

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

H.B. 848  
Apr 9, 2025  
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH10375-NH-169

Short Title: Cleveland Cultivation of Excellence Pilot. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Scott.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE CULTIVATION OF EXCELLENCE PILOT PROGRAM IN  
CLEVELAND COUNTY SCHOOLS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by  
adding a new Part to read:

"Part 3B. Cultivation of Excellence Pilot Program.

**"§ 115C-235. Cultivation of Excellence Pilot Program.**

(a) The General Assembly finds that the purpose of the Cultivation of Excellence Pilot Program is to provide the opportunity for the Cleveland County Board of Education to design and create an innovative and strategic vision to improve student achievement and performance, along with teacher recruitment and retention. Cleveland County Schools may participate in the Cultivation of Excellence Pilot Program beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and ending following the 2030-2031 school year.

(b) Cleveland County Schools and the Cleveland County Board of Education may do the following:

- (1) Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-301(c), exercise flexibility in establishing staffing levels for kindergarten through third grade classes.
- (2) Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-295, employ individuals as teachers who do not hold a teacher license, subject to the following limitations:
  - a. All teachers who are teaching in the core subject areas of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts shall be college graduates.
  - b. No more than fifty percent (50%) of the teachers at any school may be unlicensed.
  - c. No more than twenty-five percent (25%) of all teachers employed by the Cleveland County Board of Education may be unlicensed.
  - d. All individuals employed as teachers who do not hold a teaching license shall complete preservice training, which may be offered through an educator preparation program or through Cleveland County Schools, in all of the following areas prior to beginning instruction:
    1. The identification and education of children with disabilities.
    2. Positive management of student behavior.
    3. Effective communication for defusing and de-escalating disruptive or dangerous behavior.
    4. Safe and appropriate use of seclusion and restraint.



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(3) Notwithstanding G.S. 110-85, G.S. 110-88, and any rule adopted pursuant to those statutes, employ any individual who meets the requirements for employment as a teaching assistant in a kindergarten classroom as a teacher assistant in the local school administrative unit's NC Prekindergarten (NC Pre-K) program.

(4) Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-105.25(b)(3a) and (12), transfer and approve transfers of funds for the teacher assistants allotment category and textbooks and digital resources allotment category.

(c) If the State Board determines that Cleveland County Schools has failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management or violated State or federal law at any time, the State Board shall terminate participation in the pilot and shall submit, within 30 days of the termination, a report of the basis and evidence for the termination to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

(d) The Cleveland County Board of Education shall report no later than December 15 of each year of the Pilot Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The report shall include the following:

(1) Employment information as follows:

a. The number of licensed and unlicensed teachers and use of long-term substitutes in filling vacancies for classroom teachers.

b. Recruiting data on the number of licensed and unlicensed teachers hired during the school year.

c. The number of NC Pre-K teaching assistants hired who meet the requirements for employment as a kindergarten teaching assistant.

d. Overall employee retention in each school year.

(2) Average class sizes in grades kindergarten through third grade.

(3) An explanation of how flexibility in allotment categories was used.

(4) An explanation as to how the flexibility granted by this section has contributed to student success over time, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year for comparison.

(5) Any additional recommendations for the Cultivation of Excellence Pilot Program, including additional flexibilities that may contribute to student success."

**SECTION 2.** Cleveland County Schools may submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Superintendent of Public Instruction by December 15, 2026, on initial implementation of the Cultivation of Excellence Pilot Program and any recommended legislative changes.

**SECTION 3.** It is the intent of the General Assembly to provide funding to Cleveland County Schools to implement a teacher compensation model and student behavior intervention programs for elementary and middle schools.

**SECTION 4.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Part 3B of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as enacted by this act, is repealed effective December 31, 2031.