



**NORTH CAROLINA**  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Schools that Lead Pilot Program (Impact of  
Program)  
Section 7.25.(c)

**Date Due: --- October 1, 2023**  
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2023-2024

**Submitted by the [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
and/or State Board of Education],** in conjunction with Schools that Lead,  
Inc.

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**Catherine Truitt, State Superintendent :: 301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825**

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Thomas Tomberlin, Senior Director, Educator Preparation, Licensure, and Performance, NCDPI  
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## INTRODUCTION

Session Law 2021-180, Section 7.11(c), requires the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to submit to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division an annual report on the impacts of the Schools That Lead program, beginning October 1, 2023, and continuing each year thereafter until October 1, 2027. The program was piloted from 2018 through 2022.

The program focuses on providing professional development to teachers and principals in up to 75 schools, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year and ending in the 2025-2026 school year. The selected schools shall be charter schools or schools under the authority of a local school administrative unit. Professional development services shall be offered to teachers and principals in kindergarten through grade 12. The North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with Schools That Lead, Inc., shall determine which schools are eligible to participate in the program.

At a minimum, the program shall offer services to three cohorts of schools, as follows:

- 1) high schools working to increase on-time graduation rates;
- 2) middle schools working to prepare students to succeed in high school by reducing the likelihood of retention in the ninth grade for multiple school years; and
- 3) elementary schools working to reduce the number of students with early warning indicators of course failures, absences, and discipline.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction contracted with the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) to conduct an external evaluation that measures the impacts of the Program on student outcomes. EPIC's evaluation objective is to measure the impacts of the Program on student outcomes, including, but not limited to, (i) on-time graduation in high school, (ii) ninth grade retention rates, and (iii) course failures, absences, and discipline in elementary school. EPIC shall report its interim findings to the Department no later than June 30<sup>th</sup> starting in 2023 and shall submit a final report no later than June 30, 2027.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction collected and analyzed internal data most relevant to requirements in Session Law 2021-180, Section 7.11 (c): an accounting of expenditures, school performance data, principal performance data, teacher performance data, and student outcome data, beginning October 1, 2023.

This report analyzes program outcomes from three sources: internal data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, information submitted from Schools that Lead, Inc, and an external evaluation conducted by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC).

## PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

### STATE FUNDING

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction distributes \$350,000 quarterly to Schools that Lead. Funds are withheld to cover the evaluation process that is outlined in Session Law 2021-180, Section 7.11. A net amount of \$316,666.67 is distributed on a quarterly basis. Table 1 shows an accounting of expenditures beginning with the 2023-2024 school year as reported by Schools that Lead, Inc.

TABLE 1

	Salary	Health Insurance	Payroll Taxes	Travel/Lodging Staff	Total
2021-22	240,000	42,000	21,115	13,552	\$316,667
2022-23	240,000	65,000	11,667		\$316,667
2023-24*	240,000	65,000	11,667		\$316,667

\*to reflect expenditures for the fiscal year

### ESSER FUNDING

Session Law 2021-180, section 7.27 (a)(19) distributes \$970,000 to contract with Schools That Lead, Inc., to develop or purchase a statewide, online platform that allows teachers to (i) share student performance improvement methods across the State in response to learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic and (ii) support the Schools That Lead Program set forth in Section 7.11 of this act. To date, payments for fiscal year 2024 totaled \$461,875 for ESSER III contractual services. ESSER III funds should be encumbered by September 30, 2024 with liquidation by January 2025.

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In 2023-24, there were 9 schools enrolled in Cohorts 3 and 4 of the Schools that Lead Networked Improvement Communities. According to Schools that Lead organization, each school has a full team (2-4 teachers) participating in the work. Schools set goals for this school year to reflect the percentage by which they plan to reduce the number of students on their watch lists. The schools progress toward these goals will be available by June 30, 2024. It is noted that one school (Scotts Elementary School) experienced principal turnover with their assistant principal being named as principal. This may impact their goal attainment,

TABLE 2

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS				
COHORTS 3 & 4				
School Name	School Code	Grade Span	Type of School	City/County
The Franklin School of Innovation	11D000	5-12	Charter	Asheville, NC
Apprentice Academy High School	90F000	7-12	Charter	Monroe, NC
Scotts Elementary School	490348	PK-5	Traditional	Iredell-Statesville Schools
Foothills Community School	590393	6-8	Traditional	McDowell County Schools
McDowell Early College	590328	9-13	Traditional	McDowell County Schools
McDowell Academy for Innovation	590326	9-13	Traditional	McDowell County Schools
West Marion Elementary School	590352	PK-5	Traditional	McDowell County Schools
South Newton Elementary	182324	PK-5	Traditional	Newton Conover City Schools
East Garner Middle	920404	6-8	Traditional	Wake County Public School System

## **ONLINE PLATFORM**

The data platform, The Accelerator, has been built, tested, approved, and the funds to pay the provider for use of it received (October 10, 2023). The platform has been presented to the schools in Cohort 3 and 4 of Schools That Lead Networked Improvement Communities, which constitutes approximately 40 users.

### **PLATFORM UTILIZATION**

An analysis of usage from October to November 2023 shows that there were 63 users with a total of 1,380 views. Each user had an average of 7.92 views with a total average engagement time of 8 minutes and 23 seconds. The analysis shows the platform was accessed by users outside of the network, approximately 20 users. Preliminary engagement with the platform is promising. The five most popular improvement ideas accessed by users were:

- Sharing the Watch List School Wide and Inviting Staff to Adopt Students
- Positive Phone Calls Home
- Creating an Attendance Success Plan
- Reframing Attendance Letters
- Biweekly Student Communications

## **PROGRAM OUTPUTS**

The program focuses on high schools working to increase on-time graduation, middle schools working to prepare students to succeed in high school by reducing the likelihood of retention in the ninth grade for multiple school years, and elementary schools working to reduce the number of students with early warning indicators of course failures, absences, and discipline. This report analyzes program outcomes based on data available in consultation with Schools That Lead, Inc. beginning October 1, 2023, and continuing each year thereafter until October 1, 2027 when a summary and copy of the final report provided by the independent research organization, prepared by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC).

## **ACCOUNTABILITY DATA SETS AND REPORTS**

For the 2022–23 school year, schools continued to deal with student learning loss due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Data from the 2022–23 school year should be reviewed in these contexts and comparisons to prior years' results should be made with caution.

## **SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES**

Since 2013-14, student performance data have been used to assign letter grades to North Carolina public schools as required by North Carolina General Statute 115C-83.15. The grades are based on each school's achievement score (weight of 80%) as well as students' academic growth (weight of 20%). The total school performance score is converted to a 100-point scale and then used to determine a school performance grade of A, B, C, D or F. The final grade is based on a 15-point scale: A: 85-100 B: 70-84 C: 55-69 D: 40-54 F: Less than 40.

The indicators for elementary and middle schools differ from the indicators for high schools as presented in the chart and explanation below:

Elementary/Middle School Indicators			High School Indicators	
· 3rd Grade Reading	· 3rd Grade Math	· 5th Grade Science	<b>ASSESSMENTS</b>	<b>OTHER MEASURES</b>
· 4th Grade Reading	· 4th Grade Math	· 8th Grade Science	· NC Math 1/Math 3	· 4-year Graduation Rates
· 5th Grade Reading	· 5th Grade Math	· NC Math 1	· English II	· Successful completion of high-level math courses
· 6th Grade Reading	· 6th Grade Math	· Growth	· Biology	· Growth (NC Math 1/NC Math 3 and English II)
· 7th Grade Reading	· 7th Grade Math	· English Learner Progress	· The ACT	· English Learner Progress
· 8th Grade Reading	· 8th Grade Math		· ACT WorkKeys	

The following data serves as a baseline for the schools enrolled in Cohorts 3 & 4 of the of Schools That Lead Networked Improvement Communities for the 2023-2024 year:

Table 3

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES DISTRIBUTION			
Overall Grade	Number of Schools 2022-2023	Percent of Schools 2022-2023	School Growth Status
A	2	22%	Exceeded Growth 22%
B	1	11%	
C	3	33%	Met Growth 33%
D	2	22%	
F	1	11%	Not Met 45%
Total	9		



## PROGRAM OUTCOMES: INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER PLAN



UNC  
COLLEGE OF  
ARTS & SCIENCES

THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY

CAMPUS BOX 3435  
ABERNETHY HALL  
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-3435

T 919.962.1600  
F 919.962.5824  
[www.unc.edu/depts/pubpol](http://www.unc.edu/depts/pubpol)

### Schools That Evaluation Update April 2024

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction contracted with the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) to serve as the independent external evaluator of the Schools That Lead North Carolina Networked Improvement Communities.

The contract includes three evaluation reports to be delivered in Fall 2024, 2025, and 2026, and will include the following:

- Update STL logic model to incorporate program changes as well as account for virtual/hybrid service delivery
- Develop and implement rubrics to assess quality and fidelity of PD trainings
- Develop mixed-methods surveys to assess experiences with implementation; changes in knowledge, skills, and behaviors; and perceptions of impact
- Administer electronic surveys and establish survey response database
- Conduct interviews and/or focus groups with Phase 1 schools to assess experiences with sustainability and scale
- Quant and qual analysis of survey data
- Qualitative coding of focus groups and interviews
- Analyze policy outcomes via administrative data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, including:
  - Elementary schools - reducing the number of students with early warning indicators in course failures, absences, and discipline
  - Middle school - reducing 9<sup>th</sup> grade retention
  - High school - Increasing on-time graduation
- Conduct analysis of student outcomes using data at the school, district, and state level, highlighting issues of equity
- Prepare two annual interim evaluation reports and one summative evaluation report
- Present findings to relevant stakeholders as requested