



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

State Board of Education
State Superintendent Catherine Truitt

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Highlighting the NC Practitioner Network



Bridging Research and Practice

- NC Practitioner Network is a partnership helping districts address lingering challenges post pandemic.
- Pairing faculty with educators to help build research and evaluation capacity of local leaders.
- Ensuring that research is both practical and relevant to educators.
- Cohort 1 launched in 2023-24 school year – wrapping in July 2024 using ESSER III OLR Research funds.



Partnership Details

- Administrators convened from 14 districts for 5 interactive workshops.
- Each district was paired with a university-based researcher.
- Researchers closely worked with their paired district's employees, first by listening and then by helping to refine their research questions.



Examples of Research/Evaluation questions

- How can we assess the processes used by grade-level PLCs to support teachers in designing, implementing and evaluating PD that aligns PLC processes with the science of reading?
- How, and to what extent, do school-designed intervention activities improve chronic absenteeism for targeted schools?
- What strategies and policy changes can help decrease student absenteeism and increase student engagement at schools post pandemic?



Cohort 1 Participants

District Partners:

- Cabarrus County Schools
- Caldwell County Schools
- Chatham County Schools
- Cumberland County Schools
- Edenton-Chowan Public Schools
- Guilford County Schools
- Iredell-Statesville Schools
- Pender County Schools
- Rowan-Salisbury School System
- Rockingham County Schools
- Mooresville Graded School District
- Union County Public Schools
- Wake County Public School System
- Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Researcher Partners:

- East Carolina University
- Fayetteville State University
- NC State University
- UNC-Chapel Hill
- UNC-Charlotte
- NC State University
- UNC-Greensboro
- High Point University

National Experts

- Harvard University
- Georgetown University



Cohort 1 Next Steps

- The first cohort concluded on July 18 at a workshop in Cabarrus County Schools
- 8 districts are funded for local research studies supported by the NC Collaboratory



Highlighting the ESSER Funding Cliff Toolkit – STAR Award



Recapping: ESSER Funding Cliff Toolkit

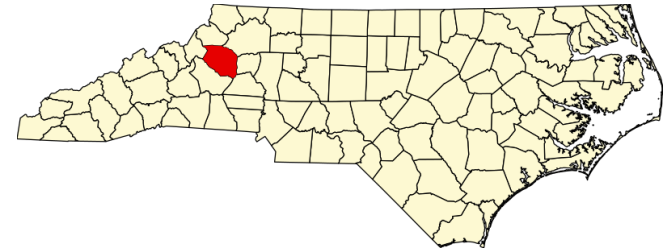
- **Purpose:** Help local leaders make decisions about what programs to continue or discontinue in the face of the upcoming expiration of federal funding to help schools with learning recovery post-pandemic.
- **What:** NCDPI developed a tool to allow school and district leaders to approach legislators with very specific asks backed by data and evidence.



Development and Roll Out



Examples In Action



Caldwell County Schools

- All principals used the ROI tool to evaluate all federally funded programs in their schools
- ROI results were presented at school improvement team (SIT) meetings and budgetary decisions were made based on results

“Using this tool has been transformative. It has given our principals and our district the data we need to make changes and cut programs that we’ve had for a long time but that just weren’t making a difference for our students”

--Jeni McNulty, Caldwell County Schools, Federal Programs Director



Examples In Action



Guilford County Schools:

- Used ROI tool to determine ROI for ESSER-funded Learning Hubs
- Learning Hubs are afterschool learning opportunities for high school students that include academic and social emotional supports in a small group environment. Transportation and dinner are provided.
- ROI tool showed that Learning Hubs had a high ROI; Guilford County Schools will continue to fund this post-ESSER

“We are seeing that when students attended a learning hub regularly, their daily attendance rate was higher as well, leading to increased academic performance. In 2022, GCS students who attended high school learning hubs had a graduation rate that was six percentage points higher than those who did not.”



Congratulations: the “STAR” Award

- A special congratulations to Division of Innovation and OLR for taking home the STAR Award for state transformation.
 - STAR = State Transformation in Action Recognition
- Nominated by The Council of State Governments Southern Office.
- Recognizes innovative practices in state government that are: transformative, effective, evidence-based, transferrable, and are impactful to many stakeholders.



Congratulations: the “STAR” Award



NC College Connect



NC College Connect Overview

NC College Connect is a program created with the goal of increasing access to higher education by simplifying the application process for qualifying North Carolina students to participating UNC System universities and their local North Carolina community college.



NC College Connect Process

- **ALL North Carolina public high school students with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above qualify.**
- **Eligible students will receive an official letter in the mail in early October.**
- **Students will access the application portal at NCCollegeConnect.org and will log in using their CFNC account.**
- **After logging in, students will see a complete list of institutions where they can claim their spot by completing a simplified application for each college or university.**
- **Students will be contacted by the colleges and universities where they applied with next steps.**

