



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

October 30, 2024 at 10:30 a.m.  
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream

**AGENDA**

**OPEN SESSION**

- A-1. Approval of the Minutes of May 6, 2024..... C. Philip Byers
- A-2. Review and Approve Laboratory Schools Evaluation Report ..... Shun Robertson
- A-3. Adjourn

## DRAFT MINUTES

May 6, 2024

Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream

This meeting of the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools was presided over by Chair C. Philip Byers. The following subcommittee members, constituting a quorum, were also present in person or by phone: Estefany Gordillo-Rivas, Temple Sloan, John Fraley, and Wendy Murphy, who was assigned to participate in the meeting by Chair Randy Ramsey for quorum purposes.

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

### 1. Approval of the Minutes of November 6, 2023 (Item A-1)

**MOTION:** Resolved, that the Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approve the open session minutes of November 6, 2023, as distributed.

**Motion:** John Fraley

**Motion carried**

### 2. Academy at Elkin Laboratory School Assumption Plan (Item A-2)

The Committee on Laboratory Schools reviewed the assumption plan that was co-authored and mutually approved by Appalachian State University and Elkin City Schools. The plan summarized actions taken and the schedule for assumption of the Academy at Elkin. Appalachian State University's Interim Chancellor Heather Norris, Dean Melba Spooner, and Assistant Dean Hannah Reeder outlined the assumption plan and the process to execute the plan.

**Motion:** Temple Sloan

**Motion carried**

### 3. Update on the Laboratory Schools Improvement Exercise

The subcommittee received an update on the System Office's collaborative efforts with Lab Schools to develop individualized SMART goals around data and create logic models with key actions and outcomes. Dr. Clay Smith, the assistant director of Educator Preparation and Lab Schools, and Dr. Lauren Lampron, the director of the NC Principal Fellows Program, led this exercise in partnership with lab school principals, program directors, curriculum leads, and the educator preparation programs supporting them. Goal setting was anchored to data so that reaching these SMART goals in the short term will result in increased proficiency in the long term.

### 4. Adjourn

There being no further business and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

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Alex Mitchell, Secretary

**AGENDA ITEM**

A-2. Review and Approve Laboratory Schools Evaluation Report..... Shun Robertson

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

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

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

**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. Additionally, subcommittee members will hear an update on the System Office-facilitated improvement and enhancement process in which laboratory schools have engaged since the 2023 annual evaluation.

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, 2024. 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.

# **2024 Annual Report on the Laboratory Schools of the UNC System**

**November 2024**

## 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. 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Students are eligible to attend a laboratory school if they reside in the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located and previously attended a low-performing school; failed to meet expected growth (based on one or more indicators); are the siblings of a child meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory school employees.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

Since the passage of the enabling legislation, UNC System institutions have opened nine laboratory schools. The ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) opened in the 2017-18 academic year. The Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) opened in the 2018-19 academic year. Niner University Elementary (UNCC) opened in the 2020-21 academic year. Finally, the Appalachian Academy at Elkin, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and the Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH) opened in the 2022-23 academic year. As of the 2024-25 academic year there are seven laboratory schools currently open—Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) returned to the operation of Rockingham County Schools for the 2023-24 school year<sup>5</sup> and Appalachian Academy at Elkin returned to the operation of Elkin City Schools for the 2024-25 school year.<sup>6</sup> This report includes data—depending upon the specific analysis—from the 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 school years. As such, results are reported for laboratory schools that are no longer open.

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<sup>1</sup> N.C.G.S. 116-239.5(b)

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

<sup>4</sup> 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)

<sup>5</sup> Moss Street Partnership School returned to the operation of the Rockingham County Schools after UNCG’s initial, five-year charter for the school expired.

<sup>6</sup> The Appalachian Academy at Elkin returned to the operation of Elkin City Schools after a vote of the Elkin City Schools Board. Space considerations were the primary issue that prompted the decision.

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 analyses conducted by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC), an applied education research and evaluation group within the Department of Public Policy at UNC Chapel Hill. Consistent with the enabling legislation, this report includes information listed in the eight items below:

- (1) A brief overview of each laboratory school operating in the 2024-25 academic year;
- (2) Student enrollment and demographics in each laboratory school;
- (3) A summary of laboratory school admissions processes and the number of students enrolled under each enrollment criteria;
- (4) Public school student achievement data from each laboratory school;
- (5) Public school student academic progress at each laboratory school;
- (6) Information on pre-service educators in laboratory schools, including outcomes for pre-service educators who obtained clinical experiences in laboratory schools;
- (7) Best practices resulting from laboratory school operations; and
- (8) Other information the UNC System BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools considers appropriate. This includes data on student attendance, student disciplinary incidents, and teacher working conditions at laboratory schools.

### **Laboratory School Overviews**

Seven UNC System institutions are currently (in the 2024-25 school year) operating laboratory schools. Although united by a common mission and commitments, these schools vary across many dimensions, including the characteristics of students enrolled, school design features, and school curricula. As such, this section provides a brief overview of each laboratory school.

Appalachian State University operates the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, a K-5 school in Walkertown, NC, previously operated by Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. Opened in August 2018, the laboratory school creates pathways and opportunities for lifelong learning and positive community impact through innovative learning experiences for all students. The laboratory school is in its second year of implementing a strategic staffing model. Using workforce design principles, the school has restructured the roles and responsibilities of teachers and moved away from the one-teacher, one-classroom model. Students are assigned to a grade level span where teachers work on a team using co-teaching practices to meet the needs of all learners. Students don't have just one teacher but a team of teachers. The school also operates under a four-day instructional week with protected, uninterrupted instructional blocks Monday through Thursday. Every Friday is an Enrichment Day. Students are engaged in tutoring, interventions, and personalized learning to support their academic growth. Teachers are engaged in a full day of co-planning, analyzing student learning data, and participating in professional learning. In 2024-25, the staff at the Academy at Middle Fork includes a principal, an assistant principal, a director of student support, a director of culture and climate, a school improvement coach, a teacher support coach, a behavior support interventionist, three curriculum coaches, three interventionists, 12 classroom teachers, five specialist teachers (art, music, media, PE, and STEM), four EC teachers, one multilingual learner teacher, three academic tutors, a school counselor, a school nurse, a school social worker, four teacher assistants, a school engagement coordinator, a technology support specialist, an administrative support and school finance specialist, a data manager, an office assistant, and a school resource officer.

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 six

classrooms—one class per grade level. The ECU Community School reflects a whole-child approach by integrating health, wellness, and learning into instruction to address the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of all students. The laboratory school uses an intentional approach to build literacy and numeracy skills through the core subjects of mathematics, science, reading/English language arts, and social studies and is simultaneously focused on engaging children in learning experiences that support their curiosity, creativity, inquiry, and intellectual growth in a school environment that respects their strengths and meets their needs. In 2024-2025, the laboratory school's staff includes a principal, six teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, one special education teacher/director, one special education teacher, four regular education teacher assistants, one special education teacher assistant, one full-time counselor, one full-time administrative assistant, one full-time social worker, one full-time reading specialist, and a part-time testing coordinator.

In partnership with Guilford County Schools, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T) opened the Aggie Academy laboratory school in August 2022. Aggie Academy currently serves students in grades 3-5 and features a culturally responsive curriculum with a strong STEAM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Arts and Math). Located less than ten minutes from the North Carolina A&T State University main campus, Aggie Academy students enjoy hands-on and experiential learning and benefit from the University's latest academic best practices, research, and student success initiatives. The College of Education uses a Practice-Based Teacher Education Model (PBTE) to provide multiple hands-on teaching experiences for educator preparation students at Aggie Academy. Furthermore, Aggie Academy students benefit from small group and individualized supplemental instruction from their teachers and the NC A&T educator preparation students, especially in literacy and mathematics. Classroom teachers design lessons that incorporate the 5 E instructional model: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. This process teaches students to think critically and be more engaged in learning. This model also includes the integration of music, art, and PE into the general content classes. The afterschool program provides students with additional opportunities for homework, tutoring, and enrichment support. For the 2024-2025 school year, the staff at Aggie Academy includes the program director, principal, instructional coach/STEM teacher, EC teacher, Media/Technology specialist, seven classroom teachers, three specials teachers (art, music, and PE), a full-time afterschool director, a part-time counselor, and a part-time social worker. The administrative staff includes a budget manager and a data manager. Additionally, NC A&T educator preparation students work as group leaders in the Children's Defense Fund Freedom School afterschool program that operates from afternoon dismissal to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday.

UNCC's laboratory school, Niner University Elementary School, is located on the campus of a former Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Pre-K center in west Charlotte and serves students in grades K-5, with three second-grade classes and two classes in all other grades. The school opened in August 2020 and aims to provide an option for elementary students in West Charlotte and improve the kindergarten readiness levels of students in West Charlotte neighborhoods through a partnership between the College of Education's Early Childhood program and in-home childcare providers. The school follows a traditional calendar that is aligned with CMS. Niner University Elementary School is a relationship-based and trauma-invested school that emphasizes equity and justice in the school environment, with school staff reflecting on culturally sustaining teaching practices to ensure they meet the needs of all students. In 2024-25, Niner University Elementary School's staff includes a principal, a curriculum coordinator, 11 classroom teachers, six instructional assistants, two special education teachers (one of whom also serves as coordinator), an English language teacher (who also serves as the English language coordinator and the Spanish teacher), a school counselor, a social worker, a school nurse, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. The administrative staff includes a finance/data manager, an administrative office associate, and a school resource officer.

UNC Chapel Hill's laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy (CCA), is located in Person County and serves kindergarten, first-, and second-grade students during its third year of operation in 2024-25. With a whole-child approach to student learning, CCA focuses on student well-being, social-emotional support for learning, and engagement of families and the community. CCA is a clinical experience site for various university degree programs, from MAT students to pre-service public health and library science majors. In 2024-25, the staff at CCA includes a principal, eight classroom teachers, one elective teacher, three instructional assistants, one EC teacher, one instructional coach, one school counselor, one school social worker, one office manager, and a director. In addition, multiple Person County Schools employees support the laboratory school through related services and child nutrition and faculty and staff at UNC Chapel Hill support additional community-wide initiatives. CCA has hosted master's students from the Gillings School of Global Public Health to conduct asset mapping of the Person County community. In addition, CCA has collaborated with Person County to provide clinical placements for the UNC School of Nursing across all Person County schools, has collaborated with the UNC Thorp Engaged Scholars as a demonstration of locally based theory to practice, and launched a partnership between the Person High School JROTC and UNC ROTC program. In short, there is a focus on the whole child and ensuring excellent academic outcomes at CCA, while also working diligently to ensure that the whole of childhood is considered in the collaborations between UNC Chapel Hill, CCA, and community partners.

UNCW operates D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA), a 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 modified year-round calendar. DCVPA has one class in each grade level. 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 restorative model to facilitate relationship building between staff, families, and students. In 2024-25, the DCVPA staff includes an executive director, a principal, an assistant principal/behavioral specialist, a data manager, an administrative assistant, an operations coordinator and liaison, an EC director, an academic and learning coordinator, 10 teachers in core content areas, four instructional assistants, three EC teachers, two EC teacher assistants, one health and PE teacher, one music teacher, an art teacher, an instructional coach, an MTSS specialist, a beginning teacher support coach, a student support specialist, a speech therapist, a school psychologist, a social worker, a part-time nurse, a school resource officer, and a technology support analyst.

WCU's laboratory school, The Catamount School, is located on the campus of Western Carolina University, in Cullowhee, 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. Fostering student growth and the development of social-emotional skills through a problem-centered, experienced-based learning approach in an inclusive education environment is at the heart of The Catamount School mission. Special education services for EC students are provided in regular classrooms using a fully inclusive, co-teaching model in which the EC teachers work collaboratively with the lead classroom teachers in math and language arts to deliver individualized instruction. In the 2024-25 school year, The Catamount School staff includes a principal, database manager, four core subject-area teachers, two exceptional children teachers, an enrichment coordinator, a health and PE teacher, and two health services coordinators who serve as the school nurses and supervise School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. One of the EC teachers also serves as the MTSS coordinator while the other also serves as assistant principal. Three College of Education and Allied Professions (CEAP) faculty members serve in dual roles: curriculum and instruction Liaison/math one teacher, HPE teacher, and EC Administrator. Additional WCU CEAP faculty and staff serve the lab school in multiple ways, including



psychological and intellectual assessments via school psychology, school counseling, and speech services. The dean of the college serves as the lead administrator and Chancellor's designee.

### **Student Enrollment and Demographics at Laboratory Schools**

Table 1 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. As of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) had 299 enrolled students, with 55 in kindergarten, 59 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 44 in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 57 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 37 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 47 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are above those from the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2024-25, 52 percent of male, 44 percent are Black, 36 percent are Hispanic, and 22 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2023-24 school year show that 100 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 29 percent of K-5 students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 29 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 57 percent are designated as low-income.<sup>7</sup>

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, the ECU Community School has 108 enrolled students, with 15 in kindergarten, 13 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 19 in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 17 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 23 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 21 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Relative to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year, these data show a modest enrollment decrease at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2024-25, 49 percent are male, 96 percent are Black and 20 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2023-24 school year show that 100 percent of ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black, 14 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 92 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) has 85 enrolled students, with 17 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 38 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 30 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Relative to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year, these data show that enrollment is the same at Aggie Academy. Of these enrolled students in 2024-25, 58 percent are male, 89 percent are Black, and 17 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 42 percent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students in Guilford County Schools are Black and 15 percent are classified as exceptional children.<sup>8</sup>

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, Niner University Elementary (UNCC) has 124 enrolled students, with 25 in kindergarten, 23 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 14 in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 22 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 25 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 15 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Relative to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year, these data show a modest enrollment decrease. Of the students enrolled in 2024-25, 51 percent are Male, 90 percent are Black and 23 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2023-24 school year show that 100 percent of the Niner University Elementary school students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 34 percent of the K-5 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 11 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 69 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, the Carolina Community Academy (UNC Chapel Hill) has 92 enrolled students, with 31 in kindergarten, 36 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 25 in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. CCA added a grade (2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2022-23 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2023-24 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

<sup>8</sup> Title I data on the percentage of low-income students at the Aggie Academy are not available for the 2023-24 year.

grade) in 2024-25 and as such their enrollment increased substantially relative to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2024-25, 52 percent are male, 54 percent are Black, 16 percent are Hispanic, and 19 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2023-24 school year show that 90 percent of the CCA students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 31 percent of the K-2 students in Person County Schools are Black, 13 percent are Hispanic, 18 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 59 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 162 enrolled students, with 13 in kindergarten, 14 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 19 in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 13 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 17 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 18 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 22 in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 25 in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 21 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Relative to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year, these data reflect a drop in enrollment of nearly 18 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2024-25, 49 percent are male, 90 percent are Black, and 27 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2023-24 school year show that 100 percent of the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 16 percent of the K-8 students in New Hanover County Schools are Black, 14 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 46 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2024-25 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 64 enrolled students, with 16 in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 25 in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 23 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Relative to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2023-24 school year, enrollment is up slightly at The Catamount School. Of the students enrolled in 2024-25, 55 percent are male, 83 percent are White, 13 percent are American Indian, and 25 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2023-24 school year show that 63 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 65 percent of the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Jackson County Schools are White, 5 percent are American Indian, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 68 percent are designated as low-income.

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

	ASU: Middle Fork		ASU: Elkin	ECU		NCA&T		UNCC		UNCCH		UNCW		WCU	
	23-24	24-25	23-24	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Total Enrollment	286	299	78	117	108	85	85	133	124	67	92	197	162	59	64
Kindergarten	54	55	---	14	15	---	---	25	25	35	31	17	13	---	---
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	45	59	---	19	13	---	---	22	23	32	36	23	14	---	---
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	56	44	24	19	19	---	---	21	14	---	25	19	19	---	---
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	39	57	19	24	17	29	17	32	22	---	---	22	13	---	---
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	47	37	35	22	23	31	38	17	25	---	---	19	17	---	---
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45	47	---	19	21	25	30	16	15	---	---	20	18	---	---
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	36	22	18	16
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	29	25	17	25
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	12	21	24	23
Male	49.0%	51.8%	44.9%	54.7%	49.1%	58.8%	57.7%	53.4%	50.8%	44.8%	52.2%	49.2%	48.8%	55.9%	54.7%
White	17.5%	16.1%	71.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	14.9%	19.6%	3.6%	3.7%	84.8%	82.8%
Black	43.7%	43.5%	3.9%	94.9%	96.3%	92.9%	89.4%	93.2%	90.3%	58.2%	54.4%	89.3%	90.1%	1.7%	1.6%
Multiracial	4.9%	3.7%	3.9%	1.7%	1.9%	4.7%	5.9%	0.0%	4.0%	9.0%	8.7%	6.1%	3.7%	0.0%	1.6%
Hispanic	32.5%	35.8%	20.5%	0.9%	0.9%	2.4%	4.7%	3.8%	3.2%	16.4%	16.3%	1.0%	2.5%	0.0%	1.6%
Asian	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	0.8%	1.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.9%	12.5%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	21.0%	21.7%	23.1%	25.6%	20.4%	10.6%	16.5%	27.8%	22.6%	9.0%	18.5%	26.4%	27.2%	23.7%	25.0%
Low-Income	100.0%	N/A	64.6%	100.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.0%	N/A	89.6%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	62.7%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Most of the data in this table comes from the Principal's Monthly Report from the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the school year. The low-income data come from the 2023-24 Title I federal reporting. Please see <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/office-federal-programs#Title-EligibleSchoolsSummaryReportESSR-1751> for those data. These Title I data are not yet available for the 2024-25 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 was 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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 created 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.<sup>11</sup>

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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."

<sup>11</sup> 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.

attended a low-performing school, the laboratory school may not have assessed whether the student was also low-performing him/herself. As a result, data in Table 2 indicate how the laboratory school confirmed students' eligibility and not necessarily all the eligibility criteria that qualified students to attend a laboratory school.

Appalachian State certified that 64 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 29 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 4 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 0.3 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 3 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that 93 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 16 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 39 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 3 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

NCA&T certified that 84 percent of the students at Aggie Academy in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; five percent qualified based on their own prior performance; seven percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and five percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCC certified that 60 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 11 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 19 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 11 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNC Chapel Hill certified that 100 percent of the students at Carolina Community Academy in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

UNCW certified that 72 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 26 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 1 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Finally, WCU certified that 58 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2024-25 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 52 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 13 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 2 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 14 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

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

	ASU: Middle Fork	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	299	108	85	124	92	162	64
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	63.6%	92.6%	83.5%	59.7%	100.0%	71.6%	57.8%
Previously Low-Performing Student	29.4%	15.7%	4.7%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	51.6%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	3.7%	38.9%	7.1%	19.4%	0.0%	25.9%	12.5%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	0.3%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	1.6%
Post March 1 <sup>st</sup> Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	3.0%	2.8%	4.7%	10.5%	0.0%	1.2%	14.1%

*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 2024-25 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 (proficiency rates), and growth at each laboratory school. These achievement data are based on student proficiency and growth on state assessments (End-of-Grade exams for laboratory schools). Proficiency measures whether students pass state assessments, while growth tracks the gains students make on those assessments. Table 3 displays these achievement data for the 2023-24 academic year. The top panel of Table 3 displays these data overall; the middle and bottom panels of Table 3 report these data for reading and mathematics separately.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, the top panel of Table 3 indicates that in the 2023-24 school year, two laboratory schools—the ECU Community School and the Aggie Academy—earned a performance grade of ‘C’. Both of these schools also earned performance grades of ‘C’ in the 2022-23 school year. Three laboratory schools—Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Appalachian Academy at Elkin, and The Catamount School—earned a performance grade of ‘D’. Finally, two laboratory schools—Niner University Elementary and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy—earned a performance grade of ‘F’.<sup>13</sup> These performance grades are based on the performance score, which is a weighted average of the achievement score (80%) and the growth score (20%). Achievement scores, which measure proficiency rates on state assessments, ranged from 10.3 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 57.0 (ECU Community School). For two consecutive years, Aggie Academy

<sup>12</sup> These school accountability data for the 2023-24 year can be accessed here: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/accountability-and-testing/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports#2023-24Reports-4468>

<sup>13</sup> The Carolina Community Academy (UNC Chapel Hill) did not have any school performance data in the 2023-24 year.

has had an overall achievement score above 55%. Growth scores ranged from 60.8 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 89.3 (ECU Community School). Two laboratory schools—the ECU Community School and Aggie Academy—exceeded growth overall. Four other laboratory schools met expected achievement growth in 2023-24.

*Table 3: Student Achievement at Laboratory Schools in 2023-24*

	Overall Performance Grade	Overall Performance Score	Overall Achievement Score	Overall Growth Score	Overall Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	D	40	30.9	74.7	Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	D	49	39.6	84.9	Met
ECU Community School	C	63	57.0	89.3	Exceeded
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	C	62	55.6	88.6	Exceeded
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	F	37	27.0	75.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	F	20	10.3	60.8	Not Met
The Catamount School (WCU)	D	54	47.4	81.5	Met
	Reading Performance Grade	Reading Performance Score	Reading Achievement Score	Reading Growth Score	Reading Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	38	29.8	69.5	Not Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	D	42	31.3	82.5	Met
ECU Community School	C	55	48.4	83.4	Met
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	C	55	48.1	82.5	Met
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	F	35	25.4	72.3	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	F	25	13.5	70.3	Met
The Catamount School (WCU)	D	54	47.4	79.2	Met
	Math Performance Grade	Math Performance Score	Math Achievement Score	Math Growth Score	Math Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	D	41	30.6	83.8	Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	C	55	47.9	85.2	Exceeded
ECU Community School	B	71	65.6	90.5	Exceeded
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	C	68	63.0	88.8	Exceeded
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	F	39	28.6	82.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	F	18	7.1	60.6	Not Met
The Catamount School (WCU)	D	53	47.4	76.9	Met

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

The middle panel of Table 3 presents school performance data in reading. In the 2023-24 school year, the ECU Community School and the Aggie Academy earned a ‘C’ performance grade in reading; the Appalachian Academy at Elkin and The Catamount School earned a ‘D’ performance grade in reading; and the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Niner University Elementary, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned a ‘F’ performance grade in reading. This is the second consecutive year that Aggie Academy has earned a reading performance grade of ‘C’. Reading achievement scores ranged from 13.5 at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy to 48.4 at the ECU Community School. Reading growth scores ranged

from 69.5 at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork to 83.4 at the ECU Community School. Six laboratory schools met expected growth in reading while one laboratory school did not meet expected reading growth in 2023-24.

Finally, the bottom panel of Table 3 presents school performance grades in math. In the 2023-24 school year, the ECU Community School earned a performance grade of 'B'. This represents the first time that a UNC System laboratory school has earned a performance grade above a 'C' on North Carolina's statewide accountability system. Two laboratory schools (Appalachian Academy at Elkin and Aggie Academy) earned a math performance grade of 'C', two laboratory schools (Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and The Catamount School) earned a math performance grade of 'D', and two laboratory schools (Niner University Elementary and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) earned a math performance grade of 'F'. Math achievement scores ranged from 7.1 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 65.6 (ECU Community School), while math growth scores ranged from 60.6 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 90.5 (ECU Community School). Three laboratory schools—Appalachian Academy at Elkin, the ECU Community School, and Aggie Academy—exceeded growth in math in 2023-24. Three laboratory schools met growth and one laboratory school did not meet expected math growth.

### **Student Academic Progress at Laboratory Schools**

The legislation enabling laboratory schools requires the reporting of student academic progress in each laboratory school, as measured against the previous school year and against other schools in the district and statewide. To fulfill this requirement, this report includes analyses of student-level achievement data from the 2022-23 school year, when there were eight laboratory schools that enrolled students who took EOG exams: the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Appalachian Academy at Elkin, the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and The Catamount School (WCU).

Appendix A provides descriptive student achievement data from the 2022-23 school year. Specifically, Appendix Table A1 presents achievement data—average EOG scores, the percentage of students below and meeting/exceeding proficiency—for all non-laboratory school students statewide. Appendix Tables A2-A9 present student achievement data—average EOG scores, the percentage of students below and meeting/exceeding proficiency—for each laboratory school and for all other students in the district hosting the respective laboratory school. Data from Appendix Tables A1-A9 show that laboratory school students have lower average EOG scores and lower proficiency rates than peers statewide or in the host school district. This is not surprising given the unique nature of students attending laboratory schools—i.e., many are previously low-performing and/or attended a low-performing school. Of note, in Appendix Table A9, we find that seven students at The Catamount School (WCU) took Math I in 2022-23.<sup>14</sup> All seven of these students passed the End-of-Course exam and earned high school credit.

To more rigorously assess student achievement at laboratory schools, this report includes results from regression analyses comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2022-23 with the test scores of students attending low-performing schools.<sup>15</sup> In particular, this report includes analyses of

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<sup>14</sup> This represents 23 percent of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class at The Catamount School. In addition, all 8<sup>th</sup> graders at The Catamount School take Earth and Environmental Science and can earn high school credit.

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



students' 2022-23 DIBELS end-of-year composite score<sup>16</sup> and students' 2022-23 EOG math, reading, and science scores. This is the first year in which DIBELS composite scores have been part of the laboratory school evaluation. To better isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student test scores in the 2022-23 school year, these models control for a rich set of covariates at the student and school level. Student control variables include prior test scores from the 2021-22 year,<sup>17</sup> prior-year attendance rates, grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, and indicators for whether the student is economically-disadvantaged, an English learner, and classified as academically gifted or a student with a disability. School level control variables include the school level (e.g. elementary, middle), the percentage of students of color and low-income students, and an indicator for whether the school is in an urban environment. Preferred models compare achievement for laboratory school students to other students attending a low-performing school in the same region as the laboratory school.<sup>18</sup>

Table 4 presents results comparing the achievement of laboratory school students to other students attending low-performing schools. Across all laboratory schools, the top row of Table 4 indicates that laboratory school students scored significantly higher than other students attending a low-performing school in two comparisons: DIBELS end-of-year composite scores<sup>19</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade science. Specifically, after adjusting for student and school covariates, laboratory school students scored nearly six percent of a standard deviation higher on their DIBELS assessments than comparable peers at low-performing schools. Laboratory school students scored 24 percent of a standard deviation higher in 5<sup>th</sup> grade science than comparable peers at low-performing schools. Conversely, laboratory school students scored nearly 18 percent of a standard deviation lower in 8<sup>th</sup> grade science than comparable peers at low-performing schools. Please see Appendix Table A10 for counts of the number of laboratory school students contributing to each of these models.

As shown in the remainder of Table 4, these test score results differ across laboratory schools. Three laboratory schools—the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and Niner University Elementary (UNCC)—had positive and statistically significant results across all eligible analyses. For example, in the 2022-23 school year, students at Niner University Elementary scored significantly higher than comparable peers in low-performing schools on the DIBELS early literacy assessment and on EOG exams in elementary grades math and reading. Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork had positive results in elementary grades math and 5<sup>th</sup> grade science. Two laboratory schools—Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and The Catamount School (WCU)—had mixed achievement results. For instance, relative to comparable peers in low-performing schools, The Catamount School had positive results in middle grades reading and negative results in 8<sup>th</sup> science in 2022-23. Finally, there were negative results for the Appalachian Academy at Elkin in elementary grades math and negative results for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in elementary grades math and reading, middle grades reading, and 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade science.

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<sup>16</sup> DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and is a statewide early grades literacy assessment taken by students in grades K-3 in North Carolina.

<sup>17</sup> When the outcome variable is the DIBELS composite score the prior-year test score measure is also from DIBELS; when the outcome is an EOG test score (math, reading, or science), the prior-year test measures are from EOG math and reading exams.

<sup>18</sup> These regions are the eight educational regions as determined by the North Carolina General Assembly. Please see <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/textbook/adopted/sbe-districts/download> for more information.

<sup>19</sup> Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Appalachian Academy at Elkin, the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH) assessed K-3 students with DIBELS in 2022-23. Results are not reported for the Carolina Community Academy because they only served kindergarten students in 2022-23, meaning there was no prior score for those students to control for in analyses.

When considering these 2022-23 test score results within the broader, long-term context of the laboratory schools evaluation, it is important to note the following: (1) 2022-23 was the second year in a row in which the ECU Community School had positive and significant test score results in multiple analyses; (2) the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) performed very well in its initial year of operation (2022-23), which is often a time when laboratory schools are still developing the knowledge, structures, and practices that enable their success; and (3) after having negative test score results in 2021-22, the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork had multiple positive results in 2022-23.

*Table 4: Test Score Results--Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools*

	DIBELS	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science
Laboratory Schools	0.055* (0.023)	-0.013 (0.067)	0.021 (0.047)	0.007 (0.032)	0.021 (0.1.07)	0.241* (0.107)	-0.178** (0.065)
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	0.028 (0.018)	0.174** (0.021)	0.020 (0.013)	---	---	0.252** (0.030)	---
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	-0.008 (0.044)	-0.261** (0.080)	-0.033 (0.039)	---	---	---	---
ECU Community School	0.114** (0.032)	0.071* (0.029)	0.263** (0.029)	---	---	0.325** (0.055)	---
Aggie Academy	---	0.136** (0.037)	0.059* (0.026)	---	---	0.467** (0.052)	---
Niner University Elementary	0.092** (0.020)	0.085** (0.028)	0.263** (0.016)	---	---	---	---
Carolina Community Academy	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	---	-0.120** (0.027)	0.023 (0.016)	---	---	0.396** (0.038)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	---	-0.193** (0.043)	-0.277** (0.030)	-0.021 (0.030)	-0.113** (0.027)	-0.344** (0.057)	-0.229* (0.096)
The Catamount School	---	---	---	0.054 (0.036)	0.219** (0.034)	---	-0.121+ (0.066)
Observation Count	39,416	27,123	27,133	46,026	44,624	13,501	17,157

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the test scores of laboratory school students versus comparable 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.

### **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 educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school. This section includes educator preparation program performance data for the seven UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools in 2023-24.

### *Integrating Laboratory Schools into Educator Preparation*

All UNC System institutions operating a laboratory school in 2023-24 integrated pre-service teachers into their schools. This integration happened in two primary ways: (1) candidates in methods and practicum courses conducted observations, diagnostics, and assessments; provided individual tutoring and small-group instruction; and assisted with instructional interventions and (2) senior-year pre-service teachers had clinical experiences as either interns (intern I) or student teachers (intern II). In intern I experiences, pre-service teachers spend one or two days per week shadowing, observing, or supporting a laboratory school teacher over a semester. During student teaching, pre-service candidates spend every day of the week, over a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction.

Table 5 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 2023-24.<sup>20</sup> Appalachian State placed 41 candidates in early field experiences, 22 candidates in intern I experiences, eight candidates in full-time student teaching experiences, and one candidate in a pre-service school leader internship at Middle Fork Academy. At the Elkin Academy, Appalachian State placed 23 candidates in early field experiences, one candidate in an intern I experience, and four candidates in full-time student teaching experiences. ECU placed 161 candidates in early-field experiences, two candidates in intern I experiences, and three candidates in full-time student teaching experiences at the ECU Community School. NCA&T placed 118 candidates in early field experiences at Aggie Academy. UNCC placed 49 candidates in early field experiences, one candidate in an intern I experience, one candidate in a full-time student teaching experience, and one candidate in a pre-service school leader internship at Niner University Elementary. UNCCH placed two candidates in intern I experiences and two candidates in full-time student teaching experiences at Carolina Community Academy. UNCW placed 42 candidates in early field experiences, 2 candidates in intern I experiences, and one candidate in a pre-service school leader internship at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Finally, WCU placed 83 candidates in early field experiences, eight candidates in intern I experiences, and three candidates in full-time student teaching at The Catamount School.

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<sup>20</sup> Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2023-24. Appalachian State placed one psychology intern and one social work intern at the Academy at Middle Fork. Appalachian State placed one social work intern and one communications intern at the Academy at Elkin. ECU placed three counseling interns, one social work intern, six speech/language interns, and three occupational therapy interns at the ECU Community School. NCA&T placed one adult education intern at Aggie Academy. UNCC placed three counseling interns at Niner University Elementary. UNCCH placed one counseling intern, four public health interns, and one nursing intern at Carolina Community Academy. WCU placed two counseling interns, three psychology interns, and 33 nursing interns at The Catamount School.

*Table 5: Clinical Experiences in Laboratory Schools for Educator Preparation Program Candidates*

Program/Licensure Areas	Early Field Experiences	Intern I	Intern II (Full-time student teaching)
<i>Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)</i>			
Birth-Kindergarten	1	0	0
Elementary Education	19	21	6
Middle Grades Education	5	0	0
Special Education	2	0	0
History/Social Studies Education	1	0	0
Math Education	1	0	0
Art/Music Education	9	1	1
Health and PE	2	0	1
Family and Consumer Sciences	1	0	0
Pre-Service School Leader Internship	0	0	1
<i>Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State)</i>			
Elementary Education	10	0	4
Middle Grades Education	2	0	0
Special Education	1	1	0
History/Social Studies Education	2	0	0
Math Education	1	0	0
Health and PE	3	0	0
Art/Music Education	4	0	0
<i>ECU Community School</i>			
Birth-Kindergarten	5	1	1
Elementary Education	0	1	0
Special Education	0	0	2
Math Practicum	6	---	---
Reading Practicum	150	---	---
<i>Aggie Academy (NCA&amp;T)</i>			
Elementary Education	118	0	0
<i>Niner University Elementary (UNCC)</i>			
Elementary Education	49	1	1
Pre-Service School Leader Internship	0	0	1
<i>Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH)</i>			
Elementary Education	0	2	2
<i>D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)</i>			
Isaac Bear Early College	14	0	0
Elementary Education	28	2	0
Pre-Service School Leader Internship	0	0	1
<i>The Catamount School (WCU)</i>			
Middle Grades Education	7	2	2
Inclusive Education	46	1	1
Health and PE	30	5	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 2023-24. These data are displayed by institution and program area (e.g. elementary education, special education).*

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

- Laboratory school curriculum directors are typically COE faculty based at the laboratory school who serve as liaisons between the COE and the laboratory school on curricular and instructional supports.
- Teachers or co-teachers in core content subjects.
- Faculty-in-residence who serve the laboratory school two to three days per week. Typically, they must have a focus for their residency and some COEs require interested faculty to apply for the position. Proposed work must align with the laboratory school model.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on-site at the laboratory school.
- Providing professional development supports for laboratory school staff.

#### *Educator Preparation Program Performance Data*

Table 6 displays the required reporting elements specified in the enabling laboratory school legislation for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school. These data come from the Educator Preparation Program report cards and are available on the NCDPI website.<sup>21</sup> The data displayed in Table 6 are for traditional programs and are for the most recent three years/cohorts, as available.

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<sup>21</sup> [https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/EPPDashboardHome\\_17084645192250/EPPDashboardHome?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y](https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/EPPDashboardHome_17084645192250/EPPDashboardHome?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y)

**Table 6: Educator Preparation Program Performance Data**

Reporting Elements	ASU	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCW	WCU
Mean SAT of Admitted Students	1142	1111	1028	1140	1243	1172	1103
Mean ACT of Admitted Students	22.6	21.9	19.4	22.4	28.4	23.8	21.9
Mean GPA of Admitted Students	3.60	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.50
Percent Passing Praxis II Exams	81	85	76	85	96	87	82
Percent Converting Initial Teaching Licenses	62	65	40	55	46	54	60
Percent Employed in NC Within One Year of Program Completion	64	74	58	76	65	68	64
Standard 1 (Leadership): % Proficient or Above	97	97	99	97	98	97	96
Standard 2 (Classroom Environment): % Proficient or Above	97	97	99	96	98	97	96
Standard 3 (Content Knowledge): % Proficient or Above	97	96	99	96	97	97	95
Standard 4 (Facilitating Student Learning): % Proficient or Above	96	95	96	93	96	97	94
Standard 5 (Reflecting on Practice): % Proficient or Above	96	95	95	93	96	96	94
EVAAS: % Meets Expected Growth	73	72	61	74	79	75	74
EVAAS: % Exceeds Expected Growth	8	10	19	8	11	7	7
Graduate Survey: % ‘Well’ or ‘Very Well’ Prepared	76	77	88	75	74	68	77
Employer Survey: % Comparable to or More Effective Than Others	94	93	96	95	94	94	93

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

### **Best Practices Resulting from Laboratory School Operations**

Throughout their existence, laboratory schools have been united by several core practices/features. This section briefly discusses those core features and then highlights the efforts of laboratory schools to improve and innovate during the 2023-24 school year.

#### *Promising Core Practices/Features of Laboratory Schools*

Over time, three core features of laboratory schools particularly stand out: (1) providing physically, socially, and emotionally safe environments for students; (2) providing a balanced curriculum with many opportunities for enrichment activities; and (3) promoting meaningful engagement between the COE and the laboratory school.

Regarding the school environment, 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, lack of access to transportation, food insecurity, and unstable housing. In response, laboratory schools emphasize creating positive school environments and building relationships with students and families. The focus on these objectives is clearly demonstrated by laboratory schools’ efforts to address basic needs and create systems of instruction and behavioral supports that foster positive school cultures. For example, laboratory schools (1) provide health, social work, and counseling services; (2) help students and families meet basic subsistence needs; (3) educate staff on the effects of trauma and adverse childhood

experiences; and (4) use positive behavioral interventions and supports and restorative practices to emphasize individual and community relationships.

Laboratory schools also 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. In doing so, laboratory schools 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. Furthermore, 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.

Finally, laboratory schools provide opportunities for meaningful engagement that benefits both the COE and the laboratory school. Laboratory schools directly expose COEs to the challenges that North Carolina public schools face, particularly in teaching low-performing student populations. The partnership between the laboratory school and the COE allows in-service teachers and staff to access COE resources and 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). Over time, COEs have refined how COE faculty and pre-service candidates engage with laboratory schools. Specifically, COEs have increasingly focused on using early field experiences (e.g. methods and practicum courses) as a primary vehicle for engaging pre-service candidates in laboratory schools. 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.

#### *Improvement Efforts in the 2023-24 School Year*

In order to increase proficiency rates at laboratory schools, the UNC Board of Governors charged each institution with developing an improvement plan aimed at improving accountability outcomes, namely proficiency rates, in academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25. Aided by UNC System Office staff, laboratory schools began this work immediately following the November 2023 presentation of the annual evaluation. In particular, laboratory schools created actionable plans anchored to micro-goals and short-term goals that could be leveraged to build strategies for long-term achievement. In doing so, each laboratory school developed a logic model that described the problem to address and proposed an intervention for doing so, as well as defined relevant inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Interventions were implemented in January 2024 and laboratory schools tracked data throughout the Spring 2024 semester to evaluate the effectiveness of their intervention(s). From afterschool programs with embedded high-dose tutoring to faculty course buyouts supporting co-teaching and co-planning in classrooms, laboratory schools evaluated their interventions in real-time. Ultimately, laboratory schools’ individualized data informed the goal and the goal informed the strategic approach taken. Figure 1 displays a set of principles for school success/improvement that guided the laboratory school work.

Figure 1: Guiding Principles for Laboratory School Success



More specifically, to promote school improvement, laboratory schools, UNC System COEs, and the UNC System Office intentionally focused on the following practices in the 2023-24 year:

- *Data-driven decision making* which included (a) regularly analyzing data from multiple sources to track student progress and identify areas for intervention and (b) having frequent meetings among teachers and administrators to review student data and instructional strategies and make adjustments as warranted.
- *Instructional coaching and walkthroughs* which included (a) regular walkthroughs in classrooms with a focus on instructional practices and student learning; (b) the provision of feedback and coaching aligned with specific goals to guide teacher improvement; and (c) the provision of professional learning sessions to further teacher learning and skill development.
- *Collaborative leadership* which included (a) school leaders working with COE faculty members, university partners and external consultants to shape instructional strategies and curricula and (b) regular meetings between school leaders, teachers, and external groups (as needed) to ensure that school improvement efforts align with larger organizational goals.
- *Curriculum development and flexibility* which included (a) adapting curriculum content and pacing based on teacher input and data from classrooms and (b) integrating social-emotional learning and enrichment into curriculum/instruction to engage students.
- *Progress reporting and accountability* which included (a) the creation of action plans and the consistent tracking and reviewing of whether action items are completed and (b) the regular use of progress monitoring tools, coupled with feedback, to hold teachers accountable and to ensure that teacher efforts are aligned with school-wide improvement goals.



- *Community and external partnerships* which included (a) frequent engagement with university and external partners who could provide additional support and resources for instructional and leadership development and (b) the provision of after school and tutoring programs staffed by university students or other volunteers.

### **Other Information the BOG Subcommittee Considers Appropriate**

Commensurate with the innovative scope, vision, and commitments of laboratory schools, it is important to understand laboratory school impacts on a broader range of outcomes. To provide further information that the BOG Subcommittee considers appropriate, this section includes findings from rigorous analyses of student-level attendance and disciplinary data from the 2022-23 school year—i.e., the most recent year that student level data are available. These data are important indicators of student engagement with school. To the extent that laboratory schools are improving student engagement, that may suggest that other outcomes, such as student learning, are also improving. This section also includes findings from the 2024 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Educators’ perceptions of their working conditions are an important indicator of school leadership quality, teacher retention, and student learning. Please see Appendix B for descriptive data on laboratory school student attendance relative to other students in the host district, Appendix C for descriptive data on laboratory school disciplinary incidents relative to other students in the host district, and Appendix D for descriptive data on working conditions at laboratory schools relative to other schools in the host district.

Table 7 presents results from rigorous analyses focused on student engagement outcomes—i.e., the percent of school days attended in the 2022-23 year and whether a respective student was suspended during the 2022-23 year.<sup>22</sup> For these analyses, laboratory school students are compared to peers attending low-performing schools.<sup>23</sup> Attendance and suspension analyses control for the same set of student demographic, student program participation (e.g. economic disadvantage), and school covariates as in the test score analyses. Attendance models control for prior-year attendance rates; suspension models control for whether the student was suspended in the prior year. Preferred models compare attendance and suspension outcomes for laboratory school students to other students attending a low-performing school in the same region.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding student attendance, the middle column of Table 7 indicates that there are no significant differences in attendance rates for laboratory school students (overall) versus comparable peers in low-performing schools. These attendance results differ across laboratory schools. Specifically, four laboratory schools—the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—have positive student attendance results. For example, in the 2022-23 school year, students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy attended 1.7 percent more school days than comparable peers at a low-performing school. This result is equivalent to approximately three more days of school attended across a 180-day school year. Importantly, the ECU Community School also had positive and significant attendance results during the 2021-22 school year. Conversely, students at three laboratory schools—Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and

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<sup>22</sup> Appendix Table B2 presents counts of the number of laboratory school students contributing to the student attendance models; Appendix Table C2 presents counts of the number of laboratory school students contributing to the student suspension models.

<sup>23</sup> As with the student achievement analyses, low-performing schools are identified as those designated as low-performing in both the 2018-19 and 2021-22 academic years.

<sup>24</sup> These analyses are limited to students enrolled in their respective school (laboratory school or comparison school) for the full-year. Results are similar when omitting this sample restriction.

The Catamount School (WCU)—had significantly lower attendance rates than comparable peers at low-performing schools.

The right column of Table 7 shows that students at laboratory schools (overall) were five percentage points less likely to be suspended during the 2022-23 school year than comparable peers at low-performing schools. To put this result into perspective, approximately 12 percent of K-8 students in North Carolina were suspended during the 2022-23 year. Results by laboratory school show that students at six schools were significantly less likely to be suspended during the 2022-23 year—Appalachian Academy at Elkin, the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU). Students at the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary, and Moss Street Partnership school were also significantly less likely to be suspended during the 2021-22 school year. Students at one laboratory school—D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—were significantly more likely to be suspended during the 2022-23 year than comparable peers at low-performing schools.

*Table 7: Laboratory School Student Attendance and Discipline Results*

	<i>Percent Days Attended</i>	<i>Ever Suspended During the School Year</i>
Laboratory Schools	0.428 (0.395)	-0.051** (0.019)
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	-0.597** (0.112)	-0.009 (0.007)
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	-0.361 (0.254)	-0.102** (0.019)
ECU Community School	2.344** (0.210)	-0.116** (0.017)
Aggie Academy	1.393** (0.184)	-0.068** (0.013)
Niner University Elementary	-0.935** (0.133)	-0.118** (0.009)
Carolina Community Academy	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	0.507** (0.141)	-0.051** (0.009)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	1.700** (0.476)	0.030* (0.013)
The Catamount School	-1.119** (0.310)	-0.131** (0.019)
Observations	107,254	115,216

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

This report includes results from regression analyses comparing the working conditions of laboratory schools in 2023-24 with the working conditions of low-performing schools.<sup>25</sup> Data for these analyses come

<sup>25</sup> For these analyses, low-performing schools are defined as those that were designated as low-performing in both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years.

from the 2024 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey<sup>26</sup> and the outcome measures are six key domains from that survey: positive school climate<sup>27</sup>, school leadership, student conduct, community and family support, professional learning, and equity.<sup>28</sup> Regression models control for select school covariates—i.e., school level, the percentage of students of color and low-income students, and an indicator for whether the school is in an urban environment—and make comparisons to low-performing schools in the same region as the laboratory school.

Relative to low-performing schools, the top row of Table 8 indicates that laboratory schools (overall) have more positive working conditions regarding professional learning for educators. This finding may reflect the partnerships between laboratory schools and COEs that facilitate opportunities to connect university faculty and K-12 teachers to further professional learning. There are no statistically significant differences between laboratory schools and low-performing schools for the other five working conditions measures. Table 8 also shows that there are meaningful differences in working conditions measures, both across and within laboratory schools. Three laboratory schools only have positive results—the ECU Community School has positive results for all six working conditions measures while Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH) and The Catamount School (WCU) have positive results for five working conditions measures, respectively. Several other laboratory schools—e.g. Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and Appalachian Academy at Elkin—have predominantly positive results but also have at least one negative and significant finding. For instance, Niner University Elementary has positive results for Positive School Climate, Student Conduct, and Community and Family Support but a negative result for Equity. Finally, two laboratory schools—Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—had predominantly negative working conditions results in 2023-24. Even still, both these laboratory schools had positive findings for the Professional Learning measure.

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<sup>26</sup> This report includes teachers' responses to the 2024 North Carolina TWC survey and excludes responses from other school personnel (e.g. counselors, principals).

<sup>27</sup> This domain is called 'Retention' on the 2024 TWC survey.

<sup>28</sup> These outcomes are created by averaging a given teacher's responses to each of the items in the respective section. Items are on a 1-4 scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree).

**Table 8: Laboratory School Working Conditions Versus Low-Performing Schools**

	Positive School Climate	Leadership	Student Conduct	Community & Family Support	Professional Learning	Equity
Laboratory Schools	0.060 (0.132)	-0.069 (0.111)	0.089 (0.137)	0.130 (0.095)	0.193* (0.097)	0.028 (0.095)
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	-0.297** (0.029)	-0.410** (0.034)	-0.215** (0.030)	-0.142** (0.021)	0.142** (0.025)	-0.157** (0.021)
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	0.061 (0.050)	0.160** (0.060)	-0.166** (0.057)	0.136** (0.036)	0.410** (0.042)	0.084* (0.041)
ECU Community School	0.475** (0.038)	0.254** (0.047)	0.430** (0.040)	0.269** (0.028)	0.342** (0.033)	0.333** (0.028)
Aggie Academy	0.198** (0.047)	-0.184** (0.054)	0.176** (0.049)	0.222** (0.033)	-0.227** (0.040)	0.163** (0.033)
Niner University Elementary	0.231** (0.035)	0.028 (0.039)	0.254** (0.034)	0.125** (0.023)	0.018 (0.030)	-0.089** (0.023)
Carolina Community Academy	0.531** (0.032)	0.485** (0.038)	0.664** (0.035)	0.311** (0.022)	0.003 (0.028)	0.387** (0.025)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	-0.353** (0.052)	-0.109+ (0.065)	-0.435** (0.058)	-0.008 (0.038)	0.111* (0.045)	-0.366** (0.039)
The Catamount School	0.391** (0.073)	-0.030 (0.082)	0.708** (0.068)	0.711** (0.042)	1.025** (0.056)	0.438** (0.053)
Observation Count	17,585	17,573	17,563	17,549	17,470	17,548

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the working conditions for laboratory school teachers versus teachers working in a low-performing school. +, \*, and \*\* indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory schools and low-performing schools at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

### Summary

This report used data across a three-year period (2022-23 through 2024-25) to assess the operation of UNC System laboratory schools and their impacts on K-12 students. From these analyses, there are several key findings of note.

Consistent with enabling legislation, laboratory schools continue to enroll students who previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school or who were low-performing themselves. Furthermore, relative to other schools in host districts, laboratory schools tend to enroll a much higher percentage of students of color and low-income students. Together, these data affirm that laboratory schools are serving their intended population of students and families.

Laboratory schools can have important impacts on student achievement and engagement outcomes. As such, this report analyzed data on the test scores, attendance, and disciplinary infractions of laboratory school students. Rigorous analyses of student-level data from the 2022-23 year show that laboratory school students (overall), relative to comparable peers in low-performing schools, had higher scores on the DIBELS and 5<sup>th</sup> grade science exams and lower scores on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade science exam. While there was no difference in student attendance at laboratory schools versus low-performing schools, laboratory school students were less likely to be suspended during the 2022-23 year. School level achievement data

from 2023-24 indicate that two laboratory schools exceeded expected growth, four laboratory schools met expected growth, and one laboratory school did not meet expected growth.

These student achievement, attendance, and disciplinary results differ across schools, with several laboratory schools standing out as having strongly positive outcomes. In particular, students at the ECU Community School and the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) had significantly higher test scores (across all or almost all comparisons), significantly higher school attendance rates, and were less likely to be suspended during the 2022-23 year. School level achievement data from 2023-24 show that the ECU Community School and Aggie Academy exceeded expected achievement growth (overall), with the ECU Community School being the first laboratory school to ever earn a performance grade of a 'B' (in mathematics). Conversely, outcomes at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) were more concerning, as students there scored lower on multiple tests in 2022-23 and the school did not meet expected achievement growth in the 2023-24 school year.

Data on educators and school climate indicate that UNC System COEs placed many teacher candidates into early field and practicum experiences at laboratory schools in 2023-24. This is consistent with data from prior years showing that COEs intentionally use their laboratory schools as a venue to host methods courses and to allow a larger number of teacher candidates the opportunity to engage with laboratory school students. It is important to note, however, that laboratory schools hosted 22 student teachers in the 2023-24 year. Given the small size of many laboratory schools, this represents a meaningful commitment to student teaching experiences. Analyses of the 2024 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey show that, relative to teachers in low-performing schools, teachers at laboratory schools reported more positive perceptions of professional learning opportunities. This finding may align with the partnerships between COEs and laboratory schools that allow for more meaningful professional development. School specific analyses show especially positive working conditions results at the ECU Community School, the Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH), and The Catamount School (WCU).

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

**Appendix A: Descriptive Data on Student Test Scores in 2022-23**

*Appendix Table A1: 2022-23 Test Score Data Statewide*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	112,126	538.55	52.45	47.55
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	112,895	543.33	47.47	52.53
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	113,509	547.74	54.63	45.37
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	113,359	550.67	52.75	47.25
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	115,307	552.44	51.95	48.05
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	119,857	556.34	50.57	49.43
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	112,045	547.10	41.27	58.73
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	112,844	546.95	47.07	52.93
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	113,461	546.63	46.09	53.91
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	113,330	546.30	49.51	50.49
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	115,258	546.13	51.46	48.54
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	86,218	536.42	73.45	26.55
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	113,448	251.73	36.49	63.51
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	119,759	250.71	30.78	69.22

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data from EOG exams for all non-laboratory students statewide.*

*Appendix Table A2: 2022-23 Test Score Data for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	41	532.00	80.49	19.51
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	41	535.34	78.05	21.95
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	41	543.41	73.17	26.83
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	41	537.76	85.37	14.63
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	41	536.80	87.80	12.20
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	41	543.63	63.41	36.59
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	41	246.78	63.41	36.59
<i>All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	3,786	538.05	55.23	44.77
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	3,931	542.62	50.95	49.05
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	3,924	546.46	59.89	40.11
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	3,776	546.73	44.07	55.93
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	3,931	546.57	50.06	49.94
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	3,925	545.87	50.85	49.15
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	3,921	250.92	40.68	59.32

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and for all other Winston-Salem Forsyth County students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A3: 2022-23 Test Score Data for Appalachian Academy At Elkin*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>Appalachian Academy at Elkin</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	33	534.42	66.67	33.33
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	27	535.48	92.59	7.41
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	33	540.03	78.79	21.21
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	27	535.33	100.00	0.00
<i>All Other Elkin City Schools Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	80	539.94	43.75	56.25
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	64	548.22	26.56	73.44
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	80	544.23	51.25	48.75
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	64	550.03	35.94	64.06

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for Appalachian Academy at Elkin and for all other X in the same grades.*



*Appendix Table A4: 2022-23 Test Score Data for the ECU Community School*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>ECU Community School</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	21	531.76	85.71	14.29
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	23	541.91	65.22	34.78
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	11	547.73	45.45	54.55
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	21	540.95	71.43	28.57
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	23	543.22	73.91	26.09
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	11	546.27	45.45	54.55
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	11	253.55	36.36	63.64
<i>All Other Pitt County Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	1,702	537.77	55.52	44.48
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,647	542.16	52.09	47.91
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,736	546.88	58.47	41.53
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	1,701	547.05	41.62	58.38
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,647	547.82	43.84	56.16
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,736	546.37	47.75	52.25
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	1,735	252.58	33.37	66.63

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the ECU Community School and for all other Pitt County students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A5: 2022-23 Test Score Data for Aggie Academy (NCA&T)*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>Aggie Academy</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	29	540.34	37.93	62.07
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	23	542.22	52.17	47.83
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	16	548.69	37.50	62.50
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	29	548.66	34.83	65.52
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	23	543.04	65.22	34.78
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	16	550.31	37.50	62.50
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	16	254.88	25.00	75.00
<i>All Other Guilford County Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	4,956	537.10	59.10	40.90
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	4,933	542.21	51.98	48.02
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	5,074	546.67	59.46	40.54
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	4,952	546.05	45.01	54.99
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	4,932	545.69	52.92	47.08
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	5,072	545.45	51.52	48.48
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	5,070	250.60	41.60	58.40

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for Aggie Academy (NCA&T) and for all other Guilford County students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A6: 2022-23 Test Score Data for Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>Niner University Elementary School</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	20	532.95	70.00	30.00
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	19	538.79	63.16	36.84
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	20	541.10	70.00	30.00
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	19	539.53	84.21	15.79
<i>All Other Charlotte Mecklenburg Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	10,392	538.24	53.92	46.08
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	10,706	542.91	48.46	51.54
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	10,368	547.98	38.72	61.28
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	10,697	547.43	44.82	55.18

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for Niner University Elementary School and for all other Charlotte Mecklenburg students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A7: 2022-23 Test Score Data for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>Moss Street Partnership School</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	56	531.82	78.57	21.43
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	45	536.29	73.33	26.67
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	56	540.61	83.93	16.07
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	56	538.70	82.14	17.86
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	45	536.49	93.33	6.67
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	56	538.25	75.00	25.00
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	56	246.70	51.79	48.21
<i>All Other Rockingham County Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	822	535.55	65.57	34.43
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	789	541.14	58.56	41.44
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	803	546.31	62.89	37.11
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	823	544.76	51.15	48.85
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	789	546.75	48.16	51.84
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	803	545.10	50.81	49.19
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	803	249.85	42.84	57.16

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the Moss Street Partnership School and for all other Rockingham County students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A8: 2022-23 Test Score Data for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	17	528.18	88.24	11.76
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	20	528.35	100.00	0.00
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	22	540.27	86.36	13.64
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	31	542.77	87.10	12.90
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	17	544.59	88.24	11.76
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	26	549.12	80.77	19.23
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	17	534.00	94.12	5.88
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	20	531.10	95.00	5.00
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	22	535.59	95.45	4.55
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	31	538.42	87.10	12.90
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	17	538.06	88.24	11.76
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	24	531.33	100.00	0.00
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	22	238.82	90.91	9.09
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	26	241.00	69.23	30.77
<i>All Other New Hanover County Students</i>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	1,819	539.80	46.78	53.22
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,852	545.26	38.61	61.39
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,813	549.74	44.57	55.43
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,692	552.18	44.95	55.02
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,704	553.03	47.77	52.23
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	1,929	557.42	45.10	54.90
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	1,819	548.77	34.74	65.26
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,851	549.00	37.60	62.40
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,814	549.09	35.94	64.06
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,691	549.06	35.13	64.87
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,707	548.22	42.00	58.00
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	1,333	537.97	65.34	34.66
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	1,814	254.58	26.90	73.10
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	1,929	251.94	26.91	73.09

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and for all other New Hanover County students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A9: 2022-23 Test Score Data for The Catamount School (WCU)*

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
<i>The Catamount School</i>				
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	11	553.55	45.45	54.55
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	18	548.28	50.00	50.00
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	23	558.96	39.13	60.87
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	11	547.73	36.36	63.64
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	18	543.67	66.67	33.33
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	16	534.06	93.75	6.25
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	23	250.61	21.74	78.26
Math I	7	559	0.00	100.00
<i>All Other Jackson County Students</i>				
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	271	550.14	54.98	45.02
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	262	550.92	58.02	41.98
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	258	554.82	57.75	42.25
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	271	546.16	48.34	51.66
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	261	544.81	57.47	42.53
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	222	535.82	78.83	21.17
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	257	249.59	33.85	66.15
Math I	314	547.46	50.32	49.68

*Note: For the 2022-23 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for The Catamount School and for all other Jackson County students in the same grades.*

*Appendix Table A10: Counts of Laboratory School Students Contributing to Test Score Analyses*

	DIBELS	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science
Laboratory Schools	319	330	330	111	120	141	48
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	122	80	80	0	0	41	0
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	53	27	27	0	0	0	0
ECU Community School	63	34	34	0	0	11	0
Aggie Academy	0	32	32	0	0	14	0
Niner University Elementary	81	17	17	0	0	0	0
Carolina Community Academy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moss Street Partnership School	0	98	98	0	0	53	0
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	0	42	42	69	71	22	25
The Catamount School	0	0	0	42	49	0	23

*Note: This table displays the unique count of laboratory school students contributing to test scores estimates in our regression models.*

**Appendix B: Descriptive Data on Student Attendance in 2022-23**

*Appendix Table B1: Attendance Data for Laboratory Schools in 2022-23*

<b>School</b>	<b>Percent Days Attended</b>
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	91.25
Winston-Salem Forsyth County Students (Grades K-5)	92.27
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	94.41
Elkin City Schools Students (Grades 2-4)	94.79
ECU Community School	94.42
Pitt County Students (Grades K-5)	93.73
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	94.58
Guilford County Students (Grades 3-5)	92.79
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	92.76
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Students (Grades K-4)	93.07
Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH)	93.31
Person County Students (Grade K)	92.41
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)	90.93
Rockingham County Students (Grades K-5)	91.97
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	91.54
New Hanover County School Students (Grades K-8)	93.05
The Catamount School (WCU)	88.84
Jackson County School Students (Grades 6-8)	92.03

Note: This table displays descriptive data on school attendance rates in the 2022-23 academic year for each UNC System laboratory school and for other students in the same grade levels in the host school district. The sample is limited to students enrolled in the respective laboratory school/host district for the full academic year.



*Appendix Table B2: Counts of Laboratory School Students Contributing to Attendance Analyses*

	Student Attendance Analyses
Laboratory Schools	1014
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	203
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	80
ECU Community School	107
Aggie Academy	49
Niner University Elementary	95
Carolina Community Academy	0
Moss Street Partnership School	261
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	169
The Catamount School	50

*Note: This table displays the unique count of laboratory school students contributing to student attendance estimates in our regression models.*

**Appendix C: Descriptive Data on Student Exclusionary Discipline in 2022-23**

*Appendix Table C1: Discipline Data for Laboratory Schools in 2022-23*

School	Suspended	Out-of-School Suspended
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	6.12	4.90
Winston-Salem Forsyth County Students (Grades K-5)	5.25	3.86
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	0.00	0.00
Elkin City Schools Students (Grades 2-4)	2.12	0.53
ECU Community School	5.13	5.13
Pitt County Students (Grades K-5)	14.91	9.50
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	3.33	3.33
Guilford County Students (Grades 3-5)	4.66	3.29
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	0.00	0.00
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Students (Grades K-4)	2.33	1.39
Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH)	0.00	0.00
Person County Students (Grade K)	4.55	2.27
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)	7.89	6.91
Rockingham County Students (Grades K-5)	8.70	4.65
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	26.56	23.44
New Hanover County School Students (Grades K-8)	8.01	4.44
The Catamount School (WCU)	26.92	25.00
Jackson County School Students (Grades 6-8)	16.44	11.14

Note: This table displays descriptive data on whether students were suspended (overall) or received an out-of-school suspension during the 2022-23 academic year. These data are for each UNC System laboratory school and for other students in the same grade levels in the host school district. The sample is limited to students enrolled in their respective schools for the full academic year.

*Appendix Table C2: Counts of Laboratory School Students Contributing to Student Suspension Analyses*

	Student Suspension Analyses
Laboratory Schools	1020
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	203
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	80
ECU Community School	107
Aggie Academy	51
Niner University Elementary	96
Carolina Community Academy	0
Moss Street Partnership School	264
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	169
The Catamount School	50

*Note: This table displays the unique count of laboratory school students contributing to student suspension estimates in our regression models.*

**Appendix D: Descriptive Data on Teacher Working Conditions in 2023-24**

	Positive School Climate	Leadership	Student Conduct	Community & Family Support	Professional Learning	Equity
Laboratory Schools	3.09	2.99	2.99	3.24	3.04	3.12
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	2.73	2.65	2.69	2.98	2.96	2.94
Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools	3.21	3.17	2.93	3.18	2.94	3.09
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	3.35	3.38	2.90	3.33	3.27	3.21
Elkin City Schools	3.32	3.21	3.15	3.42	2.89	3.21
ECU Community School	3.47	3.37	3.38	3.44	3.27	3.48
Pitt County Schools	3.20	3.21	3.02	3.22	3.03	3.14
Aggie Academy	3.21	2.87	3.06	3.38	2.64	3.29
Guilford County Schools	3.11	3.07	2.90	3.18	2.86	3.11
Niner University Elementary	3.15	3.03	3.10	3.20	2.85	3.00
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	3.13	3.11	2.92	3.20	2.93	3.11
Carolina Community Academy	3.59	3.58	3.60	3.47	2.93	3.55
Person County Schools	3.32	3.28	3.08	3.23	2.95	3.20
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	2.56	2.85	2.37	3.05	2.92	2.69
New Hanover County Schools	3.12	2.99	2.81	3.15	2.76	3.01
The Catamount School	3.58	3.10	3.65	3.70	3.85	3.39
Jackson County Schools	3.21	3.19	2.92	3.00	2.78	2.91

*Note: This table presents the average responses to items from the 2024 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. In particular, this table presents data from six sections of the TWC survey—Positive School Climate (Retention), School Leadership, Student Conduct, Community and Family Support, Professional Learning, and Equity. Items are on a 1-4 scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree).*



EDUCATION POLICY  
INITIATIVE *at* CAROLINA

# An Evaluation of UNC System Laboratory Schools

Presentation to the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

October 30, 2024

# Presentation at a Glance

- Background
- Strengths and Opportunities
- AY 23-24 Evaluation Report (Dr. Kevin Bastian, EPIC)
  - Enrollment
  - Achievement and Engagement Outcomes
  - Clinical Experiences
  - Teacher Working Conditions
  - Summary
- Next Steps

# Purpose and History

**§ 116-239.5** The mission of a laboratory school shall be 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. A laboratory school shall provide an opportunity for research, demonstration, student support, and expansion of the teaching experience and evaluation regarding management, teaching, and learning.

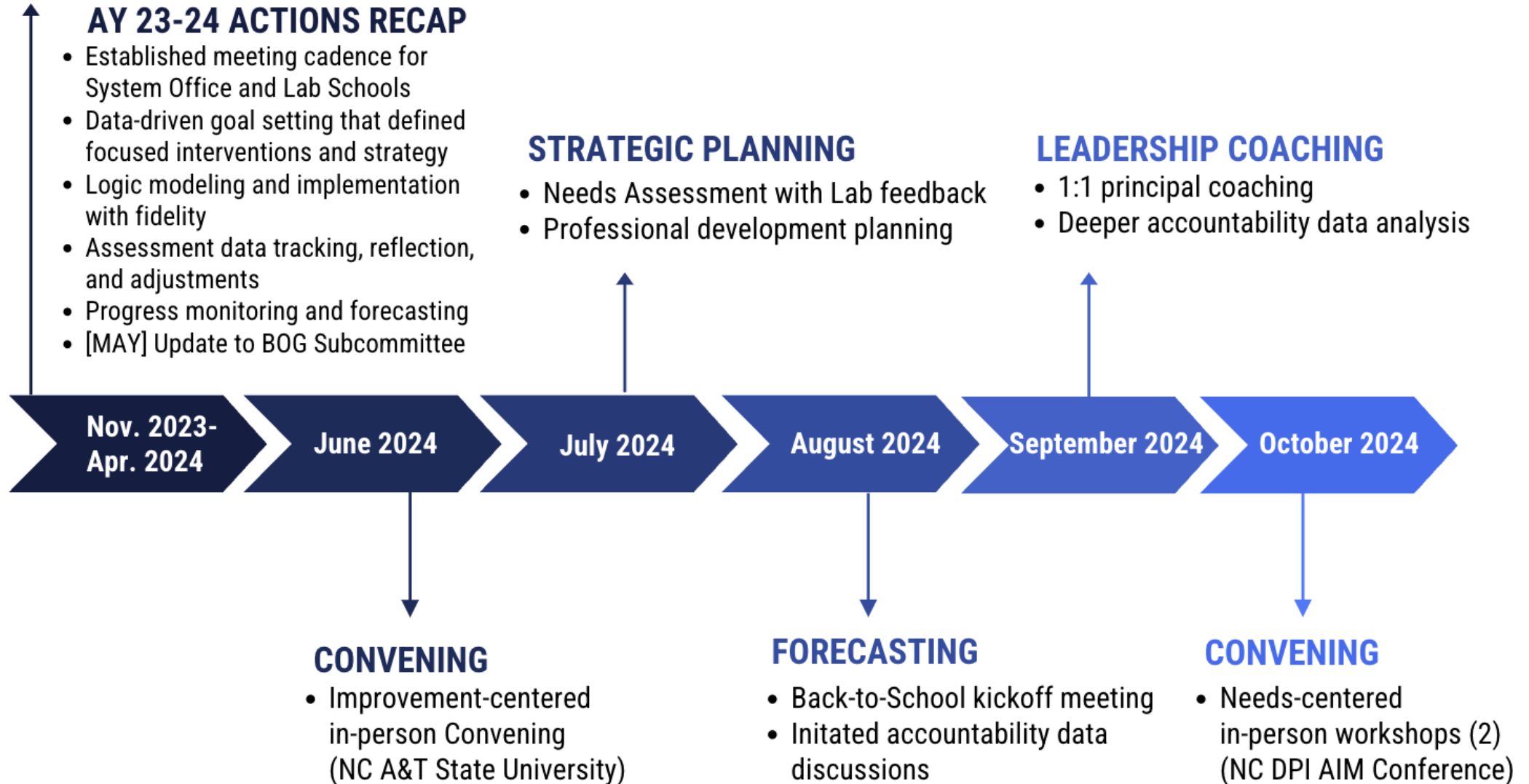
**2017:** East Carolina's Community School; Western Carolina's Catamount School

**2018:** Appalachian State's Academy at Middle Fork; UNC Wilmington's D.C. Virgo Prep Academy; UNC Greensboro's Moss Street Partnership School (reassumed in 2023)

**2020:** UNC Charlotte's Niner University Elementary

**2022:** N.C. A&T State's Aggie Academy; UNC-Chapel Hill's Carolina Community Academy; Appalachian State's Academy at Elkin (reassumed in 2024)

# Improvement Exercise Timeline (AY 23-24)





# Strengths and Opportunities

The data to come will show **strengths** in the following ways:

- Growth: 2 schools exceeded growth and 4 met growth
- 2 increases in school performance grades; first B performance grade at ECU Community School (math)
- Lab schools are significantly stronger than peer schools at keeping children in classrooms instead of missing instruction through suspensions
- Increased total number of clinical experiences by 253 preservice interns
- Teachers feel statistically significant stronger about professional learning at lab schools

# Strengths and Opportunities

The data to come will show **the need for continued focus** on the following issues:

- Continued focus on academic performance with goal of *each* school meeting or exceeding growth and increased performance scores in math and reading
- Leadership changes
  - UNCW's D.C. Virgo: College of Education dean; DCVPA executive director; DCVPA principal search underway
  - UNC Charlotte's Niner University Elementary: Principal search underway (expanded leadership model)
  - Appalachian State's Academy at Middle Fork: Principal
- Continue to increase field placements, especially deeper in academic programs
- Share data-based best practices across lab school system

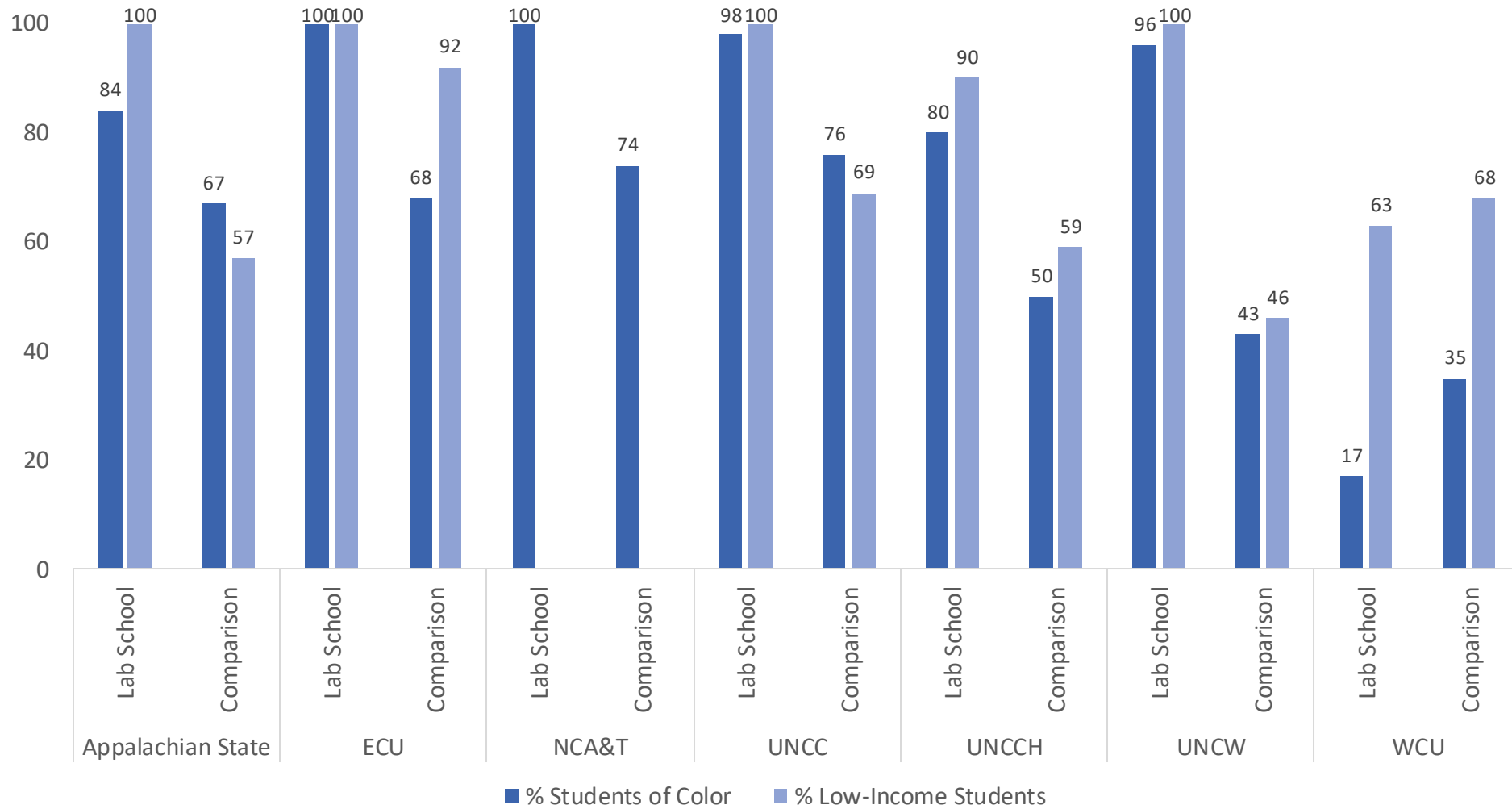
# Evaluation Background

- From 2017-18 through 2022-23, EPIC and Public Impact partnered to conduct a mixed-methods evaluation of UNC System laboratory schools. This included a report covering statutorily required reporting elements and a more comprehensive report.
- For the 2023-24 evaluation, EPIC conducted quantitative analyses on enrollment (2024-25 data), student achievement and engagement with school (2022-23 data), school achievement (2023-24 data), and school working conditions (2023-24 data).
- In response to the Board of Governors subcommittee, during the 2023-24 year, the UNC System Office worked directly with laboratory schools to develop and implement improvement plans.

# *Enrollment at Laboratory Schools*



# Laboratory School Enrollment in 2024-25



Lab School	Enrollment in 2024-25
ASU	299
ECU	108
NCA&T	85
UNCC	124
UNCCH	92
UNCW	162
WCU	64

Note: For each laboratory school, the comparison is with students in the same grade levels in the host school district.

# *Student Achievement and Engagement Outcomes*



# School Accountability Data: 2023-24 Year (Overall)

	Overall Performance Grade	Overall Performance Score	Overall Achievement Score	Overall Growth Score	Overall Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	D	40 <b>(+6)</b>	30.9 <b>(+9)</b>	74.7 (-9.6)	Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	D	49 <b>(+22)</b>	39.6 <b>(+22.9)</b>	84.9 <b>(+18.5)</b>	Met
ECU Community School	C	63 <b>(+8)</b>	57.0 <b>(+8.7)</b>	89.3 <b>(+6.1)</b>	<b>Exceeded</b>
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	C	62 <b>(+1)</b>	55.6 (-0.3)	88.6 <b>(+6.9)</b>	<b>Exceeded</b>
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	F	37 (-2)	27.0 (-1.2)	75.9 (-6.7)	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	F	20 (-2)	10.3 (-1.2)	60.8 (-4.4)	Not Met
The Catamount School (WCU)	D	54 (-2)	47.4 (-1.7)	81.5 (-0.5)	Met

**Bold indicates increased score over last year.**

# School Accountability Data: 2023-24 Year (Reading)

	Reading Performance Grade	Reading Performance Score	Reading Achievement Score	Reading Growth Score	Reading Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	F	38 <b>(+7)</b>	29.8 <b>(+6.8)</b>	69.5 <b>(+4.7)</b>	Not Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	D	42 <b>(+11)</b>	31.3 <b>(+9.6)</b>	82.5 <b>(+13.5)</b>	Met
ECU Community School	C	55 <b>(+4)</b>	48.4 <b>(+5.3)</b>	83.4 <b>(+0.1)</b>	Met
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	C	55 (-7)	48.1 (-9.3)	82.5 <b>(+4.4)</b>	Met
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	F	35 (-8)	25.4 (-7.9)	72.3 (-11.4)	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	F	25 (+2)	13.5 <b>(+1.5)</b>	70.3 <b>(+3.6)</b>	<b>Met</b>
The Catamount School (WCU)	D	54 (-8)	47.4 (-9.2)	79.2 (-2.2)	Met

**Bold indicates increased score over last year.**



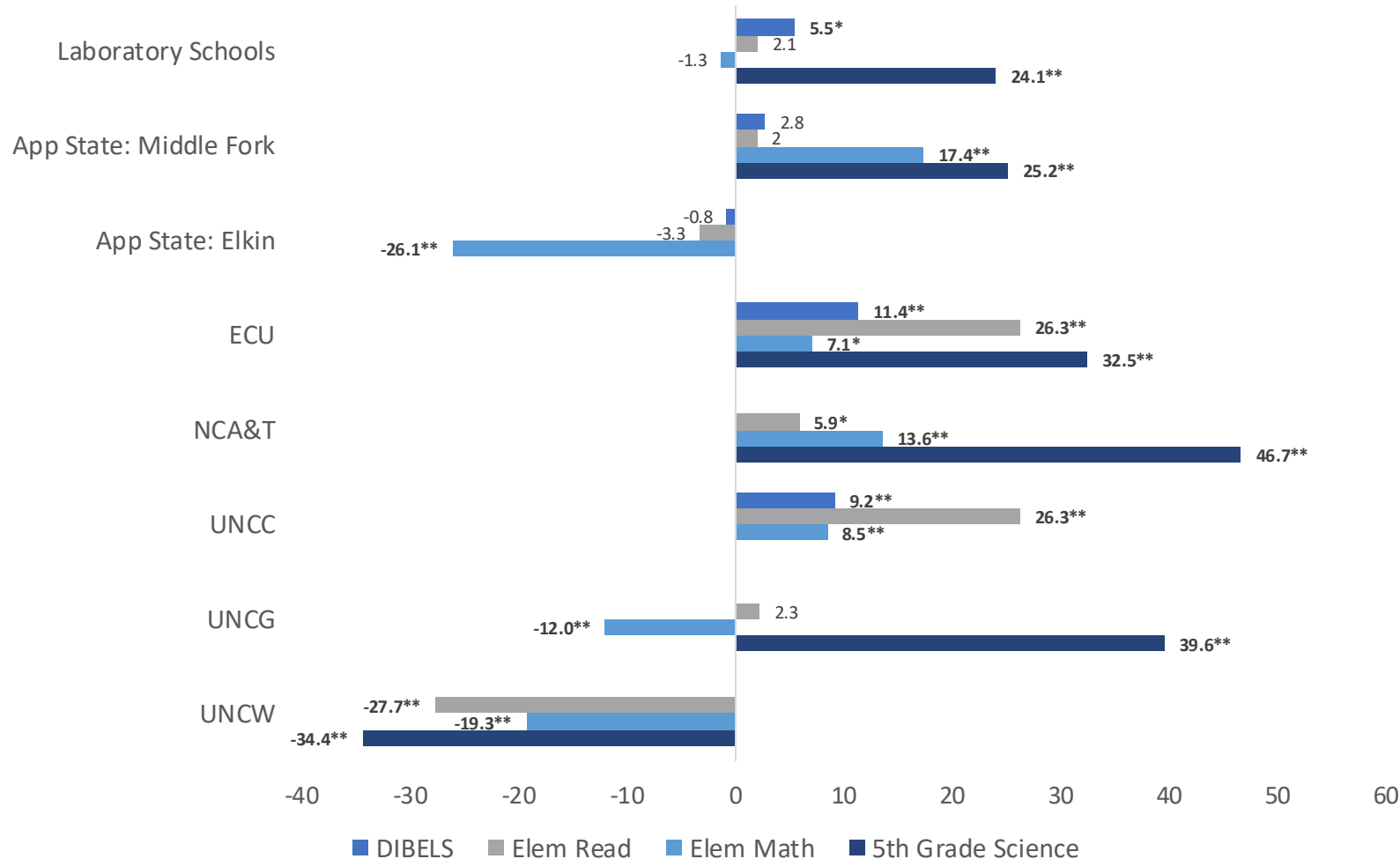
# School Accountability Data: 2023-24 Year (Math)

	Math Performance Grade	Math Performance Score	Math Achievement Score	Math Growth Score	Math Growth Status
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	<b>D</b>	41 <b>(+5)</b>	30.6 <b>(+9.3)</b>	83.8 (-10)	Met
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	<b>C</b>	55 <b>(+43)</b>	47.9 <b>(+36.2)</b>	85.2	<b>Exceeded</b>
ECU Community School	<b>B</b>	71 <b>(+12)</b>	65.6 <b>(+12.2)</b>	90.5 <b>(+10.3)</b>	<b>Exceeded</b>
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	C	68 <b>(+8)</b>	63.0 <b>(+8.6)</b>	88.8 <b>(+5.3)</b>	<b>Exceeded</b>
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	F	39 <b>(+16)</b>	28.6 <b>(+5.5)</b>	82.9	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	F	18 (-4)	7.1 (-0.4)	60.6 (-17.7)	Not Met
The Catamount School (WCU)	D	53 <b>(+3)</b>	47.4 <b>(+5.9)</b>	76.9 (-4.7)	Met

**Bold indicates increased score over last year.**

# Elementary Grades Achievement: 2022-23 Year

Percent of a Standard Deviation in Student Achievement



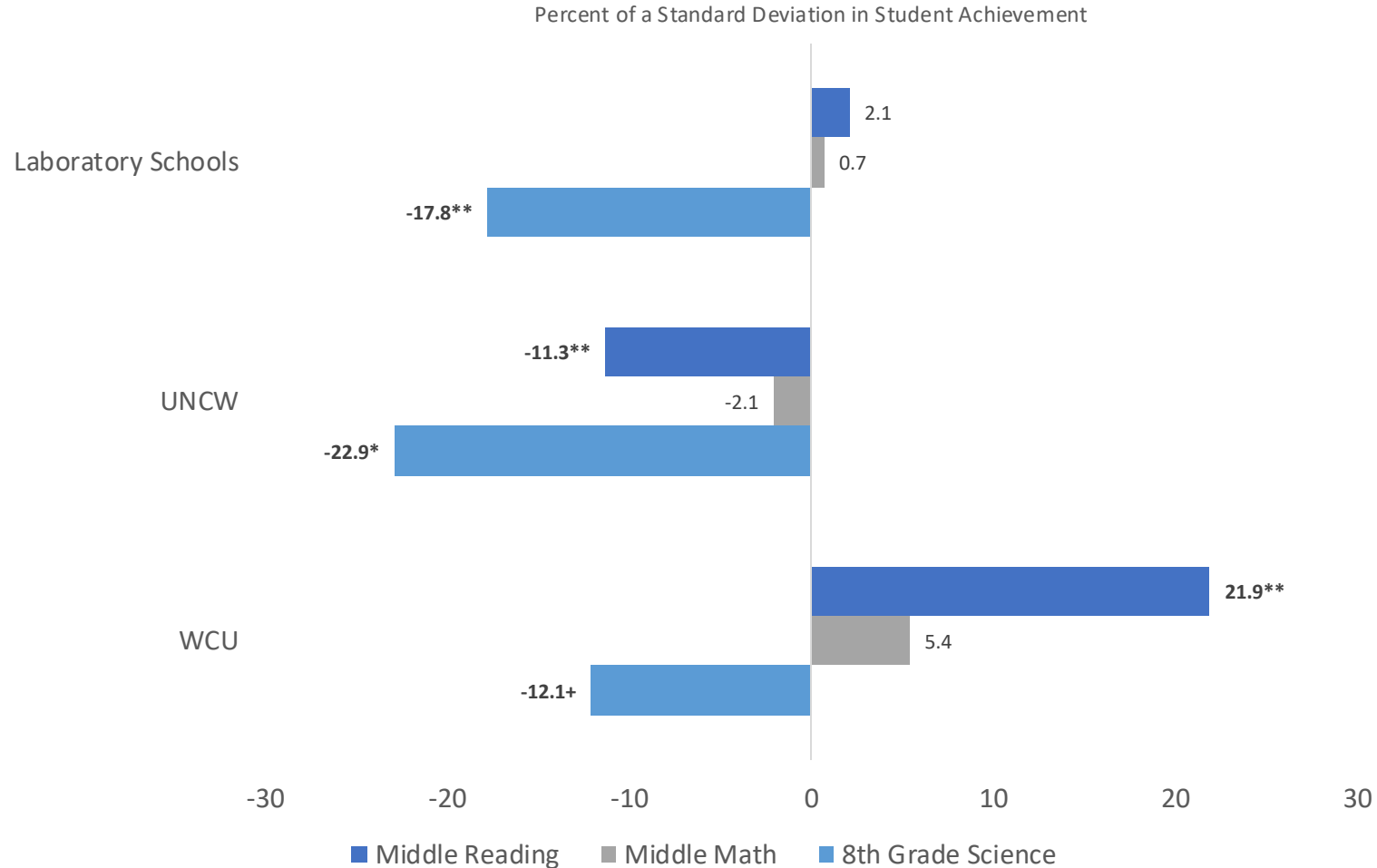
## Key Takeaways

- Models compare the test scores of lab school students in 2023 to comparable students in low-performing schools.
- Overall, lab school students scored higher on the DIBELS and 5<sup>th</sup> grade science exam.
- Results were particularly positive for App Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and Niner University Elementary (UNCC).
- Improvement needed for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW).

Note: This figure displays results from models comparing the achievement of laboratory school students to comparable students in low-performing schools.

\* and \*\* indicate statistical significance between laboratory school students and comparison students at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

# Middle Grades Achievement: 2022-23 Year

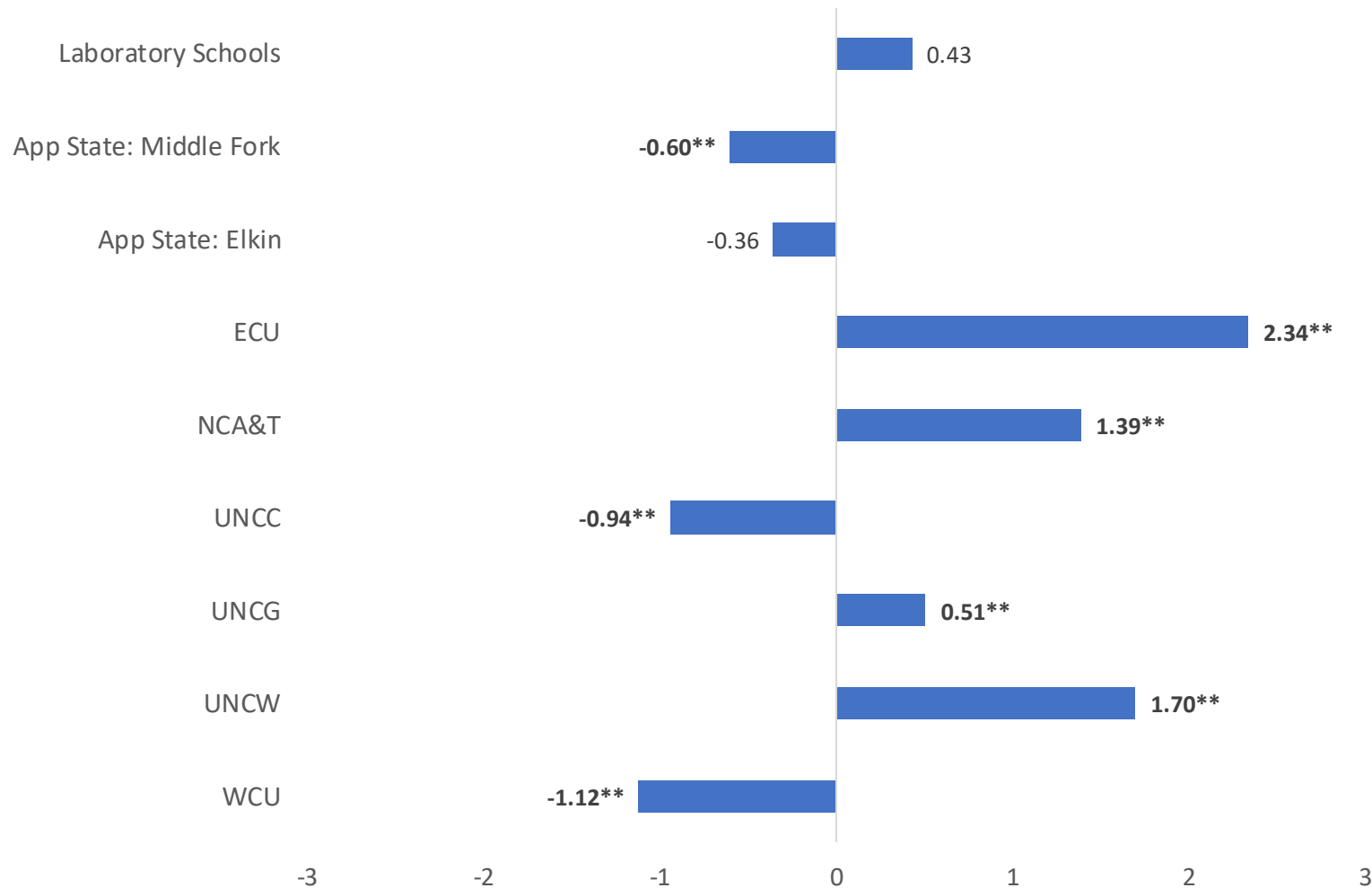


## Key Takeaways

- Models compare the test scores of lab school students in 2023 to comparable students in low-performing schools.
- Overall, lab school students scored lower on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade science exam.
- Results were positive for The Catamount School (WCU) in reading.
- Improvement needed for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW).

Note: This figure displays results from models comparing the achievement of laboratory school students to comparable students in low-performing schools.+, \* and \*\* indicate statistical significance between laboratory school students and comparison students at the 0.10, 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

# Student Attendance Results: 2022-23 Year

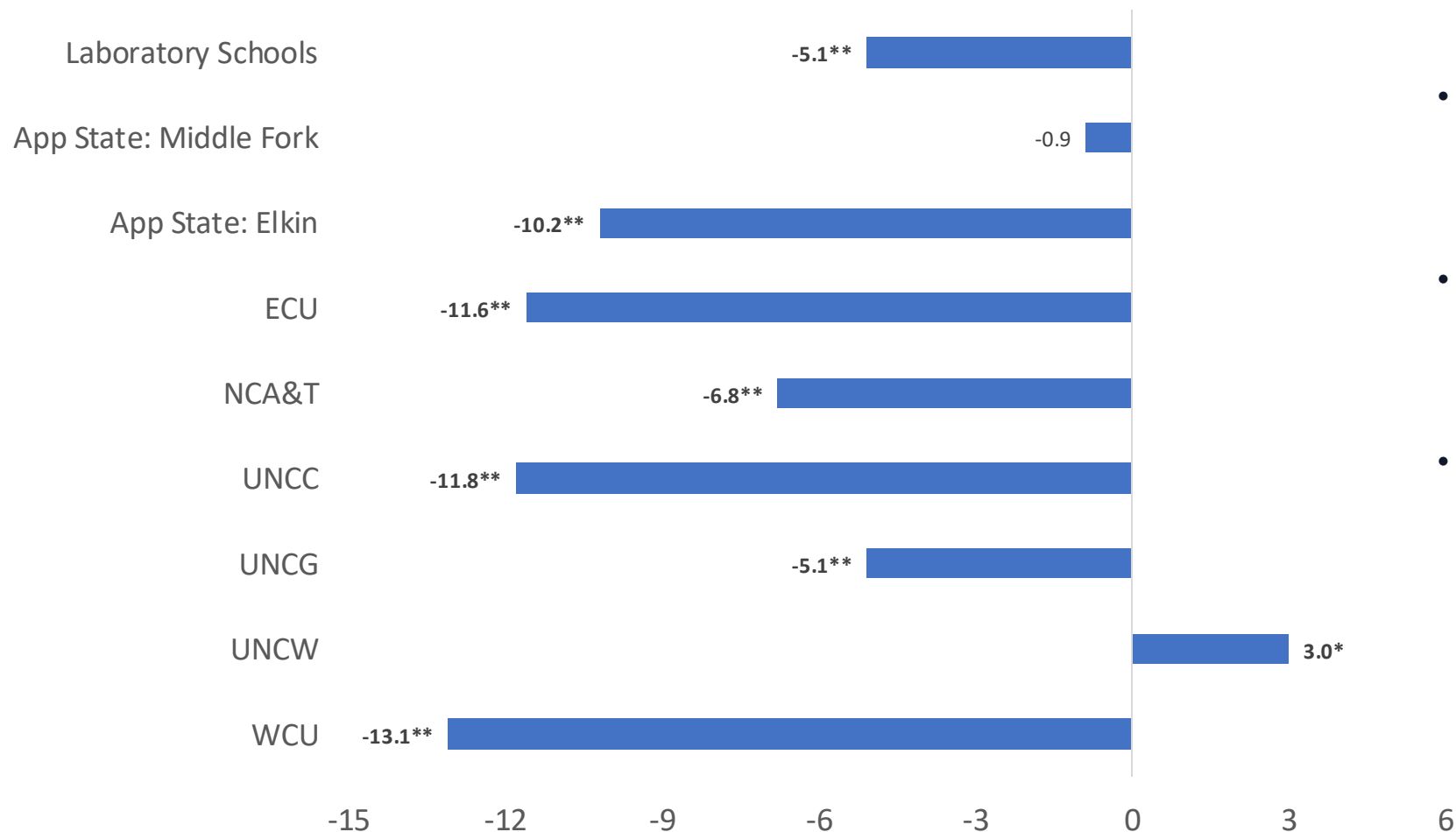


## Key Takeaways

- Models compare the percentage of school days in attendance for lab school students in 2023 versus comparable students in low-performing schools.
- Overall, no significant differences in attendance for lab schools.
- Students at the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo (UNCW) had higher attendance rates.
- To put results into perspective, attending 1% more school days is equivalent to 1.8 days of school.

Note: This figure displays results from models comparing the percentage of school days attended for laboratory school students versus comparable students in low-performing schools. \*\* indicates statistical significance between laboratory school students and comparison sample students at the 0.01 level.

# Student Suspension Results: 2022-23 Year



## Key Takeaways

- Models compare whether lab school students are suspended during the 2022-23 year relative to comparable students in low-performing schools.
- Compared to K-8 students across the state, lab school students are 5 percentage points less likely to be suspended.
- Students were less likely to be suspended at App Academy Elkin, the ECU Community School, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU).

Note: This figure displays results from models comparing the likelihood of being suspended during the school year for laboratory school students versus comparable students in low-performing schools. \* and \*\* indicate statistical significance between laboratory school students and comparison sample students at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

*Clinical Experiences at  
Laboratory Schools*



# Clinical Experiences at Laboratory Schools in 2023-24

	Early-Field and Practicum	Intern I	Intern II (Student Teaching)	School Leader Internship	Other	School Total
<b>LAB SCHOOL NETWORK TOTALS</b>	<b>517 (+238)</b>	<b>40 (-26)</b>	<b>21 (-6)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>625 (+253)</b>
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	41	22	8	1	2	<b>74</b>
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	23	1	4	0	2	<b>30</b>
ECU Community School	161	2	3	0	13	<b>179</b>
Aggie Academy (NCA&T)	118	0	0	0	0	<b>118</b>
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)	49	1	1	1	3	<b>55</b>
Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH)	0	2	2	0	6	<b>10</b>
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)	42	2	0	1	0	<b>45</b>
The Catamount School (WCU)	83	8	3	0	38	<b>132</b>

Note: This table presents counts of clinical experiences in laboratory schools in the 2023-24 school year.

Note: This is the first year data is presented for the categories of “School Leadership” and “Other,” thus comparisons are not provided in those columns.

**Key Takeaways: (1) Lab schools are valuable as placement sites for early-field experiences; (2) proportionally, meaningful numbers of student teachers in lab schools; and (3) many “other” (e.g., counseling) candidates/interns have experiences in lab schools.**

# *Working Conditions at Laboratory Schools*





# Working Conditions in Laboratory Schools in 2023-24

	Positive School Climate	School Leadership	Student Conduct	Community & Family Support	Professional Learning	Equity
Laboratory Schools	0.060	-0.069	0.089	0.130	<b>0.193*</b>	0.028
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork	-0.297**	-0.410**	-0.215**	-0.142**	0.142**	-0.157**
Appalachian Academy at Elkin	0.061	0.160**	-0.166**	0.136**	0.410**	0.084*
ECU Community School	0.475**	0.254**	0.430**	0.269**	0.342**	0.333**
Aggie Academy	0.198**	-0.184**	0.176**	0.222**	-0.227**	0.163**
Niner University Elementary	0.231**	0.028	0.254**	0.125**	0.018	-0.089**
Carolina Community Academy	0.531**	0.485**	0.664**	0.311**	0.003	0.387**
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	-0.353**	-0.109+	-0.435**	-0.008	0.111*	-0.366**
The Catamount School	0.391**	-0.030	0.708**	0.711**	1.025**	0.438**

Note: This table presents results from regression models comparing working conditions in laboratory schools versus low-performing schools. +, \*, and \*\* indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory schools and low-performing schools at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

## Key Takeaways

- Models compare working conditions at lab schools in 2024 relative to low-performing schools.
- Lab schools have more positive working conditions regarding professional learning. Possibly related to partnerships with COEs.
- Particularly positive working conditions results for the ECU Community School, Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH), and The Catamount School (WCU).

# *Summary*



# Results Summary

- Laboratory schools continue to predominantly enroll low-performing students and students zoned to attend low-performing schools. They typically enroll higher percentages of students of color and low-income students.
- Results for achievement, attendance, and discipline outcomes vary across laboratory schools. The ECU Community School and Aggie Academy stand out as having especially positive results. Findings show several areas for improvement for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy.
- While UNC System institutions primarily use laboratory schools as early-field experience sites, there is a meaningful concentration of student teachers at laboratory schools.
- Laboratory school teachers reported more positive perceptions of professional learning. Working conditions results were particularly strong for the ECU Community School, Carolina Community Academy, and The Catamount School.

# Next Steps

- Continued leadership coaching twice a month per lab school on individualized and data-based needs
- Quarterly opportunities to share promising practices across the lab schools to include topical professional learning communities (PLCs) and in-person convenings
- Increased opportunities for intentional and targeted professional development
- Facilitation of stakeholder focus groups to understand strengths and challenges of current lab school structure

# Questions?