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. Since then, nine laboratory schools have opened. East Carolina University (ECU) and Western Carolina University (WCU) opened their laboratory schools—the ECU Community School and The Catamount School, respectively—in the 2017-18 academic year. Appalachian State University, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) opened laboratory schools—the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, respectively—in the 2018-19 academic year. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) opened its laboratory school, Niner University Elementary School in the 2020-21 academic year.

In 2021-22, Appalachian State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNCCH) were approved to open and operate three new laboratory schools. In fall 2022, Appalachian State University opened a second laboratory school, the Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, a co-located school at Elkin Elementary, in Elkin City Schools, that currently serves grades 2-4. NCA&T opened its first laboratory school, Aggie Academy, as a STEAM school for grades 3-5 in Guilford County. Finally, UNCCH opened its first laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy, co-located at North Elementary School in Person County Schools. The school will serve students in kindergarten during its first year of operation, with plans to add a grade level each year to eventually serve students in grades K-2.

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.[1] 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.[2] 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); is the sibling of a child meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory

[1] N.C.G.S. 116-239.5(b)

[2] 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.

school employees.[3] 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.[4]

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 findings included in an annual evaluation report commissioned by the UNC System and prepared by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)/Public Policy at UNC Chapel Hill and Public Impact, an education research and management consulting organization based in North Carolina. The annual evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact is an in-depth review of the laboratory schools—expanding upon the requirements of the enabling legislation—and is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Consistent with the enabling legislation, this report includes the information listed in the eight items below:

(1) A brief overview of each laboratory school operating in the 2022-23 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.

Laboratory School Overviews

Nine UNC System institutions are currently 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.[5]

Appalachian State University operates the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, a K-5 school located in Walkertown, NC that was previously operated by Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools. The Academy at Middle Fork opened in August 2018 with a mission to provide a balanced education for children, teachers, principals, and families through the implementation of research-based practices and exemplary classroom instruction and school administration. The Academy at Middle Fork is committed to developing the whole child, including addressing social, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs. The Academy uses a workshop (or small group, project-based) approach for students in all grades and builds literacy skills in all core content areas. Students receive differentiated instruction that engages them in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In 2022-23 the staff at the Academy at Middle Fork included a principal, a director of student affairs and emergency management,

[3] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

[4] 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)

[5] See the full evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact in Appendix A for a description of the laboratory schools' fall 2020 reopening strategies given the COVID-19 pandemic.

an instructional coach, a school engagement coordinator (formerly the testing & transportation coordinator), a school improvement coach, a data manager, 18 classroom teachers, five specials teachers (art, media, music, PE, and STEM), six teacher assistants, two multi-lingual (ML) teachers, three EC teachers, two EC teacher assistants, an administrative support and school finance specialist, a behavioral intervention specialist, a counselor, a school nurse, and a social worker.

Appalachian State University also operates Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, a co-located school at Elkin Elementary, in Elkin City Schools, that currently serves grades 2-4. The Academy at Elkin opened in August 2022 as a "school within a school", with an anticipated enrollment of approximately 100 students in second through fourth grades. The school engages students in exploration-based learning by deploying the following methods: embracing growth mindset practices, promoting authentic learning experiences, incorporating service learning, fostering leadership, and increasing student agency. In 2022-23 the staff at the Academy at Elkin included a principal, an assistant principal, 6 classroom teachers, 4 specials teachers (art, media, STEM, and PE), 3 teacher assistants, a counselor, a school nurse, a social worker, and a school improvement coach. The Appalachian State University laboratory schools also employ a Director of Curriculum & Federal Programs, EC Director, and Technology Support Specialist who serve both lab schools.

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 ten classrooms—one class per grade in 1 and 5, and two classrooms each for grades K, 2, 3, and 4. 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 2022-23 the laboratory school's staff includes a principal, 10 teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, seven teacher assistants, two special education teachers, a full-time curriculum director, a full-time school counselor, a full-time administrative assistant, and a full-time social worker, two full-time reading specialists, and a part-time testing coordinator.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T), in partnership with Guilford County Schools, opened the Aggie Academy laboratory school in August 2022. Aggie Academy serves students in grades 3, 4, and 5 and features a culturally responsive curriculum with a strong STEAM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Arts and Math). Teachers design lessons that incorporate the 5 E's of the Inquiry-Based Learning process: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. This process is used to teach students how 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 school is comprised of three 3rd grade classes, two 4th grade classes, and one 5th grade class. 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 latest in academic best practices, research, and student success initiatives from the University. The College of Education engages in a Practice-Based Teacher Education Model (PBTE) to provide multiple hands-on teaching experiences for Educator Preparation students in Aggie Academy. Aggie Academy students benefit from small group and individualized supplemental instruction from NC A&T Educator preparation students, especially in literacy and mathematics. In 2022-23 the staff at Aggie Academy includes a program director, a principal, a STEAM instructor/coordinator, six classroom teachers, three specialty teachers (art, music, and PE), one EC teacher, one media and technology

specialist, a part-time after-school director, counselor, school nurse, and social worker. Administrative staff include a budget manager and a data manager. Additionally, NC A&T Educator Preparation students work in the after-school Children's Defense Fund Freedom School program as group leaders.

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-4, 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 to 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 in the area. 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 2022-23 Niner University Elementary School's staff includes a principal, a curriculum coordinator, 11 licensed classroom teachers, 10 instructional assistants, three 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, a guidance counselor, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. Administrative staff include a finance/data manager, administrative office associate, and a school resource officer.

UNCCH's laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy (CCA), is co-located at North Elementary School in Person County and is serving kindergarten students during its first year of operation in 2022-23 and will add a grade level each year, eventually serving students in grades K-2. With a whole child approach to student learning, CCA will have an integrated curriculum with intentional focus on student well-being, social emotional supports for learning, and engagement of families and the community. CCA will be a clinical experience site for a variety of university degree programs, from MAT students to pre-service public health and library science majors. In 2022-23, the staff at Carolina Community Academy includes a principal, 3 classroom teachers, 1 EC teacher, 1 school counselor, 1 school social worker, 3 instructional assistants, 1 part-time instructional coach, 1 office manager, and a director. In addition, multiple Person County Schools employees support the lab school through elective classes and related services along with University-wide support from faculty and staff at UNC-Chapel Hill.

UNCG operates the Moss Street Partnership School, a K-5 school located in Rockingham County that was previously operated by Rockingham County Schools (RCS). The Moss Street Partnership School opened in August 2018 and serves students in grades K-5, averaging approximately three classrooms per grade level. Staff and students at the Moss Street Partnership School follow the traditional RCS district calendar. The school uses a "learner-centered, learner-led" approach and emphasizes experiential learning, inclusive education, and a collaborative environment for both students and teachers. As a fully inclusive school, the Moss Street Partnership School is oriented to the whole child, including meeting academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) instruction is prominent: the campus features a makerspace and the school employs a full-time instructional technology consultant who assists teachers with the incorporation of technology into their lessons. In the 2022-23 school year, the Moss Street Partnership School staff includes a director, a principal, an assistant principal, an associate director, 20 classroom teachers, four specialty teachers (dance, library studies, art, and PE), three special education teachers, a school social worker, a counselor, a reading specialist, a math specialist, a speech pathologist, and the school support staff members.

UNCW operates D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA), the only 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 year-round calendar. DCVPA has a combination class in grades 4 and 5 in addition to one class in all other grade levels. 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 "kinship model" to facilitate relationship building between staff, families, and students. In 2021-22, the DCVPA staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, a data manager, an operations coordinator and liaison, 10 teachers in core content areas, three instructional assistants, one health & PE teacher, one music teacher, a media specialist, a beginning teacher support coach, a student support specialist, a speech therapist, a school psychologist, a guidance counselor, one special education educator, a part-time nurse, and a technology support analyst. A full-time clinical social worker, funded through a partnership with the College of Health and Human Services, provides student support services. Two Faculty-in-Residence from the College of Education also supported the professional learning of teachers at DCVPA, one with a focus on multi-tiered system of early intervention support (MTSS), and another with a focus on family engagement and culturally sustaining literacy practices.

WCU's laboratory school, The Catamount School, is co-located on the campus of Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva, 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. The Catamount School fosters student growth and the development of social-emotional skills through a problem-centered, experienced-based learning approach in an inclusive education environment. Special education services for EC students are provided in regular classrooms using a co-teaching model in which the EC teacher works collaboratively with the lead classroom teacher to deliver individualized instruction. In the 2022-23 school year, The Catamount School staff includes a principal, four core subject-area teachers, a part-time enrichment & arts teacher, an enrichment coordinator who coordinates services and extracurricular activities provided by university and community-based partners, an exceptional children (EC) teacher, a PowerSchool data manager, and two health services coordinators who serve as the school nurses and supervise School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. A COE faculty member serves as the Curriculum and Instruction Liaison and teaches one math class. A WCU Health and Physical Education (HPE) instructor serves as the physical education teacher and coordinates and supervises HPE pre-service candidates. WCU College of Education faculty members serve in several positions at The Catamount School, including as an EC administrator.

Student Enrollment and Demographics at Laboratory Schools

Table 1 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 262 enrolled students, with 46 in kindergarten, 55 in 1st grade, 31 in 2nd grade, 43 in 3rd grade, 43 in 4th grade, and 44 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are slightly lower (by 4.4 percent) than those from the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 51 percent are male, 42 percent are Black, nearly 37 percent are Hispanic, and 22 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 79 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 30 percent

of the K-5 students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, 14 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 62 percent are designated as low-income.[6]

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State) has 91 enrolled students, with 27 in 2nd grade, 34 in 3rd grade, and 30 in 4th grade. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 52 percent are male, 71 percent are White, 22 percent are Hispanic, and 30 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 72 percent of the 2nd-4th grade students in Elkin City Schools are White, 19 percent are Hispanic, and 10 percent are classified as exceptional children.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the ECU Community School has 123 enrolled students, with 19 in kindergarten, 21 in 1st grade, 24 in 2nd grade, 24 in 3rd grade, 24 in 4th grade, and 11 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show a modest increase in enrollment (7.9 percent) at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 55 percent are male, 95 percent are Black, and 16 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 83 percent of the ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black, 12 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 68 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th data of the 2022-23 academic year, the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) has 70 enrolled students, with 30 in 3rd grade, 24 in 4th grade, and 16 in 15th grade. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 59 percent are male, 93 percent are Black, and 13 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 43 percent of the 3rd-5th grade students in Guilford County Schools are Black and 13 percent are classified as exceptional children.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) has 140 enrolled students, with 26 in kindergarten, 31 in 1st grade, 40 in 2nd grade, 21 in 3rd grade, and 22 in 4th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show a 15.7 percent enrollment increase. This enrollment growth comes from adding a new grade level (4th grade). Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 58 percent are male, 84 percent are Black, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 23 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 87 percent of the Niner University Elementary School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 35 percent of the K-4 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 29 percent are Hispanic, 9 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 49 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH) has 28 students enrolled in kindergarten. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 50 percent are male, 64 percent are Black, 11 percent are Hispanic, and 11 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 33 percent of the kindergarten students in Person County Schools are Black, 8 percent are Hispanic, and 15 percent are classified as exceptional children.

[6] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2020-21 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2021-22 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

Table 1: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools

	ASU: Middle Fork		ASU: Elkin	ECU		NCA&T	UNCC		UNCCH	UNCG		UNCW		WCU	
	21-22	22-23	22-23	21-22	22-23	22-23	21-22	22-23	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23
Total Enrollment	274	262	91	114	123	70	121	140	28	367	339	208	209	57	59
Kindergarten	52	46	---	19	19	---	42	26	28	73	54	20	26	---	---
1st Grade	28	55	---	22	21	---	43	31	---	50	73	21	18	---	---
2nd Grade	43	31	27	23	24	---	19	40	---	58	40	19	22	---	---
3rd Grade	44	43	34	27	24	30	17	21	---	56	60	24	19	---	---
4th Grade	45	43	30	13	24	24	---	22	---	63	51	24	22	---	---
5th Grade	62	44	---	10	11	16	---	---	---	67	61	21	25	---	---
6th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	18	34	10	12
7th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	28	17	21	23
8th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	33	26	26	24
Male	48.9%	51.2%	51.7%	55.3%	55.3%	58.5%	53.7%	57.9%	50.0%	55.0%	52.8%	51.9%	49.8%	49.1%	45.8%
White	10.9%	15.3%	71.4%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	1.7%	0.7%	14.3%	14.4%	12.7%	5.3%	3.8%	84.2%	94.9%
Black	46.4%	42.0%	5.5%	95.6%	95.1%	93.2%	85.1%	84.3%	64.3%	60.8%	61.7%	86.1%	90.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	4.7%	5.0%	1.1%	1.8%	1.6%	2.4%	2.5%	4.3%	7.1%	11.7%	10.0%	3.8%	4.3%	10.5%	1.7%
Hispanic	36.9%	36.6%	22.0%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	9.1%	6.4%	10.7%	13.1%	14.5%	3.4%	1.9%	1.8%	0.0%
Asian	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	2.1%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	1.7%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	16.8%	21.8%	29.7%	23.7%	16.3%	12.8%	15.7%	22.9%	10.7%	14.4%	20.1%	19.7%	19.1%	14.0%	28.8%
Low-Income	79.3%	N/A	N/A	83.3%	N/A	N/A	87.3%	N/A	N/A	100.0%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	50.0%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. Most of the data in this table comes from the Principal's Monthly Report from the 20th day of the school year. The low-income data come from the 2021-22 Title I federal reporting. Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring#title-i---eligible-schools-summary-report-(essr) for those data. These Title I data are not yet available for the 2022-23 school year. N/A=not available.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) has 339 enrolled students, with 54 in kindergarten, 73 in 1st grade, 40 in 2nd grade, 60 in 3rd grade, 51 in 4th grade, and 61 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show an enrollment decrease of 7.6 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 53 percent are male, 62 percent are Black, nearly 15 percent are Hispanic, and 20 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 100 percent of the Moss Street Partnership School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 18 percent of the K-5 students in Rockingham County Schools are Black, 15 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 76 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 209 enrolled students, with 26 in kindergarten, 18 in 1st grade, 22 in 2nd grade, 19 in 3rd grade, 22 in 4th grade, 25 in 5th grade, 34 in 6th grade, 17th in 7th grade, and 26 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show an increase in enrollment of one student. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 50 percent are male, 90 percent are Black, and 19 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 100 percent of the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 19 percent of the K-8 students in New Hanover County Schools are Black, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children and 66 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 59 enrolled students, with 12 in 6th grade, 23 in 7th grade, and 24 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show an increase in enrollment of 3.5 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 46 percent are male, 95 percent are White, and 29 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 50 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 66 percent of the 6th-8th grade students in Jackson County Schools are White, 17 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 63 percent are designated as low-income.

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 were 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.[7] 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

[7] 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.

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.[8]

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 create 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.[9]

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 1st 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 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 99 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; less than 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff.

Appalachian State certified that 87 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Elkin in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 12 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that nearly 93 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 26 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 24 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 3.3

[8] 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."

[9] 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.

percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 3.3 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

NCA&T certified that 66 percent of the students at Aggie Academy in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance at a low-performing school; 31 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; and three percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCC certified that 66 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2022-23 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; 7 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 11 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCCH certified that 100 percent of the students at Carolina Community Academy in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

UNCG certified that 56 percent of the students at Moss Street Partnership School in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 22 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 19 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 0.3 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 2.1 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCW certified that 63 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 13 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 20.5 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and nearly 4 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Finally, WCU certified that nearly 2 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 92 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 3.4 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 8.5 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Table 2: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements

	ASU: Middle Fork	ASU: Elkin	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	262	91	123	70	140	28	339	209	59
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	99.6%	0.0%	92.7%	65.7%	65.7	100.0%	56.1%	62.9%	1.7%
Previously Low-Performing Student	0.0%	86.8%	26.0%	31.4%	15.7	0.0%	22.4%	12.9%	91.5%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	0.0%	0.0%	24.4%	0.0%	7.1	0.0%	19.2%	20.5%	3.4%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	0.4%	1.1%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	0.0%	12.1%	3.3%	2.9%	11.4	0.0%	2.1%	3.8%	8.5%

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 2022-23 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, 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 2021-22 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.[10]

Overall, the top panel of Table 3 indicates that in the 2021-22 school year The Catamount School (WCU) earned a performance grade of 'C', the ECU Community School earned a performance grade of 'D', and the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned performance grades of 'F'. These performance grades are based on the performance score, which is a weighted average of the achievement score (80%) and growth score (20%). Achievement scores, which measure proficiency rates on state assessments, ranged from 12.9 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 51.9 (The Catamount School). Growth scores ranged from 70.7 (Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork) to 84.0 (The Catamount School) and all five laboratory schools met expected achievement growth. By comparison, the last time North Carolina released school accountability data—after the 2018-19 school year—only two of five laboratory schools met expected achievement growth.

[10] These school accountability data for the 2021-22 year can be accessed here: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2021-22-school-performance-grades

Table 3: Student Achievement at Laboratory Schools in 2021-22

	Overall Performance Grade	Overall Performance Score	Overall Achievement Score	Overall Growth Score	Overall Growth Status
Appalachian Academy	F	26	14.5	70.7	Met
ECU Community School	D	50	42.6	80.2	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	32	19.5	80.0	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	26	12.9	77.5	Met
The Catamount School	C	58	51.9	84.0	Met
	Reading Performance Grade	Reading Performance Score	Reading Achievement Score	Reading Growth Score	Reading Growth Status
Appalachian Academy	F	31	19.7	74.1	Met
ECU Community School	D	42	31.9	80.4	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	29	16.6	77.0	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	27	13.4	79.7	Met
The Catamount School	C	62	57.4	82.2	Met
	Math Performance Grade	Math Performance Score	Math Achievement Score	Math Growth Score	Math Growth Status
Appalachian Academy	F	23	9.6	75.2	Met
ECU Community School	D	53	53.2	Not Reported	Not Reported
Moss Street Partnership School	F	27	13.7	80.3	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	23	8.2	81.1	Met
The Catamount School	D	54	46.3	82.9	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. Here, like the overall performance grades, The Catamount School (WCU) earned a 'C', the ECU Community School earned a 'D', and the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) earned a 'F'. Reading achievement scores (proficiency rates) ranged from 13.4 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 57.4 (The Catamount School). All five laboratory schools met expected achievement growth in reading in 2021-22. This is an improvement from 2018-19 when four laboratory schools met growth.

Finally, the bottom panel of Table 3 presents school performance grades in math. Here, the ECU Community School and The Catamount School earned performance grades of 'D', while the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) earned grades of 'F'. Math achievement scores ranged from 9.6 (Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork) to 53.2 (ECU Community School). North Carolina did not report an official math growth score or growth status for the ECU Community School in 2021-22. This is because the ECU Community School had too few students for whom a math growth score could be externally reported. All four remaining laboratory schools met expected growth in math in 2021-22. This represents an improvement from 2018-19 when only two laboratory schools met growth in math.

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 2020-21 school year, when there were five laboratory schools that enrolled students who took EOG exams: the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and The Catamount School (WCU).[11]

Table 4 displays 2020-21 student achievement data—average EOG scores, the percentage of students below and meeting/exceeding proficiency—for all non-laboratory school students, statewide. Tables 5-9 display the same 2020-21 student achievement data for each laboratory school and for all other students in the district hosting the respective laboratory school. For each respective comparison (e.g. 3rd grade reading, 5th grade math), students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, and the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) scored lower on their EOG exams than all students statewide. Compared to all non-laboratory school students in North Carolina, students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) scored lower on all their EOG exams with the exception of 8th grade math. Students at The Catamount School (WCU) scored higher than all other students, statewide, in 6th and 7th grade reading, 7th grade math, and 8th grade science. Compared to all non-laboratory school students, statewide, The Catamount School (WCU) also had a higher percentage of students passing their EOG exams in middle grades (6-8) reading, 7th grade math, and 8th grade science.

Table 4: 2020-21 Test Score Data Statewide

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
3rd Grade Reading	105,737	436.43	55.93	44.07
4th Grade Reading	105,976	541.93	54.82	45.18
5th Grade Reading	107,979	547.28	57.61	42.39
6th Grade Reading	110,827	550.13	54.66	45.34
7th Grade Reading	112,085	552.32	53.30	46.70
8th Grade Reading	112,242	556.07	51.75	48.25
3rd Grade Math	105,436	543.52	55.47	44.53
4th Grade Math	105,930	543.68	62.14	37.86
5th Grade Math	107,996	543.51	57.92	42.08
6th Grade Math	110,825	543.92	59.37	40.63
7th Grade Math	111,999	544.48	57.62	42.38
8th Grade Math	79,189	534.03	83.79	16.21
5th Grade Science	107,727	249.08	46.16	53.84
8th Grade Science	111,666	250.32	29.61	70.39

Note: For the 2020-21 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data from EOG exams for all non-laboratory students statewide.

Achievement data show that in the 2020-21 school year, students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) scored lower and had lower proficiency rates than other students in their host school district (Tables 5, 7, and 8, respectively). Table 6 indicates that students at the ECU Community School scored lower and had lower proficiency rates than peers in Pitt County Schools. However, ECU Community School students scored higher than peers at South Greenville Elementary in elementary grades math. Data from The Catamount

[11] There was a sixth laboratory school in operation in the 2020-21 school year—Niner University Elementary (UNCC). However, it served students in grades K-2 in 2020-21.

School (WCU) are mixed—i.e. there are instances in which Catamount School students scored both higher and lower than peers in Jackson County schools (Table 9).

Table 5: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the Academy at Middle Fork

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork				
3rd Grade Reading	41	432.05	73.17	26.83
4th Grade Reading	60	533.63	83.33	16.67
5th Grade Reading	50	543.18	78.00	22.00
3rd Grade Math	41	534.02	92.68	7.32
4th Grade Math	60	534.07	96.67	3.33
5th Grade Math	50	538.18	74.00	26.00
5th Grade Science	50	241.10	80.00	20.00
All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students				
3rd Grade Reading	3,714	434.97	61.95	38.05
4th Grade Reading	3,745	540.21	62.83	37.17
5th Grade Reading	3,766	545.88	63.62	36.38
3rd Grade Math	3,690	541.43	65.37	34.63
4th Grade Math	3,742	541.46	71.91	28.09
5th Grade Math	3,766	542.06	65.56	34.44
5th Grade Science	3,734	247.56	53.08	46.92

Note: For the 2020-21 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.

Table 6: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the ECU Community School

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
ECU Community School				
3rd Grade Reading	11	431.45	72.73	27.27
4th Grade Reading	11	534.45	90.91	9.09
5th Grade Reading	13	534.00	100.00	0.00
3rd Grade Math	11	541.82	63.64	36.36
4th Grade Math	11	539.82	100.00	0.00
5th Grade Math	13	539.00	92.31	7.69
5th Grade Science	13	237.85	100.00	0.00
All Other Pitt County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,659	436.13	57.63	42.37
4th Grade Reading	1,575	542.41	53.40	46.60
5th Grade Reading	1,706	546.19	62.25	37.75
3rd Grade Math	1,647	543.31	56.95	43.05
4th Grade Math	1,572	543.76	62.34	37.66
5th Grade Math	1,708	542.31	64.52	35.48
5th Grade Science	1,693	247.61	53.63	46.37
South Greenville Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	46	429.28	84.78	15.22
4th Grade Reading	45	537.27	82.22	17.78
5th Grade Reading	47	538.83	91.49	8.51
3rd Grade Math	46	534.26	95.65	4.35
4th Grade Math	42	536.24	92.86	7.14
5th Grade Math	47	534.85	93.62	6.38
5th Grade Science	45	238.44	93.33	6.67

Note: For the 2020-21 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the ECU Community School, for all other Pitt County students in the same grades, and for students at South Greenville Elementary School (the host school for the ECU Community School).

Table 7: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Moss Street Partnership School				
3rd Grade Reading	63	427.10	92.06	7.94
4th Grade Reading	59	533.81	83.05	16.95
5th Grade Reading	37	539.08	89.19	10.81
3rd Grade Math	62	534.05	95.16	4.84
4th Grade Math	59	535.12	100.00	0.00
5th Grade Math	38	533.42	94.74	5.26
5th Grade Science	37	241.59	89.19	10.81
All Other Rockingham County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	779	435.09	62.00	38.00
4th Grade Reading	799	539.63	65.46	34.54
5th Grade Reading	849	545.80	64.90	35.10
3rd Grade Math	783	542.44	60.66	39.34
4th Grade Math	801	542.93	65.79	34.21
5th Grade Math	853	542.99	59.09	40.91
5th Grade Science	845	248.73	46.75	53.25

Note: For the 2020-21 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.

Table 8: 2020-21 Test Score Data for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy				
3rd Grade Reading	20	428.05	95.00	5.00
4th Grade Reading	19	535.16	78.95	21.05
5th Grade Reading	14	540.79	85.71	14.29
6th Grade Reading	28	542.68	85.71	14.29
7th Grade Reading	33	545.48	78.79	21.21
8th Grade Reading	32	548.75	87.50	12.50
3rd Grade Math	20	532.85	95.00	5.00
4th Grade Math	19	536.47	89.47	10.53
5th Grade Math	14	534.50	92.86	7.14
6th Grade Math	28	536.14	92.86	7.14
7th Grade Math	33	537.33	96.97	3.03
8th Grade Math	32	534.75	87.50	12.50
5th Grade Science	14	237.86	85.71	14.29
8th Grade Science	32	243.28	59.38	40.62
All Other New Hanover County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,717	438.11	48.22	51.78
4th Grade Reading	1,800	543.75	47.11	52.89
5th Grade Reading	1,786	548.44	51.40	48.60
6th Grade Reading	1,798	550.70	51.67	48.33
7th Grade Reading	1,767	553.68	47.99	52.01
8th Grade Reading	1,968	556.70	47.97	52.03
3rd Grade Math	1,713	545.51	47.23	52.77
4th Grade Math	1,799	545.59	54.20	45.80
5th Grade Math	1,786	544.73	51.62	48.38
6th Grade Math	1,800	545.17	53.56	46.44
7th Grade Math	1,763	545.82	50.82	49.18
8th Grade Math	1,349	534.26	83.02	16.98
5th Grade Science	1,788	250.92	39.99	60.01
8th Grade Science	1,976	251.07	27.02	72.98

Note: For the 2020-21 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.

Table 9: 2020-21 Test Score Data for The Catamount School (WCU)

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
The Catamount School				
6th Grade Reading	11	556.36	36.36	63.64
7th Grade Reading	19	554.68	52.63	47.37
8th Grade Reading	18	555.11	50.00	50.00
6th Grade Math	11	542.09	63.64	36.36
7th Grade Math	19	546.00	52.63	47.37
8th Grade Math	14	532.57	85.71	14.29
8th Grade Science	18	250.50	27.78	72.22
Math I	4	553.75	0.00	100.00
All Other Jackson County Students				
6th Grade Reading	262	547.82	62.98	37.02
7th Grade Reading	279	550.34	60.57	39.43
8th Grade Reading	272	555.60	52.94	47.06
6th Grade Math	261	541.92	70.88	29.12
7th Grade Math	279	542.58	66.31	33.69
8th Grade Math	223	535.00	77.58	22.42
8th Grade Science	273	250.60	25.64	74.36
Math I	244	546.23	53.69	46.31
Smokey Mountain High School				
Math I	160	544.84	60.00	40.00

Note: For the 2020-21 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for The Catamount School, for all other Jackson County students in the same grades, and for students at the Smokey Mountain High School (the host school for The Catamount School).

While useful, the test score data in Tables 5-9 do not account for the unique nature of students attending laboratory schools—i.e. previously low-performing and/or attending a low-performing school. Efforts to assess laboratory school student achievement are further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on student learning and access to achievement data over time. In particular, without test scores from spring 2020, it is more challenging to isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student achievement. To more rigorously assess student achievement at laboratory schools, this report includes results from two additional analyses: (1) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2020-21 with the test scores of students attending low-performing schools;[12] and (2) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2020-21 with the test scores of a matched comparison sample. [13]

Table 10 presents results of models comparing laboratory school students to other students attending low-performing schools.[14] Across all laboratory schools, the top row of Table 10 indicates that laboratory

[12] The designation of low-performing school comes from the 2018-19 school year (i.e. the most recent year for which there are data identifying low-performing schools).

[13] Propensity score analyses were used to match laboratory school students to comparison students within the same grade level in 2020-21. Variables in the propensity score model included student demographics, student program participation, measures of prior student engagement (attendance rates and whether the student was suspended), measures of prior student achievement (scores on DIBELS and EOG exams in math and reading, as available), and school percent low income. For laboratory school students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from the year before entry into a laboratory school; for comparison sample students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from 2019 (test scores) and 2020 (attendance and disciplinary records).

[14] These models control for student gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, English learner status, and prior achievement scores (EOG or DIBELS) from 2018-19. These models also control for school type (e.g. elementary, middle), percent students of color at the school, percent low-income students at the school, and a region fixed effect. This means we assess laboratory school student achievement in 2020-21 relative to comparable students attending low-performing schools in the same region as the laboratory school.

school students score slightly lower in elementary grades reading and slightly higher in middle grades math than comparison students at low-performing schools. These results differ across laboratory schools. There are positive results for the ECU Community School in elementary grades math, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) in 5th grade science, and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in elementary grades reading. Conversely, there are negative results for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in three comparisons, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in two comparisons, and the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) in one comparison.

Table 10: Test Score Results--Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Grade Science	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	-0.087 (0.107)	**-0.089*** (0.036)	**0.080*** (0.039)	0.003 (0.022)	-0.126 (0.114)	-0.050 (0.062)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.077*** (0.035)	**-0.121**** (0.016)	---	---	**-0.304**** (0.037)	---
ECU Community School	**0.561**** (0.050)	**-0.178**** (0.030)	---	---	0.089 (0.057)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.285**** (0.037)	**-0.098**** (0.019)	---	---	**0.095*** (0.038)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.248**** (0.074)	**0.135**** (0.031)	0.095 (0.058)	0.013 (0.034)	**-0.266**** (0.067)	-0.002 (0.071)
The Catamount School	---	---	0.043 (0.050)	-0.021 (0.024)	---	**-0.159**** (0.045)
Observations	19,562	55,579	62,737	67,321	19,221	22,284

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

Table 11 presents results of models comparing the test scores of laboratory school students to a matched comparison sample.[15] A key difference between these propensity score analyses and the first set of analyses—comparing laboratory school students to students in low-performing schools—is related to the use of prior data. In the first set of analyses, the prior test scores come from 2018-19, when many of the 2020-21 laboratory school students were already attending a laboratory school. In the propensity score analyses, the prior data for laboratory school students come from the year before their enrollment in a laboratory school.

Estimates in Table 11 show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample in elementary grades math and reading, 5th grade science, and middle grades reading. Once again, these results differ across laboratory schools. Students at the ECU Community School scored significantly higher than the matched comparison sample in elementary grades math and performed comparably in elementary grades reading and science. Results are negative for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in all three elementary grades comparisons and negative for the

[15] These models control for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, English learner status, school percent low-income and the prior student engagement and achievement outcomes that were part of the initial propensity score model. These models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in two elementary grades comparisons. In middle grades, Table 11 shows that laboratory school students scored similarly to the matched comparison sample in math and 8th grade science and lower than the matched comparison sample in reading. Results for the two laboratory schools serving middle grades students show negative results for The Catamount School (WCU) in math and negative results for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in reading.

Table 11: Test Scores Results—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Grade Science	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	**-0.274**** (0.035)	**-0.172**** (0.037)	-0.034 (0.053)	**-0.133*** (0.061)	**-0.233**** (0.062)	-0.052 (0.087)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.407**** (0.053)	**-0.113**+ (0.060)	---	---	**-0.342**** (0.102)	---
ECU Community School	**0.491**** (0.087)	0.030 (0.122)	---	---	-0.050 (0.135)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.362**** (0.045)	**-0.305**** (0.053)	---	---	-0.157 (0.109)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.231**** (0.089)	-0.085 (0.094)	0.048 (0.067)	**-0.234**** (0.076)	**-0.273**+ (0.152)	-0.085 (0.113)
The Catamount School	---	---	**-0.223*** (0.104)	0.086 (0.120)	---	0.029 (0.151)
Observations	2,099	2,100	685	728	612	261

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the test scores of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Taken together, the 2020-21 test score results in Tables 10 and 11 are relatively similar. This is despite differences in the analytical approaches, the comparison samples, and the use of prior student data. Test score results for the ECU Community School were the most promising, especially in elementary grades math. Results for the remaining laboratory schools indicate that their students scored lower than comparison sample students—in low-performing schools and/or the matched sample—in at least some grade-levels/subject-areas.

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 (1) educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school and (2) outcomes for educator preparation program students completing clinical experiences in laboratory schools. This section includes educator preparation program performance data for the six UNC System institutions that operated laboratory schools in 2021-22. Future reports to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee will provide outcome data for pre-service candidates completing clinical experiences in laboratory schools. These data will be available once a sufficient number

of pre-service candidates have had clinical experiences in laboratory schools and these candidates can be connected to administrative data from NCDPI.

Integrating Laboratory Schools into Educator Preparation

All UNC System institutions operating a laboratory school in 2021-22 integrated pre-service teachers into their schools. This integration happened in two primary ways: (1) junior-year 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 the course of a semester. During student teaching, pre-service candidates spend every day of the week, over the course of a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction. In 2021-22, Niner Elementary School served as host to pre-service candidates from UNCC's Cato College of Education for the first time since the laboratory school opened.[16] Additionally, COE faculty taught teacher candidates on-site at the laboratory school, allowing opportunities for pre-service educators to immediately observe and put learning into practice

Table 12 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 2021-22.[17] Appalachian State placed six candidates into early field experiences, one candidate into an intern I experience, and nine candidates into student teaching experiences (intern II). ECU placed 12 candidates into early field experiences, five candidates into intern I experiences, and four candidates into student teaching at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed 33 candidates into early field experiences, one candidate into an intern I experience, and one candidate into a student teaching experience at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed 11 candidates into early field experiences, one candidate into an intern I experience, and one candidate into student teaching at Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 50 candidates into early field experiences at the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and hosted one school leader intern. Finally, WCU placed 84 candidates into early field experiences, 10 candidates into intern I experiences, and four candidates into student teaching at The Catamount School.

[16] Due to remote learning and pandemic restrictions on in-person engagement, UNCC COE and laboratory school leadership chose not to host preservice candidates at Niner University Elementary in 2020-21.

[17] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2021-22. ASU placed two social work interns at the Academy at Middle Fork. ECU placed two social work interns, one marriage and family therapy intern, six speech/language interns, two psychology interns, and 26 occupational therapist interns at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed five school counseling interns and one social work intern at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed 19 nursing interns and two psychology interns at Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 16 psychology students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. WCU placed three school counseling interns, 32 nursing early field experiences, and seven counseling students (not yet in internship) at The Catamount School.

Table 12: Clinical Experiences in Laboratory Schools for Educator Preparation Program Candidates

Program/Licensure Areas	Early Field Experiences	Intern I	Intern II (Full-time student teaching)
Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)			
Elementary Education	4	1	5
Special Education	1	0	0
Theatre	1	0	0
Birth to Kindergarten	0	0	2
Art	0	0	1
Physical Education	0	0	1
ECU Community School			
Elementary Education	0	2	1
Special Education	12	2	2
Early Childhood	0	1	1
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)			
Elementary Education	14	0	0
Elementary and Special Education	19	0	0
Special Education	0	1	1
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)			
Elementary Education	11	0	0
Health and Physical Education	0	1	1
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)			
Art	1	0	0
Elementary Education	17	0	0
Middle Grades	5	0	0
Physical Education	1	0	0
Special Education	26	0	0
School Leader Internship	0	0	1
The Catamount School (WCU)			
Elementary/Inclusive Education	57	1	1
Middle Grades Education	8	3	3
Health and Physical Education	19	6	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 2021-22. 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. For example, WCU COE faculty are also laboratory school staff members who serve as teacher leaders in their content areas, teaching or co-teaching classes and supporting and mentoring other laboratory school staff.[18]
- Faculty-in-residence 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. For example, at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) the faculty-in-residence taught academically and intellectually gifted (AIG) classes one day per week. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted three faculty-in-residence from the Department of Educational Leadership, one that provided expertise on student voice to strengthen relationships and create student agency, another with a focus on culturally sustaining literacy, and the third with a focus on building relationships with middle school age students to demonstrate ways to engage and motivate.
- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on site at the laboratory school.
- Several COEs engaged their faculty in regular professional development supports for laboratory school staff. For example, faculty in UNCC's Reading and Elementary Education program taught intervention courses and participated in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with Niner University Elementary teachers. Faculty from Appalachian State supported laboratory school teachers in modeling lessons, team teaching, working with small groups and collaborating with teachers to expand an existing 2-5 SEL curriculum to include K-1.

Educator Preparation Program Performance Data

For each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school, Table 13 displays the required reporting elements specified in the enabling laboratory school legislation. These data come from the 2020-21 Educator Preparation Program report cards and are available on the NCDPI website.[19] The data displayed in Table 13 are for undergraduate teacher education programs only.

[18] One WCU faculty member serves The Catamount School as a Math I teacher, another as EC Director, and another as a Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher.

[19] https://www.dpi.nc.gov/report-cards-tests/EPP-reports?field_document_entity_terms_target_id_1=2137&field_document_entity_terms_target_id_2=431 and https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/EPPDashboardHome/DashboardHome?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=card_share_link

Table 13: Educator Preparation Program Performance Data (2020-21 Report Cards)

Reporting Elements	Appalachian	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Mean SAT of Admitted Students	1114.22	1130.62	1098.46	1106.88	1171.58	1102.09
Mean ACT of Admitted Students	22.88	22.74	22.26	22.55	24.77	21.54
Mean GPA of Admitted Students	3.52	3.32	3.46	3.39	3.58	3.48
Percent Passing Professional and Content Area Exams in First Year After Program Completion	82.90	88.92	79.34	75.00	78.57	86.30
Average Number of Semesters to Graduate	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
Percent Licensed	89.10	83.95	87.55	88.84	80.98	87.05
Percent Employed in NC Within One Year of Program Completion	61.85	73.07	72.69	66.07	61.95	58.99
Standard 1 (Leadership): % Proficient or Above	98.60	98.80	96.75	95.73	97.01	95.74
Standard 2 (Classroom Environment): % Proficient or Above	96.85	98.17	95.68	96.32	96.41	94.62
Standard 3 (Content Knowledge): % Proficient or Above	97.55	97.71	93.69	93.25	97.01	93.55
Standard 4 (Facilitating Student Learning): % Proficient or Above	95.80	98.39	94.48	93.90	96.41	91.49
Standard 5 (Reflecting on Practice): % Proficient or Above	96.50	97.94	96.68	92.02	97.01	93.55
EVAAS: % Meets Expected Growth	86.36	77.52	77.84	84.51	81.55	88.64
EVAAS: % Exceeds Expected Growth	3.25	6.20	5.99	1.41	5.83	0.00
Graduate Survey: % 'Well' or 'Very Well' Prepared	80.00	81.00	78.00	80.00	74.00	83.00
Employer Survey: % Comparable to or More Effective Than Other Teachers	95.00	93.00	95.00	94.00	94.00	96.00
Retention: % Remaining in Teaching for at least Two Years	90.00	92.00	93.00	92.00	90.00	92.00

Note: This table displays educator preparation program performance data for each UNC System institution operating a laboratory school. These data come from the 2020-21 Educator Preparation Program report cards (available on the NCDPI website) and are for undergraduate teacher education programs only.

Best Practices Resulting from Laboratory School Operations

Interviews and annual status reports suggest that laboratory school and COE personnel are refining some common practices to further leverage key features of the laboratory school model. Over time, administrative and survey data will clarify whether these laboratory school practices contribute to desired academic and social-emotional outcomes. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated disruptions to school operations interrupt the timeline for determining the effectiveness of these practices. As such, the practices described below are considered promising.

Physically, Socially, and Emotionally Safe Environments for Students

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/safety nets, lack of access to transportation, food

insecurity, and unstable housing. Laboratory schools emphasize creating positive school environments and building relationships with students and families. Their focus on these objectives is most clearly demonstrated in their efforts to address basic needs and create systems of instruction and behavioral supports that foster positive school cultures. For example, as previously reported, laboratory schools employ staff and/or engage institution and community partners to (1) provide health, social work, and counseling services; (2) provide students food and clothing to meet basic subsistence needs; (3) educate staff on the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences; and (4) use positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and restorative practices to emphasize individual and community relationships. In 2021-22, laboratory schools further invested in efforts to meet the needs of students and families. Many of these needs were exacerbated by pandemic-related challenges. Laboratory school engagement with institution and community partners shifted to both address new student and family needs arising out of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as adapt to the return to in-person learning environments.

Balanced Curriculum and Enrichment Activities

Laboratory schools 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. Laboratory schools also 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. Further, 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.

COE Access to Laboratory Schools

As previously reported, laboratory schools directly expose COEs to the challenges that North Carolina public schools face, particularly in teaching low-performing student populations. They also provide schools serving high-need students access to COE resources and opportunities for in-service teachers and staff to 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). As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they are refining how they leverage these mutual benefits, primarily through the increased systematization of COE faculty and pre-service candidate engagement in laboratory schools. COEs have increasingly focused on using junior year methods classes as a primary vehicle for engaging pre-service candidates in laboratory schools. In particular, 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.

Other Information the BOG Subcommittee Considers Appropriate

Commensurate with the innovative scope, vision, and commitments of laboratory schools, the UNC System commissioned an evaluation of the laboratory schools intended to facilitate an in-depth assessment of their performance and contributions. Appendix A includes the in-depth evaluation report from EPIC and Public Impact, which addresses statutorily required reporting elements and the evaluation questions listed below.

(1) How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to succeed?
(2) How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?
(3) Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?

(4) Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?
(5) Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?
(6) Do laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?
(7) How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?

To provide further information that the BOG Subcommittee considers appropriate, this section includes findings from the full laboratory school report completed by EPIC and Public Impact. In particular, this section provides rigorous analyses of student-level attendance data from the 2020-21 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 attendance, that may suggest that other outcomes, such as student learning, are also improving.

Table 14 presents results from two student attendance analyses: (1) comparing laboratory school student attendance in 2020-21 to the attendance of other students at low-performing schools and (2) comparing laboratory school attendance in 2020-21 to a matched comparison sample. These are the same comparisons as in the student achievement models. The outcome variable in these models is a student's attendance rate for the 2020-21 year. These models control for many of the same student and school covariates as in the test score analyses. Results are relatively similar across these approaches. Overall, laboratory school students attended a higher percentage of school days in 2020-21 than the matched comparison sample. Specifically, laboratory school students attended 1.8 percentage points more days of school. This translates to approximately three more days of school attended. Students at the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) have significantly higher attendance rates than both comparison groups. Students at The Catamount School (WCU) had lower attendance rates in both models; students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) had lower attendance rates in one of the two models.

Table 14: Laboratory School Student Attendance Results

	Percent of School Days Attended	
	Compared to Other Students in Low-Performing Schools	*Compared to a Matched Sample*
Laboratory School Students	0.282 (1.567)	**1.794**** (0.557)
Academy at Middle Fork	-1.138 (0.707)	**-5.053**** (1.058)
ECU Community School	**4.508**** (1.002)	**11.667**** (1.018)
Niner University Elementary	**8.052**** (0.588)	**9.010**** (0.955)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-2.777**** (0.551)	-1.288 (1.062)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**4.482**** (1.186)	**10.329**** (0.810)
The Catamount School	**-7.900**** (1.138)	**-9.435**** (3.146)
Observations	175,168	3,331

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the attendance rates 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.

Summary

Six years after the passage of the enabling laboratory school legislation, UNC System institutions have opened nine laboratory schools that collectively educate more than 1,300 students. These schools have also graduated—onto middle school or high school, respectively—nearly 750 students. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on school operations, student learning, and access to evaluation data, it is difficult to fully assess the extent to which laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission to provide (1) an enhanced education program for students who are low-performing or attending a low-performing school and (2) exposure and training for teachers and school leaders to successfully address challenges in high need school settings. However, evidence to date highlights several areas of note.

After enrollment declines between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, given the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment at UNC System laboratory schools has generally stabilized. Enrollment growth is notable at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), which added a new grade level. Enrollment changes—increases or decreases—are modest in size at other laboratory schools. This suggests that laboratory schools are able to effectively market and recruit and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations. As intended, laboratory schools are also primarily enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their hosts districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are a racial/ethnic minority or economically-disadvantaged.

It remains challenging to fully assess laboratory school impacts on student achievement—given the characteristics of enrolled students, the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lack of student test scores from 2019-20. Rigorous analyses of student achievement data from 2020-21 indicate that ECU Community School students scored significantly higher in elementary grades math than comparable

students attending a low-performing school and a matched comparison sample. There were also positive achievement results in 2020-21, relative to other students in low-performing schools, for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) in 5th grade science and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) in elementary grades reading. Conversely, there were multiple results indicating that laboratory school students scored lower than comparison sample students in at least some grade-levels/subject-areas in 2020-21. Newly released school achievement and accountability data show that all laboratory schools met expected achievement growth in 2021-22. This is an improvement from 2018-19—the last school year in which NCDPI released school accountability data—when several laboratory schools did not meet growth.

Regarding school engagement measures, rigorous analyses of 2020-21 student attendance data show that laboratory school students were absent less often than a matched comparison sample. These attendance results were particularly strong for the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Likewise, survey data (included in the appendix to this report) indicate that laboratory school students are motivated, engaged, and feel positively about their school environment. These findings suggest that laboratory schools' focus on meeting whole child needs—academic, social/emotional, physical—is working.

Laboratory schools offer COE faculty and candidates unique exposure to the practical challenges of teaching and leading in high-need schools, while also providing laboratory schools access to COE and university resources. This is one of the most unique aspects of laboratory schools, as they are able to integrate teacher education faculty, teacher candidates, and a range of student support personnel—counselors, nurses, social workers, speech pathologists—from the host university. As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they have refined how they engage faculty and pre-service candidates in them. In particular, laboratory schools are prioritizing deeper engagement by COE faculty. This promotes a more consistent COE presence in laboratory schools and allows faculty and laboratory schools to mutually benefit from their engagement.

Due to the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19, it will still take more time to fully assess the performance of laboratory schools, their impact on educator preparation programs, and their impact on broader practices in K-12 schools. 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

Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative

November 2022 Report

Education Policy Initiative at Carolina/UNC Public Policy: Kevin C. Bastian
Public Impact: Whitaker Brown, Rachel Chall and Gregory Rudd

Introduction

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) passed legislation requiring the Board of Governors (BOG) of the University of North Carolina (UNC) System, in consultation with UNC System institution Colleges of Education (COEs), to establish laboratory schools.[1] Laboratory schools are K-12 schools operated by a UNC System institution rather than by a local school district. 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 existing in high-needs school settings.[2] Collectively, laboratory schools are committed to delivering high expectations to prepare students for college and life; ensuring that students learn to read and communicate effectively; addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students; and harnessing the benefits of partnerships to strengthen learning, teaching and school leadership.[3] 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.

In 2021-22, six UNC System institutions operated laboratory schools. East Carolina University (ECU) and Western Carolina University (WCU) opened their laboratory schools in the 2017-18 school year, while Appalachian State University, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) opened their laboratory schools in the 2018-19 school year. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) opened its laboratory school in the 2020-21 school year. The laboratory school enabling legislation requires the establishment of at least three additional laboratory schools by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.[4] In 2021-22, Appalachian State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNCCH) were approved to open and operate the three new laboratory schools. In fall 2022, Appalachian State University opened a second laboratory school, the Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, a co-located school within Elkin Elementary, in Elkin City Schools, that currently serves grades 2-4. NCA&T opened its first laboratory school, Aggie Academy, as a STEAM school for grades 3-5 in Guilford County. Finally, UNCCH opened its first laboratory school, Carolina Community Academy, co-located at North Elementary School in Person County Schools. The school will serve students in kindergarten during its first year of operation, with plans to add a grade level each year to eventually serve students in grades K-3. This evaluation report will largely focus on the six schools in operation in 2021-22.

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. However, the enabling legislation allows the UNC System to exercise six waivers to establish laboratory schools in

[1] N.C.G.S. §116-239.5(a).

[2] N.C.G.S. 116-239.5(b).

[3] The University of North Carolina System. (n.d.) "UNC Laboratory Schools." Retrieved from https://www.northcarolina.edu/unc-lab-schools

[4] Session Law 2020-56 amended N.C.G.S. §§ 116-239.7 (a1) to require the establishment of at least nine laboratory schools. Previously the laboratory school law required that nine constituent UNC System institutions with high-quality educator preparation programs establish laboratory schools. S.L. 2020-56 amended Section 11.6(d) of S.L. 2017-117 to require the establishment of at least six laboratory schools by the beginning of the 2020-21 school year and at least an additional three laboratory schools by the 2022-23 school year.

districts that do not meet this requirement.[5] 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 in the previous academic year (based on one or more indicators); is the sibling of a child meeting these requirements; or are children of laboratory school employees.[6] Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, any student residing in the district where the laboratory school is located may also enroll at a laboratory school if the school is not fully enrolled by March 1 before the start of the next school year.[7] Laboratory schools present opportunities to benefit low-performing students, to implement new and research-based instructional strategies, to enhance the preparation experiences of pre-service educators, and to integrate the contributions of the university and community into the philosophy and practices of the school.

In 2018, the UNC System commissioned the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)/Public Policy at UNC Chapel Hill and Public Impact (hereon referred to as the Evaluation Team) to conduct a five-year evaluation of the laboratory schools initiative. The intent of the evaluation is to assess whether laboratory schools benefit students and pre-service educators and to understand why laboratory schools succeed or fall short of expectations. To fulfill these objectives the Evaluation Team submitted reports in November 2018,[8] 2019,[9] 2020,[10] and 2021[11]. The following report reflects the Evaluation Team's review of laboratory school implementation, operation, successes, and shortcomings. As planned, this report includes rigorous analyses of 2020-21 administrative data (as available).

The UNC System BOG will submit its own report focusing on the statutorily required laboratory school reporting elements: student enrollment and demographics, student admissions, student achievement and academic progress, outcomes for pre-service candidates in educator preparation programs, best practices of laboratory schools, and other information the UNC BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools

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[5] 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.

[6] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.9(c)(2)

[7] 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)

[8] Bastian, K., Kim, J., & Hassel, B. "Appendix A: Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2018 Report." University of North Carolina System. (2018). Review and Evaluation of the Educational Effectiveness of the Laboratory Schools (Year 2). Retrieved from https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/Archives/2018%20Reports%20Received/Laboratory%20Schools%20-%20Review%20&%20Evaluation%20of%20Educational%20Effectiveness.pdf . The UNC System submitted an abbreviated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in November 2017.

[9] Bastian, K., Kim, J. & Brown, W. (2019). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2019 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2019%20Reports%20Received/UNC%20Laboratory%20Schools.pdf.

[10] Bastian, K., Kim, J. & Brown, W. (2020). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2020 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2020%20Reports%20Received/UNC%20Laboratory%20Schools%20Report.pdf

[11] Bastian, K., Brown, W. & Rudd, G. (2021). *Evaluation of the UNC System Laboratory Schools Initiative, November 2021 Report.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina System. Retrieved from https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/15652

considers appropriate.[12] This in-depth report from the Evaluation Team is attached to the UNC System BOG report as an appendix, to be submitted to the NCGA by November 15, 2022.

This report is organized to address the following evaluation questions:

(1) *How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to succeed?*
(2) *How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?*
(3) *Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and operated?*
(4) *Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?*
(5) *Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?*
(6) *Do the laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?*
(7) *How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?*

Evaluation Sample

This in-depth evaluation report focuses on the six UNC System laboratory schools in operation during the 2021-22 school year: The ECU Community School, The Catamount School (WCU), the Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC).[13] It also includes some initial reporting on the laboratory schools opening in the 2022-23 year: Appalachian State University Academy at Elkin, Aggie Academy (NCA&T), and Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH). The ECU Community School is co-located within the South Greenville Elementary School building in Pitt County and serves students in grades K-5. The Catamount School is co-located within the Smoky Mountain High School building in Jackson County and serves students in grades 6-8. The Appalachian State University Academy at Middle Fork serves students in grades K-5 in an elementary school formerly operated by Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools. The Moss Street Partnership School serves students in grades K-5 in an elementary school formerly operated by Rockingham County Schools. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA) is a K-8 school in Wilmington that occupies a former New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) middle school. Niner University Elementary School (NUES) is a K-4 school located in a formerly vacant Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools building in west Charlotte.[14]

Data Sources and Analysis

To complete an in-depth review of the laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team relies on five main data sources: (1) interviews with university and laboratory school leadership, personnel, and partners; (2) laboratory school status reports completed by UNC System Colleges of Education (COE); (3) administrative data on students, schools, and school personnel form the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

[12] N.C.G.S. §116-239.13 requires that the UNC BOG Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools review and evaluate the educational effectiveness of the laboratory schools and report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on these seven items by November 15 of each year.
[13] Though three new laboratory schools opened in 2022-23, this report focuses on the six schools in their second year or more of operation in 2021-22.
[14] Niner University Elementary School opened as a K-2 school in 2020-21 but plans to add a grade each year to become a K-5 school by the 2023-24 school year.

(NCDPI); (4) survey responses from laboratory school students, families, and personnel;[15] and (5) administrative data from COEs on educator preparation programs and pre-service candidates.

Much of the data for this evaluation report comes from interviews with, and status reports completed by, university leadership and laboratory school principals. Additional data for this report come from student enrollment and demographic information; official NCDPI reporting on school-level achievement;[16] surveys of laboratory school staff, students, and families; and analyses of administrative data. See Appendix A1 for further detail on the data sources, including their alignment with the evaluation questions and the timing/availability of data.

Analysis Methods

Qualitative data analyses

To assess the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team analyzed two types of qualitative data—laboratory school responses to annual status reports and interview transcripts—collected in April, May, and June 2022.

The Evaluation Team uses two template reporting forms to collect information from laboratory schools, one for schools in their second or subsequent year of operation and another for new laboratory schools regarding activities undertaken in their last planning year. For the 2021-22 evaluation, all schools completed the same reporting form. (See Appendix A1 for further detail on the annual status reports.) In addition, the Evaluation Team conducted virtual interviews with laboratory school principals, UNC System COE leaders, and LEA representatives, as well as focus groups with roughly four to six staff members at each laboratory school. See Appendix A1 and A2 for further detail on the interview protocols and analyses of interview inputs.

Quantitative data analyses

The Evaluation Team uses quantitative data from a host of sources—NCDPI, UNC System COEs, and survey responses—to assess whether laboratory schools improve students' academic performance, engagement with school, and social-emotional outcomes; and whether laboratory schools are successfully marketed and managed. See Appendix A2 for further detail on quantitative data analyses.

Findings

The following sections address each of the evaluation questions recognizing that: (1) laboratory schools are designed to serve the unique needs of the communities they serve; (2) each laboratory school reflects the uniqueness of the UNC System institution that operates it; and (3) laboratory schools have been open for different periods of time—two full years for Niner University Elementary (UNCC), four full years for the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and five full years for the ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU)—with several of those years disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[15] For the first time in spring 2021, the evaluation team administered staff surveys to all laboratory school instructional staff. See Appendix A1 for more information on staff surveys.
[16] Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2020-21-school-assessment-and-other-indicator-data

This report highlights common laboratory school features and implementation experiences arising from the laboratory school model. As appropriate, this report also highlights the ways that individual laboratory schools have implemented unique practices and includes brief snapshots of each laboratory school in Appendix A3. As related to implementation, this report also distinguishes differences among laboratory schools that opened in 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2020-21. Further, this report acknowledges the unique circumstances of the 2021-22 school year, during which many students returned to in-person learning environments with well documented gaps in learning due to COVID-19 pandemic related disruptions to home and school environments. Finally, where appropriate, this report also offers summative reflections on common themes and challenges that have emerged since the first year of laboratory school operation in 2017-18.

How have the UNC System and UNC System institutions set-up laboratory schools to succeed?

As the Evaluation Team reported in 2018, leadership at the UNC System Office and leadership and personnel at UNC System institutions engaged in three sets of activities to set up laboratory schools: (1) governance and implementation oversight; (2) laboratory school selection and approval; and (3) laboratory school planning and implementation.

The UNC System now has six years of experience in launching and supporting the development of laboratory schools. No new laboratory school opened in 2021-22, though three more recently opened at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year. The sections below describe the ways time and experience have influenced laboratory school governance and implementation.

Governance and implementation oversight

The legislation enabling laboratory schools directs the UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools to oversee the establishment of laboratory schools.[17] The UNC System Office, which supplies administrative support for the UNC BOG, provides implementation and oversight support for laboratory schools.

The enabling legislation also directs UNC System institution chancellors to oversee laboratory schools.[18] Generally, chancellors have appointed COE deans to lead laboratory school implementation and deans have appointed a faculty or staff member to direct laboratory school planning and implementation activities.[19] Frequently, this faculty or staff member plays a co-director or co-principal role at the laboratory school. Since the first year of operation, regular contact, both formal and informal, between laboratory school and COE leaders and their counterparts in host district offices, superintendents and cabinet leadership, has proven valuable in setting up and maintaining a successful partnership.

In 2019-20, the UNC System Office created a full-time executive director position responsible for coordinating supports for laboratory schools.[20] The executive director staffs the UNC Board of Governor's

[17] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.5 and 116-239.7

[18] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8

[19] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b) allows chancellors to designate governance duties to other university personnel as necessary.

[20] This position is also responsible for oversight of educator preparation programs within the UNC System.

Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools and provides supports to principals and COE deans or their designees who co-lead laboratory schools.[21]

Other communities of practice comprising staff from UNC System institutions with similar roles and responsibilities for laboratory schools also convene periodically. These communities of practice were initially organized under the direction of the UNC System Office in the first year of the laboratory school initiative. They are now organized informally by participants often in like roles (finance, legal, etc.). The UNC System Office convened laboratory school principals and COE leadership monthly, providing valuable updates and clarity around expectations for laboratory schools. In fall 2021, the Department of Public Instruction invited laboratory school leadership to the AIM conference, providing laboratory school teams an opportunity to collaborate in-person and plan strategically around literacy, assessment, and partnerships. An inaugural laboratory school summit occurred in late summer 2022 as an opportunity for further collaboration between the nine laboratory schools. Laboratory school leadership continue to appreciate and request additional opportunities for collaboration, learning, and sharing of innovative practices that may be beneficial for all schools.

The system of supports that the UNC System has established reflects the autonomy of individual system institutions under the laboratory school legislation and within the UNC System. The system institutions, and by extension their Colleges of Education and laboratory schools, operate independently of one another. However, they have common issues and challenges related to the operation of laboratory schools. For example, laboratory schools' unique classification as neither traditional LEA nor charter school creates challenges in the interpretation of new statutes and regulations and their application to each campus. These challenges were exacerbated during the rapidly changing statewide response to COVID-19 and persisted in 2021-22, despite all laboratory schools having been open for at least one year. As autonomous LEAs, most laboratory schools have continued to meet many operational and administrative demands of traditional public school districts using personnel based at the laboratory school (e.g., school principal, support staff) or at the partner institution (e.g., COE dean, university-based administrative personnel). This continues to pose challenges related to capacity and system alignment, and on occasion, diverting school leaders' attention from school-based instructional responsibilities. With limited authority under the laboratory school legislation to govern the operation of laboratory schools, the UNC System Office has worked to provide a system of supports that encourages collective engagement. Additionally, several laboratory school leaders have strengthened relationships with their regional contact at the Department of Public Instruction to further augment communication and collaboration.

Laboratory school selection and approval

The six laboratory schools operating in 2021-22 were part of the group of UNC System institutions originally identified as well-situated to support a laboratory school. The UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools approved ECU and WCU to create laboratory schools in November 2016. In January 2018, the subcommittee approved Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW; in October

[21] The executive director serves as an informal liaison between laboratory schools, the NC Department of Public Instruction, and the Board of Governors. In spring of 2020 and the 2020-21 school year, the executive director supported laboratory schools with items such as operations and funding issues related to COVID-19, DPI's Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP), and a new statewide literacy framework. In 2021-22, the director supported with the implementation of statewide LETRS training as well as planning for the approval of the three new laboratory schools opened in 2022-23.

2018, the subcommittee approved UNCC. In 2022, Appalachian State University, NCA&T, and UNCCH received approval to open and operate the three new laboratory schools.

During the 2020 legislative session, the laboratory school enabling legislation was amended to require that the UNC Board of Governors establish at least nine laboratory schools.[22] The change also allows a constituent institution to operate one or more laboratory schools in one or more school districts meeting the 25 percent low performing school threshold required for a laboratory school to open in the district.[23] Another statutory change revised the timeline for opening laboratory schools.[24] With nine laboratory schools operating in the 2022-23 school year, the Board of Governors meets the current statutory obligation.[25]

Laboratory school planning and implementation

Except for the three brand new laboratory schools that opened in fall 2022, all schools have operated for between two and five years, and as such, are beyond the implementation challenges that laboratory schools faced in their start-up year. However, some operational issues require ongoing attention to planning and implementation.

Student enrollment. In a typical year, several factors impact student enrollment at laboratory schools. First, the laboratory school enabling legislation specifies student eligibility criteria that limits the pool of students who can attend a laboratory school.[26] High transience among the students that laboratory schools are intended to serve also contributes to laboratory schools losing students year to year. Finally, transportation issues deter some eligible students from enrolling in or remaining at a laboratory school. Laboratory schools rely on their district partners to provide transportation so are subject to district policies. Students living outside of laboratory school zones must arrange for their own transportation, take longer bus rides, or travel longer to reach a bus pick-up/drop-off location.

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[22] N.C.G.S. §§116-239.5(a) previously directed the UNC Board of Governors, upon the recommendation of the UNC System President, to designate at least nine constituent institutions to establish laboratory schools. Session Law 2020-56 (HB 1096) revised the statute which as rewritten provides: The Board of Governors, upon recommendation by the President, shall designate constituent institutions to submit proposals to establish at least nine laboratory schools in total to serve public school students…The Subcommittee may select a constituent institution to operate more than one laboratory school.

[23] *Id.*

[24] *Id.* In addition N.C.G.S. §116-239.7 as rewritten provides: "The Board of Governors,…shall designate constituent institutions to establish and operate a total of at least nine laboratory schools. The chancellor of each constituent institution shall adopt and submit to the [Board of Governors' Subcommittee on Laboratory Schools] a proposal to operate one or more laboratory schools in one or more local school administrative units that meet the minimum threshold for the number of low-performing schools located in a unit under G.S. 116-239.6(4).

[25] Per Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096), revisions to Section 11.6(d) of S.L. 2016-94, as amended by Section 4 of S.L. 2017-117 provide that "Notwithstanding G.S. 116-239.5, (i) at least six laboratory schools shall be established pursuant to Article 29A of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes, as enacted by this section, and in operation by beginning of the 2020-2021 school year and (ii) at least an additional three laboratory schools shall be established pursuant to Article 29A of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes and in operation by the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

[26] See N.C.G.S. §116-239.9. Originally, the law limited enrollment to students who were both low-performing themselves and previously attended a low-performing school. The law was amended in 2017 allowing lab schools to enroll students meeting either criteria. (ECU enrolled students meeting both criteria in its first two years of operation.) The law was amended in subsequent years to allow enrollment of siblings of laboratory school students and children of laboratory school employees.

Changes made to the laboratory school legislation during the 2020 legislative session may ultimately help diminish the impact of some of these enrollment challenges. Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools that are not fully enrolled by March 1 for the upcoming year are permitted to enroll students who live within the district but do not meet the other laboratory school eligibility criteria. These students can account for up to 20 percent of a laboratory school's total student capacity.[27] In addition, districts where laboratory schools are located were required to provide transportation to students living within the district regardless of transportation policies and practices applied to other students and schools.[28]

However, pandemic conditions during spring 2020 and the 2020-21 school year likely depressed, at least initially, the effect of these enrollment related legislative changes. The pandemic resulted in a statewide stay-at-home order issued in March 2020. Consequently, all laboratory schools abandoned in-person student recruitment efforts such as door-to-door canvassing and meetings hosted at community-based organizations. Recruitment efforts largely shifted online using social media, often with the support of constituent university communications departments. According to 20-day enrollment data from Fall 2020, enrollment in laboratory schools declined by approximately 28 percent in 2020-21 compared to the previous year.[29] Only the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) maintained previous year school-wide enrollment without a significant (greater than five percent) decline. Importantly, these data indicate that most of the enrollment losses at each campus occurred in the first grade the school services (grades K or 6) or in the last grade the school services (grades 5 or 8). Student enrollment for other grades generally show smaller declines, and in some cases, increases.

These data indicate that laboratory schools may have had challenges recruiting new families to replace the students who aged out of their school as they transitioned to middle school or high school. While the enrollment of each respective class of students remained largely intact, the incoming class of students at the lowest grade level served often was not large enough to replace the outgoing class or to account for the attrition of a few students from each class.

Data from the 20th day of the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years show that enrollment has stabilized, and for several laboratory schools, has increased. This suggests that laboratory schools were able to resume effective marketing and recruitment strategies and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations.

Staff hiring. Laboratory schools have continually engaged in hiring to address staff turnover. In addition to natural attrition (due to retirements, moving, or taking leave for health reasons), some teachers and staff have left these laboratory schools for lack of fit with the laboratory school mission, or the needs of

[27] Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096) added a new N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(c2) expanding student enrollment options for laboratory schools.

[28] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096).

[29] National data Indicate that few states have seen more than a 1% increase in student enrollment in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21, when some states experienced declines as high as 5%. K-12 schools in North Carolina experienced an enrollment increase of 0.6% from 2020-21 to 2021-2022. See Jacobson, Linda. "'Those Kids Did Not Come Back': Exclusive Enrolment Data Shows Students Continue to Flee Urban Districts as Boom Town Schools and Virtual Academies Thrive." The 74 Million, 6 April 2022, https://www.the74million.org/article/covid-school-enrollment-students-move-away-from-urban-districts-virtual/. In North Carolina, enrollment numbers remain below 2019-20 levels. Traditional public school enrollment gained 0.8% from 2020-21 to 2021-22, on average, but remained down 4.3% overall.

students served. Though laboratory schools prioritize staffing their schools with licensed and experienced teachers, some have hired beginning teachers (teachers in their first three years of teaching) who had clinical experiences at the laboratory school or otherwise demonstrate that their teaching experience, interests, and goals are aligned with the laboratory school environment. The retention of laboratory school staff from school opening to present varies significantly across campus and position, ranging from four to 64 percent depending on the campus.

Supports for EC students. All laboratory schools provide statutorily required services as specified in student Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), however, the scope of legal and administrative requirements for student services can at times be broad and time-consuming administratively. In traditional LEAs, these efforts are often supported and coordinated by centralized EC departments. By nature, laboratory schools are smaller and therefore staff must often respond to a greater volume of demands in the administration of EC supports or testing. Several laboratory school leaders and EC staff have developed deeper partnerships with host district EC department heads, which has proven helpful in identifying and meeting the needs of diverse learners. Even still, cultivating and maintaining these relationships requires consistent communication and collaboration, taking time and resources.

Budgets. Ideally, enrollment would generate sufficient ADM funds so that laboratory schools are sustainable on state allocations and federal allotments alone. However, given the needs of the students that they serve, laboratory schools tend to have smaller class sizes and teacher to student ratios, particularly for younger elementary grades. Target enrollments balance these competing factors but have generally resulted in gaps between funds allocated per ADM and actual laboratory school costs. Laboratory schools receive annual supplemental revenue from the UNC System Office to support operation and rely on Colleges of Education to close budget gaps.[30] In 2021-22, laboratory schools reported receiving similar proportions of their laboratory school operational budgets from their host institution and/or COE budgets as in 2020-21: on average, approximately 21 percent from their host institution and/or COE budgets, and 14 percent from the UNC System Office.

How do laboratory schools form and harness partnerships to benefit learning, teaching, and school leadership?

The enabling laboratory school legislation specifies that laboratory schools shall use resources available to the constituent institution to expand opportunities for student success.[31] In practice, laboratory schools have availed themselves of additional resources through partnerships with the following: (1) host school districts; (2) other divisions of the university; (3) COE faculty; and (4) community partners. Though partnerships have become a fundamental feature of laboratory schools, successful collaborations require that laboratory school leaders have the capacity to develop and manage them. Laboratory schools vary in the degree to which partnership outreach and coordination is centralized and systematized rather than engaged in on an ad-hoc basis. In 2020-21, new laboratory school partnerships with constituent universities, COEs, host districts, or the local community were largely created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, except for new literacy partnerships at Appalachian State, ECU, and UNCG. Partnerships established prior to the pandemic generally shifted or were inactive in 2020-21 due to pandemic-related restrictions. In 2021-22, given the opportunity to resume full-time in-person instruction on all laboratory

[30] In 2020, laboratory schools also received federal emergency funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provided states funding and flexibilities to support K12 schools and local education agencies in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.
[31] N.C.G.S. §116-239.5(c)

school campuses, some new partnerships were established to continue to meet student need and enhance learning opportunities.

Host school districts

Benefits of partnership to Laboratory Schools. In 2021-22 laboratory schools continued to rely on district partners for access to K-12 school facilities (which the enabling laboratory school legislation did not provide), transportation and meal services, and operational supports, such as IT, maintenance, guidance on NCDPI reporting processes, and pandemic-related health and cleaning services, as well as some building security and safety procedures. Some laboratory schools share support and specials staff with district partners, effectively transforming part-time into full-time positions. Laboratory school principals are often included in recurring district principal meetings for information sharing and collaboration. Similarly, some laboratory school staff participate in district professional learning communities and professional development opportunities. In 2021-22, the Academy at Middle Fork, Niner University Elementary, and the ECU Community School independently provided social work and occupational therapy services, respectively, and therefore do not contract with their host district for these services.

During the 2020 summer session, the state legislature amended the laboratory school legislation to expand the supports that host districts must provide to laboratory schools. Effective in the 2021-22 school year, these legislative changes provided:

- New guidance for determining costs to districts for providing facilities and other operational and maintenance services for laboratory schools;[32]
- New guidance on transportation that districts provide laboratory schools;[33]
- An expansion of mandatory supports for laboratory schools including services for students with disabilities; child and family support services (e.g., social worker and school nurse services); health services, including dental and vision screenings, and similar health services that districts provide to other students; parent involvement coordination services; and school counselor services.[34]

These legislative changes are intended to address challenges that laboratory school leaders have previously experienced in their partnership with host districts.

Benefits of Partnership to Host District. In most cases, laboratory school and district leaders anticipate that students who matriculate from laboratory schools and return to district schools will be better positioned for academic success. To date, classes of students at each elementary laboratory school except Niner University Elementary have returned to host district middle schools. Laboratory school teachers acknowledge that autonomy afforded to them in their roles at laboratory schools allow them to holistically prepare students and families to return to their host district upon leaving the school. The Catamount School (WCU) has graduated five classes of 8th graders and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has graduated four classes of 8th graders. Some of these students have gone on to enroll in district early college high schools. Eighth graders attending The Catamount School who move into ninth grade at the high school where the laboratory school is co-located are already familiar with the facility and some of the staff. According to school leaders, this familiarity makes the transition easier for students. Likewise, many of these Catamount School graduates have already earned high school course credits (in Math I or Earth

[32] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(a) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)
[33] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(b) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)
[34] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(d) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)

and Environmental Science). UNCW leadership has pledged ten renewable scholarships covering in-state tuition and fees for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy graduates, the first class of which will graduate high school in spring 2023, to attend UNC Wilmington.[35]

Laboratory schools also brought resources into high-need schools, including capital improvements, expert instruction for high-need students, and professional development for district staff. For example, WCU helped the district finance improvements to an existing multi-purpose space that its laboratory school shares with its co-located district school. Several coursework opportunities offered at partner COEs and institutions have been made available to laboratory school and district staff. For example, as Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools seeks to strengthen its teacher pipeline, Appalachian State University has partnered to include district teacher assistants in graduate certificate programming. Other, less formal, professional development opportunities are also often available to host district staff because of the laboratory school partnership. For example, literacy experts working with laboratory school teachers at the ECU Community School also offered their support to South Greenville Elementary school teachers. ECU laboratory school teachers often collaborate with those at South Greenville Elementary, including participating in classroom observations and sharing best practices. Further, the Catamount School has served as a home for professional development for Jackson County Public Schools teachers on a range of topics including project-based learning and co-teaching. Since their opening, other COEs including those at Appalachian State, UNCW, and UNCG have made efforts to include district staff in various professional development opportunities.

Opportunities for Improvement. One hope of laboratory schools is that they serve as a hub for sharing of innovative practices or new strategies to address the needs and enhance the learning of the student populations served. Though laboratory school partnerships with host districts remain strong, the frequency of sharing of practices or learning from the laboratory school to the host districts remains unclear. The most visible demonstration of this type of learning and sharing of new practices might naturally exist on co-located campuses like the ECU Community School or the Catamount School (WCU). For example, leadership at the ECU Community School ensure that academic resources like a literacy specialist, or non-academic supports like access to dental care, are offered for all students and staff at South Greenville Elementary as well as those at the laboratory school. One developing opportunity for collaboration and practice sharing is the 'sister school' concept developed in 2021-22 by the Academy at Middle Fork in partnership with a neighboring Winston-Salem Forsyth County school of similar size and demographic makeup. While this relationship was only established in spring 2022, the vision for this partnership is to facilitate the sharing of practices and resources that improve student learning and social-emotional outcomes for students at the laboratory school with sister school staff and students. Overall, leadership across laboratory schools and partner LEAs recognize opportunities for greater sharing of best practices and collaboration between the laboratory schools and their partner districts. This is an area for further development over time.

Colleges of Education

Colleges of Education (COE) are fundamental laboratory school partners. University chancellors are titular heads of laboratory schools, while COE deans (or their designees) have primary oversight responsibilities and are engaged in the day-to-day operation of laboratory schools. COE deans (and/or their designees) work closely with school-based leadership teams. COE faculty directly engage with laboratory school staff

[35] More about this program can be found at: https://uncw.edu/news/2022/03/in-like-a-lion,-out-like-a-seahawk.html

and students in several forms. As planning and implementation partners, COE faculty have provided professional development relevant to specific laboratory school needs since inception. Faculty support instruction and curriculum implementation as faculty-in-residence, as instructors teaching onsite methods courses, or as field experience supervisors supporting COE students in clinical activities. In each of these roles, COE faculty may provide modeling and feedback opportunities for laboratory school staff as they work with COE students. COE faculty who are deeply engaged in instruction at laboratory schools—whether working with teachers or supervising COE students—have first-hand exposure to school operations and the challenges that public schools face in meeting the needs of diverse and high-need student populations. An ongoing challenge for COEs is finding ways to increase and sustain faculty exposure and engagement with laboratory schools. This is particularly challenging given university incentive structures and other responsibilities that COE faculty have.

The COE partnership has also helped laboratory schools recruit and identify teachers to work in laboratory schools. Several laboratory schools have hired teachers who earned degrees from their partner institution. COEs are also beginning to provide a pool of graduates who had pre-service experiences at the laboratory school from which they (or other schools with similar student composition) may hire teachers.

In 2020-21, engagement of COE faculty and students shifted to adapt to restrictions imposed by pandemic-related social distancing and remote learning. In several cases, informal or volunteer engagement of COE faculty or students with laboratory schools declined. In other cases, however, COVID-19 related changes facilitated greater COE engagement than had previously existed. For example, without a need to travel between Appalachian State, located in Boone, and the Academy at Middle Fork, located in Winston-Salem, more pre-service students were able to regularly engage with laboratory school students and staff in a remote environment. In 2021-22, the type and frequency of engagement of COE faculty generally returned to pre-2020 levels, though the specific faculty member and type of engagement may have shifted.

Other divisions of the university

Partnerships within UNC System institutions provide laboratory schools with services that are critical to school operation and resources needed to address the particular needs of laboratory school students and staff. Whereas COE planning teams tend to support coordination of partnerships as laboratory schools launch, that function becomes centralized within school-based leadership teams as laboratory schools become more established.

In 2021-22, university institutions continued to provide laboratory schools business and administrative operational supports (e.g., finance and accounting, human resources, legal, and data reporting) that local educational agencies provide to traditional district schools. These are functions that have become systematized within university divisions and offices after several years of laboratory school operation. Communications departments have increasingly supported laboratory schools with marketing for enrollment purposes, especially as schools relied heavily on virtual recruitment methods in response to pandemic-driven social distancing requirements.

Other institution partners help laboratory schools address non-academic student needs. Pre-service candidates from disciplines including counseling, social work, nursing, and speech therapy gain clinical intern experience by providing service-oriented supports to laboratory school students and/or professional development for laboratory school staff on relevant topics (e.g., trauma). For example, in 2021-22 two graduate students from the UNCG's Psychology Clinic provided counseling services on a

weekly basis at Moss Street Partnership School, which allowed students to receive long-term support in addition to what was previously provided by the school counselor. Additionally, ECU's College of Allied Health Sciences provided the services of an occupational therapist able to conduct assessments and interventions for students at ECU Community School. Further, a UNCG doctoral student in kinesiology worked with students and staff at Moss Street Community School to support the school's approaches to restorative practices. University institutions also provide laboratory schools access to university-based resources that enhance some aspect of the laboratory school model, as exemplified by faculty from the College of Arts and Architecture at UNCC providing dance lessons to the students at Niner University Elementary School with the assistance of university dance education students. Partnerships involving university staff, students, and resources beyond the constituent colleges of education have proven valuable for laboratory schools since their opening in 2017-18. These partnerships have strengthened the connection between the university and its community and brought needed resources and supports into the schools for the staff and students served.

Community partners

In their second, fourth, and fifth years of operation, laboratory schools varied in the way and degree to which they leveraged community partners. Prior to the pandemic, laboratory schools' community partners provided several primary supports, including help to address students' basic needs (e.g., backpack programs providing food for weekends), literacy development (e.g., donating reading materials, recruiting reading buddies), mental health needs (e.g., counseling services), and the expansion of enrichment activities during school (e.g. field trips to community sites) and during after school programming (e.g. activities organized by local Boys and Girls clubs). In 2020-21, laboratory schools engaged less with community partners due to social distancing limitations of the pandemic, though most laboratory schools created some partnerships specifically to address new student and family needs arising out of the COVID-19 crisis. In 2021-22, several laboratory schools formed partnerships in the community to serve students in new ways. At D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, community-based "enrichment partners" provided extension activities for students weekly that built upon their interests. The ECU Community School partnered with several organizations to provide both academic supplies (books) and non-academic resources (clothing, food, etc.) for students. In its first full year of in-person, traditional operation, Niner University Elementary formed several new partnerships within the community, including enrichment programs in the arts as well as organizations that provided food, vision, and advocacy support.

Are laboratory schools successfully marketed and managed?

The Evaluation Team addressed this evaluation question by considering the following: (1) the marketing of laboratory schools; (2) laboratory school admissions and enrollment priorities; (3) characteristics of students enrolled in laboratory schools; (4) school design; (5) school management; (6) the perceptions of laboratory school parents and caregivers; and (7) the perceptions of laboratory school personnel.

Marketing of laboratory schools

Unlike traditional district schools serving neighborhoods or other attendance zones, laboratory schools must recruit students to enroll. Prior to the 2020-21 school year, laboratory schools could enroll students who previously attended (or would have attended) a low-performing school, those who did not meet expected growth in the prior school year, or siblings of children meeting these criteria.[36] Additional

[36] N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)

amendments enacted in 2020 expanded the eligibility criteria of laboratory school students, applicable for students enrolling in the 2020-21 school year.[37]

Before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools typically relied on several marketing strategies to publicize laboratory schools. These included social media; recruiting events at the laboratory school, such as open houses and tours; meetings at community-based organizations, such as YMCAs and Boys and Girls clubs; information flyers and booths at university institution events, such as Homecoming; outreach to local childcare and pre-K centers; and advertising through local print and broadcast media.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in spring 2020 significantly curtailed in person outreach and recruitment activities. With state-imposed restrictions against large gatherings and cautions regarding face-to-face interactions, laboratory schools relied heavily on social media and print and media advertising to publicize laboratory schools. Many laboratory schools worked with COE or university institution offices that manage communications, community outreach, or marketing to deploy marketing activities more strategically (e.g., buy radio commercials during business commute time, lease billboards at key traffic areas, and develop promotional videos to use on websites, social media, and television).

In 2021-22, in person outreach and recruitment activities remained limited. Laboratory schools largely continued to rely on social media, print and media advertising for publicity, though some exceptions emerged. For example, some laboratory schools hosted both virtual and in-person "open house" events when COVID-19 restrictions were lifted to provide families with opportunities to engage either in-person or virtually.

Laboratory school leaders recognize that as laboratory schools become established and community awareness of them increases, their reputations will help drive word-of-mouth referrals. Thus, strategies that aim to improve school and student performance and otherwise keep families satisfied are also important marketing and recruitment strategies, especially as these schools gain prominence in the communities they serve.

Parents and caregivers of children newly enrolled at a laboratory school in 2021-22 report that they most commonly found out about the laboratory school through friends and word-of-mouth. Websites and social media were also mentioned as sources of information about laboratory schools. When asked why they wanted their child to attend a laboratory school, parents and caregivers reported several common reasons: (1) smaller class sizes and opportunities for their child to get more individualized attention; (2) hearing about the quality/reputation of the laboratory school; and (3) the resources available through the laboratory school and its connections to the university. Over 93 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents felt that the laboratory school did a good or very good job in explaining the application and enrollment process and in making that process an easy one.[38]

[37] Session law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096) 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."

[38] The data in this paragraph come from a laboratory school parent and caregiver survey administered in Spring 2022.

Overall, COVID-19 and the associated school closures may have adversely impacted marketing, as each laboratory school experienced declines in enrollment for the 2020-21 school year.[39] Further, the Niner University Elementary School's inaugural enrollment did not meet the UNCC laboratory school planning team's enrollment goal. As of September 2020, the Niner University Elementary School served 73 students, 49 percent of its projected enrollment target.[40] Data as of September 2021 show that laboratory schools stabilized or increased their enrollments, especially at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU). Data as of September 2022 show that laboratory school enrollments generally remained stable (from 2021-22) into the most recent school year.

Laboratory school admissions and enrollment priorities

As originally enacted in 2016, the enabling laboratory schools legislation directed UNC System institutions 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 *and* to give priority enrollment to students who did not meet expected growth in the prior school year.[41] 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. The amended statute no longer provides for priority enrollment for certain students. In 2018, the legislation was amended to expand admission eligibility criteria to include siblings of children eligible for admission under the 2017 criteria.[42] 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.[43]

[39] In 2020-21, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) enrolled 99 percent of its 2019-20 enrollment; ECU Community School enrolled 93 percent; Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) enrolled 85 percent; D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) enrolled 94 percent; and The Catamount School (WCU) enrolled 72 percent. In comparison, in 2019-20, enrollment at ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School, and The Catamount School (WCU) grew over 2018-19 enrollment, by 38 percent, 0.25 percent, and 7 percent, respectively; but declined at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) by 0.7 percent and 7 percent, respectively. All the data for these comparisons come from the 20th day of each school year.

[40] In a report submitted to the Evaluation Team in March 2020, UNCC's laboratory school planning team projected enrollment of 150 students for the 2020-21 school year.

[41] N.C.G.S. §116-239.9(a)(1) and (2).

[42] 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.

[43] 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."

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 create a new requirement, effective in the 2021-22 school year, that laboratory schools make reasonable attempts to ensure that their student population reflects the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of students in the district where they are located.[44]

Table 1 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 1st 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 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 1 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 99 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Middle Fork in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; less than 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff.

Appalachian State certified that 87 percent of the students enrolled at the Academy at Elkin in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 1 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 12 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

ECU certified that nearly 93 percent of the students at the ECU Community School in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 26 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 24 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 3.3 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 3.3 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

NCA&T certified that 66 percent of the students at Aggie Academy in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance at a low-performing school; 31 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; and three percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

[44] 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.

UNCC certified that 66 percent of the students at Niner University Elementary in 2022-23 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; 7 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 11 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCCH certified that 100 percent of the students at Carolina Community Academy in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on being zoned to attend a low-performing school.

UNCG certified that 56 percent of the students at Moss Street Partnership School in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 22 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 19 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; 0.3 percent qualified as children of laboratory school staff; and 2.1 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

UNCW certified that 63 percent of the students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 13 percent qualified based on their own prior performance; 20.5 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and nearly 4 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Finally, WCU certified that nearly 2 percent of the students enrolled at The Catamount School in 2022-23 qualified to attend based on their previous attendance or being zoned to attend a low-performing school; 92 percent qualified to attend based on their own prior performance; 3.4 percent qualified based on a sibling's attendance; and 8.5 percent qualified under a provision that helps laboratory schools reach enrollment capacity.

Table 1: Student Enrollment and Laboratory School Eligibility Requirements

	ASU: Middle Fork	ASU: Elkin	ECU	NCA&T	UNCC	UNCCH	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Total Enrollment	262	91	123	70	140	28	339	209	59
Previously Attended or Zoned to Attend a Low-Performing School	99.6%	0.0%	92.7%	65.7%	65.7	100.0%	56.1%	62.9%	1.7%
Previously Low-Performing Student	0.0%	86.8%	26.0%	31.4%	15.7	0.0%	22.4%	12.9%	91.5%
Sibling of a Child Meeting Eligibility Criteria	0.0%	0.0%	24.4%	0.0%	7.1	0.0%	19.2%	20.5%	3.4%
Child of a Laboratory School Staff Member	0.4%	1.1%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Post March 1st Enrollee that Helps the Laboratory School Reach Capacity	0.0%	12.1%	3.3%	2.9%	11.4	0.0%	2.1%	3.8%	8.5%

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 2022-23 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.

Characteristics of students enrolled in laboratory schools

Table 2 presents enrollment and demographic data for UNC System laboratory schools in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) has 262 enrolled students, with 46 in kindergarten, 55 in 1st grade, 31 in 2nd grade, 43 in 3rd grade, 43 in 4th grade, and 44 in 5th grade. These enrollment values for the Academy at Middle Fork are slightly lower (by 4.4 percent) than those from the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 51 percent are male, 42 percent are Black, nearly 37 percent are Hispanic, and 22 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 79 percent of the Academy at Middle Fork students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 30 percent of the K-5 students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools are Black, 28 percent are Hispanic, 14 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 62 percent are designated as low-income.[45]

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Academy at Elkin (Appalachian State) has 91 enrolled students, with 27 in 2nd grade, 34 in 3rd grade, and 30 in 4th grade. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 52 percent are male, 71 percent are White, 22 percent are Hispanic, and 30 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 72 percent of the 2nd-4th grade students in Elkin City Schools are White, 19 percent are Hispanic, and 10 percent are classified as exceptional children.

[45] In the paragraphs below, data on race/ethnicity for other students in the same school district come from the 2020-21 academic year. Data on economic-disadvantage come from Title I reporting for the 2021-22 academic year. These Title I data are at the school rather than the student level.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the ECU Community School has 123 enrolled students, with 19 in kindergarten, 21 in 1st grade, 24 in 2nd grade, 24 in 3rd grade, 24 in 4th grade, and 11 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show a modest increase in enrollment (7.9 percent) at the ECU Community School. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 55 percent are male, 95 percent are Black, and 16 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 83 percent of the ECU Community School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 47 percent of the K-5 students in Pitt County Schools are Black, 12 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 68 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th data of the 2022-23 academic year, the Aggie Academy (NCA&T) has 70 enrolled students, with 30 in 3rd grade, 24 in 4th grade, and 16 in 15th grade. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 59 percent are male, 93 percent are Black, and 13 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 43 percent of the 3rd-5th grade students in Guilford County Schools are Black and 13 percent are classified as exceptional children.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) has 140 enrolled students, with 26 in kindergarten, 31 in 1st grade, 40 in 2nd grade, 21 in 3rd grade, and 22 in 4th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show a 15.7 percent enrollment increase. This enrollment growth comes from adding a new grade level (4th grade). Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 58 percent are male, 84 percent are Black, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 23 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 87 percent of the Niner University Elementary School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 35 percent of the K-4 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are Black, 29 percent are Hispanic, 9 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 49 percent are designated as low-income.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Carolina Community Academy (UNCCH) has 28 students enrolled in kindergarten. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 50 percent are male, 64 percent are Black, 11 percent are Hispanic, and 11 percent are classified as exceptional children. By comparison, 33 percent of the kindergarten students in Person County Schools are Black, 8 percent are Hispanic, and 15 percent are classified as exceptional children.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) has 339 enrolled students, with 54 in kindergarten, 73 in 1st grade, 40 in 2nd grade, 60 in 3rd grade, 51 in 4th grade, and 61 in 5th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show an enrollment decrease of 7.6 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 53 percent are male, 62 percent are Black, nearly 15 percent are Hispanic, and 20 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 100 percent of the Moss Street Partnership School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 18 percent of the K-5 students in Rockingham County Schools are Black, 15 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 76 percent are designated as low-income.

Table 2: Student Enrollment in UNC System Laboratory Schools

	ASU: Middle Fork		ASU: Elkin	ECU		NCA&T	UNCC		UNCCH	UNCG		UNCW		WCU	
	21-22	22-23	22-23	21-22	22-23	22-23	21-22	22-23	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23
Total Enrollment	274	262	91	114	123	70	121	140	28	367	339	208	209	57	59
Kindergarten	52	46	---	19	19	---	42	26	28	73	54	20	26	---	---
1st Grade	28	55	---	22	21	---	43	31	---	50	73	21	18	---	---
2nd Grade	43	31	27	23	24	---	19	40	---	58	40	19	22	---	---
3rd Grade	44	43	34	27	24	30	17	21	---	56	60	24	19	---	---
4th Grade	45	43	30	13	24	24	---	22	---	63	51	24	22	---	---
5th Grade	62	44	---	10	11	16	---	---	---	67	61	21	25	---	---
6th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	18	34	10	12
7th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	28	17	21	23
8th Grade	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	33	26	26	24
Male	48.9%	51.2%	51.7%	55.3%	55.3%	58.5%	53.7%	57.9%	50.0%	55.0%	52.8%	51.9%	49.8%	49.1%	45.8%
White	10.9%	15.3%	71.4%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	1.7%	0.7%	14.3%	14.4%	12.7%	5.3%	3.8%	84.2%	94.9%
Black	46.4%	42.0%	5.5%	95.6%	95.1%	93.2%	85.1%	84.3%	64.3%	60.8%	61.7%	86.1%	90.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	4.7%	5.0%	1.1%	1.8%	1.6%	2.4%	2.5%	4.3%	7.1%	11.7%	10.0%	3.8%	4.3%	10.5%	1.7%
Hispanic	36.9%	36.6%	22.0%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	9.1%	6.4%	10.7%	13.1%	14.5%	3.4%	1.9%	1.8%	0.0%
Asian	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	2.1%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	1.7%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EC Status	16.8%	21.8%	29.7%	23.7%	16.3%	12.8%	15.7%	22.9%	10.7%	14.4%	20.1%	19.7%	19.1%	14.0%	28.8%
Low-Income	79.3%	N/A	N/A	83.3%	N/A	N/A	87.3%	N/A	N/A	100.0%	N/A	100.0%	N/A	50.0%	N/A

Note: This table displays characteristics of the students enrolled at UNC System laboratory schools in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. Most of the data in this table comes from the Principal's Monthly Report from the 20th day of the school year. The low-income data come from the 2021-22 Title I federal reporting. Please see https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring#title-i---eligible-schools-summary-report-(essr) for those data. These Title I data are not yet available for the 2022-23 school year. N/A=not available.

As of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) has 209 enrolled students, with 26 in kindergarten, 18 in 1st grade, 22 in 2nd grade, 19 in 3rd grade, 22 in 4th grade, 25 in 5th grade, 34 in 6th grade, 17th in 7th grade, and 26 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show an increase in enrollment of one student. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 50 percent are male, 90 percent are Black, and 19 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 100 percent of the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 19 percent of the K-8 students in New Hanover County Schools are Black, 16 percent are classified as exceptional children and 66 percent are designated as low-income.

Finally, as of the 20th day of the 2022-23 academic year, The Catamount School (WCU) has 59 enrolled students, with 12 in 6th grade, 23 in 7th grade, and 24 in 8th grade. Relative to the 20th day of the 2021-22 school year, these data show an increase in enrollment of 3.5 percent. Of the students enrolled in 2022-23, 46 percent are male, 95 percent are White, and 29 percent are classified as exceptional children. Title I data from the 2021-22 school year show that 50 percent of The Catamount School students are designated as low-income. By comparison, 66 percent of the 6th-8th grade students in Jackson County Schools are White, 17 percent are classified as exceptional children, and 63 percent are designated as low-income.

School design

The laboratory school enabling legislation sets out defining characteristics of laboratory schools that distinguish them from other North Carolina public schools. Specifically, laboratory schools are set up to serve students who are low-performing or attended a low-performing school (rated D or F under the state school rating system), transform and improve teacher and school leader preparation, and operate under the governance of the UNC System. Laboratory schools present an opportunity for COE faculty at UNC System institutions to lead the development and piloting of innovative instructional and school operation practices. These innovative practices may improve the learning outcomes for students and enhance educator preparation.

Established, governed, and operated independently of each other, laboratory schools provide an opportunity for COEs to design distinctly different schools reflecting the needs of the communities they serve and the strengths and capacities of their respective UNC System institutions. However, the legislative design of laboratory schools has resulted in several common, defining characteristics. Laboratory schools serve high concentrations of high-need students and are generally located in low-resource communities. Funding amounts allocated to laboratory schools also challenge COE faculty and laboratory school administrators to think creatively about the operation of a K-12 public school.

These common defining characteristics of laboratory schools drive common goals, including (1) ensuring that students attending laboratory schools are well-served; (2) contributing to the field of education by improving approaches to instruct students and prepare future educators; and (3) improving K-12 student outcomes by identifying and modeling best practices that other North Carolina schools can adopt, particularly for high-need students. Common defining characteristics and goals drive, in turn, some common features among laboratory schools.

Physically, socially, and emotionally safe environments for students. The concentration of high-need students in laboratory schools means that school staff face an intensified demand to meet student needs associated with poverty. These needs include high mobility, exposure to adverse childhood experiences and other trauma, limited support networks/safety nets, lack of access to transportation, food insecurity,

and unstable housing – needs in many cases exacerbated by the ongoing challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Laboratory school models recognize the out-of-school challenges that impede learning and in response, aim to address many of these issues with a focus on the "whole child." Laboratory schools employ staff and/or engage institution and community partners to provide health, social work, and counseling services, and address basic subsistence needs of students and families (e.g., provide food on weekends and winter clothing). For example, Niner University Elementary partners with a community organization to provide school-based mental health services for students while also utilizing a "Cares" team, which supports members of the school community who are experiencing difficulty, and a "HeART" (Healing and Responding to Trauma) team (comprised of teachers, a full-time social worker, and counselors), that responds to students' urgent emotional needs with the goal of minimizing interruptions to instructional time. With the support of counseling interns from UNCC's College of Education, Niner University Elementary also provides play therapy to identified students. The ECU Community School has an integrative Health Collaborative that includes a guidance counselor, a social worker, teachers, and in some cases graduate students from the marriage and family therapy program to address both academic and social-emotional challenges for students and their families. Laboratory schools also educate staff on the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences, and they emphasize community and relationship building among students and staff through positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and restorative justice practices. Upon returning to fully in-person learning in 2021-22, laboratory schools worked to re-establish and refine systems and practices focused on creating socially and emotionally safe environments for students. All laboratory schools used either or both PBIS and restorative practices to support behavior management and positive school culture.

Balanced curriculum and enrichment activities. Laboratory schools 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. Laboratory schools also 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. Further, 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.

In 2021-22, multiple laboratory schools implemented curriculum changes to address ongoing learning gaps exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Moss Street Partnership School staff adopted frameworks to support students' math and literacy learning. Additionally, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and the ECU Community School implemented several curricular changes to support student reading. Further, the Academy at Middle Fork added a STEM program as part of the rotation for students. Laboratory schools generally conducted beginning of the year diagnostic and end of the year summative assessments, as well as interim formative assessments throughout the year to assess student learning progress and gaps, especially in math and literacy.

Focus on literacy. Laboratory schools are particularly focused on improving teaching and learning related to literacy. In 2021-22, several COEs continued to involve faculty in the support of literacy instruction at the laboratory school. For example, faculty from ECU and UNCC regularly met with laboratory school teachers during their weekly planning periods to support the implementation of reading curriculum, review literacy assessment data, determine instructional grouping, and identify literacy resources to support instruction. Additionally, UNCW hosted a faculty-in-residency focused on culturally sustaining literacy.

In 2021-22, COEs continued to support literacy instruction at laboratory schools through graduate program offerings. ECU Community School, Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) teachers are enrolled in or planning to enroll in their partner COE Master of Education literacy programs. COE faculty also support laboratory school efforts to enhance literacy instruction. For example, an ECU COE faculty member is integrally involved with the ECU Community School's work to develop and implement a school-wide literacy plan; UNCW faculty, including the COE librarian, collaborate with D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy staff to support implementation of literacy interventions and programs. Additionally, all laboratory schools had staff participate in the statewide science of reading LETRS training to improve early literacy knowledge and instructional practices.

Licensed and experienced teachers. Laboratory schools continue to emphasize hiring and retaining licensed and experienced teachers. However, most laboratory schools have experienced staff turnover and have needed to hire some beginning teachers (those in their 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year of teaching) to fill those vacancies. In hiring teachers, laboratory schools sought individuals whose interests, background, or teaching strengths align with the laboratory school mission, model, and student population. Some laboratory schools were able to hire graduates of the COE program who had served internships or had other clinical experiences at the laboratory school as pre-service candidates.

The laboratory schools that hired beginning teachers provided them various supports, including the statewide NC New Teacher Support Program, which provides one-on-one instructional coaching through a mentor, or their COE's own support program. Though school leaders reported satisfaction with their beginning teachers, they did acknowledge that employing them reduced the number of classrooms available for pre-service candidates to have clinical experiences—given experience requirements for clinical/cooperating teachers and the desire to allow new teachers the time and opportunity to adapt to teaching in the laboratory school and addressing the needs of their students.

School management

Laboratory school management reflects the university context in which they operate. Relative to traditional district settings, laboratory school leadership is less hierarchical, and teachers exercise more autonomy. Laboratory schools are managed as an extension of the COEs that have designed and overseen their implementation.

Laboratory school leadership. Laboratory school leadership teams include a site-based principal, who works with the COE dean or designee, and an instructional or curriculum director, who is often associated with the COE but based at the laboratory school. Within these leadership teams, the principal manages staff, parent, and student interactions and concerns. The COE lead generally provides day-to-day oversight of laboratory school administration and strategic and policy management. The instructional or curriculum director works with laboratory school teachers to support curriculum planning, development, and instruction and serves as a liaison between COE faculty and lab school teachers. The governance structure of laboratory schools—schools within university systems that are operated by COEs—means that both the principal and COE leaders may be interacting with other institution partners regarding human resources, finance, operations, and other administrative functions. UNCC's laboratory school leadership team presents an exception to this model, with the COE laboratory school coordinator also serving as the site-based principal.

Laboratory schools have operated during several changes of leadership at the school, district, and COE level. Staff at Niner University Elementary (UNCC) and The Catamount School (WCU) have planned and partnered with host districts, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Jackson County Schools, respectively, under the leadership of multiple superintendents. Additionally, interim deans have led the COEs at both UNCC and ECU during laboratory school planning and/or implementation phases. In 2021-22, Appalachian State employed an interim director of curriculum and instruction as well as an interim principal, who had previously served in the curriculum director role. The Catamount School has employed three principals since opening in 2017.

Laboratory school staff. Laboratory schools generally have one full-time teacher per classroom and at least one class per grade level. Some laboratory schools also employ teacher assistants, who are sometimes shared across multiple classrooms, for lower elementary grades. In the 2021-22 school year: (1) The Catamount School (WCU) had one class per grade in grades 6-8; (2) the ECU Community School had two classes per grade in grades K, 2, 3, and 4 and one class per grade in grades 1 and 5; (3) the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) had three classes per grade; (4) D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) had a combination class in grades 4 and 5 in addition to one class in all grades; (5) the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) had two to four classrooms per grade, which includes some multi-age classrooms in the lower grades (e.g., combined first and second grade); and (6) Niner University Elementary (UNCC) had three classrooms in both kindergarten and first grade and two classrooms in second and third grades. Three laboratory schools used departmentalized instruction in 2021-22: UNCG had core content teachers for grade five and UNCW for grades 6-8. The Catamount School (WCU), the only laboratory school serving only middle grades, had five core content teachers for grades 6-8.

All laboratory schools provide student supports including administrative, counseling, student health, social work, exceptional children, and behavior management services. Laboratory schools also provide extracurricular and enrichment activities, including arts, music, and physical education. The smallest laboratory schools, UNCC, ECU and WCU, have the fewest number of full-time support staff employees and rely heavily on institution partners to provide supports. The laboratory schools operating whole schools (Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW) employ more support and extracurricular staff, such as school nurses, social workers, media specialists, and arts, music, physical education, and special education teachers. Appalachian State also employs teaching assistants for lower grade classrooms since it cannot rely on pre-service candidates to provide classroom support given the physical distance between the university campus and the laboratory school. Niner University Elementary (UNCC) employs a teacher assistant in every classroom to provide daily small group literacy and math instruction to all students. In 2021-22, UNCG and UNCW both employed assistant principals; Appalachian State, ECU, UNCC, and WCU did not have assistant principals.

Laboratory school funding. Laboratory schools rely on four primary sources of school funding: ADM dollars, allocations from the UNC System Office; support from their UNC System institution (typically, COE budgets or foundations); and Title I funds. Each of these sources may be precarious or variable: student enrollment, which drives ADM, has fluctuated over time; UNC System allocations come from fixed, recurring funds to support laboratory school implementation; UNC system institutions have supported start-up costs from funding sources not intended to support laboratory school operation; and laboratory schools require the capacity to access Title I and other federal K-12 funds.

As previously noted, the level of ADM and state financial support for laboratory schools has required that the UNC System and UNC System institutions close budget gaps. In addition, laboratory schools have made other trade-offs to contain operating costs (e.g., prioritizing supports provided in the first year of

implementation; operating co-located schools; scheduling school start and end times around the availability of district transportation). Laboratory schools have relied on COE and/or institution funding for approximately 21 percent, on average, of their operating budgets. Recurring funding from the UNC System made up another approximately 14 percent, on average, with ADM and federal funding sources covering the remainder.

In 2020, laboratory schools received one-time supports from two funding sources. The state directed $200,000 to laboratory schools for support services.[46] Laboratory schools also received federal emergency funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provided states funding and flexibility to support K-12 schools and local education agencies in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.[47] Laboratory schools continued to utilize this funding to varying degrees to support student learning in 2021-22. In addition, as previously noted, legislative changes in the laboratory school enabling legislation, effective in the 2021-22 school year, provide new guidance on costs of certain supports that district partners provide to laboratory schools.[48] These changes may reduce some operating expenses for laboratory schools and help close budget gaps. However, the impact of these new supports on the ongoing need for UNC System institutions to provide their own funds or to access other funds needed to serve high-need students successfully is unclear.

Laboratory School Autonomy. Given the governance structure unique to laboratory schools, many have developed and implemented innovative practices to support student and staff learning and development. Many of these practices are discussed at length within this report – notably, curricular adjustments made to respond to student need, COE and other university faculty and students that engage in a variety of ways with laboratory school students and personnel, and community partnerships and other coordinated efforts to meet the non-academic and social-emotional needs of students, among others. However, while this type of innovation is encouraged amongst laboratory schools, leaders note a potential tension between the perceived laboratory school autonomy and external restrictions and expectations placed on each campus. As one example, though laboratory school leadership and staff expressed appreciation for the learning and support that the state-wide LETRS training has provided, the expectation to participate alongside other traditional public schools is fundamentally at tension with their autonomy to design, implement, and learn from their own models of literacy instruction. Much of what laboratory school staff had developed for literacy instruction needed varying levels of adaptation in response to the LETRs training. Other centralized expectations outlined for both traditional public schools and laboratory schools may limit some of the flexibility that laboratory schools would have otherwise had, especially in any cases where these expectations may not need to apply across all contexts.

Additionally, though laboratory schools have operational autonomy to set their own school calendars and schedules, their reliance upon host districts for transportation has led to less flexibility in developing schedules to meet the needs of the individual students in the building. Similarly, decisions around teacher

[46] Pursuant to Session Law 2020-56, the UNC Board of Governors was authorized to transfer $200,000 in non-recurring funds from funds provided for the Future Teachers of North Carolina program for the 2020-21 fiscal year with the proviso that those funds are not used to create new positions or to hire additional consultants for the UNC System Office.

[47] In addition, Session Law 2020-97 provided that for the 2020-21 fiscal year, North Carolina districts would be held harmless for declines in enrollment such that the State Board of Education would not reduce allocations to school districts due to discrepancies between their actual and anticipated average daily membership.

[48] N.C.G.S. §116-239.8(b)(4)(a) as amended by Session Law 2020-56 (House Bill 1096)

salary and roles, though autonomous to the laboratory school, have largely been created to align with those of the standard statewide and/or district salary schedule.

As laboratory schools continue to expand and carve a distinct lane in the state's educational landscape, it will be important for stakeholders to consider how to balance coordination and centralization with laboratory school's potential for innovation.

Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of the Laboratory Schools

To assess parent/caregiver perceptions of the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a parent/caregiver survey in the spring of 2022.[49] To encourage parent/caregiver responses, laboratory schools placed links to the anonymous survey on their school websites, invited parents to complete the survey while on-site at the school, and used other established channels of communication with families. Overall, 178 parent/caregiver responses were recorded: 16 from the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 68 from the ECU Community School, 28 from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), 27 from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 12 from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and 27 from The Catamount School (WCU).[50]

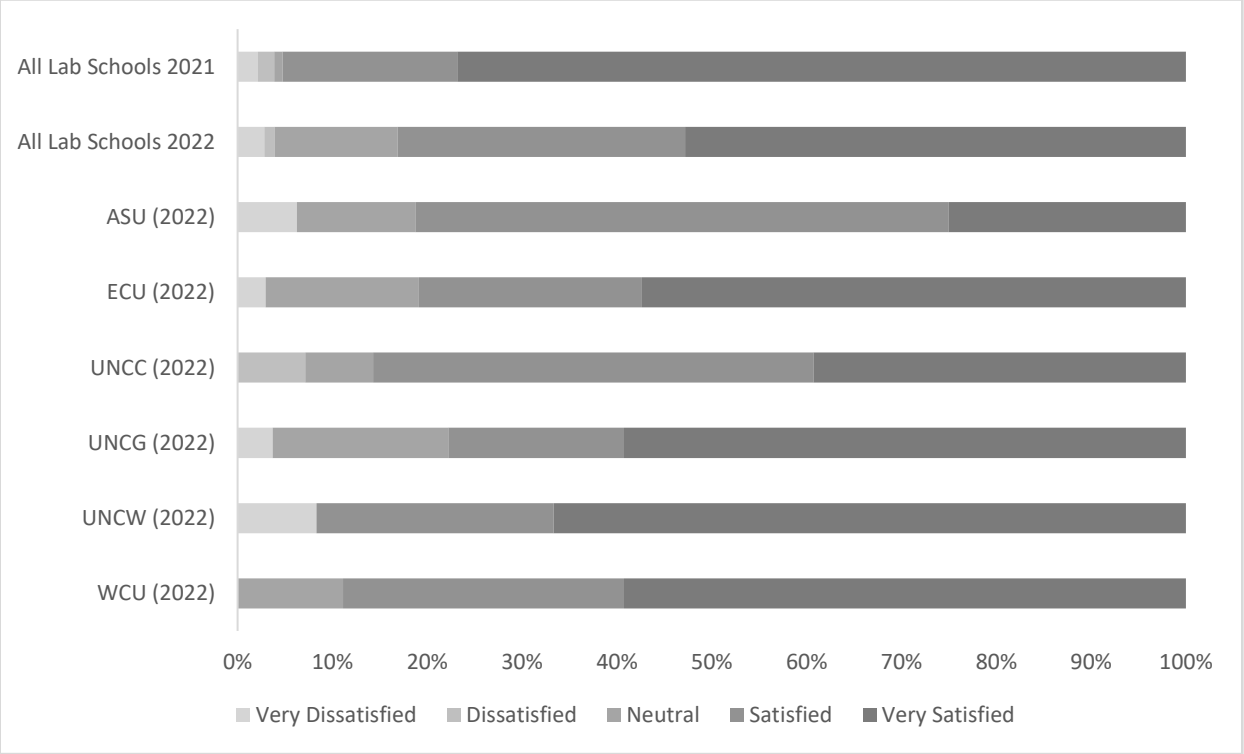
Items on the parent/caregiver survey asked respondents to assess how satisfied they were with the laboratory school, overall, and with various aspects of laboratory school operations (e.g., academic instruction, classroom management, communication with families). For the laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately, Figure 1 displays parents'/caregivers' overall satisfaction with their laboratory school. In addition, Figure 1 includes parents'/caregivers' overall satisfaction (across all laboratory schools) from spring 2021. This provides a basis for comparison for the current data.

Across all laboratory schools in 2021-22, approximately 83 percent of parent/caregiver respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their laboratory school. By comparison, the value from spring 2021 was 95 percent—with a much higher percentage of parents/caregivers reporting being very satisfied in spring 2021. These percentages varied across laboratory schools, from 78 percent satisfied or very satisfied at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 92 percent satisfied or very satisfied at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). Please see Appendix Table A4.1 for data from each parent/caregiver satisfaction item. Pooling data across laboratory schools, the data in the top panel of Appendix Table A4.1 indicate that there is some variation in the level of satisfaction felt across different aspects of the laboratory schools. In particular, in 2021-22, parent/caregivers reported being mot satisfied with how their laboratory school interacts with them and least satisfied with discipline at their laboratory school.

[49] This survey was previously administered in spring 2018, spring 2019, and spring 2021. There was no parent/caregiver survey in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[50] The number of responses from parents/caregivers with a child attending the ECU Community School represent a majority of students enrolled at that school. The responses rates are much lower for Appalachian State, UNCC, UNCG, UNCW, and WCU.

Figure 1: Parent/Caregiver Satisfaction with UNC System Laboratory Schools (2021-22)



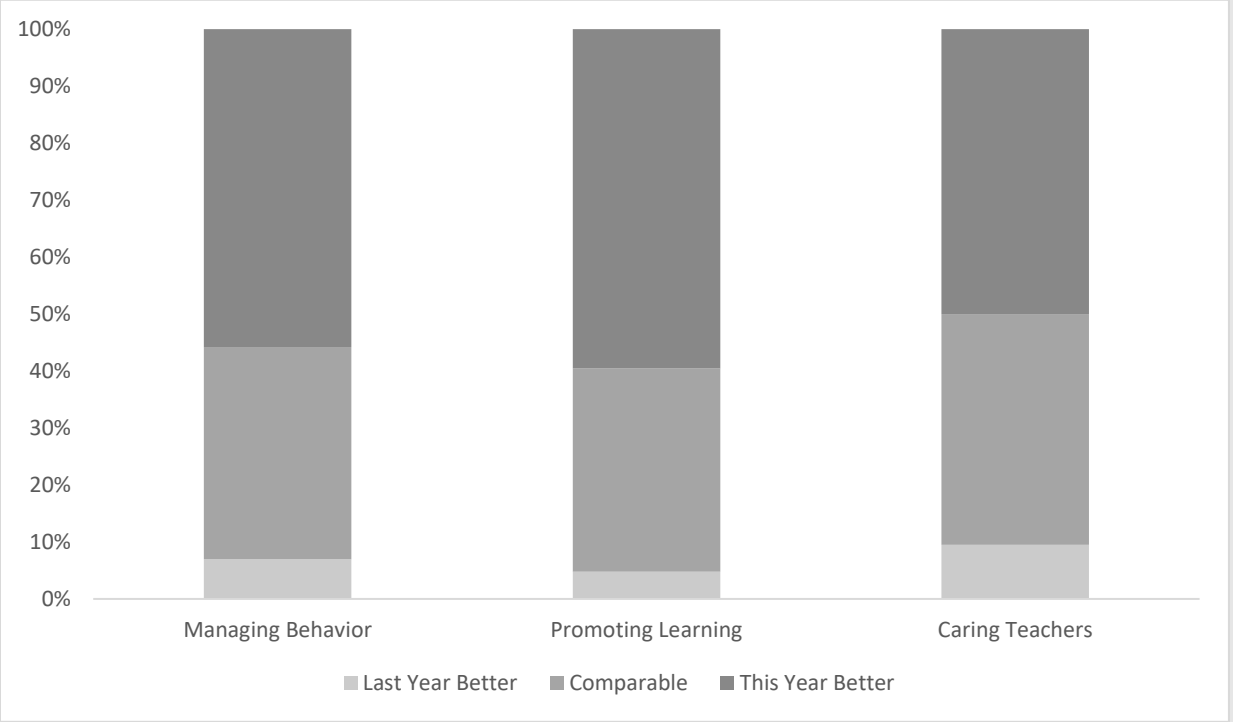
Note: This figure displays parent responses to the survey item "How satisfied are you with your child's school?". There are 178 survey responses from the 2022 survey and 233 survey responses from the 2021 survey.

An additional set of survey items asked parents/caregivers to compare their child's educational experiences in the 2021-22 school year with their educational experiences in the previous school year (2020-21). For families new to laboratory schools, this compares the laboratory school to a non-laboratory school setting; for returning laboratory school families, this compares the laboratory school in 2021-22 to its operation in the previous year.

Figure 2 displays parent responses for families new to laboratory schools in 2021-22. Nearly 56 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at managing student behavior than the school their child previously attended. Approximately 60 and 50 percent of these parent/caregiver respondents, respectively, indicated their laboratory school was better at promoting learning and having caring teachers.

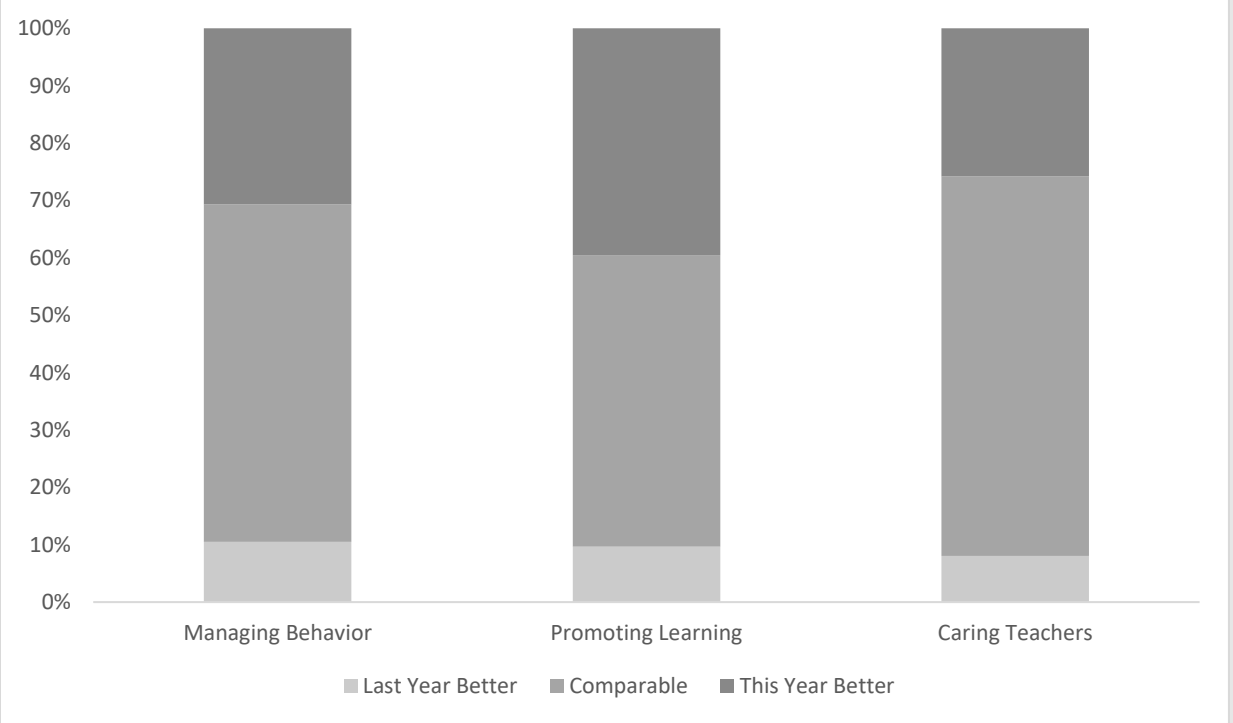
Figure 3 displays comparable data for families returning to a laboratory school in 2021-22. In the areas of managing student behavior, promoting learning, and having caring teachers, a majority of parent/caregiver respondents (ranging from 51 to 66 percent) felt that their laboratory school in 2021-22 was comparable to their laboratory school in 2020-21. Across these three areas, approximately 26-40 percent of parent/caregiver respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better in 2021-22 than it had been in 2020-21. Here, parent/caregiver respondents were most likely to say (40 percent of respondents) that their laboratory school was better at promoting learning in 2021-22 than in 2020-21. Please see Appendix Table A4.2 for parent/caregiver survey responses disaggregated for each UNC System laboratory school.

Figure 2: Comparing School Experiences for Families New to Laboratory Schools



Note: For families new to laboratory schools in 2021-22, this figure displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2021-22 to their educational experiences in 2020-21.

Figure 3: Comparing School Experiences for Families Returning to a Laboratory School



Note: For families returning to a laboratory school in 2021-22, this figure displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2021-22 to their educational experiences in 2020-21.

Perceptions of Laboratory School Personnel

To assess how laboratory school personnel perceive the management and environment of their school, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a school personnel survey in the spring of 2022.[51] This survey was distributed to classroom teachers, teacher assistants/paraprofessionals, student services personnel (e.g. counselors, social workers), school leadership (e.g., principals, curriculum directors), and other personnel (e.g., data managers, administrative assistants). Overall, 101 personnel survey responses were received: 29 from school personnel at Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 18 from the ECU Community School, 12 from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), 21 from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 15 from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and 6 from The Catamount School (WCU).

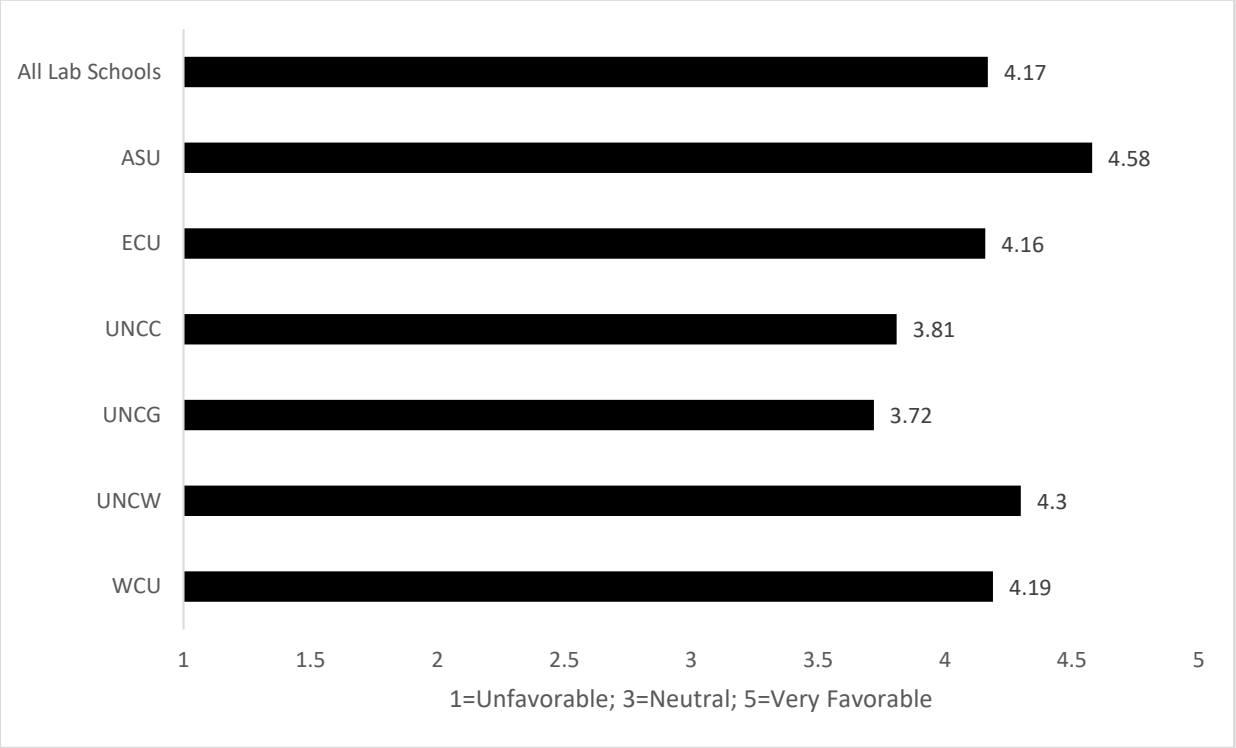
Items on the personnel survey asked respondents to assess leadership at their laboratory school, teaching practices, and school working conditions. Certain survey items were administered to all respondents, regardless of their role at the school. Other items were only administered to personnel in specific roles. For analyses, the Evaluation Team created summative measures for perceptions of school leadership[52] and perceptions of teaching practices at the school. In addition, the Evaluation Team presents data on interactions between laboratory school and COE personnel and perceptions of value, respect, and belonging at the laboratory school.

Figure 4 displays summative perceptions of school leadership at the laboratory schools. These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Overall, laboratory school personnel have favorable ratings of school leadership—i.e., an average rating of 4.17 across schools (on a 1-5 scale), that varies from 3.72 at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 4.58 at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork. Appendix Table A5.1 presents average response values on each leadership item and for each laboratory school. Data from Appendix Table A5.1 indicate that laboratory school personnel rated school leadership most favorably in the areas of setting high standards for teaching, being knowledgeable about assessment practices, and being knowledgeable about curriculum and instructional practices. Ratings were lower in the areas of actively monitoring the quality of teaching, providing helpful guidance for classroom practice, and setting clear and measurable school-level goals for progress on instructional outcomes. Several of these lower rated areas in 2021-22 are the same as in 2020-21 (i.e., providing helpful guidance for classroom practice and setting clear and measurable goals).

[51] This survey was administered for the first time in the spring of 2021.

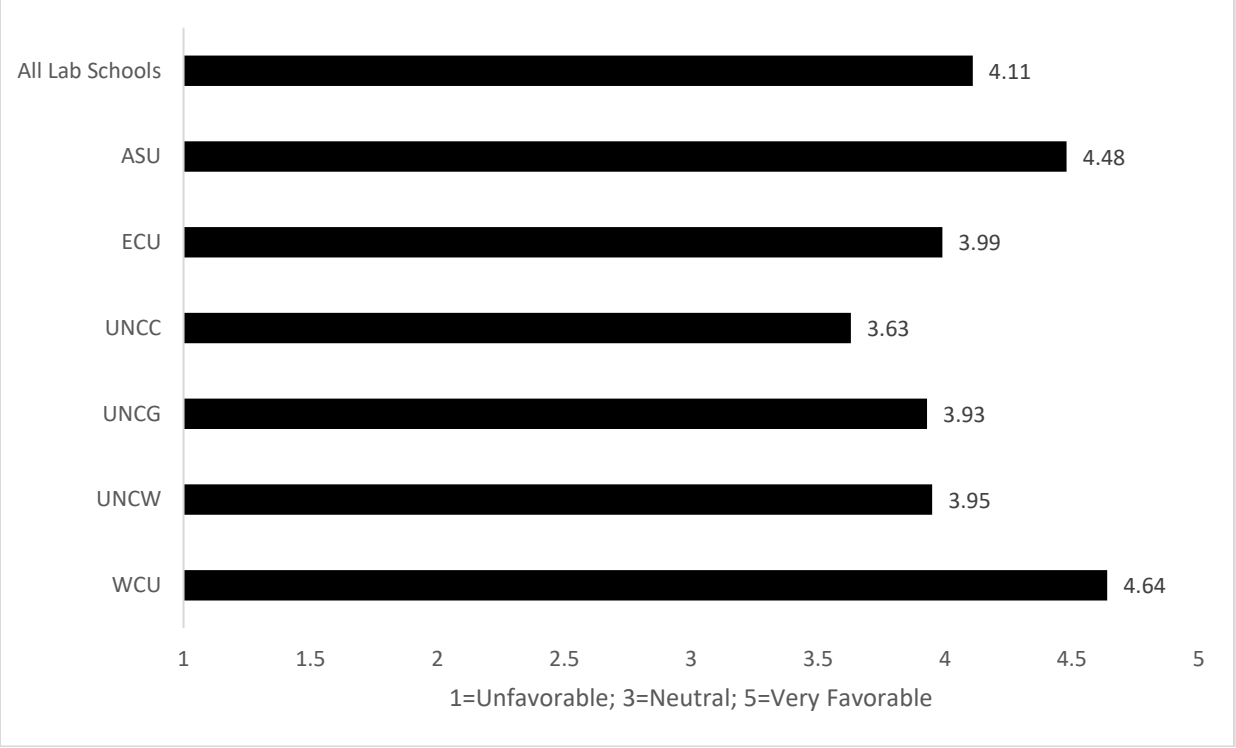
[52] Our analyses of perceptions of school leaders exclude responses from those school leaders themselves.

Figure 4: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of school leadership.

Figure 5: Perceptions of Teaching Practice at the Laboratory Schools



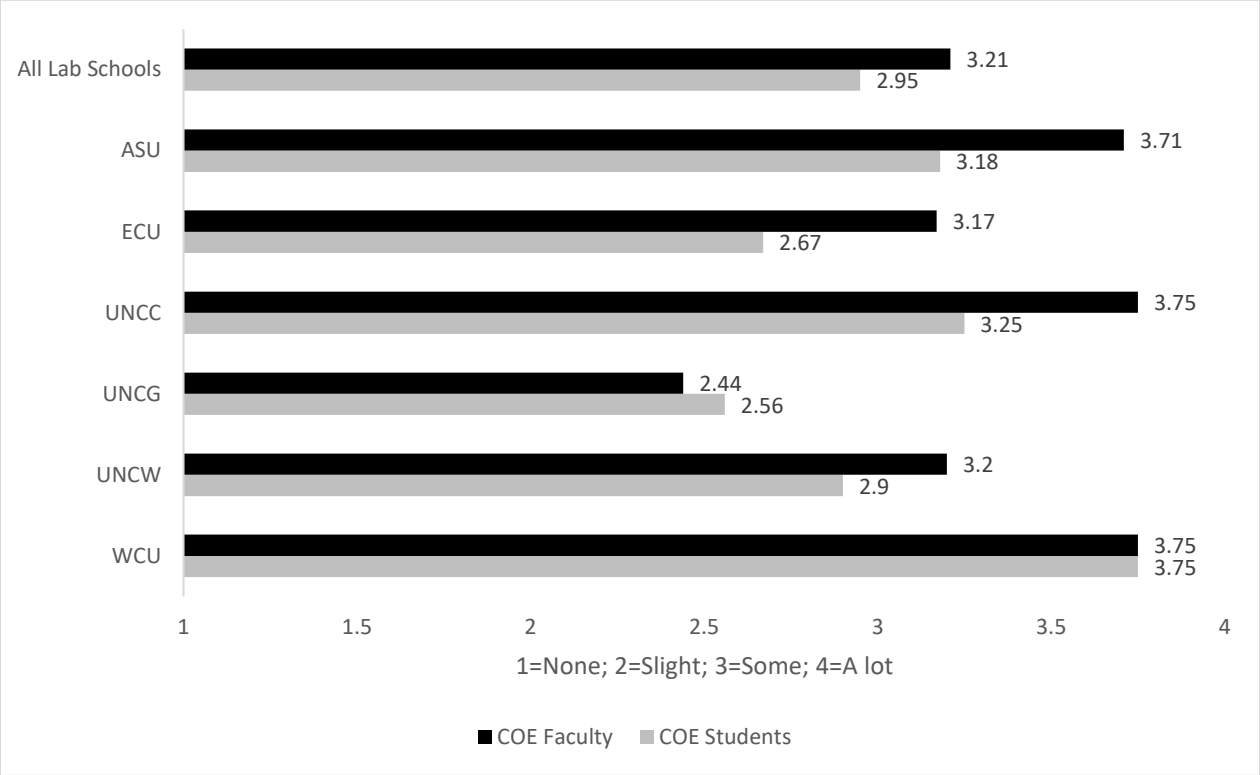
Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of teachers.

Figure 5 presents summative perceptions of teaching practice at the laboratory schools.[53] Once again, these data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. The overall rating for teaching practice at laboratory schools is 4.11 (on a scale from 1-5), with a range of 3.63 at Niner University Elementary (UNCC) to 4.64 at The Catamount School (WCU). Appendix Table A5.2 presents average response values on each teaching practice item, overall, and for each laboratory school. Data from Appendix Table A5.2 indicate that laboratory school personnel rated teaching practice most favorably in the areas of teachers having strong skills to produce student learning and in teachers collaborating around curriculum and lessons. Ratings were lower in the area of teachers having strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.

A unique feature of laboratory schools is the extent to which laboratory school personnel have opportunities to interact with and learn from COE faculty and students. Figure 6 displays data on the extent to which those interactions contributed to teacher growth at laboratory schools.[54] These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Regarding the extent to which COE faculty contributed to the growth of laboratory school teachers, the average response was 3.21 (between *some* and *a lot*), with a range of 2.44 at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 3.75 at Niner University Elementary (UNCC) and The Catamount School (WCU). Regarding the extent to which COE students (e.g., pre-service teachers in practicum and field experiences) contributed to the growth of laboratory school teachers, the average response was 2.95, with a range of 2.56 at Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 3.75 at The Catamount School (WCU).

[53] These teaching practice items focus on the extent to which teachers and other instructional personnel (1) hold one another accountable for working hard; (2) collaborate to revise and refine curriculum; (3) make sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels; (4) collaborate to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students; (5) have strong skills to produce meaningful student learning; (6) have strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems; and (7) are confident that they can motivate students to think and word hard.
[54] These survey items were only administered to classroom teachers at laboratory schools.

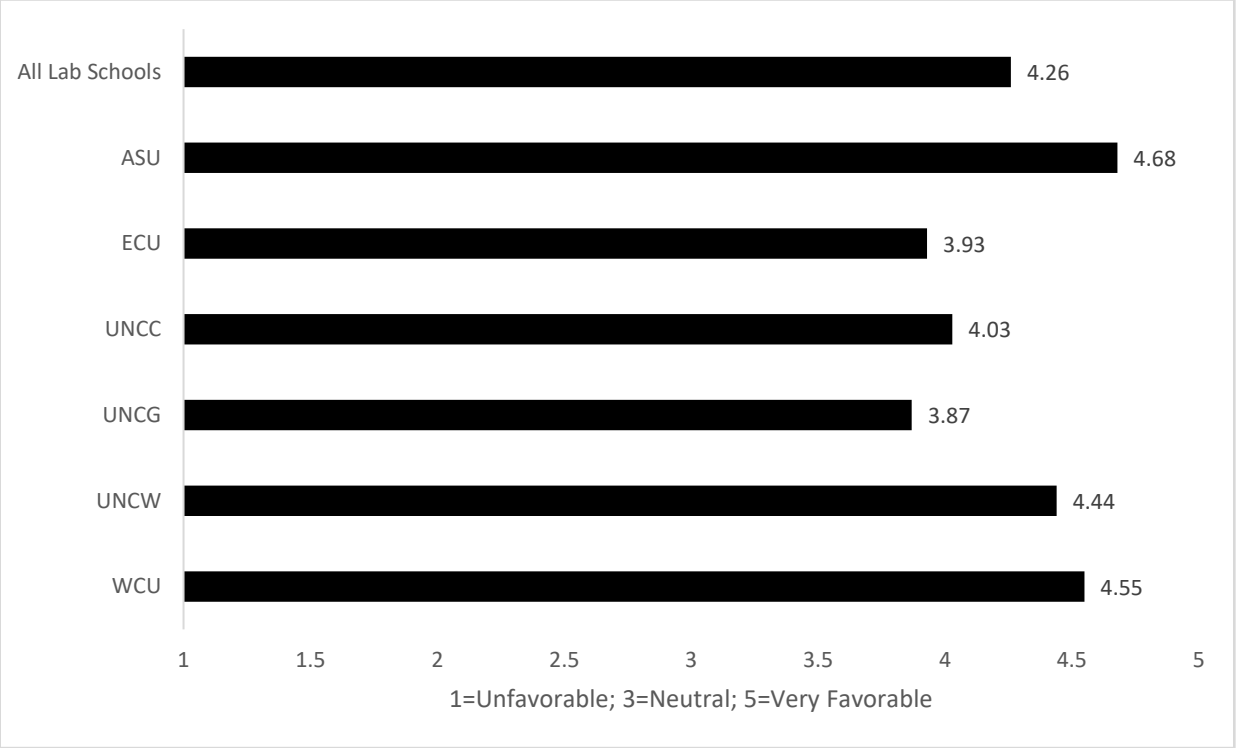
Figure 6: How Interactions with COE Faculty and Students Contribute to Growth as a Teacher



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding how the faculty and students at their partner College of Education contribute to their growth as teachers.

Finally, Figure 7 presents summative perceptions of the extent to which laboratory school personnel feel valued, respected, and like they belong at their schools. These data are presented for all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately. Overall, laboratory school personnel report feeling favorable—an average value of 4.26 on a 1-5 scale—regarding their summative sense of value, respect, and belonging. These ratings range from 3.87 at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 4.68 at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork. Appendix Table A5.3 presents average response values for each of these items and for each laboratory school.

Figure 7: Laboratory School Personnel Sense of Value, Respect, and Belonging



Note: This figure displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their sense of being valued, respected, and belonging.

Do laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students?

To examine whether laboratory schools improve the academic performance of students, the Evaluation Team typically provides two types of administrative data in this report. First, the Evaluation Team presents detailed and rigorous analyses of *student-level* achievement data from two years prior (i.e., 2020-21 for this report). These data and analyses represent a more in-depth supplement to the descriptive data on student achievement in the November 2021 report. Second, the Evaluation Team provides descriptive, *school-level* achievement data from the most recent school year (i.e., 2021-22).

In-depth analyses of 2020-21 student academic performance

Per legislative design, the six laboratory schools operating in 2020-21 enrolled many students who had previously attended a low-performing school and/or who were low-performing themselves (based on one or more indicators).[55] This complicates efforts to isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student achievement. The nature of students attending laboratory schools—previously low-performing, attending low-performing schools—means that comparison groups must be carefully identified. Even with rigorous methods, adjustments for unobservable characteristics associated with student enrollment at laboratory schools may not be possible. Efforts to assess laboratory school student achievement are further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of student test scores from 2019-20. Without test scores from spring 2020, the Evaluation Team must use student achievement data from 2018-19 when controlling for prior student achievement. Using test score data from two years prior reduces the number

[55] Niner University Elementary (UNCC) enrolled students in grades K-2 in 2020-21. As such, they are not part of these analyses that focus on End-of Grade test scores in grades 3-8.

of students in the analyses. It is also important to highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the schooling, learning, and social-emotional development of many students. That also complicates efforts to isolate the impacts of laboratory schools on student achievement.

With these cautions, the Evaluation Team proceeded with two primary comparisons in its test score analyses: (1) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2020-21 with the test scores of students attending low-performing schools[56] and (2) comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2020-21 with the test scores of a matched comparison sample. In Appendix A6, the Evaluation Team also displays unadjusted test scores for laboratory school students (in 2020-21) versus all other students in the laboratory schools' host LEAs. Notably, as shown in Appendix Table A6.5, four eighth graders at The Catamount School (WCU) took Math I in 2020-21. There average Math I score was 553.75—relative to 546.23 in Jackson County—and 100 percent of those students passed the exam and earned high school course credit.

Tables 3-5 present student achievement results from our first set of analyses—i.e., comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2020-21 with the scores of students attending low-performing schools. We estimate separate models for elementary grades math and reading, middle grades math and reading, 5th grade science, and 8th grade science. These models control for student demographics, student program participation, and school-level characteristics.[57] Importantly, these models also control for student test scores from the 2018-19 academic year.[58] This means we assess laboratory school student achievement in 2020-21 relative to other students attending low-performing schools who had similar prior test scores from 2018-19. Our models also include region or LEA fixed effects, meaning we compare laboratory school students' test scores in 2020-21 to those of other students attending low-performing schools in the same region or other students attending low-performing schools in the host LEA. We present test score estimates across all laboratory schools, combined, and for each laboratory school, separately.[59]

Table 3 indicates that in elementary grades math there are no statistically significant differences, overall, in the test scores of laboratory school students and other elementary grades students attending a low-performing school. Results by laboratory school return strong positive results for the ECU Community School. Relative to students attending a low-performing school, ECU Community School students scored approximately 50 percent of a standard deviation higher on their EOG elementary math exam.[60] Elementary grades math results are negative and statistically significant for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). In elementary grades reading, estimates show that laboratory school students, overall, score slightly lower than other students attending a low-performing school—by approximately 7-9 percent of a standard deviation. Here, there are negative results for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, and the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG). When comparing within the Southeast region, elementary grades reading scores are

[56] The designation of low-performing school comes from the 2018-19 school year (i.e., the most recent year for which there are data identifying low-performing schools).

[57] Models control for student gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, and English learner status. At the school level, models control for school type (i.e., elementary, middle, elementary/middle combination), percent students of color, and percent low-income students.

[58] The 2019 prior test scores come from EOG exams and student end-of-year scores from the DIBELS mCLASS exam.

[59] Appendix Table A6.6 includes counts of the unique number of students contributing to these test score models.

[60] These results remain statistically significant and comparable in size when estimating models that do not control for 2018-19 test scores.

higher, by 13 percent of a standard deviation, at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW). This result is not statistically significant when comparing to other students at low-performing schools in the host LEA (New Hanover County Schools).

Table 3: Elementary Grades (3-5) Math and Reading—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Math		Reading	
	Region Fixed Effects	*LEA Fixed Effects*	*Region Fixed Effects*	*LEA Fixed Effects*
Laboratory School Students	-0.087 (0.107)	-0.010 (0.095)	**-0.089*** (0.036)	**-0.067*** (0.029)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.077*** (0.035)	0.037 (0.048)	**-0.121**** (0.016)	**-0.056**$^{+}$ (0.030)
ECU Community School	**0.561**** (0.050)	**0.512**** (0.064)	**-0.178**** (0.030)	**-0.180**** (0.044)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.285**** (0.037)	**-0.235**** (0.048)	**-0.098**** (0.019)	**-0.075*** (0.033)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.248**** (0.074)	**-0.175**$^{+}$ (0.097)	**0.135**** (0.031)	0.031 (0.052)
The Catamount School	---	---	---	---
Observations	19,562	19,562	55,579	55,579

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the End-of-Grade test score outcomes in elementary grades (3-5) math and reading of laboratory school students versus other elementary grades 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.

Table 4 presents laboratory school student achievement results in middle grades math and reading. In math, estimates indicate that laboratory school students score slightly higher than other students attending a low-performing school in the same region or in the host LEA. For example, laboratory school students score approximately 14 percent of a standard deviation higher in middle grades math than other students attending a low-performing school in the host LEA. These results—comparing within the host LEA—are positive and significant for both the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and The Catamount School (WCU). In middle grades reading, laboratory school students perform similarly to other students attending a low-performing school.

Table 5 presents laboratory school student achievement results from the EOG exams in 5th and 8th grade science. Across all laboratory school students there are no statistically significant results—laboratory school students perform comparably to other students in low-performing schools. In 5th grade science, we find positive and significant results for the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) of approximately 10 to 20 percent of a standard deviation. Results in 5th grade science are negative for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW).

Table 4: Middle Grades (6-8) Math and Reading—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Math		Reading	
	Region Fixed Effects	*LEA Fixed Effects*	*Region Fixed Effects*	*LEA Fixed Effects*
Laboratory School Students	**0.080*** (0.039)	**0.138*** (0.060)	0.003 (0.022)	-0.023 (0.027)
Academy at Middle Fork	---	---	---	---
ECU Community School	---	---	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	---	---	---	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	0.095 (0.058)	**0.072*** (0.035)	0.013 (0.034)	-0.046 (0.030)
The Catamount School	0.043 (0.050)	**0.312**** (0.071)	-0.021 (0.024)	0.033 (0.056)
Observations	62,737	62,737	67,321	67,321

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the End-of-Grade test score outcomes in middle grades (6-8) math and reading of laboratory school students versus other middle grades 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.

Table 5: 5th and 8th Grade Science—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	5th Grade Science		8th Grade Science	
	Region Fixed Effects	*LEA Fixed Effects*	*Region Fixed Effects*	*LEA Fixed Effects*
Laboratory School Students	-0.126 (0.114)	-0.038 (0.097)	-0.050 (0.062)	0.036 (0.060)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.304**** (0.037)	**-0.163*** (0.068)	---	---
ECU Community School	0.089 (0.057)	0.108 (0.088)	---	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**0.095*** (0.038)	**0.204**** (0.015)	---	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.266**** (0.067)	**-0.289*** (0.123)	-0.002 (0.071)	-0.023 (0.061)
The Catamount School	---	---	**-0.159**** (0.045)	**0.198**** (0.044)
Observations	19,221	19,221	22,284	22,284

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the End-of-Grade test score outcomes in 5th and 8th grade science of laboratory school students versus other 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.

Table 6 presents student achievement results from our second set of analyses—i.e., comparing the test scores of laboratory school students in 2020-21 with the scores of a matched comparison sample.[61] We estimate separate models for elementary grades math and reading, middle grades math and reading, 5th grade science, and 8th grade science. These models control for student grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, exceptional child status, English learner status, school percent low income, and the prior student engagement and achievement outcomes that were part of the initial propensity score model.[62] A key difference between these propensity score analyses and our first set of analyses—comparing to students in low-performing schools—is related to the use of prior data. In our first set of analyses, the prior test scores come from 2018-19, when many of the 2020-21 laboratory school students were already attending a laboratory school. In our propensity score analyses, the prior data for laboratory school students come from the year before their enrollment in a laboratory school.[63]

Table 6: Test Scores Results—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Grade Science	8th Grade Science
Laboratory School Students	**-0.274**** (0.035)	**-0.172**** (0.037)	-0.034 (0.053)	**-0.133*** (0.061)	**-0.233**** (0.062)	-0.052 (0.087)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-0.407**** (0.053)	**-0.113**$^{+}$ (0.060)	---	---	**-0.342**** (0.102)	---
ECU Community School	**0.491**** (0.087)	0.030 (0.122)	---	---	-0.050 (0.135)	---
Moss Street Partnership School	**-0.362**** (0.045)	**-0.305**** (0.053)	---	---	-0.157 (0.109)	---
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**-0.231**** (0.089)	-0.085 (0.094)	0.048 (0.067)	**-0.234**** (0.076)	**-0.273**$^{+}$ (0.152)	-0.085 (0.113)
The Catamount School	---	---	**-0.223*** (0.104)	0.086 (0.120)	---	0.029 (0.151)
Observations	2,099	2,100	685	728	612	261

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the test scores of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Estimates in Table 6 show that laboratory school students (overall) scored significantly lower than the matched comparison sample on EOG exams in math, reading, and science. Specifically, laboratory school

[61] See Appendix Table A7.1 for characteristics of the laboratory school sample and the matched comparison sample. The Evaluation Team used propensity score analyses to match laboratory school students to comparison students within the same grade level in 2020-21. Variables in the propensity score model included student demographics (gender, student of color status, age), student program participation (economic disadvantage, exceptional child, English learner), measures of prior student engagement (attendance rates and whether the student was suspended), measures of prior student achievement (scores on DIBELS and EOG exams in math and reading, as available), and school percent low income. For laboratory school students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from the year before entry into a laboratory school; for comparison sample students, data on prior engagement and achievement come from 2019 (test scores) and 2020 (attendance and disciplinary records).

[62] These models also control for the propensity score and weight observations more heavily as they more closely resemble the laboratory school sample.

[63] Appendix Table A6.7 includes counts for the number of laboratory school students in our matched comparison sample analyses.

students scored 27, 17, and 23 percent of a standard deviation lower in math, reading, and 5th grade science, respectively. As with our prior analyses (Tables 3-5), these results differ across laboratory schools. Students at the ECU Community School scored significantly higher than the matched comparison sample in elementary math and performed comparably in elementary reading and science. Results are negative for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in all three elementary grades comparisons and negative for Moss Street Partnership School and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in two elementary grades comparisons.

Turning to middle grades EOG exams, Table 6 shows that laboratory school students scored similarly to the matched comparison sample in math and science and lower than the matched comparison sample in reading. Results for the two laboratory schools serving middle grades students show negative results for The Catamount School (WCU) in math and negative results for D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy in reading.

Taken together, the 2020-21 test score results in Tables 3-5 and Table 6 are relatively similar. This is despite differences in the analytical approaches, the comparison samples, and the use of prior student data. Test score results for the ECU Community School were the most promising, especially in elementary grades math. Results for the remaining laboratory schools indicate that their students scored lower than comparison sample students—in low-performing schools or the matched sample—in at least some grade-levels/subject-areas.

Descriptive reporting of 2021-22 school performance data

The legislation enabling laboratory schools requires the reporting of student achievement data, including school performance grades, achievement scores, 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 7 displays these achievement data for the 2021-22 academic year. The top panel of Table 7 displays these data overall; the middle and bottom panels of Table 7 report these data for reading and mathematics, separately.[64]

Overall, the top panel of Table 7 indicates that in the 2021-22 school year The Catamount School (WCU) earned a performance grade of 'C', the ECU Community School earned a performance grade of 'D', and the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy earned performance grades of 'F'. These performance grades are based on the performance score, which is a weighted average of the achievement score (80%) and growth score (20%). Achievement scores, which measure proficiency rates on state assessments, ranged from 12.9 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 51.9 (The Catamount School). Growth scores ranged from 70.7 (Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork) to 84.0 (The Catamount School) and all five laboratory schools met expected achievement growth. By comparison, the last time North Carolina released school accountability data—after the 2018-19 school year—only two of five laboratory schools met expected achievement growth.

[64] These school accountability data for the 2021-22 year can be accessed here: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2021-22-school-performance-grades

Table 7: Student Achievement at Laboratory Schools in 2021-22

	Overall Performance Grade	Overall Performance Score	Overall Achievement Score	Overall Growth Score	Overall Growth Status
Appalachian Academy	F	26	14.5	70.7	Met
ECU Community School	D	50	42.6	80.2	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	32	19.5	80.0	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	26	12.9	77.5	Met
The Catamount School	C	58	51.9	84.0	Met
	Reading Performance Grade	Reading Performance Score	Reading Achievement Score	Reading Growth Score	Reading Growth Status
Appalachian Academy	F	31	19.7	74.1	Met
ECU Community School	D	42	31.9	80.4	Met
Moss Street Partnership School	F	29	16.6	77.0	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	27	13.4	79.7	Met
The Catamount School	C	62	57.4	82.2	Met
	Math Performance Grade	Math Performance Score	Math Achievement Score	Math Growth Score	Math Growth Status
Appalachian Academy	F	23	9.6	75.2	Met
ECU Community School	D	53	53.2	Not Reported	Not Reported
Moss Street Partnership School	F	27	13.7	80.3	Met
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	F	23	8.2	81.1	Met
The Catamount School	D	54	46.3	82.9	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 7 presents school performance data in reading. Here, like the overall performance grades, The Catamount School (WCU) earned a 'C', the ECU Community School earned a 'D', and the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) earned a 'F'. Reading achievement scores (proficiency rates) ranged from 13.4 (D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy) to 57.4 (The Catamount School). All five laboratory schools met expected achievement growth in reading in 2021-22. This is an improvement from 2018-19 when four laboratory schools met growth.

Finally, the bottom panel of Table 7 presents school performance grades in math. Here, the ECU Community School and The Catamount School earned performance grades of 'D', while the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) earned grades of 'F'. Math achievement scores ranged from 9.6 (Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork) to 53.2 (ECU Community School). North Carolina did not report an official math growth score or growth status for the ECU Community School in 2021-22. This is because the ECU Community School had too few students for whom a math growth score could be externally reported. All four remaining laboratory schools met expected growth in math in 2021-22. This represents an improvement from 2018-19 when only two laboratory schools met growth in math.

Do laboratory schools benefit students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school?

Laboratory school models prioritize social and emotional well-being (e.g., D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy's kinship model), promoting a positive school culture (e.g., restorative or trauma-invested practices), and creating experiential learning opportunities through physical spaces at laboratory schools or university institutions. These are key ways to support students' social-emotional needs and engagement with school. The return to in-person instruction for the full year in fall 2021 brought needed consistency and increased in-person supports for students. However, school leaders still acknowledged the challenge for staff and students as they attempted to reset expectations and re-adapt to in-person learning environments. Services provided to meet the non-academic needs of students and/or their families include the CARES team at Niner University Elementary (UNCC), mental health services provided for students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) and Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), social-emotional development focused "village meetings" at The Catamount School (WCU), small group SEL learning sessions at Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State), and the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at the ECU Community School.

To assess how laboratory schools influence students' social-emotional and school engagement outcomes, the Evaluation Team used two sources of data: responses from the Tripod student survey (from the 2021-22 academic year) and administrative data on student attendance (from the 2020-21 academic year). Collectively, these data capture students' motivation for learning, perceptions of school/classroom climate, and engagement with school. These constructs are important to measure as they may be necessary precursors to student learning. However, it is also important to highlight potential limitations to these data and their ability fully capture student development and engagement.

Student perceptions of laboratory schools

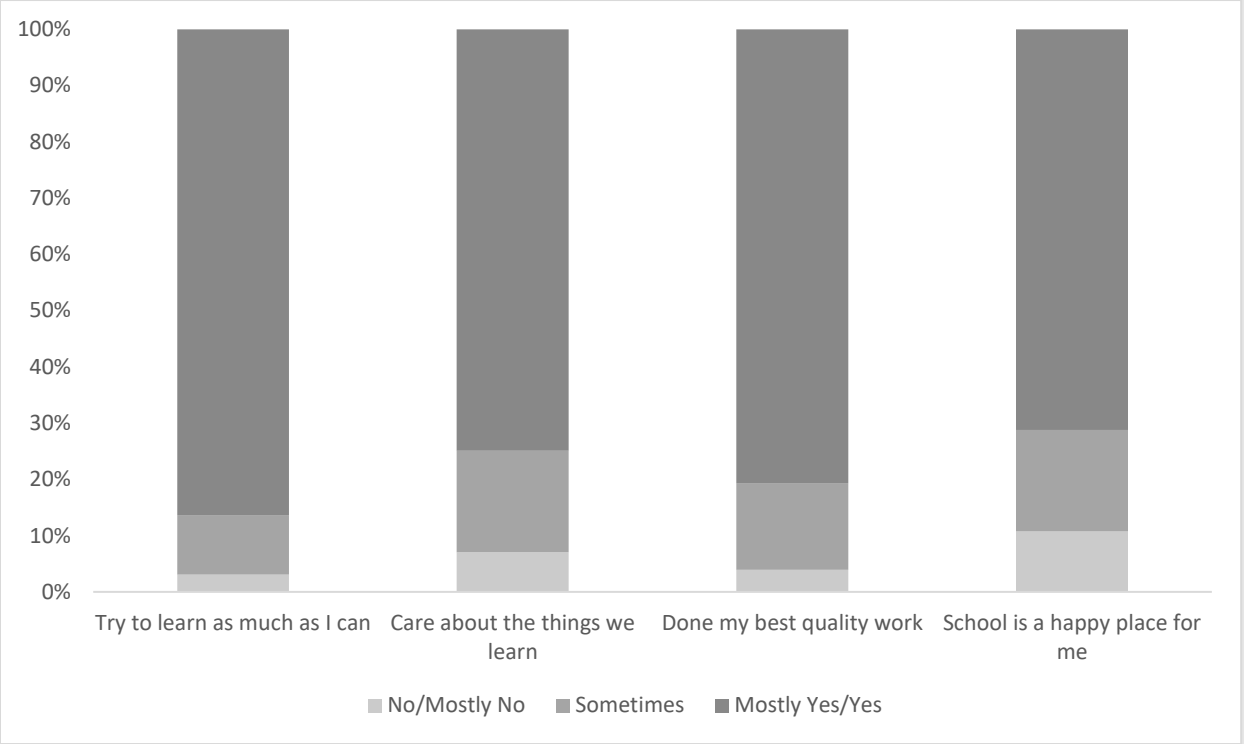
The Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer an online survey to laboratory school students in the spring of 2022. Two survey versions were used: (1) an early elementary survey taken by students in grades K-2 at the laboratory schools and (2) an upper elementary survey taken by students in grades 3-8 at the laboratory schools.[65] Overall, the Evaluation Team received 975 survey responses from laboratory school students: 258 responses form the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, 102 responses from the ECU Community School, 97 responses from Niner University Elementary (UNCC), 315 responses from Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), 151 responses from D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and 52 responses from The Catamount School (WCU). Data presented in this section focus on student responses across laboratory schools; data in Appendix A8 are presented for each respective laboratory school. Given differences in student grade levels and prior educational experiences, caution is warranted when comparing survey data across laboratory schools.

For all laboratory school student respondents, Figure 8 displays responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and engagement with school. Approximately 75-86 percent of respondents indicated that they mostly or always tried to learn as much as they could, cared about the things they learned, and did their best quality work in the laboratory school. Seventy-one percent of laboratory school student respondents indicated that school was mostly or always a happy place for them. When comparing

[65] The upper elementary survey has additional items that are not on the early elementary survey. Both surveys include many of the same items. The key distinction between surveys is that response values range from 1-3 on the early elementary survey (no, maybe, yes) and from 1-5 on the upper elementary survey (no, mostly not, sometimes, mostly yes, yes). For common reporting, the Evaluation Team converted all responses to a 1-3 scale.

these student responses from spring 2022 to those from spring 2021, results from 2022 were slightly lower for all four items. Please see Appendix Table A8.1 for data on student motivation and engagement for each respective laboratory school.

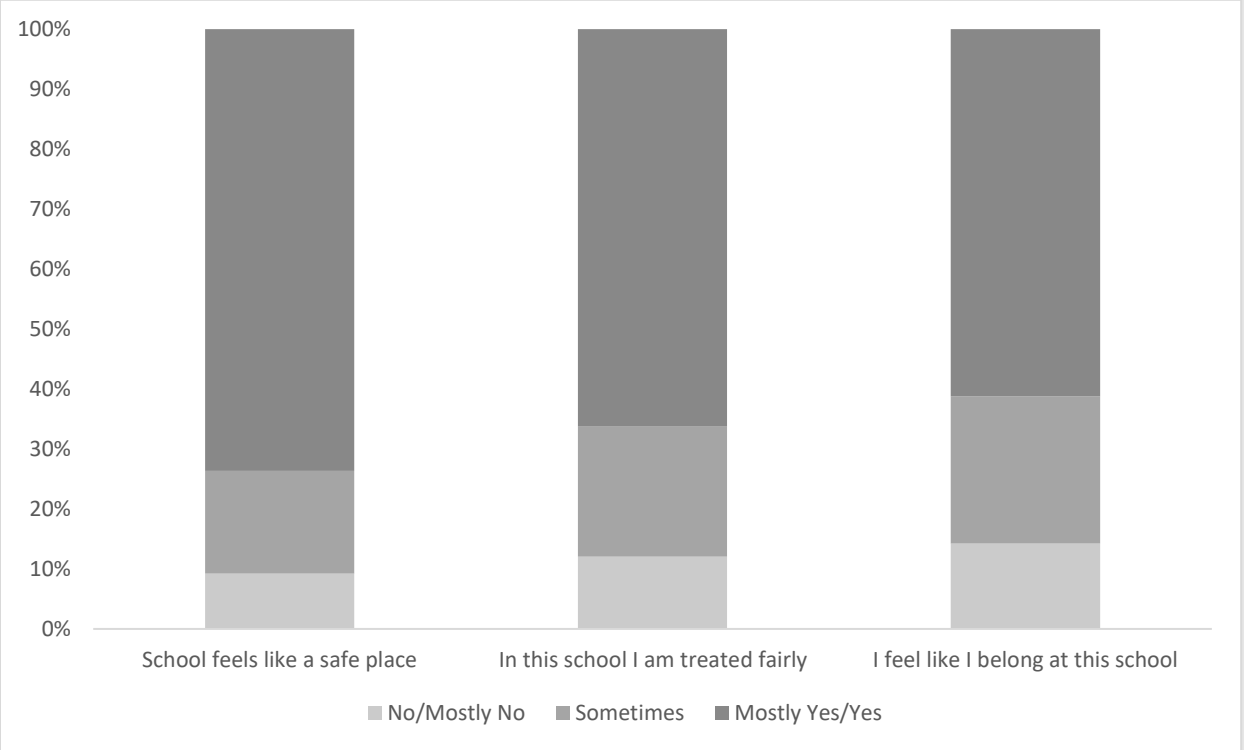
Figure 8: Laboratory School Students Motivation and Engagement with School



Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and their engagement with school. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'try to learn as much as I can' and 'school is a happy place for me'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all four items.

Similarly, Figure 9 displays laboratory school student responses to a set of items on school climate. In 2022, nearly 74 percent of respondents reported that school is mostly or always a safe place for them. This is down from 81 percent in spring 2021. Approximately 66 and 61 percent of respondents, respectively, indicated that they are mostly or always treated fairly at school and that they feel like they belong at their laboratory school. Once again, these response values are lower than the respective values from spring 2021 Please see Appendix Table A8.2 for student perceptions of school climate for each respective laboratory school.

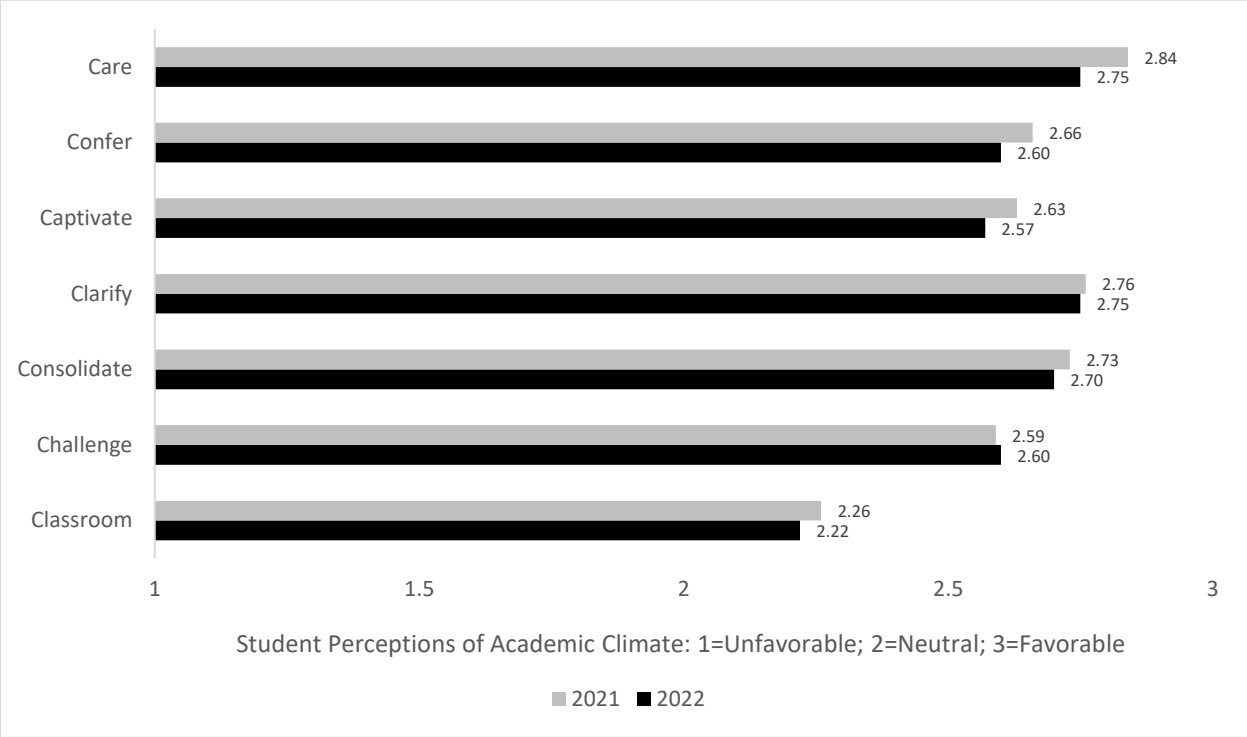
Figure 9: Laboratory School Students Perceptions of School Climate



Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their perceptions of school climate. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items—'school feels like a safe place to me' and 'in this school I am treated fairly'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all three items.

The Tripod student survey is best known for assessing the academic climate of classrooms and schools through survey items on the 7Cs—Care, Confer, Captivate, Clarify, Consolidate, Challenge, and Classroom Management. Essentially, these survey items allow students to rate the academic climate in their classroom/school along seven distinct dimensions. Figure 10 displays summative 7Cs data for laboratory schools, where values equal to '1' are unfavorable responses, values equal to '2' are neutral responses, and values equal to '3' are favorable responses. Figure 10 also includes comparable data from spring 2021. Overall, in spring 2022, laboratory school students were most favorable regarding the care shown for them by teachers, their teachers' ability to clarify student understanding, and their teachers' ability to consolidate student learning. As in prior years, laboratory school students reported that their teachers struggled most with classroom management. Relative to spring 2021, 7Cs responses were slightly lower in spring 2022 for six of the seven constructs (all except challenging students to think and work hard). Please see Appendix Table A8.3 for 7Cs data for each laboratory school.

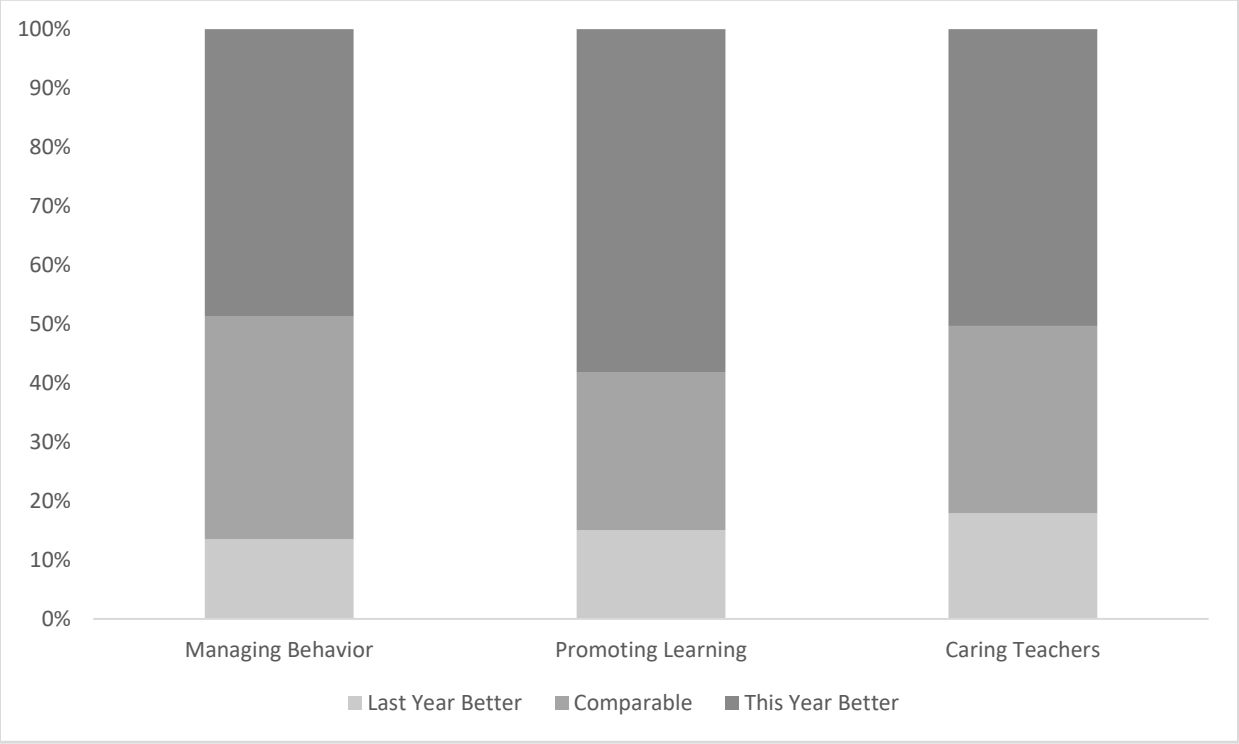
Figure 10: Student Perceptions of Laboratory School Academic Climate (Tripod 7Cs)



Note: This figure displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of survey items on their perceptions of academic climate. Specifically, this figure displays aggregate 7Cs data for laboratory school students. Each construct—e.g., Care, Confer, etc.—includes multiple survey items.

As with the Tripod parent/caregiver survey, an additional set of survey items asked laboratory school students to compare their educational experiences in 2021-22 with their educational experiences in 2020-21. Figure 11 displays responses for students *new* to laboratory schools in 2021-22. Nearly 50 percent of student respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at managing student behavior than their school in 2020-21. Approximately 58 percent of student respondents reported that their laboratory school was better at promoting learning, while 50 percent of respondents indicated that their laboratory school was better at having caring teachers. Please see Appendix Table A8.4 for these responses disaggregated for each laboratory school and for students new to or returning to a laboratory school in 2021-22.

Figure 11: Comparing School Experiences for Students New to Laboratory Schools



Note: For students new to laboratory schools in 2021-22, this figure displays responses to survey items asking students to compare their educational experiences in 2021-22 to their educational experiences in 2020-21.

Student attendance at laboratory schools in 2020-21

Student attendance is a policy relevant measure of engagement with school that can be meaningfully influenced by teachers and schools. Therefore, the Evaluation Team assessed whether laboratory schools impact attendance. Laboratory schools may encourage attendance if they create supportive and caring environments and build strong relationships with students and families. Conversely, attendance at laboratory schools may be lower given transportation challenges or if laboratory schools are unable to build strong connections between school and home.

The unique nature of many laboratory school students—i.e., those who previously attended/were zoned to attend a low-performing school and/or were previously low-performing themselves—warrants caution in student level analyses. In particular, groups of comparison students must be carefully identified to better isolate the relationship between laboratory school enrollment and the outcome of interest. As such, the Evaluation Team starts with descriptive data regarding student attendance at the six laboratory schools in operation in 2020-21. In more rigorous analyses, the Evaluation Team assesses whether attendance differs for (1) laboratory school students versus other students attending low-performing schools and (2) laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample.

Table 8 displays student attendance rates for the 2020-21 school year—that is, the percentage of days present at a school divided by the days enrolled. The top panel of Table 8 displays attendance rates for any student enrolled at a laboratory school in 2020-21, including students who exited the school before

the completion of the year.[66] The second panel of Table 8 presents comparable data for students enrolled at a laboratory school for the entire year. Overall, the attendance rate for laboratory schools in 2020-21 was 89.36, ranging from 85.61 at the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) to 95.20 at Niner University Elementary (UNCC). Of note, the data in the second panel show that attendance rates are generally slightly higher for students enrolled at laboratory schools for the entire year.

Table 8: Attendance Rates at Laboratory Schools and Other District Schools (2020-21)

Student Groups	Student Count	Attendance Rates
All Enrolled Laboratory School Students		
Laboratory Schools 2020-21	1,072	89.36
Academy at Middle Fork	277	87.86
ECU Community School	112	94.91
Niner University Elementary	76	95.20
Moss Street Partnership School	348	85.61
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	209	93.76
The Catamount School	50	84.08
Laboratory School Students Enrolled for the Entire Year		
Laboratory Schools 2020-21	983	89.77
Academy at Middle Fork	263	88.95
ECU Community School	102	94.99
Niner University Elementary	69	96.24
Moss Street Partnership School	309	85.81
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	199	93.77
The Catamount School	41	81.57
Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled in the LEA)		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	24,480	90.92
Pitt County (K-5)	10,998	92.41
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	328	89.60
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (K-2)	33,552	92.68
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	5,245	91.37
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	17,684	90.53
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	883	86.44
Laboratory School Comparisons (Same Grade Students Enrolled for the Entire Year in the LEA)		
Winston-Salem Forsyth (K-5)	20,825	91.98
Pitt County (K-5)	9,352	93.46
South Greenville Elementary (K-5)	246	90.99
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (K-2)	27,729	93.89
Rockingham County Schools (K-5)	4,549	92.60
New Hanover County Schools (K-8)	15,135	91.47
Jackson County Schools (6-8)	771	86.85

Note: This table displays attendance rates for laboratory school students and other, same-grade students in the host LEAs

The bottom panels of Table 8 present attendance rates for the same-grade students in the school districts hosting laboratory schools (or the host school for South Greenville Elementary). As above, the Evaluation

[66] The reported attendance rates for students who exit laboratory schools only consider their attendance at a laboratory school and not any other school in which they subsequently enrolled.

Team provides these data for any student enrolled in the host district and for students in the host district for the entire year. Attendance rates for the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) are higher than those in the host district; rates for Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU) are lower than those in the host district.

Table 9 presents results from student-level regression models comparing attendance rates at laboratory schools in 2020-21 to those of comparison students enrolled in low-performing schools. Analyses compare the attendance rates of laboratory school students to (a) other students in low-performing schools in the same region as the respective laboratory school and (b) other students in low-performing schools in the host district for the respective laboratory school.[67] Analyses include controls for many of the same student and school covariates as in the test score analyses. Some models also include a control for the student's attendance rate in the prior year. Across all laboratory school, these results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in laboratory school student attendance versus other students in low-performing schools. However, results differ across laboratory schools. Students at the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy have significantly higher attendance rates. For example, Niner University Elementary students attend approximately eight percent more days of school than peers at low-performing schools. Conversely, Table 9 shows some negative attendance results for Moss Street Partnership School (comparing within the same region as the laboratory school) and The Catamount School (WCU).

Table 9: Attendance Rates—Laboratory School Versus Other Students Attending Low-Performing Schools

	Compared to Students Attending Low-Performing Schools in the Same Region as the Laboratory School		Compared to Students Attending Low-Performing Schools in the Host LEA for the Laboratory School	
	Without Prior Attendance	*With Prior Attendance*	*Without Prior Attendance*	*With Prior Attendance*
Laboratory School Students	1.708 (1.950)	0.282 (1.567)	3.677 (2.359)	2.608 (2.009)
Academy at Middle Fork	-0.875 (0.673)	-1.138 (0.707)	0.291 (1.077)	0.128 (1.115)
ECU Community School	**7.394**** (0.988)	**4.508**** (1.002)	**6.194**** (1.059)	**3.654**** (1.113)
Niner University Elementary	**8.530**** (0.557)	**8.052**** (0.588)	**8.754**** (0.623)	**8.136**** (0.658)
Moss Street Partnership School	**-1.647**** (0.542)	**-2.777**** (0.551)	-0.114 (2.033)	-0.580 (2.023)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**7.465**** (1.276)	**4.482**** (1.186)	**13.443**** (1.878)	**10.799**** (1.857)
The Catamount School	**-9.882**** (1.121)	**-7.900**** (1.138)	**-9.106**** (1.711)	**-7.081**** (1.645)
Observations	189,582	175,168	189,582	175,168

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the attendance rates of laboratory school students versus other elementary and middle grades 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.

[67] For these analyses and the matched comparison sample analyses, the Evaluation Team limited the sample to those enrolled at their school for the entire 2020-21 year. Results are similar when the sample includes any student enrolled.

To extend the analyses shown in Table 9, Table 10 displays estimates from models that compare attendance rates for laboratory school students in 2020-21 versus a matched comparison sample. Overall, results in Table 10 show that laboratory school students have significantly higher attendance rates—by approximately 1.8 percent—than matched comparison students. This estimate translates to approximately 3 more days of school attended for laboratory school students. Similar to Table 9, these attendance rate results differ across laboratory schools. The ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) have significantly higher attendance rates than the matched comparison sample. The Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and The Catamount School (WCU) have significantly lower attendance rates.

Table 10: Attendance Rates—Laboratory School Versus Matched Comparison Sample Students

	Attendance Rate Differences
Laboratory School Students	**1.794****
	(0.557)
Academy at Middle Fork	**-5.053****
	(1.058)
ECU Community School	**11.667****
	(1.018)
Niner University Elementary	**9.010****
	(0.955)
Moss Street Partnership School	-1.288
	(1.062)
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	**10.329****
	(0.810)
The Catamount School	**-9.435****
	(3.146)
Observations	3,331

Note: This table presents estimates from models assessing the attendance rates of laboratory school students versus a matched comparison sample. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences between laboratory school and matched comparison sample students at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Do the laboratory schools support and strengthen educator preparation?

COEs most often use methods and practicum courses relevant to laboratory school objectives to integrate pre-service candidates into laboratory schools. Methods instructors were frequently part of the COE curriculum team supporting the laboratory schools, and in some cases, those instructors serve as co-teachers in content areas. When methods courses were taught on-site at the laboratory school, instructors had the opportunity to demonstrate instruction for pre-service candidates, who in turn, practiced instructional techniques and strategies with small groups of laboratory school students. In 2020-21, laboratory schools worked with their university partners to adapt strategies for engaging preservice candidates and COE faculty to accommodate remote and hybrid instruction. In 2021-22, all laboratory schools returned to in-person engagement for preservice candidates under the supervision of COE and other university faculty and laboratory school teachers and staff. COEs also engaged in-service teachers through PD or other supports.

Pre-service candidates

Traditionally, COEs have provided pre-service candidates two primary ways for engaging in laboratory schools. Junior year candidates in methods and practicum courses conducted observations, diagnostics, and assessments; provided individual tutoring and small group support/instruction; and assisted with instruction or instructional interventions. Senior year pre-service candidates had clinical experiences as either interns (Intern I) or student teachers (intern II). Pre-service candidates in intern I experiences typically spent one or two days, per week, shadowing, observing, or supporting a laboratory school teacher over the course of a semester. Student teachers spent every day of the week, over the course of a semester, working with the laboratory school teacher to plan and lead classroom instruction and to support students one-on-one or in small groups. Student teachers also participated in staff meetings and professional development for laboratory school faculty. In 2020-21, these experiences were adapted depending on the mode of instruction in which the laboratory school engaged (in-person, hybrid, or remote-only).

In 2021-22, pre-service candidates returned to working under the direction of a laboratory school teacher and COE clinical supervisor on-site at laboratory schools. At some laboratory schools, instructors who teach junior year methods courses also supervise senior year interns/student teachers. In theory, this practice enhances continuity in methods instruction, particularly when methods instructors hold their courses onsite at the laboratory school, and increases interaction between clinical educators and laboratory school students and staff. Niner Elementary School served as host to pre-service candidates from UNCC's Cato College of Education for the first time since the laboratory school opened.[68] Additionally, UNCC faculty taught teacher candidates on-site at the laboratory school, allowing opportunities for pre-service educators to immediately observe and put learning into practice.

The Catamount School (WCU), ECU Community School, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and Niner University Elementary School (UNCC) engaged pre-service candidates in other disciplines, including counseling, social work, nursing, speech/language, and inclusive education, who conducted activities or provided supports to students virtually. In 2020-21, pandemic conditions removed some barriers to pre-service candidate engagement at Appalachian State – namely, travel requirements from Boone to Winston-Salem – which increased the total number of pre-service teacher candidates who engaged in the laboratory school from previous years. In 2021-22, however, pre-service teacher candidate engagement returned to previous levels, as travel distance again precluded regular and frequent engagement. Laboratory school and COE leaders are continuing to work on a longer-term strategy to allow for a deeper engagement at the Academy at Middle Fork for pre-service teacher candidates.

COEs use several criteria to select pre-service candidates for clinical experiences at laboratory schools. Generally, COEs select pre-service candidates for clinical experiences based on their major and interest in working with diverse student populations. COEs rely on methods and practicum courses—offered in the junior year—as a way to expose more pre-service candidates to the laboratory school model. Laboratory schools use methods classes as candidate pools to select student teachers. Selection, placement, or programmatic practices related to pre-service candidates at laboratory schools haven't yet shown significant influence on those related to placements at other traditional public schools with which the COE partners.

[68] Due to remote learning and pandemic restrictions on in-person engagement, UNCC COE and laboratory school leadership chose not to host preservice candidates at Niner University Elementary.

Table 11: Clinical Experiences in Laboratory Schools for Educator Preparation Program Candidates

Program/Licensure Areas	Early Field Experiences	Intern I	Intern II (Full-time student teaching)
Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State)			
Elementary Education	4	1	5
Special Education	1	0	0
Theatre	1	0	0
Birth to Kindergarten	0	0	2
Art	0	0	1
Physical Education	0	0	1
ECU Community School			
Elementary Education	0	2	1
Special Education	12	2	2
Early Childhood	0	1	1
Niner University Elementary (UNCC)			
Elementary Education	14	0	0
Elementary and Special Education	19	0	0
Special Education	0	1	1
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)			
Elementary Education	11	0	0
Health and Physical Education	0	1	1
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)			
Art	1	0	0
Elementary Education	17	0	0
Middle Grades	5	0	0
Physical Education	1	0	0
Special Education	26	0	0
School Leader Internship	0	0	1
The Catamount School (WCU)			
Elementary/Inclusive Education	57	1	1
Middle Grades Education	8	3	3
Health and Physical Education	19	6	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 2021-22. These data are displayed by institution and program area (e.g. elementary education, special education).

Table 11 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 2021-22.[69] Appalachian State placed six candidates into early field experiences, one candidate into an intern I experience, and nine candidates into student teaching experiences (intern II). ECU placed 12 candidates into early field experiences, five candidates into intern I experiences, and four candidates into student teaching at the ECU Community School. UNCC

[69] Many of the UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools also placed other pre-service interns into laboratory schools in 2021-22. ASU placed two social work interns at the Academy at Middle Fork. ECU placed two social work interns, one marriage and family therapy intern, six speech/language interns, two psychology interns, and 26 occupational therapist interns at the ECU Community School. UNCC placed five school counseling interns and one social work intern at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed 19 nursing interns and two psychology interns at Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 16 psychology students at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. WCU placed three school counseling interns, 32 nursing early field experiences, and seven counseling students (not yet in internship) at The Catamount School.

placed 33 candidates into early field experiences, one candidate into an intern I experience, and one candidate into a student teaching experience at Niner University Elementary. UNCG placed 11 candidates into early field experiences, one candidate into an intern I experience, and one candidate into student teaching at Moss Street Partnership School. UNCW placed 50 candidates into early field experiences at the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. Finally, WCU placed 84 candidates into early field experiences, 10 candidates into intern I experiences, and four candidates into student teaching at The Catamount School.

Principal interns

Laboratory schools place principal interns through their partner COE's Masters of School Administration (MSA) program or the NC Principal Fellows program, a scholarship loan program that funds principal intern salaries. Only D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) hosted a school leader candidate in a formal principal internship in 2021-22.

College of education faculty engagement with laboratory schools

Generally, COE faculty have either a regular onsite presence at the laboratory school (e.g., faculty in residence, COE faculty teaching at school) or engaged with laboratory school staff on an ad hoc basis, often delivering professional development or other curricular and instructional supports. COEs have been challenged to systematize opportunities for more faculty to engage more deeply and more regularly with laboratory school staff and students. COEs must manage the workload of faculty who are deeply engaged with the laboratory school and ensure that their engagement is both relevant and compensated. Some faculty in embedded positions are paid as members of the laboratory school staff (e.g., curriculum directors) or receive a workload offset or release equivalent to teaching one course (e.g., faculty-in-residence). Other faculty manage their laboratory school engagement in addition to their regular workload. COEs must also work with laboratory school staff to appropriately balance the number of ad hoc interactions COE faculty have with laboratory school students and teachers against the laboratory school model's priority on creating environments that seek to foster consistent relationships between laboratory school students and the adults supporting them.

COE faculty that regularly engaged with laboratory schools in 2021-22 were 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. For example, WCU COE faculty are also laboratory school staff members who serve as teacher leaders in their content areas, teaching or co-teaching classes and supporting and mentoring other laboratory school staff.[70]
- Faculty-in-residence 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. For example, at the Academy at Middle Fork (Appalachian State) the faculty-in-residence taught academically and intellectually gifted (AIG) classes one day per week. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted three faculty-in-residence from the Department of Educational Leadership, one that provided expertise on student voice to strengthen relationships and create student agency, another with a focus on

[70] One WCU faculty member serves The Catamount School as a Math I teacher, another as EC Director, and another as a Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher.

culturally sustaining literacy, and the third with a focus on building relationships with middle school age students to demonstrate ways to engage and motivate.

- Clinical supervisors who oversee COE pre-service candidates on site at the laboratory school.
- Several COEs engaged their faculty in regular professional development supports for laboratory school staff. For example, faculty in UNCC's Reading and Elementary Education program taught intervention courses, facilitated summer literacy and programming, and participated in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with Niner University Elementary teachers. Faculty from Appalachian State supported laboratory school teachers in modeling lessons, team teaching, working with small groups and collaborating with teachers to expand an existing 2-5 SEL curriculum to include K-1.

Other faculty have scheduled opportunities, typically coordinated through curriculum directors, to provide ad hoc instructional support to laboratory school staff during planning periods, summer institutes, and scheduled professional days (e.g., teacher workdays) on a range of topics and issues relevant to laboratory schools (e.g., STEM, literacy, SEL). Faculty may also work individually with teachers on an as-requested basis regarding particular content areas (e.g., science, math, literacy, special education) and instructional strategies.

To date, the engagement of COE faculty with laboratory schools continues to be more voluntary than systematic, posing challenges for the sustainability and consistency of faculty involvement from year-to-year. Without (1) course offloads or workload exchanges that allow time for COE faculty to be in or otherwise involved with laboratory schools and (2) other systematized processes for identifying and engaging faculty to serve in laboratory schools, it remains unclear whether COEs can maintain the level of faculty engagement of the initial implementation years. As more faculty rotate in and out of engagement with laboratory schools, it also becomes more difficult for these faculty to build lasting relationships with staff and students.

In-service teachers

Traditionally, the laboratory school model provides various opportunities for laboratory school teachers to grow in their profession. As described herein, laboratory school staff work alongside COE faculty embedded in the laboratory school as instructional/curriculum directors, faculty-in-residence, or clinical supervisors and receive direct instructional supports and ad hoc consulting.

In-service teachers also receive professional development from COE faculty on instructional supports (e.g., using interim assessments, standards-based report cards, differentiated instruction strategies, science of reading, MTSS, PBIS and restorative practices) and other university partners on topics relevant to addressing their students' holistic needs (e.g., trauma, behavior management). In 2021-22, laboratory school staff continued to receive these professional development and support opportunities. New to the 2021-22 school year, laboratory school staff participated in LETRS training based in 'science of reading' literacy instruction practices, sometimes in coordination with faculty at their constituent COE.

Laboratory school staff also have opportunities at COEs to pursue professional growth. In 2021-22, as in previous years, laboratory school staff were enrolled in certification or advanced degree courses at partner COEs. For example, laboratory school teacher assistants may take undergraduate courses; laboratory school teachers may take certification courses or enroll in graduate programs at ECU and UNCG. Staff at the Academy at Middle Fork can enroll in any undergraduate or graduate course or program at ASU. In 2021-22, staff enrolled in the Master's in Reading program, Professional School

Counseling, and the Special Education residency programs. ASU, ECU, UNCG, UNCC, and WCU have teachers currently enrolled in doctoral, master's in education, or Literacy programs.

How have the UNC System and its constituent institutions set up laboratory schools to grow and sustain?

The early years of laboratory school implementation surfaced key concerns among stakeholders regarding the length of time COEs would operate laboratory schools and the adequacy of financial resources to serve a concentrated population of highest need students.

In the five years since the first two laboratory schools opened, several developments have aided the growth and sustainability of the schools. Changes in the laboratory school legislation have clarified expectations at the five-year renewal mark. The ECU Community School and The Catamount School (WCU) received approval for renewal in 2021-22, while the Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW), and the Academy at Middle Fork (ASU) are engaging in renewal this school year. Likewise, laboratory schools are becoming increasingly institutionalized within university systems. Partnerships with constituent institutions, host districts, and community organizations have strengthened over time, as the laboratory schools become increasingly embedded within the communities they serve. These partnerships have proven valuable to the laboratory school's ability to support the practices of teachers, create positive and safe learning environments for students, and foster engagement of COE faculty and students with the laboratory school.

Nonetheless, laboratory schools still have challenges to address. Although COEs have made strides towards integrating the management of laboratory schools into their own university systems, misalignment of host district or NCDPI and university systems continues to create challenges in managing certain processes like human resources and finance. Specific challenges have also been sustained in the identification, administration, and coordination of supports for EC students at laboratory schools. As laboratory schools become better integrated into NCDPI or other statewide systems, some questions emerge regarding how laboratory schools will continue to be set up to operate autonomously in ways that continue to breed innovation.

While laboratory school leaders report strong relationships with host districts, some difficulties persist. Differences in university and host district calendars create challenges for school schedules, COE faculty and candidate engagement, and laboratory school student enrollment and transportation. Further, laboratory schools often recruit students from within existing host district boundaries. Although laboratory school leaders report that their host districts consistently express support for their schools, both parties draw student enrollment, and thus, ADM funding, from the same pool of prospective students. This natural conflict of interest often results in laboratory school leaders largely engaging in marketing and recruitment efforts for the laboratory school independent of their host district.

Another opportunity for growth is the ways in which laboratory schools may serve as a hub for the sharing of innovative practices or new strategies to address the needs and enhance the learning of the student populations served. As laboratory schools build on their partnerships with host districts, it remains unclear the extent to which sharing of promising practices between laboratory schools and host districts is happening with regularity. This type of learning and collaboration may most naturally exist on co-located campuses, such as the ECU Community School or The Catamount School (WCU). One developing opportunity for collaboration and practice sharing is the 'sister school' concept developed in 2021-22 by the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork in partnership with a neighboring Winston-Salem Forsyth County elementary school of similar size and demographic makeup. While this relationship was only

established in spring 2022, the vision for this partnership is to facilitate the sharing of practices and resources that improve student learning and social-emotional outcomes for students at the laboratory school with sister school staff and students. Overall, leadership across laboratory schools and partner LEAs recognize opportunities for greater sharing of best practices and collaboration between the laboratory schools and their partner districts. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted such sharing of practices, this is an area for further development over time.

Additionally, the engagement of COE faculty and students with laboratory schools varies considerably—in terms of the numbers of COE personnel involved, the depth of their engagement, and the structures/incentives to support their work. Changes, over time, in the COE faculty and pre-service candidates who engage with the laboratory school also necessitate that laboratory school staff and students establish new relationships with COE personnel and students on a frequent basis.

Finally, funding for laboratory schools has been a fundamental challenge to each school's growth and sustainability that has not significantly changed five years into the initiative. Laboratory schools are not self-sustaining on per-pupil funding allocations alone. Given the high concentration of academic and social-emotional need at laboratory schools, state funding alone may not be sufficient to fully address student needs – a challenge shared by laboratory schools as well as many traditional public schools in the state. COEs continue to subsidize laboratory school budgets—sometimes by greater than 20 percent of budgets—to close gaps between ADM and other public funds and actual laboratory school operating expenditures. The COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in NC schools transitioning to remote learning in March 2020 and continuing when the 2020-21 school year began, brought some short-term relief funding. However, this does not represent a solution for the long-term, especially as student learning gaps have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though laboratory school leaders voice optimism for long-term outcomes, whether laboratory schools can grow and sustain may hinge on how well they can address student needs in a changed statewide budget landscape. As the initiative approaches the year five renewal period for the second cohort of laboratory schools, and legislation mandated three new schools to open in the 2022-23 school year, developing a sustainable plan for laboratory school funding will be paramount.

Summary

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation requiring the UNC System BOG and UNC System institutions to establish laboratory schools. The mission of UNC System laboratory schools is twofold: to provide an enhanced education program for students who are low-performing or attended a low-performing school and to provide exposure and training for teachers and school leaders to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings. Six years later, UNC System institutions have opened nine laboratory schools that collectively serve more than 1,300 students. Given regular disruptions of major hurricanes (UNCW) and the COVID-19 pandemic and their impact on both school operations, student learning, and access to evaluation data (e.g., student test score data), it is difficult to fully assess whether laboratory schools are meeting their stated mission. However, evidence to date highlights areas of success and challenge.

Knowledge gained over several years of operating laboratory schools has smoothed over some of the implementation challenges that previously existed. The benefits of increased familiarity with K-12 systems and the institutionalization of operating policies and practices also accrue to newer laboratory schools.

This transfer of knowledge is particularly important, since the UNC System just opened three laboratory schools in the 2022-23 school year. Despite this organizational learning, funding adequacy for laboratory schools remains a challenge. The UNC System and COEs continue to supplement regular public school funding streams. Whether legislative amendments that shift costs from laboratory schools to district partners provide budgetary relief to laboratory schools remains to be seen.

As COEs have gained experience with laboratory schools, they have also refined how they engage faculty and pre-service candidates in them. Universities have integrated COE personnel into laboratory schools as leaders (e.g., curriculum directors), as faculty-in-residence, as informal providers of coaching and professional development for teachers, and as supervisors for pre-service teachers. Likewise, COEs have integrated pre-service educators into laboratory schools through practicum, intern, and student teaching experiences. There are structures in place for COE and laboratory school interactions and COVID-19 did not meaningfully impact that structure. However, there remains further work for COEs to institutionalize and incentivize faculty involvement for the long-term.

Administrative and survey data suggests that laboratory schools are making positive contributions. After enrollment declines between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, given the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment at UNC System laboratory schools stabilized or increased in the 2021-22 school year and remained fairly stable into 2022-23. This suggests that laboratory schools were able to effectively market and recruit and that the surrounding communities are generally pleased with laboratory school operations. As intended, laboratory schools are also primarily enrolling students who are low-performing or previously attended (or were zoned to attend) a low-performing school. Relative to schools in their host districts, a higher percentage of laboratory school students are a racial/ethnic minority or economically-disadvantaged.

Survey responses show that laboratory school students, parents/caregivers, and personnel are generally satisfied and rate their laboratory school experiences positively. For example, laboratory school students rated the academic climate of their schools highly and nearly 85 percent of parents/caregivers report being satisfied or very satisfied with their child's laboratory school. Likewise, laboratory school personnel favorably perceive the teaching and school leadership at laboratory schools. It is worth noting, however, that perceptions of laboratory schools were slightly lower in 2021-22, across student, family, and personnel, than in 2020-21. This may be related to the return to in-person instruction and the challenges related to the 2021-22 school year.

Student-level administrative data from the 2020-21 school year indicate that certain laboratory schools, particularly the ECU Community School, Niner University Elementary (UNCC), and D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW) have higher attendance rates, relative to comparable students in low-performing schools and a matched comparison sample. Attendance rates were lower at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG), and The Catamount School (WCU). Regarding student achievement, there are challenges to isolating the impact of laboratory schools, especially given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on students, schools, and the availability of data. Rigorous analyses of 2020-21 student-level data suggest promising achievement outcomes at the ECU Community School. This is particularly true in elementary math, where ECU Community School students outperformed other students in low-performing schools and a matched comparison sample. Results for the remaining laboratory schools indicate that their students scored lower than comparison sample students—in low-performing schools or the matched sample—in at least some grade-levels/subject-areas in 2020-21. School accountability data from 2021-22 show that all five laboratory schools met expected achievement

growth. This is an improvement from 2018-19—the last time NCDPI released school performance data—when only two laboratory schools met growth.

The UNC System and UNC System institutions operating laboratory schools face upcoming challenges. These include the need to more sustainably fund laboratory school operations, finding ways to institutionalize COE faculty engagement in the long-term, formalizing and strengthening avenues for the sharing of effective approaches to meet student academic and non-academic needs with traditional public schools, and addressing questions around laboratory school governance and accountability. Though this report is the final report aligned to the original legislatively mandated evaluation, ongoing evaluation may be appropriate to examine how laboratory school practices and policies evolve to respond to these challenges and contribute to enhanced outcomes for K-12 students and pre-service educators.

Appendix A1: Data Sources

To complete an in-depth review of the laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will rely on five main data sources: (1) interviews with university and laboratory school leadership, personnel, and partners; (2) laboratory school status reports completed by UNC System COEs; (3) administrative data on students and school personnel from the NCDPI; (4) survey responses from laboratory school students, families, and personnel; and (5) administrative data from COEs on educator preparation programs and pre-service candidates. Below, the Evaluation Team briefly reviews each of these data sources.

Laboratory School Interviews

For each UNC System laboratory school, the Evaluation Team will conduct a full set of interviews at two time points during the evaluation. First, during the spring of a laboratory school's first year of operation, the Evaluation Team will interview COE leadership and faculty, laboratory school personnel (e.g., teachers, principals, pre-service teachers), and laboratory school partners (within the local community and from across the university). These interviews will assist the Evaluation Team in understanding how the laboratory schools have been set up, with whom the laboratory schools are partnering, how the laboratory schools are operated, and the relationships between educator preparation and the laboratory schools. The Evaluation Team conducted these interviews with ECU and WCU in April 2018; with Appalachian State, UNCG, and UNCW in April 2019; and with UNCC in April/May 2021. Second, during the last year of the laboratory school evaluation (2022), the Evaluation Team conducted interviews with COE leadership and faculty, laboratory school personnel (e.g., teachers, support staff) and a representative from each laboratory school LEA partner. These interviews allow the Evaluation Team to assess the development and growth of the laboratory schools.

In addition to these two time periods, the Evaluation Team also started annual interviews with laboratory school leadership. In spring 2020 and spring 2021, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews—typically with the laboratory school principal and COE laboratory school lead—for each school. These conversations provide an opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about new programs/policies at the schools and to understand how the laboratory schools are adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, to supplement interviews at each laboratory school site, the Evaluation Team conducted interviews in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022 with leadership at the UNC System Office. These interviews focused on the planning, set up, and governance of laboratory schools.

Laboratory School Status Reports

To complement the interviews with university and laboratory school stakeholders, the Evaluation Team collected status reports from the UNC System COEs that are operating laboratory schools. These status reports include a set of pre-specified questions, to be completed by the COE Dean or his/her designee, that allow UNC System institutions to describe: (1) the design of their laboratory school; (2) the marketing and management of their laboratory school; (3) key laboratory school partners and the services they provide; (4) the relationship between educator preparation and the laboratory school; and (5) challenges and successes in setting up and developing the laboratory school.

UNC System institutions complete a status report in their last planning year prior to opening,[71] and a modified version of the status report during each subsequent year of operation. In completing these reports—especially those completed after the initial round of interviews in the school's first year of operation—the Evaluation Team directs schools to focus on what is new in the current year.

Administrative Data from the NCDPI

The laboratory school evaluation will use student-level data provided by the NCDPI. Student level data include demographics, absences, disciplinary incidents, and test scores on the state's EOG exams. With these data the Evaluation Team will assess the demographics and prior achievement of students attending laboratory schools, whether laboratory schools improve the test scores of students, and whether laboratory schools benefit students' engagement with school.

These NCDPI data are not available to the Evaluation Team for analysis until several months after the close of a school year (typically November). As a result, evaluation reports submitted in November will not include rigorous analyses and results from the most recently completed school year. Instead, these data will be included in subsequent reports.

Survey Responses

To evaluate the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will collect survey data from multiple sources. First, the Evaluation Team has contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to laboratory school students. The Evaluation Team chose the Tripod student survey because of its established validity and reliability, the alignment between survey items and aims of the laboratory school evaluation, and its flexibility in allowing the Evaluation Team to customize questions. This survey assesses students' motivation for learning, engagement with school, and perceptions of academic climate. The Evaluation Team administered this survey to students at the ECU Community School and The Catamount School in spring 2018 and to students at the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, and The Catamount School in spring 2019. Due to the school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Team did not collect student survey data in spring 2020. In spring 2021 and 2022, the Evaluation Team administered the survey to students attending all six operating laboratory schools.

Second, the Evaluation Team has contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to parents/caregivers of laboratory school students. This survey focuses on parents'/caregivers' satisfaction with the laboratory school, their perceptions of the laboratory school application process and set up, and their perceptions of school climate, services, and safety. The Evaluation Team administered this survey in spring 2018 to the parents/families of students attending the ECU Community School and The Catamount School. In spring 2019, the Evaluation Team administered this survey to the parents/families of students attending the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, the ECU Community School, the Moss Street Partnership School, the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy, and The Catamount School. Due to the school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Team did not collect student survey data in spring 2020. In spring 2021 and spring 2022, the Evaluation Team administered the survey to parents/caregivers at all six operating laboratory schools.

[71] ECU and WCU opened their laboratory schools before the Evaluation Team began the evaluation, and thus, they did not complete a planning year status report. Appalachian State, UNCG, UNCW, and UNCC completed this status report as will all other UNC System laboratory schools.

For the first time in spring 2021, the Evaluation Team contracted with Tripod Education Partners to administer a survey to laboratory school personnel. This includes classroom teachers, teaching assistants and paraprofessionals, student services personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers), school leadership (e.g., principals, curriculum directors), and other personnel (e.g., administrative assistants). The survey focuses on perceptions of school leadership, teaching/instructional practices, and school climate. The Evaluation Team conducted these personnel surveys again in spring 2022.

Administrative Data from Colleges of Education

To examine outcomes for pre-service teachers and school leaders who obtained clinical experience in laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will use administrative data on pre-service candidates provided by UNC System COEs. These candidate data will include demographics, measures of academic ability (e.g., grade point averages, SAT/ACT scores), licensure areas and licensure exam scores, time to graduation, edTPA scores, and indicators for having a clinical experience in a laboratory school. With these data the Evaluation Team will examine the characteristics of candidates with significant clinical experiences in laboratory schools (compared to peers with more traditional preparation experiences) and link administrative data from COE and NCDPI to track these candidates into the state's public schools. The Evaluation Team will begin to incorporate these administrative data from COE into subsequent reports once there are enough pre-service candidates who have had significant clinical experiences in laboratory schools. In addition, the Evaluation Team will collect data from COEs, on an annual basis, detailing the number of pre-service teachers having early field, intern I, and intern II experiences at laboratory schools. These data will also include counts of other COE pre-service interns (e.g., MSA students, counseling students) at the laboratory schools.

Appendix A2: Analysis Methods

Qualitative data analyses

To assess the UNC System laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team analyzed two types of qualitative data—interview transcripts and laboratory school responses to annual status reports.

The Evaluation Team designed interview protocols for use with various stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of laboratory schools (e.g., UNC System officials, College of Education faculty, laboratory school teachers). These interview protocols are organized around the seven laboratory school evaluation questions.

To analyze the interview responses, the Evaluation Team conducted an initial review of the transcripts to identify key concepts and themes (e.g., school governance, partnerships, educator preparation) related to each of the evaluation questions. Using these key concepts and themes, the Evaluation Team developed a categorization scheme, aligned with the evaluation questions, to organize specific portions of the transcribed interview text. With this scheme the Evaluation Team reviewed all interview transcripts and coded responses based on the pre-identified concepts and themes. A final review and synthesis of the interview responses, based on the developed coding scheme, revealed the critical observations and findings that are included in this report.

The Evaluation Team designed a report template to be submitted annually by schools in their second and subsequent years of operation excluding the last year of the evaluation. The "subsequent operating year" status report template is organized around the seven laboratory school evaluation questions.

Quantitative data analyses

The evaluation of the UNC System laboratory schools will use quantitative data from a host of sources: NCDPI, UNC System COEs, and survey responses. With these data the Evaluation Team will assess whether laboratory schools improve students' academic performance, engagement with school, and social-emotional outcomes; and whether laboratory schools are successfully marketed and managed. Below, the Evaluation Team describes several guiding principles for how it will analyze and report quantitative data on laboratory schools. These principles are designed to help the Evaluation Team perform rigorous analyses and report data in meaningful ways.

First, the Evaluation Team will start the analysis process by reporting student and school outcomes without making any statistical adjustments. For example, the Evaluation Team may report the average End-of-Grade mathematics scores of laboratory school students and other students in the host school district. While there are limitations to this approach and its ability to isolate the impacts of laboratory schools, it does have the advantage of presenting information in a transparent and understandable manner.

Second, when analyzing administrative data for laboratory schools, the Evaluation Team will present pooled results across all laboratory schools and separate results for each laboratory school. Pooling the data will provide a larger sample and return a summative measure of laboratory school effects. Separate, school-by-school analyses acknowledge the potential for variation in laboratory school impacts due to differences in set up, student demographics, partnerships, and goals across the schools.

Third, given the unique sample of students attending laboratory schools—those who were previously low-performing and/or those coming from a low-performing school—reporting of raw, unadjusted student outcomes will not isolate the impact of laboratory schools. As such, the Evaluation Team will also use administrative data from NCDPI to identify comparison samples of students and schools that more closely resemble the laboratory school population. It is likely that the Evaluation Team will use propensity score matching to create these comparison samples; other statistical approaches may also be feasible and will be examined by the Evaluation Team.[72]

Lastly, when analyzing administrative data from NCDPI, the Evaluation Team will estimate regression models that control for a rich set of individual and contextual characteristics. For example, when assessing student achievement, the Evaluation Team will use propensity score matching to identify an appropriate comparison sample and then control for individual student characteristics to more rigorously isolate the impact of laboratory schools on student performance.

[72] Other approaches include comparing laboratory school students to (1) students attending other low-performing schools; (2) students who applied to laboratory schools but were unable to attend due to over-subscription (this does not currently exist); and (3) themselves in previous years before they attended the laboratory school.

Appendix A3: Laboratory School Snapshots

Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork

Appalachian State's laboratory school, the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, is an elementary school located on the campus of the former Middle Fork Elementary School in Walkertown, NC. The campus building is leased from Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools (WSFCS) and houses grades K-5. The Academy at Middle Fork operates on the WSFCS school calendar.

In its fourth year, the Academy at Middle Fork staff included a principal, a director of curriculum and instruction, a director of student affairs and emergency management (formerly the behavior support coach), a school engagement coordinator (formerly the testing & transportation coordinator), a school improvement coach, a data manager, 18 classroom teachers, four specials teachers (art, media, music, and PE), seven teacher assistants, two ESL teachers, an EC coordinator, three EC teachers, three EC teacher assistants, an administrative support and school finance specialist, a part-time behavioral intervention specialist, a counselor, a school nurse, and a social worker. In addition, one faculty member served as a faculty-in-residence, teaching the laboratory school's Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program one day per week.

The Academy at Middle Fork's mission is to provide a balanced education for children, teachers, principals, and families through the implementation of research-based practices and exemplary classroom instruction and administration. The laboratory school's key themes are innovation, inclusivity, and intentionality. The school is committed to developing the whole child, including social, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs. The Academy at Middle Fork uses a workshop approach for students in all grades and builds literacy skills in all core content areas. Students receive differentiated instruction that engages them in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The Academy at Middle Fork incorporates several distinctive practices in its laboratory school model. In 2021-22, the Academy at Middle Fork designed and implemented a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program as a part of its specialist rotation. In this program, students use various building materials to design engineering projects that foster creative thinking and innovative problem-solving skills. Additionally, the lab school continued its "Literacy Cast" sessions for the second year. In this program, students are placed in small workshop groups where they focus on building skills aligned with their reading levels. As a part of Literacy Cast, the lab school hosts guest authors – both remotely and in-person – to discuss the materials that the students are reading. The Academy at Middle Fork includes restorative justice and positive reinforcement practices as a part of its social and emotional learning curriculum to support the whole child.

Despite returning to the classroom for the entire 2021-22 school year, the Academy at Middle Fork engaged fewer pre-service candidates than in 2020-21. In 2021-22, Appalachian State placed 10 interns at the lab school. A total of six pre-service candidates in elementary, special, and theatre education had intermittent field experiences at the laboratory school. Additionally, the Academy had two school social worker interns in 2021-22. COE leaders are working to identify sustainable ways for long-term COE pre-service candidate engagement at the laboratory school. The distance between Appalachian State's campus in Boone and the Academy at Middle Fork's campus in Walkertown – approximately 90 miles – continues to present a unique challenge to lab school leaders in their efforts to engage pre-service candidates.

The ECU Community School

The ECU Community School is an elementary school co-located on the campus of South Greenville Elementary in Greenville, NC. In 2021-22, it served grades K-5, with one class per grade in grades 1, 2, 4, and 5, and two classrooms each for grades K and 3.

In its fifth year of operation, the laboratory school's staff included a principal, nine teachers in kindergarten through 5th grade, seven teacher assistants, two special education teachers, a full-time curriculum director, a full-time director of integrated health, a full-time school counselor, a full-time administrative assistant, and a full-time social worker, two full-time reading specialists, and a part-time testing coordinator. In addition, in 2021-22, three ECU College of Education faculty members worked directly with students at the ECU Community School: a library sciences faculty member taught keyboarding skills and digital citizenship, a literacy studies faculty member worked with the after school tutorial program, coordinated AmeriCorps volunteers, coordinated Sara Smiles Scholarship recipients, and worked on assessment and planning with teachers, and a special education faculty member conducted in-school tutoring.

The ECU Community School acknowledges and supports the integration of health, wellness, and learning to develop the whole child. 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. Its long-term literacy focus includes working with the leadership team, laboratory school teachers, and other stakeholders to facilitate the development of a multi-year plan to bring evidence-based reading instruction and the use of a complementary comprehensive assessment system to scale in the laboratory school. The ECU Community School 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. The school implements PBIS through weekly recognition of classes and individuals with outstanding behavior.

Most of the schools and colleges on the ECU campus are engaged with the laboratory school to support its whole child approach. Thirty-seven interns from the Marriage and Family Therapy, Psychology, School Social Work, Speech Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy departments had clinical experiences at the laboratory school in 2021-22. Additionally, the COE placed 12 special education pre-service candidates in early field experiences, four student teachers in special education, three student teachers in elementary education, and two student teachers in early childhood education at the laboratory school. The ECU Community School partnered with the COE STEM-CORPS East to host four AmeriCorps volunteers who worked in the After School Tutorial program and supported the newly founded Science Olympiad team for students in third, fourth, and fifth grades. The Communication Disorders department in the College of Allied Health Services provided audiology services (i.e., evaluations, reviews of results, and treatment recommendations) to the laboratory school. In another testament to the universal investment of colleges at ECU, the Theatre Department provided an Earth Day performance for laboratory school students in April 2022.

Some distinct practices that the ECU Community School implements include a standards-based report card to assess individual progression to content mastery; an integrated health collaborative (IHC) approach to identify physical health and social-emotional needs and provide appropriate medical and counseling supports/referrals; a modified version of the edTPA to coach in-service teachers, inform their professional development, and create a common language for teachers to use with pre-service candidates; and a two-way, live-streamed video feed between university and laboratory school

classrooms that allows pre-service candidates to observe instructional practices, classroom management techniques, and student behaviors in real-time.

Moss Street Partnership School

The Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG) is an elementary school located north of Greensboro, in Reidsville, NC, which occupies a former Rockingham County Schools (RCS) elementary school. The laboratory school serves students in grades K-5, averaging approximately three classrooms per grade level. Staff and students at the Moss Street Partnership School follow the traditional RCS district calendar.

In its fourth year, the Moss Street Partnership School employed a director, a principal, an assistant principal, an associate director, 20 classroom teachers, four specialty teachers (dance, library studies, music, and PE), four special education teachers, a school social worker, a counselor, a reading specialist, a speech pathologist, and the school support staff members.

The Moss Street Partnership School uses a "learner-centered, learner-led" approach and emphasizes experiential learning, inclusive education, and a collaborative environment for both students and teachers. STEAM instruction is prominent at the Moss Street Partnership School. The campus features a makerspace, although the school was unable to fully leverage this space in 2020-21 due to social distancing requirements and remote learning.

The school employs a full-time instructional technology consultant who assists teachers with the incorporation of technology into their lessons; a role that proved invaluable during the transition to remote instruction. As a fully inclusive school, the Moss Street Partnership School is oriented to the whole child, including meeting academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs. Faculty from the UNCG School of Education and the Department of Kinesiology engaged with the laboratory school in 2020-21 to develop effective STEM resources, respond to social-emotional student needs, and increase parent-family engagement with the laboratory school during remote learning. In support of its dual focus on academic and whole child development, the school uses some distinctive practices including a standards-based report card to assess individual progression towards content mastery.

In 2021-22, UNCG placed 11 pre-service candidates to complete their practicum assignments, one pre-service, PE candidate for their first semester of student teaching (intern I), and one pre-service, PE candidate for their final semester of student teaching (intern II). The Moss Street Partnership School also hosted 19 nursing interns and two psychology interns in 2021-22.

In addition, eight classroom teachers graduated from UNCG's M.Ed. programs in literacy in spring 2021. Four laboratory staff members (two teachers and two administrators) enrolled in UNCG's Educational Leadership Ed.D. program.

D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy

D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (DCVPA) is a K-8 school in Wilmington that occupies a former New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) middle school that previously served grades 6-8. It is currently the only K-8 school within the district and includes a combination class in grades 4 and 5 in addition to one class in all grades.

In its fourth year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, a data manager, an operations coordinator and liaison, 10 teachers in core content areas, three instructional assistants, one health & PE teacher, one music teacher, a media specialist, a beginning teacher support coach, a student support specialist, a speech therapist, a school psychologist, a guidance counselor, one special education educator, a part-time nurse, and a technology support analyst. A full-time clinical social worker, funded through a partnership with the College of Health and Human Services, provides student support services. Two Faculty-in-Residence participants from the College Of Education also supported the professional learning of teachers at DCVPA, one with a focus on multi-tiered systems of early intervention support (MTSS), and another with a focus on family engagement and culturally sustaining literacy practices.

Learning at DCVPA is guided by the acronym PIER, which stands for Personalized, Inquiry-based, Experiential, and Reflective. Teachers at DCVPA use the Rigor-Relevance framework to implement inquiry-based instruction and an experiential learning approach to help students transition from knowledge to application of content. Literacy instruction is based on a framework incorporating evidence-based reading instructional practices—phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The school's model also includes a heavy emphasis on STEM instruction. DCVPA is simultaneously focused on addressing the physical health and social-emotional needs of their students. In 2019-20, the school shifted toward restorative practices for behavior management. To support this shift, the school provided professional learning to staff and established a Restoration Committee. In 2021-22, the school increased student support by hiring a school psychologist, guidance counselor, behavior specialist, and student support specialist. DCVPA uses a "kinship model", whereby everyone in the school community models caring behavior, through teachers mentoring students, older students mentoring younger students, school staff engaging whole families, and the school/community providing essentials to students and families (e.g., food).

D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy incorporates several distinct practices into its laboratory school model, including the use of a working lab in the COE's Center for Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (CESTEM), where teachers can take laboratory school students to engage in hands-on, standards-aligned learning experiences. Finally, the laboratory school has an on-site "Parent Room" which includes a kitchen, washer/dryer, and meeting space for families.

In its fourth year, D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy hosted 68 pre-service candidates, including 119 field experience placements for students in the COE in addition to 13 psychology students. D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy also hosted one pre-service school leader intern in 2021-22.

The Catamount School

WCU's laboratory school, The Catamount School, is co-located on the campus of Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva, NC. The laboratory school occupies one wing of the main high school building. Stemming from its prior work with Jackson County Public Schools (JCPS) to establish freshman academies, WCU opened The Catamount School as a mechanism to support students' transition to high school. The Catamount School has one classroom, per grade, for grades 6-8 and operates on the JCPS calendar. The Catamount School is the only middle school in JCPS, which otherwise includes grades 6-8 in K-8 schools.

In its fifth year, The Catamount School staff included a principal, four core subject-area teachers, an enrichment & arts teacher, an enrichment coordinator who coordinates services and extracurricular activities provided by university and community-based partners, an exceptional children (EC) teacher, a PowerSchool data manager, and two health services coordinators who serve as the school nurses and supervise School of Nursing candidates in practicum experiences. A COE faculty member serves as the Curriculum and Instruction Liaison and teaches one math class. A WCU Health and Physical Education (HPE) instructor serves as the physical education teacher and coordinates and supervises HPE pre-service candidates. WCU College of Education faculty members serve in several positions at The Catamount School, including as an EC administrator and as a second math teacher.

The Catamount School fosters student growth and the development of social-emotional skills (particularly resilience) through a problem-centered, experience-based learning approach in an inclusive education environment. Special education services for EC students are provided in their regular classroom using a co-teaching model in which the EC teacher works collaboratively with the lead classroom teacher to deliver individualized content area instruction. Literacy instruction also uses the co-teaching model between the inclusion instructor and lead classroom teacher and is supported by twice weekly one-on-one and small group reading intervention groups with pre-service candidates.

Nearly 100 pre-service teacher candidates had formal clinical experiences at The Catamount School in the 2021-22 school year, including pre-service candidates in middle grades, health and physical education, and inclusive education programs (dual program in elementary and special education). In addition, pre-service candidates from other WCU programs had clinical experiences at The Catamount School, including students in school counseling and nursing.

Some distinct practices The Catamount School incorporates into its laboratory school model include the Community of Care team—COE faculty, laboratory school staff, and university partners who monitor the provision of services that support students' well-being; a school nurse who has improved the services to both TCS students and the undergraduate nursing students at the school; the use of PBIS to create and hold students and teachers accountable to behavioral expectations; a multi-tiered system of support model to comprehensively address student academic and social-emotional growth goals; the use of project-based learning to foster connections between core content and the students' communities and lived experiences; and the use of standards-based grading, which allows teachers, students, and parents to assess individual progression to content mastery.

Niner University Elementary

Niner University Elementary School is located on the campus of a former Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Pre-K Center in west Charlotte, NC and, in 2021-22, served students in grades K-3 with three classes in both kindergarten and first grade and two classes in both second and third grades. The school aims to provide an option for elementary students in west Charlotte and to 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 in the area. The school follows a traditional calendar that is aligned with CMS.

In its second year, Niner University Elementary Staff included a principal, a curriculum coordinator, ten licensed classroom teachers, eight 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), a school counselor, a social worker, a guidance counselor, and a media specialist/IT facilitator. Administrative staff include a finance/data manager, administrative office associate, and a school resource officer.

Niner University Elementary employs multiple instructional methods, including inquiry-based instruction and guided learning. All students at NUE receive daily small group literacy and math instruction. In this flexible grouping model, teachers utilize data to design instruction that is specific to student needs. Student-centered literacy instruction is embedded across all content areas and includes social-emotional supports. Niner University Elementary strives to create an environment that supports the whole student and that student's family and community. As an example of this outreach and support, faculty members from the College of Business at UNCC led financial literacy seminars with NUE parents and the university's career development center provided job interview preparation tips.

At the core of the school's trauma-invested program is the Care team, which supports members of the school community who are experiencing difficulty, and the HeART (Helping And Responding to Trauma) team, which addresses behavioral issues related to trauma. Equity and justice are central to the school environment, and the school staff continuously reflects on culturally sustaining teaching practices to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of all students. Additionally, the professional school counselor and teachers deliver social justice multicultural education lessons to students.

UNCC placed 14 teacher candidates in elementary education, 19 teacher candidates in dual elementary education and special education, and one teacher candidate focused on special education at Niner University Elementary for their early field experiences. Of the 34 total pre-service candidates, 23 completed their first semesters of education courses in 2021-22. Four of those introductory courses were taught on Niner University Elementary's campus. Additionally, UNCC placed five school counseling interns and one social work intern at Niner University Elementary in 2021-22, whose work focused on play therapy with specific groups of laboratory school students. Undergraduate arts education and dance majors also provided dance instruction to Niner University Elementary students during the entire school year.

Appendix A4: Additional Parent/Caregiver Survey Data (2021-22 School Year)

Appendix Table A4.1: Parent Satisfaction with Laboratory Schools

How satisfied are you with…	Mean (2021)	Mean (2022)	Responses (2022)	% Very Dissatisfied (2022)	% Dissatisfied (2022)	% Neutral (2022)	% Satisfied (2022)	% Very Satisfied (2022)
All Laboratory Schools								
Overall	4.66	4.29	178	2.81	1.12	12.92	30.34	52.81
Discipline at the lab school	4.61	4.11	178	5.06	2.81	12.92	34.27	44.94
Lab school interacts with you	4.66	4.35	178	2.25	2.81	7.30	32.58	55.06
Partnership with the lab school	4.59	4.22	177	2.26	4.52	10.73	33.90	48.59
Child's social and emotional growth	4.64	4.25	177	2.82	3.39	12.99	27.12	53.67
Child's academic growth	4.63	4.32	178	2.81	2.25	10.67	28.65	55.62
Child's physical development	4.59	4.21	178	2.81	4.49	12.36	29.78	50.56
Lab school communicates with you	4.66	4.30	178	2.81	5.06	6.74	30.34	55.06
Appalachian State Academy at Middle Fork (ASU)								
Overall	4.55	3.94	16	6.25	0.00	12.50	56.25	25.00
Discipline at the lab school	4.53	4.00	16	6.25	0.00	6.25	62.50	25.00
Lab school interacts with you	4.58	4.06	16	6.25	0.00	6.25	56.25	31.25
Partnership with the lab school	4.53	3.88	16	6.25	6.25	6.25	56.25	25.00
Child's social and emotional growth	4.61	4.00	15	6.67	0.00	13.33	46.67	33.33
Child's academic growth	4.59	3.81	16	6.25	0.00	18.75	56.25	18.75
Child's physical development	4.70	3.88	16	6.25	6.25	6.25	56.25	25.00
Lab school communicates with you	4.58	4.06	16	6.25	0.00	6.25	56.25	31.25
ECU Community School								
Overall	4.81	4.32	68	2.94	0.00	16.18	23.53	57.35
Discipline at the lab school	4.77	4.07	68	8.82	0.00	13.24	30.88	47.06
Lab school interacts with you	4.75	4.28	68	2.94	4.41	8.82	29.41	54.41
Partnership with the lab school	4.73	4.25	68	2.94	7.35	5.88	29.41	54.41
Child's social and emotional growth	4.76	4.29	68	2.94	2.94	13.24	23.53	57.35
Child's academic growth	4.80	4.46	68	2.94	0.00	10.29	22.06	64.71
Child's physical development	4.65	4.18	68	4.41	5.88	11.76	23.53	54.41
Lab school communicates with you	4.75	4.24	68	1.47	7.35	10.29	27.94	52.94
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)								
Overall	4.54	4.18	28	0.00	7.14	7.14	46.43	39.29
Discipline at the lab school	4.50	4.07	28	0.00	7.14	17.86	35.71	39.29
Lab school interacts with you	4.85	4.18	28	0.00	7.14	7.14	46.43	39.29
Partnership with the lab school	4.62	4.07	28	0.00	3.57	25.00	32.14	39.29
Child's social and emotional growth	4.69	4.11	28	0.00	3.57	21.43	35.71	39.29
Child's academic growth	4.50	4.21	28	3.57	0.00	14.29	35.71	46.43
Child's physical development	4.58	4.11	28	0.00	0.00	28.57	32.14	39.29
Lab school communicates with you	4.73	4.00	28	3.57	7.14	14.29	35.71	39.29
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)								
Overall	4.67	4.30	27	3.70	0.00	18.52	18.52	59.26
Discipline at the lab school	4.43	4.00	27	3.70	7.41	18.52	25.93	44.44
Lab school interacts with you	4.48	4.56	27	0.00	0.00	11.11	22.22	66.67
Partnership with the lab school	4.33	4.37	27	0.00	3.70	11.11	29.63	55.56
Child's social and emotional growth	4.48	4.30	27	3.70	7.41	7.41	18.52	62.96
Child's academic growth	4.57	4.30	27	0.00	14.81	0.00	25.93	59.26
Child's physical development	4.48	4.48	27	0.00	3.70	7.41	25.93	62.96
Lab school communicates with you	4.57	4.48	27	3.70	3.70	0.00	25.93	66.67
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)								
Overall	4.31	4.42	12	8.33	0.00	0.00	25.00	66.67
Discipline at the lab school	4.42	4.42	12	8.33	0.00	0.00	25.00	66.67
Lab school interacts with you	4.33	4.58	12	8.33	0.00	0.00	8.33	83.33
Partnership with the lab school	4.39	4.36	11	9.09	0.00	0.00	27.27	63.64
Child's social and emotional growth	4.44	4.42	12	8.33	0.00	0.00	25.00	66.67
Child's academic growth	4.31	4.33	12	8.33	0.00	8.33	16.67	66.67
Child's physical development	4.44	4.50	12	8.33	0.00	0.00	16.67	75.00
Lab school communicates with you	4.36	4.58	12	8.33	0.00	0.00	8.33	83.33
The Catamount School (WCU)								

Overall	4.91	4.48	27	0.00	0.00	11.11	29.63	59.26
Discipline at the lab school	4.73	4.30	27	0.00	3.70	11.11	37.04	48.15
Lab school interacts with you	4.85	4.59	27	0.00	0.00	3.70	33.33	62.96
Partnership with the lab school	4.67	4.30	27	0.00	0.00	14.81	40.74	44.44
Child's social and emotional growth	4.70	4.33	27	0.00	3.70	14.81	25.93	55.56
Child's academic growth	4.76	4.41	27	0.00	0.00	14.81	29.63	55.56
Child's physical development	4.58	4.19	27	0.00	7.41	11.11	37.04	44.44
Lab school communicates with you	4.85	4.59	27	0.00	3.70	0.00	29.63	66.67

Note: This table displays parent responses to a set of survey items about their satisfaction with their child's laboratory school

Appendix Table A4.2: Comparing School Experiences

When you think about your child's school experiences this year compared to his/her school experiences last year, in which year was the school better at…	Responses	% Last Year Was Better	% Comparable	% This Year Was Better
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	2	0.00	50.00	50.00
Helping your child learn	2	0.00	50.00	50.00
Having teachers that really care about your child	2	0.00	50.00	50.00
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	12	8.33	58.33	33.33
Helping your child learn	12	16.67	41.67	41.67
Having teachers that really care about your child	12	16.67	50.00	33.33
ECU Community School—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	13	7.69	46.15	46.15
Helping your child learn	13	7.69	38.46	53.85
Having teachers that really care about your child	13	23.08	30.77	46.15
ECU Community School—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	54	7.41	62.96	29.63
Helping your child learn	54	5.56	62.96	31.48
Having teachers that really care about your child	54	3.70	68.52	27.78
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	12	16.67	33.33	50.00
Helping your child learn	11	0.00	45.45	54.55
Having teachers that really care about your child	11	9.09	36.36	54.55
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	12	16.67	50.00	33.33
Helping your child learn	12	25.00	25.00	50.00
Having teachers that really care about your child	12	8.33	66.67	25.00
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	7	0.00	28.57	71.43
Helping your child learn	7	0.00	42.86	57.14
Having teachers that really care about your child	7	0.00	42.86	57.14
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	18	11.11	50.00	38.89
Helping your child learn	18	5.56	38.89	55.56
Having teachers that really care about your child	18	5.56	72.22	22.22
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	4	0.00	0.00	100.00
Helping your child learn	4	0.00	0.00	100.00
Having teachers that really care about your child	4	0.00	50.00	50.00
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	6	0.00	50.00	50.00
Helping your child learn	6	16.67	16.67	66.67
Having teachers that really care about your child	6	16.67	50.00	33.33
The Catamount School (WCU)—First Time Families				
Helping students behave	5	0.00	60.00	40.00
Helping your child learn	5	20.00	20.00	60.00
Having teachers that really care about your child	5	0.00	60.00	40.00
The Catamount School (WCU)—Returning Families				
Helping students behave	22	18.18	63.64	18.18
Helping your child learn	22	9.09	59.09	31.82
Having teachers that really care about your child	22	13.64	68.18	18.18

Note: This table displays parent responses to survey items asking parents to compare their child's educational experiences in 2021-22 to their educational experiences in 2020-21

Appendix A5: Additional Laboratory School Personnel Survey Data (2021-22 School Year)

Appendix Table A5.1: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools

Leadership at this school…	All Lab Schools	ASU	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Communicates a clear vision for our school	4.19	4.72	4.33	3.67	3.43	4.47	4.17
Supports teachers in their efforts to improve teaching and learning	4.28	4.69	4.17	3.83	3.76	4.53	4.67
Is knowledgeable about assessment practices	4.35	4.72	4.39	4.00	4.00	4.47	4.17
Has high, ambitious goals when working with me to improve instruction	4.28	4.53	4.29	4.50	3.94	4.40	4.00
Actively monitors the quality of teaching at this school	4.00	4.52	3.56	3.50	3.76	4.13	4.33
Sets clear and measurable school-level goals for progress on instructional outcomes	4.03	4.48	4.06	3.58	3.57	3.93	4.50
Communicates effectively when giving me support	4.18	4.76	4.11	3.42	3.62	4.33	4.67
Supports me as I try to implement what I learn in professional development	4.28	4.65	4.14	4.25	3.81	4.40	4.50
Helps teachers figure out how to address particular instructional challenges	3.99	4.48	3.72	3.58	3.48	4.27	4.33
Provides helpful guidance for effective classroom practice	4.01	4.62	3.89	3.58	3.33	4.20	4.17
Is very knowledgeable about curriculum and effective instructional practices	4.35	4.83	4.28	3.75	4.00	4.53	4.17
Makes sure that professional development addresses priority instructional goals	4.10	4.34	4.17	3.83	3.71	4.13	4.50
Is willing to provide criticism	4.34	4.52	4.39	4.08	4.38	4.27	3.83
Sets high standards for teaching	4.39	4.72	4.17	4.00	4.38	4.27	4.50
Places a high priority on engaging parents as partners in helping children learn	4.13	4.48	4.28	3.42	3.67	4.47	4.17
Is willing to have difficult conversations if the result is to improve teaching and learning	4.26	4.45	4.39	4.00	4.05	4.33	4.00

Note: This table displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of school leadership. We display average response values for each leadership survey item across all lab schools and for each lab school separately.

Appendix Table A5.2: Perceptions of School Leadership at the Laboratory Schools

	All Lab Schools	ASU	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
Teachers here hold one another accountable for working hard	4.05	4.47	3.57	3.50	3.81	4.30	4.00
Teachers collaborate to revise and refine curriculum	4.31	4.68	3.93	4.13	4.22	4.25	4.40
Teachers make sure that curriculum is aligned well across different grade levels	4.11	4.52	3.80	3.75	3.67	4.25	4.80
Teachers collaborate to design lessons with the right level of challenge for students	4.31	4.76	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.00	4.25
Teachers here have strong skills to produce meaningful student learning	4.35	4.66	4.06	3.75	4.33	4.33	5.00
Teachers here have strong skills to deal with student disciplinary problems	3.79	4.07	4.00	3.25	3.33	3.67	4.83
Teachers here are confident that they can motivate their students to think and work hard	4.19	4.65	4.29	3.50	4.00	3.90	4.25

Note: This table displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their perceptions of teachers. We display average response values for each survey item across all lab schools and for each lab school separately.

Appendix Table A5.3: Laboratory School Personnel Sense of Value, Respect, and Belonging

	All Lab Schools	ASU	ECU	UNCC	UNCG	UNCW	WCU
I feel valued at this school	4.19	4.66	3.89	4.00	3.71	4.33	4.50
I am treated with respect at this school	4.31	4.72	3.94	4.08	4.00	4.40	4.67
I feel like I belong at this school	4.28	4.66	3.94	4.00	3.90	4.60	4.50

Note: This table displays the responses of laboratory school personnel to a set of survey items regarding their sense of being valued, respected, and belonging. WE display average response values for each survey item across all lab schools and for each lab school separately.

Appendix A6: Additional Student Achievement Data (2020-21 School Year)

Appendix Table A6.1: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork and Other, Same-Grade Students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork				
3rd Grade Reading	41	432.05	73.17	26.83
4th Grade Reading	60	533.63	83.33	16.67
5th Grade Reading	50	543.18	78.00	22.00
3rd Grade Math	41	534.02	92.68	7.32
4th Grade Math	60	534.07	96.67	3.33
5th Grade Math	50	538.18	74.00	26.00
5th Grade Science	50	241.10	80.00	20.00
All Other Winston-Salem Forsyth Students				
3rd Grade Reading	3,714	434.97	61.95	38.05
4th Grade Reading	3,745	540.21	62.83	37.17
5th Grade Reading	3,766	545.88	63.62	36.38
3rd Grade Math	3,690	541.43	65.37	34.63
4th Grade Math	3,742	541.46	71.91	28.09
5th Grade Math	3,766	542.06	65.56	34.44
5th Grade Science	3,734	247.56	53.08	46.92

Note: For the 2020-21 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 A6.2: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the ECU Community School and Other, Same-Grade Students in Pitt County Public Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
ECU Community School				
3rd Grade Reading	11	431.45	72.73	27.27
4th Grade Reading	11	534.45	90.91	9.09
5th Grade Reading	13	534.00	100.00	0.00
3rd Grade Math	11	541.82	63.64	36.36
4th Grade Math	11	539.82	100.00	0.00
5th Grade Math	13	539.00	92.31	7.69
5th Grade Science	13	237.85	100.00	0.00
All Other Pitt County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,659	436.13	57.63	42.37
4th Grade Reading	1,575	542.41	53.40	46.60
5th Grade Reading	1,706	546.19	62.25	37.75
3rd Grade Math	1,647	543.31	56.95	43.05
4th Grade Math	1,572	543.76	62.34	37.66
5th Grade Math	1,708	542.31	64.52	35.48
5th Grade Science	1,693	247.61	53.63	46.37
South Greenville Elementary School				
3rd Grade Reading	46	429.28	84.78	15.22
4th Grade Reading	45	537.27	82.22	17.78
5th Grade Reading	47	538.83	91.49	8.51
3rd Grade Math	46	534.26	95.65	4.35
4th Grade Math	42	536.24	92.86	7.14
5th Grade Math	47	534.85	93.62	6.38
5th Grade Science	45	238.44	93.33	6.67

Note: For the 2020-21 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for the ECU Community School, for all other Pitt County students in the same grades, and for students at South Greenville Elementary School (the host school for the ECU Community School).

Appendix Table A6.3: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the Moss Street Partnership School and Other, Same-Grade Students in Rockingham County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
Moss Street Partnership School				
3rd Grade Reading	63	427.10	92.06	7.94
4th Grade Reading	59	533.81	83.05	16.95
5th Grade Reading	37	539.08	89.19	10.81
3rd Grade Math	62	534.05	95.16	4.84
4th Grade Math	59	535.12	100.00	0.00
5th Grade Math	38	533.42	94.74	5.26
5th Grade Science	37	241.59	89.19	10.81
All Other Rockingham County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	779	435.09	62.00	38.00
4th Grade Reading	799	539.63	65.46	34.54
5th Grade Reading	849	545.80	64.90	35.10
3rd Grade Math	783	542.44	60.66	39.34
4th Grade Math	801	542.93	65.79	34.21
5th Grade Math	853	542.99	59.09	40.91
5th Grade Science	845	248.73	46.75	53.25

Note: For the 2020-21 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 A6.4: 2020-21 Test Score Data for the D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and Other, Same-Grade Students in New Hanover County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy				
3rd Grade Reading	20	428.05	95.00	5.00
4th Grade Reading	19	535.16	78.95	21.05
5th Grade Reading	14	540.79	85.71	14.29
6th Grade Reading	28	542.68	85.71	14.29
7th Grade Reading	33	545.48	78.79	21.21
8th Grade Reading	32	548.75	87.50	12.50
3rd Grade Math	20	532.85	95.00	5.00
4th Grade Math	19	536.47	89.47	10.53
5th Grade Math	14	534.50	92.86	7.14
6th Grade Math	28	536.14	92.86	7.14
7th Grade Math	33	537.33	96.97	3.03
8th Grade Math	32	534.75	87.50	12.50
5th Grade Science	14	237.86	85.71	14.29
8th Grade Science	32	243.28	59.38	40.62
All Other New Hanover County Students				
3rd Grade Reading	1,717	438.11	48.22	51.78
4th Grade Reading	1,800	543.75	47.11	52.89
5th Grade Reading	1,786	548.44	51.40	48.60
6th Grade Reading	1,798	550.70	51.67	48.33
7th Grade Reading	1,767	553.68	47.99	52.01
8th Grade Reading	1,968	556.70	47.97	52.03
3rd Grade Math	1,713	545.51	47.23	52.77
4th Grade Math	1,799	545.59	54.20	45.80
5th Grade Math	1,786	544.73	51.62	48.38
6th Grade Math	1,800	545.17	53.56	46.44
7th Grade Math	1,763	545.82	50.82	49.18
8th Grade Math	1,349	534.26	83.02	16.98
5th Grade Science	1,788	250.92	39.99	60.01
8th Grade Science	1,976	251.07	27.02	72.98

Note: For the 2020-21 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 A6.5: 2020-21 Test Score Data for The Catamount School and Other, Same-Grade Students in Jackson County Schools

Test	Student Count	Average Test Score	Percent Below Proficient	Percent Proficient or Above
The Catamount School				
6th Grade Reading	11	556.36	36.36	63.64
7th Grade Reading	19	554.68	52.63	47.37
8th Grade Reading	18	555.11	50.00	50.00
6th Grade Math	11	542.09	63.64	36.36
7th Grade Math	19	546.00	52.63	47.37
8th Grade Math	14	532.57	85.71	14.29
8th Grade Science	18	250.50	27.78	72.22
Math I	4	553.75	0.00	100.00
All Other Jackson County Students				
6th Grade Reading	262	547.82	62.98	37.02
7th Grade Reading	279	550.34	60.57	39.43
8th Grade Reading	272	555.60	52.94	47.06
6th Grade Math	261	541.92	70.88	29.12
7th Grade Math	279	542.58	66.31	33.69
8th Grade Math	223	535.00	77.58	22.42
8th Grade Science	273	250.60	25.64	74.36
Math I	244	546.23	53.69	46.31
Smokey Mountain High School				
Math I	160	544.84	60.00	40.00

Note: For the 2020-21 academic year, this table displays descriptive student achievement data for The Catamount School, for all other Jackson County students in the same grades, and for students at the Smokey Mountain High School (the host school for The Catamount School).

Appendix Table A6.6: Unique Counts of Laboratory School Students in Models Comparing Student Achievement in Laboratory Schools to Student Achievement in Low-Performing Schools

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Science	8th Science
Laboratory School Students	115	177	129	132	112	46
Academy at Middle Fork	50	74	0	0	49	0
ECU Community School	14	22	0	0	13	0
Moss Street Partnership School	37	59	0	0	36	0
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	14	22	92	92	14	32
The Catamount School	0	0	37	40	0	14

Note: This table displays the unique number of laboratory school students contributing to test score estimates. These models controlled for prior achievement (2018-19) and compared laboratory school students to other students in low-performing schools.

Appendix Table A6.7: Unique Counts of Laboratory School Students in Models Comparing Student Achievement in Laboratory Schools to the Achievement of a Matched Comparison Sample

	Elem Math	Elem Reading	Middle Math	Middle Reading	5th Science	8th Science
Laboratory School Students	367	366	126	130	106	46
Academy at Middle Fork	145	144	0	0	47	0
ECU Community School	37	37	0	0	13	0
Moss Street Partnership School	143	143	0	0	35	0
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	42	42	90	90	11	33
The Catamount School	0	0	36	40	0	13

Note: This table displays the unique number of laboratory school students contributing to test score estimates in our matched comparison sample analyses.

Appendix A7: Laboratory School and Matched Comparison Sample Students

Appendix Table A7.1: Characteristics of Laboratory School and Matched Comparison Sample Students

Groups	Student Count	Minority	EDS	SPED	Age in Months	Prior Attendance Rate	Prior Suspension Status	Prior Year Reading Score (Std)	Prior Year Math Score (Std)	School Percent Low Income
1st Grade										
All Other Students	113,955	55.76	43.57	11.37	79.33	95.71	5.54	---	---	57.02
Lab Schools	47	95.74	78.72	10.64	80.23	93.91	19.15	---	---	82.71
Matched	235	95.74	76.17	8.09	80.27	93.30	14.89	---	---	83.77
2nd Grade										
All Other Students	113,347	56.03	42.78	11.87	91.64	96.16	6.44	0.009	---	56.84
Lab Schools	57	89.47	77.19	14.04	92.28	92.93	7.02	-0.698	---	86.88
Matched	271	87.45	75.65	15.50	91.83	93.76	4.43	-0.644	---	87.84
3rd Grade										
All Other Students	113,388	55.53	41.93	12.78	103.79	96.41	7.49	0.024	---	56.22
Lab Schools	129	86.82	62.79	16.28	104.14	94.23	12.40	-0.469	---	86.43
Matched	631	89.54	63.39	15.06	104.19	95.23	12.99	-0.455	---	87.32
4th Grade										
All Other Students	113,927	55.46	41.34	13.19	115.91	96.61	8.35	0.012	---	55.88
Lab Schools	140	85.71	49.29	20.00	115.76	93.97	12.14	-0.647	---	83.60
Matched	693	87.45	49.64	22.37	115.70	94.82	11.40	-0.642	---	85.11
5th Grade										
All Other Students	116,558	55.52	41.04	13.33	127.99	96.60	10.66	0.001	---	55.94
Lab Schools	110	92.73	48.18	16.36	128.87	94.81	20.00	-0.492	---	83.61
Matched	545	97.06	52.48	16.33	128.71	95.79	18.35	-0.470	---	84.70
6th Grade										
All Other Students	121,785	55.97	41.52	13.12	140.07	96.58	12.54	-0.007	-0.004	52.62
Lab Schools	36	69.44	55.56	27.78	139.28	95.65	16.67	-0.388	-0.577	81.48
Matched	180	70.00	55.00	26.67	138.97	95.76	13.89	-0.262	-0.371	81.67
7th Grade										
All Other Students	124,137	55.26	39.98	12.75	152.10	96.37	18.98	-0.009	-0.004	52.35
Lab Schools	48	70.83	64.58	18.75	151.48	93.16	33.33	-0.419	-0.426	76.39
Matched	240	69.58	65.42	19.58	151.63	92.80	33.75	-0.417	-0.394	76.77
8th Grade										
All Other Students	124,929	54.51	38.19	12.65	164.07	96.04	21.40	0.003	0.006	52.20
Lab Schools	46	78.26	71.74	19.57	163.26	95.27	28.26	-0.266	-0.369	81.15
Matched	230	75.65	72.17	28.70	163.02	95.70	30.43	-0.362	-0.336	80.30

Note: This table displays student demographics, prior year absence and suspension, and prior year test scores for all students, students at UNC System laboratory schools, and matched comparison sample students. The Evaluation Team used propensity score analyses to match laboratory school students to more comparable students. Not all laboratory school students have the prior year data required for these matches.

Appendix A8: Additional Student Survey Data (2021-22 Year)

Appendix Table A8.1: Laboratory School Students Motivation and Engagement with School

	Mean (2021)	Mean (2022)	Responses (2022)	% No or Mostly No (2022)	% Sometimes (2022)	% Mostly Yes or Yes (2022)
All Laboratory Schools						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.85	2.83	951	3.05	10.62	86.33
I care about the things we learn in school	2.75	2.68	482	7.05	18.05	74.90
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.81	2.77	486	3.91	15.43	80.66
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.72	2.60	958	10.75	18.06	71.19
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.93	2.89	254	0.79	9.45	89.76
I care about the things we learn in school	2.88	2.65	134	8.21	18.66	73.13
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.89	2.79	136	4.41	12.50	83.09
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.82	2.67	254	7.48	17.72	74.80
ECU Community School						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.90	2.93	102	0.00	6.86	93.14
I care about the things we learn in school	2.78	2.73	45	4.44	17.78	77.78
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.86	2.84	44	2.22	11.11	86.67
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.80	2.71	102	7.84	13.73	78.43
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.75	2.68	98	5.10	21.43	73.47
I care about the things we learn in school	---	3.00	12	0.00	0.00	100.0
I have done my best quality work in this school	---	2.69	13	15.38	0.00	84.62
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.71	2.62	97	11.34	15.46	73.20
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.84	2.80	306	5.56	9.15	85.29
I care about the things we learn in school	2.80	2.70	151	6.62	17.22	76.16
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.76	2.77	152	3.29	16.45	80.26
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.77	2.60	312	11.22	17.95	70.83
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.76	2.83	141	2.84	11.35	85.82
I care about the things we learn in school	2.48	2.64	90	7.78	20.00	72.22
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.68	2.63	90	4.44	27.78	67.78
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.36	2.45	143	16.78	20.98	62.24
The Catamount School (WCU)						
In this school I try to learn as much as I can	2.92	2.86	50	2.00	10.00	88.00
I care about the things we learn in school	2.71	2.64	50	8.00	20.00	72.00
I have done my best quality work in this school	2.95	2.90	50	2.00	6.00	92.00
This school is a happy place for me to be	2.82	2.50	50	12.00	26.00	62.00

Note: This table displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their motivation for learning and their engagement with school. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'try to learn as much as I can' and 'school is a happy place for me'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all four items.

Appendix Table A8.2: Laboratory School Students Perceptions of School Climate

	Mean (2021)	Mean (2022)	Responses (2022)	% No or Mostly No (2022)	% Sometimes (2022)	% Mostly Yes or Yes (2022)
All Laboratory Schools						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.75	2.64	953	9.23	17.10	73.66
In this school I am treated fairly	2.71	2.54	946	12.05	21.78	61.24
I feel like I belong at this school	2.59	2.47	485	14.23	24.54	61.24
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.82	2.69	253	7.91	15.02	77.08
In this school I am treated fairly	2.76	2.59	249	9.24	22.49	68.27
I feel like I belong at this school	2.75	2.50	137	11.68	26.28	62.04
ECU Community School						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.80	2.68	101	7.92	15.84	76.24
In this school I am treated fairly	2.82	2.54	100	16.00	14.00	70.00
I feel like I belong at this school	2.64	2.51	45	17.78	13.33	68.89
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.62	2.66	97	10.31	13.40	76.29
In this school I am treated fairly	2.34	2.42	93	16.13	25.81	58.06
I feel like I belong at this school	---	2.75	12	8.33	8.33	83.33
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.78	2.65	311	9.32	16.08	74.60
In this school I am treated fairly	2.76	2.56	311	11.90	20.58	67.52
I feel like I belong at this school	2.58	2.47	150	12.67	27.33	60.00
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.55	2.48	141	12.77	26.95	60.28
In this school I am treated fairly	2.58	2.45	143	14.69	25.17	60.14
I feel like I belong at this school	2.21	2.27	91	20.88	30.77	48.35
The Catamount School (WCU)						
This school feels like a safe place to me	2.92	2.72	50	6.00	16.00	78.00
In this school I am treated fairly	2.92	2.68	50	4.00	24.00	72.00
I feel like I belong at this school	2.82	2.62	50	12.00	14.00	74.00

Note: This table displays laboratory school students' responses to a set of items on their perceptions of school climate. Students completing the early elementary grades survey answered two of these items— 'school feels like a safe place to me' and 'in this school I am treated fairly'. Students completing the upper elementary grades survey answered all three items.

Appendix Table A8.3: Student Perceptions of Laboratory School Academic Climate (Tripod 7Cs)

	Appalachian Academy		ECU Community School		Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)		Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)		D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)		The Catamount School (WCU)	
	2021	*2022*	*2021*	*2022*	*2021*	*2022*	*2021*	*2022*	*2021*	*2022*	*2021*	*2022*
Care	2.87	2.77	2.87	2.83	2.78	2.70	2.85	2.77	2.72	2.65	2.98	2.81
Confer	2.66	2.64	2.73	2.56	2.58	2.61	2.70	2.62	2.59	2.47	2.76	2.76
Captivate	2.68	2.56	2.74	2.72	2.70	2.62	2.63	2.59	2.35	2.44	2.77	2.50
Clarify	2.80	2.78	2.82	2.87	2.56	2.64	2.78	2.74	2.69	2.69	2.88	2.76
Consolidate	2.75	2.75	2.81	2.75	2.57	2.65	2.78	2.74	2.65	2.57	2.76	2.56
Challenge	2.58	2.63	2.71	2.63	2.66	2.66	2.62	2.65	2.49	2.44	2.50	2.46
Classroom Management	2.28	2.23	2.31	2.31	2.02	2.15	2.38	2.28	2.11	2.08	2.29	2.24
Student Responses	210	258	100	102	67	97	216	315	124	151	39	52

Note: This table presents laboratory school students' responses to a set of survey items on their perceptions of academic climate. Specifically, this table shows aggregate data for each 7C construct. Ratings range from 1-3, where 1 is unfavorable, 2 is neutral, and 3 is favorable.

Appendix Table A8.4: Comparing School Experiences

When you think about this school year compared to last school year, in which year was your school better at…	Responses	% Last Year Was Better	% Comparable	% This Year Was Better
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Students New to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	26	11.54	38.46	50.00
Helping you learn more	27	14.81	18.52	66.67
Having teachers that really care about you	27	18.52	29.63	51.85
Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork—Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	176	26.70	36.36	36.93
Helping you learn more	174	12.07	38.51	49.43
Having teachers that really care about you	176	12.50	48.86	38.64
ECU Community School— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	11	18.18	18.18	63.64
Helping you learn more	11	18.18	18.18	63.64
Having teachers that really care about you	11	9.09	45.45	45.45
ECU Community School— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	74	31.08	44.59	24.32
Helping you learn more	71	18.31	47.89	33.80
Having teachers that really care about you	74	20.27	64.86	14.86
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	23	21.74	43.48	34.78
Helping you learn more	21	23.81	38.10	38.10
Having teachers that really care about you	23	39.13	39.13	21.74
Niner University Elementary School (UNCC)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	39	28.21	20.51	51.28
Helping you learn more	35	22.86	25.71	51.43
Having teachers that really care about you	39	33.33	33.33	33.33
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	48	16.67	35.42	47.92
Helping you learn more	47	19.15	21.28	59.57
Having teachers that really care about you	44	11.36	29.55	59.09
Moss Street Partnership School (UNCG)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	204	18.14	37.25	44.61
Helping you learn more	202	10.40	38.61	50.99
Having teachers that really care about you	202	8.91	50.99	40.10
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	16	6.25	37.50	56.25
Helping you learn more	16	0.00	50.00	50.00
Having teachers that really care about you	16	18.75	50.00	31.25
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy (UNCW)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	110	28.18	44.55	27.27
Helping you learn more	110	14.55	50.91	34.55
Having teachers that really care about you	110	15.45	60.00	24.55
The Catamount School (WCU)— Students New to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	24	4.17	45.83	50.00
Helping you learn more	24	8.33	25.00	66.67
Having teachers that really care about you	24	12.50	12.50	75.00
The Catamount School (WCU)— Students Returning to the Laboratory School in 2021-22				
Helping students behave	24	8.33	54.17	37.50
Helping you learn more	24	4.17	33.33	62.50
Having teachers that really care about you	24	8.33	50.00	41.67

Note: This table displays student responses to survey items asking students to compare their educational experiences in 2021-22 to their educational experiences in 2020-21.