



NORTH CAROLINA
NEW SCHOOLS

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

**Scaling Early College High School Strategies in
Comprehensive High Schools:
Investing in Innovation Report**
Session Law 2013-360, section 8.25

Report Due: March 15, 2014

INVESTING IN INNOVATION GRANT

Session Law 2013-360, section 8.25

SECTION 8.25.(a) Section 7.17 of S.L. 2012-142 is repealed.

SECTION 8.25.(b) The federal Investing in Innovation Fund Grant: Validating Early College Strategies for Traditional Comprehensive High Schools awarded to the North Carolina New Schools Project for 2012-2017 requires students to enroll in a community college course in the 10th grade. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, specified local school administrative units may offer one community college course to participating sophomore (10th grade) students. Participating local school administrative units are Alleghany, Beaufort, Hertford, Jones, Madison, Richmond, Rutherford, Surry, Warren, Wilkes, and Yancey County Schools.

SECTION 8.25.(c) Grant funds shall be used to pay for all costs incurred by the local school administrative units and the community college partners to implement the grant, including community college FTE. Community colleges shall not earn budget FTE for student course enrollments supported with this grant.

SECTION 8.25.(d) Research for the project shall address the effects of early college strategies in preparing students for college completion. The North Carolina New Schools Project shall report on the implementation of the grant to the State Board of Education, State Board of Community Colleges, Office of the Governor, and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than March 15, 2014, and annually thereafter until the end of the grant period.

Investing in Innovation (i3): **Year 2 Baseline External Evaluation Report**

The Investing in Innovation Grant has been branded the North Carolina Investing in Rural Innovative Schools. NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools is managed by North Carolina New Schools and is designed to increase the number of students who graduate from high school and are prepared for enrollment and success in postsecondary education. The program addresses the unique challenges of high-need students in rural areas by radically changing expectations for college and career readiness, teaching and learning, personalization and school design through a program that is affordable and scalable for participating districts.

NC New Schools has partnered with eleven rural school districts to scale the success of North Carolina's early college high school strategies in 18 traditional high schools serving high need students. The five-year grant will impact more than 20,000 students by 2016 and targeted outcomes are:

- Increase graduation rates by 10%
- Increase by 10% the rate at which students successfully complete Algebra 1 by the end of ninth grade
- Increase college credit and AP acquisition
- Build district & community capacity
- Establish a replicable model.¹

NC New Schools has developed a set of comprehensive supports that are the critical components of the initiative. The services are intended to support implementation of a whole-school reform model emphasizing the creation of a career and college-preparatory school environment. These supports includes:

- 1) **Integrated System of Professional Development:** each year, teachers and school leaders take part in a series of intensive professional learning and regular on-site coaching activities.
- 2) **Support for College Credit Courses:** includes funding for college courses, a college liaison, and assistance in developing postsecondary partnerships.
- 3) **Community and Key Stakeholder Engagement:** collaboration with community stakeholders, including local chambers of commerce, economic development commissions and business and industry leaders to support local workforce development strategies.

Investing in Rural Innovative Schools also includes a set of key components that are intended to support the implementation of the early college model in traditional high schools. Teachers will learn to implement NC New Schools' six Design Principals that represent characteristics of an effective high school. These Design Principles, are as follows:

¹ The data presented in this report does not reflect these goals because it is too early to measure gains on these measures. NC New Schools will measure these outcomes following year 3 of service provision.

- Instilling powerful teaching and learning in schools;
- Providing high student/staff personalization;
- Redefining professionalism;
- Creating leadership that develops a collective vision; and
- Implementing a purposeful design in which school structures support all of the above principles.

This report includes results from the evaluation of the second year of NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools. The evaluation uses mixed methods to examine the implementation and impact of the project. The impact of the project will be determined through a quasi-experimental study in which student outcomes for NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner schools will be compared to a matched set of comparison high schools. The evaluation will study implementation through the use of surveys, observations, site visits, and analysis of data collected by the project. The Year 2 report focuses on the implementation of the program and on presenting baseline data for the Cohort 2 and 3 schools.

Implementation Evaluation: Key activities that occurred in Year 2 are listed below.

- NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff **recruited an additional four schools** to replace four schools that left the program prior to their receiving services.
- The program design was modified in several ways: 1.) the program funded **college liaison** positions, individuals who would support college course taking efforts at the school level; 2.) **more resources were provided to fund college readiness activities** at schools; and 3.) the program will **extend services** to NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner schools, at a gradually declining level, for longer than the three years originally intended.
- Participation in **professional development increased dramatically** in the second year of the program. In the first full year of implementation (2012-2013 school year), Cohort 1 schools participated in an average of 14.5 days of professional development. In the first half of the 2013-2014 school year, all Cohort 1 and 2 schools had participated in an average of 17 days of professional development, more than 100% of the expected number of days.
- In the 2012-2013 school year, Cohort 1 schools received 97% of the targeted number of days of instructional coaching. Cohort 1 and 2 schools are on-track for receiving the targeted number of days in Year 2. Instructional coaches spent the majority of their time meeting with teachers, providing **customized feedback**.
- In the 2012-2013 school year, Cohort 1 schools received 61% of the targeted number of days of leadership coaching. In the fall of 2013, three quarters of Cohort 1 and 2 schools received at least 100% of the days of leadership coaches' visits. Leadership coaches worked primarily with the principal around implementing the Design Principles in the school.

- Five out of seven Cohort 1 and 2 districts have completed Memoranda of Understanding with their postsecondary partners. So far, a total of **990 students have taken college courses**, an estimated 12% of the entire enrollment of Cohort 1 and 2 schools.
- **All Cohort 1 and 2 districts participated in Design Principle Rubric Reviews on the topic of College Readiness.** This provided an opportunity for the NC New Schools staff, school and district staff to examine data collaboratively and determine how well they are doing relative to standards for the College Readiness rubric.
- The Community Development Coordinator has worked extensively with all of the Cohort 1 and 2 districts. This has resulted in **local partnerships** in some districts that are designed to support the schools' innovative activities.

Impact Evaluation: In Year 2, the evaluation focused on collecting baseline data for the Cohorts 2 and 3 participating schools, as well as qualitative data concerning implementation of the program in the schools. Initial results show that NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner schools are smaller than the state average and have a higher percentage of students in poverty. Schools in Cohort 1 and 2 have lower percentages of minority students than the state average while schools in Cohort 3 have higher percentages of minority students.

When compared with the state average, NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner schools are beginning the program with lower graduation rates and lower enrollment in advanced courses. Table B shows baseline performance for participating schools, compared to the state averages in the appropriate baseline year.

Table A: Services Provided, by Year

Year	Activity	Average Targeted Days of Participation	Average Days of School Participation	Range of Participation (lowest to highest # of days)	Average % of Days Received ^a
2012-2013 (5 schools)	Professional Development	18	14.5	6-19.5	78%
	Instructional Coaching	69	71	46-102	97%
	Leadership Coaching	17	9	5-14	61%
2013-2014 (12-schools, 5/11 of year)	Professional Development	9	17	11-24	100%
	Instructional Coaching	35	32	22-42	93%
	Leadership Coaching	8	9	7-12	95%

^aIn calculating the average percentage, schools received a maximum level of 100%, even if they received more than their targeted number of days.

Table B: Baseline Outcomes, by Cohort

Treatment School Cohort	On-Time Grad Rate Avg (5 year average)	Percent Students Enrolled in Algebra 2	Percent Enrollments in AP/IB/College Credit Courses	Attendance Rate	Avg. Pass Rate Core Subjects (EOC Composite)
Cohort 1 (11-12)	74.0%	16.5%	2.1%	94.5%	80.0%
State Average (11-12)	79.1%	20.0%	5.2%	94.4%	79.8%
Cohort 2 (12-13)	78.1%	NA	2.9%	94.3%	40.2%
Cohort 3 (12-13)	74.6%	NA	2.4%	92.9%	28.3%
State Average (12-13)	81.2%	NA	5.2%	94.2%	39.4%

Analysis of data from the University of North Carolina system for NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner school graduates show that, at baseline, NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner schools are starting with lower percentages of their students enrolling in a UNC system school, a higher percentage of students enrolled in remedial courses and a lower percentage of students graduating in five years. Table C presents the baseline postsecondary performance for selected measures.

Table C. Baseline Postsecondary Performance of NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools Partner High School Graduates Enrolled as First-Time Freshman at UNC System Schools

Cohort	% of 12 th grade Students Enrolled in UNC system	% in Remedial English	% in Remedial Math	Average Credits Earned Freshman Year	Average Course Grade Freshman Year	% Graduating within 5 Years
1	15.4	3.3	6.5	29.9	3.0	55.5
2	20.4	7.7	6.4	29.8	3.0	56.2
3	19.6	5.1	9.2	29.5	2.6	44.1
NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools Average	18.8	5.8	7.2	29.7	2.9	52.6
State Average	25.2	2.5	6.3	29.7	2.9	57.1

Baseline implementation survey data show that the NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools partner schools have a generally solid leadership base upon which to build work around the Design Principles. There is room to grow, particularly in the area of advanced and college preparatory course taking, college expectations, and staff-student relationships. Instruction is also an area for significant focus. At baseline, teachers reported using the targeted high quality instructional practices between once a month and once a week. Both instructional and leadership coaches indicated concern about low levels of rigor and quality of instruction in the schools.

NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools coaches and staff report that initial implementation at the school level varies by school, driven in large part by the degree of buy-in and support provided by the principal.

Lessons Learned, Conclusions and Recommendations

In Year 2, NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff responded to lessons learned from the first year by making changes and modifications in the program. For example, they began working with the schools earlier, more clearly explaining the project and its expectations; this has contributed to increased participation by schools in the various project activities. Recognizing the importance of leadership, they continued with the Design Principle Rubric Review process and expanded the process to operate at the district level as well. They also provided increased resources to schools to assist in implementing the college credit component, most significantly by supporting a college liaison position. NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff and coaches also reported two new lessons learned this year. One centered on the need to formalize different stages of development in schools to help the coaches tailor the services more effectively. The other key lesson learned was the need to identify ways to move beyond gaining the trust of school members to pushing schools to improve themselves.

The data collected in Year 2 of the evaluation show that NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools has accelerated its efforts from the first year of implementation and that it is on-track for implementing its program as intended. The revisions made to the program appear that they will have positive impacts on the program's implementation, enhancing the impact of the program.

Baseline data also show that, with the introduction of the new cohorts of schools, NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools continues to serve its target population of rural schools needing assistance in increasing college-related outcomes for their students.

Using the data from Year 2, the evaluation team has developed several recommendations for consideration by project staff:

- Given the importance of leadership, **NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff should continue their work with both school and district leadership teams** to develop buy-in and a deeper understanding of the program.
- To facilitate the work of the coaches, NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff could **explore the possibility of creating teams of coaches working within districts** so that the same group of instructional and leadership coaches are working with the same team of schools as much as possible.
- A key programmatic goal for the upcoming year should be identifying ways in which **NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff and coaches can be supportive and collaborative**, yet also effectively “push” schools **to attain the next level of progress**.

As part of the data-driven conversations with the schools, we recommend that NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools staff explicitly discuss the postsecondary data that are available by school on the UNC system website.

Appendix

NC Investing in Rural Innovative Schools Partner Schools

School	Year
East Rutherford High School	1 (2012 – 2013)
Madison High School	1 (2012 – 2013)
Northside High School (Beaufort County)	1 (2012 – 2013)
North Surry High School	1 (2012 – 2013)
Southside High School (Beaufort County)	1 (2012 – 2013)
Alleghany High School	2 (2013 – 2014)
R-S Central High School (Rutherford County)	2 (2013 – 2014)
Chase High School (Rutherford County)	2 (2013 – 2014)
East Surry High School	2 (2013 – 2014)
Hertford County High School	2 (2013 – 2014)
Mountain Heritage High School (Yancey)	2 (2013 – 2014)
Washington High School (Beaufort County)	2 (2013 – 2014)
East Bladen High School	3 (2014 – 2015)
Jones County High School	3 (2014 – 2015)
Riverside High School (Martin County)	3 (2014 – 2015)
South Creek High School (Martin County)	3 (2014 – 2015)
West Bladen High School	3 (2014 – 2015)
Warren High School	3 (2014 – 2015)

Note: LEA participation has changed since legislation passage in 2012. Bladen and Martin County Schools participation is pending per legislative approval.