruitment strategies and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations.

*Staff hiring.* Laboratory schools in the first and second opening cohorts 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 these laboratory schools for lack of fit with the laboratory school mission, or the needs of students served. Though laboratory schools prioritize staffing their schools with licensed and experienced teachers, some have hired beginning teachers (teachers in their first three years of teaching) who had clinical experiences at the laboratory school or otherwise demonstrate that their teaching experience, interests, and goals are aligned with the laboratory school environment. For laboratory schools in the first and second opening cohorts, the retention of staff, from school opening to present, varies significantly across campus and position. The retention of lead classroom teachers ranges from 11 to 95 percent depending on the campus. On average, the retention rate of teacher assistants, special education teachers, or 'specials' teachers ranges from 30 to 60 percent.

*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 and rely on Colleges of Education to close budget gaps.[31] In 2020-21, laboratory schools reported receiving, on average, approximately 21 percent of their laboratory school operational budgets from their host institution and/or COE budgets, and 14 percent from the UNC System Office.

**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, it experienced the same challenges as its peers in adapting and aligning university administrative systems (e.g., finance, human resources) with K-12 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

[31] 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.

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, like cohort one and two laboratory schools, UNCC abandoned in-person student recruitment efforts. UNCC also paused new staff hiring. Though UNCC had hired most of its teaching staff by spring 2020, the pandemic forced UNCC to transition other new staff hiring activities to online platforms. Further, the Niner University Elementary School's inaugural enrollment did not meet the UNCC laboratory school planning team's enrollment goal. As of September 2020, the Niner University Elementary School served 73 students, 49 percent of its projected enrollment target.[32]

In accordance with the guidance of Niner University Elementary's host district, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), the campus opened with 100 percent of students participating in remote-only instruction, which continued through March of 2021. UNCC and laboratory school staff and faculty adjusted the school's model, including curriculum and instructional resources, to adapt to the virtual learning environment. Some planned elements of Niner University Elementary's laboratory school model, such as an in-person mental health clinic for parents, students, and staff, as well as engagement with area in-home day cares, were put on hold due to pandemic-induced social distancing requirements.

### *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.[33] In practice, laboratory schools have availed themselves of additional resources through partnerships with the following: (1) host school districts; (2) other divisions of the university; (3) COE faculty; and (4) community partners. Though partnerships have become a fundamental feature of laboratory schools, successful collaborations require that laboratory school leaders have the capacity to develop and manage them. Laboratory schools vary in the degree to which partnership outreach and coordination is centralized and systematized rather than engaged in on an ad-hoc basis. In 2020-21, new laboratory school partnerships with constituent universities, COEs, host districts, or the local community were largely created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, except for new literacy partnerships at Appalachian State, ECU, and UNCG. Partnerships established prior to the pandemic generally shifted or were inactive in 2020-21 due to pandemic-related restrictions.

*Host school districts*

In 2020-21 laboratory schools largely followed host district decisions and policies related to remote, hybrid, or in-person learning. Laboratory schools also continued to rely on district partners for access to K-12 school facilities (which the enabling laboratory school legislation did not provide) upon return to in-person learning, transportation and meal services (including those provided during COVID-19 school closures), and operational supports, such as IT, maintenance, guidance on NCDPI reporting processes, and pandemic-related health, safety, and cleaning services during in-person instruction. Some laboratory

[32] 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.
[33] N.C.G.S. §116-239.5(c)

schools share support staff with district partners, effectively transforming part-time into full-time positions.

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. Additionally, several host districts altered their transportation offerings to accommodate both social distancing requirements and shifts in laboratory school operations. For example, Winston Salem Forsyth County Schools offered community bus stops for Appalachian Academy students living outside the Middle Fork residential area. Although Pitt County Schools implemented a district-wide remote learning day on Mondays, the district continued to offer bus service to the ECU Community School, which opted to carry on with in-person offerings five days per week.

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 provided:

- New guidance for determining costs to districts for providing facilities and other operational and maintenance services for laboratory schools;[34]
- New guidance on transportation that districts provide laboratory schools;[35]
- 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.[36]

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 four classes of 8th graders and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has graduated three 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. Likewise, many of these Catamount School graduates have already earned high school course credits (in Math I or Earth and Environmental Science).

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 helped the district finance improvements to an existing multi-purpose space that its laboratory school will share with its co-located district school. In 2020-21, the ECU Community School developed and shared with district personnel training on learning management systems that ECU faculty had developed for laboratory school staff and parents.

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

*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 directly engage with laboratory school staff and students in several forms. As planning and implementation partners, COE faculty have provided professional development relevant to specific laboratory school needs since inception. Faculty 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 schools with similar student composition) may hire teachers.

In 2020-21, engagement of COE faculty and students shifted to adapt to restrictions imposed by pandemic-related social distancing and remote learning. In several cases, informal or volunteer engagement of COE faculty or students with laboratory schools declined. For example, leaders at WCU noted that the restrictions placed on campus visitors limited the number of informal pre-service and volunteer supports for students at The Catamount School. Instead, only interns were permitted to engage with students and staff at the laboratory school face to face during the school year.

In other cases, however, COVID-19 related changes facilitated greater COE engagement than had previously existed. Without a need to travel between Appalachian State, located in Boone, and the Academy at Middle Fork, located in Winston-Salem, more pre-service students were able to regularly engage with laboratory school students and staff in a remote environment. The change from year-round calendar to traditional district calendar at DC Virgo Preparatory allowed the laboratory school to host UNCW interns for the first time since the school opened. The COVID-19 pandemic also created new opportunities for faculty from COEs to support laboratory school staff and students in the transition to remote curriculum and instruction and the use of instructional technology.

*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 2020-21 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. These are functions that have become systematized within university divisions and offices after several years of laboratory school operation. Communications departments have increasingly supported laboratory schools with marketing for enrollment purposes, especially as schools relied heavily on virtual recruitment methods in response to pandemic-driven social distancing requirements. Additionally, many COE or university IT departments supported laboratory school leaders, staff, and students with the transition to remote learning, including distribution of and support with devices, hotspots, and remote learning platforms.

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). For example, in 2020-21, three school counseling interns and one Master's in Social Work candidate supported Niner University Elementary in the implementation of a play therapy program. University institutions also provide laboratory schools access to university-based resources that enhance some aspect of the laboratory school model, as exemplified by the UNCC department of dance faculty member who led remote dance classes at the laboratory school with the assistance of university dance education students.

*Community partners*

In their first, third, and fourth years of operation, laboratory schools varied in the way and degree to which they leveraged community partners. Prior to the pandemic, laboratory schools' community partners provided 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). Overall, laboratory schools appear to have engaged less with community partners during 2020-21 due to social distancing limitations of the pandemic. However, most laboratory schools created new partnerships specifically to address new student and family needs arising out of the COVID-19 crisis. For example, 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.

***Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?***

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

*Marketing of laboratory schools*

Unlike traditional district schools serving neighborhoods or other attendance zones, laboratory schools must recruit students to enroll. Prior to the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools could enroll students who previously attended (or would have attended) a low-performing school, those who did not meet

expected growth in the prior school year, or siblings of children meeting these criteria.[37] Additional amendments enacted in 2020 expanded the eligibility criteria of laboratory school students, applicable for students enrolling in the 2020-21 school year.[38]

In prior years, schools typically relied 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.

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. Many laboratory schools worked with COE or university institution offices that manage communications, community outreach, or marketing to deploy marketing activities more strategically (e.g., buy radio commercials during business commute time, lease billboards at key traffic areas, and develop promotional videos to use on websites, social media, and television).

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, especially as these schools gain prominence in the communities they serve. Again, given limited in-person recruitment activities, these word-of-mouth referrals through enrolled families became more important in 2020-21.

Parents and caregivers of children newly enrolled at a laboratory school in 2020-21 report that they most commonly found out about the laboratory school from friends, websites, and social media. When asked why they wanted their child to attend a laboratory school, these parents and caregivers reported several common reasons: (1) smaller class sizes and opportunities for their child to get more individualized attention; (2) word-of-mouth and hearing that the school had been effective for other children; and (3) the resources available through the laboratory school and its connections to the university. Over 90 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents felt that the laboratory school did a good or very good job in explaining the application and enrollment process and in making that process an easy one.[39]

[37] N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)

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

[39] The data in this paragraph come from a laboratory school parent and caregiver survey administered in Spring 2021.

Overall, COVID-19 and the associated school closures may have adversely impacted marketing, as each laboratory school experienced declines in enrollment for the 2020-21 school year.[40] Further, the Niner University Elementary School's inaugural enrollment did not meet the UNCC laboratory school planning team's enrollment goal. As of September 2020, the Niner University Elementary School served 73 students, 49 percent of its projected enrollment target.[41] Data as of September 2021 show that laboratory schools stabilized or increased their enrollments, especially at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU).

*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.[42] 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.[43] 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.[44]

[40] 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.

[41] 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.

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

[43] 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.

[44] 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."

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.[45]

Table 1 presents data on how laboratory schools determined whether students were eligible to attend in 2021-22: 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 73 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 12 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 21 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; two percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and five percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that nearly 97 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 33 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 28 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 3.5 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and two percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCC certified that 63 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 18 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 4 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; nearly 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 13 percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCG certified that 53 percent of the students at Moss Street Partnership School in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 32%

[45] 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.

qualified based on their own prior performance; 12 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 2.5 percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCW certified that 58 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 21 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 16 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and four percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Finally, WCU certified that 6 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 90 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 7 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 2 percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

*Table 1: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements*

| | ASU | ECU | UNCC | UNCG | UNCW | WCU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Enrollment | 274 | 114 | 121 | 367 | 208 | 57 |
| Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School | 73.3% | 96.5% | 63.4% | 52.6% | 58.2% | 5.3% |
| Previously Low-Performing Student | 12.04% | 32.5% | 17.9% | 31.9% | 21.2% | 89.5% |
| Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria | 20.8% | 28.1% | 3.6% | 11.9% | 16.4% | 7.0% |
| Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member | 2.2% | 3.5% | 1.8% | 1.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity | 5.1% | 1.8% | 13.4% | 2.5% | 4.3% | 1.8% |

*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 2021-22 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 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 274 enrolled students, with 52 in kindergarten, 28 in 1st grade, 43 in 2nd grade, 44 in 3rd grade, 45 in 4th grade, and 62 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are similar to those from the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, nearly 49 percent are male, 46 percent are Black, 37 percent are Hispanic, and 17 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 68 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 29 percent of the K-5 students in

Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, and 62 percent are designated as low-income.[46]

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, the ECU Community School has 114 enrolled students, with 19 in kindergarten, 22 in 1st grade, 23 in 2nd grade, 27 in 3rd grade, 13 in 4th grade and 10 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show a modest increase in enrollment (4.5 percent) at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 55 percent are male, 96 percent are Black, and 24 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 100 percent of the ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 46 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black and 70 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) has 121 enrolled students, with 42 in kindergarten, 43 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, and 17 in 3rd grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show significant enrollment growth—up nearly 66 percent—at Niner University Elementary. This enrollment growth comes from adding a new grade level (3rd grade) and enrolling new students in existing grades. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 54 percent are male, 85 percent are Black, 9 percent are Hispanic, and 16 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 71 percent of the Niner University Elementary School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 34 percent of the K-3 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, and 47 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) has 367 enrolled students, 73 in kindergarten, 50 in 1st grade, 58 in 2nd grade, 56 in 3rd grade, 63 in 4th grade, and 67 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show an enrollment increase of 10 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 55 percent are male, 61 percent are Black, 13 percent are Hispanic, and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 92 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, 14 percent are Hispanic, and 72 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 208 enrolled students, with 20 in kindergarten, 21 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, 24 in 3rd grade, 24 in 4th grade, 21 in 15th grade, 18 in 6th grade, 28 in 7th grade, and 33 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show a small increase in enrollment at the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 52 percent are male, 86 percent are Black, and 20 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 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 64 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 57 enrolled students, with 10 in 6th grade, 21 in 7th grade, and 26 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show an enrollment increase of nearly 33 percent. Of the students enrolled in

[46] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2019-20 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2020-21 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

2021-22, 49 percent are male, 84 percent are White, 11 percent are multiracial, and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 33 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 68 percent of the middle grades (6-8) students in Jackson County Schools are White, four percent are multiracial, and 61 percent are designated as low-income.

*Table 2: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools*

| | ASU | | ECU | | UNCC | | UNCG | | UNCW | | WCU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 |
| Total Enrollment | 276 | 274 | 109 | 114 | 73 | 121 | 333 | 367 | 203 | 208 | 43 | 57 |
| Kindergarten | 31 | 52 | 19 | 19 | 40 | 42 | 40 | 73 | 18 | 20 | --- | --- |
| 1st Grade | 43 | 28 | 27 | 22 | 19 | 43 | 67 | 50 | 17 | 21 | --- | --- |
| 2nd Grade | 43 | 43 | 24 | 23 | 14 | 19 | 59 | 58 | 22 | 19 | --- | --- |
| 3rd Grade | 45 | 44 | 13 | 27 | --- | 17 | 66 | 56 | 20 | 24 | --- | --- |
| 4th Grade | 63 | 45 | 12 | 13 | --- | --- | 60 | 63 | 21 | 24 | --- | --- |
| 5th Grade | 51 | 62 | 14 | 10 | --- | --- | 41 | 67 | 14 | 21 | --- | --- |
| 6th Grade | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 26 | 18 | 7 | 10 |
| 7th Grade | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 32 | 28 | 19 | 21 |
| 8th Grade | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 33 | 33 | 17 | 26 |
| Male | 48.6% | 48.9% | 56.9% | 55.3% | 57.5% | 53.7% | 56.8% | 55.0% | 53.7% | 51.9% | 48.8% | 49.1% |
| White | 10.5% | 10.9% | 1.8% | 0.9% | 4.1% | 1.7% | 13.8% | 14.4% | 6.4% | 5.3% | 76.7% | 84.2% |
| Black | 44.9% | 46.4% | 94.5% | 95.6% | 76.7% | 85.1% | 63.7% | 60.8% | 88.2% | 86.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Multiracial | 5.1% | 4.7% | 1.8% | 1.8% | 6.9% | 2.5% | 10.8% | 11.7% | 1.5% | 3.8% | 11.6% | 10.5% |
| Hispanic | 38.0% | 36.9% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 11.0% | 9.1% | 11.7% | 13.1% | 3.9% | 3.4% | 4.7% | 1.8% |
| Asian | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.4% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.3% | 3.5% |
| American Indian | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.7% | 0.0% |
| Pacific Islander | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.9% | 0.0% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| EC Status | 10.5% | 16.8% | 29.4% | 23.7% | 13.7% | 15.7% | 17.4% | 14.4% | 20.7% | 19.7% | 27.9% | 14.0% |
| Low-Income | 67.94 | N/A | 100.00 | N/A | 70.83 | N/A | 92.20 | N/A | 100.00 | N/A | 33.33 | N/A |

*Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 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 2020-21 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 2021-22 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. 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. These features were often adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Impact of COVID-19 on school models.* Laboratory schools identified and implemented remote learning platforms and strategies within weeks of initial school closures in March of 2020. With some minor refinements, schools largely continued using these platforms and strategies during periods of school closure and hybrid or remote-only learning environments. Although all laboratory schools returned to offering in-person instruction in spring 2021, they also gave students and families a remote-only option for the duration of the year for those unwilling or unable to return to in-person schooling. These students were largely taught synchronously alongside their peers once in-person instruction was resumed, with a few exceptions for students who continued to receive packets of work or accessed coursework online asynchronously.

During periods of remote-only or hybrid instruction, most schools utilized synchronous videoconferencing technology for at least some period of daily instruction. Teachers also posted assignments on the school's learning management platform for asynchronous completion. Often, hybrid schedules involved a reduction in the number of days that students attended school each week, with students divided into cohorts that alternated days or weeks of in-person attendance.

As a result of reduced in-person, synchronous instructional time, several schools designed and implemented supplemental instructional programming in 2020-21. For example, staff at the Academy at Middle Fork offered students a virtual after-school program to assist with completing assignments and skill building in reading and math. Faculty and students at the laboratory schools of ECU, WCU, and UNCG engaged in in-school tutoring programs for select laboratory school students. The Catamount School (WCU) and the ECU Community School offered an extended school year for some (students with an Exceptional Children designation at The Catamount School) or all students (the ECU Community School). D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) transitioned back to a year-round calendar for the 2021-22 school year and therefore began their school year earlier than most schools on a traditional calendar. Meanwhile, the Academy at Middle Fork (ASU), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) utilized state funding for summer school intended to address potential learning loss associated with periods of pandemic-induced remote learning.

*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, although most of these experiences were paused in 2020-21 due to social distancing requirements. 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.

In 2020-21, notwithstanding necessary adaptations to transform curriculum to remote environments, laboratory schools continued to utilize the same curriculum as in previous years (or, in the case of UNCC's Niner University Elementary, the curriculum that had been designed during the school's planning year). Laboratory schools generally conducted beginning of the year diagnostic and end of the year summative assessments, as well as interim formative assessments throughout the year to assess student learning progress and gaps, especially in math and literacy. Understandably, laboratory schools faced challenges conducting many assessments remotely, especially those designed to monitor reading comprehension progress in early grades that depend on in-person administration for accuracy.

*Focus on literacy.* Laboratory schools are particularly focused on improving teaching and learning related to literacy. All laboratory schools adapted their literacy curriculum for remote and hybrid learning environments in 2020-21. Despite barriers posed by remote learning, several COEs continued to involve faculty in the support of literacy instruction at the laboratory school. For example, not only did UNCC faculty from the Reading and Elementary Education program plan the laboratory school's reading curriculum, but they also met virtually with Niner University Elementary teachers during their weekly planning periods to support the implementation of this curriculum. Two laboratory schools, Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), adopted new strategies related to literacy in 2020-21. Appalachian State faculty implemented a new, hour-long daily activity for students called "Literacy Cast". During this time, students connected with their teachers and Appalachian State faculty (and six visiting authors) to develop writing and vocabulary skills. Teachers at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) participated in targeted professional development related to two literacy frameworks: one for K-2 teachers and students and another for those in grades 3-5.

In 2020-21, COEs continued to support literacy instruction at laboratory schools through graduate program offerings. 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 Master 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 and implement 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, most laboratory schools have experienced staff turnover and have needed to hire some beginning teachers (those in their 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year of teaching) to fill those vacancies. In hiring teachers, laboratory schools sought individuals whose interests, 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. 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. Before the start of the 2020-21 school year, the ECU Community School hired a full-time curriculum director; as a result, nearly all laboratory schools employ this role full time. The governance structure of laboratory schools—schools within university systems that are operated by COEs—means that both the 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 schools have operated during several changes of leadership at the school, district, and COE level. Staff at Niner University Elementary (UNCC) and The Catamount School (WCU) have planned and partnered with host districts, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Jackson County Schools, respectively, under the leadership of multiple superintendents. Additionally, interim deans have led the COEs at both UNCC and ECU during laboratory school planning and/or implementation phases. During the 2020-21 school year, Appalachian State hired a new laboratory school director. Finally, the Catamount School has employed two principals since opening in 2017, the second of whom resigned in summer 2021. A new principal has been identified and hired to lead the school entering its renewal year. The Academy at Middle Fork (ASU) also changed principals during summer 2021. Principalship at other laboratory schools has remained unchanged.

*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. In the 2020-21 school year: (1) The Catamount School (WCU) had one class per grade in grades 6-8; (2) the ECU Community School had two classes per

grade in grades K, 1, and 2 and one class per grade in grades 3, 4, and 5; (3) the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) had three classes per grade; (4) D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) had one class per grade in grades K, 1, and 3-5 and two classes per grade in grades 2 and 6-8; (5) the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) had two to four classrooms per grade, which includes some multi-age classrooms in the lower grades (e.g., combined first and second grade); and (6) Niner University Elementary (UNCC) had four kindergarten classrooms and one class per grade in grades one and two. Three laboratory schools used departmentalized instruction in 2020-21: UNCG had core content teachers for grade five and UNCW for grades 6-8. The Catamount School (WCU), the only laboratory school serving only middle grades, had five core content teachers for grades 6-8.

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, UNCC, 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.[47] In 2020-21, UNCG and UNCW all employed assistant principals; Appalachian State, ECU, UNCC, and WCU did not have assistant principals.

*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 and may continue to decline if pandemic-related trends hold steady; 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). Laboratory schools relied on COE and/or institution funding for approximately 21 percent, on average, of their operating budgets. Recurring funding from the UNC System made up another approximately 14 percent, on average, with ADM and federal funding sources covering the remainder.

In 2020, laboratory schools received one-time supports from two funding sources. The state directed $200,000 to laboratory schools for support services.[48] Laboratory schools also received federal emergency

[47] Niner University Elementary (UNCC) also employed shared classroom assistants in grades K-2 in 2020-2021.

[48] 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.

funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provided states funding and flexibilities to support K-12 schools and local education agencies in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.[49] 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.[50] These changes may reduce some operating expenses for laboratory schools and help close budget gaps. However, the impact of these new supports on 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 continued statewide economic uncertainties and declining enrollment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of the Laboratory Schools*

To assess parent/caregiver perceptions of the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a parent/caregiver survey in the spring of 2021.[51] To encourage parent/caregiver responses, laboratory schools placed links to the anonymous survey on their school websites, invited parents to complete the survey while on-site at the school, and used other established channels of communication with families. Overall, 233 parent/caregiver responses were recorded: 38 from the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 79 from the ECU Community School, 26 from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), 21 from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 36 from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and 33 from The Catamount School (WCU).[52]

Items on the parent/caregiver survey asked respondents to assess how satisfied they were with the laboratory school, overall, and with various aspects of laboratory school operations (e.g., academic instruction, classroom management, communication with families). For the laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately, Figure 1 displays parents'/caregivers' overall satisfaction with their laboratory school. In addition, Figure 1 includes parents'/caregivers' overall satisfaction (across all laboratory schools) from spring 2019. This provides a basis for comparison for the current data.

Across all laboratory schools in 2020-21, approximately 95 percent of parent/caregiver respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their laboratory school. By comparison, the value from spring 2019 was 84 percent—with a much higher percentage of parents/caregivers reporting being very satisfied in spring 2021. These percentages varied across laboratory schools, from 100 percent satisfied or very satisfied at the ECU Community School and The Catamount School to 89 percent satisfied or very satisfied at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Please see Appendix Table A4.1 for data from each parent/caregiver satisfaction item. Pooling data across laboratory schools, the data in the top panel of Appendix Table A4.1 indicate that parents/caregivers were generally equally satisfied with all aspects of their laboratory school—e.g., academic growth, social-emotional growth, communication, etc.—in 2020-21. Furthermore, these data (like those in Figure 1) show that parents/caregivers reported higher levels of satisfaction in 2020-21, on specific aspects of laboratory school practice, than in 2018-19.

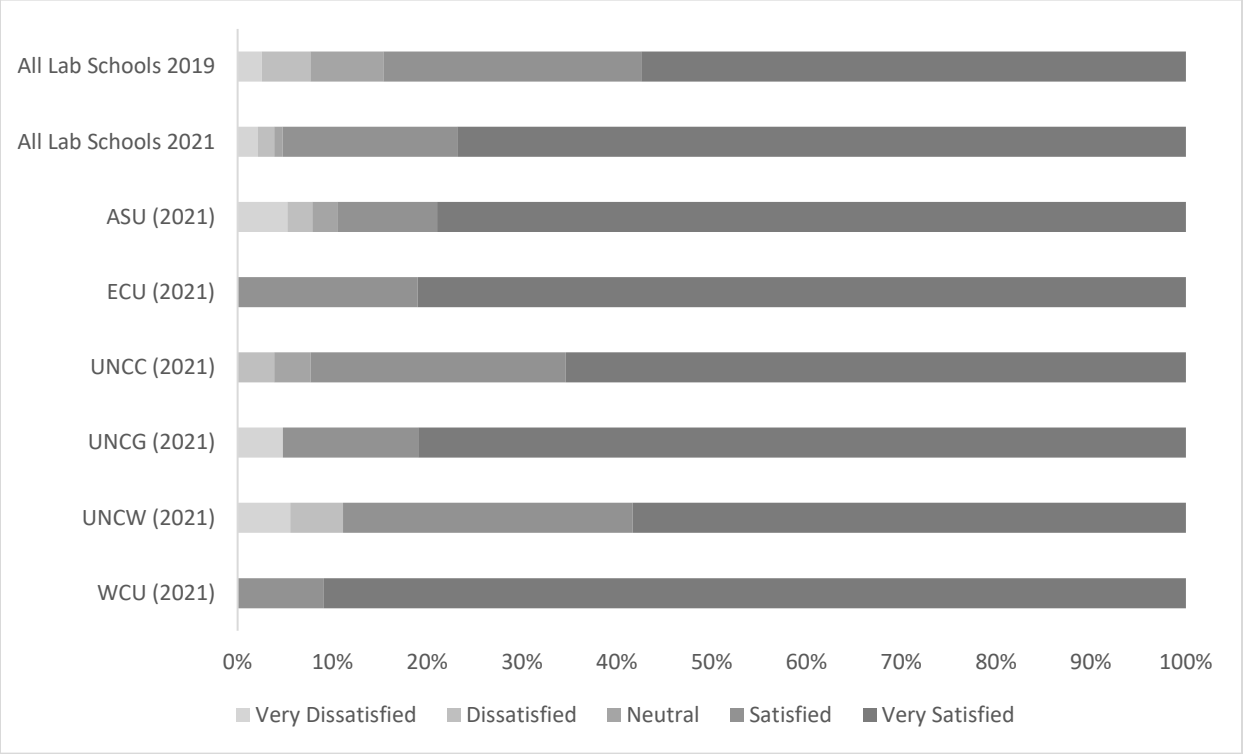
[49] In addition, Session Law 2020-97 provided that for the 2020-21 fiscal year, North Carolina districts would be held harmless for declines in enrollment such that the State Board of Education would not reduce allocations to school districts due to discrepancies between their actual and anticipated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

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

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

[52] The number of responses from parents/caregivers with a child attending the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) represent a large majority of students enrolled at those schools. The responses rates are lower for Appalachian State, UNCC, UNCG, and UNCW.

*Figure 1: Parent/Caregiver Satisfaction with UNC System Laboratory Schools (2020-21)*



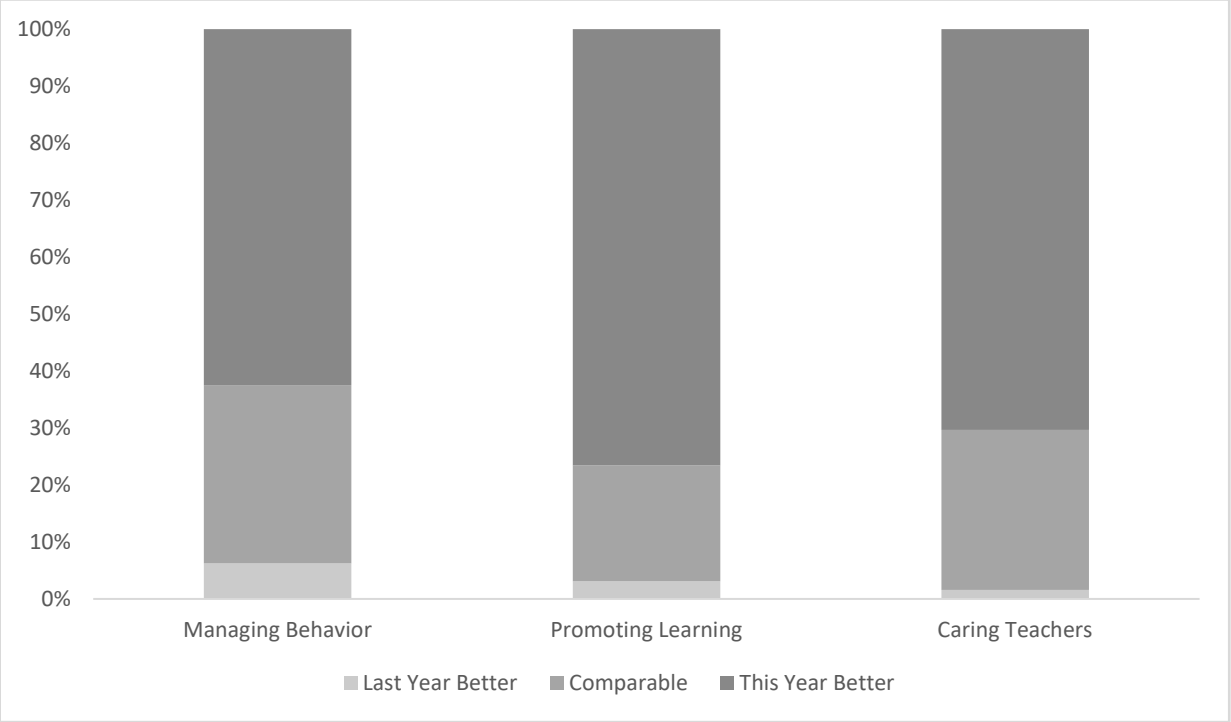

*Note: This figure displays parent responses to the survey item "How satisfied are you with your child's school?". There are 233 survey responses from the 2021 survey and 195 responses from the 2019 survey.*

An additional set of survey items asked parents/caregivers to compare their child's educational experiences in the 2020-21 school year with their educational experiences in the previous school year (2019-20). For families new to laboratory schools, this compares the laboratory school to a non-laboratory school setting; for returning laboratory school families, this compares the laboratory school in 2020-21 to its operation in the previous year.

Figure 2 displays parent responses for families new to laboratory schools in 2020-21. Nearly 63 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at managing student behavior than the school their child previously attended. Approximately 76 and 70 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents, respectively, indicated their laboratory school was better at promoting learning and having caring teachers.

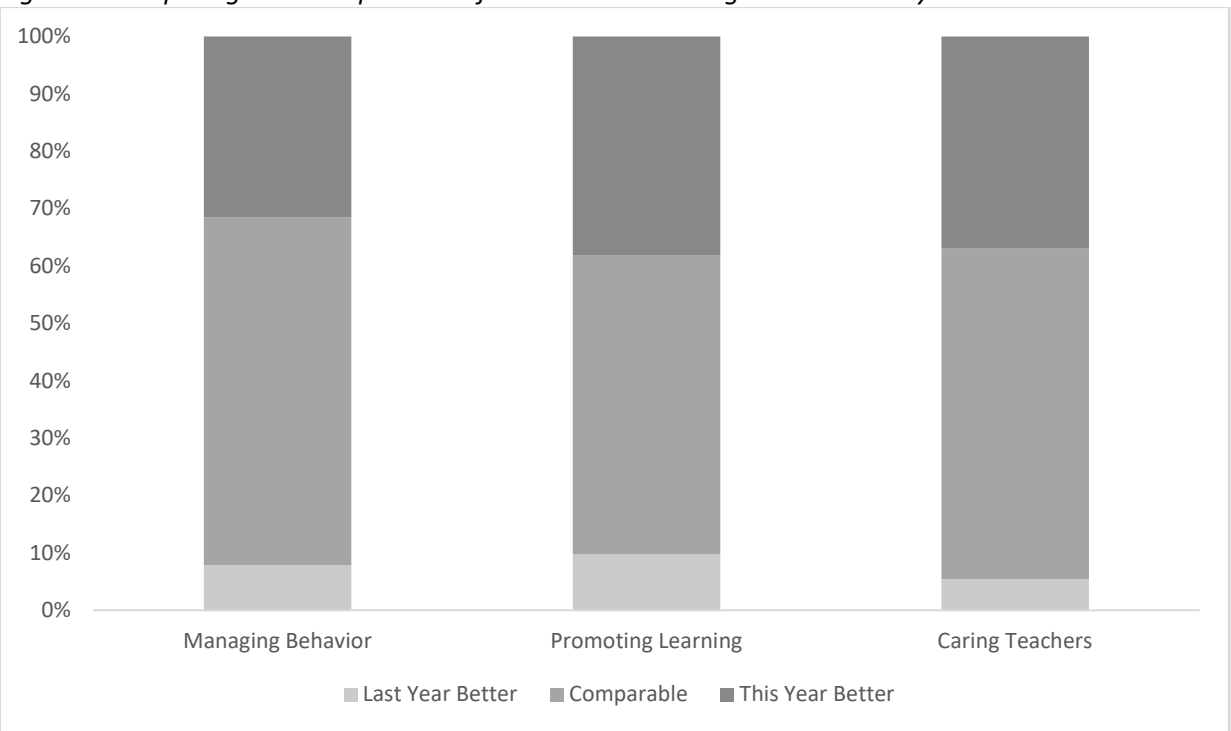
Figure 3 displays comparable data for families returning to a laboratory school in 2020-21. In the areas of managing student behavior, promoting learning, and having caring teachers, a majority of parent/caregiver respondents (ranging from 52 to 60 percent) felt that their laboratory school in 2020-21 was comparable to their laboratory school in 2019-20. Across these three areas, approximately 32-38 percent of parent/caregiver respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better in 2020-21 than it had been in 2019-20. Please see Appendix Table A4.2 for parent/caregiver survey responses disaggregated for each UNC System laboratory school.

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




*Note: For families new to laboratory schools in 2020-21, this figure displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2020-21 to their educational experiences in 2019-20.*

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




*Note: For families returning to a laboratory school in 2020-21, this figure displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2020-21 to their educational experiences in 2019-20.*

*Perceptions of Laboratory School Personnel*

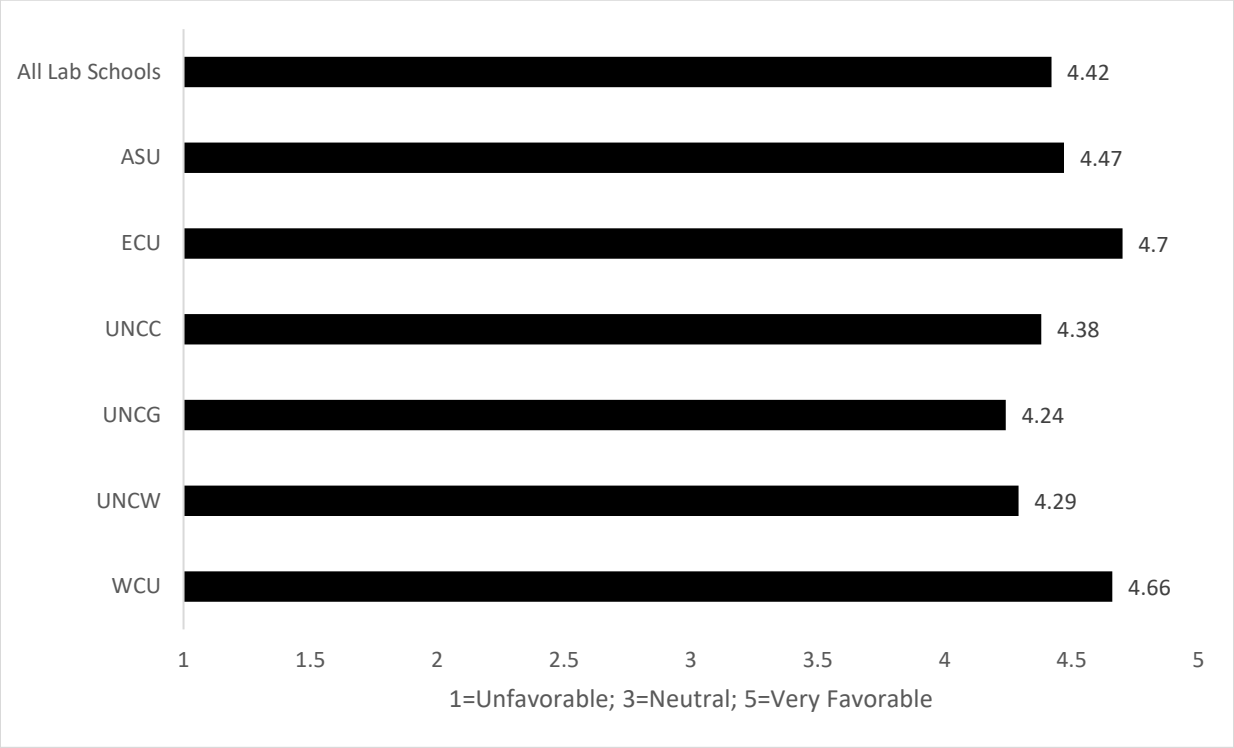
To assess how laboratory school personnel perceive the management and environment of their school, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a school personnel survey in the spring of 2021. This survey is new to the laboratory school evaluation—i.e., it was not administered in previous years—and was distributed to classroom teachers, teacher assistants/paraprofessionals, student services personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers), school leadership (e.g., principals, curriculum directors), and other personnel (e.g., data managers, administrative assistants). Overall, 122 personnel survey responses were received: 35 from school personnel at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 18 from the ECU Community School, 13 from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), 30 from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 16 from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and 10 from The Catamount School (WCU).

Items on the personnel survey asked respondents to assess leadership at their laboratory school, teaching practices, and school working conditions. Certain survey items were administered to all respondents, regardless of their role at the school. Other items were only administered to personnel in specific roles. For analyses, the Evaluation Team created summative measures for perceptions of school leadership[53] and perceptions of teaching practices at the school. In addition, the Evaluation Team presents data on interactions between laboratory school and COE personnel and perceptions of value, respect, and belonging at the laboratory school.

Figure 4 displays summative perceptions of school leadership at the laboratory schools. These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Overall, laboratory school personnel have favorable ratings of school leadership—i.e., an average rating of 4.42 across schools (on a 1-5 scale), that varies from 4.24 at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 4.70 at the ECU Community School. Appendix Table A5.1 presents average response values on each leadership item and for each laboratory school. Data from Appendix Table A5.1 indicate that laboratory school personnel rated school leadership most favorably in the areas of setting high standards for teaching and supporting efforts to improve teaching and learning. Ratings were lower in the areas of setting clear and measurable goals for progress on instructional outcomes, making sure that professional development addresses priority instructional goals, and providing helpful guidance for effective classroom practice.

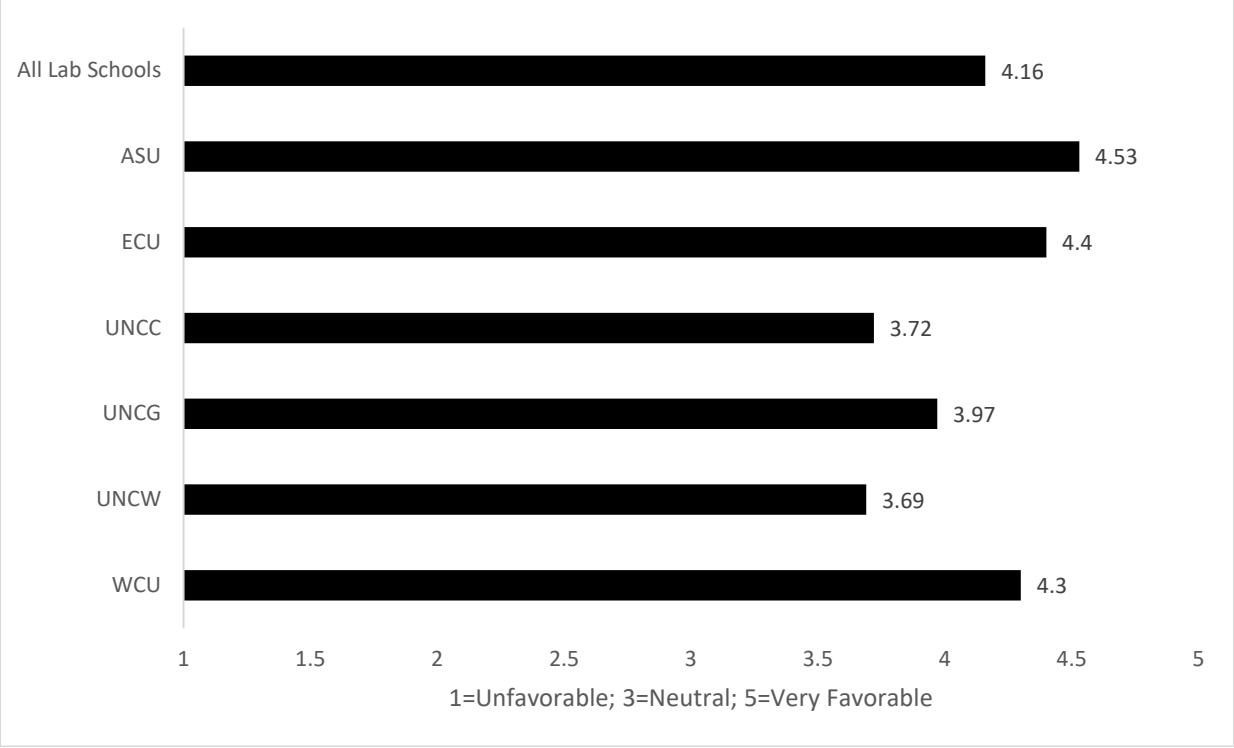
[53] Our analyses of perceptions of school leaders exclude responses from those school leaders themselves.

*Figure 4: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools*




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

*Figure 5: Perceptions of Teaching Practice at the Laboratory Schools*



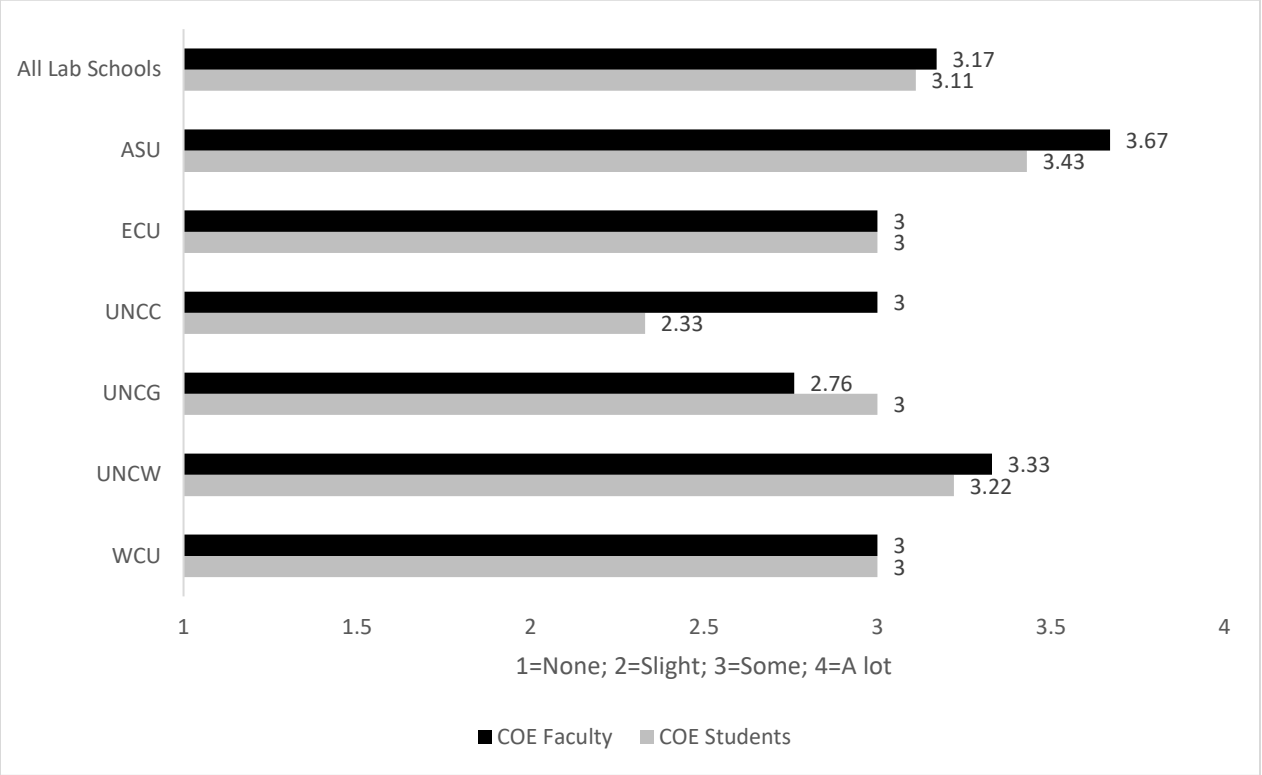

*Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of teachers.*

Figure 5 presents summative perceptions of teaching practice at the laboratory schools.[54] Once again, these data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Relative to ratings of school leadership (Figure 4), ratings of teaching practice at laboratory schools are lower. The overall rating for teaching practice at laboratory schools is 4.16 (on a scale from 1-5), with a range of 3.69 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) to 4.53 at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork. Appendix Table A5.2 presents average response values on each teaching practice item and for each laboratory school. Data from Appendix Table A5.2 indicate that laboratory school personnel rated teaching practice most favorably in the areas of teachers having strong skills to produce meaningful student learning and teachers collaborating to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students. Ratings were lower in the areas of teachers making sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels and teachers collaborating to revise and refine curriculum.

A unique feature of laboratory schools is the extent to which laboratory school personnel have opportunities to interact with and learn from COE faculty and students. Figure 6 displays data on the extent to which those interactions contributed to teacher growth at laboratory schools.[55] These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Regarding the extent to which COE faculty contributed to the growth of laboratory school teachers, the average response was 3.17 (between *some* and *a lot*), with a range of 2.76 at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 3.67 at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork. Regarding the extent to which COE students (e.g., pre-service teachers in practicum and field experiences) contributed to the growth of laboratory school teachers, the average response was 3.11, with a range of 2.33 at Niner University Elementary (UNCC)[56] to 3.43 at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork.

[54] These teaching practice items focus on the extent to which teachers and other instructional personnel (1) hold one another accountable for working hard; (2) collaborate to revise and refine curriculum; (3) make sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels; (4) collaborate to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students; (5) have strong skills to produce meaningful student learning; (6) have strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems; and (7) are confident that they can motivate students to think and word hard.
[55] These survey items were only administered to classroom teachers at laboratory schools.
[56] Niner University Elementary was in its first year of operation in 2020-21 and operated in remote instruction until March 2021. As such, there were more limited interactions with COE students from UNCC.

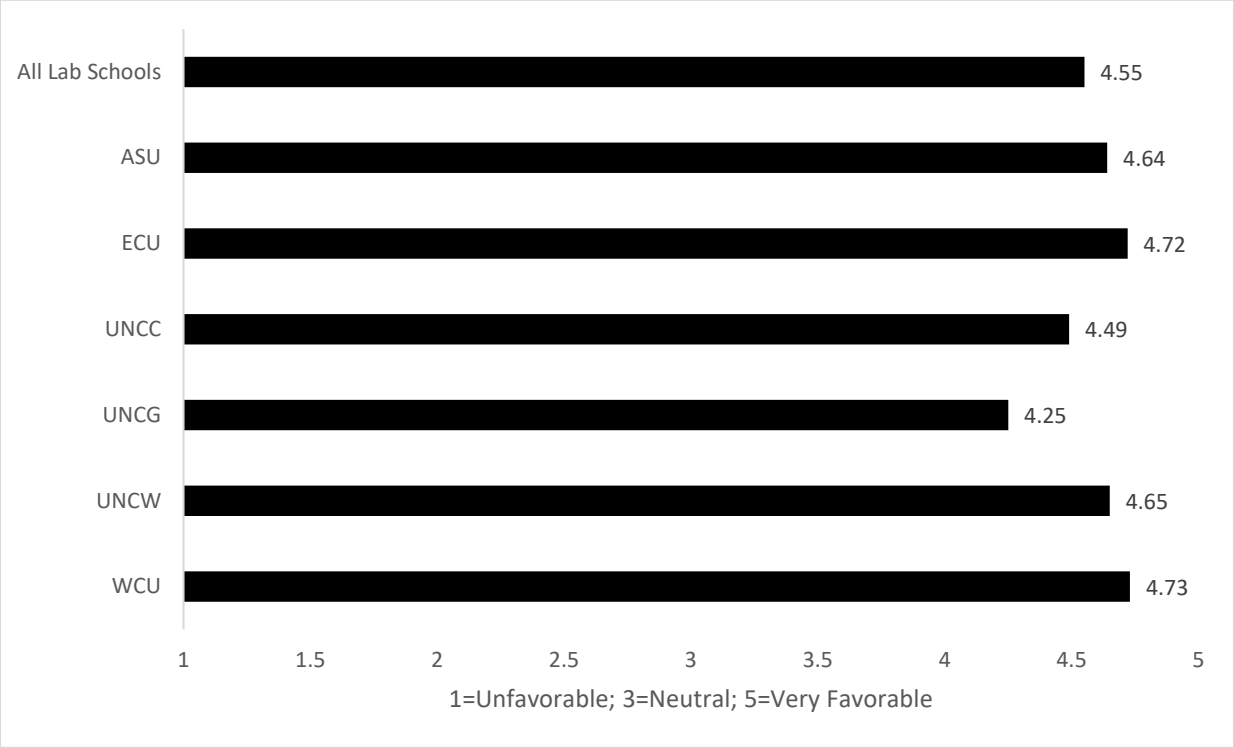
*Figure 6: How Interactions with COE Faculty and Students Contribute to Growth as a Teacher*




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

Finally, Figure 7 presents summative perceptions of the extent to which laboratory school personnel feel valued, respected, and like they belong at their schools. These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Overall, laboratory school personnel report feeling quite favorable—an average value of 4.55 on a 1-5 scale—regarding their summative sense of value, respect, and belonging. These ratings range from 4.25 at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 4.73 at The Catamount School (WCU). Appendix Table A5.3 presents average response values for each of these items and for each laboratory school.

*Figure 7: Laboratory School Personnel Sense of Value, Respect, and Belonging*




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

***Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?***

To examine whether laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students, the Evaluation Team typically provides two types of administrative data in this report—rigorous analyses of *student-level* achievement data from two years prior (i.e., 2019-20 for this report) and *school-level* achievement data from the most recent school year (i.e., 2020-21 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 does not include rigorous analyses of *student-level* achievement data from 2019-20.

Students completed end-of-grade assessments in spring 2021. However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, North Carolina secured a waiver from the US Department of Education and is not holding public schools accountable for students' performance on standardized exams in 2020-21. This waiver, coupled with the absence of standardized exams from 2019-20, means that North Carolina only reported test proficiency rates for 2020-21.

To best meet the requirements of the enabling laboratory school legislation, Tables 3-7 report test proficiency rates from 2020-21 for each laboratory school.[57] As a basis of comparison, Tables 3-7 also report test proficiency rates from 2018-19 (the last school year such data are available). These data should be interpreted with caution, as proficiency rates are only one measure of academic performance and students have experienced hardships, including many fewer days of in-person instruction, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[57] Test proficiency rates are not available for Niner University Elementary School (UNCC), since it enrolled students in grades K-2 in 2020-21.

*Table 3: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| App Academy | 3rd Grade Reading | 32.65 | 29.30 |
| App Academy | 4th Grade Reading | 30.43 | 16.67 |
| App Academy | 5th Grade Reading | 20.83 | 22.00 |
| App Academy | 3rd Grade Math | 28.57 | 7.10 |
| App Academy | 4th Grade Math | 17.39 | <5.00 |
| App Academy | 5th Grade Math | 20.83 | 26.00 |
| App Academy | 5th Grade Science | 39.58 | 20.00 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 4: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—ECU Community School*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ECU Community School | 3rd Grade Reading | 6.25 | 27.30 |
| ECU Community School | 4th Grade Reading | 14.29 | 9.10 |
| ECU Community School | 5th Grade Reading | 0.00 | 7.10 |
| ECU Community School | 3rd Grade Math | 0.00 | 36.40 |
| ECU Community School | 4th Grade Math | 0.00 | <5.00 |
| ECU Community School | 5th Grade Math | 21.43 | 14.30 |
| ECU Community School | 5th Grade Science | 57.14 | 7.10 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 5: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Moss Street Partnership School | 3rd Grade Reading | 11.36 | 7.90 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 4th Grade Reading | 17.39 | 17.20 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 5th Grade Reading | 15.25 | 10.80 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 3rd Grade Math | 13.64 | <5.00 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 4th Grade Math | 13.04 | <5.00 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 5th Grade Math | 18.97 | 5.30 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 5th Grade Science | 11.86 | 10.80 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 6: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 3rd Grade Reading | 25.00 | 5.00 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 4th Grade Reading | 22.22 | 21.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 5th Grade Reading | 20.00 | 14.30 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 6th Grade Reading | 35.29 | 14.30 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 7th Grade Reading | 31.58 | 21.20 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 8th Grade Reading | 23.33 | 12.50 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 3rd Grade Math | 33.33 | 5.00 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 4th Grade Math | 5.56 | 10.50 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 5th Grade Math | 44.00 | 7.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 6th Grade Math | 38.24 | 7.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 7th Grade Math | 15.79 | <5.00 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 8th Grade Math | 16.67 | 12.50 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 5th Grade Science | 56.00 | 14.30 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 8th Grade Science | 56.67 | 40.60 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 7: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—The Catamount School (WCU)*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Catamount School | 6th Grade Reading | 55.56 | 63.60 |
| The Catamount School | 7th Grade Reading | 65.22 | 47.40 |
| The Catamount School | 8th Grade Reading | 56.52 | 50.00 |
| The Catamount School | 6th Grade Math | 22.22 | 36.40 |
| The Catamount School | 7th Grade Math | 39.13 | 47.40 |
| The Catamount School | 8th Grade Math | 6.67 | 33.33 |
| The Catamount School | 8th Grade Science | 78.26 | 72.20 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

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

The remote and hybrid learning environments associated with school closures not only fundamentally shifted learning models, but 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), promoting a positive school culture (e.g., restorative or trauma-invested practices), or creating experiential learning opportunities through physical spaces at laboratory schools or university institutions (e.g., maker spaces) were disrupted when schools closed. During periods of remote learning, the means of supporting students' social-emotional well-being in-person became increasingly restricted due to social distancing requirements. Meanwhile, the specific social-emotional needs of students were often exacerbated because of the pandemic. During the pandemic, many students experienced feelings of isolation, housing instability, financial stress due to the

job loss of a parent or guardian, and even loss of life of relatives or loved ones. The return to in-person instruction in spring 2021 brought needed consistency and increased in-person supports for students, yet school leaders acknowledged the challenge for staff and students as they attempted to reset expectations and re-adapt to in-person learning environments.

Through all periods of remote or hybrid learning, schools attempted to sustain regular, though less frequent, check-ins with students and/or families via phone calls or synchronous online meetings. Services provided to meet the non-academic needs of students and/or their families include the CARES team at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), mental health services provided for students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), social-emotional development focused "village meetings" at The Catamount School (WCU), small group SEL learning sessions at Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), and the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at the ECU Community School.

All schools reported challenges in ensuring that all students regularly accessed and completed assignments and participated in synchronous lessons. However, schools reported less significant drop-off in student engagement during periods of remote or hybrid learning in the 2020-21 school year than during the initial school closures in spring 2020. All schools had small numbers of students who remained virtual all year, though these numbers decreased over time once in-person learning resumed. Many laboratory schools established afterschool programs that, even during periods of remote instruction, provided another touchpoint for students to engage with teachers and peers. These included both traditional academic recovery programs as well as enrichment opportunities like that offered at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), where students had access to an on-site gardening club in partnership with UNCW Sustainability peer educators.

To assess how laboratory schools influence students' social-emotional and school engagement outcomes, the Evaluation Team used three sources of data: responses from the Tripod student survey, administrative data on student attendance (from 2019-20) and administrative data on student disciplinary incidents (from 2019-20). Collectively, these data capture students' motivation for learning, perceptions of school/classroom climate, and engagement with school. These constructs are important to measure as they may be necessary precursors to student learning. However, it is also important to highlight potential limitations to these data and their ability fully capture student development and engagement.

*Student perceptions of laboratory schools*

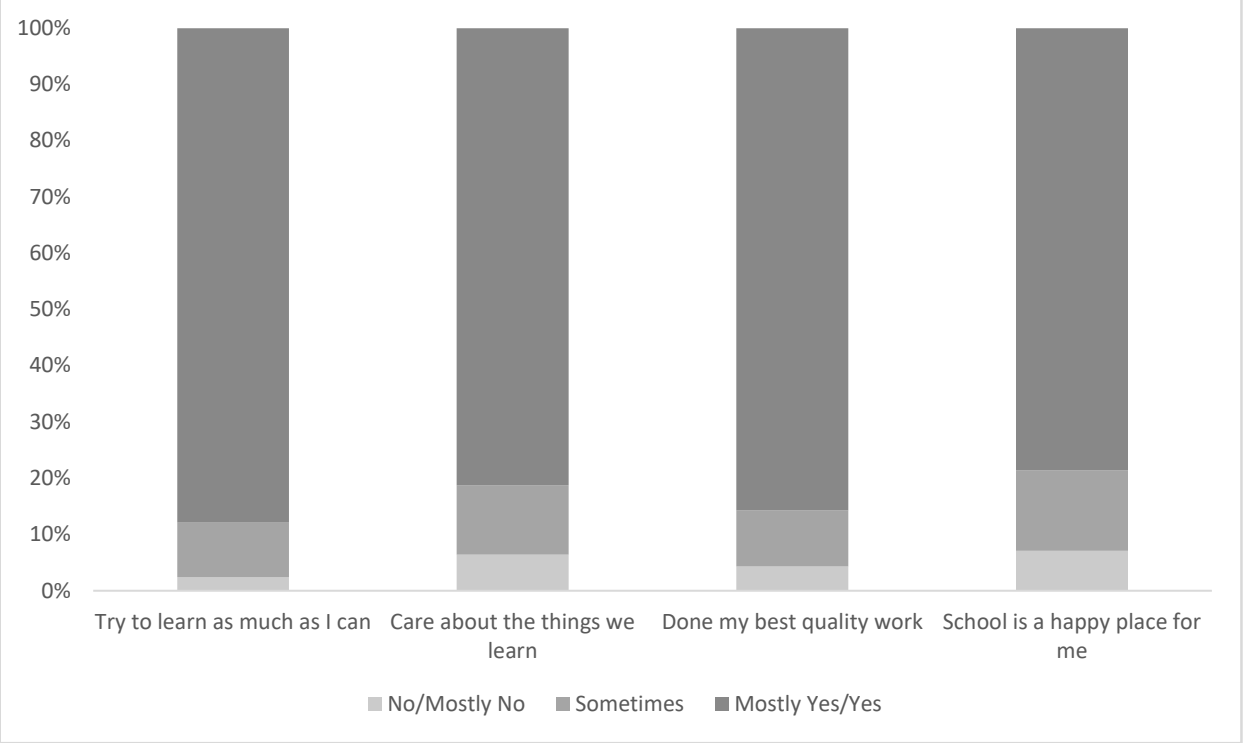
The Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer an online survey to laboratory school students in the spring of 2021. Two survey versions were used: (1) an early elementary survey taken by students in grades K-2 at the laboratory schools and (2) an upper elementary survey taken by students in grades 3-8 at the laboratory schools.[58] Overall, the Evaluation Team received 760 survey responses from laboratory school students: 210 responses from the Appalachian Academy, 100 responses from the ECU Community School, 67 responses from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), 220 responses from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 124 responses from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy

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

(UNCW), and 39 responses from The Catamount School (WCU). Data presented in this section focus on student responses across laboratory schools; data in Appendix A6 are presented for each respective laboratory school. Given differences in student grade levels and prior educational experiences, caution is warranted when comparing survey data across laboratory schools.

For all laboratory school student respondents, Figure 8 displays responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and engagement with school. Approximately 81-88 percent of respondents indicated that they mostly or always tried to learn as much as they could, cared about the things they learned, and did their best quality work in the laboratory school. Nearly 79 percent of laboratory school student respondents indicated that school was mostly or always a happy place for them. When comparing these student responses from spring 2021 to those from spring 2019,[59] results from 2021 were meaningfully higher for two items—doing my best quality work (86 versus 77 percent) and school as a happy place (79 versus 66 percent). Please see Appendix Table A6.1 for data on student motivation and engagement for each respective laboratory school.

*Figure 8: Laboratory School Students Motivation and Engagement with School*



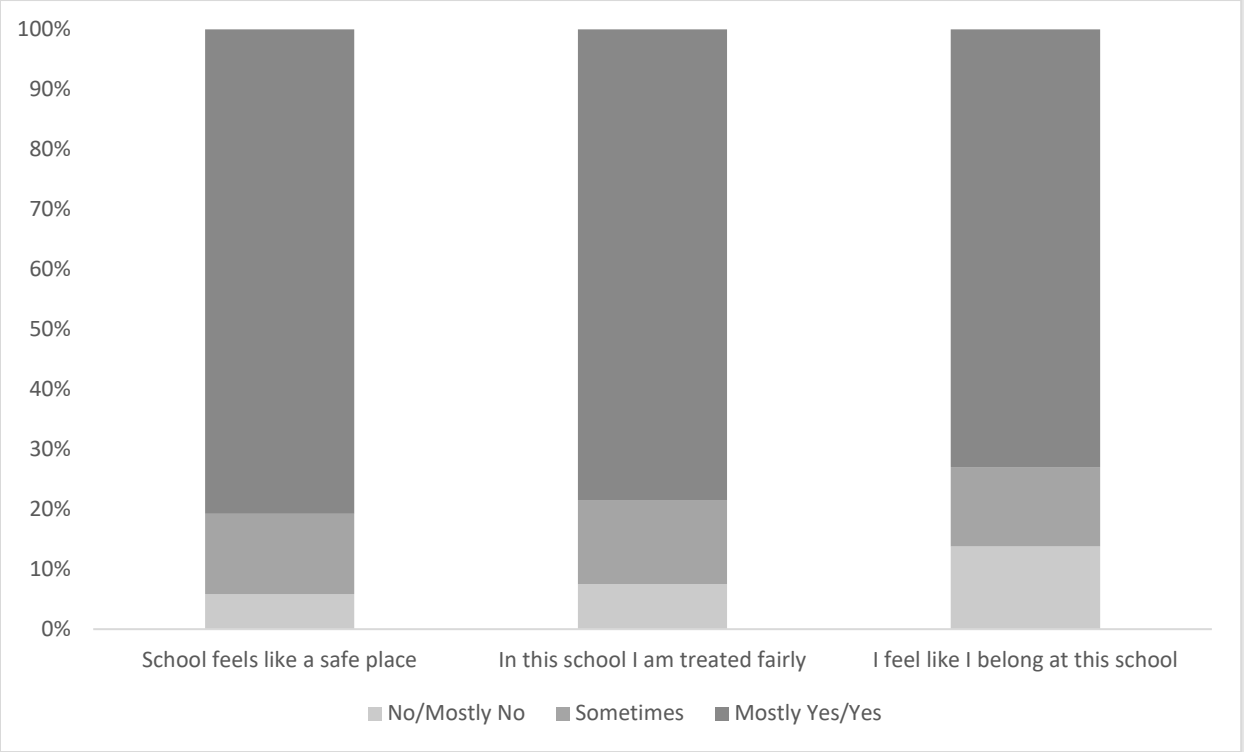

*Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and their engagement with school. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'try to learn as much as I can' and 'school is a happy place for me'.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

Similarly, Figure 9 displays laboratory school student responses to a set of items on school climate. In 2021, nearly 81 percent of respondents reported that school is mostly or always a safe place for them. This is up from 73 percent in spring 2019. Approximately 78 and 73 percent of respondents, respectively, indicated that they are mostly or always treated fairly at school and that they feel like they belong at their laboratory school. Once again, these responses values are higher than comparable values from spring

[59] Given the COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures, spring 2019 was the last time the Tripod student survey was administered.

2019—i.e., 78 versus 65 percent for being treated fairly and 73 versus 61 percent for feeling a sense of belonging. Please see Appendix Table A6.2 for student perceptions of school climate for each respective laboratory school.

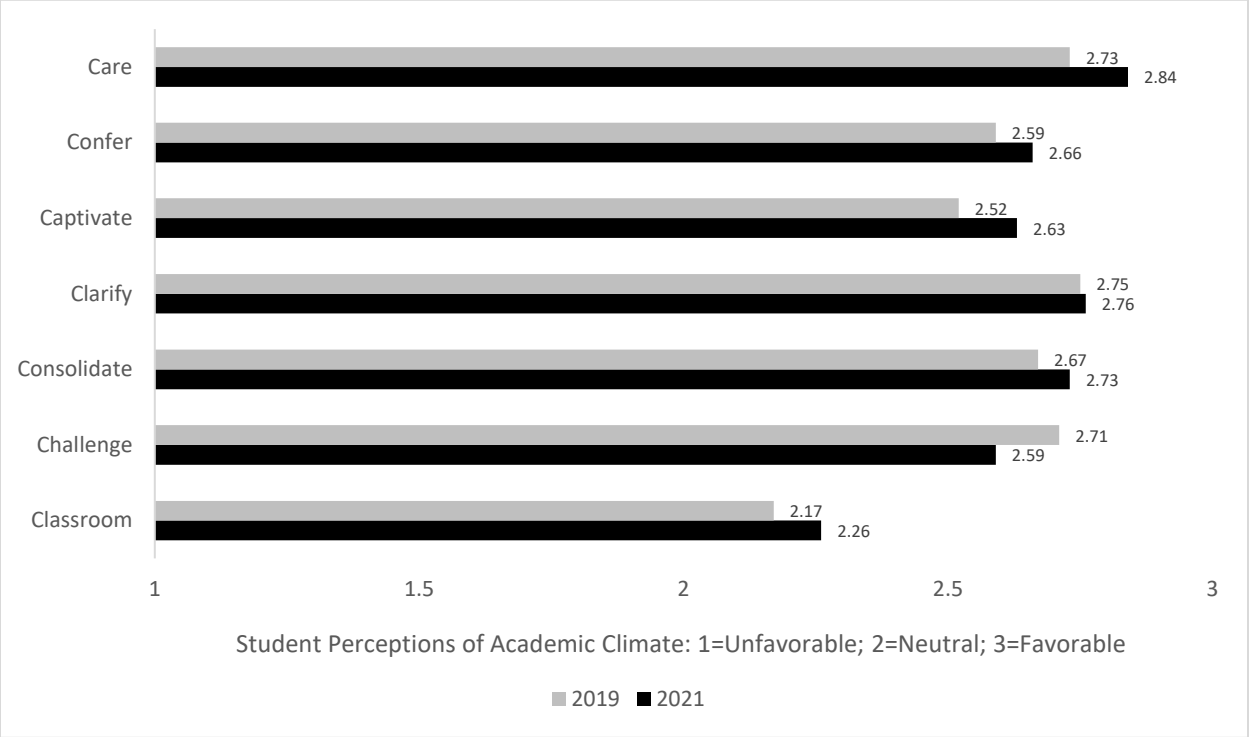
*Figure 9: Laboratory School Students Perceptions of School Climate*




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

The Tripod student survey is best known for assessing the academic climate of classrooms and schools through survey items on the 7Cs—Care, Confer, Captivate, Clarify, Consolidate, Challenge, and Classroom Management. Essentially, these survey items allow students to rate the academic climate in their classroom/school along seven distinct dimensions. Figure 10 displays summative 7Cs data for laboratory schools, where values equal to '1' are unfavorable responses, values equal to '2' are neutral responses, and values equal to '3' are favorable responses. Figure 10 also includes comparable data from spring 2019. Overall, in spring 2021, laboratory school students were most favorable regarding the care shown for them by teachers, their teachers' ability to clarify student understanding, and their teachers' ability to consolidate student learning. As in prior years, laboratory school students reported that their teachers struggled most with classroom management. Relative to spring 2019, 7Cs responses were higher in spring 2021 for six of the seven constructs (all except challenging students to think and work hard). Please see Appendix Table A6.3 for 7Cs data for each laboratory school.

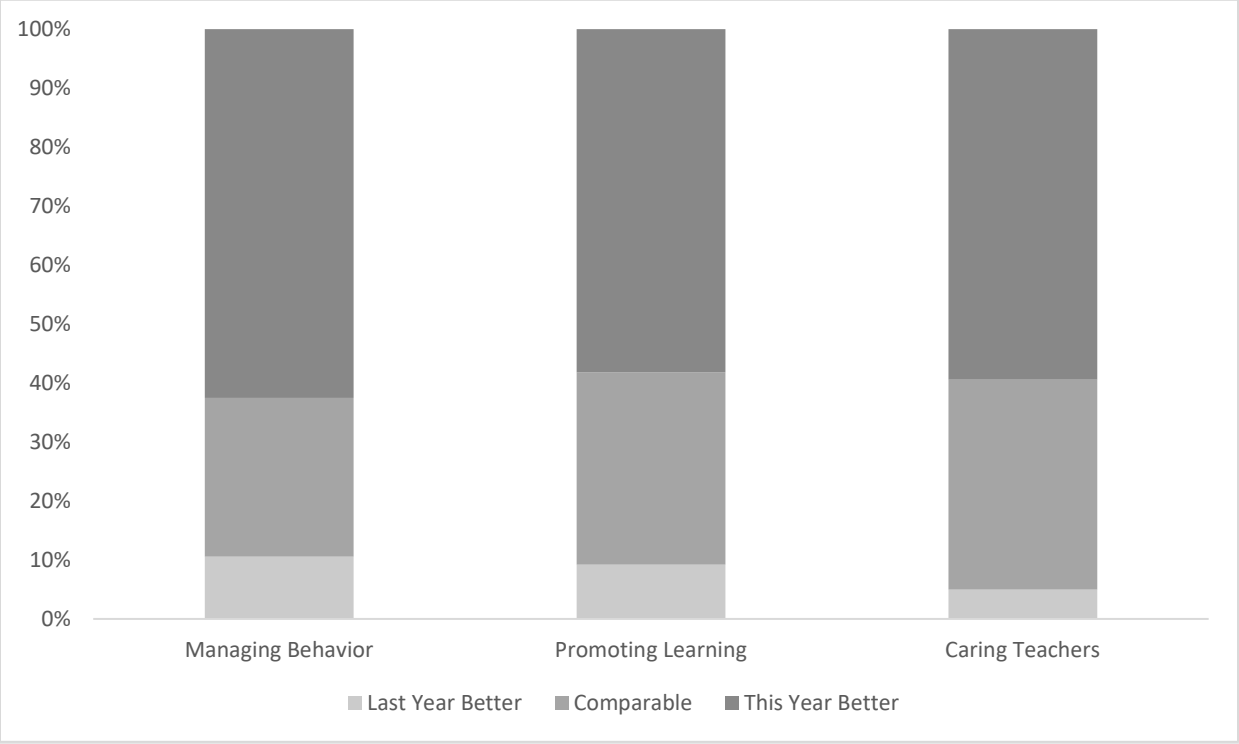
*Figure 10: Student Perceptions of Laboratory School Academic Climate (Tripod 7Cs)*




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

As with the Tripod parent/caregiver survey, an additional set of survey items asked laboratory school students to compare their educational experiences in 2020-21 with their educational experiences in 2019-20. Figure 11 displays responses for students *new* to laboratory schools in 2020-21. Nearly 63 percent of student respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at managing student behavior than their school in 2019-20. Approximately 59 percent of student respondents reported that their laboratory school was better at promoting learning and having caring teachers. Please see Appendix Table A6.4 for these responses disaggregated for each laboratory school and for students new to or returning to a laboratory school in 2020-21.

*Figure 11: Comparing School Experiences for Students New to Laboratory Schools*




*Note: For students new to laboratory schools in 2020-21, this figure displays responses to survey items asking students to compare their educational experiences in 2020-21 to their educational experiences in 2019-20.*

*Student attendance at laboratory schools in 2019-20*

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

The unique nature of many laboratory school students—i.e., those who previously attended/were zoned to attend a low-performing school and/or were previously low-performing themselves—warrants caution in student level analyses. In particular, groups of comparison students must be carefully identified to better isolate the relationship between laboratory school enrollment and the outcome of interest. As such, the Evaluation Team starts with descriptive data regarding student attendance at the five laboratory schools in operation in 2019-20. In more rigorous analyses, the Evaluation Team assesses whether attendance differs for (1) laboratory school students versus other students attending low-performing schools[60] and (2) laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.[61]

[60] Given the grade composition of laboratory schools (i.e. within the K-8 grade range), this includes only low-performing elementary or middle schools.

[61] Please see Appendix A7 for characteristics of laboratory school students and matched comparison sample students. Student-level matching was based on gender, race/ethnicity, economic-disadvantage, special education status, prior attendance data, prior suspension status, and prior test scores (in reading and math, as available).

Table 8 displays student attendance rates for the 2019-20 school year—that is, the percentage of days present at a school divided by the days enrolled. The top panel of Table 8 displays attendance rates for any student enrolled at a laboratory school in 2019-20, including students who exited the school before the completion of the year.[62] The second panel of Table 8 presents comparable data for students enrolled at a laboratory school for the entire year. Overall, the attendance rate for laboratory schools in 2019-20 was 96.46, ranging from 94.95 at The Catamount School (WCU) to 97.88 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Of note, the attendance rate for each laboratory school was higher in 2019-20 than in 2018-19. Furthermore, the data in the second panel show that attendance rates are slightly higher for students enrolled at laboratory schools for the entire year.

*Table 8: Attendance Rates at Laboratory Schools and Other District Schools (2019-20)*

| Student Groups | Student Count | Attendance Rates |
|---|---|---|
| *All Enrolled Laboratory School Students* | | |
| Laboratory Schools 2019-20 | 1,076 | 96.46 |
| Academy at Middle Fork | 284 | 95.78 |
| ECU Community School | 118 | 97.61 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 396 | 96.06 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 217 | 97.88 |
| The Catamount School | 61 | 94.95 |
| *Laboratory School Students Enrolled for the Entire Year* | | |
| Laboratory Schools 2019-20 | 999 | 96.66 |
| Academy at Middle Fork | 274 | 95.92 |
| ECU Community School | 102 | 97.92 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 357 | 96.38 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 209 | 97.92 |
| The Catamount School | 57 | 95.01 |
| *Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled in the LEA)* | | |
| Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5) | 25,861 | 95.91 |
| Pitt County (K-5) | 11,516 | 96.55 |
| South Greenville Elementary (K-5) | 350 | 93.17 |
| Rockingham County Schools (K-5) | 5,536 | 95.42 |
| New Hanover County Schools (K-8) | 18,533 | 95.81 |
| Jackson County Schools (6-8) | 861 | 95.43 |
| *Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled for the Entire Year in the LEA)* | | |
| Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5) | 23,457 | 96.07 |
| Pitt County (K-5) | 10,040 | 96.84 |
| South Greenville Elementary (K-5) | 223 | 94.78 |
| Rockingham County Schools (K-5) | 5,044 | 95.69 |
| New Hanover County Schools (K-8) | 16,917 | 96.06 |
| Jackson County Schools (6-8) | 788 | 95.72 |

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

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

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

Team provides these data for any student enrolled in the host district and for students in the host district for the entire year. Attendance rates for the ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy are higher than those in the host district; rates for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork are comparable to those in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools; and rates for The Catamount School (WCU) are lower than those in Jackson County Schools.

Table 9 presents results from student-level regression models comparing attendance rates at laboratory schools in 2019-20 to those of comparison students enrolled in low-performing schools. The Evaluation Team ran these analyses across all grades (K-8) and then separate models for elementary grades (K-5) and middle grades (6-8).[63] Analyses included a rich set of student characteristics including grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, special education, gifted education, economically-disadvantaged, and limited English proficient.[64] Overall, these results show positive and statistically significant results for laboratory school students. Specifically, in 2019-20, laboratory school students (overall) attended 1.25 percent more school days than comparable students enrolled in low-performing schools. Separate estimates by laboratory school show that attendance results are significantly higher at the ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Estimates for attendance rates are significantly lower at The Catamount School (WCU).

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

| | Elementary and Middle Grades Combined | Elementary Grades | Middle Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| Laboratory School Students | **1.253**$^{*}$<br>(0.509) | **1.119**$^{*}$<br>(0.461) | 1.411<br>(1.237) |
| Academy at Middle Fork | 0.060<br>(0.094) | 0.032<br>(0.091) | --- |
| ECU Community School | **2.352**$^{**}$<br>(0.247) | **2.086**$^{**}$<br>(0.301) | --- |
| Moss Street Partnership School | **1.129**$^{**}$<br>(0.098) | **1.024**$^{**}$<br>(0.097) | --- |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | **3.016**$^{**}$<br>(0.228) | **3.249**$^{**}$<br>(0.231) | **2.837**$^{**}$<br>(0.332) |
| The Catamount School | **-0.551**$^{**}$<br>(0.190) | --- | **-1.089**$^{**}$<br>(0.090) |
| Observations | 229,425 | 145,067 | 84,358 |

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

To extend the analyses shown in Table 9, Table 10 displays estimates from more rigorous analyses that compare attendance rates for laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.[65]

[63] For these analyses and the matched comparison sample analyses, the Evaluation Team limited the sample to those enrolled at their school for the entire 2019-20 year.

[64] Analyses also include a State Board of Education region fixed effect—i.e. comparing student attendance at laboratory schools to that of students attending a low-performing school in the same State Board of Education region.

[65] These analyses control for student grade-level, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, special education status, and limited English proficient. Models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

Generally, these results are similar to those in Table 9. Estimates in the top row of Table 10 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 0.80 percent higher than for the matched sample. This estimate translates to approximately 1.3 fewer days absent for laboratory school students in elementary grades. Comparable to Table 4, separate results by school show that attendance rates are significantly higher at the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Results are negative and statistically significant when comparing The Catamount School students to matched comparison sample students in grades 6-8.

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

| | Elementary and Middle Grades Combined | Elementary Grades | Middle Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| Laboratory School Students | **0.700**** | **0.779**** | 0.393 |
| | (0.157) | (0.159) | (0.474) |
| Academy at Middle Fork | -0.148 | -0.072 | --- |
| | (0.272) | (0.270) | |
| ECU Community School | **2.460**** | **2.485**** | --- |
| | (0.400) | (0.404) | |
| Moss Street Partnership School | **0.754**** | **0.830**** | --- |
| | (0.209) | (0.208) | |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | **1.737**** | **2.103**** | **1.612**** |
| | (0.218) | (0.219) | (0.361) |
| The Catamount School | -0.879 | --- | **--1.759**+ |
| | (0.915) | | (0.993) |
| Observations | 3,885 | 3,086 | 799 |

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

*Student disciplinary incidents at laboratory schools in 2019-20*

In order to foster an environment that facilitates student learning and development, many laboratory schools invest in trainings and programs focused on the whole child. These include PBIS, restorative justice, and trauma-invested training sessions. A goal of such programs is to develop and strengthen relationships between students and the school and to ensure that laboratory schools provide students the supports that keep them engaged and learning. Part of this involves reducing the incidence of exclusionary discipline—i.e., in- or out-of-school suspensions—at laboratory schools.

As such, the Evaluation Team assessed whether laboratory schools impact students' likelihood of being suspended (in- or out-of-school) during the 2019-20 academic year. The outcome for these analyses is an indicator for whether a student was suspended during the year. This work begins with descriptive reporting on the percentage of students suspended at the five laboratory schools in operation in 2019-20. In more rigorous analyses, the Evaluation Team assesses whether the likelihood of being suspended differs for (1) laboratory school students versus other students attending low-performing schools and (2) laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.

Table 11 presents the percentage of students suspended at least once during the 2019-20 year. The top panel displays these data for laboratory school students; the bottom panel displays comparable data for same-grade students in the districts hosting laboratory schools (or the host school for South Greenville Elementary). Overall, 12.73 percent of laboratory school students were suspended at least one time during the 2019-20 school year. This ranges from 1.75 percent of students being suspended at The Catamount School (WCU) to 23.76 percent of students being suspended at the ECU Community School.

*Table 11: Suspension Status at Laboratory Schools and Other District Schools (2019-20)*

| Student Groups | Student Count | Percentage of Students Suspended in the 2019-20 Year |
|---|---|---|
| *Laboratory School Students Enrolled for the Entire Year* | | |
| Laboratory Schools 2019-20 | 990 | 12.73 |
| Academy at Middle Fork | 271 | 14.39 |
| ECU Community School | 101 | 23.76 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 353 | 5.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 208 | 21.15 |
| The Catamount School | 57 | 1.75 |
| *Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled for the Entire Year in the LEA)* | | |
| Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5) | 23,457 | 9.13 |
| Pitt County (K-5) | 10,040 | 18.56 |
| South Greenville Elementary (K-5) | 220 | 53.18 |
| Rockingham County Schools (K-5) | 5,044 | 11.56 |
| New Hanover County Schools (K-8) | 16,917 | 9.32 |
| Jackson County Schools (6-8) | 788 | 20.81 |

*Note: This table displays the percentage of laboratory school students who were suspended (in or out-of-school) during the 2019-20 year. Data are also presented for other, same-grade students in the host LEAs*

The values in Table 11 are unlikely to convey the impact of laboratory schools on student conduct, especially given the target enrollment population for laboratory schools—i.e., students with prior academic and behavior challenges. To better address this concern, Table 12 presents results from regression analyses showing the likelihood of laboratory school students being suspended relative to students in low-performing schools.[66] Overall, these results indicate that laboratory school students are no more or less likely to be suspended than comparable students in low-performing schools. However, these results vary by laboratory school. In particular, students at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) were more likely to be suspended, while those at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and The Catamount School (WCU) were less likely to be suspended.

[66] As with the student attendance analyses, these regressions also compare within State Board of Education regions (i.e. use a State Board of Education region fixed effect).

*Table 12: Likelihood of Being Suspended—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools*

| | Elementary and Middle Grades Combined | Elementary Grades | Middle Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| Laboratory School Students | -0.051<br>(0.034) | -0.020<br>(0.036) | **-0.146**$^{**}$<br>(0.028) |
| Academy at Middle Fork | **0.045**$^{**}$<br>(0.008) | **0.054**$^{**}$<br>(0.007) | --- |
| ECU Community School | -0.005<br>(0.019) | -0.012<br>(0.023) | --- |
| Moss Street Partnership School | **-0.094**$^{**}$<br>(0.008) | **-0.080**$^{**}$<br>(0.007) | --- |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | **-0.061**$^{**}$<br>(0.018) | -0.022<br>(0.019) | **-0.120**$^{**}$<br>(0.027) |
| The Catamount School | **-0.280**$^{**}$<br>(0.041) | --- | **-0.195**$^{**}$<br>(0.008) |
| Observations | 212,049 | 133,507 | 78,542 |

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

Table 13 displays results from our preferred analyses—i.e., those that match laboratory school students to comparison students with similar demographic and prior education experiences (i.e., test scores, attendance, suspension status). Compared to a matched sample, laboratory school students were less likely, by 5.5 percentage points, to be suspended in the 2019-20 school year. These results were particularly large in magnitude for Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and The Catamount School (WCU), where students were 10-20 percentage points less likely than matched students to be suspended. Middle grades students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) were also less likely than matched students to be suspended. Results for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and the ECU Community School are statistically insignificant.

*Table 13: Likelihood of Being Suspended —Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students*

| | Elementary and Middle Grades Combined | Elementary Grades | Middle Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| Laboratory School Students | **-0.055**$^{**}$ (0.014) | **-0.038**$^{*}$ (0.016) | **-0.122**$^{**}$ (0.035) |
| Academy at Middle Fork | 0.014 (0.028) | 0.017 (0.028) | --- |
| ECU Community School | -0.009 (0.055) | 0.000 (0.055) | --- |
| Moss Street Partnership School | **-0.103**$^{**}$ (0.020) | **-0.109**$^{**}$ (0.020) | --- |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | -0.040 (0.035) | -0.018 (0.049) | **-0.111**$^{*}$ (0.049) |
| The Catamount School | **-0.199**$^{**}$ (0.032) | --- | **-0.140**$^{**}$ (0.036) |
| Observations | 3,885 | 3,086 | 799 |

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the likelihood of laboratory school students being suspended during the academic year 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?***

School closures and the associated shifts to remote or hybrid learning environments altered the approach of COEs to integrating laboratory schools into their educator preparation programs. Prior to the pandemic, COEs had most often used methods and practicum courses relevant to laboratory school objectives to integrate pre-service candidates into laboratory schools. Methods instructors were frequently part of the COE curriculum team supporting the laboratory schools, and in some cases, those instructors 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. In 2020-21, laboratory schools worked with their university partners to adapt strategies for engaging preservice candidates and COE faculty to accommodate remote and hybrid instruction. In some cases, social distancing requirements restricted COE involvement, while in others, remote engagement of staff and students opened new avenues for participation in laboratory schools. In 2020-21, five laboratory schools engaged preservice candidates 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 (Appalachian State), COE faculty serving in faculty-in-residence roles also provided specific support for both in-person and virtual learning contexts. COEs continued to engage in-service teachers through PD or other supports, although often in a virtual, rather than in-person, environment.

*Pre-service candidates*

Traditionally, COEs have 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. In 2020-21, these experiences were adapted depending on the mode of instruction in which the laboratory school engaged (in-person, hybrid, or remote-only). During spring and fall of 2020, most COEs engaged student teacher interns in the new remote operations of the laboratory school. In these cases, pre-service teacher candidates 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. 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. Overall, laboratory schools generally offered fewer preservice placements in 2020-21 than in previous years, with some exceptions at specific campuses. At Appalachian State and UNCW, pandemic conditions removed some barriers to preservice candidate engagement: namely, travel requirements from Boone to Winston-Salem in the case of Appalachian State, and the pandemic-related shift to a traditional school calendar for UNCW. At these campuses, the numbers of preservice teacher candidates who engaged in the laboratory school increased significantly in the 2020-21 year.

Pre-service candidates worked under the direction of a laboratory school teacher and COE clinical supervisor. Those candidates who completed their internships virtually were supervised by methods faculty or clinical supervisors using videoconference software such as GoReact or Zoom. Candidates who completed at least some portion of their pre-service experiences in-person, often participated in a combination of in-person and virtual observation and meetings with their clinical supervisors and cooperating teachers for feedback.

COEs use several criteria to select pre-service candidates for clinical experiences at laboratory schools. Generally, COEs select pre-service candidates for clinical experiences based on their major and interest in working with diverse student populations. COEs rely on methods and practicum courses—offered in the junior year—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. Selection, placement, or programmatic practices related to pre-service candidates at laboratory schools haven't yet shown significant influence on those related to placements at other traditional public schools with which the COE partners. During remote instruction, because laboratory school attendance policies generally aligned to district attendance, practices for placement and engagement of preservice candidates in the laboratory schools were largely the same as for any other traditional placement site.

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

| Program/Licensure Areas | Early Field Experiences | Intern I | Intern II (Full-time student teaching) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 16 | 19 | 9 |
| Music Education | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Art | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Health & Physical Education | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| *ECU Community School* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Special Education | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 0 | 15 | 13 |
| Early Childhood Education | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Elementary/Special Education | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Dance Education | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Health and Physical Education | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 42 | 0 | 4 |
| English as Second Language (ESL) | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Masters in School Administration | --- | --- | 4 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)* | | | |
| Inclusive Education | 50 | 1 | 1 |
| Middle Grades Education | 9 | 3 | 3 |
| Health and Physical Education | 6 | 9 | 0 |

*Note: For each UNC System institution, this table displays counts of the pre-service candidates who had clinical experiences in a laboratory school in 2020-21. These data are displayed by institution and program area (e.g. elementary education, special education).*

Table 14 presents counts of the pre-service teachers and school leaders who had a clinical experience—early field, intern I, intern II—in a laboratory school in 2020-21.[67] Appalachian State placed 16 teacher candidates into early field experiences at the Academy at Middle Fork and placed 22 candidates into intern I experiences. Appalachian State also placed 11 candidates into student teaching experiences (intern II). While the pandemic opened up a new opportunity for Appalachian State candidates to engage remotely in the laboratory school, as schools shift back to in-person learning, Appalachian State leadership continues to work on a long-term strategy that would sustain a larger number of students able to serve internships at the laboratory school. ECU placed six special education candidates into early field experiences at its laboratory school. Five ECU candidates completed intern I experiences and four ECU candidates completed student teaching at the ECU Community School. UNCG placed seven preservice teachers into early field experiences at Moss Street Partnership School. Moss Street also served as a placement site for 17 intern Is and 14 intern IIs. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and The Catamount

[67] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2020-21. ASU placed one School Social Work intern. ECU placed two marriage and family therapy interns, three school psychology interns, four speech-language pathology interns, and 26 occupational therapy interns at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed three school counseling interns and one social work intern at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed two school social work interns, eight speech-language/audiology interns, and one public health education intern at the Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed two school counseling interns and one school nursing intern at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. WCU placed five school counselling interns, five school psychology interns, and eight school nursing interns at The Catamount School.

School welcomed many candidates into early field experiences—42 and 65, respectively. D.C. Virgo was the placement site for nine student teachers; The Catamount School was the placement site for 13 intern I candidates and four intern II candidates. Given challenges associated with opening a new school during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNCC decided to postpone engagement of pre-service teaching candidates from the COE. Instead, pre-service candidate engagement was limited to three candidates in the school counseling program and one Master's in Social Work candidate.

*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. Only D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) hosted school leader candidates in a formal principal internship in 2020-21. The ECU Community School did not host any school leader candidates in formal principal internship experiences in 2020-21. However, the ECU Community School hosted four school leader candidates—part of the NC Principal Fellows cohort at ECU—to complete service-learning leadership projects at the laboratory school.

*College of education faculty engagement with laboratory schools*

Until spring 2020, COE faculty most often had either a regular onsite presence at the laboratory school (e.g., faculty in residence, COE faculty teaching at school) or engaged with laboratory school staff on an ad hoc basis, often delivering professional development or other curricular and instructional supports. COEs have been challenged to systematize opportunities for more faculty to engage more deeply and more regularly with laboratory school staff and students. 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. With some notable exceptions,[68] remote learning and social distancing requirements in 2020-21 intensified the challenges for some COE faculty to engage in laboratory schools on a deep and consistent basis.

COE faculty that regularly engaged at laboratory schools in 2020-21 were 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.

[68] More Appalachian State faculty were able to engage more frequently and with greater depth than in previous years due to the removal of the travel barrier between the university in Boone and the laboratory school in Winston-Salem.

- 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.[69]
- Faculty-in-residence serve the laboratory school two to three days per week. Typically, they must have a focus for their residency and some COEs require interested faculty to apply for the position. Proposed work must align with the laboratory school model. For example, at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) the faculty-in-residence taught academically and intellectually gifted (AIG) classes one or two days per week. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted two faculty-in-residence from the Department of Educational Leadership, one that provided expertise in curriculum and equity and the other in blended learning instruction.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on site at the laboratory school.
- Several COEs engaged their faculty in regular professional development supports for laboratory school staff. For example, faculty in UNCC's Reading and Elementary Education program facilitated weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with Niner University Elementary teachers. Faculty from Appalachian State supported laboratory school teachers in special education and science, as well as the newly implemented Literacy Cast program. Faculty from ECU provided professional development on best practices in remote learning for Community School staff.

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

To date, the engagement of COE faculty with laboratory schools continues to be more voluntary than systematic, posing challenges for the sustainability and consistency of faculty involvement from year-to-year. Without (1) course offloads or workload exchanges that allow time for COE faculty to be in or otherwise involved with laboratory schools and (2) other systematized processes for identifying and engaging faculty to serve in laboratory schools, it remains unclear whether COEs can maintain the level of faculty engagement of the initial implementation years. As more faculty rotate in and out of engagement with laboratory schools, it also becomes more difficult for these faculty to build lasting relationships with staff and students. As it pertains to certain cases where remote learning conditions facilitated greater COE engagement in 2020-21, such as the Literacy Cast at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), COE leaders are working to establish longevity and sustainability of those engagements.

*In-service teachers*

Traditionally, 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.

[69] One WCU faculty member serves The Catamount School as a Math I teacher, another as EC Director, and another as a Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher.

In-service teachers also receive professional development from COE faculty on instructional supports (e.g., using interim assessments, standards-based report cards, differentiated instruction strategies, 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 2020-21, laboratory school staff continued to receive these professional development and support opportunities, albeit most often in a remote context. In some cases, PD was tailored specifically to support laboratory schools as they adapted to the pandemic, like professional development on the best practices for remote instruction delivered for ECU Community School teachers.

Laboratory school staff also have opportunities at COEs to pursue professional growth. In 2020-21, laboratory school staff were enrolled in certification or advanced degree courses at partner COEs. For example, laboratory school teacher assistants may take undergraduate courses; laboratory school teachers may take certification courses or enroll in graduate programs at ECU and UNCG. Staff at the Academy at Middle Form (ASU) can enroll in any undergraduate or graduate course or program. In 2020-21, staff enrolled in the Master's in Reading program, Professional School Counseling, the EdD in Educational Leadership, and the Special Education residency programs. ECU, UNCG, and WCU have teachers currently enrolled in Doctoral, 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 four years since the first two laboratory schools opened, several developments have aided the growth and sustainability of the schools. Changes in the laboratory school legislation have clarified expectations at the five-year renewal mark and the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) are engaging in renewal in this school year. Likewise, laboratory schools are becoming increasingly institutionalized within UNC System institutions. Partnerships with constituent institutions, host districts, and community organizations have strengthened over time, as the laboratory schools become increasingly embedded within the communities they serve. These partnerships have proven valuable to the laboratory school's ability to support the practices of teachers, create positive and safe learning environments for students, and foster engagement of COE faculty and students with the laboratory school.

Nonetheless, laboratory schools still have challenges to address. Although COEs have made strides towards integrating the management of laboratory schools into their own university systems, misalignment of host district or NCDPI and university systems continues to create challenges in managing certain processes like human resources and finance. While laboratory school leaders report strong relationship with host districts, some difficulties persist. Differences in university and host district calendars create challenges for school schedules, COE faculty engagement, and laboratory school student transportation. Further, laboratory schools often recruit students from within existing host district boundaries. Although laboratory school leaders report that their host districts consistently express support for their schools, both parties draw student enrollment, and thus, ADM funding, from the same pool of prospective students. This natural conflict of interest often results in laboratory school leaders largely engaging in marketing and recruitment efforts for the laboratory school independent of their host district.

Additionally, the engagement of COE faculty and students with laboratory schools varies considerably—in terms of the numbers of COE personnel involved, the depth of their engagement, and the structures/incentives to support their work. Changes, over time, in the COE faculty and pre-service candidates who engage with the laboratory school also necessitate that laboratory school staff and students establish new relationships with COE personnel and students on a frequent basis. Disruptions in operations like those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic further complicate these dynamics for laboratory school staff and leaders.

Finally, funding for laboratory schools has been a fundamental challenge to each school's growth and sustainability that has not significantly changed four years into the initiative. Laboratory schools are not self-sustaining on per-pupil funding allocations alone. COEs continue to subsidize laboratory school budgets—sometimes by greater than 20 percent of budgets—to close gaps between ADM and other public funds and actual laboratory school operating 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 brought some short-term relief funding. However, this does not represent a solution for the long-term. While the longevity of pandemic-induced enrollment declines is unknown, were such numbers to remain lower, this would further decrease allotments and tighten already restricted laboratory school budgets.

Though laboratory school leaders voice optimism for long-term outcomes, whether laboratory schools can grow and sustain may hinge on how well they can address student needs in a changed statewide budget landscape. As the initiative approaches the year five renewal period for the first two laboratory schools, and legislation mandates three new schools to open by the 2022-23 school year, developing a sustainable plan for laboratory school funding will be paramount.

## 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. Five years later, UNC System institutions have opened six laboratory schools that collectively serve more than 1,100 students. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on both school operations and access to evaluation data (e.g., student test score data), it is difficult to fully assess whether laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission. 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. This transfer of knowledge is particularly important, since the UNC System needs to open three more laboratory schools by the 2022-23 school year. Despite this organizational learning, funding adequacy for laboratory schools remains a challenge. The UNC System and COEs continue to supplement regular public school funding streams. Whether legislative amendments that shift costs from laboratory schools to district partners provide budgetary relief to laboratory schools remains to be seen. This will be a focus of future evaluation efforts.

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

While some administrative and survey data are not available to the Evaluation Team (given COVID-19), extant data suggests that laboratory schools are making positive contributions. After enrollment declines between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, given the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment at UNC System laboratory schools stabilized or increased in the 2021-22 school year. In particular, enrollment growth is notable at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU). This suggests that laboratory schools were able to effectively market and recruit and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations. As intended, laboratory schools are also primarily enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their host districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are a racial/ethnic minority or economically-disadvantaged.

Survey responses show that laboratory school students and their parents/caregivers are satisfied and rate their laboratory school experiences positively. For example, 95 percent of parent/caregiver respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's laboratory school; laboratory school students rated the academic climate of their schools highly (and often higher than in spring 2019). Likewise, responses from an inaugural personnel survey indicate that laboratory school educators rate their school leadership and school climate highly, with some room for improvement in perceptions of teaching practice.

Student-level administrative data—from the 2019-20 school year—indicate that laboratory school students attend a higher percentage of school days and are less likely to be suspended than comparable students in a matched sample. These results, coupled with the student survey responses, suggest that laboratory schools are strengthening student engagement with and perceptions of school. These are important outcomes, especially as they may serve as precursors to student learning. The real challenge to this evaluation is being unable to assess student learning given the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated disruptions to instruction and assessment. The Evaluation Team looks forward to rigorously assessing student achievement in future evaluation reports.

The UNC System and UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools face upcoming challenges. These include the opening of three additional schools, the need to more sustainably fund laboratory school operations, finding ways to institutionalize COE faculty engagement in the long-term, and addressing questions around laboratory school governance and accountability. Accordingly, the Evaluation Team will continue to examine how laboratory school practices and policies evolve to respond to these challenges and contribute to enhanced outcomes for K-12 students and pre-service educators.

## Appendix A1: Data Sources

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

***Laboratory School Interviews***

For each UNC System laboratory school, the Evaluation Team will conduct a full set of interviews at two time points during the evaluation. First, during the spring of a laboratory school's first-year of operation, the Evaluation Team will interview COE leadership and faculty, laboratory school personnel (e.g., teachers, principals, pre-service teachers), and laboratory school partners (within the local community and from across the university). These interviews will assist the Evaluation Team in understanding how the laboratory schools have been set up, with whom the laboratory schools are partnering, how the laboratory schools are operated, and the relationships between educator preparation and the laboratory schools. The Evaluation Team conducted these interviews with ECU and WCU in April 2018; with Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW in April 2019; and with UNCC in April/May 2021. Second, during the last year of the laboratory school evaluation (2022), the Evaluation Team will conduct a full set of 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 these two time periods, the Evaluation Team has also started annual interviews with laboratory school leadership. In spring 2020 and spring 2021, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews—typically with the laboratory school principal and COE laboratory school lead—for each school. These conversations provide an opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about new programs/policies at the schools and to understand how the laboratory schools are adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, to supplement interviews at each laboratory school site, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews in 2018, 2019, and 2021 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,[70] 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. In completing these reports—especially those completed after the initial round of interviews in the school's first year of operation—the Evaluation Team directs schools to focus on what is new in the current year.

***Administrative Data from the NCDPI***

The laboratory school evaluation will use student 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. 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 of UNC System graduates and to specifically assess the outcomes of early-career educators who had significant pre-service experiences in a laboratory school.

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

***Survey Responses***

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

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

Second, the Evaluation Team has contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to parents/caregivers of laboratory school students. This survey focuses on parents'/caregivers' satisfaction with the laboratory school, their perceptions of the laboratory school application process and set up, and their perceptions of school climate, services, and safety. The Evaluation Team administered this survey in spring 2018 to the parents/families of students attending the ECU Community School and The Catamount School. In spring 2019, the Evaluation Team administered this survey to the parents/families of students attending the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, and The Catamount School. Due to the school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Team did not collect student survey data in spring 2020. In spring 2021, the Evaluation Team administered the survey to parents/caregivers at all six operating laboratory schools.

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

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 have had significant clinical experiences in laboratory schools. In addition, the Evaluation Team will collect data from COEs, on an annual basis, detailing the number of pre-service teachers having early field, intern I, and intern II experiences at laboratory schools. These data will also include counts of other COE pre-service interns (e.g., MSA students, counseling students) at the laboratory schools.

## Appendix A2: Analysis Methods

***Qualitative data analyses***

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

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

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

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.[71] 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.

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

## Appendix A3: Laboratory School Snapshots

### *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork*

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

In its third 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, 18 classroom teachers, four specials teachers (art, media, music, and PE), 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 served as a faculty-in-residence, teaching the laboratory school's Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program multiple days per week.

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 school 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. In 2020-21, the Academy at Middle Fork implemented "Literacy Cast", a daily literacy session that allows reading education faculty at Appalachian State University and several guest authors to connect directly with students and model effective literacy instruction for lab school teachers. The Academy at Middle Fork also uses PBIS and models social justice by committing to sustainable practices, global education, and responsible living.

Due to COVID-19, the Academy conducted fully remote instruction from August 24 - November 13, 2020. From November 14 through January 22, the school reopened with a hybrid cohort model. Students in Cohort A attended school in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays, and those in Cohort B attended on Thursdays and Fridays. About 60 percent of students participated in the hybrid model. K-3 students were allowed to return to school four days a week beginning January 25, 2021. Students in grades 4-5 joined the younger students in school four days a week on March 8. For the remainder of the school year, approximately 75% of students attended school in-person while 25% remained fully virtual.

Because of the Academy's virtual and hybrid learning formats in 2020-21, more pre-service candidates engaged in the laboratory school than in previous years, when only candidates living in Forsyth County were assigned for internships. In 2020-21, Appalachian State placed 22 methods-based interns and 11 student teachers at the school. Sixteen pre-service candidates in elementary education had intermittent field experiences at the laboratory school. Additionally, the Academy had one school social worker intern in 2020-21. COE leaders are working to identify sustainable ways for long-term COE pre-service candidate engagement as laboratory school instruction returns to in-person.

### *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 2020-21, it served grades K-5, with one class per grade in grades 3-5, and two classrooms each for grades K-2.

In its fourth year of operation, the laboratory school's staff included a principal, nine teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, seven teacher assistants, a special education director/teacher, a second special education teacher, a full-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 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.

Beginning August 17, 2020, the ECU Community School allowed all students to attend school in-person daily. The school also offered a remote option for families and students who were not comfortable attending school in-person. From January 6 through 22, 2021, the school moved to remote learning as a precautionary measure. Students were allowed to return to school in-person on January 25, 2021.

Most of the schools and colleges on the ECU campus are engaged with the laboratory school to support its whole child approach. Thirty-five Interns from the Marriage and Family Therapy, Psychology, Speech Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy departments had clinical experiences at the lab school in 2020-21. Additionally, the COE placed six special education pre-service candidates in early field experiences and nine student teachers in elementary education and special education at the lab school. Four NC Principal Fellows completed Leadership Projects at the school in 2020-21. Students in the ECU Honors College served as weekly Reading Buddies for students in the Community School. Additionally, the ECU Student Affairs Division was awarded a $30,000 grant to implement an After School Tutorial program at the Community School.

Some distinct practices that the ECU Community School implements 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 third year, the Moss Street Partnership School employed 25 classroom teachers (four 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, although the school was unable to fully leverage this space in 2020-21 due to social distancing requirements and remote learning. The school employs a full-time instructional technology consultant who assists teachers with the incorporation of technology into their lessons; a role that proved invaluable during the transition to remote instruction. 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 the UNCG School of Education and the Department of Kinesiology engaged with the lab school in 2020-21 to develop effective STEM resources, respond to social-emotional student needs, and increase parent-family engagement with the lab school during remote learning. 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.

From August 17,2020-Febraury 26, 2021, the Moss Street Partnership School operated in a fully remote format. Beginning March 1, 2021, the school allowed students to return to school in-person five days per week and provided a remote option for families and students who were not comfortable or unable to return to school.

In 2020-21, UNCG placed 17 pre-service candidates for their first semester of student teaching (intern I), and 14 students for their final semester of student teaching (intern II). Most student teachers came from Elementary Education, with others from the Physical Education and Special Education majors. Seven students from the Elementary Education, Special Education, Dance Education, and Physical Education majors had early field experiences at the lab school in 2020-21. The Moss Street Partnership School also hosted two year-long interns from the School of Health and Human Services in School Social Work, eight semester-long interns in Speech-Language Pathology, a Public Health Education intern, and a school counseling intern. The School of Nursing supported 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's M.Ed. programs in literacy. Four laboratory staff members (two teachers and two administrators) enrolled in UNCG's Educational Leadership Ed.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. Although DCVPA previously operated on a year-round schedule, the school adopted a traditional calendar for the 2020-21 school year as part of its COVID-19 reopening plan.

In its third year, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy staff included a principal, an assistant principal, ten teachers in core content areas, two teaching assistants, four teachers in art, music, physical education/health, and media, two special education educators, a part-time nurse, 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. Two Faculty-in-Residence from the COE also supported the professional learning of teachers at DCVPA, one with a focus on equity and the other with a focus on blended learning.

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 (in 2020-21, these experiences were limited due to COVID-19 school closure). 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. COVID-19 limited access to facilities and on-site resources in 2020-21.

From August 2020 to October 2020, all DCVPS students were fully remote. Beginning in October, elementary and middle grades students could return to school on a hybrid schedule, with the option of remaining remote. In March 2021, elementary students returned to school fully in-person, and middle grades followed beginning in mid-April. All families also had the option to remain fully remote.

In its third year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted 46 pre-service candidates, including 42 early field experiences and four student teacher interns. The school had previously been unable to host student teaching interns due to its year-round calendar, but in 2020-21 the school transitioned to a traditional school calendar in response to COVID-19. This transition allowed UNCW to place four student teachers at the school, three in Elementary Education and one in English as a Second Language.

### *The Catamount School*

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

In its fourth 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. WCU College of Education faculty members serve in several positions at The Catamount School, including EC administrator, and Math I teacher.

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

The Catamount School began the 2020-21 school year with a hybrid model. Students in two groups attended school in-person two days per week, and Wednesdays served as a fully remote day for all students. Beginning in April 2021, students could attend school in-person five days per week. Students also had the option to attend school in a completely remote format through the entire school year.

More than 80 pre-service teacher candidates had formal clinical experiences at The Catamount School in the 2020-21 school year, including pre-service candidates in middle grades, health and physical education, and inclusive education programs (dual program in elementary and special education). However, only student teacher interns were permitted to work in-person at the school; all early field experiences took place remotely. In addition, pre-service candidates from other WCU programs had clinical experiences at The Catamount School, including students in school counseling, school psychology, and nursing.

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

### *Niner University Elementary*

Niner University Elementary School is located on the campus of a former Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Pre-K Center in west Charlotte, NC and, in 2020-21, served students in grades K-2 with four kindergarten classes and two first and second grade classes. The school aims to provide an option for elementary students in west Charlotte and to improve the kindergarten readiness levels of students in West Charlotte neighborhoods through a partnership between the College of Education's Early Childhood program and in-home childcare providers in the area. The school follows a traditional calendar that is aligned with CMS.

In its inaugural year, Niner University Elementary Staff included a principal, a curriculum coach, eight licensed classroom teachers, six instructional assistants, two special education teachers (one of whom also serves as coordinator), a school counselor, a social worker, a school nurse, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. 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, and faculty members also provide ongoing professional development to NUE staff.

Niner University Elementary employs multiple instructional methods, including inquiry-based instruction, guided learning, and project-based learning. Student-centered literacy instruction is embedded across all content areas and includes social-emotional supports. NUE is a relationship-based and trauma invested school and plans to incorporate a fully functioning mental health clinic for parents, teachers, students and staff. At the core of the school's trauma-invested program are the Cares team, which supports members of the school community who are experiencing difficulty, and the HeART (Helping And Responding to Trauma) team, which addresses behavioral issues related to trauma. Equity and justice are central to the school environment, and the school staff continuously reflects on culturally sustaining teaching practices to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of all students. Additionally, the professional school counselor and teachers deliver social justice multicultural education lessons to students.

Niner University Elementary opened with a completely remote model due to COVID-19 and remained remote until March 8, 2021, at which point students were welcomed back to the school in-person. The school continued to offer remote instruction to students and families who chose not to attend school in-person.

UNCC placed three school counseling interns and one social work intern at Niner University Elementary in 2020-21, whose work focused on play therapy with specific groups of laboratory school students. Undergraduate arts education and dance majors also provided dance instruction to Niner University Elementary students during the entire school year.

# Appendix A4: Additional Parent/Caregiver Survey Data (2020-21 School Year)

*Appendix Table A4.1: Parent Satisfaction with Laboratory Schools*

| How satisfied are you with… | Mean (2019) | Mean (2021) | Responses (2021) | % Very Dissatisfied (2021) | % Dissatisfied (2021) | % Neutral (2021) | % Satisfied (2021) | % Very Satisfied (2021) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All Laboratory Schools* | | | | | | | | |
| Overall | 4.32 | 4.66 | 233 | 2.15 | 1.72 | 0.86 | 18.45 | 76.82 |
| Discipline at the lab school | 4.12 | 4.61 | 233 | 1.72 | 0.86 | 3.86 | 21.89 | 71.67 |
| Lab school interacts with you | 4.27 | 4.66 | 233 | 2.15 | 0.86 | 2.58 | 18.03 | 76.39 |
| Partnership with the lab school | 4.37 | 4.59 | 233 | 2.15 | 1.29 | 3.43 | 21.89 | 71.24 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | 4.28 | 4.64 | 233 | 1.72 | 0.43 | 5.58 | 16.31 | 75.97 |
| Child's academic growth | 4.35 | 4.63 | 231 | 2.16 | 2.60 | 2.16 | 16.02 | 77.06 |
| Child's physical development | 4.33 | 4.59 | 232 | 1.29 | 1.29 | 5.60 | 20.69 | 71.12 |
| Lab school communicates with you | 4.31 | 4.66 | 233 | 2.58 | 0.86 | 2.58 | 16.31 | 77.68 |
| *Appalachian State Academy at Middle Fork (ASU)* | | | | | | | | |
| Overall | 4.86 | 4.55 | 38 | 5.26 | 2.63 | 2.63 | 10.53 | 78.95 |
| Discipline at the lab school | 4.71 | 4.53 | 38 | 5.26 | 0 | 2.63 | 21.05 | 71.05 |
| Lab school interacts with you | 4.76 | 4.58 | 38 | 5.26 | 0 | 5.26 | 10.53 | 78.95 |
| Partnership with the lab school | 4.86 | 4.53 | 38 | 5.26 | 2.63 | 2.63 | 13.16 | 76.32 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | 4.71 | 4.61 | 38 | 5.26 | 0 | 5.26 | 7.89 | 81.58 |
| Child's academic growth | 4.90 | 4.59 | 37 | 5.41 | 2.70 | 0 | 10.81 | 81.08 |
| Child's physical development | 4.71 | 4.70 | 37 | 2.70 | 0 | 2.70 | 13.51 | 81.08 |
| Lab school communicates with you | 4.71 | 4.58 | 38 | 5.26 | 5.26 | 0 | 5.26 | 84.21 |
| *ECU Community School* | | | | | | | | |
| Overall | 4.36 | 4.81 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18.99 | 81.01 |
| Discipline at the lab school | 4.38 | 4.77 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 1.27 | 20.25 | 78.48 |
| Lab school interacts with you | 4.40 | 4.75 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 1.27 | 22.78 | 75.95 |
| Partnership with the lab school | 4.44 | 4.73 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 2.53 | 21.52 | 75.95 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | 4.33 | 4.76 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 3.80 | 16.46 | 79.75 |
| Child's academic growth | 4.42 | 4.80 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 1.27 | 17.72 | 81.01 |
| Child's physical development | 4.40 | 4.65 | 79 | 0 | 2.53 | 3.80 | 20.25 | 73.42 |
| Lab school communicates with you | 4.40 | 4.75 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 2.53 | 20.25 | 77.22 |
| *Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)* | | | | | | | | |
| Overall | n/a | 4.54 | 26 | 0 | 3.85 | 3.85 | 26.92 | 65.38 |
| Discipline at the lab school | n/a | 4.50 | 26 | 0 | 3.85 | 7.69 | 23.08 | 65.38 |
| Lab school interacts with you | n/a | 4.85 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 3.85 | 7.69 | 88.46 |
| Partnership with the lab school | n/a | 4.62 | 26 | 0 | 3.85 | 3.85 | 19.23 | 73.08 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | n/a | 4.69 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 3.85 | 23.08 | 73.08 |
| Child's academic growth | n/a | 4.50 | 26 | 0 | 11.54 | 0 | 15.38 | 73.08 |
| Child's physical development | n/a | 4.58 | 26 | 0 | 3.85 | 7.69 | 15.38 | 73.08 |
| Lab school communicates with you | n/a | 4.73 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 7.69 | 11.54 | 80.77 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)* | | | | | | | | |
| Overall | 4.03 | 4.67 | 21 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 80.95 |
| Discipline at the lab school | 3.59 | 4.43 | 21 | 4.76 | 0 | 9.52 | 19.05 | 66.67 |
| Lab school interacts with you | 4.17 | 4.48 | 21 | 4.76 | 4.76 | 0 | 19.05 | 71.43 |
| Partnership with the lab school | 4.18 | 4.33 | 21 | 9.52 | 0 | 0 | 28.57 | 61.90 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | 4.19 | 4.48 | 21 | 4.76 | 4.76 | 0 | 19.05 | 71.43 |
| Child's academic growth | 4.22 | 4.57 | 21 | 4.76 | 0 | 4.76 | 14.29 | 76.19 |
| Child's physical development | 4.29 | 4.48 | 21 | 4.76 | 0 | 4.76 | 23.81 | 66.67 |
| Lab school communicates with you | 4.06 | 4.57 | 21 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 23.81 | 71.43 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)* | | | | | | | | |
| Overall | n/a | 4.31 | 36 | 5.56 | 5.56 | 0 | 30.56 | 58.33 |
| Discipline at the lab school | n/a | 4.42 | 36 | 2.78 | 2.78 | 2.78 | 33.33 | 58.33 |
| Lab school interacts with you | n/a | 4.33 | 36 | 5.56 | 2.75 | 5.56 | 25 | 61.11 |
| Partnership with the lab school | n/a | 4.39 | 36 | 2.78 | 2.78 | 5.56 | 30.56 | 58.33 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | n/a | 4.44 | 36 | 2.78 | 0 | 11.11 | 22.22 | 63.89 |
| Child's academic growth | n/a | 4.31 | 35 | 5.71 | 2.86 | 5.71 | 25.71 | 60.00 |
| Child's physical development | n/a | 4.44 | 36 | 2.78 | 0 | 8.33 | 27.78 | 61.11 |
| Lab school communicates with you | n/a | 4.36 | 36 | 8.33 | 0 | 2.78 | 25.00 | 63.89 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)* | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | 4.42 | 4.91 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 | 90.91 |
| Discipline at the lab school | 4.27 | 4.73 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 6.06 | 15.15 | 78.79 |
| Lab school interacts with you | 4.08 | 4.85 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15.15 | 84.85 |
| Partnership with the lab school | 4.33 | 4.67 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 6.06 | 21.21 | 72.73 |
| Child's social and emotional growth | 4.17 | 4.70 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 | 12.12 | 78.79 |
| Child's academic growth | 4.19 | 4.76 | 33 | 0 | 3.03 | 3.03 | 9.09 | 84.85 |
| Child's physical development | 4.15 | 4.58 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 | 24.24 | 66.67 |
| Lab school communicates with you | 4.33 | 4.85 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 3.03 | 9.09 | 87.88 |

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

*Appendix Table A4.2: Comparing School Experiences*

| When you think about your child's school experiences this year compared to his/her school experiences last year, in which year was the school better at… | Responses | % Last Year Was Better | % Comparable | % This Year Was Better |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—First Time Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 7 | 0.00 | 28.57 | 71.43 |
| Helping your child learn | 7 | 0.00 | 42.86 | 57.14 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 7 | 0.00 | 42.86 | 57.14 |
| *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Returning Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 30 | 13.33 | 70.00 | 16.67 |
| Helping your child learn | 30 | 10.00 | 70.00 | 20.00 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 30 | 3.33 | 70.00 | 26.67 |
| *ECU Community School—First Time Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 10 | 0.00 | 30.00 | 70.00 |
| Helping your child learn | 10 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 80.00 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 10 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 80.00 |
| *ECU Community School—Returning Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 68 | 4.41 | 54.41 | 41.18 |
| Helping your child learn | 68 | 2.94 | 48.53 | 48.53 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 68 | 2.94 | 55.88 | 41.18 |
| *Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)—First Time Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 24 | 12.50 | 25.00 | 62.50 |
| Helping your child learn | 24 | 4.17 | 16.67 | 79.17 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 24 | 4.17 | 29.17 | 66.67 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)—First Time Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 5 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 80.00 |
| Helping your child learn | 5 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 80.00 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 5 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 80.00 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)—Returning Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 16 | 0.00 | 81.25 | 18.75 |
| Helping your child learn | 16 | 6.25 | 56.25 | 37.50 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 16 | 6.25 | 50.00 | 43.75 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—First Time Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 6 | 16.67 | 50.00 | 33.33 |
| Helping your child learn | 6 | 0.00 | 50.00 | 50.00 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 6 | 0.00 | 50.00 | 50.00 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—Returning Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 29 | 20.69 | 48.28 | 31.03 |
| Helping your child learn | 29 | 27.59 | 37.93 | 34.48 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 29 | 13.79 | 48.28 | 37.93 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)—First Time Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 13 | 0.00 | 46.15 | 53.85 |
| Helping your child learn | 13 | 7.69 | 7.69 | 84.62 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 13 | 0.00 | 23.08 | 76.92 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)—Returning Families* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 21 | 0.00 | 66.67 | 33.33 |
| Helping your child learn | 21 | 9.52 | 52.38 | 38.10 |
| Having teachers that really care about your child | 21 | 4.76 | 61.90 | 33.33 |

*Note: This table displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2020-21 to their educational experiences in 2019-20*

# Appendix A5: Additional Laboratory School Personnel Survey Data (2020-21 School Year)

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

| Leadership at this school… | All Lab Schools | ASU | ECU | UNCC | UNCG | UNCW | WCU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communicates a clear vision for our school | 4.38 | 4.43 | 4.83 | 4.46 | 4.07 | 4.19 | 4.50 |
| Supports teachers in their efforts to improve teaching and learning | 4.57 | 4.66 | 4.83 | 4.31 | 4.40 | 4.44 | 4.80 |
| Is knowledgeable about assessment practices | 4.54 | 4.57 | 4.83 | 4.46 | 4.30 | 4.38 | 5.00 |
| Has high, ambitious goals when working with me to improve instruction | 4.52 | 4.63 | 4.38 | 4.43 | 4.40 | 4.73 | 4.50 |
| Actively monitors the quality of teaching at this school | 4.37 | 4.51 | 4.67 | 3.92 | 4.23 | 4.38 | 4.30 |
| Sets clear and measurable school-level goals for progress on instructional outcomes | 4.30 | 4.49 | 4.72 | 4.08 | 3.87 | 4.06 | 4.80 |
| Communicates effectively when giving me support | 4.39 | 4.43 | 4.83 | 4.46 | 4.03 | 4.25 | 4.70 |
| Supports me as I try to implement what I learn in professional development | 4.54 | 4.71 | 4.38 | 4.00 | 4.48 | 4.82 | 4.50 |
| Helps teachers figure out how to address particular instructional challenges | 4.39 | 4.57 | 4.72 | 4.23 | 4.10 | 4.19 | 4.60 |
| Provides helpful guidance for effective classroom practice | 4.34 | 4.40 | 4.72 | 4.15 | 4.03 | 4.31 | 4.60 |
| Is very knowledgeable about curriculum and effective instructional practices | 4.50 | 4.54 | 4.72 | 4.62 | 4.20 | 4.44 | 4.80 |
| Makes sure that professional development addresses priority instructional goals | 4.34 | 4.46 | 4.61 | 4.46 | 3.83 | 4.25 | 4.90 |
| Is willing to provide criticism | 4.47 | 4.23 | 4.72 | 4.69 | 4.70 | 4.27 | 4.20 |
| Sets high standards for teaching | 4.61 | 4.66 | 4.67 | 4.92 | 4.53 | 4.31 | 4.60 |
| Places a high priority on engaging parents as partners in helping children learn | 4.53 | 4.49 | 4.72 | 4.31 | 4.47 | 4.56 | 4.80 |
| Is willing to have difficult conversations if the result is to improve teaching and learning | 4.48 | 4.34 | 4.72 | 4.62 | 4.50 | 4.19 | 4.80 |

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

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

| | All Lab Schools | ASU | ECU | UNCC | UNCG | UNCW | WCU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers here hold one another accountable for working hard | 4.19 | 4.50 | 4.00 | 4.14 | 4.00 | 4.30 | 3.75 |
| Teachers collaborate to revise and refine curriculum | 3.84 | 4.39 | 3.93 | 3.73 | 3.93 | 2.77 | 2.80 |
| Teachers make sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels | 3.59 | 4.19 | 3.36 | 3.63 | 3.38 | 3.00 | 3.40 |
| Teachers collaborate to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students | 4.32 | 4.83 | 3.75 | 4.00 | 4.28 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Teachers here have strong skills to produce meaningful student learning | 4.53 | 4.80 | 4.67 | 3.77 | 4.37 | 4.50 | 4.90 |
| Teachers here have strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems | 4.11 | 4.34 | 4.78 | 3.31 | 3.80 | 3.81 | 4.50 |
| Teachers here are confident that they can motivate their students to think and work hard | 4.27 | 4.67 | 4.63 | 3.57 | 4.04 | 4.10 | 4.25 |

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

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

| | All Lab Schools | ASU | ECU | UNCC | UNCG | UNCW | WCU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I feel valued at this school | 4.49 | 4.61 | 4.67 | 4.38 | 4.20 | 4.63 | 4.60 |
| I am treated with respect at this school | 4.63 | 4.70 | 4.78 | 4.77 | 4.28 | 4.75 | 4.80 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 4.53 | 4.61 | 4.72 | 4.31 | 4.30 | 4.56 | 4.80 |

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

# Appendix A6: Additional Student Survey Data (2020-21 School Year)

*Appendix Table A6.1: Laboratory School Students Motivation and Engagement with School*

| | Mean (2019) | Mean (2021) | Responses (2021) | % No or Mostly No (2021) | % Sometimes (2021) | % Mostly Yes or Yes (2021) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All Laboratory Schools* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | 2.83 | 2.85 | 734 | 2.45 | 9.67 | 87.87 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | 2.79 | 2.75 | 373 | 6.43 | 12.33 | 81.23 |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | 2.72 | 2.81 | 371 | 4.31 | 9.97 | 85.71 |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | 2.53 | 2.72 | 730 | 7.12 | 14.25 | 78.63 |
| *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | 2.85 | 2.93 | 208 | 1.44 | 4.33 | 94.23 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | 2.89 | 2.88 | 124 | 2.42 | 7.26 | 90.32 |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | 2.85 | 2.89 | 122 | 0.82 | 9.02 | 90.16 |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | 2.72 | 2.82 | 206 | 3.40 | 11.65 | 84.95 |
| *ECU Community School* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | 2.82 | 2.90 | 99 | 0.00 | 10.10 | 89.90 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | 2.89 | 2.78 | 36 | 5.56 | 11.11 | 83.33 |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | 2.76 | 2.86 | 36 | 5.56 | 2.78 | 91.67 |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | 2.73 | 2.80 | 99 | 3.03 | 14.14 | 82.83 |
| *Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | --- | 2.75 | 67 | 4.48 | 16.42 | 79.10 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | --- | 2.71 | 65 | 4.62 | 20.00 | 75.38 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | 2.87 | 2.84 | 200 | 4.00 | 8.50 | 87.50 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | 2.81 | 2.80 | 98 | 8.16 | 4.08 | 87.76 |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | 2.72 | 2.76 | 98 | 8.16 | 8.16 | 83.67 |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | 2.58 | 2.77 | 201 | 6.47 | 10.45 | 83.08 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | 2.76 | 2.76 | 122 | 3.28 | 17.21 | 79.51 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | 2.68 | 2.48 | 77 | 10.38 | 31.17 | 58.44 |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | 2.58 | 2.68 | 77 | 6.49 | 19.48 | 74.03 |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | 2.10 | 2.36 | 120 | 20.83 | 22.50 | 56.67 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)* | | | | | | |
| In this school I try to learn as much as I can | 2.77 | 2.92 | 38 | 0.00 | 7.89 | 92.11 |
| I care about the things we learn in school | 2.59 | 2.71 | 38 | 7.89 | 13.16 | 78.95 |
| I have done my best quality work in this school | 2.69 | 2.95 | 38 | 0.00 | 5.26 | 94.74 |
| This school is a happy place for me to be | 2.17 | 2.82 | 39 | 2.56 | 12.82 | 84.62 |

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

*Appendix Table A6.2: Laboratory School Students Perceptions of School Climate*

| | Mean (2019) | Mean (2021) | Responses (2021) | % No or Mostly No (2021) | % Sometimes (2021) | % Mostly Yes or Yes (2021) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All Laboratory Schools* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | 2.63 | 2.75 | 738 | 5.83 | 13.41 | 80.76 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | 2.53 | 2.71 | 734 | 7.49 | 14.03 | 78.47 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 2.48 | 2.59 | 370 | 13.78 | 13.24 | 72.97 |
| *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | 2.82 | 2.82 | 205 | 3.90 | 10.24 | 85.85 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | 2.65 | 2.76 | 204 | 4.41 | 15.20 | 80.39 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 2.77 | 2.75 | 122 | 8.20 | 8.20 | 83.61 |
| *ECU Community School* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | 2.81 | 2.80 | 100 | 3.00 | 14.00 | 83.00 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | 2.71 | 2.82 | 100 | 5.00 | 8.00 | 87.00 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 2.59 | 2.64 | 36 | 8.33 | 19.44 | 72.22 |
| *Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | --- | 2.62 | 66 | 7.58 | 22.73 | 69.70 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | --- | 2.34 | 67 | 22.39 | 20.90 | 56.72 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | 2.66 | 2.78 | 207 | 6.28 | 9.66 | 84.06 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | 2.50 | 2.76 | 204 | 5.88 | 11.76 | 82.35 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 2.49 | 2.58 | 99 | 17.17 | 8.08 | 74.75 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | 2.26 | 2.55 | 121 | 10.74 | 23.14 | 66.12 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | 2.26 | 2.58 | 120 | 11.67 | 19.17 | 69.17 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 2.14 | 2.21 | 75 | 25.33 | 28.00 | 46.67 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)* | | | | | | |
| This school feels like a safe place to me | 2.30 | 2.92 | 39 | 2.56 | 2.56 | 94.87 |
| In this school I am treated fairly | 2.56 | 2.92 | 39 | 0.00 | 7.69 | 92.31 |
| I feel like I belong at this school | 2.34 | 2.82 | 38 | 5.26 | 7.89 | 86.84 |

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

*Appendix Table A6.3: Student Perceptions of Laboratory School Academic Climate (Tripod 7Cs)*

| | Appalachian Academy | | ECU Community School | | Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) | | Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) | | D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) | | The Catamount School (WCU) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2019* | *2021* | *2019* | *2021* | *2019* | *2021* | *2019* | *2021* | *2019* | *2021* | *2019* | *2021* |
| Care | 2.86 | 2.87 | 2.75 | 2.87 | --- | 2.78 | 2.80 | 2.85 | 2.51 | 2.72 | 2.35 | 2.98 |
| Confer | 2.69 | 2.66 | 2.56 | 2.73 | --- | 2.58 | 2.65 | 2.70 | 2.31 | 2.59 | 2.53 | 2.76 |
| Captivate | 2.67 | 2.68 | 2.66 | 2.74 | --- | 2.70 | 2.60 | 2.63 | 2.21 | 2.35 | 2.08 | 2.77 |
| Clarify | 2.82 | 2.80 | 2.79 | 2.82 | --- | 2.56 | 2.80 | 2.78 | 2.61 | 2.69 | 2.45 | 2.88 |
| Consolidate | 2.77 | 2.75 | 2.80 | 2.81 | --- | 2.57 | 2.67 | 2.78 | 2.53 | 2.65 | 2.39 | 2.76 |
| Challenge | 2.75 | 2.58 | 2.78 | 2.71 | --- | 2.66 | 2.71 | 2.62 | 2.61 | 2.49 | 2.65 | 2.50 |
| Classroom Management | 2.25 | 2.28 | 2.29 | 2.31 | --- | 2.02 | 2.22 | 2.38 | 1.95 | 2.11 | 1.90 | 2.29 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student Responses | 270 | 210 | 79 | 100 | --- | 67 | 320 | 216 | 156 | 124 | 55 | 39 |

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

*Appendix Table A6.4: Comparing School Experiences*

| When you think about this school year compared to last school year, in which year was your school better at… | Responses | % Last Year Was Better | % Comparable | % This Year Was Better |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Students New to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 19 | 10.53 | 42.11 | 47.37 |
| Helping you learn more | 19 | 10.53 | 26.32 | 63.16 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 18 | 0.00 | 38.89 | 61.11 |
| *Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 157 | 16.56 | 36.31 | 47.13 |
| Helping you learn more | 156 | 12.82 | 33.33 | 53.85 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 153 | 9.15 | 51.63 | 39.22 |
| *ECU Community School— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 80 | 21.25 | 30.00 | 48.75 |
| Helping you learn more | 81 | 14.81 | 37.04 | 48.15 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 82 | 13.41 | 40.24 | 46.34 |
| *Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 33 | 15.15 | 18.18 | 66.67 |
| Helping you learn more | 29 | 13.79 | 31.03 | 55.17 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 33 | 6.06 | 21.21 | 72.73 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 16 | 12.50 | 6.25 | 81.25 |
| Helping you learn more | 15 | 0.00 | 26.67 | 73.33 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 15 | 13.33 | 13.33 | 73.33 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 159 | 15.72 | 38.36 | 45.91 |
| Helping you learn more | 158 | 12.03 | 37.34 | 50.63 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 156 | 5.77 | 50.00 | 44.23 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 18 | 11.11 | 27.78 | 61.11 |
| Helping you learn more | 18 | 11.11 | 50.00 | 38.89 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 18 | 5.56 | 72.22 | 22.22 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 85 | 15.29 | 44.71 | 40.00 |
| Helping you learn more | 86 | 19.77 | 40.70 | 39.53 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 85 | 18.82 | 47.06 | 34.12 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 17 | 0.00 | 41.18 | 58.82 |
| Helping you learn more | 16 | 6.25 | 25.00 | 68.75 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 16 | 0.00 | 37.50 | 62.50 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2020-21* | | | | |
| Helping students behave | 22 | 13.64 | 54.55 | 31.82 |
| Helping you learn more | 22 | 4.55 | 27.27 | 68.18 |
| Having teachers that really care about you | 21 | 4.76 | 52.38 | 42.86 |

*Note: This table displays student responses to survey items asking students to compare their educational experiences in 2018-19 to their educational experiences in 2017-18.*

# Appendix A7: Laboratory School and Matched Comparison Sample Students

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

| Groups | Student Count | Minority | EDS | SPED | Prior Attendance Rate | Prior Suspension Status | Prior Year Reading Score (Std) | Prior Year Math Score (Std) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1st Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 117,064 | 54.56 | 46.70 | 11.69 | 94.28 | 2.71 | 0.009 | --- |
| Lab Schools | 41 | 90.24 | 82.93 | 12.20 | 91.75 | 7.32 | -0.574 | --- |
| Matched | 205 | 92.68 | 80.49 | 11.71 | 92.22 | 7.32 | -0.538 | --- |
| *2nd Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 116,840 | 54.31 | 45.80 | 12.38 | 94.87 | 3.26 | 0.023 | --- |
| Lab Schools | 135 | 85.19 | 65.19 | 16.30 | 93.76 | 11.11 | -0.465 | --- |
| Matched | 666 | 83.48 | 67.42 | 13.96 | 93.62 | 10.06 | -0.512 | --- |
| *3rd Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 116,906 | 54.31 | 45.47 | 12.84 | 95.14 | 4.18 | 0.014 | --- |
| Lab Schools | 138 | 87.68 | 47.83 | 20.29 | 93.90 | 13.77 | -0.670 | --- |
| Matched | 690 | 87.25 | 47.25 | 21.16 | 94.06 | 16.23 | -0.650 | --- |
| *4th Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 118,953 | 54.58 | 45.56 | 13.29 | 95.38 | 5.44 | 0.006 | 0.006 |
| Lab Schools | 110 | 92.73 | 45.45 | 17.27 | 94.57 | 19.09 | -0.579 | --- |
| Matched | 546 | 93.41 | 42.67 | 14.65 | 94.45 | 18.68 | -0.478 | -0.316 |
| *5th Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 123,458 | 54.79 | 45.48 | 13.51 | 95.40 | 7.17 | 0.004 | 0.005 |
| Lab Schools | 126 | 90.48 | 52.38 | 18.25 | 94.63 | 13.49 | -0.644 | -0.674 |
| Matched | 626 | 91.05 | 53.04 | 19.17 | 94.80 | 17.25 | -0.599 | -0.665 |
| *6th Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 125,182 | 54.45 | 46.30 | 12.89 | 95.31 | 9.03 | -0.005 | -0.003 |
| Lab Schools | 42 | 76.19 | 64.29 | 19.05 | 93.44 | 26.19 | -0.352 | -0.324 |
| Matched | 210 | 77.14 | 66.67 | 19.05 | 93.54 | 25.71 | -0.438 | -0.390 |
| *7th Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 125,243 | 53.96 | 44.73 | 12.77 | 94.90 | 17.13 | 0.005 | 0.006 |
| Lab Schools | 46 | 82.61 | 73.91 | 19.56 | 95.29 | 28.26 | -0.272 | -0.293 |
| Matched | 230 | 78.70 | 78.70 | 18.26 | 95.47 | 25.22 | -0.281 | -0.412 |
| *8th Grade* | | | | | | | | |
| All Students | 122,206 | 53.36 | 42.74 | 12.84 | 94.49 | 18.87 | 0.007 | 0.008 |
| Lab Schools | 54 | 68.52 | 72.22 | 18.52 | 95.34 | 27.78 | -0.627 | -0.791 |
| Matched | 270 | 64.81 | 71.11 | 13.70 | 95.27 | 25.93 | -0.594 | -0.783 |

*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.*

**Introduction**

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) passed legislation requiring the University of North Carolina System, in consultation with UNC System institution Colleges of Education (COEs), to establish laboratory schools. These laboratory schools are K-12 public schools of choice operated by a UNC System institution rather than by a local school district. Since then, 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); is the sibling of a child meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory school employees.[3] 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 2021-22 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]
(5) Public school student academic progress at each laboratory school;[6]
(6) Information on pre-service educators in laboratory schools, including outcomes for pre-service educators who obtained clinical experiences in laboratory schools;
(7) Best practices resulting from laboratory school operations; and
(8) Other information the UNC System BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools considers appropriate.

**Laboratory School Overviews**

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.[7]

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, five specials teachers (art, media, music, PE, and STEM), 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. In addition, one faculty member

[5] These data are from the 2020-21 academic year. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of statewide testing data from 2019-20, these 2020-21 achievement data are reported by North Carolina in ways that are inconsistent with previous years' reporting (e.g. school achievement growth is not available). See below for a fuller description of the challenges with these data.

[6] A rigorous analysis of student academic progress is not available in this report. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, students did not take end-of-grade assessments in the 2019-20 academic year.

[7] 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.

serves as a faculty-in-residence, teaching the laboratory school's Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program multiple days per week.

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 nine classrooms—one per grade in grades 3-5 and two classrooms each for grades K-2. 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 5$^{th}$ grade, an EC director/teacher, a second EC teacher, 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.

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-3, with four kindergarten classes and two classes per grades 1-3. 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 staff includes a principal, a curriculum coach, ten licensed classroom teachers, six instructional assistants, two EC teachers (one of whom also serves as coordinator), a school counselor, a social worker, a school nurse, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. 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; faculty members also provide ongoing professional development to laboratory school staff.

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 innovation and professional learning, a student learning strategist, an office manager, a budget and personnel director, a program manager for federal programs, a media specialist, an instructional technology consultant, a school social worker, a school counselor, a speech/language pathologist, twenty-four classroom teachers (including four creative arts and PE teachers), three EC teachers, and an EC

teacher assistant. In addition, one COE administrator supports teachers and students in the school as director.

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.[8] 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 between staff, families, and students. The DCVPA staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, ten teachers in core content areas, two EC teachers, four teachers in art, music, physical education/health, and media, two teaching assistants, 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. Two Faculty-in-Residence from the COE also supported the professional learning of teachers at DCVPA, one with a focus on equity and the other with a focus on blended learning.

WCU's laboratory school, The Catamount School, is co-located on the campus of Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva, NC, and serves grades 6-8. It opened in August 2017 and is the only middle school in Jackson County. The Catamount School has adopted the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model as a framework for creating collaborative school-community relationships and improving students' learning and health. The Catamount School fosters student growth and the development of social-emotional skills through a problem-centered, experienced-based learning approach in an inclusive education environment. Special education services for EC students are provided in regular classrooms using a co-teaching model in which the EC teacher works collaboratively with the lead classroom teacher to deliver individualized instruction. 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 who serves as the school nurse and supervises School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. 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.

**Student Enrollment and Demographics at Laboratory Schools**

Table 1 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 274 enrolled students, with 52 in kindergarten, 28 in 1st grade, 43 in 2nd grade, 44 in 3rd grade, 45 in 4th grade, and 62 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are similar to those from the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, nearly 49 percent are male, 46 percent are Black, 37 percent are Hispanic, and 17 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 68 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 29 percent of the K-5 students in

[8] 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.

Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, and 62 percent are designated as low-income.[9]

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, the ECU Community School has 114 enrolled students, with 19 in kindergarten, 22 in 1st grade, 23 in 2nd grade, 27 in 3rd grade, 13 in 4th grade and 10 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show a modest increase in enrollment (4.5 percent) at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 55 percent are male, 96 percent are Black, and 24 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 100 percent of the ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 46 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black and 70 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) has 121 enrolled students, with 42 in kindergarten, 43 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, and 17 in 3rd grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show significant enrollment growth—up nearly 66 percent—at Niner University Elementary. This enrollment growth comes from adding a new grade level (3rd grade) and enrolling new students in existing grades. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 54 percent are male, 85 percent are Black, 9 percent are Hispanic, and 16 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 71 percent of the Niner University Elementary School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 34 percent of the K-3 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, and 47 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) has 367 enrolled students, with 73 in kindergarten, 50 in 1st grade, 58 in 2nd grade, 56 in 3rd grade, 63 in 4th grade, and 67 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show an enrollment increase of 10 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 55 percent are male, 61 percent are Black, 13 percent are Hispanic, and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 92 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, 14 percent are Hispanic, and 72 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 208 enrolled students, with 20 in kindergarten, 21 in 1st grade, 19 in 2nd grade, 24 in 3rd grade, 24 in 4th grade, 21 in 15th grade, 18 in 6th grade, 28 in 7th grade, and 33 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show a small increase in enrollment at the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Of the students enrolled in 2021-22, 52 percent are male, 86 percent are Black, and 20 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 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 64 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2021-22 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 57 enrolled students, with 10 in 6th grade, 21 in 7th grade, and 26 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2020-21 school year, these data show an enrollment increase of nearly 33 percent. Of the students enrolled in

[9] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2019-20 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2020-21 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

2021-22, 49 percent are male, 84 percent are White, 11 percent are multiracial, and 14 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2020-21 school year show that 33 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 68 percent of the middle grades (6-8) students in Jackson County Schools are White, four percent are multiracial, and 61 percent are designated as low-income.

*Table 1: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools*

| | ASU | | ECU | | UNCC | | UNCG | | UNCW | | WCU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 20-21 | 21-22 |
| Total Enrollment | 276 | 274 | 109 | 114 | 73 | 121 | 333 | 367 | 203 | 208 | 43 | 57 |
| Kindergarten | 31 | 52 | 19 | 19 | 40 | 42 | 40 | 73 | 18 | 20 | --- | --- |
| 1st Grade | 43 | 28 | 27 | 22 | 19 | 43 | 67 | 50 | 17 | 21 | --- | --- |
| 2nd Grade | 43 | 43 | 24 | 23 | 14 | 19 | 59 | 58 | 22 | 19 | --- | --- |
| 3rd Grade | 45 | 44 | 13 | 27 | --- | 17 | 66 | 56 | 20 | 24 | --- | --- |
| 4th Grade | 63 | 45 | 12 | 13 | --- | --- | 60 | 63 | 21 | 24 | --- | --- |
| 5th Grade | 51 | 62 | 14 | 10 | --- | --- | 41 | 67 | 14 | 21 | --- | --- |
| 6th Grade | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 26 | 18 | 7 | 10 |
| 7th Grade | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 32 | 28 | 19 | 21 |
| 8th Grade | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 33 | 33 | 17 | 26 |
| Male | 48.6% | 48.9% | 56.9% | 55.3% | 57.5% | 53.7% | 56.8% | 55.0% | 53.7% | 51.9% | 48.8% | 49.1% |
| White | 10.5% | 10.9% | 1.8% | 0.9% | 4.1% | 1.7% | 13.8% | 14.4% | 6.4% | 5.3% | 76.7% | 84.2% |
| Black | 44.9% | 46.4% | 94.5% | 95.6% | 76.7% | 85.1% | 63.7% | 60.8% | 88.2% | 86.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Multiracial | 5.1% | 4.7% | 1.8% | 1.8% | 6.9% | 2.5% | 10.8% | 11.7% | 1.5% | 3.8% | 11.6% | 10.5% |
| Hispanic | 38.0% | 36.9% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 11.0% | 9.1% | 11.7% | 13.1% | 3.9% | 3.4% | 4.7% | 1.8% |
| Asian | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.4% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.3% | 3.5% |
| American Indian | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.7% | 0.0% |
| Pacific Islander | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.9% | 0.0% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| EC Status | 10.5% | 16.8% | 29.4% | 23.7% | 13.7% | 15.7% | 17.4% | 14.4% | 20.7% | 19.7% | 27.9% | 14.0% |
| Low-Income | 67.94 | N/A | 100.0 | N/A | 70.83 | N/A | 92.20 | N/A | 100.00 | N/A | 33.33 | N/A |

*Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 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 2020-21 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 2021-22 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.[10] 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.[11]

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.[12]

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.

[10] 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.

[11] 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."

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

Appalachian State certified that 73 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 12 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 21 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; two percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and five percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that nearly 97 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 33 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 28 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 3.5 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and two percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCC certified that 63 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 18 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 4 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; nearly 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 13 percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCG certified that 53 percent of the students at Moss Street Partnership School in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 32% qualified based on their own prior performance; 12 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 2.5 percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCW certified that 58 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 21 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 16 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and four percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Finally, WCU certified that 6 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2021-22 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 90 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 7 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 2 percent qualified under the recently enacted provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

*Table 2: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements*

| | ASU | ECU | UNCC | UNCG | UNCW | WCU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Enrollment | 274 | 114 | 121 | 367 | 208 | 57 |
| Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School | 73.3% | 96.5% | 63.4% | 52.6% | 58.2% | 5.3% |
| Previously Low-Performing Student | 12.04% | 32.5% | 17.9% | 31.9% | 21.2% | 89.5% |
| Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria | 20.8% | 28.1% | 3.6% | 11.9% | 16.4% | 7.0% |
| Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member | 2.2% | 3.5% | 1.8% | 1.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity | 5.1% | 1.8% | 13.4% | 2.5% | 4.3% | 1.8% |

*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 2021-22 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 2020-21 academic year: performance grades, performance scores, achievement scores, growth scores, and growth status. However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, North Carolina secured a waiver from the US Department of Education and is not holding public schools accountable for students' performance on standardized exams in 2020-21. This waiver, coupled with the absence of standardized exams from 2019-20, means that North Carolina only reported test proficiency rates for 2020-21.

To best meet the requirements of the enabling laboratory school legislation, Tables 3-7 report test proficiency rates from 2020-21 for each laboratory school.[13] As a basis of comparison, Tables 3-7 also report test proficiency rates from 2018-19 (the last school year such data are available). These data should be interpreted with caution, as proficiency rates are only one measure of academic performance and students have experienced hardships, including many fewer days of in-person instruction, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[13] Test proficiency rates are not available for Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) since it enrolled students in grades K-2 in 2020-21.

*Table 3: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| App Academy | 3rd Grade Reading | 32.65 | 29.30 |
| App Academy | 4th Grade Reading | 30.43 | 16.67 |
| App Academy | 5th Grade Reading | 20.83 | 22.00 |
| App Academy | 3rd Grade Math | 28.57 | 7.10 |
| App Academy | 4th Grade Math | 17.39 | <5.00 |
| App Academy | 5th Grade Math | 20.83 | 26.00 |
| App Academy | 5th Grade Science | 39.58 | 20.00 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 4: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—ECU Community School*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ECU Community School | 3rd Grade Reading | 6.25 | 27.30 |
| ECU Community School | 4th Grade Reading | 14.29 | 9.10 |
| ECU Community School | 5th Grade Reading | 0.00 | 7.10 |
| ECU Community School | 3rd Grade Math | 0.00 | 36.40 |
| ECU Community School | 4th Grade Math | 0.00 | <5.00 |
| ECU Community School | 5th Grade Math | 21.43 | 14.30 |
| ECU Community School | 5th Grade Science | 57.14 | 7.10 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 5: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Moss Street Partnership School | 3rd Grade Reading | 11.36 | 7.90 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 4th Grade Reading | 17.39 | 17.20 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 5th Grade Reading | 15.25 | 10.80 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 3rd Grade Math | 13.64 | <5.00 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 4th Grade Math | 13.04 | <5.00 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 5th Grade Math | 18.97 | 5.30 |
| Moss Street Partnership School | 5th Grade Science | 11.86 | 10.80 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 6: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 3rd Grade Reading | 25.00 | 5.00 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 4th Grade Reading | 22.22 | 21.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 5th Grade Reading | 20.00 | 14.30 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 6th Grade Reading | 35.29 | 14.30 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 7th Grade Reading | 31.58 | 21.20 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 8th Grade Reading | 23.33 | 12.50 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 3rd Grade Math | 33.33 | 5.00 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 4th Grade Math | 5.56 | 10.50 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 5th Grade Math | 44.00 | 7.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 6th Grade Math | 38.24 | 7.10 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 7th Grade Math | 15.79 | <5.00 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 8th Grade Math | 16.67 | 12.50 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 5th Grade Science | 56.00 | 14.30 |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | 8th Grade Science | 56.67 | 40.60 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

*Table 7: Test Proficiency Rates in 2020-21—The Catamount School (WCU)*

| School Name | Test Name | % Proficient or Above in 2018-19 | % Proficient or Above in 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Catamount School | 6th Grade Reading | 55.56 | 63.60 |
| The Catamount School | 7th Grade Reading | 65.22 | 47.40 |
| The Catamount School | 8th Grade Reading | 56.52 | 50.00 |
| The Catamount School | 6th Grade Math | 22.22 | 36.40 |
| The Catamount School | 7th Grade Math | 39.13 | 47.40 |
| The Catamount School | 8th Grade Math | 6.67 | 33.33 |
| The Catamount School | 8th Grade Science | 78.26 | 72.20 |

*Note: This table displays test proficiency rates from the 2020-21 and 2018-19 school years.*

**Student Academic Progress at Laboratory Schools**

The legislation enabling laboratory schools requires the reporting of student academic progress in each laboratory school, as measured against the previous school year and against other schools in the district and statewide. To fulfill this requirement, this report typically includes analyses of *student-level* achievement data from two years prior—i.e., the 2019-20 school year for this November 2021 report. However, given the COVID-19 pandemic and 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 analyses of student academic progress in the 2019-20 school year.

**Educator Preparation Programs and Laboratory Schools**

Laboratory schools offer pre-service teachers and school leaders an opportunity to have more in-depth and practice-based preparation experiences. Likewise, laboratory schools offer COE faculty an opportunity to refine and innovate their preparation practices based on their experiences in laboratory

schools. As such, this section briefly details how UNC System institutions are integrating laboratory schools into educator preparation. The enabling laboratory school legislation also requires the reporting of (1) educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school and (2) outcomes for educator preparation program students completing clinical experiences in laboratory schools. This section includes educator preparation program performance data for the 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*

Five of the six UNC System institutions operating a laboratory school in 2020-21 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. In 2020-21, COEs modified these experiences in order to adapt to remote, hybrid, or in-person learning models used by laboratory schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given challenges associated with opening a new school during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNCC decided to postpone engagement of pre-service teaching candidates from the COE. Instead, pre-service candidate engagement was limited to three candidates in the school counseling program and one Master's in Social Work candidate.

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 2020-21.[14] Appalachian State placed 16 teacher candidates into early field experiences at the Academy at Middle Fork and placed 22 candidates into intern I experiences. Appalachian State also placed 11 candidates into student teaching experiences (intern II). While the pandemic opened up a new opportunity for Appalachian State candidates to engage remotely in the laboratory school (relative to prior years where the physical distance between the Academy at Middle Fork and the Appalachian State University campus challenged participation), as schools shift back to in-person learning, Appalachian State leadership continues to work on a long-term strategy that would sustain a larger number of students able to serve internships at its laboratory school. ECU placed six special education candidates into early field experiences at its laboratory school. Five ECU candidates completed intern I experiences and four ECU candidates completed student teaching at the ECU Community School. UNCG placed seven pre-service teachers into early field experiences at Moss Street

[14] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2020-21. ASU placed one School Social Work intern. ECU placed two marriage and family therapy interns, three school psychology interns, four speech-language pathology interns, and 26 occupational therapy interns at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed three school counseling interns and one social work intern at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed two school social work interns, eight speech-language/audiology interns, and one public health education intern at the Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed two school counseling interns and one school nursing intern at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. WCU placed five school counselling interns, five school psychology interns, and eight school nursing interns at The Catamount School.

Partnership School. Moss Street also served as a placement site for 17 intern Is and 14 intern IIs. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and The Catamount School welcomed many candidates into early field experiences—42 and 65, respectively. D.C. Virgo was the placement site for nine student teachers. Because D.C. Virgo was on a traditional calendar in 2020-21, rather than a year-round calendar, this was the first year the school hosted student teachers. The Catamount School was the placement site for 13 intern I candidates and four intern II candidates.

*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 | 16 | 19 | 9 |
| Music Education | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Art | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Health & Physical Education | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| *ECU Community School* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Special Education | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| *Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 0 | 15 | 13 |
| Early Childhood Education | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Elementary/Special Education | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Dance Education | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Health and Physical Education | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| *D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)* | | | |
| Elementary Education | 42 | 0 | 4 |
| English as Second Language (ESL) | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Masters in School Administration | --- | --- | 4 |
| *The Catamount School (WCU)* | | | |
| Inclusive Education | 50 | 1 | 1 |
| Middle Grades Education | 9 | 3 | 3 |
| Health and Physical Education | 6 | 9 | 0 |

*Note: For each UNC System institution, this table displays counts of the pre-service candidates who had clinical experiences in a laboratory school in 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.[15]
- Faculty-in-residence serve the laboratory school two to three days per week. Typically, they must have a focus for their residency and some COEs require interested faculty to apply for the position. Proposed work must align with the laboratory school model. For example, at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) the faculty-in-residence taught academically and intellectually gifted (AIG) classes one or two days per week. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted two faculty-in-residence from the Department of Educational Leadership, one that provided expertise in curriculum and equity and the other in blended learning instruction.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on site at the laboratory school.
- Several COEs engaged their faculty in regular professional development supports for laboratory school staff. For example, faculty in UNCC's Reading and Elementary Education program facilitated weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with Niner University Elementary teachers. Faculty from Appalachian State supported laboratory school teachers in special education and science, as well as the newly implemented Literacy Cast program. Faculty from ECU provided professional development on best practices in remote learning for Community School staff.

*Educator Preparation Program Performance Data*

For each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school, Table 9 displays the required reporting elements specified in the enabling laboratory school legislation. These data come from the 2019-20 Educator Preparation Program report cards and are available on the NCDPI website.[16] The data displayed in Table 9 are for undergraduate teacher education programs only.

[15] One WCU faculty member serves The Catamount School as a Math I teacher, another as EC Director, and another as a Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher.

[16] https://www.dpi.nc.gov/report-cards-tests/EPP-reports?field_document_entity_terms_target_id_1=540&field_document_entity_terms_target_id_2=431

*Table 9: Educator Preparation Program Performance Data (2019-20 Report Cards)*[17]

| Reporting Elements | Appalachian | ECU | UNCC | UNCG | UNCW | WCU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean SAT of Admitted Students | 1216.86 | 1203.20 | 1207.50 | 1204.47 | 1186.85 | 1220.63 |
| Mean ACT of Admitted Students | 26.53 | 25.81 | 26.14 | 26.50 | 24.88 | 26.03 |
| Mean GPA of Admitted Students | 3.48 | 3.28 | 3.48 | 3.45 | 3.51 | 3.47 |
| Percent Passing Professional and Content Area Exams | 79.1 | 90.77 | 83.53 | 81.82 | 81.51 | 78.46 |
| Average Number of Semesters to Graduate | 6.10 | 3.93 | 5.65 | 4.13 | 3.59 | 5.36 |
| Percent Licensed | 33 | 89 | 88 | 87 | 86 | 86 |
| Percent Employed in NC Within One Year of Program Completion | 24 | 80 | 76 | 70 | 61 | 72 |
| Standard 1 (Leadership): % Proficient or Above | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Standard 2 (Classroom Environment): % Proficient or Above | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Standard 3 (Content Knowledge): % Proficient or Above | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Standard 4 (Facilitating Student Learning): % Proficient or Above | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Standard 5 (Reflecting on Practice): % Proficient or Above | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| EVAAS: % Meets Expected Growth | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| EVAAS: % Exceeds Expected Growth | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Graduate Survey: % 'Well' or 'Very Well' Prepared | 76.79 | 77.53 | 73.50 | 82.75 | 68.69 | 81.95 |
| Employer Survey: Average Rating (1-5 scale) | 3.51 | 3.41 | 3.55 | 3.60 | 3.46 | 3.48 |
| Retention: % Remaining in Teaching for at least Two Years | 66 | 73 | 61 | 62 | 62 | 61 |

*Note: This table displays educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school. These data come from the 2019-20 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**

Interviews and annual status reports suggest that laboratory school and COE personnel are refining some common practices to further leverage key features of the laboratory school model. Over time, administrative and survey data will clarify whether these laboratory school practices contribute to desired academic and social-emotional outcomes. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated disruptions to school operations interrupt 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

[17] Given the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher evaluation ratings and EVAAS estimates are not available from 2019-20.

demonstrated in their efforts to address basic needs and create systems of instruction and behavioral supports that foster positive school cultures. For example, as previously reported, laboratory schools employ staff and/or engage institution and community partners to (1) provide health, social work, and counseling services; (2) provide students food and clothing to meet basic subsistence needs; (3) educate staff on the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences; and (4) use positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and restorative practices to emphasize individual and community relationships. During the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools further invested in efforts to meet the needs of students and families. Many of these needs were exacerbated by pandemic-related challenges. Laboratory school engagement with institution and community partners shifted to both address new student and family needs arising out of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as adapt to social-distancing and remote learning environments.

*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 low-performing student populations. They also provide schools serving high-need students access to COE resources and opportunities for in-service teachers and staff to engage in continued professional learning (e.g., professional development from COE faculty at the laboratory school or advanced certification/degree programs for laboratory school personnel). As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they are refining how they leverage these mutual benefits, primarily through the increased systematization of COE faculty and pre-service candidate engagement in laboratory schools. COEs have increasingly focused on using junior year methods classes as a primary vehicle for engaging pre-service candidates in laboratory schools. In particular, when methods classes are taught onsite at laboratory schools, this increases the number and degree to which COE instructors and pre-service candidates are exposed to and engage directly with laboratory school teachers and students. In 2020-21, laboratory schools worked with their university partners to adapt strategies for engaging preservice candidates and COE faculty to accommodate remote and hybrid instruction. In some cases, social distancing requirements restricted COE involvement, while in others, remote engagement of staff and students opened new avenues for participation in laboratory schools.

**Other Information the BOG Subcommittee Considers Appropriate**

Commensurate with the innovative scope, vision, and commitments of laboratory schools, the UNC System commissioned an evaluation of the laboratory schools intended to facilitate an in-depth assessment of their performance and contributions. Appendix A includes the in-depth evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact, which addresses statutorily required reporting elements and the evaluation questions listed below.

(1) How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to succeed?
(2) How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?
(3) Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?
(4) Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?

(5) Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?
(6) Do laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?
(7) How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?

To provide further information that the BOG Subcommittee considers appropriate, this section includes several key findings from the full laboratory school report completed by EPIC and Public Impact. In particular, this section provides rigorous analyses of student-level attendance and discipline data from the 2019-20 school year—i.e., the most recent year that student-level data are available. These data are important indicators of student engagement with school and are especially valuable given the lack of student-level test score data (due to COVID-19). To the extent that laboratory schools are improving student attendance and behavior, that may suggest that other outcomes, such as student learning, are also improving.

Table 10 presents results from student attendance and suspension analyses in the 2019-20 school year. In these analyses the outcome measures are the percentage of days a student attends school and an indicator for whether a student was suspended (in-school or out-of-school suspension) during the year. Outcomes for laboratory school students—overall and at each specific laboratory school—are compared with those for a matched sample of students. This matched sample of students is similar to laboratory school students along a number of dimensions including race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, special education, limited English proficiency, and prior absences, suspensions, and test scores.

Relative to this matched sample, the top row of Table 10 indicates that laboratory school students attended a higher percentage of school days and were less likely to be suspended. For example, laboratory school students attended 0.70 percent more school days—corresponding to approximately 1.1 more days of school attended—than students in the matched comparison sample. Likewise, laboratory school students were 5.5 percentage points less likely to be suspended. These attendance and suspension results vary by laboratory school. Specifically, the student attendance results are strongest at the ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW); the suspension results are strongest at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and The Catamount School (WCU).

*Table 10: Attendance and Suspension Results for Laboratory School Students Versus a Matched Comparison Sample*

| | Student Attendance | Student Suspensions |
|---|---|---|
| Laboratory School Students | **0.700**** | **-0.055**** |
| | (0.157) | (0.014) |
| Academy at Middle Fork | -0.148 | 0.014 |
| | (0.272) | (0.028) |
| ECU Community School | **2.460**** | -0.009 |
| | (0.400) | (0.055) |
| Moss Street Partnership School | **0.754**** | **-0.103**** |
| | (0.209) | (0.020) |
| D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy | **1.737**** | -0.040 |
| | (0.218) | (0.035) |
| The Catamount School | -0.879 | **-0.199**** |
| | (0.915) | (0.032) |
| Observations | 3,885 | 3,885 |

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the (a) attendance rates of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample and (b) likelihood of laboratory school students being suspended during the academic year 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.

**Summary**

Five years after the passage of the enabling laboratory school legislation, UNC System institutions have opened six laboratory schools that collectively educate more than 1,100 students. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on both school operations and access to evaluation data (e.g., student test score data), it is difficult to fully assess whether laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission to provide (1) an enhanced education program for students who are low-performing or attended a low-performing school and (2) exposure and training for teachers and school leaders to successfully address challenges in high-needs school settings. However, evidence to date highlights several areas of success.

After enrollment declines between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, given the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment at UNC System laboratory schools stabilized or increased in the 2021-22 school year. In particular, enrollment growth is notable at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU). This suggests that laboratory schools were able to effectively market and recruit and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations. As intended, laboratory schools are also primarily enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their host districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are a racial/ethnic minority or economically-disadvantaged.

Given disruptions to statewide testing, it is challenging to assess laboratory schools' impact on student achievement. Data from the 2021-22 school year may allow for richer analyses of student learning. However, evidence is clearer that laboratory schools are positively influencing students' engagement with school. Rigorous analyses of data from 2019-20 show that laboratory school students attend school more often and are less likely to be suspended than a matched sample of students. Likewise, survey data (included in the appendix to this report), indicate that laboratory school students are motivated, engaged, and feel positively about their school environment. These findings suggest that laboratory schools' focus on meeting whole child needs—academic, social/emotional, physical—is working.

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

Due to the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19—disruptions to testing in 2019-20, remote learning in much of 2020-21, efforts by schools and teachers to make up for missed instructional time—it will still take more time to fully 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 focus on how laboratory schools impact students' engagement with school and their academic achievement.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools
October 26, 2021

## AGENDA ITEM

A-3. Request to Establish a Laboratory School: Appalachian State University..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

**Situation:** Pursuant to G.S. 116-239.5, 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 in accordance with the provisions of this statute. The Board of Governors shall select constituent institutions with high-quality educator preparation programs as demonstrated by the annual performance measures reported by the constituent institutions in accordance with G.S. 115C-296.35. The Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools, established under G.S. 116-239.7, shall review the proposals and approve at least nine of the proposals to establish laboratory schools.

**Background:** Appalachian State University seeks to open an additional K-5 laboratory school in partnership with Hickory City Schools in fall 2022.

**Assessment:** A proposal for the new school is presented for subcommittee review. The university will provide a brief presentation to outline its plans and seeks approval to establish the new school by resolution.

**Action:** This item requires a vote by the subcommittee.

# University of North Carolina Laboratory School Initial Proposal

| | |
|---|---|
| **Institution name** | **Appalachian State University** |
| **Laboratory school name** | **TBD** |
| **Date of submission** | **October 13, 2021** |
| **Name of person submitting form** | **Dr. Hannah Reeder** |
| **Title of person submitting form** | **Assistant Dean, Reich College of Education**<br>**Director of Lab Schools** |
| **Email address of person submitting form** | **reederhs@appstate.edu** |

# UNC Laboratory School Proposal-Initial
# DUE October 11, 2021

## Purpose

The purpose of this initial proposal is to outline the preliminary plans for each institution's lab school such that the Board of Governors' Subcommittee on Lab Schools will have sufficient information to approve the opening of the school. Additional details regarding academic programming, budgeting, educator preparation engagement, and operational activities will be added to a final report.

## Initial Planning Team

Provide the names and contact information of laboratory school planning team members. These individuals may be existing university employees for this initial proposal with the understanding that your planning team may change as needed and as tasks are accomplished. An individual within your team may fulfill more than one role.

| Area of Responsibility | Name | Title | Email Address | Phone Number |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dean**<br>*Serves as liaison between the chancellor, BOT, & other senior leaders* | Dr. Melba Spooner | Dean, Reich College of Education | spoonermc@appstate.edu | (828) 262-2230 |
| **Team Leader(s)**<br>*Serves as the main point of contact for the school; coordinates collaboration between key individuals working on operational processes, academic programming, and educator preparation; may be a faculty member(s) or COE administrator* | Dr. Hannah Reeder | Assistant Dean, Reich College of Education | reederhs@appstate.edu | (828) 262-6066<br>(828) 260-5692 |
| **Start-up Coordinator**<br>*Manages operational start up activities serving as the liaison between areas within the IHE/COE as well as with the system office; may be a faculty* | Dr. Hannah Reeder | Assistant Dean, Reich College of Education | reederhs@appstate.edu | (828) 262-6066<br>(828) 260-5692 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *member or EHRA non-teaching* | | | | |
| **Academic Programs** *Facilitates the design of the curriculum and instructional design to be implemented at the school; likely a faculty member* | Dr. Morgan Blanton | Clinical Assistant Professor | blantonmv@appstate.edu | (828) 262-7247 |
| **Teacher Preparation and Development** *Facilitates the design of the integration of teacher candidates interaction within the school; liaison with the school leader on scheduling and plans* | Dr. Hannah Reeder | Assistant Dean, Reich College of Education | reederhs@appstate.edu | (828) 262-6066<br>(828) 260-5692 |
| **Principal Preparation and Development** *Facilitates the design of the integration of principal candidates interaction within the school; liaison with the school leader on scheduling and plans* | Dr. Kimberly Money | Assistant Professor, School Administration | moneykd@appstate.edu | (828) 262-8380 |
| **Legal Services** *Designated counsel to facilitate compliance with lab school legislative requirements; higher education & P-12 state and federal regulations/laws* | Meghan Willis | Assistant General Counsel | willsmm@appstate.edu | (828) 262-2751 |
| **Human Resources** *Designated HR representative(s) who serve as the point of contact for lab school hiring process; may be institutional or unit level or both* | Angela Miller | Deputy HR Director | millerad@appstate.edu | (828) 262-6769 |
| **Finance** *Designated business operations representative(s) who* | Talana Bell | Chief Financial Officer, Academic Affairs | belltj@appstate.edu | (828) 262-7312 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *serve as the point of contact for lab school hiring process; may be institutional or unit level or both* | | | | |
| **Other University Representative (Optional)** *Any other members of the COE or university who may add to the planning process; may be Arts & Sciences faculty or integrated health professionals* | Sharon Bell | Chief Financial Officer, Business Affairs | bellsb@appstate.edu | (828) 262-2030 |
| **Other University Representative (Optional)** *Any other members of the COE or university who may add to the planning process; may be Arts & Sciences faculty or integrated health professionals* | Heather Langdon | Executive Director, Institutional Research & Planning | langdonhh@appstate.edu | (828) 262-2093 |
| **Other University Representative (Optional)** *Any other members of the COE or university who may add to the planning process; may be Arts & Sciences faculty or integrated health professionals* | Dr. Betsy Rosenbalm | Director of Public School Partnership | rosenbalmem@appstate.edu | (828) 262-6108 |
| **LEA Representative (Optional)** *Identified point(s) of contact for coordination of partnership activities (ex: facilities, transportation, nutrition, etc.)* | TBD | | | |
| **LEA Representative (Optional)** *Identified point(s) of contact for coordination of partnership activities* | TBD | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(ex: facilities, transportation, nutrition, etc.)* | | | | |

**Preliminary School Overview**

Please provide a preliminary overview of your lab school using the prompts below. Answers may be amended and additional details added as plans are finalized.

Provide the name, mailing address (if available) for the proposed laboratory school.

TBD

Provide the name of partner local education agency (LEA).

TBD

Provide a description of the proposed student population to be served by the laboratory schools, including anticipated student demographics and anticipated levels of academic performance upon transition to your school.

The lab school will serve students in grades K-2. Student recruitment will target kindergarten and first grade students from the partnering district who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Did not meet grade-level standards,
- Was rated below proficient on formative and summative assessments,
- Was rated below proficient on end-of-year state assessments,
- Is reading below grade level,
- Is the sibling of an eligible child, and/or
- Is the child of a lab school employee.

Recruitment for rising kindergarteners will consist of students who perform low on the kindergarten diagnostic assessment or who have been identified as at-risk by a district pre-k program.

After July 1, 2022, any remaining slots can be filled with other K-2 students from the partnering district.

The anticipated demographics of students at the lab school are as follows:

- 64% white
- 15% black
- 20% Hispanic
- 1% two or more races

Of the anticipated student population, approximately 20% will be English Language Learners and approximately 12% will receive Exceptional Children's services.

Using the chart below, identify the grade levels served and total projected student enrollment by year.

| Academic School Year | Grade Levels and Students Per Grade Level | | | | | | | | | Total Projected Student Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| First Year (2022-2023) | 30 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 90 |
| Second Year (2023-2024) | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 120 |
| Third Year (2024-2025) | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 150 |
| Fourth Year (2025-2026) | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 180 |
| Fifth Year (2026-2027) | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 180 |
| A laboratory school must serve students in at least three consecutive grade levels in the range of kindergarten through eighth grade (§ 116-239.6(4)). | | | | | | | | | | |

**Proposed Academic Program**

Provide a brief overview of the proposed academic program, indicating the preliminary features of the learning environment, instructional methods, curriculum, assessment strategies, and innovations designed to enhance student achievement.

*Additional details related to each feature will be added as the planning team finalizes academic plans for the school's student population.*

The lab school will facilitate and encourage discovery, inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Using a mastery-based learning model, students will be encouraged and provided opportunities to take ownership of their learning. Service learning

and student leadership components will be incorporated throughout the academic program.

An emphasis on early literacy will be a primary focus of the lab school. This includes the implementation of a literacy workshop approach where students receive adaptive, guided, small group instruction. The goal is to improve and enrich literacy via immersive reading and writing instruction.

The lab school is exploring a partnership with EL Education, which is focused on redefining and raising student achievement. The lab school intends to create a learning environment that does the following:

- Focuses on a mastery of learning approach where students demonstrate proficiency and understanding of content;
- Facilitates the transfer and application of learning to meaningful tasks;
- Fosters critical thinking, which includes analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing complex ideas while considering multiple perspectives;
- Encourages empathy, integrity, respect, and compassion; and
- Celebrates authentic and meaningful work.

**Proposed Integration of Teacher Preparation and Development**

Provide a brief, preliminary overview describing how the laboratory school will provide exposure and training for teacher candidates to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings. Describe how the laboratory school will harness the benefits of internal and external partnerships to strengthen teacher preparation and development.

*Additional details will be added as the planning team finalizes strategies for teacher preparation and development.*

Pre-service teacher candidates will be placed at the lab school for early field experiences, methods-based internships, and clinical internships. Other opportunities for pre-service candidates to engage with the lab school will be provided through special projects, lab school visits, observations, and volunteer opportunities.

To build the teacher pipeline and to recruit community college transfer students to Appalachian State University, the lab school will also host pre-service teacher candidates for internships who are enrolled in Catawba Valley Community College and Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute's associates in teacher education programs.

**Proposed Integration of Principal Preparation and Development**

Provide a brief overview describing how the laboratory school will provide exposure and training for principal candidates to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings.

*Additional details will be added as the planning team finalizes strategies for principal preparation and development.*

Faculty from the Master's of School Administration program will work directly with the principal to create opportunities for principal candidates to conduct observations and interviews, complete special projects and assignments, and participate in internships. The lab school will work directly with the Principal Fellows Program at Appalachian State University to provide administrative internships for principal candidates in a high-needs school.

**Preliminary Goals**

State the preliminary, measurable goals for the proposed laboratory school for the first five years of operation in each of the areas listed below.

*Additional details will be added as the planning team finalizes goals for each area listed below.*

| **Academic Program** |
| --- |
| *(Example: Improve scholars' reading proficiency by 5% each year as evidenced by North Carolina End-of-Grade Reading Assessment)*<br><br>The lab school will demonstrate growth in proficiency by 5% each year on the K-2 reading assessment. |
| **Teacher and Principal Preparation and Development** |
| *(Example: Incorporate both early field and internship experiences in middle grades and health/PE education programs)*<br><br>The lab school will Increase the number of internship, practicum, and clinical internship placements for teacher education majors from the following programs: B-K, elementary education, special education, health & PE, art, and music. This includes pre-service teacher candidates from Appalachian State University and neighboring community colleges. |
| **Operational** |

*(Example: School will be at capacity for enrolled students according to projections)*

The lab school will meet enrollment projections for K-2 at the start of year one and will add one grade level per year until the school has at least two classes per grade level across the K-5 spectrum.

**Budget and Financial**

*(Example: Establish an operational budget which includes multiple funding streams)*
The lab school will apply for Federal grants through CCIP and set an operational budget to effectively and efficiently utilize funding from the State, Federal grants, Local District per pupil funds, UNC System Office allotments, and University funds.

**Governance**

*(Example: Establish rules and policies in accordance with state and federal law)*

The lab school will work with University Counsel and the partnering school district to develop policies and procedures that align with state and federal law.

**Budget - Revenue Projections – Year One**

Provide preliminary revenue estimates based on projected average daily membership (ADM). These amounts may change as student enrollment is finalized.

Revenue Projections: 2022-2023 – Inaugural year

| Revenue | 2022-2023 Per Pupil Funding* | Projected ADM | Approximate Funding for 2022-2023 |
|---|---|---|---|
| State ADM Funds | $5,603.80 | 90 | $1,455,558 |
| Local ADM Funds | $1,853.35 | 90 | $ 166,801 |
| Federal Funds - Exceptional Children | $1,514.35 | 11 | $ 17,282 |
| State Funds - Exceptional Children | $4,549.88 | 11 | $ 51,923 |
| Federal Funds - Title I | $ 900.00 | 77 | $ 68,850 |
| Other Federal Funds | $ 92.02 | 77 | $ 7,086 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other Funds (State EL and UNC-SO allotment) | $2,332.87 | 90 | $ 209,458 |
| Total | | | $1,976,959 |

*Based on 2021-22 per pupil revenue.

Note:

Each lab school will submit a subsequent report that builds upon the plans outlined within this document. Schools will have the opportunity to provide information regarding the following components:

- School Mission
- School Focus and/or Overarching Theme (ex: STEAM)
- Enrollment/Marketing strategies to by employed
- Detailed description of academic programming and instructional innovations to include information on the learning environment, instructional methods, innovations, and planned assessments beyond state-level, as well as plans to meet the needs of all students (special populations, EC, etc.)
- Specific courses/clinical experiences planned for teacher candidate engagement
- Specific plans for teacher development to include professional development and teacher evaluation
- Specific courses/clinical experiences and/or projects planned for principal candidate engagement
- A detailed description of community outreach and partnership plans
- Revenue Projections through 2026-27 and Initial Budget (anticipated expenditures)

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools
October 26, 2021

## AGENDA ITEM

A-4. Request to Establish a Laboratory School: North Carolina A&T State University ..... Laura Bilbro-Berry

**Situation:** Pursuant to G.S. 116-239.5, 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 in accordance with the provisions of this statute. The Board of Governors shall select constituent institutions with high-quality educator preparation programs as demonstrated by the annual performance measures reported by the constituent institutions in accordance with G.S. 115C-296.35. The Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools, established under G.S. 116-239.7, shall review the proposals and approve at least nine of the proposals to establish laboratory schools.

**Background:** North Carolina A&T State seeks to open a laboratory school serving grades $6^{th}$-$8^{th}$ in partnership with Guilford County Schools in fall 2022.

**Assessment:** A proposal for the new school is presented for subcommittee review. The university will provide a brief presentation to outline its plans and seeks approval to establish the new school by resolution.

**Action:** This item requires a vote by the subcommittee.

# University of North Carolina Laboratory School Initial Proposal

| | |
|---|---|
| **Institution name** | North Carolina A&T State University |
| **Laboratory school name** | Aggie Academy |
| **Date of submission** | October 15, 2021 |
| **Name of person submitting form** | Deloris Gee |
| **Title of person submitting form** | Interim Vice Chancellor for Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness |
| **Email address of person submitting form** | dmgee@ncat.edu |

| Area of Responsibility | Name | Title | Email Address | Phone Number |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dean**<br>*Serves as liaison between the chancellor, BOT, & other senior leaders* | **Paula Price** | **Dean College of Education** | **pgprice@ncat.edu** | **336-334-7757** |
| **Team Leader(s)**<br>*Serves as the main point of contact for the school; coordinates collaboration between key individuals working on operational processes, academic programming, and educator preparation; may be a faculty member(s) or COE administrator* | **New Hire** | **Principal** | | |
| **Start-up Coordinator**<br>*Manages operational start up activities serving as the liaison between areas within the IHE/COE as well as with the system office; may be a faculty member or EHRA non-teaching* | **New Hire** | **Coordinator/Liaison** | | |
| **Academic Programs**<br>*Facilitates the design of the curriculum and instructional design to be implemented at the school; likely a faculty member* | **Gerrelyn Patterson** | **Chair Educator Preparation** | **gcpatterson@ncat.edu** | **336-285-4411** |
| **Teacher Preparation and Development**<br>*Facilitates the design of the integration of teacher candidates' interaction within the school; liaison with the school leader on scheduling and plans* | **Kim Erwin** | **Associate Dean Center for Student Success and Engagement** | **kderwin@ncat.edu** | **336-334-7663** |
| **Principal Preparation and Development**<br>*Facilitates the design of the integration of principal candidates' interaction within the school; liaison with the school leader on scheduling and plans* | **Kim Erwin** | **Associate Dean Center for Student Success and Engagement** | **kderwin@ncat.edu** | **336-334-7663** |
| **Legal Services**<br>*Designated counsel to facilitate compliance with lab school legislative* | **Sheena Cobrand** | **Deputy General Counsel** | **sjcobrand@ncat.edu** | **336-334-7592** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *requirements; higher education & P-12 state and federal regulations/laws* | | | | |
| **Human Resources** *Designated HR representative(s) who serve as the point of contact for lab school hiring process; may be institutional or unit level or both* | **Sam Richardson** | **Director of Human Resources** | **srichardson@ncat.edu** | **336-285-3585** |
| **Finance** *Designated business operations representative(s) who serve as the point of contact for lab school hiring process; may be institutional or unit level or both* | **Robert Pompey, Jr.** | **Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance** | **rpompey@ncat.edu** | **336-334-7587** |
| **Other University Representative (Optional)** *Any other members of the COE or university who may add to the planning process; may be Arts & Sciences faculty or integrated health professionals* | **Elimelda Ongeri** | **Interim Dean College of Health and Human Sciences** | **eongeri@ncat.edu** | **336-285-2182** |
| **Other University Representative (Optional)** *Any other members of the COE or university who may add to the planning process; may be Arts & Sciences faculty or integrated health professionals* | **Tom Jackson** | **Vice Chancellor for Information Technology Services/Chief Information Officer** | **htjackson@ncat.edu** | **336-256-0543** |
| **LEA Representative (Optional)** *Identified point(s) of contact for coordination of partnership activities (ex: facilities, transportation, nutrition, etc.)* | **Sharon Contreras** | **Superintendent Guilford County Schools** | **superintendent@ gcsnc.com** | **336-370-8992** |
| **LEA Representative (Optional)** *Identified point(s) of contact for coordination of partnership activities (ex: facilities, transportation, nutrition, etc.)* | **Whitney Oakley** | **Chief Academic Officer** | **oakleyw@gcsnc.com** | **336-370-8992** |

**UNC Laboratory School Proposal-Initial**
**DUE October 11, 2021**

## Purpose

The purpose of this initial proposal is to outline the preliminary plans for each institution's lab school such that the Board of Governors' Subcommittee on Lab Schools will have sufficient information to approve the opening of the school. Additional details regarding academic programming, budgeting, educator preparation engagement, and operational activities will be added to a final report.

## Initial Planning Team

Provide the names and contact information of laboratory school planning team members. These individuals may be existing university employees for this initial proposal with the understanding that your planning team may change as needed and as tasks are accomplished. An individual within your team may fulfill more than one role.

- Paula Price
- Gerrelyn Patterson
- Edith Martin (community)
- Principal
- Office manager
- Curriculum Coordinator

## Preliminary School Overview

Please provide a preliminary overview of your lab school using the prompts below. Answers may be amended and additional details added as plans are finalized.

Provide the name, mailing address (if available) for the proposed laboratory school.

| |
|---|
| Aggie Academy |

Provide the name of partner local education agency (LEA).

| |
|---|
| Guilford County Public Schools |

Provide a description of the proposed student population to be served by the laboratory schools, including anticipated student demographics and anticipated levels of academic performance upon transition to your school.

The proposed student population will be primarily comprised of low-income students currently residing in east Greensboro and attending Melvin C. Swann Middle School, a middle school in close proximity to North Carolina A&T State University. Swann is designated by the state of NC as a low-performing school. The performance grade score has been "D" for the last six years and expected academic growth has not been met since 2017.
The following statistics further describe the 2019-2020 student population:
Incoming Student Readiness 43.2%
Economically Disadvantage 52.8%
Criminal Acts Per 1000 students 12.76% (compared to 5.99 for the LEA)

Using the chart below, identify the grade levels served and total projected student enrollment by year.

| Academic School Year | Grade Levels and Students Per Grade Level | | | | | | | | | Total Projected Student Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| First Year (2022-2023) | | | | | | 45 | 45 | | | 90 |
| Second Year (2023-2024) | | | | | | 45 | 45 | 45 | | 135 |
| Third Year (2024-2025) | | | | | | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 180 |
| Fourth Year (2025-2026) | | | | | | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 180 |
| Fifth Year (2026-2027) | | | | | | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 180 |
| A laboratory school must serve students in at least three consecutive grade levels in the range of kindergarten through eighth grade (§ 116-239.6(4)). | | | | | | | | | | |

## Proposed Academic Program

Provide a brief overview of the proposed academic program, indicating the preliminary features of the learning environment, instructional methods, curriculum, assessment strategies, and innovations designed to enhance student achievement.

*Additional details related to each feature will be added as the planning team finalizes academic plans for the school's student population.*

The proposed middle school will serve grades 5-8 and will be housed in what is now Guilford County School System's Melvin C. Swann Middle School or on the campus of North Carolina A&T State University. The school will have a STEAM focus that is couched within a whole student approach to education. The tenets of whole child education address social-emotional, physical, creative and cognitive capacities. Such a perspective requires the availability of wrap-around-services and is grounded in progressive philosophy which promotes self-understanding, skill development and the desire to continue learning. Furthermore, reading and math assessment will occur at least three times a year. These data will ultimately help guide curriculum developments and innovations that augment student learning.

**Proposed Integration of Teacher Preparation and Development**

Provide a brief, preliminary overview describing how the laboratory school will provide exposure and training for teacher candidates to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings. Describe how the laboratory school will harness the benefits of internal and external partnerships to strengthen teacher preparation and development.

*Additional details will be added as the planning team finalizes strategies for teacher preparation and development.*

Because the student population of Aggie Academy will be primarily comprised of low-income, low performing students, teacher education candidates will garner first-hand knowledge by completing their pre-service experiences, internships and observations within the lab school. Furthermore, several faculty members from NCA&T will teach their methods classes at the lab school. Consequently, NCA&T students will be afforded the opportunity to practice the methods they learn at the lab school under the direct supervision of their instructors. Furthermore, the lab classroom instructor will provide formative feedback on the pedagogy of both the college student and the university professor. Such a partnership has potential for benefiting all parties.

**Proposed Integration of Principal Preparation and Development**

Provide a brief overview describing how the laboratory school will provide exposure and training for principal candidates to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings.

*Additional details will be added as the planning team finalizes strategies for principal preparation and development.*

Principal candidates in the university's MSA program will assist, shadow and partner with the Aggie Academy principal to gain experience in addressing challenges in high-needs school settings. Furthermore, candidates may select the lab school as their internship site with the commitment to intern for the full academic year. Candidates will be taught by precept and by example.

**Preliminary Goals**

State the preliminary, measurable goals for the proposed laboratory school for the first five years of operation in each of the areas listed below.

*Additional details will be added as the planning team finalizes goals for each area listed below.*

| **Academic Program** |
|---|
| 1. *The lab school will earn a minimum performance grade score of 'C' the first year.*<br>2. Individual reading and math assessment will be conducted three times a year, each year excluding, EOG/EOC.<br>3. *Reading scores will improve at least 5% each year until proficiency is met.*<br>4. *Math scores will improve at least 5% each year until proficiency is met.*<br>5. *Curricula will support the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for each grade level as a minimum, but with broader depth for academically gifted students.*<br>6. *Each year a new **experiential** learning experience will be added to the curriculum (e.g., science class at the Greensboro Science Center, financial literacy at a community bank, NC A&T art museum, etc.).*<br>7. *Provide enrichment and extracurricular activities that broaden students' perspectives.* |
| **Teacher and Principal Preparation and Development** |

1. *Incorporate early field experiences in elementary, middle, health/PE, and school leadership education programs.*
2. *A teacher education interns will be assigned to the lab school.*
3. *A school leader intern will be assigned to the lab school each year.*

**Operational**

1. *School will be at capacity for enrolled students according to projections.*
2. *A minimum of 75% of classroom teachers will be licensed.*
3. *Help address health disparities through site-based wellness intervention (medical, behavioral and nutritional).*
4. *Partner with Guilford County Schools to offer professional development*
5. *College of Education will facilitate compliance reporting, supervision for interns, support instruction through shared teaching.*
6. *The dean and the principal shall approve all grants and funding acquisitions and expenditures.*
7. *School counselor candidates will complete practicum and internship experiences at the lab school.*
8. *Faculty within nursing, physical therapy, speech and hearing, psychology, social work, and counseling will provide consultation and other services to students, parents and the lab school.*
9. *University police will collaborate with the Greensboro police on the management of safety and emergency services.*
10. *NCA&T Title IX officer will ensure compliance with all policies and will provide training for all lab school staff, board members, etc. as required by statute.*
11. *General Counsel will review and consult on legal matters pertaining to the lab school including, but not limited to, all MOAs/MOUs.*
12. *Community business partners will provide opportunities for various student activities (e.g., job shadowing, service-learning, on-site demonstrations, etc.) and teacher professional development.*

**Budget and Financial**

1. *Establish an operational budget which includes multiple funding streams.*
2. *Budget revenue and expenditures will be under the direction of the Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance at North Carolina A&T State University.*
3. ***Decrease dependency on university funding each year until school reaches self-sufficiency.***
4. *Identify internal/external funding sources and submit grants to support the lab school.*

**Governance**

1. Aggie Academy will exist as a unit within the College of Education.
2. The College of Education, in collaboration with the Human Resources department, will be responsible for all hiring, personnel management and personnel evaluation.
3. The principal will be the lab school leader and shall work in close conjunction with the dean. The principal shall also lead all searches for lab school personnel.
4. The dean shall provide regular updates to the provost and the chancellor.
5. The dean will function as the 'superintendent' and will be responsible for signing documents with that title.
6. The principal and dean will collaborate on first-level management of research projects, organization of the lab school and formulation of fiscal policies.
7. An advisory board shall be established to provide advice to the chancellor and the dean, and address the specific responsibilities outlined in Article 29A 116-239.8.
8. All rules and policies will be established in accordance with state and federal laws.



**Budget - Revenue Projections – Year One**

Provide preliminary revenue estimates based on projected average daily membership (ADM). These amounts may change as student enrollment is finalized.

Revenue Projections: 2022-2023 – Inaugural year

| Revenue | 2022-2023 Per Pupil Funding* | Projected ADM | Approximate Funding for 2022-2023 |
|---|---|---|---|
| State ADM Funds | $5,066 | $5,066 | $455,940 |
| Local ADM Funds | $3,845 | $3,845 | $346,050 |
| Federal Funds - Exceptional Children | $1,000 | $1,000 | $90,000 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| State Funds - Exceptional Children | | | |
| Federal Funds - Title I | $147 | $147 | $13,230 |
| Other Federal Funds | | | |
| Other Funds (UNC Allotment) | | | $200,000 |
| Total | **$10,058** | **$10,058** | **$1,105,220** |

*Based on 2021-22 per pupil revenue.

Note:

Each lab school will submit a subsequent report that builds upon the plans outlined within this document. Schools will have the opportunity to provide information regarding the following components:

- School Mission
- School Focus and/or Overarching Theme (ex: STEAM)
- Enrollment/Marketing strategies to by employed
- Detailed description of academic programming and instructional innovations to include information on the learning environment, instructional methods, innovations, and planned assessments beyond state-level, as well as plans to meet the needs of all students (special populations, EC, etc.)
- Specific courses/clinical experiences planned for teacher candidate engagement
- Specific plans for teacher development to include professional development and teacher evaluation
- Specific courses/clinical experiences and/or projects planned for principal candidate engagement
- A detailed description of community outreach and partnership plans
- Revenue Projections through 2026-27 and Initial Budget (anticipated expenditures)

**RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF GOVERNORS SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABORATORY SCHOOLS APPROVING NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURUAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY TO ESTABLISH A LABORATORY SCHOOL**

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 116, Article 29A of the General Statutes of North Carolina requires the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina to designate nine constituent institutions to establish and operate laboratory schools to serve public school students in grades kindergarten through eight in accordance with the provisions of the Article; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Governors has designated North Carolina A&T State University as one of the nine constituent institutions to establish and operate a laboratory school; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with the requirements of Chapter 116, Article 29A of the General Statutes of North Carolina, North Carolina A& T State University submitted to the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools a proposal to operate a laboratory school; and

**WHEREAS**, North Carolina A&T State University proposes to operate a laboratory school by the name of Aggie Academy to be located in the Guilford County Public School district with a term of operation of five years beginning in August 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 116, Article 29A requires the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools to approve or disapprove proposals from constituent institutions to establish and operate laboratory schools; and

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 116, Article 29A of the General Statutes of North Carolina also requires the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools to adopt a resolution upon the approval of each laboratory school which includes the name of the laboratory school, the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school shall be located, and a term of operation for the laboratory school of five years from the date of initial operation, to be filed with the Department of Public Instruction for subsequent approval by the State Board of Education;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approves the establishment of Aggie Academy by North Carolina A&T State University for a term of operation of five years beginning in August 2022 to be located in the Guilford County Public School district; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools would like to acknowledge and thank the Guilford County Public School Board of Education and its superintendent, the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school will be located, for its cooperation with North Carolina A&T State University in the development of the Aggie Academy.

The foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools at a meeting of the subcommittee on the 26th day of October 2021.

THE UNC SYSTEM

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABORATORY SCHOOLS

By: _____
Meredith R. McCullen, Secretary