



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

REPORT TO THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Principal Recruitment Supplement

SL 2019-247 Section 2.5

G.S.115C-285.1

Date Due: March 15, 2026
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2025-2026

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION VISION

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JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE REPORT REQUIREMENTS

SL 2019-247 Section 2.5 G.S.115C-285.1 establishes the Principal Recruitment Supplement Program which provides a qualifying principal who accepts a position as a principal in a qualifying low performing school an annual salary supplement of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000/year), paid on a monthly basis, as long as the principal is employed as the principal of that school, up to a maximum period of 36 months (See Appendix A).

The legislation requires that the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) report no later than March 15, 2021, and every year thereafter to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the Program. The report is required to include, at a minimum, the following information:

- (1) The impact of the Program on school performance, including the performance of
 - (i) schools receiving a principal under the Program and
 - (ii) schools that lost a principal due to the Program.
- (2) The number of principals participating in the Program.
- (3) The identity of schools participating in the Program.
- (4) The length and rate of retention of principals
 - (i) within the Program and
 - (ii) at specific schools within the Program.

NCDPI IMPLEMENTATION

The process for qualifying schools for the Principal Recruitment Supplement begins yearly in October after NCDPI's Office of Accountability and Testing certifies all accountability data. After the certification process and State Board of Education (SBE) approval, the Office of Accountability and Testing submits a list of the bottom 5% of schools to the Office of District and School Support Services (ODSSS) for recruitment. Recruitment is done in three phases:

Phase I	Notice of Eligibility	The first 40 superintendents of schools in the bottom 5% are notified of their eligibility. The district superintendent has to accept the invitation to participate. If accepted, they advance to Phase II.
Phase II	Participation Acceptance	In Phase II, the district receives all eligible schools categorized by those that are priority, alternative, or already participating in the supplemental program.
Phase III	Active Recruitment	In Phase III, the district superintendent/designee submits possible candidates to be vetted by the Office of Financial Business Services. Once a candidate qualifies, the district submits all information as identified in G.S.115C-285.1.

Recruitment efforts are made throughout the spring as the list of eligible schools outnumber the forty available slots. As district superintendents decline participation, the remaining districts

on the initial list are considered to ensure all available recruitment supplements are distributed. Recruitment is done on a rotating basis as long as supplements are available.

The cumulative implementation activity is recorded from year to year since the program began in 2020 (see Table 1). Participation increased steadily from 13 schools in 2020–2021 to a peak of 20 schools in 2023–2024, declined to 13 schools in 2024–2025, and then rebounded to 20 schools in 2025–2026. The current year matches the highest level of participation observed during the implementation of this initiative.

Table 1. Implementation Activity

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
# cumulative year to year participation	13	14	18	20	13	20
# of qualifying schools	110	110	137	126	120	124
# of supplements available	40	40	40	40	40	40
# of schools declining	17	16	6	0	13	22

PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT SUPPLEMENT PARTICIPATION

The full list of schools actively participating in the Principal Recruitment Supplement Program and their performance data when entering the program are located below (see Table 2). Participants are grouped according to the year they entered the program. Recipients are hired at various points throughout the year; therefore, financial data is used to monitor their employment status.

Currently, schools participating in the Principal Recruitment Supplement all serve high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. One hundred percent are Title I served schools, with percentages of economically disadvantaged students ranging from approximately 51% to 88%. Most schools serve populations in which more than 65-70% of students are economically disadvantaged, reflecting concentrated poverty. Elementary schools represent the largest group of participating schools, with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools accounting for approximately 32% of participating schools and Forsyth County Schools accounting for approximately 26%, the highest representation among districts.

The number of schools that qualify for the supplement significantly exceeds the number of available awards. As a result, schools are ranked based on their School Performance Grade

(SPG) score, with Top 40 schools representing those with the lowest SPG scores among eligible schools.

Table 2. Cumulative List of Principal Recruitment Supplement Recipients

Year Added	Status	District	School Name	SBR	GS	TISS	% EDS	SPG	SGS
2022-2023	Top 40	New Hanover County Schools	R Freeman Sch of Engineering	Southeast	PK-05	Y	88	F	Met
2023-2024	Top 40	Anson County Schools	Wadesboro Elementary	Southwest	04-05	Y	76.2	F	Not Met
2023-2024	Top 40	New Hanover County Schools	Forest Hill Global Elementary	Southeast	0K-05	Y	73.7	F	Not Met
2023-2024	Top 40	Halifax County Schools	Everetts STEM Academy	Northeast	PK-05	Y	76.1	F	Not Met
2023-2024	Top 40	CMS	Martin Luther King Jr Middle	Southwest	06-08	Y	51.4	F	Not Met
2023-2024	Top 40	CMS	University Park Creative Arts	Southwest	0K-05	Y	67.3	F	Not Met
2023-2024	Top 40	CMS	Druid Hills Academy	Southwest	PK-08	Y	64.6	F	Met
2023-2024	Top 40	WS/Forsyth County Schools	Forest Park Elementary	Piedmont Triad	PK-05	Y	74.9	F	Not Met
2023-2024	Top 40	WS/Forsyth County Schools	Hall-Woodward Elementary	Piedmont Triad	PK-05	Y	69.1	F	Not Met
2024-2025	ALT	CMS	J.M. Alexander Middle	Southwest	06-08	Y	54.5	F	Not Met
2024-2025	ALT	Vance County Schools	E.O. Young Jr. Elementary	North Central	PK-05	Y	82.8	F	Met
2024-2025	ALT	Gaston County Schools	W. P. Grier Middle	Southwest	06-08	Y	73.8	F	Not Met
2025-2026	ALT	Guilford County Schools	Southern Guilford Middle	Piedmont Triad	06-08	Y	75.9	F	Not Met
2025-2026	Top 40	WS/Forsyth County Schools	Winston Salem Preparatory Academy	Piedmont Triad	06-12	Y	81.7	F	Met
2025-2026	Top 40	WS/Forsyth County Schools	Gibson Elementary	Piedmont Triad	PK-05	Y	80.2	F	Met
2025-2026	Top 40	WS/Forsyth County Schools	Ashley Academy	Piedmont Triad	PK-05	Y	82.0	F	Not Met
2025-2026	ALT	Gaston County Schools	Lingerfeldt Elementary	Southwest	PK-05	Y	82.4	F	Not Met

2025-2026	ALT	CMS	Hidden Valley Elementary	Southwest	PK-05	Y	59.1	F	Not Met
2025-2026	ALT	CMS	South Pine Academy	Southwest	PK-05	Y	52.4	F	Not Met
2025-2026	ALT	Rockingham County Schools	J.E. Holmes Middle	Piedmont Triad	06-08	Y	66.5	F	Not Met

Note. Abbreviations are as follows: State Board Region (SBR), Grade Span (GS), Title I Served School (T1SS), Percent Economically Disadvantaged Students (% EDS), School Performance Grade (SPG), School Growth Status (SGS)

PAST COHORTS

Cohorts I (2020–2021) and II (2021–2022) collectively included 16 principals serving in eligible schools. All participating principals in both cohorts have reached the legislatively established maximum participation period of 36 months for receipt of the supplement. While their eligibility for the bonus has concluded, their experiences continue to provide valuable insights for program implementation and improvement.

At the conclusion of the legislated participation period, approximately 50% of the schools represented in both cohorts exited the low-performing designation.

One principal from Cohort I remains employed at the same school, which is no longer designated as low performing. Additionally, one school from Cohort I later requalified for the program and is currently participating as part of Cohort VI.

COHORT III: 2022-2023 PARTICIPANTS

Cohort III initially included two principals; however, the school in Nash County was closed and relocated to Edgecombe County as part of the two-district demerger. Nash County retained the principal at a school that does not meet the program’s eligibility guidelines. This shift corresponded with a sharp decline in the school’s growth status and score (see Table 3).

Table 3. 2022-2023 Principal Recruitment Supplement Recipients

Status	District	School Name	2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025	
			SPG	SGS/S	SPG	SGS/S	SPG	SGS/S
Top 40	New Hanover County Schools	R Freeman School of Engineering	F	Met/70.8	F	Met/76.5	F	Not Met/57.4

Note. Abbreviations are as follows: School Performance Grade (SPG), School Growth Status/Score (SGS/S)

COHORT IV: 2023-2024 PARTICIPANTS

The eight principals of Cohort IV were added to the program during the summer of 2023. Fifty percent of these schools exceeded growth, which, under the North Carolina Accountability Model, resulted in the removal of their low-performing designation (see Table 4).

Table 4. 2023-2024 Principal Recruitment Supplement Recipients

Status	District	School Name	2023-2024		2024-2025	
			SPG	SGS/S	SPG	SGS/S
Top 40	Anson County Schools	Wadesboro Elementary	F	Met/82.1	D	Met/76.5
Top 40	New Hanover County Schools	Forest Hill Elementary	D	Met/78.1	D	Met/73.8
Top 40	Halifax County Schools	Everetts Elementary STEM Academy	D	Exceeded/87.4	F	Met/83.1
Top 40	CMS	Martin Luther King Jr Middle	F	Met/74.7	D	Exceeded/89.8
Top 40	CMS	University Park Creative Arts	C	Exceeded/93.4	C	Exceeded/88.8
Top 40	CMS	Druid Hills Academy	D	Exceeded/93.9	C	Exceeded/95.6
Top 40	Forsyth County Schools	Forest Park Elementary	D	Met/80.1	D	Exceeded/93.9
Top 40	Forsyth County Schools	Hall-Woodward Elementary	D	Met/78.2	D	Met/82.9

Note. Abbreviations are as follows: School Performance Grade (SPG), School Growth Status/Score (SGS/S).

COHORT V: 2024-2025 PARTICIPANTS

The three principals in Cohort V were hired in the summer and fall of 2024. The 2023–2024 data are included solely as a baseline to illustrate the schools’ starting points. Although these principals are still early in their 36-month commitment, two of the three schools exceeded growth, which, under the North Carolina Accountability Model, resulted in the removal of their low-performing designation.

Table 5. 2024-2025 Principal Recruitment Supplement Recipients

Status	District	School Name	Baseline 2023-2024		2024-2025	
			SPG	SGS/S	SPG	SGS//S
ALT	CMS	J.M. Alexander Middle	F	Not Met/56.5	F	Not Met/56.7
ALT	Vance County Schools	E.O. Young Jr. Elementary	F	Met/78.6	D	Exceeded/90.0
ALT	Gaston County Schools	W. P. Grier Middle	F	Not Met/56.9	D	Exceeded/88.4

Note. Abbreviations are as follows: School Performance Grade (SPG), School Growth Status/Score (SGS/S)

COHORT VI: 2025-2026 PARTICIPANTS

Cohort VI, the most recent group participating in the Principal Recruitment Supplement, consists of eight principals, the majority of whom began their tenure on July 1, 2025. All schools in this cohort are Title I schools, primarily at the elementary level, and most did not meet growth in the most recent accountability cycle. Turnaround efforts are currently underway, and the release of the October 2026 accountability data will provide the first opportunity to assess early academic progress under their leadership. See Table 2 for additional details about the 2025–2026 cohort.

RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Recruitment efforts are tracked and recorded throughout the year. From March of 2025 to present, twenty-seven principals were vetted through the Department’s Office of School Business Services (See Table 6).

Table 6. Principal Recruitment Supplement Program Vetting

#/%	Qualification Status
14/27 (52%)	Did not qualify for principal recruitment supplement
8/27 (30%)	Qualified for principal recruitment supplement and placed at qualifying school
5/27 (18%)	Qualified for principal recruitment supplement but not placed at qualified school (did not receive bonus)
0/27 (0%)	Not enough information to qualify due to out-of-state employment
0/27 (0%)	Awaiting results from Office of School Business Services

Note. The above reference chart provides the qualification status is reported using both the number of individuals and the corresponding percentage of the total (#/%).

Of the 27 individuals reviewed, just over half (52%) did not qualify for the Principal Recruitment Supplement. Nearly one-third (30%, 8 of 27) both met the qualification criteria and were placed

at an eligible school, making them eligible to receive the bonus. An additional 18% met the qualification criteria but were not assigned to a qualifying school. Districts may requalify these individuals at any time and claim one of the 40 available supplements, provided that slots remain available.

BARRIERS TO THE PROGRAM

Many districts that were offered eligibility for the program identified the following barriers to participation:

- Limited flexibility in school selection. Under statute, an eligible school is defined as a low-performing school, as described in G.S. 115C-105.37, that ranked in the bottom five percent (5%) of all schools statewide based on the prior year's School Performance Score. For the 2024–2025 accountability year, this definition resulted in 124 eligible schools, compared to 628 low-performing traditional schools statewide. Several districts expressed frustration with the limited number of schools that met the statutory eligibility criteria.
- Perceived inequities in principal compensation. Districts also noted challenges related to inequities in local principal salary structures when some schools qualify for the supplement while other similarly situated schools do not.

TOP RECOMMENDATION SY 2025-2026

The following recommendation were proposed and approved by the SBE to maximize the program's impact:

- Expand the definition of a qualifying school to include all low performing schools as defined in G.S. 115C-105.37. This will allow:
 - Local superintendents the flexibility to consider all low-performing schools within their district instead of one or two schools in the district that fall into the lowest 5% of schools.
 - The program to serve as a complement to State statute §115C-105.39 which directs local superintendents to evaluate the current principal's performance when a school is designated as low performing. By all schools designated as low performing being eligible, the supplement could serve as a recruitment tool for superintendents deciding to recommend to the local school board the transfer, dismissal, or demotion of a current principal.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS SY 2025-2026

- Direct NCDPI to conduct a study of this program alongside all statutory requirements for low-performing districts and schools to ensure the timelines, needs, and work of public-school units align optimally.
- Remove the restriction of subsection (c)(3) in this statute so that principal supplemental pay counts toward the pension formula for purposes of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.
- Hold principals harmless from negative consequences of moving to a school under this program.
- Increase the number of years a principal can stay at an eligible school from 3 years to 4-5 years.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. LEGISLATION GOVERNING PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

Session Law 2019-247 Section 2.5

§ 115C-285.1. Principal recruitment supplement.

(a) Definitions. – The following definitions shall apply in this section:

- (1) Eligible employer. – The governing board of a local school administrative unit with an eligible school.
- (2) Eligible school. – A low-performing school, as defined in G.S. 115C-105.37, that received an overall school performance score that placed it in the bottom five percent (5%) of all schools in the State in the prior school year.
- (3) Qualifying principal. – A principal who is paid on the Exceeded Growth column of the Principal Salary Schedule.
- (4) Qualifying school. – An eligible school selected by the Department to participate in the Program.

(b) Program; Purpose. – The Department of Public Instruction shall establish the Principal Recruitment Supplement Program (Program). To the extent funds are made available the purpose of the Program shall be to provide significant, time-limited salary supplements to qualifying principals who accept employment as principals of qualifying schools.

(c) Salary Supplement. – A qualifying principal who accepts a position as a principal in a qualifying school shall receive an annual salary supplement of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000), paid on a monthly basis, as long as the principal is employed as the principal of that school, up to a maximum period of 36 months, subject to the following:

- (1) A qualifying principal who contracts with an eligible employer to receive the salary supplement shall not be excluded in future years from contracting with the same eligible employer or a different eligible employer for another salary supplement, subject to the requirements of this section.
- (2) A qualifying principal who accepts employment as a principal at a qualifying school shall continue to receive the salary supplement during performance of the contract, up to 36 months, even if one or more of the following occur:
 - a. The principal is no longer a qualifying principal.
 - b. The school is no longer an eligible school.
- (3) Notwithstanding G.S. 135-1(7a), salary supplements provided pursuant to this section are not compensation under Article 1 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes, the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.

(d) Time Line. – To the extent funds are made available for the Program, the following timeline shall apply:

- (1) No later than **December 1, 2019**, and October 1 of each year thereafter, the Department shall notify an eligible employer with one or more eligible schools that the eligible employer may be selected to participate in the Program.
- (2) No later than **January 15, 2020**, and November 1 of each year thereafter, each eligible employer that seeks to participate in the Program shall notify the Department of its intent.
- (3) No later than **January 31, 2020**, and November 15 of each year thereafter, the Department shall notify any eligible employer with a qualifying school that the school qualifies for the Program, up to a statewide total of 40 schools. In making its selections,

the Department shall prioritize eligible schools with the lowest overall school performance scores.

(4) No later than **May 1, 2020**, and annually thereafter, each eligible employer with a qualifying school shall do all of the following:

a. Execute all applicable contracts with qualifying principals.

b. Notify the Department of the

(i) identity of principals and schools in the unit that will participate in the Program,

(ii) length of the contract period between the eligible employer and each qualifying principal, and

(iii) length of time the qualifying principal will receive the salary supplement.

(5) No later than **August 1, 2020**, and annually thereafter, all qualifying principals identified pursuant to sub-subdivision (4) b. of this subsection shall begin employment as a principal at the applicable qualifying school.

(e) Additional Funds. – In the event an eligible employer is unable to award funds for the salary supplement because of resignation, dismissal, reduction in force, death, retirement, or failure to execute a contract with a qualifying principal, the Department shall award the funds, as soon as is practicable, to another eligible employer identified in subdivision (a)(2) of this section.

(f) Supplement Not Supplant. – Salary supplements provided to qualifying principals pursuant to this section shall be used to supplement and not supplant State and non-State funds already provided for principal compensation.

(g) Report. – No later than March 15, 2021, and every year thereafter in which funds are expended under the Program, the Department shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the Program, including, at a minimum, the following information:

(1) The impact of the Program on school performance, including the performance of

(i) schools receiving a principal under the Program and

(ii) schools that lost a principal due to the Program.

(2) The number of principals participating in the Program.

(3) The identity of schools participating in the Program.

(4) The length and rate of retention of principals

(i) within the Program and (ii) at specific schools within the Program."