



Public Schools of North Carolina  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

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## Small Structured High Schools

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*2007 Budget Act, sec. 7.21*

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## **Update on Small Restructured High Schools (Redesigned High Schools Supported by the North Carolina New Schools Project)**

Governor Mike Easley and the N.C. Education Cabinet with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation created the North Carolina New Schools Project (NCNSP) in August 2003 to focus leadership and financial resources on change in the state's high schools. The purpose of NCNSP is to accelerate systemic, sustainable innovation in secondary schools across the state so that, in time, every high school in the state graduates every student ready for college, careers and life in the society and economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To that end, NCNSP, in cooperation with state and national partners, has launched an unprecedented effort to create 148 academically rigorous, focused and flexible innovative high schools across North Carolina. The N.C. State Board of Education; the N.C. Department of Public Instruction; the UNC and N.C. Community College systems; national organizations such as Jobs for the Future, the New Technology Foundation, Asia Society and the Middle College National Consortium, among others, are working in partnership to create these innovative high schools.

Unlike previous attempts to reform high schools, NCNSP forms a six-year partnership (one year of planning followed by five years of implementation) with local school districts and higher education partners to change fundamental high school structures including governance, student support and teaching and learning. Each innovative high school is completely autonomous, with its own principal and school budget, and will serve when fully implemented approximately 100 students per grade level, or up to 400 students in grades 9-12 or 9-13. Some models may emerge as 6-12 schools serving up to 600 students. Each innovative high school also is expected to implement and exhibit a rigorous and far-reaching set of best-practice conditions, known as Design Principles, that lead to student success as judged by all students graduating ready for college, careers and life. These Design Principles are based on the experiences of schools from across the country which succeed in graduating all students prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce, research on best practices in effective innovative high schools and NCNSP's own experience. The Design Principles are

- **Ready for College:** Innovative high schools are characterized by the pervasive, transparent, and consistent understanding that the school exists for the purpose of preparing all students for college and work. They maintain a common set of high standards for every student to overcome harmful tracking and sorting.
- **Powerful Teaching and Learning:** Innovative high schools are characterized by the presence of commonly held standards for high quality instructional practice. Teachers in these schools design instruction that ensures the development of critical thinking, application and problem solving skills often neglected in traditional settings.

- **Personalization:** Staff in innovative high schools understand that knowing students well is an essential condition of helping them achieve academically. These high schools ensure that adults leverage knowledge of students in order to improve student learning.
- **Redefined Professionalism:** The responsibility to the shared vision of the innovative high school is evident in the collaborative, creative, and leadership roles of all adult staff in the school. The staff of these schools takes responsibility for the success of every student, holds themselves accountable to their colleagues, and is reflective about their roles.
- **Purposeful Design:** Innovative high schools are designed to create the conditions that ensure the other four design principles: ready for college, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, and redefined professionalism. The organization of time, space, and the allocation of resources ensures that these best practices become common practice.

NCNSP and its partners are working with local school districts and their higher education partners to create two types of innovative high schools: redesigned high schools and *Learn and Earn* early college high schools.

- **Redesigned High Schools:** NCNSP is partnering with local school districts to convert conventional high schools into a series of autonomous, focused and academically rigorous new schools which operate on the existing campus. These new schools each adopt a curricular focus or common methodology as one strategy to enable teachers in the core courses to work together to make connections between courses and the adult world of work and to link learning to that world. The intent of a focus is not preparation for a specific career but preparation for a lifetime of learning and change.
- ***Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools:** Based on the campus of two-or-four year community colleges and universities, *Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools provide an academically rigorous course of study with the goal of ensuring that all students graduate with a high school diploma and two years of transferable credit or an associate's degree. The *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Initiative submitted a separate status report to the State Board of Education and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in January 2009 in accordance with SL 2007-323. *Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools target students who have met with failure in conventional schools and who are the first in their family to attend college.

For the purposes of this report, SL 2007-323 calls on the State Board of Education to report on the results of an annual evaluation of the small restructured high schools (also known as redesigned high schools) that received supplemental funding from the General Assembly. The Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) in conjunction with the North Carolina New Schools Project (NCNSP) is monitoring and evaluating the progress of

these schools in implementing the school model and in the schools' effect on student achievement. This report will provide an update on the initiative and the schools that were open for students during the 2007-08 school year, as well as student achievement data from these schools.

## **Redesigned High Schools**

Forty-three state-supported redesigned high schools were open for students during the 2007-08 school year.<sup>1</sup> The 43 schools were located across 25 high school campuses and 22 local school districts. Eight of the schools were health and life science-focused high schools, five were information technology-enabled, sixteen were science, technology, engineering or math-focused (STEM) high schools, one was an international studies-focused high school and thirteen of the schools were based on a local focus, such as coastal studies, biotechnology and ecology. Ten of the STEM-focused redesigned high schools are also part of the turnaround high school initiative with NCDPI. The ten schools chose to work with NCNSP as part of their turnaround requirement. These ten schools received initial planning grants from the General Assembly in 2006-07, but have not received any additional supplemental funding from the General Assembly to support the implementation of their redesigned high school model. Instead, these ten schools have used local funds from their respective school districts to cover the cost of their implementation and support from NCNSP. For a complete list of the 43 redesigned high schools that were open for the 2007-08 school year, see Attachment A.

### *Student Demographics*

Collectively, the 43 redesigned high schools served more than 9,400 students in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades during the 2007-08 school year.<sup>2</sup> Over the next two to three years, the schools will add additional cohorts of 9<sup>th</sup> graders until they reach their capacity of approximately 400 students each. The number of students per grade level that were served in redesigned high schools for the 2007-08 school year is presented in Table 1 below. Student demographic information for the 43 schools combined is presented in Table 2 below.

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<sup>1</sup> A total of 44 redesigned high schools were open across the state in 2007-08. However, one of those schools, Cherokee High School, is a Bureau of Indian Affairs school that is funded by the federal government and not the state.

<sup>2</sup> Forty-one of the 43 schools exclusively served students in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The Cape Hatteras Secondary School of Coastal Studies served students in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades and the Roanoke Rapids Living to Learn High School served students in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades.

**Table 1. Number of Students per Grade Level in Redesigned High Schools, 2007-08**

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
6th	60
7 <sup>th</sup>	41
8 <sup>th</sup>	144
9 <sup>th</sup>	3,499
10 <sup>th</sup>	2,458
11 <sup>th</sup>	1,834
12 <sup>th</sup>	1,439
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,475</b>

Source: 1<sup>st</sup> Month MLD data from  
NCDPI

**Table 2. Race and Gender of Students in Redesigned High Schools, 2007-08**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>White</b>	21.2%	19.8%	40.9%
<b>Black</b>	21.4%	23.7%	45.1%
<b>Hispanic</b>	4.0%	4.3%	8.3%
<b>Native Amer.</b>	2.0%	2.2%	4.2%
<b>Asian</b>	0.8%	0.7%	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%

Source: NCDPI

### *ABC End-of-Course Test Results*

In 2007-08, the 43 state-supported redesigned high schools had performance composites (or the percent of students proficient on all End-of-Course tests) ranging from 21.7 percent to 87.6 percent, with 12 percent of the redesigned high schools posting performance composites of 80 percent or greater (compared to 0 percent of the

redesigned high schools' comparison high schools<sup>3</sup> and 13 percent for all high schools statewide). More than one-half of the redesigned high schools (51 percent) had performance composites that were greater than their comparison high school. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of the redesigned high schools in 2007-08 met the growth targets set for their school under the state's ABC accountability measures (made expected growth), compared with 33 percent of the comparison high schools and 44 percent of all high schools statewide. Two redesigned high schools (5 percent) exceeded their growth targets (made high growth) compared to 5 percent of the comparison high schools and 16 percent of all high schools statewide.

### *Ninth Grade Promotion Rates*

To graduate, a student must complete the required courses and be promoted from grade to grade. Research has shown that promotion from 9<sup>th</sup> grade is an especially strong indicator of a student's likelihood to graduate. During the 2006-07 school year (the most recent year for which promotion rates are currently available), 16 of the 24 redesigned high schools that were open had sizable 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes that year. The 16 schools reported 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rates ranging from 61 percent to 100 percent with one-quarter (25 percent) of the schools promoting 100 percent of their 9<sup>th</sup> graders (only one comparison school reported a 100 percent 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rate). More than one-half (56 percent) of the schools promoted 90 percent or more of their 9<sup>th</sup> graders (compared with 45 percent of the comparison schools). One-half (50 percent) of the schools had 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rates that were greater than the rates for their comparison high schools. The 16 redesigned high schools that served 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2006-07 had a combined 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rate of 85 percent, compared to a combined rate of 90 percent for the comparison high schools and 88 percent for all high schools statewide.

### *Dropout Rates*

To graduate all students, schools must ensure that all students stay in school and do not dropout. During the 2006-07 school year (the most recent year for which dropout rates are currently available), the 24 redesigned high schools that enrolled students that year reported school wide dropout rates ranging from 0 percent to 10.3 percent, with one out of every six schools (17 percent) reporting **no dropouts** (no comparison schools reported no dropouts). Nearly 9 out of every 10 redesigned high schools (88 percent) reported dropout rates that were lower than the dropout rate for their comparison high school. The 24 redesigned high schools had a combined school wide dropout rate in 2006-07 of 3.93 percent compared to a combined rate of 6.89 percent for their comparison high schools and 5.24 percent for all high schools statewide.

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<sup>3</sup> NCNSP has strategically selected a traditional, comprehensive high school to serve as a comparison high school for each redesigned high school. The comparison high school serves as a benchmark in order to more effectively judge the growth and progress of the redesigned high school in improving student achievement. Each comparison high school was selected based on its similarities to the redesigned high school on geographic location (either on the same campus, in the same school district or in a neighboring school district), its student demographics (primarily race, gender and the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch when available) and the school's prior student performance on End-of-Course tests.

As mentioned earlier, a student's success in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade is crucial in terms of their eventual success in graduating from high school. Research has shown that 9<sup>th</sup> grade is the year where students are the most likely to drop out of high school. For that reason, NCNSP also tracks dropout rates at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in addition to school wide dropout rates for redesigned high schools. During the 2006-07 school year (the most recent year for which 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropout rates are available), 16 of the 24 redesigned high schools that were opened served sizable 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes that year. Those 16 schools reported 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropout rates ranging from 0 percent to 14.4 percent, with more than 4 in 10 redesigned high schools (44 percent) reporting **no 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropouts** (only one comparison school reported no 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropouts). Thirteen of the 16 schools (81 percent) had 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropout rates that were lower than the 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropout rate for their comparison high school. The 16 redesigned high schools that had sizable 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes in 2006-07 had a combined 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropout rate of 4.60 percent, compared to a combined rate of 6.96 percent for their comparison high schools and 5.72 percent for all high schools statewide.

### **Funding and Additional Support**

Thirty-three of the 43 state-supported redesigned high schools enrolling students for the 2007-08 school year received supplemental funding from the General Assembly to support the implementation of their innovative high school model. Each school received a position allotment for one state-funded guidance counselor (approximately \$68,000 per year) and two position allotments for two clerical support positions (approximately \$36,000 per clerical support position per year). The 10 STEM-focused redesigned high schools that are also a part of the turnaround high school initiative through NCDPI did not receive the supplemental funding from the General Assembly (all implementation funding for these 10 schools came from local school district sources).

In addition, each redesigned high school (with the exception of the 10 STEM-focused high schools) signed a five-year implementation agreement with NCNSP to receive grant funding from NCNSP that provides technical assistance in the implementation of their innovative high school model. The implementation grant funding comes from a \$20 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The implementation grant funding covers, among other things, the cost of a school change and instructional coach, professional development for teachers and principals, and local cash to cover additional expenses, including travel to professional development events.

***School Change and Instructional Coaches:*** Each redesigned high school is assigned a professionally trained and highly experienced school change coach who serves as a facilitator for the planning and implementation of the school. During the 2007-08 school year, each redesigned high school also received the services of a highly trained and experienced instructional coach who worked directly with the faculty on-site to support sustained change in their instructional practice. Both types of coaches are identified and trained by NCNSP. Brokering organizations (the Leadership Group of the Carolinas and Bridgewood Educational Services) work with NCNSP to facilitate the coaching process.



NCNSP, in conjunction with those brokering organizations, provides extensive and ongoing professional development for school change and instructional coaches to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities as coaches.

***Teacher and Principal Professional Development:*** Over the past year, NCNSP dramatically changed its program of service to teachers, principals and counselors in redesigned high schools. The new program of service, called Integrated System of School Support Services or IS4, combines the services of the instructional coach described above with the opportunity for schools to engage in peer review site visits and by adding the services of a leadership facilitator to support the work and development of principals.

- *Peer school reviews:* NCNSP broadened its professional development reach during the 2007-08 school year by creating local and regional networks of schools as a way to foster ongoing collaboration among faculty. The peer school reviews were organized to provide opportunities for focused reflection and discussion of NCNSP's design principles, based on observations of concrete classroom instruction as well as more general school functions and activities. The visits were the centerpiece of a series of regional symposia held in the fall, winter and spring to build networks among teachers and schools and to strengthen practices key to effective learning: critical thinking, active questioning and problem solving. The classroom visits, based on a medical rounds model adopted by University Park Campus School in Worcester, Mass., were designed to help teachers learn from each other by making their practice public. Rounds allow visitors to rotate through the school, observe instruction, and look for key evidence of the Design Principles. The school visits ended with two separate post-round discussions when participants discussed what they observed in relation to selected design principles and guiding questions developed by the principal and teachers at the host school. The design of the peer school review maximizes learning for participants and minimizes the overall disruption to the school. The visits helped achieve two critical goals: supporting schools as they grow towards full fidelity of the Design Principles and making classroom and school-wide practice public to improve student achievement.
- *Leadership Facilitators:* Principals in NCNSP schools were provided an additional level of support during the 2007-08 year from one of four leadership facilitators to help schools effectively introduce and execute the key school and instructional change embodied in the NCNSP Design Principles. All schools except those in their first year of implementation received the services of one of the leadership facilitators during monthly school visits throughout the year. The new support positions, filled by seasoned principals under contract to NCNSP, were added to ensure school-based follow up to regional and statewide development programs focused on critical instructional approaches such as project-based learning and Critical Friends Groups. The facilitators also provided valuable support to inexperienced principals whose leadership skills were still untested. It is critical for principals to understand,

recognize and be able to discuss with teachers how to change instruction to ensure student success.

### **Changes in School Sites for the 2008-09 School Year**

There are several changes in the number of redesigned high schools that will be open for the 2008-09 school year. Over the past school year, three school districts chose to discontinue their partnerships with NCNSP in three redesigned high schools. In two of these schools, the Halifax School of Ecology and the Roanoke Rapids Living to Learn High School, the district administration decided to make changes in the redesigned high school that would have been inconsistent with the NCNSP Design Principles. In these instances, NCNSP and the school districts came to a mutual conclusion that the partnership would be discontinued. In the third school, the Scotland High School of Engineering and Skilled Trades, changes in the number of students being served across the campus created the need to collapse six redesigned high schools into five. Therefore, the district administration decided to close one of the redesigned high schools on the Scotland High School campus. In addition, one new redesigned high school, the City of Medicine Academy in Durham, will open for students during the 2008-09 school year. With the discontinuation of partnerships with three schools and the opening of one new redesigned high school, 41 state-supported redesigned high schools are open for students during the 2008-09 school year.

### **Evaluation Efforts**

Fouts and Associates, NCNSP's external evaluators through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, are conducting an evaluation of the overall NCNSP initiative and the redesigned high schools. The evaluators are collecting and comparing data from 16 NCNSP sites (both the comprehensive high schools and the redesigned high schools housed on the comprehensive campuses) to evaluate the impact of the new, redesigned high schools on student retention and graduation rates, college attendance and persistence rates, student perceptions of their school and student perceptions of college. In addition, 10 of the 16 sites are in-depth evaluation sites where the evaluators are conducting annual site visits, which include interviews and focus groups with school and district personnel, to evaluate both the implementation of the redesigned high schools and the impact on teachers and administrators. The final evaluation report will be available in 2009.

**Attachment A. State-Funded Redesigned High Schools Supported by the North Carolina New Schools Project**

<b>School</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Year Opened</b>
Anson County New Technology High School	Anson County Schools	2007-08
School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA)	Asheville City Schools	2005-06
Bertie County STEM High School	Bertie County Schools	2007-08
Cam-Tech High School	Camden County Schools	2006-07
Camden County High School	Camden County Schools	2007-08
Garinger School of Information Technology	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	2006-07
Garinger School of International Studies	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	2006-07
Business and Finance High School at Garinger	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	2007-08
Leadership and Public Service High School at Garinger	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	2007-08
Math and Science High School at Garinger	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	2007-08
Howard School of Health and Life Sciences	Cumberland County Schools	2005-06
Cape Hatteras Secondary School of Coastal Studies	Dare County Schools	2006-07

James B. Kenan School of Engineering	Duplin County Schools	2007-08
Southern High School of Engineering	Durham Public Schools	2007-08
Hillside New Technology High School	Durham Public Schools	2007-08
City of Medicine Academy	Durham Public Schools	2008-09
South Granville School of Health and Life Sciences	Granville County Schools	2005-06
J.F. Webb School of Health and Life Sciences	Granville County Schools	2005-06
South Granville School of Business and Global Communications	Granville County Schools	2007-08
South Granville School of Engineering and Applied Studies	Granville County Schools	2007-08
Halifax School of Ecology	Halifax County Schools	2006-07 (school closed in 2007-08)
Newton-Conover Health Science High School	Newton-Conover City Schools	2005-06
Northampton-West High School	Northampton County Schools	2007-08
Robeson New Tech High School	Public Schools of Robeson County	2006-07
Roanoke Rapids Living to Learn High School	Roanoke Rapids Graded School District	2006-07 (school closed in 2007-08)
Scotland High School of Health Sciences	Scotland County Schools	2005-06

Scotland High School of Engineering and Skilled Trades	Scotland County Schools	2005-06 (school closed in 2007-08)
Scotland High School of Math, Science, and Technology	Scotland County Schools	2006-07
Scotland High School of Visual and Performing Arts	Scotland County Schools	2006-07
Scotland High School of Business, Marketing and Finance	Scotland County Schools	2006-07
Scotland High School of Leadership and Public Service	Scotland County Schools	2006-07
Swain County School of Applied Science, Math and Technology	Swain County Schools	2006-07
Swain County High School	Swain County Schools	2007-08
East Wake School of Information Technology	Wake County Public Schools	2006-07
East Wake School of Health Science	Wake County Schools	2005-06
East Wake School of Engineering Systems	Wake County Schools	2007-08
East Wake School of Arts, Education and Global Studies	Wake County Schools	2007-08
Warren County Technology High School	Warren County Schools	2007-08
Goldsboro High School of Science and Engineering	Wayne County Schools	2007-08
Weldon High School	Weldon City Schools	2007-08

Jacket Technology High School	Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools	2007-08
Atkins School of Biotechnology	Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools	2005-06
Atkins School of Computer Technology	Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools	2005-06
Atkins School of Pre-Engineering	Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools	2005-06