



SCORE ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL
A THREE-YEAR PROGRAM EVALUATION
Getting and Keeping Students on a Path to Graduation

March 2023



WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

DATA, RESEARCH & ACCOUNTABILITY



ABSTRACT

Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) SCORE Academy is an alternative learning high school composed of two distinct programs. SCORE Academy Re-engagement (A) serves students who are 16 to 21 years old and need to earn between one and 10 credits toward graduation. SCORE Academy Reassignment (B) serves students who have been reassigned by the WCPSS Discipline Review Committee (DRC) in lieu of receiving a long-term suspension. This report evaluates each program's outcomes. Qualitative data collected from staff and students within each program show evidence of strong, positive relationships. An examination of credit accumulation across school years shows evidence of the program's established goals being partially met. SCORE Academy A students who were enrolled in the program for five months or less in 2020-21 or 2021-22 earned, on average, two credits, thereby meeting the semester goal. Students who were enrolled for more than five months did not, on average, meet the yearly goal of four credits earned. In 2021-22, most of the students (86%) in SCORE Academy B were enrolled for five months or less and earned, on average, two credits, missing the goal of three or more credits. The official graduation rates for SCORE Academy in 2020 (48.9%) and 2022 (44.0%) exceeded the goal of 40%, and five-year graduation rates were higher, hovering around 60%. SCORE Academy B students who returned to their base high schools had comparatively lower graduation rates with no added value in examining the five-year rate. Based on these findings, recommendations are given to improve program transparency and adjust program goals.

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INTRODUCTION

North Carolina law requires that schools assist students “who are at risk of academic failure or of engaging in disruptive or disorderly behavior” (The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI] Center for Safer Schools, September 2021). Alternative Learning Programs and Schools (ALPS) are designed to address the needs of these students. ALPS are learning environments that help students overcome barriers that can hinder their academic success. They function under various missions and serve students who are at risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, and/or dropping out of school. Districts can also assign students to an ALPS for committing a behavioral infraction that could have resulted in a long-term suspension were it not for the alternative program option (NCDPI, 2022).

SCORE Academy is an alternative learning high school established in 2017-18 by the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). It is dedicated to creating an equitable learning environment through nurturing relationships, a restorative mindset, an engaging curriculum, and targeted interventions. SCORE Academy’s vision is to create pathways for productive and restorative transitions that prepare students for a lifetime of success (SCORE Academy, 2021a). SCORE Academy operates as a single school within WCPSS, though it is composed of two distinct programs that serve different groups of students, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

SCORE Academy is one school composed of two distinct programs



SCORE Academy
Re-engagement (A)

A re-engagement program for students aged 16 and older who have earned at least 12 high school credits toward graduation and need support to successfully earn their remaining credits



SCORE Academy
Re-assignment (B)

A re-assignment program for students who have been reassigned and placed by the WCPSS Discipline Review Committee (DRC) in lieu of long-term suspension (LTS)

According to NCDPI (2022b), effective ALPS provide services that are designed to meet the needs of students who have been unsuccessful in a traditional school setting with the intent of reducing potential dropout and suspension incidents that can hinder students' progress toward graduation. SCORE Academy offers students a less traditional and smaller educational environment than most of the district's other high schools. It allows students to focus on basic core content using online learning environments that give students flexibility in how they learn (J. Hinds, personal communication, January 19, 2022). Each of the WCPSS high schools can refer students to SCORE Academy. Some students from nearly every high school have either enrolled or been reassigned since the school opened in 2017-18.

“We are a landing spot for kids that don’t fit into comprehensive high school plan.”

SCORE Academy Teacher



The purpose of this report is to provide a description of SCORE Academy and its two programs, which offer supports to help students graduate or successfully transition back to a WCPSS high school, and to evaluate the program outcomes (SCORE Academy, 2021b). As shown in Table 1, the descriptive research design facilitates an examination of outcome data for students attending SCORE Academy A and B (List, Sadoff, & Wagner, 2011; What Works Clearinghouse, 2014). The findings presented in this report are intended to help district leadership and the SCORE Academy administrative team make planning decisions and facilitate implementation improvements.

Table 1

Conclusions supported by this study's research design

Research Design	Conclusions
<input type="checkbox"/> Experimental	We can conclude that the program or policy caused changes in outcomes because the research design used random assignment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Quasi-Experimental	We can reasonably conclude that the program or policy caused changes in outcomes because an appropriate comparison strategy was used.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Descriptive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quantitative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Qualitative	These designs provide outcome data for the program or policy, but differences cannot be attributed directly to it due to lack of a comparative control group.

Data Source: List, Sadoff, & Wagner (2011) and What Works Clearinghouse (2014)





BACKGROUND

In accordance with North Carolina's Alternative Schools and Alternative Learning Programs law, (NCDPI Center for Safer Schools, 2021), WCPSS has implemented ALPS to support student re-engagement and reassignment initiatives. SCORE Academy is a synthesis of these initiatives. A timeline of the district's program implementation is shown in Figure 2 and details about each program are provided in the Appendix.

WCPSS has historically implemented various alternative learning opportunities for students whose principals have recommended them for long-term suspension. The Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs) that operated in 1995-96 (at three locations across the district) and the Richard M. Milburn High School which opened in 1996-97 were educational opportunities offered to students whom the Superintendent, upon recommendation of school principals, had long-term suspended. In 2008-09, WCPSS transitioned to the Second Chance Online Resource for Education (SCORE) program, which predated the SCORE Academy, to serve students facing long-term suspensions. In 2015-16 and 2016-17, WCPSS contracted with the Acceleration Academies, a for-profit company focused on re-engaging students who had dropped out of school, to implement the Wake Acceleration Academy which provided academic, instructional, and support services to students with barriers to earning a high school diploma and those wishing to return to school after a gap in their education.

An alteration in Wake County Board of Education policy, which shifted ALPS offers to mandatory disciplinary assignments, first occurred in 2016-17 during the final year of the SCORE program's implementation. Prior to 2016-17, students could deny an ALPS offer and accept the long-term suspension, or they could accept the offer; however, if they did not successfully complete the program, the long-term suspension would be "reactivated."

The policy shift to a mandatory disciplinary reassignment, which the district currently follows, means there is no longer a long-term suspension to reactivate. Rather, students are subject to compulsory education laws and are truant if they don't continue with the ALPS for the prescribed period. This shift aligns with North Carolina General Statute (G.S. § 115C-390.7(e)) that states the following:

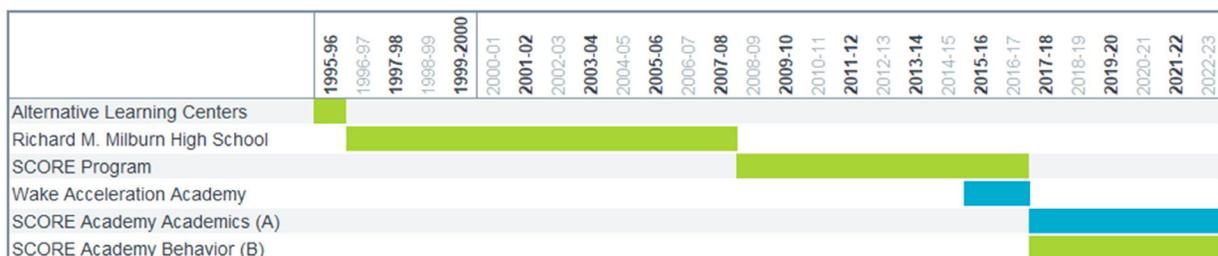
disciplinary reassignment of a student to a full-time educational program that meets the academic requirements of the standard course of study established by the State Board of Education as provided in G.S. § 115C-12 and provides the student with the opportunity to make timely progress towards graduation and grade promotion is not a long-term suspension requiring the due process procedures described in G.S. § 115C-390.8.

In accordance with Wake County Board of Education policies (Due Process [4300], the Code of Student Conduct [4309], and G.S. § 115C-390.7 of Article 27), when school administration determines that a student behavioral incident warrants a suspension beyond 10 days, they may recommend a long-term suspension to the Superintendent. A long-term suspension is defined as “the exclusion for more than 10 school days of a student from school attendance for disciplinary purposes from the school to which the student was assigned at the time of the disciplinary action.” Because school administrators cannot impose a suspension beyond 10 days, WCPSS created the Discipline Review Committee (DRC) — composed of the following positions: Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education Services, Assistant Superintendent for Equity Affairs, and two Area Superintendents. These designees have voting authority to make those decisions. The DRC can also assign students to an alternative learning program in lieu of a long-term suspension and they make this disciplinary assignment for the majority of students whose long-term suspension recommendations they review. In such cases, the student’s record reflects a short-term suspension, thereby reducing the number of students within the district who are serving long-term suspensions (WCPSS Student Due Process, 2022).

SCORE Academy was established as a school in 2017-18 to bring together re-engagement and reassignment services for students using an online learning environment and three site locations for in-person support (Crossroads Flex High School, River Oaks Middle School Annex, and Garner Station). SCORE Academy Re-engagement, originally called SCORE Academy Academics (A), opened using a similar model adopted from Wake Acceleration Academy. SCORE Academy Reassignment, originally called SCORE Academy Behavior (B), opened to support students who received disciplinary assignments in lieu of long-term suspensions, using a slightly different model than the SCORE program.

Figure 2

Historically, WCPSS has implemented various ALPS for student re-engagement and reassignment and SCORE Academy synthesizes these initiatives



■ Programs for students recommended for long-term suspension

■ Programs for students with education barriers or gaps



In addition to SCORE Academy B, the district has other ALPS that support specific student groups in lieu of long-term suspension. These include WCPSS Connections Academy which serves middle school students, including those with disabilities; and the Infinity program and evening programs which support high school students with disabilities (WCPSS Student Due Process, 2022).

The district's Alternative Counseling and Education (ACE) Program is delivered by Wake County Alliance Health/South Light Healthcare and other approved providers to middle and high school students in lieu of a long-term suspension for a violation of the district's drug and alcohol policy (Policy 4309 Level III-I). Students or parents who decline the offer or are in non-compliance with the ACE program are often reassigned to SCORE Academy (C. Anderson, personal communication, November 3, 2022; K. Jorgensen, personal communication, October 27, 2022).

WCPSS has alternative application schools that are not currently used for long-term disciplinary assignments but are reserved for principal/counselor referrals for students who are not experiencing academic and/or behavioral success at their base schools, or who need a public separate school setting for special education. These schools include Mount Vernon Middle (which is composed of the Middle School program, the Booster program, and Bridges), River Oaks Middle, Longview School, and Mary Phillips High.

Additionally, WCPSS middle and high schools have Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs) that support student behavior and academic needs. Operating at the schools during school hours, these ALCs are staffed by teachers who provide support for better decision-making, remediation, and/or credit recovery. These ALCs are not disciplinary reassignments in lieu of long-term suspensions, although they may be used in combination with in-school suspension (K. Jorgensen, personal communication, March 13, 2022).

SCORE ACADEMY RE-ENGAGEMENT (SCORE ACADEMY A)

SCORE Academy A re-engages and supports students who have dropped out of school or have barriers that are hindering their progress toward graduation. Students who are within 10 credits of meeting the district's graduation requirements are eligible to apply. To earn a diploma from SCORE Academy, students must successfully complete 22 credits in the Future-Ready Course of Study (WCPSS High School Program Planning Guide, 2021-22). According to NCDPI (2022) the Future-Ready Course graduation requirements (i.e., completion of four sequential English credits, four mathematics, four social studies credits, three science credits, one health and physical education credit, and six elective credits) ensure that a student is prepared for life and whatever they choose to do after they graduate from high school. Typically, SCORE Academy A students enroll in these core courses needed for graduation, although students often need to earn elective credits as well.

To support credit completion, Score Academy A offers online, asynchronous core and elective courses, which students take two at a time. Enrollment is open year-round and there are no quarters or semesters. Students can enroll and work on their classes within the online system at any time, and



when they successfully complete one course, they can enroll in another. During the 2017-18 to 2021-22 school years, SCORE Academy A partnered with the curriculum provider Apex Learning to deliver the online instruction and shifted to a contract with Edgenuity for the 2022-23 school year. All self-paced, asynchronous courses — which include reading materials, videos, quizzes, and tests — are based on the pass/fail grading system. Students also complete custom assignments that SCORE Academy teachers build for each course. This structure gives students the flexibility to complete their coursework at their convenience (J. Hinds, personal communication, January 19, 2022).

Upon enrollment, each student in SCORE Academy A receives a needs assessment to determine any educational and social resources (e.g., mental health support, family or childcare needs, and necessities) they might need and to ensure that they enroll in the appropriate courses required for graduation (J. Hinds, personal communication, January 19, 2022). At least once a week, students are required to be onsite at one of the three locations used by SCORE Academy. During this time students can meet with Graduation Coaches about their progress, get content area or custom assignment support, or work on their own. Students can also get support from content teachers and participate in Restorative Practices as needed.

SCORE ACADEMY REASSIGNMENT (SCORE ACADEMY B)

SCORE Academy B is an educational option for students who have been reassigned and placed by the WCPSS DRC in lieu of receiving a long-term suspension. SCORE Academy B operates on a block semester schedule in which students start based on their reassignment date and remain until the DRC-appointed timeframe. Upon entry, students start participating in four virtual, synchronous courses that best match the courses they were taking at their base high school. SCORE Academy B offers the core English Language Arts, social studies, and science courses. Math course offerings are varied. The teachers use Canvas to build these synchronous core courses, which helps ensure that students are receiving the same curriculum they would at their base high schools and that they continue to earn numeric grades on their report cards. Students take elective courses asynchronously using the same curriculum and pass/fail grading system as students in SCORE Academy A.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of SCORE Academy B during 2020-21 when the school year opened in a virtual environment and school administrators made very few recommendations for students to be long-term suspended. As such, the district decided to use SCORE Academy B to provide a unique opportunity for students who were experiencing challenges with remote learning at their base high school. Per parent consent, SCORE Academy B served about 50 students from across the district who were overage 9th and 10th grade students needing academic support (J. Hinds, personal communication, October 28, 2022). Thus, the program did not operate under its intended model during the 2020-21 school year when long-term suspensions were minimal.

Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, SCORE Academy B returned to serving students in lieu of long-term suspension and began implementing Restorative Practices to engage in intentional social emotional learning (SEL) work with students. As part of the Restorative Practices, students



participate in Restorative Circles or restorative activities, such as transition meetings and mediations, and restorative assignments. They may also earn one credit upon successful completion of an SEL elective. Students who are not prohibited from attending onsite activities per their behavioral infraction are assigned to a small, cohort group that is scheduled each Friday. These “Friday Cohorts” are held either in the morning or afternoon at the three campus locations where students participate in their Restorative Circles or activities, meet with teachers to get academic support, and meet with counselors to set goals and talk through challenges.

SCORE ACADEMY INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

SCORE Academy’s principal, assistant principals, teachers, counseling department, and social workers support the students enrolled in each academy. The current principal has held the position since the school’s opening in 2017-18. Each of the three SCORE Academy locations staff at least one school administrator, one school counselor, and one Student Assistance Program coordinator or social worker to ensure a full spectrum of support. Similar to other district high schools, SCORE Academy has one operating budget based on local, state, and federal funds. A sizable amount is funded through the WCPSS Alternative Education and Extended Learning Programs. Over \$100,000 goes toward technology to support the online learning environment, and each year the WCPSS Academics Department provides funds for approximately half of the cost of the online curriculum provided by the external vendor. Teacher allotments can present challenges because SCORE Academy is partially funded based on the 10-day student count, which often represents fewer students than the year-end enrollment. SCORE Academy A has no enrollment limits and SCORE Academy B has no official maximum enrollment, although 130 students is a realistic upper limit based on staffing resources.

SCORE Academy Teachers/Graduation Coaches

SCORE Academy teachers have numerous responsibilities that involve building and managing courses and supplemental assignments, delivering instruction, offering instructional support, developing relationships with students as their teacher and/or Graduation Coach, and monitoring and documenting students’ needs and progress. Each teacher is responsible for building and teaching at least one course that they deliver synchronously to SCORE Academy B students. Newly hired teachers receive in-house training on course design and all teachers can access the WCPSS Canvas modules for additional support. Although the teachers do not build or deliver the online courses for SCORE Academy A, they provide coaching and instructional support to the students at their weekly onsite meetings. Additionally, it is the teachers’ responsibility to ensure that the online courses deliver the district’s standards, and they are held accountable for the students’ performance and growth outcomes within the courses.

As a supplement to each of the asynchronous and synchronous courses, teachers collaborate to create what they call “custom assignments” which are opportunities, beyond quizzes and exams, for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through written responses to open-ended questions. Teachers create all custom assignments except those used and created by



the school counselors for the SEL elective course. Within SCORE Academy A, teachers use custom assignments to bridge any gaps between the district standards and the procured curriculum. The custom assignments are also part of the course requirements for SCORE Academy B. Students must complete each custom assignment and they can receive teacher support to do so.

In addition to their teaching role, SCORE Academy teachers, except for the teacher who serves as the school's technology support, also serve as Graduation Coaches to a caseload of 30-50 students. Graduation Coaches support their students until they graduate or return to their base high school and new students are added to their caseloads upon enrollment or reassignment. One Graduation Coach shared that "I am the first face they see when they come in for orientation. That is the very first initial connection...and you are taking them on through graduation." Graduation Coaches help their students select courses, keep track of their course log-in and attendance, and monitor the percentage of each course that they complete during a week. To check on their progress and assist with challenges, Graduation Coaches connect with students weekly by texting, phone-calling, or meeting virtually or in person at one of the SCORE Academy sites. Each student has a detailed case file, accessible to all staff, where Graduation Coaches document their contacts and include comments about the student's needs and circumstances. Graduation Coaches also coach students on balancing their school and personal responsibilities and refer students to the school counselors and external agencies based on their needs.

SCORE Academy Counselors

SCORE Academy counselors meet with individual students, either in person or virtually, at least bi-monthly. The counselors receive Multi-Tiered System of Support and attendance referrals from teachers, and they monitor students' levels of engagement, such as when students are logged in and working compared to any idle time within the asynchronous course. If students are disengaged, counselors intervene to offer support. When students complete a course, counselors receive a grade report, and students proceed to the next course.

The school administrators have implemented Restorative Practices as a school resource that is mandatory for all students in SCORE Academy B and on an as-needed basis for students in SCORE Academy A. The counseling team leads Restorative Practices implementation and plans all lessons and activities. Counselors and teachers use Restorative Circles, which facilitate equitable and open conversations among students, to discuss challenges, teach appropriate responses to triggers, and build up SEL skills like self-management, self-regulation, and good decision-making to help students learn alternative behaviors and coping strategies. Additionally, counselors continue to support students in SCORE Academy B by frequently meeting with them at their base schools after they transition back.



SCORE ACADEMY GOALS

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the pathway of change created by Data, Research, and Accountability (DRA) staff and the SCORE Academy school administrator to reflect the most recent implementation components and intended short-term through long-term goals for SCORE Academy A and B. Each academy intends to increase the graduation rate by supporting students through re-engagement (SCORE Academy A) or reassignment (SCORE Academy B).

In addition to synthesizing re-engagement and reassignment programs, the need for SCORE Academy was based on 2016-17 data when the district’s graduation rate was 87.1, the dropout rate was 2.76, and the suspension rate was 0.07. The district’s 2020 goal was to improve graduation rates to 95%, in part, by offering alternative educational opportunities for students (Wake County Public School System, n.d.). SCORE Academy opened in the 2017-18 school year to serve students who face barriers toward graduation, have dropped out, or have been reassigned and placed by the WCPSS DRC. The implementation of each program operates to build strong student and staff relationships and offer a flexible and supportive environment so students in SCORE Academy A can earn their remaining graduation credits and students in SCORE Academy B can continue to earn their credits in lieu of a long-term suspension.

Figure 3
Pathway of Change for SCORE Academy A



Figure 4
Pathway of Change for SCORE Academy B



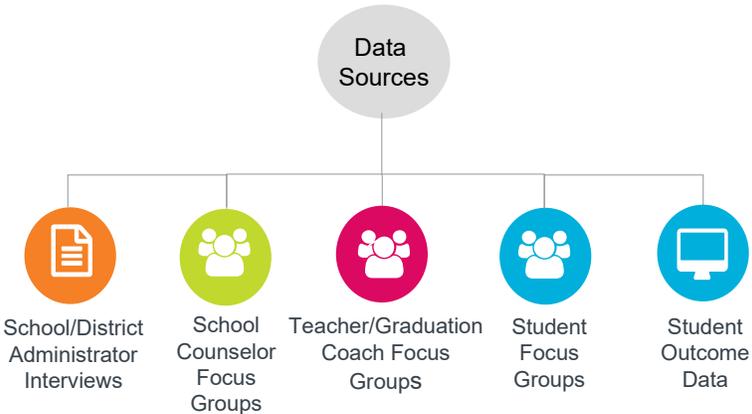
Note: The graduation goals apply to graduation in general and are not specific to four years.



METHODS

The research design selected for this study is descriptive in nature, relying on qualitative and quantitative research and data collected from a variety of sources, as shown in Figure 5. The qualitative data consist of informal interviews and correspondences with the principal of SCORE Academy and WCPSS Central Service leadership as well as four focus groups. Our examination of outcome data includes quantitative analyses of credits earned toward graduation and graduation rates. This descriptive research design provides an understanding of SCORE Academy that tells a story and shows program outcomes rather than determining cause and effect (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Figure 5
This report utilized multiple data sources, most were qualitative



During the spring and fall of 2022, DRA researchers interviewed the principal of SCORE Academy and spoke with Central Services leaders. Each of the seven counselors at SCORE Academy participated in a focus group and answered a series of questions about the two programs. The SCORE Academy administrators selected teacher participants who were representative of the subjects they taught and their length of tenure at the school. Seven teachers attended the focus group and answered knowledge and opinion questions like those posed to the counselors. The SCORE Academy administrators also selected and invited students to attend the focus groups. DRA researchers were able to speak with three SCORE Academy A students at the River Oaks site to gather their input about the program. On a separate day, we were invited to join one of the Friday Cohorts also held at the River Oaks site. We facilitated a Restorative Circle and used the protocol to collect feedback about the program from six SCORE Academy B students.



For the quantitative analyses, we analyzed the number of credits students earned at SCORE Academy A throughout the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years and at SCORE Academy B throughout the 2021-22 school year. We accessed and examined SCORE Academy's official cohort graduation data and we calculated graduation rates for students in SCORE Academy B who returned to their base high schools. The high mobility of SCORE Academy students has the potential to bring about data idiosyncrasies that are worth mentioning. Whereas students often remain at SCORE Academy A until they graduate, some disengage (stop attending and return one or more times) or drop out. Likewise, students in SCORE Academy B can follow multiple paths. They may disengage from the program or drop out, they may return to the program more than once throughout their high school education due to discipline recidivism, they may apply to SCORE Academy A after returning to their base high school or before doing so, or they may return to their base high school and remain there through graduation. These diverse journeys often result in multiple entrance and exit dates as well as student rosters that are not mutually exclusive across the programs, all of which can bring challenges to outcome data examination. These challenges were handled by examining dates and considering multiple enrollments.



STATUS OF GOALS

Qualitative data, gleaned from focus groups conducted with students and staff at SCORE Academy during the 2022-23 school year, show evidence of strong, positive relationships between students and their Graduation Coaches and counselors. Teachers, in both their Graduation Coach and teaching roles, and counselors express how much they care about the students by making indirect and direct contact with them each week, checking in on their well-being and progress, and providing support as students navigate their personal lives and schoolwork. Graduation Coaches and students noted that the low student-staff ratio facilitates these connections and helps build strong relationships. Restorative Practices, particularly using Restorative Circles within SCORE Academy B, creates an environment where staff and students can discuss issues, repair any harm, and prepare students for their back-to-base transition.

An examination of credit accumulation across school years shows evidence of goals being partially met (see Figure 6). This success appears to depend on students’ length of enrollment at the school. The SCORE Academy A students who were enrolled in the program for five months or less in 2020-21 or 2021-22 earned, on average, two credits, thereby meeting the semester goal. Students who were enrolled for more than five months did not, on average, meet the yearly goal of four credits earned. Most of the students (86%) in SCORE Academy B were enrolled for five months or less during the 2021-22 school year. On average, these students earned two credits; however, fewer than half met the semester goal by earning three or more credits. Only 25 students were reassigned and enrolled in the program for five months or more. They earned five credits, on average, although about 12 students met the annual goal by earning six credits.

SCORE Academy exceeded its target graduation rate of 40%. The official four-year graduation rate was 48.9% in 2020, 38.6% in 2021, and 44.0% in 2022. Five-year graduation rates rose to 60.1% in 2021 and 57.5% in 2022 showing the added value of including students who took an extra year to graduate. SCORE Academy B students who returned to their base high schools and graduated did so in four years, with no added value in allowing for an additional year. Calculated rates for these students were 45.5% in 2021 and 27.5% in 2022, thereby partially meeting the goal in 2021 and not meeting it in 2022.

Figure 6

SCORE Academy typically met or partially met its goals

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Short-Term and Intermediate Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students build relationships with Graduation Coaches and counselors 	Data not collected	Data not collected	■■■
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students earn credits toward graduation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCORE Academy A: 1 per quarter/2 per semester SCORE Academy B: 3 out of 5 per semester 	■■■ N/A	■■■ ■■■	N/A N/A
Long-Term Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students graduate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCORE Academy A: At least 40% of students SCORE Academy B: 50% of students who return to base school 	■■■ ■■■	■■■ ■■■	N/A N/A

■■■ Met ■■■ Mostly Met ■■■ Partially Met ■■■ Not Met

Note: N/A = Not Available



IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

STUDENTS SERVED

SCORE Academy is composed of different student profiles which vary by program, as presented in Tables 2 and 3, which reflect all students who attended each academy during the 2021-22 school year. Compared to the district profile, Black-African American, Hispanic/Latino, and/or English Learner (EL) students were overrepresented at SCORE Academy A. Almost all the students were classified as 11th and 12th grade students in 2021-22, though over half had been retained in-grade. All the students were at least 16 years old, which aligns with the program, though about two-thirds were ages 17 and 18 and one-third were ages 19 and 20. SCORE Academy B overwhelmingly served reassigned male and Black-African American students who tended to be in 9th or 10th grade. About one-third of these students were retained in-grade.

Table 2

SCORE Academy A mainly served Hispanic/Latino, Black-African American, and White students whereas SCORE Academy B primarily enrolled male, Black-African American students, 2021-22

	WCPSS	SCORE Academy A	SCORE Academy B
Black/African American	22.3%	28.5%	57.8%
Hispanic/Latino	19.0%	36.2%	18.2%
Multiracial	3.9%	5.5%	4.8%
White	43.5%	26.5%	17.7%
English Learner (EL)	9.3%	31.9%	17.6%
Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG)	14.5%	6.6%	0.4%
Student with Disabilities (SWD)	10.9%	17.5%	0.4%
Male	51.4%	54.2%	74.9%
Total # of Students	158,761	589	187

Data Sources: WCPSS District Facts, 2021-22 and Student Locator Data as of 7-1-22

Note: American Indian and Asian students are not shown because they comprise such a small percentage of the student populations for SCORE Academy A and B. SCORE Academy B does not typically serve SWD students, rather these students may be served by the Infinity and evening programs.



Table 3
SCORE Academy A typically served students 17 to 18 years old, whereas SCORE Academy B tended to support younger students in 9th and 10th grade, 2021-22

	SCORE Academy A	SCORE Academy B
Age 14-15	0.0%	30.5%
Age 16	4.1%	29.4%
Age 17-18	62.5%	39.0%
Age 19-20	33.1%	1.1%
Grade 9	0.2%	46.0%
Grade 10	8.8%	31.6%
Grade 11	56.5%	12.3%
Grade 12	34.5%	10.2%
Retained in-grade	56.1%	37.9%
Total # of Students	589	187

Data Source: Student Locator Data as of 7-1-22

Teacher and Counselor Perspectives of SCORE Academy A Students Served

According to SCORE Academy teachers and counselors, students who attend SCORE Academy A have often fallen behind in school because of poor attendance or low motivation and may be retained in-grade, which can push them off-cohort. Often, these students face barriers to being academically successful because they are working during the day to help support their families, caring for their own children, or dealing with other family issues and circumstances that hinder full engagement at their base high schools. SCORE Academy teachers and counselors said that many students want to attend the school because they believe it will be a better fit for them. The three SCORE Academy A students we spoke with each experienced a change in family circumstances that led them to seek a more flexible school schedule.

SCORE Academy A also draws students who have SEL challenges. The school’s counselors reported that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the student referrals to SCORE Academy A are due to school/social anxiety and other mental health issues that are hindering students’ ability to function in traditionally structured high schools. Additionally, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, one counselor has noticed an increase in the number of students who don’t want to attend school in person and prefer to engage in remote learning.



Although SCORE Academy A intends to support students with challenges that are hindering their progress toward graduation, the academy is not set up to serve students whose only goal is to graduate early. During the focus group discussions, teachers and counselors reported that many students arrive to SCORE Academy A with the hopes of being “done with school” or with unrealistic expectations of graduating faster; that it is a “fast-track program.” They want better communication with the WCPSS high schools to ensure that counselors make appropriate referrals and do not “sell” the program as a path to early graduation. Because so many students arrive at SCORE Academy A with the mindset that they can easily and quickly earn credits, the teachers — in their Graduation Coach role — and counselors said they spend time talking with students about the reality of the program (see Table 4).

Table 4
SCORE Academy A students often arrive with misunderstandings of the program and Graduation Coaches and counselors help them see its reality

Theme	Supporting Quotes from Graduation Coaches and Counselors
<p>Misunderstanding SCORE A program</p>	<p>“We are starting to get a large amount of students that are sold the wrong idea of coming here, their base school is telling them that they can finish quickly. They come in with very unrealistic goals of what this program is versus what they were sold to get them here.”</p> <p>“The base schools are using the rare, best case scenarios and saying that’s the standard. ‘Oh, you need 6 credits? You can’t get 6 credits in one semester here, but you can at SCORE.’ This is true... for a student who is working 40 hours a week in their classes.”</p> <p>“I had two students who told me this month...’I was told by my counselor in June not to come back because they were going to send me to SCORE and this isn’t what I thought it was.”</p>
<p>Reality of SCORE A program</p>	<p>“We are going to be able to support you more than your base school but there’s frustration [with this mindset].”</p> <p>“This is still high school and there’s criteria...it is quicker in that they don’t have to sit in class from 7:30-2:30 but they do have to put in the work.”</p> <p>“It is more flexible, you can work at night, if you have to support your family during the day.”</p>

Data Source: SCORE Academy focus groups



Teacher and Counselor Perspectives of SCORE Academy B Students Served

SCORE Academy counselors shared that a variety of behavioral infractions, particularly fighting, lead to students disciplinary reassignment. The six SCORE Academy B students we spoke with told us that fighting caused their placement at the school. SCORE Academy teachers and counselors agree that most often students are not happy about the placement and arrive upset. As one teacher said, "Students are coming to us because of a suspension and that's not a happy time for anyone." SCORE Academy teachers and counselors believe that the base high school staff and students may perceive reassigned students as troublemakers; however, they have a different perspective, as seen in the following quotes:



"We see these different sides of these kids. They're sweet, amazing kids who have really been pigeonholed for a lot of their school years as troublemakers."

"We very rarely have issues of misbehavior and disrespect."

The parents of students who are reassigned to SCORE Academy B also deal with a mix of emotions. The SCORE Academy counselors said that often parents are angry or frustrated and make comments that suggest that they often do not understand their child's behavioral infraction, the district's discipline appeals process, and ALPS options in general. As one counselor put it, "Parents come in thinking we're [SCORE Academy] not a part of Wake County [WCPSS]." During the SCORE Academy B orientation, counselors help students, and their families understand the program and make them aware that students will be cared for by quality teachers who provide individual instruction. Counselors stress to students that the reassignment is a chance for them to earn credits during their time away from their base high school. Both teachers and counselors think that students' perspectives typically improve during their time at SCORE Academy B, as seen in the following quotes:



"I think we fix a lot of that though, too. I think a lot of those kids come in here just like that and then once they come in and start working with us, they're a joy. I feel like we repair some of the harm and they see that teachers are here to help. I think we do a really good job of showing them we are going to help them any way we can."

"They feel at home. They recognize that the other kids in their class have also been suspended, so it's not like 'I am the bad kid in class. I am just a kid in class because we're all in the same boat.'"



Implementation of Restorative Practices for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Support

SCORE Academy implements Restorative Practices to provide SEL support to students. According to Evans and Vaandering (2016), Restorative Practices are implemented in learning environments to honor the worth and value of each member of that community. The WCPSS Counseling and Student Services Department supports the district's implementation of Restorative Practices to promote restorative discipline mindsets by "addressing the needs of the whole school community by humanizing every person, building a sense of belonging, encouraging positive relationships and behaviors, and repairing harm when necessary." Moreover, the teachers and counselors have received training offered by the district and by Campbell University practitioners. The training facilitates their delivery and implementation of Restorative Practices including Restorative Circles, a restorative assignment, and an asynchronous SEL course. These practices are used on an individual basis within SCORE Academy A and are essential components of the SCORE Academy B program.

Restorative Circles

Restorative circles are used to build open and honest connections and relationships, so students feel supported at school. The technique gives every person in the circle a chance to speak and be heard. Schools, such as SCORE Academy, may use circles as a response to harm or conflict. The process engages students in the repairing-harm cycle to encourage them to take personal responsibility. It also teaches them to listen to others in the circle without making judgments. Teachers — in their Graduation Coach role — and counselors co-facilitate restorative circles with SCORE Academy B students. Some prompts they use for circle discussions include the following:



"Name a time that you were hurt, name the feelings you had, what did you need to not feel hurt?"

"Think about one time when someone did you wrong, what were the emotions that you felt?"

"Reflect back to when you were suspended, how can you repair the hurt that you caused to others?"

When we asked the SCORE Academy B focus group students about their experiences with the Restorative Circles, several shared with us that initially they didn't want to participate, but once they did, they decided the activity "was not so bad." Other students said they like learning about other people who come from different backgrounds and that it is a non-judgmental environment where they can learn about other people's perspectives.



Restorative Assignment

Each reassigned student is required to complete a restorative assignment before they go back to their base high school. Its purpose is to repair harm and set the stage for a successful back-to-base transition. The assignment might include writing a letter or having a conference or mediation with one or more of the people involved in the incident at the base school. The SCORE Academy counselors work with students to complete this assignment and might make suggestions such as, “I really think you should have a mediation with that teacher you cussed out in class, because until you make that right, you aren’t going to feel comfortable going back and the teacher is never really going to feel comfortable with you on campus.”

Asynchronous SEL Course

SCORE Academy B students are required to take an online SEL course where they have the potential to earn one elective credit. The course, which is asynchronous and offered through the external vendor, offers videos and restorative lessons on the major SEL components. SCORE Academy counselors also build the custom assignments for this course and meet with students weekly to monitor progress. One counselor said there is a struggle to get students to do the work in this course because they are more focused on academic classes. Another counselor mentioned seeing less success with this asynchronous course compared to the Friday Cohorts because “when students are on campus, they are much more engaged.” One counselor estimated that about half of the students earn this SEL credit. Another counselor mentioned that even if students don’t complete the assignments, the content helps to guide SEL component conversations during weekly meetings or spark ideas for circle prompts.

SHORT-TERM AND INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME RESULTS

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

SCORE Academy teachers make it a priority to build relationships with students, and this connection is an especially important part of their Graduation Coach role. As one Graduation Coach said, “When you build that relationship with them [students on your caseload], they are more apt to work with you.” One way Graduation Coaches develop these relationships is by reaching out to students on their caseloads weekly, primarily communicating through text messages. During their focus group discussion, Graduation Coaches said they build relationships with students via texting even before they see the students at their weekly onsite meetings.



The Graduation Coaches also shared that compared to being a teacher, serving in their coaching role helps build a deeper connection with students, as seen in the following quotes:



“You are their advocate to get them to graduate. You aren’t teaching them any content. You are really there to be their advocate and be their cheerleader and to be there until the end.”

“I tell them I’ll be a positive nuisance.”

“We’re lucky in that we are able to manage the whole child, not just the academic piece...there’s also the emotional piece and we’re able to touch on a wide range of things. It fits together that they aren’t doing their work because they are working, or mom is sick, or they don’t have transportation.”

Students from SCORE Academy A and B said during their focus group discussions that they have closer relationships with their Graduation Coaches and the school counselors than they had with adults at their base high schools. The lower student-staff ratio offers ample opportunities for students to get individual support, which students attribute to their feelings of connection with the staff at SCORE Academy. Other contributing factors they mentioned include Graduation Coaches and counselors checking in with them, helping them understand things, and not judging them. Based on the student comments captured in our focus group notes, such as those shown below, the key to relationship building is SCORE Academy staff showing students how much they care about them.



One student commented that if people took the time to listen, most students wouldn’t need SCORE Academy. The student mentioned that the main reason students act out, at least at base schools, is because they think “I know my teachers don’t care, so why do I care?” According to this student, SCORE Academy teachers genuinely care about students’ mental health and check in on how students are doing whereas base school teachers never did that.

Another student spoke about really liking this program and how “without it, I likely wouldn’t have finished high school.” This student described SCORE Academy staff as nice, supportive, and always willing to help, even after students have disengaged. This student talked about getting a lot of support and one-on-one time compared to base schools because there are fewer students at SCORE Academy.

A third student said SCORE Academy staff are really accepting and that they help students rather than judge them.



Graduation Coaches suggested that the consistent and personal connections they make with students form the kind of relationships that teachers at base high schools are expected to have with all their students but cannot have realistically, given the large class sizes. As shown in Table 5, Graduation Coaches believe their small student caseloads support positive relationship building. The coaches and the school counselors also agree that the time SCORE Academy B students spend with their Friday Cohorts engaging in Restorative Circles has an important impact on students' willingness to be vulnerable and make interpersonal connections.

Table 5

SCORE Academy Graduation Coaches and counselors think small caseloads and the use of Restorative Circles support positive relationships with their students

Theme	Supporting Quotes from Graduation Coaches and Counselors
<p>Small caseloads of students</p>	<p>“That’s the beauty of this. It is really manageable with a caseload of 25-35.”</p> <p>“The scale of this makes it work.”</p> <p>“It’s amazing the relationships you build.”</p> <p>“Relationships with the kids. You feel like there’s more of a chance to make an impact and help a kid in some area. When you do that, it’s rewarding. I don’t know that you get that as often in a comprehensive school.”</p>
<p>Restorative circles with students</p>	<p>“I was a skeptic of it when we started doing it, but it works; you’ll have kids who pass, pass, pass, and by the third circle, they open up, they start talking.”</p> <p>“It’s great when you see students start to lower their hard shell, but at the same time, it’s a huge life skill to learn to sit there and listen to other people, to empathize.”</p> <p>“It teaches them to listen and not just wait their turn to speak; you start to empathize and recognize that actions have an impact on people.”</p> <p>“In the circle, these students and adults are on the same level. The rules apply to everybody, everybody is sharing the same way. How often at their base school are these students actually treated like young adults?”</p>

Data Source: SCORE Academy focus groups



Another intent of Restorative Practices is to prepare SCORE Academy B students to return to their base high schools. Counselors commented during the focus group discussion that although students often make progress and growth while at SCORE Academy, in their experience, base high schools are not always welcoming, and “this can create a level of dissension for the student.” SCORE Academy counselors try to explain to the students that the base high school students and staff have not witnessed their growth while attending SCORE Academy and may only remember them as students who made a mistake. They shared their thoughts about the back-to-base transition as seen in the following quotes:



“It makes a huge difference when they [students] are with us [at SCORE Academy]. I question its fidelity when they go back to base school. There are some that buy into it and some that don't.”

“We tell them [staff at the base school] about their [the students'] growth, but they haven't seen it.”

“We try to get students back to their base school with a different mindset.”

“We try to emphasize to the base school, when they [students] are going back, that we aren't looking at what they've done...we want a positive atmosphere.”

Several of the SCORE Academy B students we spoke with said they did not plan on returning to their base high school, primarily because they plan to graduate beforehand. Of those who did plan to return, one student did not plan to fight again, another planned to “be good,” and another anticipated skipping class and then getting in trouble again because he felt the base school administrators would still have bad perceptions of him. According to the SCORE Academy counselors, the back-to-base transition can be more challenging for students when the base high school does not buy into the Restorative Practices process. To facilitate positive re-engagements, SCORE Academy counselors hold a transition conference with base high school staff and the returning students and their families and regularly visit the students throughout the school year so they can maintain the relationships they have built.



CREDIT ACCUMULATION

SCORE Academy A serves students who need to earn as many as 10 or fewer credits to successfully meet the 22-credit graduation requirement. According to counselors, when students start the program, parents always ask, “When can my student graduate?” The answer counselors offer is that it depends on how many credits students need to earn combined with their self-motivation and maturity level. To keep track of students’ weekly progress, teachers, in their roles as Graduation Coaches, monitor the number of hours students spend working on each asynchronous course compared to the percentage of the course they complete. The suggested time to complete an online course taken within the curriculum provider, Edgenuity, is between 40-70 hours. Graduation Coaches questioned the accuracy of this estimate because to successfully complete the online courses, students often rewatch videos, review material, and retake quizzes. In addition, students must complete the custom assignments teachers create to supplement the course content. As one teacher said, “We can’t have students spending 180 hours in order to complete a single class.” As such, teachers often give students accommodations to promote success, including reducing the number of tests or test items, adjusting custom assignments to target key instructional concepts, and helping students figure out how to balance their school and personal responsibilities. According to teachers, some students may take three or four weeks to finish a course, whereas others might take a year. One teacher told us, “As a ballpark, we try to tell them [students] if they can complete two courses in a quarter, that is basically what you would be doing in a base school anyway.” To give students some flexibility, that “ballpark” was adjusted to create the goal that students in SCORE Academy A will earn at least one credit per quarter or two credits per semester.

Figure 7 presents the distribution of the number of credits students earned at SCORE Academy A throughout the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years (combined because there was no discernable difference in the distribution of credits earned annually). Because students’ program entrance and exit dates vary, it is important to consider their length of enrollment. As shown in Table 6, during each school year, half of the students were enrolled at SCORE Academy A for five months or less (so about one semester) whereas the other half were enrolled for five months or more.

- The credit distribution shows that the greatest percentage of students earned few credits; in fact, a quarter of the students did not earn any credits either school year.
- Students who were enrolled in the program for five months or less in 2020-21 or 2021-22 earned on average, two credits, thereby meeting the semester goal.
- Conversely, the students who were enrolled for more than five months did not, on average, meet the yearly goal of four credits earned.



Figure 7

There is wide variability in the number of credits SCORE Academy A students earned in 2020-21 and 2021-22; a quarter of them did not earn any credits either school year

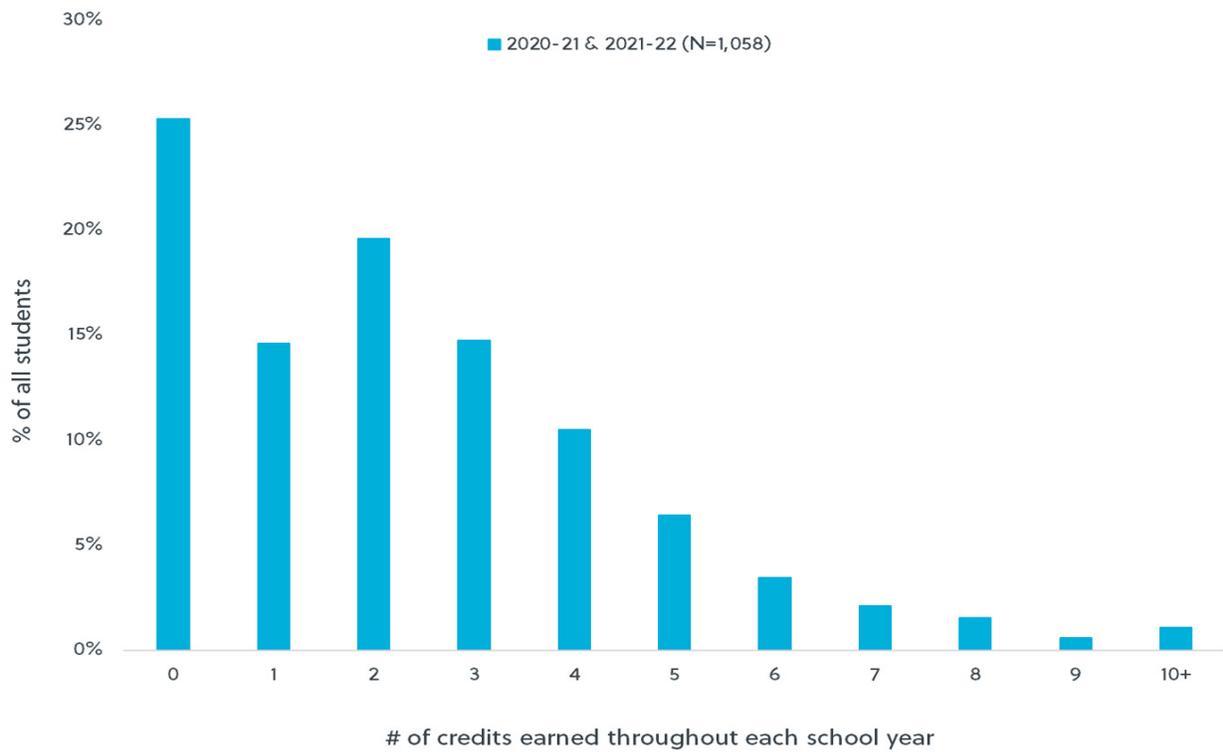


Table 6

SCORE Academy A students who were enrolled the program in 2020-21 or 2021-22 earned, on average, about two credits each school year, regardless of their length of enrollment

Length of enrollment at SCORE Academy A	2020-21			2021-22		
	# students	Mean # credits	Median # credits	# students	Mean # credits	Median # credits
5 months or less	218	2.2	2.0	291	2.1	2.0
>5 months to a full school year	258	2.3	2.0	291	2.8	3.0
Total	476	2.3	2.0	582	2.4	2.0

Data Sources: Student Locator Data as of 6-30-21 and 7-1-22 and PowerSchool Data File 2020-21 and 2021-22

Notes: 2021-22 excludes seven students who were enrolled for less than a month. Fewer than five students who earned no credits in 2021-22 also had withdrawal codes that year; Fewer than 10 students who earned no credits in 2020-21 officially dropped out of school that year. About one-fifth (132) of the students enrolled in 2020-21 were also students in 2021-22. The age of students enrolled in SCORE Academy A did not impact the number of credits earned in either year, showing no evidence that older students earned a higher number of credits.



Students are reassigned to SCORE Academy B throughout the school year as behavioral incidents occur and suspension recommendations ensue. The DRC may place students in the program for any length of time, although, the typical placement is for the remainder of a fall or spring semester. In addition to the SEL elective, students typically take four courses at SCORE Academy that best align to the core courses they were taking at their base high school. To give SCORE Academy B students some leeway, the articulated goal is that they will earn at least three credits per semester or six per school year. In addition, students told us they set other goals to accomplish during their assigned time at SCORE Academy B including passing classes with a C or better, “doing the work.” and not letting the reassignment affect their self-perception or plans to go to college.

Figure 8 shows the number of credits students earned at SCORE Academy B throughout the 2021-22 school year. As shown in Table 7, most of the students (86%) were enrolled for five months or less. Some students may have had longer reassignments, for example 25 students stayed at SCORE Academy B between five months and the end of the school year.

- The credit distribution shows that the greatest percentage of students earned four credits or less and a quarter of the students did not earn any credits.
- Students who were enrolled for five months or less in 2021-22 earned two credits, on average. Fewer than half of these students met the target semester goal of earning three or more credits.
- Conversely, the 25 students who were enrolled for five months or more earned, on average, five credits. A small number (about 12 students) met the annual goal by earning six or more credits.



Figure 8

There is wide variability in the number of credits SCORE Academy B students earned in 2021-22; a quarter of them did not earn any credits

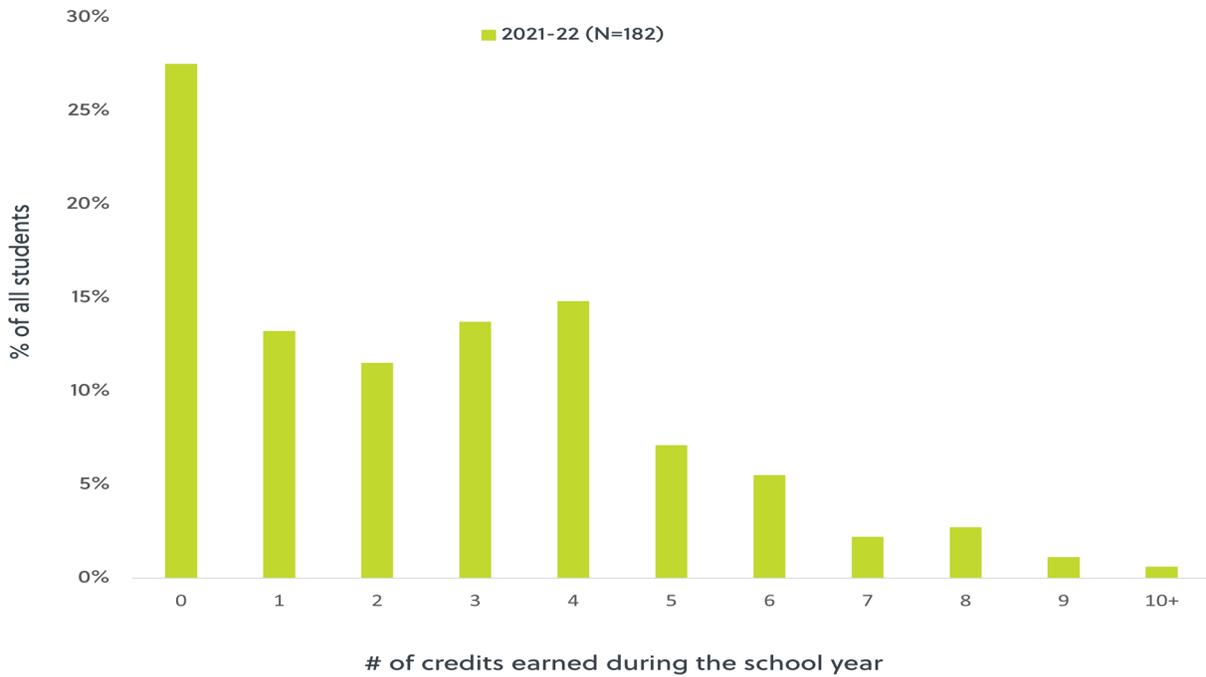


Table 7

In 2021-22, SCORE Academy B students who were enrolled for five months or less earned, on average, two credits; students who were enrolled for more than five months earned, on average, five credits

Length of enrollment at SCORE Academy B	2021-22		
	# students	Mean # credits	Median # credits
5 months or less	157	2.2	2.0
>5 months to a full school year	25	5.2	6.0
Total	182	2.6	2.0

Data Sources: Student Locator Data as of 6-30-21 and 7-1-22 and PowerSchool Data File 2020-21 and 2021-22

Note: 2021-22 excludes 5 students who were enrolled less than a month; Fewer than 20 students who earned no credits in 2021-22 also had withdrawal codes that year.



Several teachers suggested that a student’s age contributes to their success in the program. We found no correlation between age and the number of credits earned. It is possible that although there is no relationship between age and credits in our study, one might exist between a student’s age and motivation, or between motivation and credits earned. Based on teachers’ experiences, they sometimes see motivation increase as students approach age 21 and realize this is their last chance to earn a high school diploma. Table 8 shows examples of student motivation and how it can impact coursework success.

Table 8
Self-motivation may impact coursework success within SCORE Academy A

Theme	Supporting Comments and Quotes from Teachers and Students
<p>Student Motivation</p>	<p>One teacher commented that “I currently have a student who’s been withdrawn three times and she’s going to graduate. She’s down to her last two classes, she’s finished 7-8 classes in the past 8 months because she comes in 3 days a week, she stays for 6 hours, she asks for help when she needs it. She does the process the way it’s supposed to be done. And if you do that, we are a highly successful program.”</p> <p>A student who first enrolled at SCORE Academy A when she was 18 years old told us she wasn’t focused or motivated when she began her coursework and she disengaged from the program twice. During her recent six months back in the program, she completed three or four classes and is looking forward to graduating and going to Wake Tech.</p> <p>Another SCORE Academy A student remarked that the course work is okay, it’s just a matter of getting herself to do it, especially after she’s worked a full day at her job.</p>

Data Source: SCORE Academy focus groups



Most of the students (86%) reassigned to SCORE Academy B during the 2021-22 school year were enrolled in the program for five months or less. This length of time may indicate that they were reassigned to the program to serve out a semester or that they exited the program early. Nevertheless, on average, these students earned two credits. Teachers said they can become frustrated with this slow progress. They know it is important to consider students' growth as well as their performance, so they set a foundation for students to achieve small victories. The following quotes are examples of these feelings:



"Sometimes it's really defeating when you look at our [SCORE Academy] B grades and I'm like, 'Only 57% of my class passed.' That might not look great to the Board, or the higher ups of Wake County, but when you realize that 97% of them came to me with a 7% or a 0%...nobody would get a credit at their base."

"Even if they [students] don't pass all four classes I feel like the repair is bigger than just that [earning credits]...They're learning that not everyone in education is here to suspend or write them off."

Teachers reported challenges with student engagement and participation within the Canvas synchronous learning environment which might have influenced the number of credits students were able to earn. One teacher noted that the online environment can also be social-emotionally beneficial to students. Quotes from teachers about students' online experiences are presented in the following table.

Table 9
Student experiences with the online environment may impact coursework success within SCORE Academy B

Theme	Supporting Quotes from Teachers
<p>Students' Online Learning Experiences</p>	<p>"I think what is really hard is a lot of them [students] don't do well virtually...so a lot of them come in not liking the platform. As a teacher, it's hard to gauge how invested they are. Participation is just hard virtually. They don't turn their cameras on. Having audio participation is like a win, so if they type in the chat box, great, but how do we engage with them more?"</p> <p>"It helps them see the teachers face-to-face, it just makes such a big difference. When they are online, it makes it harder to connect with them."</p> <p>"Just to play devil's advocate, there are some good things about students being virtual because they don't have all the peer pressure, like they can connect with the student virtually because they don't have those insecurities and a lot of them are more willing to talk to you when they don't have to stand there and stare at you in the eye. The kids just aren't comfortable with that. They open-up more."</p>

Data Source: SCORE Academy focus groups



LONG-TERM OUTCOME RESULTS

High School Graduation

NCDPI (2021) measures the four-year cohort graduation rate as the percentage of students in a 9th grade cohort who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less. For example, the 2022 four-year cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students who entered the 9th grade for the first time during the 2018-19 school year and who earned a diploma by August 2022. The cohort is “adjusted” by adding any students transferring into the cohort and subtracting any students who transfer out during the years covered by the rate.

The 4-Year graduation rate =
$$\frac{\text{the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma (numerator)}}{\text{the number of students who form the adjusted 9th grade cohort for the graduating class (denominator)}}$$

Many students in SCORE Academy graduate in five years rather than four. The 2022 five-year cohort graduation rate and the 2021 four-year graduation rate share the same denominator. The numerator used to calculate the five-year rate is larger than that of the four-year rate because it includes students from the cohort who took an additional year to graduate.

The official graduation rates for SCORE Academy primarily include students attending SCORE Academy A. Students enrolled in SCORE Academy B may be included in the rates if they earned a diploma while attending the school. Thus, the numerator includes students who graduated from SCORE Academy overall and the denominator includes the adjusted 9th grade cohort of SCORE Academy students. SCORE Academy B students who return to their base high schools prior to graduation are included in the graduation rates for those schools.

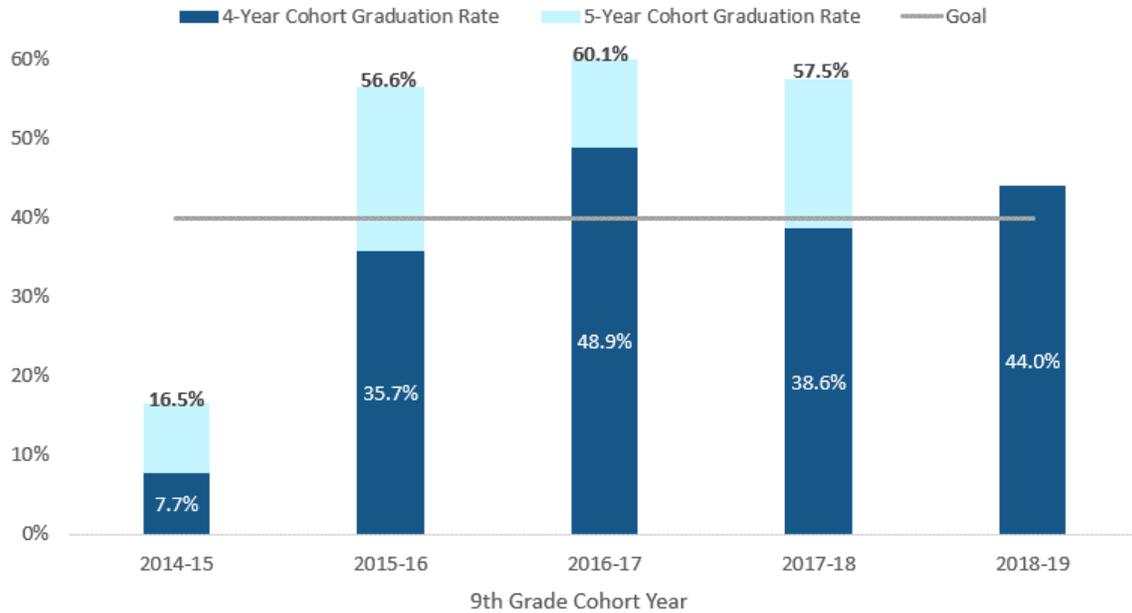
Figure 9 shows that SCORE Academy graduation rates increase considerably when students who graduate in five years are included. SCORE Academy had a four-year graduation rate over 40% in 2020 and 2022 and a five-year graduation rate over 50% in 2020, 2021, and 2022, meeting the program’s long-term goal during those years.

- SCORE Academy’s first graduating cohort of 91 students started 9th grade in 2014-15 (at their base high schools) and had a four-year graduation rate of only 7.7% in 2018. This same cohort had a five-year rate of 16.5%, a gain of 8.8 percentage points.
- The next, larger cohort of 249 students had a four-year graduation rate of 35.7% in 2019 and a five-year rate of 56.6%, a gain of 20.9 percentage points.
- The rates for the next 9th grade cohorts were even higher. The 2016-17 9th grade cohort had a four-year graduate rate of 48.9% in 2020 and a five-year rate of 60.1% (11.2 percentage points gain). Students in the 2021 graduate cohort who comprised the first 9th grade cohort for SCORE Academy in 2017-18 had a four-year graduation rate of 38.6% in 2021 and a five-year rate of 57.5% (18.9 percentage point gain).
- The 2022 four-year graduation rate for the cohort that started 9th grade in 2018-19 exceeded 40% and the five-year rate will depend on how many more students earn a diploma by August 2023.



Figure 9

SCORE Academy graduation rates increase considerably when students have an extra year; thus, taking five rather than four years to graduate.



9th Grade Cohort		4-Year Cohort Graduation			5-Year Cohort Graduation		
Year	# Students	Year	Rate	# Graduates	Year	Rate	# Graduates
2014-15	91	2018	7.7%	7	2019	16.5%	15
2015-16	249	2019	35.7%	89	2020	56.6%	141
2016-17	313	2020	48.9%	153	2021	60.1%	188
2017-18	285	2021	38.6%	110	2022	57.5%	164
2018-19	341	2022	44.0%	150	2023	TBD	TBD

Data Sources: NCDPI Longitudinal 4- and 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rates 2018-2022

Notes: The graduation goal applies to graduation in general and is not specific to four years. Years represent the 9th grade student cohort. For example, the 2018 graduation cohort started 9th grade in 2014-15, so their four-year graduation year was 2018 (7.7%) while their five-year graduation year was 2019 (16.5%). The 5-year cohort graduation rate for the 2018-19 9th grade students is not available yet. Of the students who attended SCORE Academy in 2021-22, those who graduated that year typically did so in either four or five years; few took longer than five years.



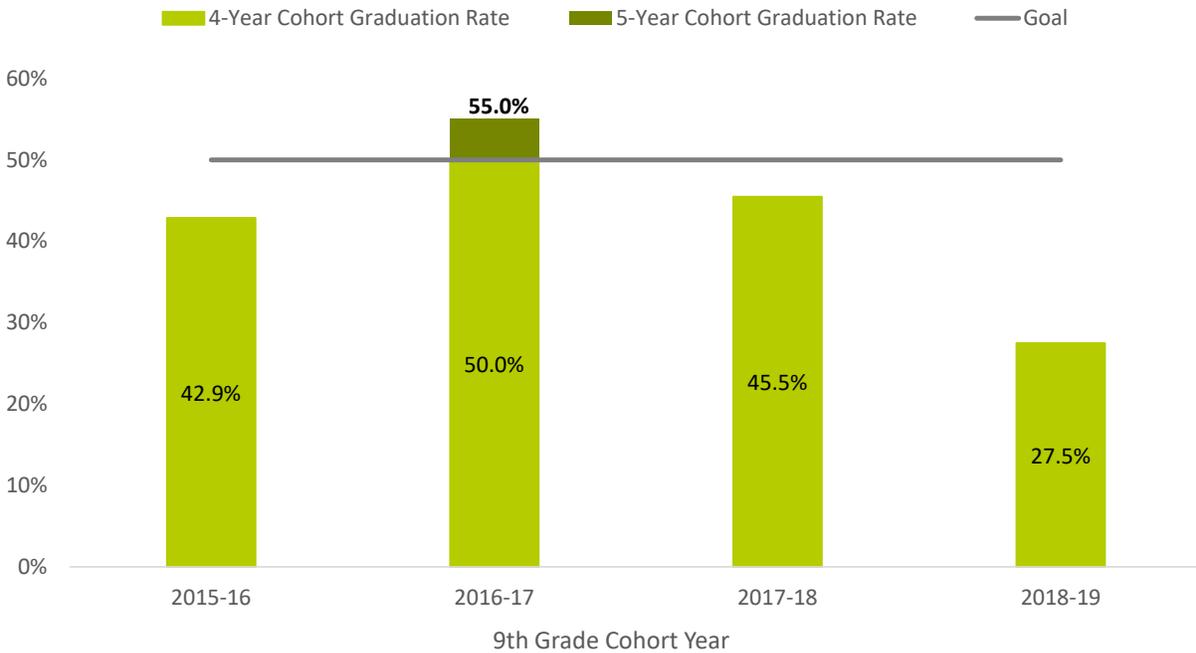
SCORE Academy B students who return to their base high schools prior to graduation are included in the adjusted graduation rates for those schools. To determine whether at least half of those students graduated from their base high school, we followed these students through graduation, beginning with the 2015-16 9th grade cohort. Figure 10 shows the calculated graduation rates for students who had been previously assigned to SCORE Academy B. Those who graduated from their base school did so in four years. Unlike the official graduation rates for SCORE Academy, there was no discernable added value in giving students an extra year to graduate.

- Seven students who had been reassigned to SCORE Academy B comprised the 9th grade cohort in 2015-16; three of them graduated from their base school in 2019.
- The next cohort had a four-year graduation rate of 50% in 2020, meeting the established goal. One additional student took an extra year to graduate, yielding a five-year rate of 55% in 2021.
- In 2021, the graduation rate dipped slightly to 45.5%; however, the number of graduates more than doubled that year compared to 2020.
- 2022 yielded the lowest graduation rate for the students from the 9th grade cohort of 2018-19; the five-year rate will depend on how many more students earn a diploma by August 2023.



Figure 10

SCORE Academy B students who returned to their base high school graduated in four years with the highest rates in 2020 and 2021



9th Grade Cohort		4-Year Cohort Graduation			5-Year Cohort Graduation		
Year	# Students	Year	Rate	# Graduates	Year	Rate	# Graduates
2015-16	7	2019	42.9%	3	2020	42.9%	3
2016-17	20	2020	50.0%	10	2021	55.0%	11
2017-18	55	2021	45.5%	25	2022	45.5%	25
2018-19	40	2022	27.5%	11	2023	TBD	TBD

Data Sources: NCDPI Longitudinal 4- and 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rates 2018-2022

Notes: The graduation goal applies to graduation in general and is not specific to four years. Years represent the 9th grade student cohort. For example, the 2018 graduation cohort started 9th grade in 2015-16, so their four-year graduation year was 2019 (42.9%) and their five-year graduation year was 2020; however, no students took an additional year to graduate so the 2019 and 2020 rates are the same. The 5-year cohort graduation rate for the 2018-19 9th grade students is not available yet.



SCORE Academy helps to bolster the district's graduation rate and offers support to other WCPSS high schools by serving students who have the greatest graduation barriers and might not graduate otherwise. Although SCORE Academy has a lower graduation rate compared to the high schools it serves, each graduate is a success story and is celebrated, as seen in the following quotes from students' teachers and Graduation Coaches:



"Seeing students who struggle graduate and hearing their personal statements. It's a tear-jerker."

"Not only are they the first ones to graduate high school, a lot of these kids are probably going to get an associates degree, maybe even a bachelor's degree.... These are kids who would have never gotten a high school diploma."

"Most of the students that we serve are students that in some capacity have been given up on or have been identified as not going to meet expectations. So, when we help them get to that point, it's rewarding, in particular for them and their families. Because they know that they were identified in that way, kind of stereotyped, that they did not finish that task. So to see that and moments like graduation, those kids come in, they've finished, and they're planning for a graduation ceremony, it's really cool because you know that this wasn't the expectation at the beginning of this journey."



STAFF AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

SCORE Academy teachers, counselors, and students took the opportunity to share their thoughts about the programs during their focus group discussions. They offered sincere feedback on the positive impacts of SCORE Academy as well as suggestions for needed resources and improvements. The teachers are incredibly committed to supporting students, as evident in the following quotes about SCORE Academy:



“Sometimes people look at SCORE like we hang on to the students forever. But we do everything in our power to not withdraw them. We always give students the opportunity to come back because we know we’re the last stop for these kids.”

“I’ve worked at several comprehensive schools in Wake County and downtown and this is by far my favorite job...it’s all of us I am proud of. We really come together around students and for students’ success. We are a team. It’s all about the students and working with the staff is extraordinary.”

“I would never be able to keep going if I didn’t feel like we were making a difference.”



The SCORE Academy B students we spoke with also shared their feelings about the program. Their comments captured in focus group notes are shown in Table 10. Although the students said that they did not choose or even want to attend SCORE Academy B, they think it helps students who have been recommended for a long-term suspension. Many of them expressed that they miss their friends and the social atmosphere of their base schools.

Table 10

Students who were placed in SCORE Academy B think it has helped them although they view the remote environment as boring

Themes	Supporting Comments from Students
SCORE Academy helps students	<p>One student said he’s been doing good in all his classes, for the first time since COVID.</p> <p>Another student suggested that SCORE Academy taught him to be a good person and to do his work.</p> <p>Something students like about SCORE Academy is that it starts at 10 am and ends at 2:25 pm and there’s no extra stuff.</p> <p>According to one student, SCORE Academy is a great place for kids who violated school policies.</p>
SCORE Academy isn’t too bad; the remote environment is a little boring	<p>One student described SCORE Academy as easy but boring. He doesn’t like being at home and would rather sit at someone else’s home to do his work.</p> <p>Another student agreed that it’s a good school but kind of boring. He wishes he could have finished his senior year with his girlfriend.</p> <p>SCORE Academy is described by one student as an alternative school to assist students who’ve been in fights. He said that what it says on paper is what it does. He doesn’t want to be here, but it’s not as bad as he thought.</p>

Data Source: SCORE Academy focus groups



One of the main areas of improvement for SCORE Academy that teachers and counselors mentioned is the need for district-provided transportation (other suggested improvements are listed in Table A1 in the Appendix). Students attend meetings at the site locations to receive instructional support and participate in Restorative Practices. They often rely on parents to drive them to the SCORE Academy sites. This can pose challenges if the parent is unavailable or does not own a vehicle. One teacher mentioned that even the students who are identified under McKinney-Vento are not eligible for district bus service. SCORE Academy uses taxi or Uber services to transport students who lack transportation. Transportation was not an issue for the three SCORE Academy A students we spoke to; however, navigating onsite meetings around their own work schedules and childcare needs was a barrier.

Another major challenge mentioned by counselors is a lack of needed technology to engage in remote learning. Counselors have seen students arrive at SCORE Academy B without their district-provided device because the base school administrators have asked them to turn it in when they are reassigned. Taking online courses without the appropriate technology presents a challenge, as noted by counselors in the following quotes:



“Kids are assigned a device and that device is supposed to stay with them, but when they [students] come to SCORE, the base school is treating it like a different situation, and they are taking it [the device] back.”

“When we have a student who comes to us without a Chromebook, it takes 2-3 weeks for that process to go through Tech Services... especially for B students who get told by their school that they have to leave their Chromebook there. They don't bring it here and suddenly students go 2-3 weeks without a device at a virtual school...so the student loses 3 weeks of instruction when they are already behind.”





DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The student profiles show an over-representation of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino student groups within SCORE Academy A and B.

According to Ryberg et al.'s (2021) analysis of new data from the Civil Rights Data Collection, although out-of-school suspensions have decreased nationwide since 2011-12, schools continue to suspend their Black/African American students and students with disabilities at disproportionate rates. Despite some improvements, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino high school students continue to drop out at considerably higher rates than their White and Asian peers. The loss of instructional time these students experience from being out of school makes them vulnerable to underemployment, lower earnings, and contact with the criminal justice system. These national racially and ethnically disparate findings are consistent with suspension and dropout patterns found within WCPSS. These inequities can carry over to programs implemented within the district, such as those within SCORE Academy where the students served are predominantly Black-African American and Hispanic/Latino.

The Wake County Board of Education has adopted an equity policy (Policy Code 1150) to ensure an equitable education for all students. A major component of the equity policy focuses on reducing disparities and the predictive association between race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and student outcomes such as dropout, suspension, and graduation rates.

The policy also prioritizes beliefs and practices which can help ensure that the base high schools provide educational environments that benefit all students. Full implementation of this policy may positively impact the district's dropout and suspension data which has shown racial and ethnic disparities. This data trend may subsequently shift the SCORE Academy student profile to one that better represents the district's overall student population or even reduce the need for the program.

Notwithstanding the over-representation of certain subgroups, SCORE Academy has supported hundreds of students, helped them gain credits, and graduate. These are students who needed considerable support and who likely would not have graduated otherwise. SCORE Academy's alternative learning programs align with the district equity goals of providing all students with a caring and supportive learning environment.

In their qualitative feedback, teachers and school counselors shared stakeholders' misperceptions about SCORE Academy.

WCPSS has a plethora of programs and alternative learning options to meet different student needs. Teachers and counselors who participated in focus group discussions shared several misperceptions that district stakeholders have about SCORE Academy and a general lack of awareness about this school. They want stakeholders to know that SCORE Academy A is not a program that helps students graduate early and that SCORE Academy B is not a permanent placement for students whose principals have made long-term suspension recommendations. SCORE Academy is one of the district's alternative schools that is designed to support students who have disengaged from

school, who are experiencing barriers to success at their base high schools, or who have been reassigned by DRC in lieu of serving a long-term suspension. Programs must serve the types of students they are intended to support so fidelity of implementation can be reached and expected outcomes can be met.

There are strong, positive relationships between SCORE Academy staff and students, gained in part through the use of Restorative Practices.

Teachers, in their Graduation Coach and teaching roles, and counselors express care and interest toward their students. They actively make indirect and direct contact with students each week to check on their progress and well-being and to support them as they navigate their personal lives and schoolwork. Using Restorative Practices, these same relationship-building actions are implemented with an equity lens as the staff and students participate in Restorative Circles, creating an environment where each person can be honest, vulnerable, respected, and heard. These positive relationships can contribute to students' school adjustment and academic and social performance (Rimm-Kaufman & Lia Sandilos, 2015).

An examination of credits earned at SCORE Academy during a school year indicates variability in students' progress.

Students who enroll in SCORE Academy A need to earn between one and ten credits to graduate. They bring with them their own set of circumstances — such as working a full-time job, caring for their own children, or dealing with SEL issues, to name a few — that they have not been able to successfully manage along with their



educational pursuits at base high schools. The self-paced, online learning environment with opportunities for in-person connections with staff is helpful for students who need a flexible schedule with structured supports offered by Graduation Coaches and counselors.

The SCORE Academy A students who were enrolled in the program for five months or less in 2020-21 or 2021-22 earned, on average, two credits, meeting the semester goal. Students who were enrolled for more than five months did not, on average, meet the yearly goal of four credits earned. The number of credits earned appears to vary considerably by student, which makes sense given that students enroll needing a range of one to 10 credits. As such, some students may meet the semester goal whereas others do not, simply because of the number of credits they already have when they start the program.

The number of credits earned may be impacted by the student's ability to be self-directed within the online learning environment and the level of in-person support they need. Coming onsite to receive in-person support is very important for some students and less so for others. Two of the SCORE Academy A students we spoke with said that they like having opportunities to come onsite where teachers are available to give support when they do not understand something. They said that the teachers are willing to help with certain subjects, like math or science, or with custom assignments. Additionally, they use the time to get support for online quizzes. These two students stressed the importance of having teachers available to meet in person to offer support beyond the videos they watch in their asynchronous courses. The other SCORE Academy A student we spoke with said she can navigate the online courses independently and does not need extra support, but she is still expected to come onsite

weekly. For her, it is most helpful when her Graduation Coach sends texts to see how she's doing or to remind her to log into her courses.

An examination of the official SCORE Academy graduation rates shows the added value of considering the five-year rate.

The first group of students to graduate from SCORE Academy in 2017-18, the school year it opened, yielded four- and five-year rates below 20%. These rates may have been impacted by the program's first-year student population when students from Wake Acceleration Academy, who often had few accumulated graduation credits, transferred into SCORE Academy A. Since then, graduation rates have risen considerably and exceeded the target rate of 40%. The four-year graduation rate was 48.9% in 2020, 38.6% in 2021, and 44.0% in 2022. Five-year graduation rates rose to 60.1% in 2021 and 57.5% in 2022.

The added value in giving students an extra year to earn credits and graduate is evident in the percentage point gains (between 11 and 20) seen in SCORE Academy's five-year graduation rates. These gains are considerably greater than those seen when examining the district's four- and five-year rates with gains of only a few percentage points in the fifth year. SCORE Academy B students who returned to their base high schools and graduated did so in four years, with little apparent added value in allowing for an additional year. Rates for these students were calculated as 45.5% in 2021 and 27.5% in 2022. Students in SCORE Academy A may be more likely than those in SCORE Academy B to reap the benefits of a fifth high school year because of the multiple life circumstances they are dealing with while trying to complete their education as well as the possibility that they got off-cohort prior to entering the program. Thus,



it is important to examine 5-year graduation rates for SCORE Academy. SCORE Academy B supports students in lieu of serving a long-term suspension and helps them maintain their academic progress so they can return to their base school. The base school administrators, teachers, and staff are ultimately responsible for ensuring that these students successfully graduate.

SCORE Academy serves students with very high needs, and for many, the goal of graduation seems out of reach. As such they often need additional resources and time to reach that measure of success. Graduation is the goal for SCORE Academy A students and as one teacher said, "If they don't graduate it's because they were withdrawn or dropped out. This is their last stop within Wake County." A quarter of the students did not earn any credits during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, which could be because they disengaged or dropped out of school. Students must make sufficient graduation progress before turning 21 years old, when they age out of the program, after which they have the option of earning their General Education Diploma (GED). Nevertheless, SCORE Academy graduates over 100 students each year and as one Central Service Director stated, "If we only had one student who graduated, that is still one student who has a diploma, who can now contribute back into their community and to their family in such a better way than they would have otherwise. The fact that we have 100+ students annually who are in that circumstance, that right there is success."

SCORE Academy met many of its stated goals for students. Since the school opened in 2017-18, it has graduated more than 700 students who might not have earned their high school diploma otherwise. Its purpose and goals also support the WCPSS district goals related to meeting the educational needs of all students. The qualitative and quantitative findings

from the multiple data sources used in this report support several recommendations for continuous improvement of SCORE Academy programs.

RECOMMENDATION FOR PROGRAM TRANSPARENCY/ COMMUNICATION

Central Office Leadership can actively communicate to base high school administrators the purpose and goals of each SCORE Academy program to help decrease misperceptions and better align district needs with the programs, promote collaboration, and improve parent understanding of the programs.

Facilitating a better awareness of the programs can help align students' needs and SCORE Academy A services and bridge the reassignment process and back-to-base transition for students in SCORE Academy B. Area Superintendents and other district leaders can promote clear and consistent communications with base school administrators and counselors to help them understand that SCORE Academy is a WCPSS school to which students either apply or are reassigned. It is important for stakeholders to recognize that SCORE Academy A is not a fast-track program. Equally important is their understanding that students who are reassigned to SCORE Academy B will return to their base school and should keep possession of their district-provided devices to ensure academic continuity as they transition in and out of SCORE Academy B. In addition, it is important for base school administrators to help parents realize the purpose, parameters, and expectations of each SCORE Academy program before their student applies or at the time of reassignment. Parents should also be aware



that the district does not provide transportation for SCORE Academy students. Although SCORE Academy administrators often use school funds to help students get to and from their weekly onsite meetings, transportation is ultimately the parents' or students' responsibility.

"I think we're the best kept, most misunderstood secret of Wake County schools."

SCORE Academy Teacher

"Even the folks within the school system don't appreciate what we do and how it works."

SCORE Academy Teacher

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOAL ADJUSTMENTS

SCORE Academy administration may consider adding a goal related to improving the behavioral health of students in each academy by facilitating their social and emotional skill development which should impact students' success when returning to their base school or after graduation.

Improving the behavioral health of students is a districtwide priority and is very important for the students served by SCORE Academy. The school administrators can be more intentional in capturing the work that is done around

improving the students' SEL skill sets, including but not limited to the implementation of Restorative Practices. This will help them to be successful when they either return to their base high school or graduate from SCORE Academy. To measure behavioral health growth, it might be possible to collect students' pre- and post-enrollment measures of SEL skills to complement more readily available qualitative data for this outcome. More importantly, the school administration, counseling department, and teachers may want to discuss goal setting for the online SEL elective course as well as ways to encourage student engagement in it.

To better align goals with student profiles, SCORE Academy administration should consider adjusting the credit accumulation goals to reflect a percentage of students meeting their individual goals based on their specific needs.

Students who enroll in SCORE Academy A must earn between one and ten additional credits to graduate and they often possess different levels of self-motivation and self-direction. Students are also reassigned to SCORE Academy B at different times throughout the school year with varied lengths of reassignment. As such, this variability suggests that students may require different timeframes for completing courses which may correspond to diverse credit accumulation goals. Setting a program goal that reflects the proportion of students who meet their individual credit accumulation goals may be a more appropriate measure of success.



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APPENDIX

WCPSS HISTORIC RE-ENGAGEMENT AND REASSIGNMENT INITIATIVES

1995-96

WCPSS operated three evening-based Alternative Learning Centers (ALC) to allow middle and high school students who had received long-term suspensions to continue to make educational progress. The ALCs operated at the following locations:

- Mount Vernon ALC at Mount Vernon Middle School
- Garner ALC at Garner High School
- Millbrook ALC at Millbrook High School

The district implemented these ALCs for the 1995-96 school year only, partly due to low enrollment. As explained by Carruthers et al., (1998), although each ALC had the capacity to serve 80 students, for a potential total of 240 students, the actual total enrollment across the three ALCs was 67 students. This enrollment gap initiated the district's considerations of other options and in the spring of 1996, WCPSS developed a request for proposals (RFP) for a private contractor to operate an alternative school program for students who received long-term suspensions.

1996-97 to 2007-08

Richard M. Milburn High School (RHMS), founded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Grim in 1975 at the Marine Corps Development and Education Command at Quantico, was the sole agency to submit a complete proposal by the deadline. Eleven WCPSS staff members rated the proposal and by May of 1996 the Wake County Board of Education approved the WCPSS contract with RMHS to provide an alternative school program for middle and high school students receiving long-term suspensions (Carruthers, 1999). During its implementation, RHMS was housed in a business complex within Wake County and operated on a daily 7:30-3:30 schedule.

The 1996-97 contract specified that RHMS would serve as many as 76 middle and high school students, at a cost of \$4,900 per student. Ultimately, RHMS enrolled 77 students with long-term suspensions as well as 24 students referred to as "at-risk" and another four students referred to as "dropout retrieval." The WCPSS Office of Due Process decided which long-term suspended students were eligible to apply and RMHS made all enrollment decisions. WCPSS contracted with RHMS in 1997-98 to serve students who received long-term suspensions only, eliminating any enrollment of students with other needs. That year's contracted cost was \$5,000 per student with an additional \$100 fee for students in need of special education services (Carruthers et al., 1998).



2007-08 was the last school year the district contracted with RHMS using state funds in the amount of \$1,068,000 to meet the educational and social needs of about 165 students per semester (WCPSS, 2008). At this time, WCPSS initiated plans to shift to an internal program serving the same student population, which leadership believed would be more effective and cost-efficient.

2008-09 to 2016-17

WCPSS transitioned to Second Chance Online Resource for Education (SCORE), the district-operated alternative program for students facing long-term suspensions. The district made state and local funds in the amount of \$530,000 available for program implementation. The WCPSS Academics Department worked with the Technical Outreach for Public Schools (TOPS) for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to build course content for SCORE teachers to deliver in an online, asynchronous environment, initially using the learning management system Blackboard and then switching to Canvas. Transition counselors also supported students enrolled in the SCORE program and helped them successfully transition back to their base school (Rearden, personal communication, July 27, 2022). The teachers and counselors staffing the SCORE program were housed at WCPSS Central Service offices, which did not provide a separate space for any in-person interactions with students. As such, WCPSS initiated plans to transition SCORE from a program to a school, that would open for the 2017-18 school year and whose staff would share brick-and-mortar space at the newly opened Crossroads Flex High School (Rearden, personal communication, July 27, 2022).

2015-16 and 2016-17

To help reach the district's goal of having a 95 percent graduation rate by 2020, WCPSS connected with the Acceleration Academies, a for-profit company focused on re-engaging students who had dropped out of school. Partnering with a company that had experience implementing this type of program was important to WCPSS. The district contracted with them to implement the Wake Acceleration Academy which provided academic, instructional, and support services to students either at risk of not earning a high school diploma or wishing to return to school after a gap in their education. The academy used blended learning, delivered by WCPSS teachers, and was housed at two sites in Raleigh and one site in Garner where students were required to attend twice a week to meet with teachers. The academies were open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday. WCPSS' contracted with Acceleration Academies for a cost of \$5,600 per student and each site could serve as many as 250.

By 2016-17, WCPSS staff had gained knowledge and experience implementing the re-engagement model and district leadership determined that it would be more effective and cost-efficient for the school system to develop its own program. WCPSS dissolved the Wake Acceleration Academy to implement a district-created academy using a similar model (Rearden, personal communication, July 27, 2022).



2017-18 to present

WCPSS established SCORE Academy as a school to bring together services for students needing re-engagement and reassignment. Each program within SCORE Academy serves a different student population within an online learning environment; however, three locations are maintained where students meet with teachers and counselors.

- SCORE Academy Re-engagement, originally called SCORE Academy Academics (A), opened using a similar model adopted from Wake Acceleration Academy. Any student who had attended the Wake Acceleration Academy was transferred to SCORE Academy A. Many of these students, who needed to earn a large number of credits, reached age 21 before they earned their diplomas. To better support students' graduation success, the district shifted to the model where students enter the program with at least 12 credits and take two courses at a time (Rearden, personal communication, July 27, 2022).
- SCORE Academy Reassignment, originally called SCORE Academy Behavior (B), opened to support students recommended for long-term suspension using a slightly different format than the initial model created in collaboration with TOPS (Rearden, personal communication, July 27, 2022).



STAFF SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to district-provided transportation, teachers and counselors want other resources to support student success, as shown in Table A1, including better access to district-provided lunches, more support for English Learners, and additional space and staff to meet the increasing demand for the programs.

Table A1
Teachers and counselors want additional resources to support the school’s student population

Needed resources	Supporting Comments and Quotes from Teachers and Counselors
Better access to district-provided lunches	Teachers would like a more efficient way for students who qualify for Free Lunch to receive them. Currently, staff must know a day in advance of when students who are coming onsite need lunches. This notice is not always feasible. Staff also have to pick up the lunches from the nearest WCPSS school.
English Learner (EL) translation and support	<p>Counselors said they love the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at the school who facilitates Spanish translation for families; however, this position is not full-time and the service is in high demand given the school’s student population.</p> <p>Counselors shared that they believe that EL students and their families have a particularly difficult time understanding the WCPSS discipline review process, and often, no one from the district has explained the process in Spanish. “There were numerous cases of ESL students coming to us [SCORE Academy B] because of not complying with the ACE program. But do they even understand the requirements of the ACE program?”</p>
Space and staff to accommodate growth of the school	<p>Teachers reported that the Garner site in particular does not have sufficient space for them to hold student orientations and meetings, teach their online courses, and have staff conferences.</p> <p>Teachers also shared that additional staff are needed to serve the growing number of students. They said recruiting teachers is a challenge and more incentives are necessary to recruit and retain high quality teachers.</p> <p>“The program is growing at a rapid pace and we are getting more students than we have ever had before SCORE was a school.”</p>

Data Source: SCORE Academy focus groups





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Acknowledgements

DRA staff acknowledge the collaboration and contributions of the SCORE Academy administrators and staff, particularly, Principal Jody Hinds. We also thank all Central Service administrators who provided information for this report.