

REBUILDING THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE

Policies and Practices to Make It Happen for NC

Actionable and Replicable Models for Recruiting, Preparing, and Retaining a Diverse, Highly Effective Educator Workforce in North Carolina

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Recruiting, Preparing, and Retaining Highly Effective and Diverse Educator Workforce: The NC Context

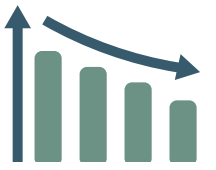
Teachers are the most important school-related factor impacting students' academic outcomes. To meet the needs and potential of all students, North Carolina (NC) must be able to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. North Carolina continues to experience challenges with vacancies and positions filled with teachers who are not fully certified in nearly all grade levels and subject areas.

At the start of the 2023-24 school year, there were 2,840 vacancies in K-12 teaching positions and an additional 744 vacant EC teaching positions across the state.¹ There were another 5,041 non-certified (residency licensed) teachers in NC classrooms in the fall of 2023. The number of non-certified teachers is up from 1,942 in the fall of 2021. While students of color comprise over half of the total student population in our state, just under 80 percent of our teachers are white.²

REBUILDING THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE

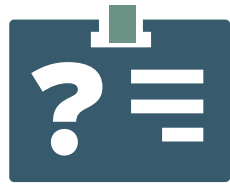
Policies and Practices to Make It Happen for NC

**40%
DECLINE**

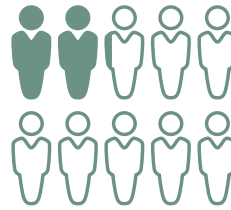


**in teacher
credentials**

issued from 2011-16



**3,584
TEACHER
VACANCIES
in 2023-24**



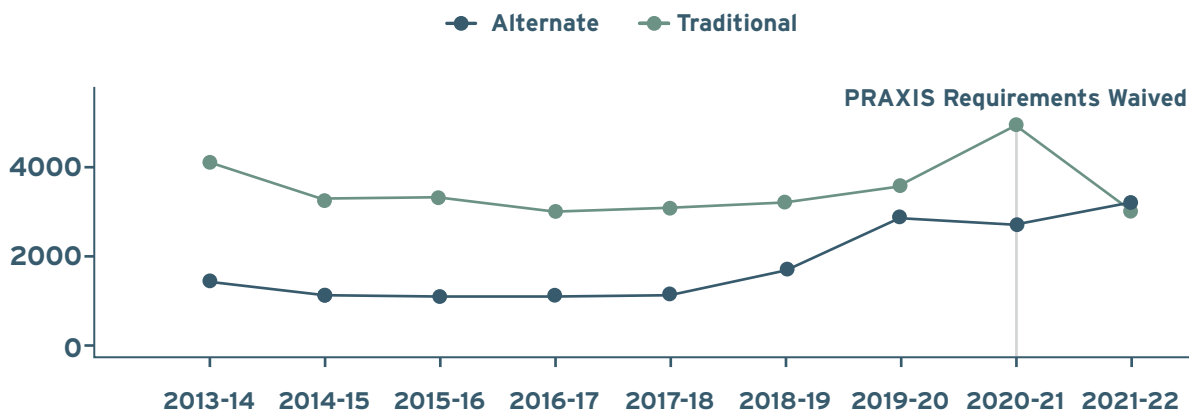
**21%
of teachers
are non-white**



**53%
of students
are non-white**

At the same time, enrollment in traditional Educator Preparation Programs has declined over time (note, however, that there was a significant enrollment spike during the 2020-21 school year, which coincided with COVID-related waivers of licensure testing requirements as shown in the chart below),³ and there are not enough candidates in the teacher pipeline to meet the needs of public schools across the state. Enrollment in alternative preparation programs has increased,⁴ which has helped to address some of the teacher shortage challenges, but this also poses new challenges because teachers entering through alternative pathways often need more professional development and mentoring support in their early years of teaching.⁵

North Carolina Traditional vs. Alternative EPP First-Year Enrollment Over Time



Data: DPI EPP Enrollment Dashboard

Many efforts are underway across North Carolina’s education community to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and diversity. The work of the DRIVE Task Force, the Human Capital Roundtable, the Leandro Commission, and others has led to the development of robust proposals for policy and practice. As we seek to improve outcomes and ensure that students graduate prepared for college, career, and life, the need to address our teacher pipeline challenges has never been more urgent - and doing so will require bold, systemic changes to how we recruit, prepare, compensate, support, and respect our educators.

North Carolina ranks 36th in teacher pay compared with other states, with an average teacher salary of approximately \$54,863. The state average starting salary for beginning teachers (\$37,676) ranks 46th in the country.⁶ State benefits provided to teachers are of lower value than all neighboring states.⁷ Teachers in NC, on average, are paid approximately 26 percent less than similarly educated and experienced professionals.⁸ In addition to low pay, teachers are experiencing high levels of stress and burnout. The COVID-19 pandemic has only added to these issues that are leading many current and prospective teachers to choose other career paths.⁹

Amid these challenges, Teacher Preparation Partnerships have emerged as one promising strategy to help strengthen the teacher pipeline through collaboration among four-year universities, community colleges, school districts, and workforce development partners. Beginning in 2022, the Public School Forum worked with the Educator Pipeline Collaborative, a cohort of Teacher Preparation Partnerships, to support the growth and development of their partnerships, foster cross-partnership learning and collaboration, share and document programs and promising practices, and propose recommendations for policy and practice. These recommendations aim to make the teaching profession more attractive and strengthen efforts to improve teacher recruitment, preparation, retention, and diversity in actionable, sustainable ways.

The Role of Teacher Preparation Partnerships in Recruiting, Preparing, And Retaining A Diverse, Highly Effective Educator Workforce

A growing number of school districts, educator preparation programs, community colleges, and workforce development boards are developing mutually beneficial educator preparation partnerships to expand entry points and prepare and support a more high-quality and diverse teacher pipeline.

North Carolina's educator preparation programs in both the University of North Carolina System and its private colleges and universities have developed strong and successful partnerships with local education agencies (LEAs) and community colleges across the state. These partnerships focus on recruitment and preparation of initial and alternative entry educators, beginning teacher induction support, ongoing professional development, and curriculum support. Preparation partnerships have helped improve public education and provide pre-service educators and educational researchers opportunities to engage with classroom educators and students.

The NC Educator Pipeline Collaborative

In partnership with the Governor's office, the Public School Forum of NC launched the Educator Pipeline Collaborative in 2022, bringing together a diverse cohort of teacher preparation partnerships – school districts, educator preparation programs, and community colleges – from across the state to work collaboratively to examine, develop, and expand their work, share promising strategies, and develop recommendations for policy and practice.

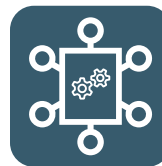


All 58 of NC's Community Colleges now offer Associate of Science and Associate of Arts Degrees in Teacher Preparation, and a uniform articulation agreement allows students to seamlessly transfer to one of 39 universities across the state to complete their bachelor's degree in education. This expands the opportunities for students who want to enter the teaching profession, as well as partnership opportunities among school districts, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.

Collaborative Goals



To identify and understand the work of successful partnerships and programs



To develop a framework for effective teacher preparation partnerships across K-12, higher education, and workforce development



To support a cohort of teacher preparation partnerships in their development of programs that meet their context and community needs



To share findings and recommendations with school district, higher education, and state leaders to promote best practices and advocate for policies and programs that will have a lasting impact on the teacher pipeline

Cohort 1 Participants

Nine teacher preparation partnerships - including educator preparation program, community college, and school or school district partners - joined the inaugural cohort of the NC Educator Pipeline Collaborative. Cohort One included 64 participants from nine university-based educator preparation programs, seven community colleges, seven school districts, and one charter school representing seven regions of the state.

Cohort 1 Activities

The Forum provided each partnership with the following:

- Quarterly work sessions to learn and collaborate with cohort preparation partnerships
- Individualized support and technical assistance through coaching sessions
- Assistance in developing and implementing the partnership's action plan to develop, recruit support, and retain teachers in their region
- Tools for research and evaluation, advocacy, and dissemination of lessons learned

NC Educator Pipeline Collaborative Cohort 1 Partnerships

- Appalachian State University + Caldwell Community College + Caldwell County Schools
- East Carolina University + Pitt Community College + Pitt County Schools
- Elon University + Alamance Community College
- NC A&T State University + Guilford Technical Community College + Guilford County Schools
- NC Central University + Durham Technical Community College + Durham Public Schools
- UNC Charlotte + Kannapolis City Schools
- UNC Pembroke + Old Main STREAM Academy
- UNC Wilmington + Cape Fear Community College + New Hanover County Schools
- Winston-Salem State University + Catawba College + Rowan-Cabarrus Community College + Rowan-Salisbury School System



Emerging Trends from Research and the Educator Pipeline Collaborative: Features of Effective Teacher Preparation Partnerships

Several key features of effective teacher preparation partnerships emerged from our research and work with the Educator Pipeline Collaborative.

Strong Partnerships

Strong teacher preparation partnerships between four-year institutes of higher education, community colleges, and school systems can be the foundation for strengthening the local educator pipeline. Most successful partnerships have common characteristics. Partners:

- ✓ Are ready to engage.
- ✓ Develop a shared vision and goals for the partnership.
- ✓ Invest in the critical elements of the partnership, including leadership, time, staffing, communication, stakeholder engagement and funding.
- ✓ Engage in continuous improvement.
- ✓ Define and measure the key metrics of partnership success.
- ✓ Document and define roles and processes for the partnership (such as articulation agreements and MOUs).

The Educator Pipeline Collaborative partners engaged in the activities above to create robust partnerships that led to action.

Sustained Resources

Teacher preparation partnerships can recruit, prepare, and retain a better prepared, more diverse range of participants by expanding targeted recruitment efforts and offering aligned advising, financial support, program flexibility, and innovative pathways to completion. Successful implementation requires a sustained multi-year commitment by all partners to invest in recruiting, preparing, and supporting their teacher candidates and teachers serving in their local schools and districts.

The Educator Pipeline Collaborative demonstrated that even when partners are fully committed and invested in this work, it is often difficult to dedicate adequate time and resources to focus on building and growing the partnership because in most cases, those doing the work of the partnerships are wearing multiple other hats within their institutions. Partner institutions would benefit greatly from additional funding to increase staff capacity, provide logistical support and facilitate ongoing cross-

partnership sharing. Ideally, each institution would have a person who could focus on recruitment into the educator pipeline programs, supporting candidates in the programs, and partnering with the other institutions (PreK-12 school districts, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities).

Grow-Your-Own Programs

Grow-Your-Own programs implemented by teacher preparation partnerships have had success in increasing the supply of diverse, high quality teachers who are committed to staying to teach in their local communities. These programs recruit and train local community members, career changers, paraprofessionals, after-school program staff, and others currently working in schools, and create seamless and affordable pathways to enter the profession. Local graduates and community members offer a sustainable solution to teacher shortages while often increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce.

Highlights from the Educator Pipeline

Collaborative:

Each of the partnerships engaged in the Educator Pipeline Collaborative offer examples of effective Grow-Your-Own strategies that focus on recruiting community members and students into the teaching professions and provide incentives to return to teach in the local school district. Collaborative convenings provided an opportunity for partners to learn more about successful Grow Your Own strategies, including from one another and through engagement with leaders of Edgecombe County's successful Scholar Teachers Program. Examples of Grow Your Own models designed by Collaborative partnerships include:

- Appalachian State University, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, and Caldwell County Schools developed strategies to recruit students, teacher assistants, and other classified personnel into the teaching profession. Candidates who earn an associates degree through CCC&TI are guaranteed admission to Appalachian State University's School of Education, and Caldwell County Schools offers guaranteed interviews for open positions in the district for program completers, with the expectation that graduates will work in Caldwell County Schools for at least two years.
- NC Central University, Durham Technical Community College, and Durham Public Schools developed the Bull City Teaching Scholars, which will provide teacher candidates who commit to teach in Durham Public Schools for at least four years with scholarships of up to \$12,000 per year for four years to cover the cost of tuition.
- Elon University and Alamance Community College, in partnership with the Alamance-Burlington School System (ABSS) formed the Alamance Scholars Program to improve the teacher pipeline in the local schools and to increase career opportunities for community members. Candidates who enter the program

in high school can begin taking courses for free at Alamance Community College in their junior year, and upon earning their Associates degree, may transfer to earn their bachelor's degree at Elon. Candidates are guaranteed employment in ABSS upon receipt of their teaching license.

Early Recruitment Strategies

Early recruitment strategies that encourage students in middle and high school to consider the teaching profession and enable them to take high school and college courses in education and areas relevant to their teaching interests have been valuable components of educator preparation partnerships. Participating students are then well positioned to enroll in a 2+2 program or four-year educator preparation program.

Highlights from the Educator Pipeline Collaborative:

Collaborative participants talked often about the importance of identifying and recruiting students who may be interested in a career in education as early as middle school. Partnerships also recognized the need to develop effective communications and marketing strategies to promote the profession and counter negative stereotypes - not only for the prospective educators but for their families as well. Examples of their strategies include:

- NC A&T State University, with support from its partners at Guilford Technical Community College and the Guilford County Schools hosted the Blue and Gold Bus Tour: Males Exploring Pathways in Education to expose more than 200 male high school students of color to the university and education as a profession. The event provided an opportunity for students to see what it truly means to be educators and transformational agents of change. Next year's event will expand to include 2+2 and associate degree candidates from GTCC.
- Kannapolis City Schools and UNC Charlotte have hosted community events for high school

students in Kannapolis City Schools and their families to provide them with information about the teaching profession and to build support and buy-in among families who may be interested in a career in teaching.

meet their goals of recruiting a diverse teaching workforce committed to reflecting on their own biases and practices, engaging and equitably serving their community, and challenging inequitable educational structures and practices.

A Focus on Equity

Research is clear that all students benefit from a diverse teacher workforce. Effectively serving the needs of our diverse student population also requires that educators are trained in evidence-based practices to advance equity such as culturally responsive practices and strategies to reduce and address implicit bias.

Highlights from the Educator Pipeline Collaborative:

Collaborative partnerships recognized the importance of implementing intentional strategies to increase the diversity of candidates entering the workforce and to ensure that educators entering the profession are well-prepared to meet the needs of NC's diverse student population.

- UNC Wilmington, Cape Fear Community College, and New Hanover County Schools have focused intentionally on recruiting and retaining educators of color. The partnership hosted a summit in March 2023 to bring together future teachers, current and retired educators, school and district leaders, community college partners, university faculty, and local and state organizations committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse teacher workforce. The summit hosted 113 participants (including 27 students) from across the region, and served as a way to foster collaboration, share assets and resources, and develop recommendations for research and policy.
- UNC Pembroke and Old Main Stream Academy are recruiting and preparing educators to serve Robeson County's diverse student population through an innovative Place-Based Learning model. UNC Pembroke also partners with the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity to help

Mentoring and Support

Robust mentoring and support for teacher candidates and beginning teachers as a part of their engagement in their preparation partnership is a crucial component of ensuring that teachers are licensed, well-prepared, successful, and likely to remain in the profession.

Highlights from the Educator Pipeline Collaborative:

Partnerships highlighted the importance of providing a range of supports for their prospective and beginning educators.

- Winston-Salem State University, Catawba College, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, and Rowan-Salisbury Schools designed an eight-year supported journey toward a career in education through a cohort model including two years in high school, two years in community college, two years at a university, and two years of early educator support when they begin teaching. The cohort model is intended to provide another layer of support among their peers when they are students, and will allow them to have an already established network as beginning teachers in Rowan-Salisbury schools.
- East Carolina University, Pitt Community College, and Pitt County Schools's Grow Your Own Pirate Program is designed to support educators in a variety of ways through their candidacy, licensure, and initial years of teaching. Educators matriculating through their program will have access to teacher mentors, embedded field experiences, licensure exam and admissions support, personalized advising, new teacher support in initial years of teaching, and more.

Policy Recommendations

The innovative work of teacher preparation partnerships across NC shows great promise in helping to rebuild the educator pipeline in our state. At the same time, partners note that long-term, systemic improvements will also require policy change. The Educator Pipeline Collaborative in partnership with the Forum, developed the following policy recommendations to promote promising practices to make efforts to recruit and retain a high-quality and diverse teaching workforce more effective. The majority of these recommendations require action at the state level. However, once policy changes are made at the state level, the PreK-12 school districts, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities can act quickly to integrate the changes into the recruitment, support, and retention of our educator pipeline.

Policy Recommendations that Could be Implemented Immediately at Minimal Cost

- Eliminate the Praxis Core requirement for entry into NC Educator Preparation Programs.
- Facilitate licensure reciprocity with other states, with an immediate focus on spouses of military personnel.
- Eliminate the 6-month waiting period for retirees before they are allowed to return to public positions.
- Adopt Florida's [Deferred Retirement Option Program \(DROP\)](#) to provide an incentive for educators to stay in the field for 35 years instead of 30 years.
- Provide opportunities for educators to be a part of legislation and policy development and implementation through the creation of advisory groups on major legislation and policy or program development or changes at the state and local levels, respectively.

Teacher Recruitment & Pathways

- Provide state funding to each district for programs to facilitate alternate pathways into the teaching profession, i.e. TA to teacher pathways.
- Allocate funding for districts to recruit educators into the Teaching Fellows Program with an opportunity to utilize local funding to add a grow-your-own component that leads to Teaching Fellows returning to their district.
- Allocate funding for a dedicated person in PreK-12 school districts, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities to partner on teacher pathways and recruitment efforts.

Preparation & Licensure

- Eliminate the 6-month waiting period for retirees before they are allowed to return to public positions.
- Eliminate the Praxis Core requirement for entry into NC Educator Preparation Programs.
- Allow licensure reciprocity with other states, with an immediate focus on spouses of military personnel. NC could review requirement in other states and honor where similar requirements (even with some differences) have been met by granting licensure immediately.
- Provide state funding to cover costs for teachers' first and second attempts at licensure assessments.
- Adopt Florida's [Deferred Retirement Option Program \(DROP\)](#) to provide an incentive for educators to stay in the field for 35 years instead of 30 years.

Compensation & Working Conditions

- Increase educator pay to be competitive with other states and professions.
- Restore Master's Pay.
- Restore retiree health benefits for teachers hired after 2021.
- Provide additional pay for hard-to-staff positions, in alignment with the market value.
- Provide housing supplements or options for teachers to live in the communities in which they work.
- Provide funding and support to reduce shortages of school-based mental health personnel to provide students with the support they need and reduce additional workload for teachers.
- Reduce non-instructional duties by utilizing other staff or volunteers.

Educator Support & Retention

Fully fund mentor support for beginning teachers in years 1, 2, and 3

- Provide opportunities for beginning teachers to gradually take on responsibilities over the first year rather than having a full workload on day 1.
- Provide ongoing, timely professional development within the work hours.
- Provide additional time to educators for planning and assessment.
- Fund mentor and coaching support for administrators.
- Provide opportunities for educators to be a part of legislation and policy development and implementation through the creation of advisory groups on major legislation and policy or program development or changes at the state and local levels, respectively.
- Improve working conditions and work-life quality by improving the professionalism of educators, providing flexibility where possible, and ensuring that teachers' well-being is a priority.

Endnotes

- 1 Rash, M. (September 6, 2023). Data Released on Back to School Vacancies. EdNC.
- 2 DRIVE Task Force. (2021). Developing a Representative & Inclusive Vision for Education: Final Report and Recommendations.
- 3 [NC Department of Public Instruction. EPP Dashboard.](#)
- 4 [NC Department of Public Instruction. EPP Dashboard.](#)
- 5 Public School Forum of NC. (October 2023). [Teacher Recruitment and Retention Trends Across NC and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)
- 6 National Education Association. (2023). Educator Pay in America.
- 7 Fiscal Research Division of the NC General Assembly. (2022). Teacher Compensation and Benefits Considerations for the House Select Committee on An Education System for NC's Future.
- 8 Allegretto, S. (2023). Teacher Pay Penalty Still Looms Large. Economic Policy Institute.
- 9 Kini, T. (2022). Tackling Teacher Shortages: What Can States and Districts Do? Learning Policy Institute.



Conclusion

Building a strong educator pipeline takes time and intentional action, and through the Educator Pipeline Collaborative, research, and early exemplars, we learned that partnerships with school districts, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities are a critical component of rebuilding the educator pipeline. Collaborative partners shared that they had rarely or never had that type of time set-aside to build meaningful partnerships, create a vision together, develop an action plan, and address logistical and administrative tasks needed to implement the plan. The needs ranged from basic articulation agreements to complex multi-year scholarship and teacher support programs. They also shared that learning from other partnerships across the state was inspiring and efficient; and it allowed them to create partnerships beyond the Collaborative.

As we go forward, we must prioritize this type of partnership at the local and state levels. This includes state-level support for recruiting candidates and providing guidance and resources for going through the development process to become teachers. As a state, we have many policy needs to support the recruitment and retention of educators, including increased compensation, improved working conditions, and more accessible opportunities to enter the teaching profession. Several of these can be accomplished almost immediately, while others will take more time to get to sufficient change. We also have many assets in the leaders and institutions at the PreK-12, community college, and four-year college and university levels. These partners and leaders demonstrate a huge commitment and the ability to build and sustain partnerships when resources and policies are in place to support their work. NC has an opportunity to move forward quickly with ongoing support for educator pipeline initiatives and collaboration across our state. Our future depends on it.