

NCPFP 2024 Evaluation Report

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INITIATIVE at CAROLINA

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide formative data and analysis on the eight principal preparation programs funded in the 2020-2026 and 2022-2028 grant cycles of the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (NCPFP). The Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) is the official evaluator of the NCPFP, and this is the second written report in EPIC's seven-year NCPFP evaluation. For this report we analyzed focus group, survey, and administrative data on NCPFP programs and the Principal Fellows who were enrolled in and completed these programs. When possible, we compared results for Principal Fellows to those enrolled in and completing traditional principal preparation routes. Our work focuses on the four key tenets of the NCPFP: attracting promising school leader candidates, providing innovative and high-quality preparation experiences, meeting a majority of the demand for school leaders in North Carolina, and producing effective school leaders. From our analyses we identified several important takeaways.

Key Findings

Attracting Promising School Leader Candidates

- Recruitment and selection practices varied both across and within NCPFP programs. When school districts led the recruitment and selection of Fellows—through direct nomination or application processes—candidates had more teaching experience. District nomination processes also resulted in candidates with higher evaluation ratings.
- Relative to traditional MSA programs, NCPFP programs bring in many more principal candidates from rural schools.

Providing Innovative and High-Quality Preparation Experiences

- School districts and NCPFP programs select more experienced and more highly-rated principals to serve as mentors for Principal Fellow interns.
- Principal Fellows highlighted the important role that the internship, mentor principals, and executive coaches played in their development. In addition, Fellows continued to name financial supports and the cohort model as key strengths of the program.
- In a survey of early-career assistant principals, Principal Fellow completers rated their programs more highly and reported feeling more confident to be an effective school leader than those prepared through traditional MSA or licensure only programs.

Meeting a Majority of the Demand for School Leaders in North Carolina

- Principal Fellow completers are much more likely to secure a school administrator position than graduates of traditional MSA programs.
- Among Principal Fellows in assistant principal roles in 2023-24, nearly 90 percent were employed in their “home” district—i.e. the same district in which they were previously employed and/or completed their internship.

Producing Effective School Leaders

- Among first-year assistant principals, Principal Fellows earn significantly higher NCEES ratings on three school executive standards—Instructional Leadership, Cultural Leadership, and External Development Leadership.
- Initial projections suggest that it will be several more years before we can assess outcomes for school principals who completed an NCPFP program.

Introduction

For 30 years North Carolina has been committed to innovative, high-quality, and financially accessible principal preparation. In 1993, the state General Assembly established the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (NCPFP), which provided competitive, merit-based scholarship loans to individuals of exceptional ability who wanted to enter school administration in North Carolina. In the initial design of the NCPFP, individual candidates were selected to receive a forgivable scholarship loan, then each Principal Fellow chose the eligible institution they wanted to attend, earned a Masters in School Administration (MSA), and repaid the scholarship loan through at least four years of service as an assistant principal or principal in North Carolina. From its inception through programmatic changes in 2021, over 1,200 individuals completed an NCPFP program.

In 2015, the state General Assembly expanded its approach to innovative and financially accessible school leader preparation by creating the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3). Unlike the initial iteration of NCPFP, where funding was directed to individual principal candidates, North Carolina allocated TP3 funds to preparation programs through a competitive grant process. TP3 programs aimed to develop authentic partnerships with K-12 districts, proactive and intentional recruitment and selection strategies, rigorous coursework, and full-time paid residencies. In addition, TP3 programs needed to display a commitment and capacity to prepare leaders for high-need, low-performing schools. From its inception through its consolidation with NCPFP in 2021, over 370 individuals completed a TP3 program.

In July 2021, North Carolina consolidated TP3 and NCPFP into a single principal preparation program under the original NCPFP name. The new NCPFP combines aspects of the original NCPFP with aspects of TP3. The consolidated program directs funding to preparation programs through a competitive grant process and prioritizes partnerships between programs and K-12 districts. Principal Fellows take coursework as a cohort, participate in enrichment opportunities offered by their individual programs and the state level NCPFP, complete a paid year-long internship, earn an MSA degree, and satisfy requirements of their forgivable loan by working as a school administrator in North Carolina. The core commitments of the consolidated NCPFP are to (1) attract promising school leader candidates; (2) provide innovative and high-quality preparation through coursework, practice-based experiences in schools, and coaching; (3) meet a majority of the demand for school leaders in North Carolina; and (4) produce effective school leaders that positively impact student achievement, student engagement, school working conditions, and teacher retention.

As part of the consolidated NCPFP program, eight institutions have been awarded NCPFP grants across two funding cycles. The first funding cycle, running from 2020 to 2026, includes four institutions: East Carolina University (ECU), North Carolina Central University (NCCU),¹ North Carolina State University (NCSU), and UNC Charlotte (UNCC). The second funding cycle, running from 2022 to 2028, awarded grants to six institutions: Appalachian State University (ASU), ECU, NCSU, UNC Chapel Hill (UNCCH), UNC Greensboro (UNCG), and Western Carolina University (WCU). With funding from both grant cycles, NCSU now has annual graduating cohorts, while ECU has increased the size of their annual cohorts. The 2023-24 academic year was

¹ The NCPFP program at NCCU is a partnership between NCCU and the Central Carolina Regional Education Service Alliance.

the first year in which ASU, UNCCH, UNCG, and WCU graduated Fellows and the first year in which all eight programs had graduates.

In addition to providing rigorous preparation experiences, the NCPFP is committed to an evaluation process that meets state reporting requirements, identifies effective preparation practices, and informs decision making around program practices and future grant funding. To fulfill these objectives, the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission selected the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) as the official NCPFP evaluator. EPIC is a research initiative within the Department of Public Policy at UNC Chapel Hill with deep expertise in educator preparation and a long history of conducting applied research and evaluation in partnership with K-12 and higher education agencies in North Carolina.

This is the second written report in EPIC's seven-year evaluation of the NCPFP.² In this report we focus on NCPFP programs and Principal Fellows completing these programs in the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 academic years. For reporting, we align our evaluation questions with the core commitments of the NCPFP program:

Attracting Promising School Leader Candidates

- (1) What are the ways that NCPFP programs and school districts recruit/select Principal Fellows?
- (2) How are these recruitment and selection practices related to characteristics of Principal Fellows?
- (3) What are the characteristics of the schools that Principal Fellows worked in immediately prior to program entry?

Providing Innovative and High-Quality Preparation Experiences

- (1) What are the characteristics of NCPFP internship schools and mentor principals?
- (2) What are the perspectives of mentor principals regarding their selection as mentors, support received for the mentor role, and the impact of the yearlong internship?
- (3) What are the perspectives of Principal Fellows regarding their internships and program coaching supports?
- (4) How do Principal Fellows perceive the benefits of their preparation programs?

Meeting a Majority of the Demand for School Leaders in North Carolina

- (1) What employment roles are held by Principal Fellows?
- (2) To what extent does the location of employment for Principal Fellows correspond with locations of prior employment/internships?

Producing Effective School Leaders

- (1) What are the evaluation ratings for Principal Fellows serving in assistant principal roles?
- (2) What is the likely timeline for knowing more about the effectiveness of Principal Fellows as principals?

² The 2023 NCPFP report can be found here: <https://epic.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1268/2024/01/NCPFP-2023-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

We use qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze a range of focus group, survey, and administrative data. Our diverse data sources and mixed methods analyses are a strength of this evaluation, as they allow us to better understand program practices and assess program impacts. Given the current stage of the evaluation—year three of a seven-year evaluation—our results are largely intended to be formative and to inform NCPFP program practices. In the remainder of this report, we detail our data sample and sources, describe our analysis methods, review our findings, and discuss implications for program practices and future evaluation efforts.

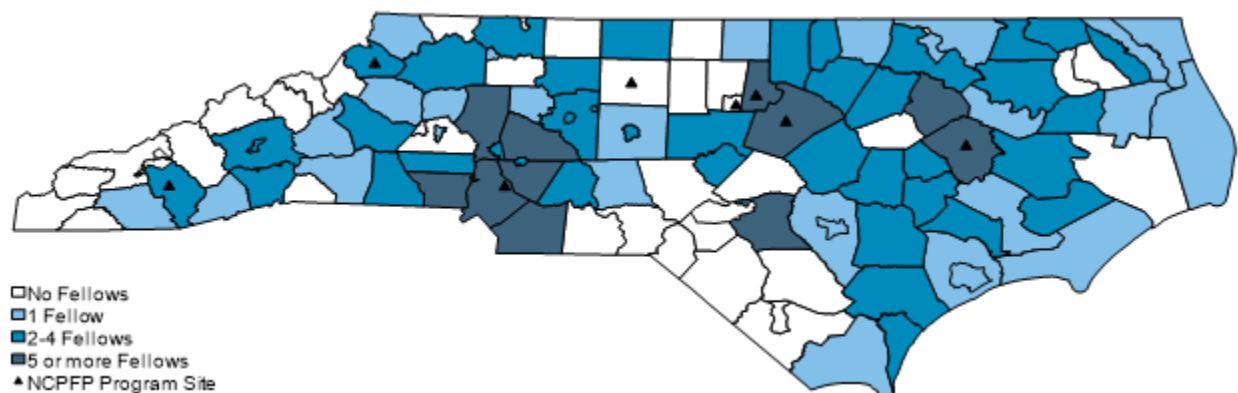
Data and Analysis

Data Sample and Sources

In this evaluation report, we focus on NCPFP program completers from the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 academic years. Our analyses concentrate on the consolidated NCPFP and do not include candidates completing TP3 programs or NCPFP programs under its original design.³ Four NCPFP programs had graduates in 2021-22 (ECU, NCCU, NCSU, and UNCC) while three programs had graduates in 2022-23 (ECU, NCSU, and UNCC). All eight NCPFP programs had graduates in the 2023-24 academic year. As further detailed below, some of our analyses include graduates from all three cohorts. Given data availability, other analyses only include graduates from one or two of these NCPFP cohorts.

Figure 1 shows the school districts from which Principal Fellows in our analytical sample originated—i.e. the districts in which they were employed prior to program entry. Overall, the 236 Principal Fellows in the 2022-2024 graduating classes represent 80 out of the 115 traditional K-12 school districts in the state.⁴ Many districts contributed a small number of Principal Fellows. Eleven districts, generally larger urban districts, contributed five or more Principal Fellows, with Wake, Cumberland, and Durham Public Schools being the top suppliers of Principal Fellows candidates.⁵

Figure 1: The Distribution of Principal Fellows by School District (Classes 2022-2024)



³ There were TP3 graduates in 2021-22 from High Point University, NCSU, the Sandhills Regional Education Consortium (SREC), UNCG, and WCU. NCSU also had Principal Fellows completers in 2021-22 and we include them in our analyses.

⁴ Many of the districts with no Principal Fellows have partnerships with one or more NCPFP programs. However, these districts elected not to recruit for the respective years given their needs.

⁵ While the main WCU campus is in Jackson County (as indicated on the map), the WCU school leadership campus is in Asheville.

For this NCPFP evaluation report we relied on data from the following five sources:

- (1) NCPFP program reporting: For each graduating cohort, NCPFP programs submit data on enrollees and program characteristics.
- (2) State level administrative data: The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) provided data on all K-12 students, school personnel, and schools.⁶ The UNC System Office provided data identifying individuals completing an MSA degree at a UNC System institution.
- (3) Program completer survey: We developed a survey to assess program completers' perceptions of their principal preparation programs. For this evaluation report, we analyze survey items on how Principal Fellows were recruited and selected into their programs.
- (4) Early-career school administrator survey: We developed a survey to assess early-career administrators' perceptions of their principal preparation programs. We administered this survey in spring 2024 to assistant principals with less than three years of experience in their respective roles.
- (5) Focus groups: In the spring and summer of 2024, we conducted focus groups with Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort, mentor principals for those Principal Fellows, and school district representatives.

Qualitative Data Analysis

We collected qualitative data through focus groups with Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort, mentor principals for Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort, and school district representatives. Overall, we spoke with 13 second-year Principal Fellows (representing all eight NCPFP programs), eight mentor principals (representing five NCPFP programs), and seven school district representatives (representing four NCPFP programs). The focus group sessions were recorded on Zoom and later transcribed and de-identified by a member of the evaluation team. Our analysis consisted of both deductive and inductive coding. We developed an initial set of deductive codes that were guided by our research questions. Later, we developed an inductive coding schema from emergent themes in the data. Each focus group transcript was coded by multiple members of the evaluation team. We identified major themes in the focus group data both within and across NCPFP programs. In our findings sections below, we report key results with illustrative quotes to elevate the voices of Principal Fellows, mentor principals, and district representatives.

Quantitative Data Analysis

We conducted quantitative analyses to assess (1) the ways in which NCPFP programs and school districts recruit and select Principal Fellows and how those recruitment/selection practices are related to characteristics of Principal Fellows; (2) the characteristics of the schools that Principal Fellows worked in immediately prior to program entry; (3) the characteristics of internship schools and mentor principals; (4) early-career school administrators' perceptions of their principal

⁶ Administrative data from NCDPI does not consistently include charter schools, especially in school personnel data. As such, our analyses focus on traditional (non-charter) public schools in North Carolina.

preparation programs; (5) the employment roles held by Principal Fellows; (6) the evaluation ratings of Principal Fellows as assistant principals; and (7) a projected timeline for when this evaluation will know more about the effectiveness of Principal Fellows as principals.

To address these topics, we use a mix of descriptive reporting and regression analyses. Across both of these analytical approaches, we often present data for Principal Fellows and for those completing other preparation routes—e.g., traditional MSA, licensure only programs. In doing so, our goal is to compare outcomes for Principal Fellows relative to more traditional school leader preparation. When appropriate, we also present data for each NCPFP program. Please see the appendix for more details on our data sources, quantitative and qualitative analyses, focus group protocols, and survey items.

Findings

Attracting Promising School Leader Candidates

The first of the core commitments of NCPFP is to attract promising school leader candidates. One of the unique aspects of NCPFP is partnerships between educator preparation programs (EPPs) and school districts to recruit candidates from a particular district, with the goal of the candidate returning to that district to serve as an administrator. Recruiting and selecting candidates is one of several program components where NCPFP programs partner closely with districts. This section of the report considers ways that NCPFP programs work with district partners to recruit and select candidates, the types of candidates that they select, and the prior schools where candidates have served.

What are the ways that NCPFP programs and school districts recruit/select Principal Fellows?

Results from prior years of the evaluation indicated that the role of the district in recruiting and selecting candidates for NCPFP programs varied considerably between EPPs and across districts partnering with the same EPP. To better understand how candidates were selected into programs, we included questions about recruitment and selection in the spring 2024 program completer survey. Specifically, we asked Principal Fellows to identify which of three categories of selection experience best matched their own experience with being accepted into an NCPFP program.⁷ A candidate was considered **district nominated** if the individual was directly nominated for the NCPFP program by someone in their district without a district-level application process. Candidates who participated in a **district application process** in their district may have completed an application form, submitted letters of recommendation, and/or interviewed with district leadership. Candidates who began with a **university application** applied directly to their university without any prior district nomination or application process, though district nomination or approval may have followed their university application.

Table 1 shows the percent of NCPFP candidates who report being selected through each of these approaches. We report these data for all NCPFP programs and by each EPP. Overall, most NCPFP candidates began their selection process at the district level with either a district nomination (28%) or district application process (51%). However, a significant minority (21%) began with a university application. Much of this variation in approach occurred across EPPs. NCCU and NCSU stand out as having a majority of candidates beginning with a university application process. For

⁷ These analyses include 124 Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort who took the spring 2024 program completer survey. There were 16 Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort who did not complete this survey.

the six programs that had a majority of their candidates beginning their selection with the district, most had a mix of nomination and district application processes, although the dominant approach varied. For example, nearly all candidates at ASU and UNCG completed a district application process, but this was much rarer for candidates from ECU and WCU.

Table 1: Recruitment and Selection Approaches of NCPFP Programs

| Recruitment/Selection Process | NCPFP | ASU | ECU | NCCU | NCSU | UNCC | UNCCH | UNCG | WCU |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| % District Nomination | 28 | 0 | 65 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 45 | 11 | 64 |
| % District Application | 51 | 87 | 35 | 29 | 9 | 76 | 45 | 89 | 14 |
| % University Application | 21 | 13 | 0 | 71 | 91 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 21 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Count of Principal Fellows Responding to Survey Items | 124 | 15 | 23 | 14 | 11 | 17 | 11 | 19 | 14 |

Note: This table shows the percentage of Principal Fellows who entered their program via district nomination, district application, and university application processes for each individual program and across all programs. These data come from the spring 2024 program completer survey. Nearly 90 percent of Fellows completed this survey.

How are these recruitment and selection practices related to characteristics of Principal Fellows?

As background for these analyses, we begin by providing descriptive data on the characteristics of Principal Fellows in the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 graduating cohorts. In particular, we display data on the demographics, credentials, and performance of Principal Fellows. We use data from two years prior to program completion so that we can assess the characteristics of Principal Fellows at the time they were recruited/selected into their NCPFP program.

Table 2 displays these descriptive data for Principal Fellows, overall, and for each NCPFP program. Among NCPFP completers, we find that 74 percent are female, 39 percent are a person of color, and their average age at program entry is 36 years old. At program entry, we find that Principal Fellows have over 10 years of education experience, 13 percent are Nationally Board Certified, and 37 percent have a graduate degree. Finally, in the year prior to program entry, Principal Fellows earned average evaluation ratings of 4.08 (where 4 is accomplished) and had average EVAAS estimates 21 percent of a standard deviation above the mean.

Table 2: Characteristics of Principal Fellows (2022-2024 Graduating Cohorts)

| Characteristics | NCPFP | ASU | ECU | NCCU | NCSU | UNCC | UNCCH | UNCG | WCU |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| % Female | 74 | 67 | 77 | 79 | 77 | 74 | 58 | 67 | 73 |
| % Person of Color | 39 | 20 | 43 | 66 | 48 | 24 | 67 | 24 | 13 |
| Age at Entry | 36.3 | 35.6 | 36.8 | 39.5 | 32.9 | 36.0 | 43.9 | 34.4 | 39.4 |
| Years Experience | 10.4 | 7.9 | 11.0 | 12.5 | 8.6 | 10.4 | 14.3 | 8.8 | 11.6 |
| % NBC | 13 | 27 | 18 | 10 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| % Graduate Degree | 37 | 20 | 34 | 48 | 21 | 43 | 67 | 38 | 53 |
| Avg NCEES Rating | 4.08 | 4.14 | 4.03 | 3.95 | 4.03 | 4.23 | 3.93 | 3.82 | 4.43 |
| Avg EVAAS Estimates (Std) | 0.214 | 0.101 | 0.224 | -0.023 | 0.272 | 0.084 | 1.48 | 0.133 | 0.793 |

Note: This table displays descriptive data on the Principal Fellows in the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 graduating cohorts. Data are from two years prior to program completion.

We next consider how the characteristics of Principal Fellows are related to different NCPFP recruitment/selection practices. To do so, we compare data on the 124 Principal Fellows completing the spring 2024 completer survey to the 203 principal candidates completing a traditional MSA degree at a UNC System institution in the 2022-23 academic year.⁸ Our analyses link data on recruitment/selection practices from the program completer survey to the demographics, credentials, and prior performance of principal candidates.⁹

Table 3 presents descriptive characteristics for Principal Fellows selected through each of the three approaches—district nomination, district application, university application—compared to characteristics of traditional MSA completers. These results show that the percent of female candidates and candidates of color was similar across all selection approaches and similar to traditional MSAs. The two selection approaches that began with the district—nomination or application—resulted in slightly older candidates with about 2 to 2.5 more years of experience compared to the university application approach or traditional MSAs. Regardless of selection approach, Principal Fellows were more likely than traditional MSA completers to already have a graduate degree. District application processes resulted in more principal candidates with National Board Certification; district nomination processes resulted in principal candidates with significantly higher NCEES Leadership ratings and somewhat higher EVAAS estimates.

Table 3: Characteristics of School Leader Candidates by Recruitment/Selection Approach

| Recruitment/Selection Process | 2023 Traditional MSA Completers | NCPFP District Nomination | NCPFP District Application | NCPFP University Application |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| % Female | 73 | 74 | 68 | 69 |
| % Person of Color | 30 | 27 | 29 | 35 |
| Age | 36.4 | 39.8** | 40.0** | 36.5 |
| Years Experience | 8.4 | 11.0** | 10.3** | 8.4 |
| % NBC | 6.4 | 8.6 | 14.3* | 7.7 |
| % Graduate Degree | 16.3 | 40.0* | 38.1** | 46.2** |
| NCEES Leadership Ratings | 4.05 | 4.39+ | 4.13 | 4.25 |
| NCEES Facilitating Learning Ratings | 3.91 | 4.17 | 3.98 | 4.08 |
| EVAAS Estimates (Std) | 0.118 | 0.311 | 0.066 | 0.211 |

Note: This table shows descriptive data on the characteristics of NCPFP Fellows who entered their program via each of the three selection approaches compared to traditional MSA completers. +, *, and ** indicate statistically significant differences at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively, versus traditional MSAs at the same university.¹⁰

Focus groups with LEA representatives revealed further insights on recruitment and selection processes. LEA representatives described collaboratively working with EPPs to recruit and select Principal Fellows. The process of recruitment and selection varied across programs. One LEA representative described in-person recruitment done by EPP representatives, “...They [will] come

⁸ Most traditional MSA programs start with a university application and do not involve the district in recruitment/selection.

⁹ As with the data in Table 2, for these analyses we link principal candidates to data from two years prior to their program completion.

¹⁰ When estimating models to compare within programs, we exclude both NCCU and NCSU as they only had Principal Fellow completers.

and speak to groups who are interested. They'll do check-ins. [They ask], ‘Do you have anybody who's applying? Is there anybody I need to talk to or follow up to explain more details about the program?’” Another LEA representative shared the internal promotion for the NCPFP that occurs each year, “...we put it in our employee newsletters, and then it's by word of mouth as well...we give a thumbs up, yes, [the district] can support [the candidate] going through the MSA.”

What are the characteristics of the schools that Principal Fellows worked in immediately prior to program entry?

In addition to examining the individual characteristics of Principal Fellows, we also consider characteristics of the schools where Principal Fellows worked prior to entering the program. NCPFP aims to prepare leaders for high-need schools, so considering the types of schools where Fellows have prior experience is important. For these analyses, we assess data for the 236 Principal Fellows in the 2022-2024 graduating cohorts relative to the 367 candidates completing a traditional MSA degree at a UNC System institution in 2022 or 2023.¹¹ Table 4 shows descriptive comparisons of prior employment schools for traditional MSAs and NCPFP completers. Overall, Principal Fellows come from schools with similar characteristics on most measures. Principal Fellows are more likely to come from rural schools and come from schools with slightly higher performance composites. There is also significant variation across NCPFP programs in the school levels candidates come from, the percentage of candidates from rural schools, and the student demographics at the schools from which candidates come. Some of this variation may be driven by differences in the regions that different NCPFP programs serve.

Table 4: Characteristics of Prior Employment Schools of School Leader Candidates

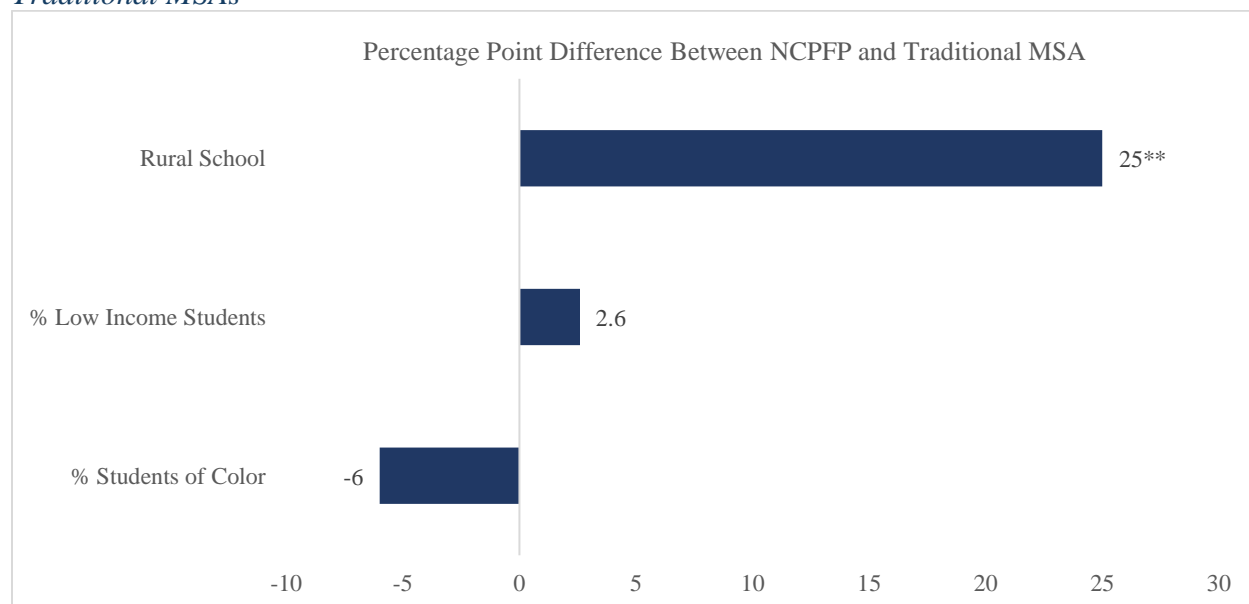
| School Characteristics | Trad MSA | NCPFP | ASU | ECU | NCCU | NCSU | UNCC | UNCCH | UNCG | WCU |
|--------------------------|----------|-------|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|-----|
| % Elementary | 43 | 39 | 50 | 32 | 36 | 35 | 41 | 88 | 48 | 21 |
| % Middle | 21 | 24 | 14 | 22 | 20 | 27 | 28 | 0 | 19 | 36 |
| % High | 32 | 32 | 21 | 32 | 44 | 31 | 30 | 13 | 33 | 43 |
| % Other School Level | 5 | 5 | 14 | 15 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| % Rural | 55 | 65 | 71 | 95 | 52 | 35 | 70 | 13 | 100 | 50 |
| % Low Income Students | 59 | 57 | 61 | 63 | 52 | 65 | 45 | 68 | 61 | 53 |
| % Students of Color | 59 | 57 | 43 | 58 | 66 | 70 | 48 | 76 | 47 | 38 |
| Teacher Retention Rate | 81 | 80 | 84 | 76 | 79 | 79 | 81 | 83 | 82 | 81 |
| % Title 1: Schoolwide | 72 | 74 | 71 | 88 | 72 | 81 | 54 | 88 | 81 | 79 |
| % Title 1: Targeted | 8 | 6 | 14 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 11 | 0 | 10 | 7 |
| Performance Composite | 42 | 47 | 54 | 43 | 55 | 41 | 48 | 40 | 47 | 56 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| # Program Completers | 367 | 236 | 15 | 44 | 27 | 48 | 54 | 12 | 21 | 15 |
| # with prior school data | 317 | 225 | 14 | 41 | 25 | 48 | 54 | 8 | 21 | 14 |

Note: This table shows descriptive characteristics of the schools where NCPFP Fellows served immediately prior to program entry compared to the characteristics of the schools that traditional MSA candidates served two years prior to completion.

¹¹ In these analyses, we present data on the characteristics of the schools that principal candidates worked in two years prior to program completion.

Given the differences in regions served by specific NCPFP programs, we are particularly interested in making comparisons within universities—i.e., we compare the prior school characteristics for Principal Fellows from a respective university to the prior school characteristics for traditional MSA completers from the same university. Figure 2 shows results from regression analyses that compare prior school characteristics for Principal Fellows and traditional MSAs from the same universities.¹² In these analyses we focus on rurality and student demographics in prior employment schools. These results confirm that even when comparing within universities, Principal Fellows are more likely to come from rural schools. Relative to traditional MSA completers at the same university, Principal Fellows are 25 percentage points more likely to have come from a rural school. Regarding student demographics at prior employment schools, we find no significant differences between Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers from the same university.

Figure 2: Comparing Characteristics of Prior Employment Schools between NCPFP and Traditional MSAs



Note: This figure shows coefficients from regression models assessing the characteristics of the schools that Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers worked in prior to program entry. Comparisons are limited to within the same university. ** indicates statistically significant differences at the 0.01 level.

Providing Innovative and High-Quality Preparation Experiences

The second core commitment of NCPFP is to provide innovative and high-quality preparation experiences. NCPFP programs have a number of unique elements—e.g. year-long internships, executive coaching, program-specific enrichment activities, enhancements provided by the NCPFP Central Office—that may especially help Principal Fellows succeed in school leadership roles. In our prior evaluation report, we focused on first-year experiences (e.g. recruitment, coursework) for Principal Fellows. This section of the report focuses on second-year experiences—internship and coaching—and overall perceptions of NCPFP programs. To consider these areas, we analyze focus group data, survey responses, and administrative data from NCDPI.

¹² When estimating models to compare within programs, we exclude both NCCU and NCSU as they only had Principal Fellow completers.

What are the characteristics of NCPFP internship schools and mentor principals?

With these analyses, we examine the characteristics of the schools chosen to host a Principal Fellows intern and the characteristics of the principals in those schools. The goal of these analyses is to examine the choices made by NCPFP programs and their district partners in making internship placements. As such, our analyses focus on school and principal-level data from the year before the internship and make comparisons between internship sites and non-internship sites within the same district. The sample for these analyses includes 140 Principal Fellows interns—from all eight programs—in the 2023-24 academic year. The comparison sample for these analyses are the 2,500 schools and principals that did not host a Principal Fellows intern in the respective academic year.

Table 5 presents descriptive data on the characteristics of the schools hosting a Principal Fellows intern in the 2023-24 academic year.¹³ The top panel of Table 5 shows that 43 percent of Principal Fellow internships occur in elementary schools and 65 percent are in rural locations. All of the Principal Fellows from ECU and UNCG complete their internships in rural sites. The bottom panel of Table 5 indicates that students of color and low-income students make up slightly more than half of those enrolled in Principal Fellows internship schools, with data on attendance and achievement showing that internship schools have chronic absentee rates of 26 percent and test proficiency rates (on End-of-Grade and End-of-Course exams) of 52 percent.

Table 5: Characteristics of Internship Schools and Non-Internship Schools

| | Non-Internship Site | NCPFP | ASU | ECU | NCCU | NCSU | UNCC | UNCCH | UNCG | WCU |
|--|---------------------|-------|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|-----|
| School Type and Rurality | | | | | | | | | | |
| % Elementary | 49 | 43 | 55 | 31 | 48 | 38 | 48 | 58 | 32 | 47 |
| % Middle | 17 | 25 | 20 | 35 | 14 | 44 | 22 | 17 | 37 | 7 |
| % High | 19 | 25 | 15 | 23 | 33 | 13 | 30 | 17 | 32 | 33 |
| % Rural/Town | 57 | 65 | 70 | 100 | 38 | 38 | 74 | 17 | 100 | 47 |
| Student Demographics and Outcomes | | | | | | | | | | |
| % Students of Color | 56 | 53 | 39 | 62 | 69 | 56 | 48 | 54 | 50 | 39 |
| % Low-Income Students | 57 | 54 | 55 | 64 | 52 | 49 | 41 | 51 | 64 | 50 |
| Chronic Absence Rate | 27 | 26 | 23 | 31 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 24 | 22 | 27 |
| Performance Composite | 52 | 52 | 59 | 46 | 46 | 54 | 56 | 55 | 50 | 53 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| School Count | 2548 | 152 | 20 | 26 | 21 | 16 | 23 | 12 | 19 | 15 |

Note: This table displays descriptive data on the characteristics of NCPFP internship schools and non-internship schools. Data are from the year prior to the internship placement.

We estimated regression models to compare the characteristics of internship schools to other schools within the same district that did not host a Principal Fellows intern. These results (not

¹³ There were 140 Principal Fellows completing an internship in 2023-24. However, some of them interned at more than one school. As such, Table 5 indicates that Principal Fellows were at 152 unique schools.

displayed) show that schools hosting a Principal Fellows intern have modestly lower test proficiency rates (by 2.5 percent) than schools that did not host an intern. Principal Fellow internship sites were very similar to other schools in the same districts regarding the percent students of color and low-income students.

Table 6 presents descriptive data on the characteristics of principals serving as a mentor for a Principal Fellows intern.¹⁴ Overall, 59 percent of Principal Fellows' mentors are female and 24 percent are a person of color. NCCU had the highest percentage of placements (44 percent) with principals of color. On average, Principal Fellows' mentors have six years of experience in a principal role and have prior-year ratings of 4 ('accomplished') on the North Carolina School Executive Standards. Mentors for interns from ASU and NCSU had particularly high prior-year NCEES ratings.

Table 6: Characteristics of Mentor Principals and Non-Mentor Principals

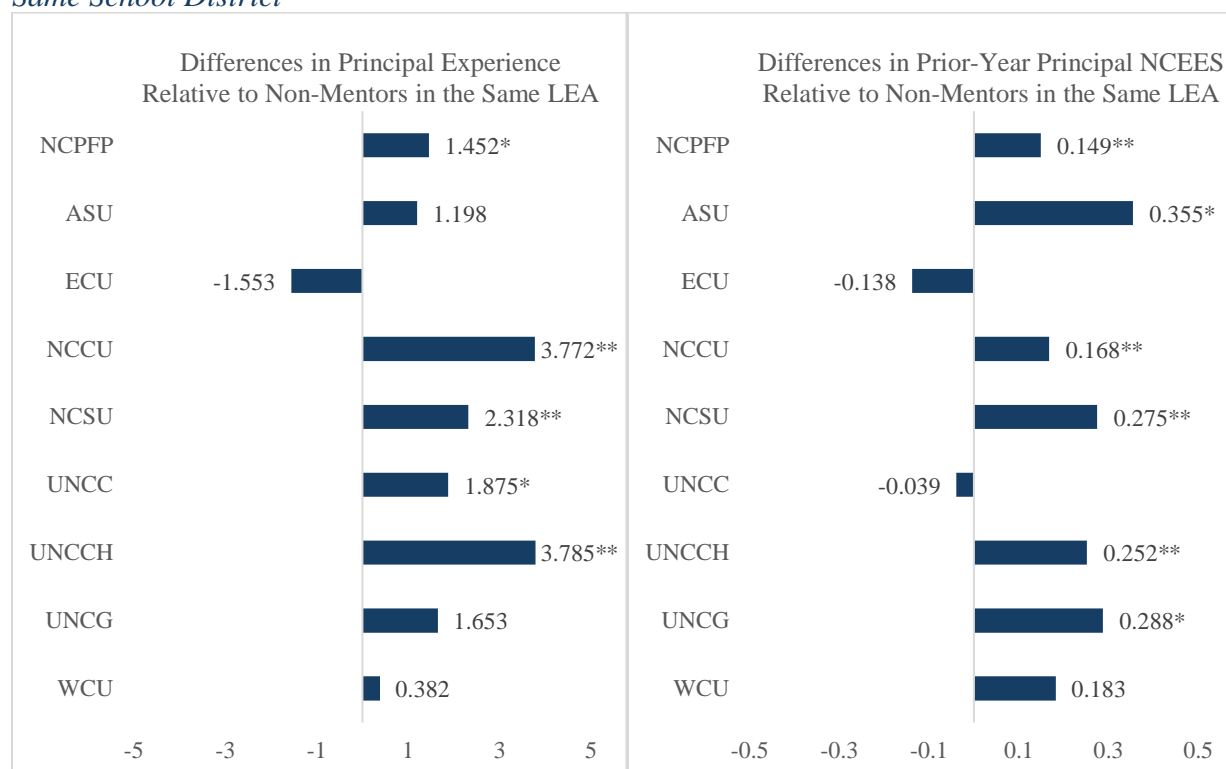
| Mentor Principal Characteristics | Non-Internship Site | NCPFP | ASU | ECU | NCCU | NCSU | UNCC | UNCCH | UNCG | WCU |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| % Female | 64 | 59 | 45 | 46 | 67 | 53 | 61 | 73 | 79 | 60 |
| % Person of Color | 30 | 24 | 20 | 36 | 44 | 13 | 22 | 18 | 17 | 13 |
| Years of Principal Exp | 5.0 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 2.5 | 8.9 | 7.5 | 6.7 | 9.0 | 6.0 | 4.4 |
| Avg. Prior-Year NCEES Rating | 3.8 | 4.01 | 4.21 | 3.71 | 3.98 | 4.21 | 3.91 | 4.06 | 4.04 | 4.16 |
| Principal Count | 2218 | 147 | 20 | 26 | 18 | 15 | 23 | 11 | 19 | 15 |

Note: This table displays descriptive data on the characteristics of NCPFP mentor principals and non-mentor principals.

Figure 3 displays results from regression models comparing the characteristics of mentor principals to other principals within the same district that did not host a Principal Fellows intern. These models are an opportunity to more closely assess the placement choices made by NCPFP programs and their district partners. The left panel of Figure 3 shows that mentor principals for Principal Fellows average nearly 1.5 more years of principal experience than other principals in the district. These experience results are statistically significant for four NCPFP programs and are particularly large in magnitude for NCCU and UNCCH. The right panel of Figure 3 shows that those mentoring Principal Fellow interns earn significantly higher NCEES ratings than other principals in the same district. Specifically, principals mentoring Principal Fellows earned NCEES ratings 0.15 points higher than non-mentor principals. These results for mentor principal evaluation ratings are statistically significant for five NCPFP programs and are particularly large in magnitude for ASU. The data in Figure 3 strongly suggest that NCPFP programs and their district partners prioritize internship placements with well-experienced and effective principals.

¹⁴ In partnership agreements between EPPs and school districts for Principal Fellows, school districts pledge to place Principal Fellows interns with mentor principals that are deemed effective or highly effective based on the North Carolina School Executive Standards.

Figure 3: Comparing Characteristics of Mentor Principals to Non-Mentor Principals Within the Same School District



Note: The left panel of this figure compares the experience of principals hosting a Principal Fellow intern relative to other, non-mentor principals in the host district. The right panel compares the prior-year NCEES ratings of principals hosting a Principal Fellow intern relative to other, non-mentor principals in the host district. * and ** indicate statistically significant differences between internship sites and non-internship sites at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

What are the perspectives of mentor principals regarding their selection as mentors, support received for the mentor role, and the impact of the yearlong internship?

Among the eight school principals participating in our focus groups, districts had selected all but one to serve as a mentor for a Principal Fellow intern. The principal who was not previously selected by the district was moved to a school where a Principal Fellow intern had already been placed. In conversations with these mentor principals, they reported that districts often have criteria for the mentor principal role. One mentor principal shared, “Our district has criteria that you have to meet in order to become a mentor principal. So, you have to have at least three years of service as a principal and on the principal evaluation instrument, you can’t have anything below accomplished and you have to be within good standing in the district.” Beyond criteria, other mentors discussed the process by which they were selected. For example, another mentor principal discussed being tapped for the role, “I was asked by the associate superintendent that’s over curriculum and instruction, [they] had reached out and asked if I would be willing to mentor and host someone.”

Once selected as a mentor principal, there were various supports offered by EPPs and districts for the role. All mentor principal participants described positive experiences with supports received. Some—but not all—mentor principals received financial stipends for their work. In describing

meetings, one mentor principal explained, “Some of [the meetings were] virtual. Some of it was in person. Particularly helpful for me, because I was new this year to this program, was the initial meeting. Everybody got to meet each other, and then, having the principals meet together was nice to find colleagues that were in the same boat.” Another mentor principal shared, “We had a couple of times where we could actually go to [the university] for some training. And so sometimes the training was just for us, and then sometimes it was with the mentee, but then also the mentees had a coach from [the university] and so they had two support people and so they were able to be in constant conversation as well...”

Mentor principals found that hosting an intern offered benefits to the school community. When reflecting on the integral role of principal interns, more broadly, one mentor principal said, “Some of the interns, especially if they were full time interns, they acted as if they were an assistant principal. The staff and students didn’t know them as an intern, only when we introduced them at the beginning of the year, but they treated them as if they were part of the administrative team.” Full-time internships created space for Principal Fellows to be another member of the leadership team, supporting students, families, and staff. Moreover, mentor principals described the positive impact that hosting an intern had on their own professional development. One mentor principal shared, “It kept me up to date with the latest trends. I thought that was great. It also caused me to reflect on my own practices...” Another mentor principal added, “I appreciate collaborating with someone and having a different perspective and a different viewpoint. I learn from that.”

What are the perspectives of Principal Fellows regarding their internships and program coaching supports?

During focus groups with year 2 Principal Fellows, participants expressed that they had opportunities to engage in a wide variety of internship experiences reflective of school administration. This included (but was not limited to) school discipline, school transportation, test administration, instructional walkthroughs, leadership of professional learning communities, teacher observations, and school supervision duty. One Fellow said, “[The internship] gave me the opportunity to experience administration, full on real life 100%, but still have the safety net of an assistant principal and a principal there to support me and wean me into it.” Several Fellows stated that changing grade levels (elementary to secondary or secondary to elementary) provided unique learning opportunities during the internship. For example, one Principal Fellow noted, “I never would have touched middle school if it had been up to me, but trying something different is good. I now have a very great understanding of where my kids in elementary school are going...”

During focus groups, Principal Fellows also discussed the key role of their mentor principal in their internship experience. Fellows shared that they met with mentor principals, both formally and informally, on a regular basis. Overall, mentor principals offered interns a wide array of experiences and created multiple opportunities for feedback. Illustrative of the informal and formal meetings, one Principal Fellow shared, “We’re definitely going to meet every Thursday afternoon to talk about the upcoming week. We’re going to attend PLCs on Mondays to look at school data. And then it was, ‘Hey, come in here really quick, I’ve got a parent who’s on the phone and you need to hear this.’” In reflecting on the value of their mentor principal, another Fellow said, “The most valuable [aspect] was having a strong principal as my mentor and my leader. Somebody with experience and with knowledge that really knew when to support me and knew when to let me do things on my own, to find that balance. They’re not [going to] do everything for me to make it

easy, but they're going to put you in opportunities where you have to problem solve and do things on your own. But you know they're going to be there if you need them."

In multiple focus groups, Principal Fellows discussed experiences with coaching during the internship. Fellows reported meeting with coaches frequently, although the cadence varied. Fellows with coaches spoke positively about interactions, reflecting on the coach's previous experience in education and informed mentorship. One Principal Fellow said, "[The] executive coach is that person outside of this building who has been an administrator before and understands that lens and then provides you support. So, I always felt like I could call him, talk with him. We met weekly by Zoom and then once a month he visited my campus and when I planned learning walks...he came and he watched me facilitate that and gave feedback. When I had an interview, he met with me and went over interview questions and drilled me and gave feedback." Fellows also discussed both the timing of the coaching cycle as well as the value of high-quality coaching. For example, a Fellow shared, "I think [a coach] would be far more valuable in your second year because in my first year, I felt like we were meeting because [they are] my [coach] and [the EPP] told me to meet...But I couldn't really connect with my coach because at that time, I was still a teacher doing my teaching thing."

How do Principal Fellows perceive the benefits of their preparation programs?

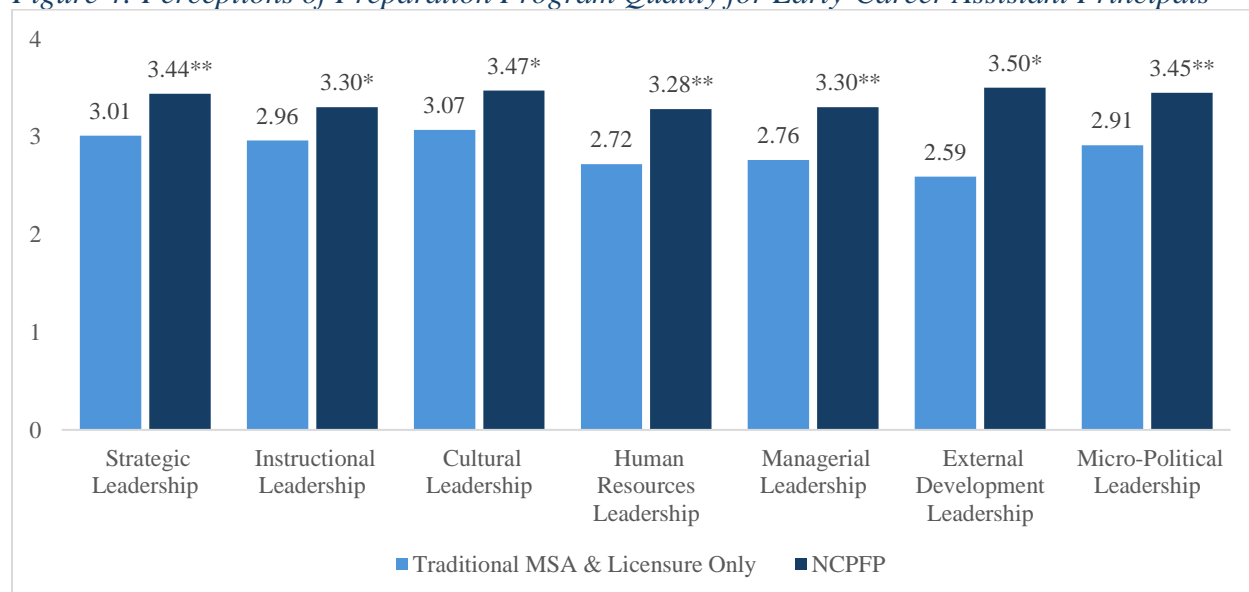
In focus groups, Principal Fellows discussed three key benefits to the program: financial accessibility, school administration preparation, and the collaborative cohort model. One Principal Fellow shared that without the fully funded program, a MSA degree would not have been possible: "For me, this program and this degree wouldn't have been possible without this scholarship plan. There's no other way that I could have done it. It's given me an opportunity to expand my career and to affect more schools and affect more children and create more change and I would have never had that opportunity without Principal Fellows." Fellows highlighted both coursework and the internship experiences as key in preparing them to become school leaders. For example, a Fellow noted that, "The hands-on practice is what really prepares you. The coursework was a great foundation, but the practical aspect was everything." In referencing the cohort model of the program, another Fellow discussed that collaboration amongst the Fellows does not end when the program is complete, "...it'll be neat to see where everybody ends up and keeping in touch with them. That's also a nice safe sounding board to get things out."

When considering suggestions for the program, Fellows discussed a continued focus on strong mentorship during internship, both from the mentor principal and/or executive coach. One Fellow suggested, "The only feedback I really have is to make sure that [Fellows] have a mentor during their internship, and not necessarily a mentor that they have to meet with every month or so to check a box." While none of the Fellows independently discussed the gap in years of service created by the current full-time internship funding model as a drawback to the program, when asked specifically about the issue, Fellows confirmed that the gap is a concern. One Fellow offered, "I'll be honest, losing some of your retirement is hard to think about, that you're losing service time. That was a hard pill to swallow, but at the same time, the experience was worth it coming out on this end, seeing it from where I'm sitting now, I would definitely go back again and say, I'll give up a year of retirement to be able to get the experiences I've had this year."

To further examine the perceptions of Principal Fellows, we administered a school administrator survey to early-career assistant principals (fewer than three years of experience) in spring 2024. For our analyses, we compare the perceptions of 42 Principal Fellows in assistant principal roles (from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 graduating cohorts) to the perceptions of 246 early-career assistant principals who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program. Our survey items focused on perceptions of how well respondents were prepared to enact key leadership tasks and how confident they feel to be effective school leaders.

Figure 4 presents data regarding how well-prepared early-career assistant principals felt to enact school leadership tasks aligned with North Carolina’s school executive standards. Across all seven school executive standards, Principal Fellows reported feeling significantly better prepared. For example, Principal Fellows had an average response of 3.44 (on a 0-4 scale) for the Strategic Leadership standard, while the corresponding value for the comparison group was 3.01.¹⁵ Overall, these data suggest that after acquiring experience as a school administrator, Principal Fellows felt positively about the quality of their preparation experiences.

Figure 4: Perceptions of Preparation Program Quality for Early-Career Assistant Principals



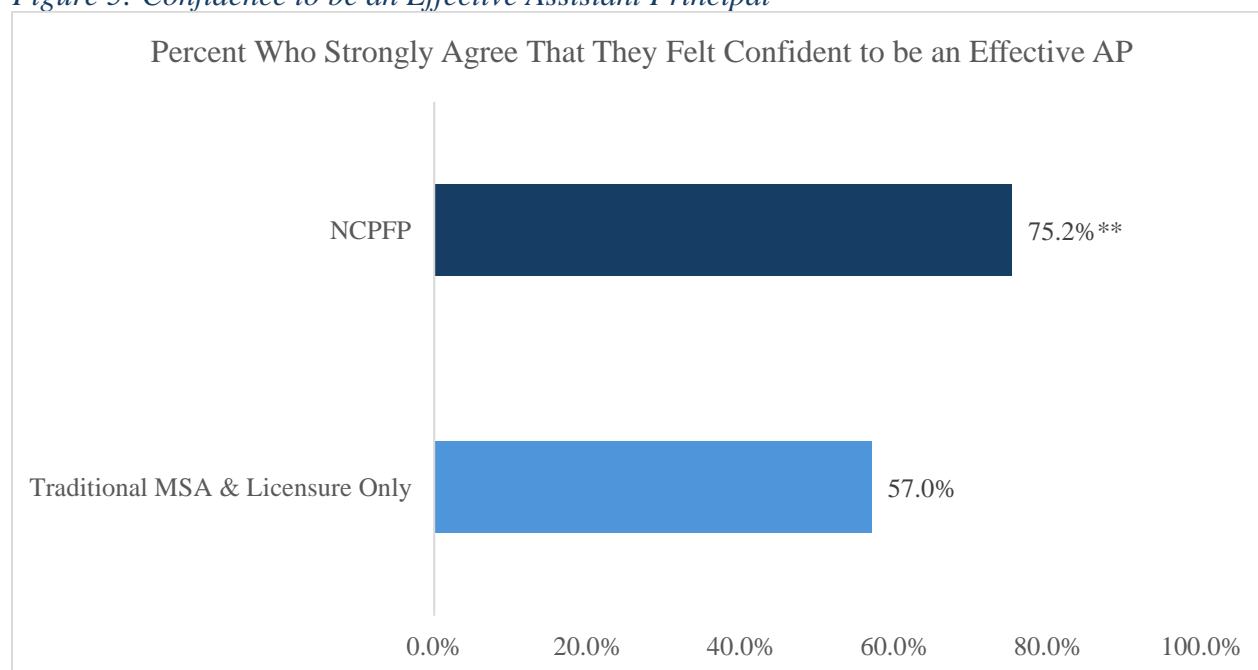
Note: This figure displays results from regression models comparing the survey responses of Principal Fellows versus peers who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program. The sample consists of early-career assistant principals in the 2023-24 school year. * and ** indicate statistically significant differences between Principal Fellows and the comparison group at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Figure 5 displays the percentage of respondents to our early-career administrator survey who strongly agreed that they felt confident to be an effective assistant principal. Among Principal Fellows working as an assistant principal in 2023-24, 75 percent of survey respondents strongly agreed that they felt confident in their effectiveness as an assistant principal. Among early-career assistant principals who had completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program, only 57 percent of respondents answered similarly. Taken together, these survey data indicate that

¹⁵ The scale for these survey items ranged from 0-4, where ‘0’ indicated that the preparation program did not focus on the respective leadership area, a ‘2’ indicated that the respondent felt somewhat well prepared in the leadership area, and a ‘4’ indicated that the respondent felt very well prepared in the leadership area.

Principal Fellows felt better prepared for school leadership and more confident in their effectiveness as assistant principals. At a later stage of the evaluation, as more Principal Fellows move into the principalship, we will survey early-career school principals and assess their perceptions of preparation quality and confidence.

Figure 5: Confidence to be an Effective Assistant Principal



Note: This figure displays results from regression models comparing the survey responses of Principal Fellows versus peers who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program. The sample consists of early-career assistant principals in the 2023-24 school year. ** indicates statistically significant differences between Principal Fellows and the comparison group at the 0.01 level.

Meeting a Majority of the Demand for School Leaders in North Carolina

The third core commitment of NCPFP is to meet a majority of the demand for school leaders in North Carolina. By meeting this demand, while also maintaining program quality, NCPFP aims to meaningfully reshape the state's school leader workforce. NCPFP measures this commitment by the number of Principal Fellows prepared on an annual basis,¹⁶ however, it is also important to assess how many of those Fellows secure school leadership positions in NCPS. As such, this section of the report examines the employment of Principal Fellows in the immediate years after program completion.

What employment roles are held by Principal Fellows?

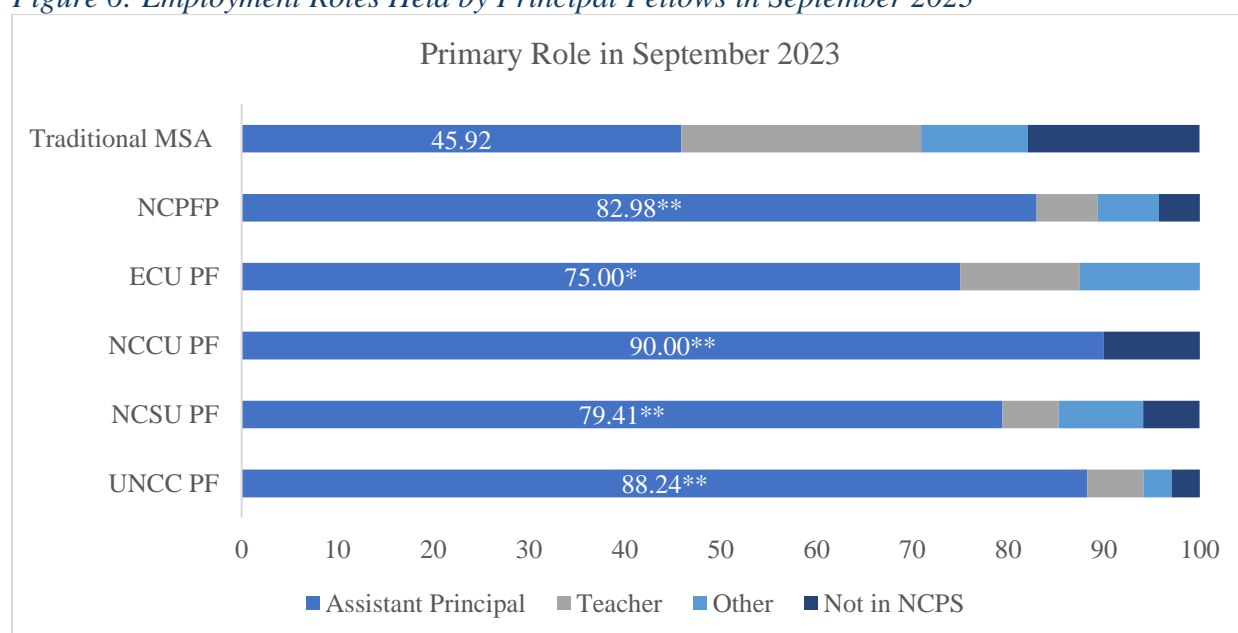
To examine employment outcomes, we focus on NCPFP completers in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. Using employment records from the start of the 2023-24 school year, we compare the roles held (e.g. assistant principal, teacher) by these Principal Fellows relative to those of the

¹⁶ NCPFP aims to meet 55 percent of the demand for school leaders in North Carolina by 2029 and 70 percent of the demand by 2032. Demand is defined as the number of school principals exiting NCPS in a respective year.

368 individuals completing a traditional MSA degree at a UNC System institution in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years.¹⁷

Figure 6 displays data on employment at the start of the 2023-24 school year.¹⁸ Among our comparison sample of 368 traditional MSA completers, we find that approximately 18 percent were not employed in a traditional NCPS, while 46 percent were in an assistant principal role, 25 percent were in a teacher role, and 11 percent were in another certified role (e.g., instructional coach) in September 2023. The employment results for Principal Fellows completers from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 cohorts are very different. In September 2023, 83 percent of Principal Fellows graduates were serving as an assistant principal, 6 percent were teaching, 6 percent were in another certified position, and 4 percent were not employed in a traditional NCPS. The percentage of Principal Fellows in an assistant principal position varied by institution, ranging from 75 percent for ECU to 90 percent for NCCU. Overall, these data strongly suggest that NCPFP program components, including partnerships with districts and post-completion service requirements, impact the school administrator pipeline in North Carolina. Throughout the remainder of this evaluation, we will continue to track tenure in school leadership positions and transitions to higher levels of school leadership.

Figure 6: Employment Roles Held by Principal Fellows in September 2023



Note: For MSA completers in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years—both Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers from UNC System institutions—this figure displays their primary employment role in September 2023. * and ** indicate statistically significant differences, at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively, in the likelihood that Principal Fellows, relative to traditional MSA completers, are in an assistant principal role.

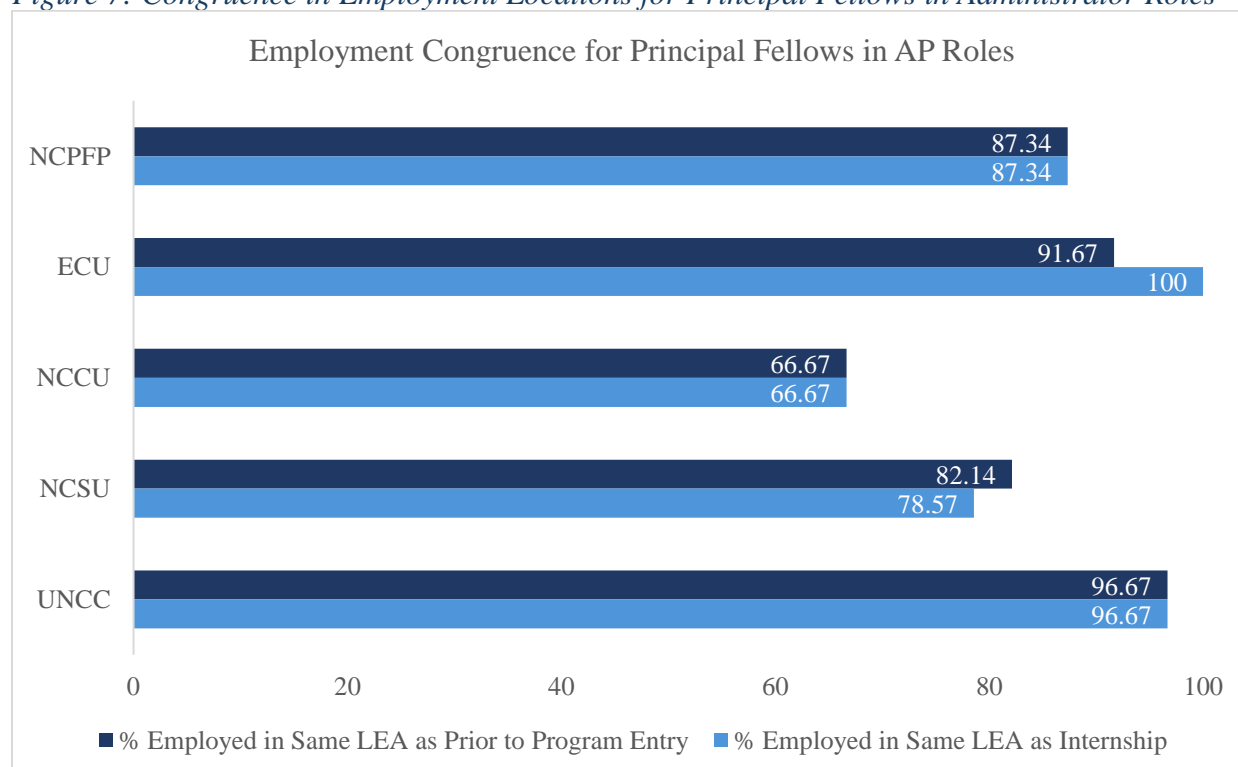
¹⁷ Employment files from NCDPI only include data for traditional (non-charter) public schools. As such, we do not know if program completers are working in a school administrator role in a charter school or other, non-public school setting.

¹⁸ We can also examine these employment data for each Principal Fellows cohort and school year separately. For example, nearly 88 percent of Principal Fellows graduates in 2021-22 were assistant principals in September 2022. For the Principal Fellows graduating cohort in 2022-23, 78 percent were assistant principals in September 2023.

To what extent does the location of employment for Principal Fellows correspond with locations of prior employment/internships?

During our focus groups, some Principal Fellows and district representatives voiced concerns regarding the ability of Principal Fellows to secure a school administrator position within their “home” school district—i.e. the district in which they worked prior to becoming a Principal Fellow and/or the district in which they completed their principal internship. To further investigate this, Figure 7 displays data on the percentage of Principal Fellows whose assistant principal position in September 2023 was in (1) the same school district as where they were employed prior to entering the program and (2) the same school district as where they completed their internship. Among Principal Fellows serving as assistant principals, Figure 7 shows that a large majority (87 percent) were working in their home school districts. These values vary across programs, with Principal Fellows graduates from ECU and UNCC being most likely to remain in their home districts. We will continue to track this outcome for future evaluation reports, especially as all eight NCPFP programs had graduates entering the workforce in 2024-25.

Figure 7: Congruence in Employment Locations for Principal Fellows in Administrator Roles



Note: Among Principal Fellows working as assistant principals in September 2023, this figure displays the percentage working in the same district in which they were employed prior to program entry and the same district in which they completed their principal internship.

Producing Effective School Leaders

The final core commitment of NCPFP is to produce effective school leaders that positively impact student, educator, and school outcomes. This commitment is the culmination of instituting rigorous selection processes and providing high-quality preparation experiences. In this section of the report, we assess the effectiveness of NCPFP completers by examining the performance of beginning

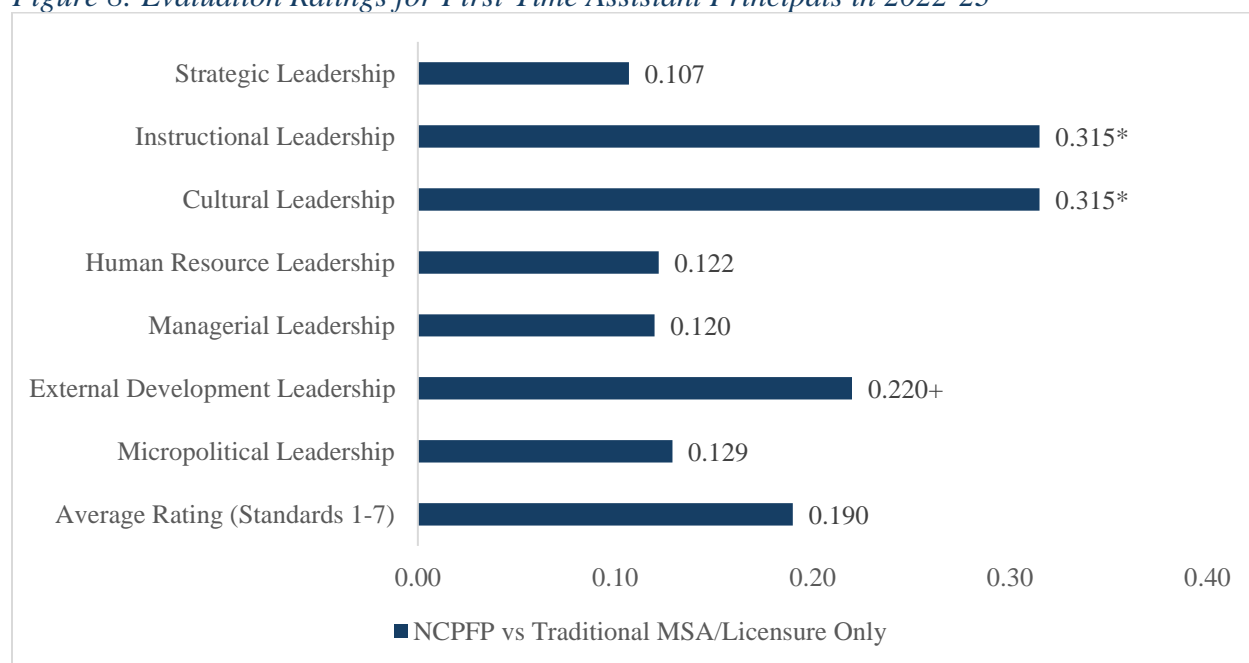
assistant principals. We also use existing data from the TP3 program to project when we may be able to know more about the effectiveness of NCPFP completers.

What are the evaluation ratings for Principal Fellows serving in assistant principal roles?

For analyses of school administrator evaluation ratings, we focus on Principal Fellows in the 2021-22 graduating cohort who became assistant principals in NCPS in the 2022-23 school year. We compare their evaluation ratings on the North Carolina School Executive Standards relative to the evaluation ratings of first-time assistant principals in the 2022-23 year who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program.¹⁹ For these analyses we estimate regression models controlling for the demographics of assistant principals and select school characteristics.

Relative to first-time assistant principals who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only preparation program, Figure 8 shows that Principal Fellows earned significantly higher evaluation ratings on three school executive standards: Instructional Leadership, Cultural Leadership, and External Development Leadership. For example, Principal Fellows earned evaluation ratings 0.315 points higher on Instructional Leadership than peers who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program. To put this result into perspective, we note that the average difference in evaluation ratings between first- and second-year assistant principals is approximately 0.20 to 0.25 points. As such, the significant results for Principal Fellows are equivalent to/larger in magnitude than the gains acquired through the first year of assistant principal experience.

Figure 8: Evaluation Ratings for First-Time Assistant Principals in 2022-23



Note: This figure displays results from regression models comparing the school administrator evaluation ratings for Principal Fellows from the 2021-22 graduating cohort who were first-time assistant principals in 2022-23 relative to other first-time assistant principals in 2022-23 (prepared through traditional MSA and licensure only routes). + and * indicate statistically significant differences between Principal Fellows and the comparison group at the 0.10 and 0.05 level, respectively.

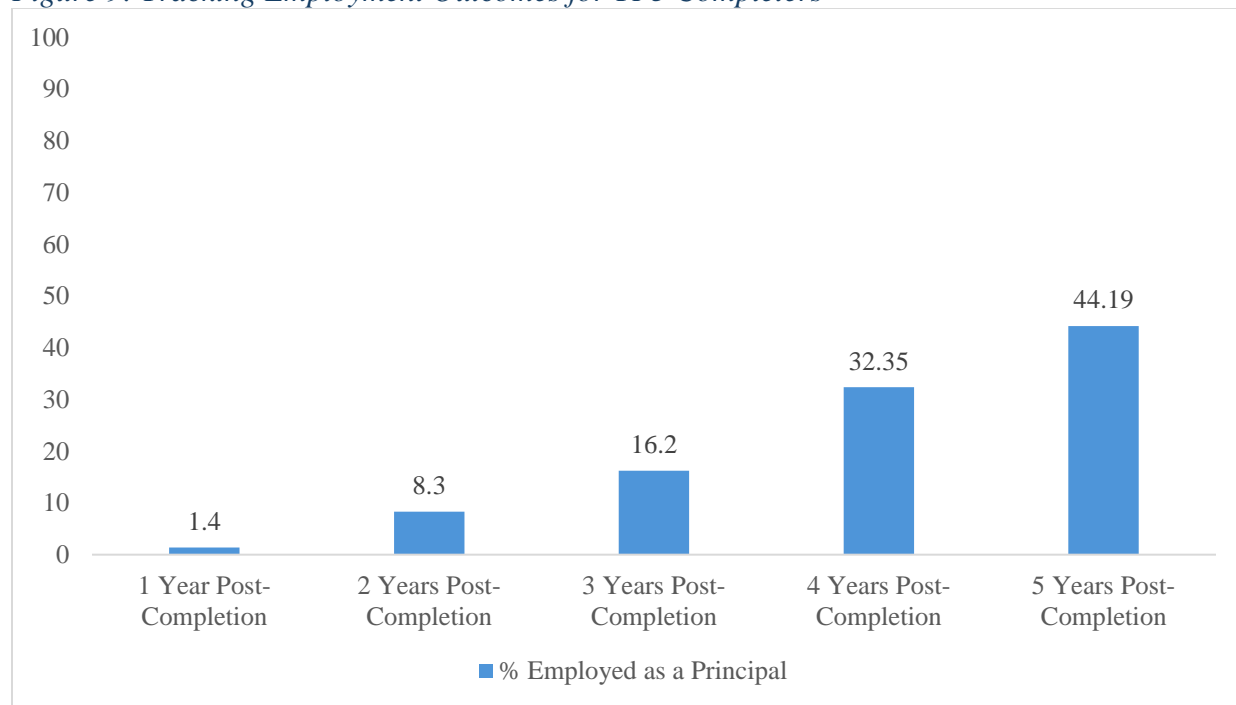
¹⁹ While 42 Principal Fellows from the 2021-22 graduating cohort served as an assistant principal in 2022-23, only 25 of those individuals have evaluation ratings in the administrative data provided by NCDPI.

What is the likely timeline for knowing more about the effectiveness of Principal Fellows as principals?

In order to assess the effectiveness of Principal Fellows in principal roles, there needs to be a sufficient number of graduates holding that position. As such, it is important to consider the timeline on which Principal Fellows may move into principal positions in NCPS. To know more about that potential timeline, we used employment files from NCDPI to track, for up to five years after program completion, the percentage of TP3 graduates working as principals in NCPS. With these data, we project the rate at which Principal Fellows may move into principal positions.

Figure 9 displays the percentage of TP3 program completers employed as a principal in NCPS. Overall, these data show that it takes time to move into a school principal position. Three years after program completion only 16 percent of TP3 graduates were employed as principals in NCPS; five years after program completion 44 percent of TP3 graduates were school principals.

Figure 9: Tracking Employment Outcomes for TP3 Completers



Note: For each year after program completion, this figure displays the percentage of TP3 graduates working in a principal position in North Carolina public schools.

Table 7 presents data *projecting* when Principal Fellow completers from each cohort will move into principal positions in NCPS. That is, the data in Table 7 do not reflect actual movements into principal positions for Principal fellows, but rather, use the percentages from Figure 9 (for TP3 completers) to predict promotion to the principalship. Table 7 shows that we anticipate approximately 14 Principal Fellow graduates to be school principals in 2024-25, 38 to be school principals in 2025-26, and 73 to be school principals in 2026-27. A key takeaway from these projections is that 2025-26 is likely the first year that the evaluation team can assess outcomes for Principal Fellows working as school principals in NCPS. We will assess *actual* numbers of Principal Fellows in these roles over time.

Table 7: Projected Movement into School Administrator Positions for Principal Fellows

| Completion Year | Number of Completers | Principals in 2022-23 | Principals in 2023-24 | Principals in 2024-25 | Principals in 2025-26 | Principals in 2026-27 |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2022 | 48 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 21 |
| 2023 | 48 | | 1 | 4 | 8 | 16 |
| 2024 | 140 | | | 2 | 12 | 23 |
| 2025 | 137 | | | | 2 | 11 |
| 2026 | 144 | | | | | 2 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | 517 | 1 | 5 | 14 | 38 | 73 |

Note: Using data from TP3 graduates movement into principal positions, this table displays projected movements into principal positions for Principal Fellows. Red numbers in the NCPFP Completers column indicate a projected number of program completers.

Discussion

For this report we analyzed focus group transcripts, survey responses, and program/administrative data for Principal Fellows in the 2022-2024 graduating cohorts. Our analyses aligned with the four core commitments of the NCPFP program: (1) to attract promising school leader candidates; (2) to provide innovative and high-quality preparation experiences; (3) to meet a majority of the demand for school leaders in North Carolina; and (4) to produce effective school leaders that positively impact student, educator, and school outcomes. From our analyses, we identified several important takeaways.

Regarding the recruitment and selection of Fellows, we found that both across and within NCPFP programs there was variation in recruitment and selection practices. The two selection approaches that began with the district—nomination or application—resulted in candidates with 2 to 2.5 more years of educator experience compared to traditional MSAs. District nomination processes resulted in principal candidates with significantly higher NCEES Leadership ratings and somewhat higher EVAAS estimates. Furthermore, relative to traditional MSA programs, we found that NCPFP programs brought in many more principal candidates from rural schools. This is consistent with a goal of the NCPFP to provide school leaders for underserved regions of the state.

Results for the preparation experiences of Principal Fellows were largely positive. Administrative data show that school districts and NCPFP programs select more experienced and more highly-rated principals to serve as mentors for Principal Fellows interns. When reflecting on experiences during their second-year in the program, Principal Fellows highlighted the important role that the internship (authentic practice opportunities), mentor principals, and executive coaches (if offered) played in their development. Furthermore—consistent with prior evaluation findings—Fellows continued to identify financial supports and the cohort model as key strengths of the program. Survey responses from early-career assistant principals showed that Principal Fellows, relative to peers prepared through traditional MSA or licensure only pathways, rated their programs more highly and reported feeling more confident in their ability to be an effective school leader.

Meeting the demand for school leaders requires that Principal Fellows move into school administrator roles. Relative to peers completing a traditional MSA program, we found that Principal Fellows completers—from the 2022 and 2023 cohorts—were much more likely to be in

an assistant principal position at the start of the 2023-24 year. In particular, 83 percent of Principal Fellows were in an assistant principal position compared to 45 percent for traditional MSA completers. Although both districts and Fellows expressed some concern about Fellows securing employment in “home” districts following program completion, initial data showed that a large majority of Principal Fellows (nearly 90 percent of those in an administrator role) were working as an assistant principal in the same district in which they were previously employed and/or completed their internship. We will continue to track this measure for future cohorts and as Fellows move into principal positions.

Finally, early evidence indicates that Principal Fellows are effective in school administrator roles. Fellows working as assistant principals in 2022-23 received higher evaluation ratings than other beginning assistant principals on three school executive standards—Instructional Leadership, Cultural Leadership, and External Development Leadership. However, initial projections suggest that it will be several more years before we can assess outcomes for school principals who completed an NCPFP program. In this interval, we will use existing measures and primary data collection to assess the performance of Fellows in assistant principal roles.

Appendix A: Data Sources and Analyses

Data Sources

For this NCPFP evaluation report we relied on data from the following five sources:

- (1) NCPFP program reporting: NCPFP programs submit data to EPIC for each graduating cohort of Principal Fellows. These data include the demographics of enrollees, the district from which enrollees entered the program, enrollees' role in the district (e.g. teacher), enrollee email addresses, whether and when the enrollee completed the program, the cost of the enrollees' tuition and fees, the school where the enrollee completed their internship, the name of the mentor principal, the local salary supplement for the enrollee (during the internship year), and final ratings for the enrollee from their internship experience.
- (2) State-level administrative data: NCDPI provided data on all K-12 students, school personnel, and schools. Student level data include enrollment and demographics, attendance, and test scores. K-12 school personnel data include demographics, employment, credentials, and performance measures (e.g. NCEES evaluation ratings and EVAAS value-added estimates). School level data include school type, rurality, aggregated student demographics, academic achievement measures, and North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey responses. The UNC System Office also provided data identifying individuals completing an MSA degree at a UNC System institution and the year of program completion.
- (3) Program completer survey: We developed a survey to assess program completers' perceptions of their principal preparation programs. Principal Fellows take this survey near the end of their internship experience. Additionally, we worked with the NCPFP Central Office to open this completer survey to others finishing MSA programs at public and private institutions in North Carolina. For this evaluation report, we analyze survey items on how Principal Fellows were recruited and selected into their programs. In particular, these survey items assess whether Principal Fellows were district nominated, participated in a district application process, or applied directly to their university without any prior district nomination/application process.
- (4) Early-career school administrator survey: We developed a survey to assess early-career administrators' perceptions of their principal preparation programs. We administered this survey in spring 2024 to assistant principals with less than three years of experience in their respective roles. This allows us to compare the perceptions of Principal Fellows to peers with other forms of preparation. The survey includes items on (a) how well they were prepared by their program; (b) time allocation in their current role; (c) confidence to enact key school leadership tasks and be an effective administrator; (d) perceptions of school principals; (e) helpful supports to their practice as a school administrator; and (f) the financial burdens of school leader preparation.
- (5) Focus groups: In the spring and summer of 2024, we conducted focus groups with Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort, mentor principals for those Principal Fellows, and school district representatives.

Qualitative Data and Analysis

We collected qualitative data through focus groups in spring and summer 2024. Our focus groups included second-year Principal Fellows from the class of 2024 and consisted of one to four Principal Fellows from each of the eight NCPFP programs. Prior to the focus groups, we used data provided by each NCPFP program—including data on Principal Fellows demographics, K-12 districts, and prior roles in schools—to identify a diverse group of potential participants for recruitment. Overall, we spoke with 13 second-year Principal Fellows. We also conducted focus groups with district contacts working with EPPs to administer the NCPFP. We recruited district contacts that would offer representation of districts with varied characteristics (i.e. rural/suburban/urban; small/large; charter/traditional). Overall, we spoke with representatives from seven districts. Finally, we conducted focus groups with mentor principals supervising second-year Principal Fellows. We invited all eligible mentor principals to participate in focus groups. Overall, we spoke with eight mentor principals.

Each focus group followed a semi-structured protocol and lasted approximately one hour. Focus group protocols varied based on participant group. Protocols for each focus group are provided in Appendix B (second-year Principal Fellows), Appendix C (mentor principals), and Appendix D (district representatives). An evaluation team member led each focus group while another team member took responsive notes for data analysis. The focus group sessions were recorded on Zoom and later transcribed and de-identified by a member of the evaluation team. All participants received gift cards for their participation in the focus groups.

We uploaded focus group transcripts into Dedoose, an online qualitative data analysis platform. Our analysis consisted of both deductive and inductive coding. We developed an initial set of deductive codes that were guided by our research questions. Later, we developed an inductive coding schema from emergent themes in the data. Each focus group transcript was coded separately by two evaluation team members and coding disagreements were reconciled by a third team member. This process promoted intercoder reliability. We identified major themes and representative quotes from focus groups both within and across NCPFP programs.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection of promising school leader candidates is a central component of NCPFP programs. Our prior work in this area—from focus groups with first-year Principal Fellows—indicated that the role of the district in recruiting and selecting NCPFP candidates varied considerably between programs and across districts partnering with the same program. To further understand how candidates were selected into NCPFP programs, we added questions on recruitment and selection into our spring 2024 program completer survey. Specifically, we asked 2024 NCPFP completers to identify which of three categories best described their recruitment and selection experience—whether they were district nominated, participated in a district application process, or applied directly to their university/NCPFP program without any prior district involvement. In total, 124 out of 140 Principal Fellows in the 2024 graduating cohort answered these survey items.

For Principal Fellows, overall, and for each NCPFP program, separately, we report the percentage of survey respondents in each recruitment and selection category. This allows us to determine

which recruitment approaches were most prevalent and assess the extent to which recruitment approaches varied across and within programs.

As a next step in these analyses, we assessed how different recruitment and selection approaches are related to the characteristics of Principal Fellows. For this work we used NCDPI administrative data to identify the characteristics of the 124 Principal Fellows who completed the spring 2024 program completer survey. The characteristics we focus on come from the year prior to program entry and include demographics (gender, race/ethnicity), credentials (experience, National Board Certification, graduate degree), and performance measures (NCEES, EVAAS).

For analyses, we estimate regression models comparing the characteristics of Principal Fellows recruited through each of these three approaches (district nomination, district application, university application) relative to the characteristics of traditional MSA completers from the same university. By comparing within university, we aim to adjust for differences across programs in applicant pools and better isolate the relationships between recruitment practices and principal candidate characteristics.²⁰ Importantly, these models assume that traditional MSA completers participate in traditional recruitment and selection practices—i.e. directly applying to their university with minimal or no district involvement.

Characteristics of Prior Employment Schools

For these analyses we are interested in the characteristics of the schools where Principal Fellows worked prior to entering the program. Such analyses are important because prior experiences in schools may impact Principal Fellows' readiness to succeed in high-need school settings. The sample for this work includes the 236 Principal Fellows in the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 graduating cohorts relative to the 367 candidates completing a traditional MSA degree at a UNC System institution in the 2021-22 or 2022-23 years. We include this comparison sample so that we can assess the extent to which Principal Fellows are coming from different school environments than peers completing a traditional preparation route.

We start this work by using employment records from NCDPI to identify the schools that Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers worked in two years prior to program completion. For Principal Fellows—who complete a two-year preparation program—this is the school they worked in prior to program entry. Traditional MSA candidates may take longer than two years to finish their programs and we do not have data identifying when traditional MSAs begin their programs. As such, the data for traditional MSA completers may not come from prior to program entry. After identifying the schools at which Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers worked, we link school characteristics to those data. The school measures we focus on include school level (e.g., elementary, middle), rurality, student demographics (percent low-income students and students of color), teacher retention rates, whether the school is classified as a Title I campus, and the school performance composite.

To analyze these data on prior employment schools, we report descriptive statistics for the traditional MSA comparison group, for Principal Fellows (overall), and for each NCPFP program. While these descriptive data are valuable, we are also cognizant that differences across NCPFP

²⁰ When estimating models to compare within programs, we exclude both NCCU and NCSU as they only had Principal Fellow completers.

programs may not be related to differences in recruitment and selection practices, but rather, due to underlying differences in the K-12 schools in the regions the NCPFP programs serve. As such, we estimated a series of regression models that compare prior school characteristics for Principal Fellows versus traditional MSAs from the same universities. By making comparisons within universities, we can better assess whether differences in prior school characteristics are due to practices of NCPFP programs and their district partners. There are three outcome variables for these analyses: whether the prior employment school was in a rural area and the percent students of color and low-income students at the prior employment school. We report regression results across all NCPFP programs.²¹

Internship Characteristics

With these analyses, we are interested in the characteristics of the schools chosen to host a Principal Fellows intern and the characteristics of the principals in those schools (mentor principals). The goal of these analyses is to examine the choices made by NCPFP programs and their district partners in making internship placement decisions. As such, our analyses use school and principal-level data from the year before the internship—i.e., data from the year in which programs and districts were making their placement decisions.

The sample for these analyses includes the 140 Principal Fellow interns—from all eight programs—who completed their internship in the 2023-24 academic year. In total, these Fellows interned in 152 unique schools. The comparison group for these analyses are all the schools—and by extension, principals—that did not host a Principal Fellow intern. This includes approximately 2,500 unique schools and principals that did not a Principal Fellows intern in 2023-24.

Our analyses focus on a range of school and principal measures. The school measures we focus on include school level (e.g. elementary, middle), rurality, student demographics (percent students of color and low-income students), the chronic absenteeism rate, and the school performance composite. The principal data we focus on include demographics (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity), principal experience, and prior-year ratings from the North Carolina School Executive Standards.

To analyze these data on internship schools and mentor principals, we report descriptive statistics for all schools and principals that did not host a Principal Fellows intern in the respective year, for all Principal Fellows interns (overall), and for each NCPFP program. Beyond these descriptive statistics, we estimated a series of regression models to compare the characteristics of internship schools and mentor principals to the characteristics of schools and principals within the same district that did not host a Principal Fellows intern. This within-district comparison allows us to better understand the placement choices made by NCPFP programs and their partner districts. There are five outcome variables for these analyses: the performance composite, percent students of color, and percent low-income students at the internship school and mentor principal experience and average evaluation ratings. We report regression results across all NCPFP programs and separate results for each NCPFP program.

²¹ When estimating models to compare within programs, we exclude both NCCU and NCSU as they only had Principal Fellow completers.

Perceptions of Program Quality

For the last three years (2022-2024), we have surveyed principal candidates finishing their preparation programs—Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers—to assess their perceptions of preparation quality at the time of program completion. While these data are valuable, they do not capture how school leaders feel about their preparation experiences after having served in administrator roles.

To address this gap, we developed and administered a survey to early-career assistant principals (less than three years of experience in the role) in spring 2024. Overall, 42 Principal Fellow completers (from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 graduating cohorts) in an assistant principal position completed the survey. We compare their perceptions of their preparation experiences relative to the perceptions of 246 survey respondents who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program and were an early-career assistant principal in 2023-24.

For this report, we analyze survey items focused on perceptions of how well respondents were prepared to enact key leadership tasks (responses on a 0-4 scale) aligned with the North Carolina School Executive Standards. We also analyze a survey item focused on how confident respondents feel to be an effective school leader (responses on a 1-5 scale). With these measures as outcomes, we estimate linear regression models with the following control variables (taken from other survey responses): years of experience as an assistant principal and the number of years since finishing their principal preparation program. We report estimates for all Principal Fellow respondents relative to traditional MSA/licensure only respondents.

Employment for Principal Fellows

Given the requirement that NCPFP completers serve in school leadership roles (to meet the obligations of their forgivable loan), we assess the employment outcomes of Principal Fellows and traditional MSA completers. In particular, we use employment records from the start of the 2023-24 school year (September pay records) and compare the roles held (e.g. assistant principal, teacher) by the 96 Principal Fellows in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 graduating cohorts relative to those of the 368 individuals completing a traditional MSA degree at a UNC System institution in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. There are three important limitations of this work. First, employment files from NCDPI only include data for traditional (non-charter) public schools and, as such, we do not know if program completers are working in a school administrator role in a charter or non-public school setting in North Carolina. Second, these data capture the role held by individuals at the start of the school year. This may not represent their primary role throughout the full school year. Finally, there are school leadership roles that meet the NCPFP service requirement—i.e. Dean of Students—that cannot be identified with NCDPI employment records. Given these limitations, data we provide in this report may not fully match what is reported by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority.

Using September 2023 pay records, we identify whether the primary role for these Principal Fellow and traditional MSA completers is working as a teacher, an assistant principal, a principal, in another certified role, or not employed in NCPS. We report descriptive statistics for traditional MSA completers, Principal Fellows (overall), and each NCPFP program for the primary role held by program completers. In addition, we estimate regression models to assess whether there are

statistically significant differences in the likelihood that Principal Fellows, relative to traditional MSA completers, serve in an assistant principal role.

To extend these analyses, we assess whether Principal Fellows secure school administrator positions in their home school district. We define a home district as one in which a Principal Fellow worked prior to program entry and/or one in which they completed their principal internship. Among the Principal Fellows—from the 2022 and 2023 graduating cohorts—that were working as an assistant principal at the start of the 2023-24 school year, we report the percentage (1) working in the same district as they worked prior to program entry and (2) working in the same district in which they completed their internship. We report these descriptive data for Principal Fellows, overall, and for each of the four programs (ECU, NCCU, NCSU, and UNCC) with graduates in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Evaluation Ratings for Principal Fellows

This is the first evaluation report in which we can begin to track the performance of Principal Fellow completers. To do so, we focus on Principal Fellows in the 2021-22 graduating cohort who become assistant principals in NCPS in the 2022-23 school year. This is the most recent year for which educator performance data are currently available.

For this work we compare the school administrator evaluation ratings for Principal Fellows relative to the evaluation ratings of those who completed a traditional MSA or licensure only program and are first-time assistant principals in the 2022-23 school year. In total, 42 Principal Fellows from the 2021-22 graduating cohort served as an assistant principal in 2022-23. However, only 25 of them have evaluation ratings in the administrative data provided by NCDPI. Our comparison sample consists of 483 first-time assistant principals with evaluation ratings.

We estimate linear regression models to assess whether Principal Fellows have significantly higher evaluation ratings than other assistant principals. The outcome measures for these analyses are ratings (on a 1-5 scale) on each of the North Carolina School Executive Standards: Strategic Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Cultural Leadership, Human Resource Leadership, Managerial Leadership, External Development Leadership, and Micropolitical Leadership. In these regression models we control for the demographics of assistant principals (gender, race/ethnicity) and the following school characteristics: school level, rurality, the percent students of color, and the percent low-income students. Given the small number of Principal Fellows in our sample (n=25), we report results for NCPFP overall rather than at the individual program level. In all models we adjust for dependence in the data by clustering standard errors at the school level.

Movement into Principal Positions

NCPFP programs aim to prepare highly effective school principals that positively impact student achievement, school working conditions, and educator retention. To assess the effectiveness of Principal Fellows in principal roles there needs to be a sufficient number of graduates in that position, and research shows that, on average, it takes several years for program completers to move into a principal position. Therefore, we conducted analyses to better inform the NCPFP Commission and the NCPFP Central Office regarding the potential timeline on which Principal Fellows may move into principal positions in NCPS.

Since the first cohort of Principal Fellows graduated in 2022, we cannot use their data to track longer-term movement into principal positions. Instead, we identified 382 TP3 completers (from 2018 to 2022) and used certified salary files from NCDPI to track their employment in NCPS for up to five years after program completion. It is reasonable to track the employment of TP3 graduates since their programs had many similarities—deep partnerships with districts, year long internships—to current NCPFP programs.

We report the percentage of TP3 completers who are principals in NCPS one, two, three, four, and five years after program completion. Next, we use these data to project the number of Principal Fellows completers that will serve in principal roles over time. In particular, we identify the number of Principal Fellow completers in the 2022-2026 cohorts (actual numbers of completers and predicted cohort sizes for future years) and use the TP3 employment data to calculate the number of Principal Fellows, by school year, that will serve in principal roles. These are only projections meant to inform key stakeholders about when principal effectiveness analyses may be feasible. Throughout the evaluation we will track the actual number of Principal Fellows moving in principal roles.

Appendix B: Principal Fellow Focus Group Protocol

- 1) Can you share more about the courses you're taking this year?
- 2) How are your courses organized?
 - a. Probe: Format, activities, schedules, professors/instructors
 - b. Probe: Can you speak to your experiences with in-person and online courses?
 - c. Probe: How does Year 2 compare to Year 1?
- 3) Which elements of your Year 2 coursework do you find most important in developing your capacity for school leadership?
 - a. Probe: Particular courses, activities
 - b. Probe: How has this applied to your internship experience?
- 4) What is your internship like?
 - a. Probe: Elements of the internship, time on site, multiple locations, duration of internship
- 5) Did your hopes for and reality of the internship align?
- 6) What do you spend most of your time doing in your internship?
 - a. Probe: Are there any areas in your placement that you hope to get more experience in?
- 7) What have been the most valuable experiences in your internship? Least valuable?
- 8) Have you had a coach assigned by your EPP during your internship? If so, what did your time with your coach look like?
 - a. Probe: How often did you meet/how much time?
- 9) How were you placed at your school site and with your mentor principal?
- 10) Can you tell us about your relationship with your mentor principal?
 - a. Probe: What do your interactions with your mentor principal look like?
 - b. What do mentorship activities look like?
- 11) What is your plan for your career following graduation?
 - a. Probe: Where will you work? Is this a site that you've worked at before?
 - b. Probe: What other elements are you considering in preparation for your career?
- 12) What are the benefits of Principal Fellows in regards to finances/benefits?

- 13) What are the drawbacks of being a Principal Fellow in regard to finances/benefits?
- a. Probe: How did knowing you would lose a year towards retirement while on a leave of absence during the internship play a role in your decision to pursue Principal Fellows?
 - b. Probe: If you were not aware of this, how does this new information impact that decision?
- 14) Is there anything else we should know about your experiences in the program thus far that you would like us to know about?
- a. Probe: What feedback do you have for the program?

Appendix C: Mentor Principal Focus Group Protocol

- 1) How did you become a mentor principal?
 - a. Probe: Did you know your intern prior to placement?
- 2) What are your responsibilities as a mentor principal?
- 3) What does the format of the internship program look like at your school?
 - a. Probe: Is the Fellow in school all the time or away for part of the week?
 - b. Probe: How do you feel having an intern has impacted your school?
 - c. Probe: How does this differ from other mentorship/internship programs?
- 4) Can you tell us about your relationship with your mentee?
 - a. Probe: What do mentorship activities look like?
- 5) How were you supported in your role as a mentor principal?
 - a. Probe: Training? On-going relationship with EPP? EPP supervisor? Assigned coaches for the intern? Stipends available?
 - b. Probe: What additional supports would be helpful?
- 6) What types of experiences has your intern had this year?
 - a. Probe: What has their work with staff looked like? With students? With families? With other administrators?
 - b. Probe: What elements are required by the EPP?
- 7) What experiences do you think have been the most valuable in developing your intern's leadership capacity?
- 8) How do you assess Principal Fellows during their internship year?
 - a. Probe: How do you share this information?
 - b. Probe: How do you provide feedback?
 - c. Probe: How does assessment relate to NC school executive standards?
- 9) How prepared are Principal Fellows to become a school administrator? What continued support do you think would be valuable as they begin their administrative career?
- 10) How did having a NCPFP intern impact you professionally?
 - a. Probe: Introduction of different PD, methods, workload
 - b. Probe: How does this differ from interns in other programs you've worked with?
- 11) What advice do you have for other mentor principals working with NCPFP?
- 12) Is there anything else we should know about your work as it relates to NCPFP that we haven't asked?

Appendix D: District Representative Focus Group Protocol

- 1) What is your role at your LEA?
- 2) What are your responsibilities related to NCPFP?
- 3) Which EPPs do you work with?
 - a. Probe: How did you get connected with this EPP?
 - b. Probe: What does your on-going relationship with the EPP look like?
- 4) What does communication with your EPP look like?
 - a. Probe: How are concerns reported? Is there communication around candidate quality?
- 5) What qualities are you looking for in Principal Fellow candidates?
- 6) Can you tell us about the process your LEA uses to select candidates?
 - a. Probe: Requirements, nomination vs. application, other staff involved, how if at all is the EPP involved?
 - b. Probe: What data/information are you drawing on to make these decisions?
- 7) How is grant administration handled for Principal Fellows?
 - a. Probe: What does the process look like for receiving/coding/accounting for your stipend from the state for the internship?
 - b. Probe: Salary, stipend, retirement, benefits, local supplement
 - c. Probe: What has gone well? Have there been any challenges? What resources would be helpful in mitigating the named challenges?
- 8) What role does your LEA have in placing Principal Fellows in internships?
 - a. Probe: What criteria (if any) are you looking for in schools and Principal Fellows when making placements? What are you looking for in mentor principals?
- 9) How does your LEA make job placement decisions for graduating Principal Fellows?
 - a. Probe: Do you have a commitment for placement? If so, has this been a challenge?
 - b. Probe: When does this hiring process take place?
 - c. Probe: Retention of qualified candidates if a position is not open?
- 10) What advice do you have for other LEAs facilitating NCPFP?
 - a. Probe: Any advice for EPPs supporting LEAs?
- 11) Is there anything else we should know about your work as it relates to NCPFP that we haven't asked?

Appendix E: Program Completer Survey Items Analyzed for the Evaluation Report

Most Principal Fellows are selected into the NC Principal Fellows program in one of three ways. Some Fellows are *directly nominated* for the program by someone in their district (e.g., superintendent or principal) without any type of district level application process. Some Fellows participate in a *district level application* process which may include one or more steps, such as completing an application form, submitting letters of recommendation to the district, or an interview with the superintendent or other district personnel. Finally, some Fellows *applied directly to their university/NCPFP program* and then were selected for the program by the university and/or their district.

Which of these selection processes best describes your experience?

- Someone in my district directly nominated me to the university without a district application process
- I participated in a district level application process
- I applied to my university/Principal Fellows program independently
- Other (please explain)

What did your district application process include? Please select all that apply. [For those completing a district application process only]

- Submitting written statements (e.g. personal statement, essay)
- Submitting letters of recommendation
- Submitting a portfolio
- Participating in an interview
- Giving a presentation
- Reviewing resume/other records
- Completing mock leadership tasks
- Other

Did someone in your district approach you about their interest in nominating you for the NCPFP program or did you approach someone in your school/district about your interest in being nominated? [For those who were nominated by their district only]

- My district approached me
- I approached my school/district
- Other (please explain)

When you applied to your university, did you apply specifically to the NCPFP program or did you apply for an administrator degree program more generally? [For those who applied directly to their university]

- Applied specifically to NCPFP
- Applied for an administrator degree program more generally
- Other (please explain)

What did your university application process include? Please select all that apply. [For those who applied directly to their university]

-An interview(s)

-Submitting letters of recommendation or district endorsement

-Submitting a writing sample

-Giving a presentation

-Submitting a portfolio

-Completing mock leadership tasks

-Other (please explain)

Appendix F: Early-Career School Administrator Survey Items Analyzed for the Evaluation Report

Reflecting on your experiences as a school administrator, please indicate how well your principal preparation program prepared you for:

Strategic leadership, which includes collaborating with stakeholders to create a vision for the school; facilitating the setting of high expectations and concrete goals; and creating processes to distribute leadership throughout the school.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

Instructional leadership, which includes implementing coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; using assessment data to monitor student progress and improve instruction; and providing formal and informal feedback to teachers concerning their classroom instruction.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

Cultural leadership, which includes creating a collaborative work environment that promotes cohesion and cooperation among staff; creating a school environment that meets the academic, social, emotional, physical, and cultural needs of students; and promoting a sense of well-being, efficacy, and empowerment among staff, students, and families.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

Human resources leadership, which includes creating and monitoring processes for hiring, inducting, and mentoring new teachers and staff; providing for results oriented professional development that is aligned with the curricular, instructional, and assessment needs of school personnel; and evaluating teachers and other school personnel in a fair and equitable manner for the purpose of improving teacher and personnel performance.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

Managerial leadership, which includes managing fiscal and physical resources through effective budgeting and accounting practices; developing systems for the fair and equitable management of school-based conflicts among staff, families, or community stakeholders; and collaboratively developing and enforcing clear expectations, structures, rules, and procedures for students and staff.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

External development leadership, which includes establishing processes that empower parents/caregivers and other community stakeholders to significantly contribute to the school; designing protocols and processes that ensure compliance with state and district mandates; and building relationships with community members and groups that support specific goals.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

Micro-political leadership, which includes being easily accessible to staff and students; promoting open communications throughout the school community; and using objectivity and data-driven decision making for reward and advancement.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

Equity driven leadership, which includes addressing marginalization related to student identifies; ensuring that every student has equitable access to the resources necessary for academic and socio-emotional success; and promoting the values of equity, social justice, community, and diversity.

Responses on a 0-4 scale, where 0=not addressed in my program, 2=somewhat well prepared, and 4=very well prepared

I feel confident in my ability to be an effective assistant principal.

Responses on a 1-5 scale, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=somewhat agree, and 5=strongly agree



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