Report to the NC General Assembly

Low-Performing Districts and Schools, Improvement Planning, and Statewide Support

HB 2436 (Sec.7.3a-7.3b)   SL 2007-323.Sec.7.18(b) HB 1473, 2007 G.S. 115C-12(25)

Dr. Stacey Wilson-Norman, Chief Academic Officer, Division of Academics

Dr. Monique Felder, Deputy Chief Academic Officer, Office of District and School Support and Services

Dr. Cynthia Martin, Director, School Transformation, Office of District and School Support and Services

Mr. Curtis Sonneman, Section Chief, Accountability & Testing/Analysis and Reporting, Division of Accountability and Research

Dr. Karen Roseboro, Superintendent, Montgomery County Schools

Dr. Stephen Fisher, Superintendent, Cleveland County Schools

North Carolina Department of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

October 2025

Desired Outcomes

Ground the Work in Statute & Future Needs: Review statutory requirements, recent implementation steps, and personnel actions in low-performing schools, and present recommendations for additional legislation to strengthen supports and increase local flexibility.

Understand the Current Landscape: Present 2024–25 data on low-performing schools and districts by region, including year-to-year changes and statewide maps.

Show How We Are Responding: Highlight ODSSS' structure, partnerships, cross-department supports, and lessons learned from school improvement plans.

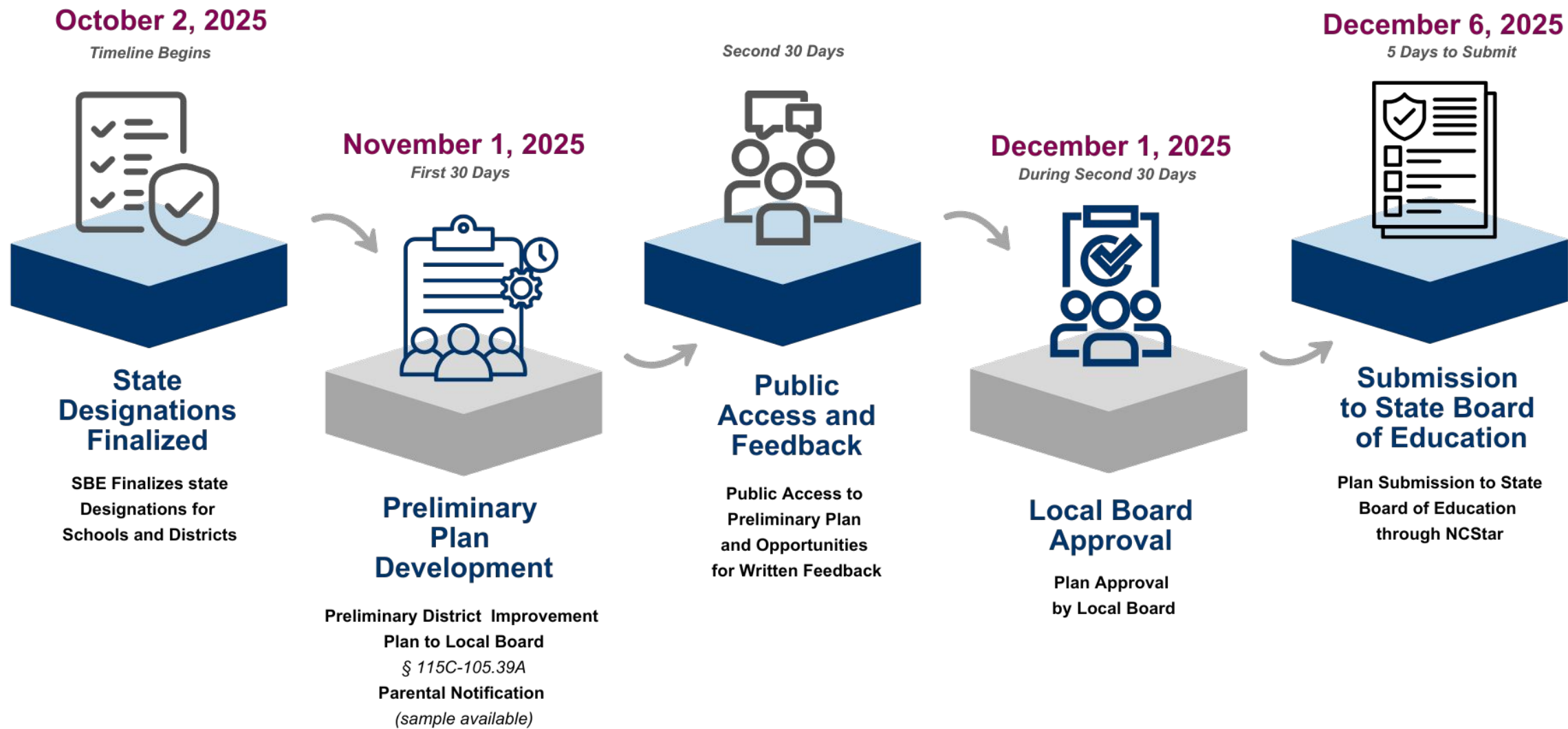**Spotlight Success:** Feature two districts partnering with ODSSS to improve outcomes for students.

Legislative Foundation and Opportunities

Dr. Cynthia Martin, Director

School Transformation, Office of District and School Support Services

State Designation Timeline

October 2, 2025
Timeline Begins

State Designations Finalized

SBE Finalizes state Designations for Schools and Districts

November 1, 2025
First 30 Days

Preliminary Plan Development

Preliminary District Improvement Plan to Local Board
§ 115C-105.39A
Parental Notification
(sample available)

Second 30 Days

Public Access and Feedback

Public Access to Preliminary Plan and Opportunities for Written Feedback

December 1, 2025
During Second 30 Days

Local Board Approval

Plan Approval by Local Board

December 6, 2025
5 Days to Submit

Submission to State Board of Education

Plan Submission to State Board of Education through NCStar

Key Requirement: Personnel Actions
Due By October 31, 2025

New Process

1. Local Superintendents received a link to **complete a survey** on **September 15, 2025.**

2. The local superintendent will have to **report on the decision made** for every principal assigned to a designated school *(retained, retained with a plan, transferred, or dismissed/demoted)*

3. Survey needs to be completed and **submitted by October 31, 2025.** *(previous date September 30, 2025)*

*Within 30 days of **initial** identification of a school as low performing, the superintendent shall take one of the following actions concerning the school's principal: retainment of the principal; retainment of the principal with a plan of remediation; transference of the principal; or dismissal/demotion of the principal. The superintendent's decision must be submitted to NCDPI by September 30th annually (§115C-105.39).*

Legislative Opportunities
Strengthen Support

Revise Statutory Timelines: Adjust current deadlines including the release of statewide data to allow timely accountability *and* more practical, data-driven school improvement.

Reform State Accountability Model: Redesign the model to balance proficiency and growth, ensure schools meeting growth are not labeled low-performing, and incorporate measures that more accurately reflect teaching and learning—especially at the high school level.

Increase Flexibility in Resources & Staffing: Authorize districts to braid/repurpose funds, offer differentiated pay, use hiring/licensure flexibilities to address hard-to-staff areas, and increase calendar flexibilities to address natural disasters and summer learning loss.

Expand & Sustain Support Capacity: Provide recurring funds to grow ODSSS regional staff and cross-functional specialists, so that priority/intensive-level support does not end with the sunset of temporary funding streams such as ESSER.

Support Innovation Grants & Pilots: Invest in research-based pilots and expand initiatives like Golden LEAF Schools through competitive innovation grants for high-need districts.

Where We Stand
Regional Data and Shifts from Last Year

Curtis Sonneman, Section Chief

Accountability & Testing/Analysis and Reporting

Division of Accountability and Research

Regional Data

Year	SBE Region	Low Performing Districts	Percent of Districts Low Performing	Low Performing Traditional Schools	Percent of Traditional Schools Low Performing	Low Performing Charters	Percent of Charters Low Performing	Low Performing Lab Schools	Percent of Lab Schools Low Performing	Percent All Schools Low Performing
2025	North Central	3	18.8%	109	21.4%	11	16.2%	n/a	n/a	20.8%
2025	Northeast	7	36.8%	48	33.1%	1	12.5%	0	0%	31.8%
2025	Northwest	0	0.0%	42	24.3%	2	50.0%	n/a	n/a	24.9%
2025	Piedmont-Triad	3	18.8%	142	35.9%	11	39.3%	2	100%	36.5%
2025	Sandhills	5	41.7%	93	40.1%	6	33.3%	n/a	n/a	39.6%
2025	Southeast	2	16.7%	58	24.9%	5	31.3%	1	100%	25.6%
2025	Southwest	2	16.7%	102	21.5%	14	29.8%	1	100%	22.4%
2025	Virtual	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	100.0%	n/a	n/a	100.0%
2025	Western	1	7.1%	34	20.5%	1	6.7%	0	0%	19.2%

Alternative schools, schools with insufficient data, and K-2 schools are excluded from the denominator for percent calculations.
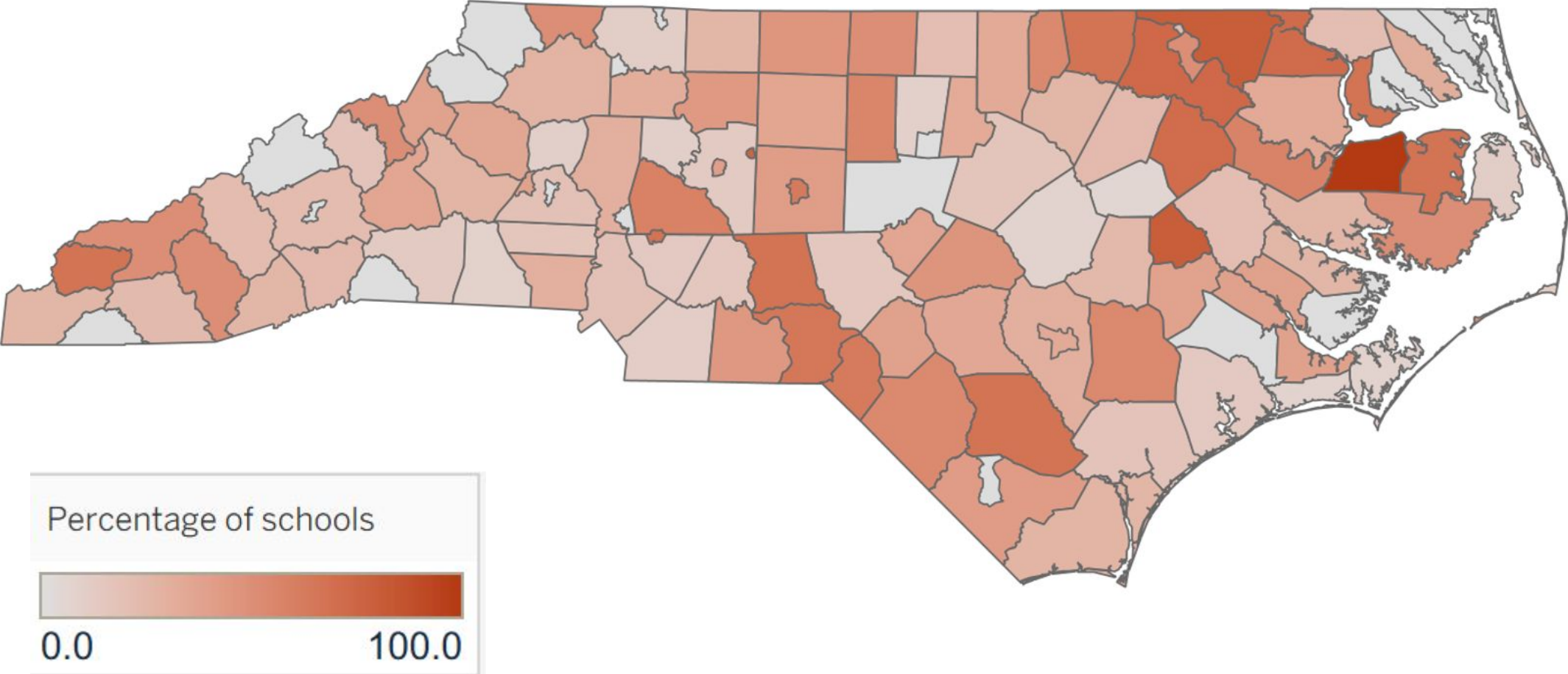
Data Shifts from Last Year

	Schools 2024	Schools 2025	Leavers LP Status	Stayers LP Status	Enters LP Status	Change
All LP	735	685	260	475	210	-50
LP Traditional Public Schools	675	628	234	441	187	-47
LP Lab Schools	5	4	2	3	1	-1
LP Charter Schools	55	53	24	31	22	-2
LP Districts	23	23	7	16	7	0
Continually LP Traditional Public Schools	730	670	130	600	70	-60
Continually LP Charter schools	59	50	16	43	7	-9

685 Low-Performing Schools

NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction
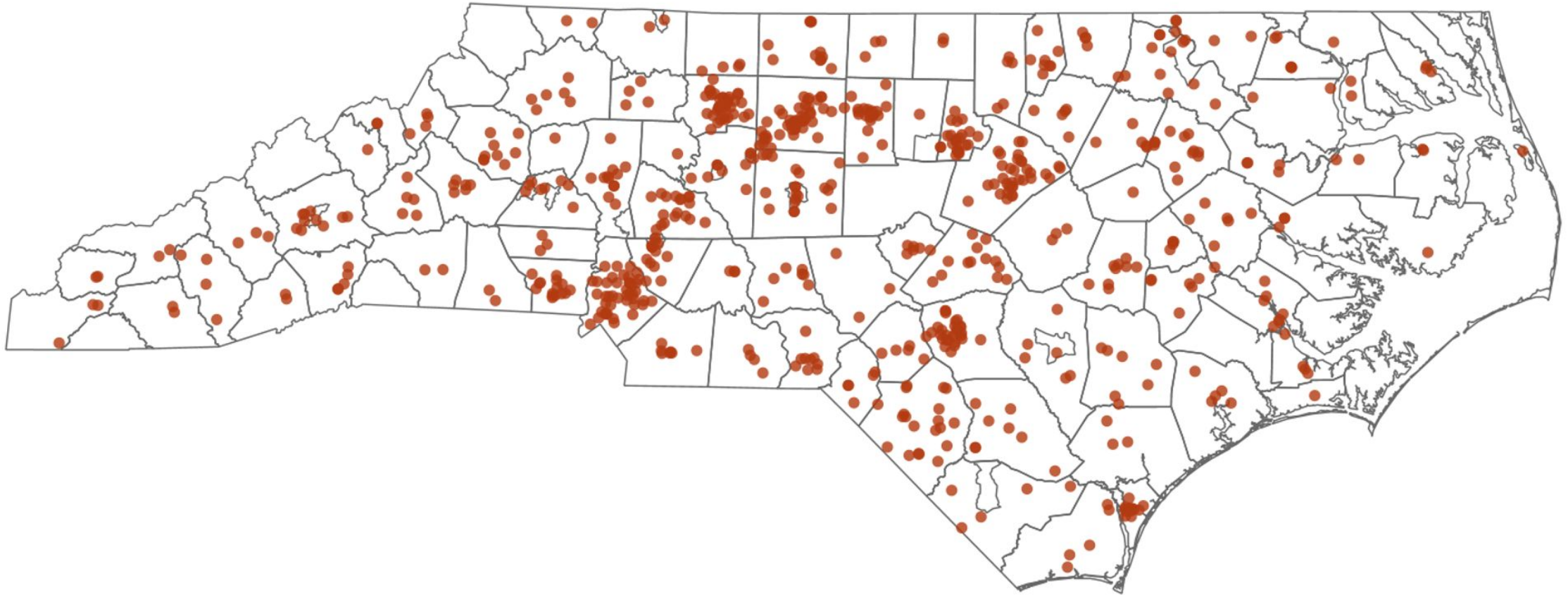
Percentage of Low-Performing Schools by LEA

Percentage of schools

0.0   100.0

Office of District and School Support and Services (ODSSS)

Dr. Monique Felder, Deputy Chief Academic Officer

Office of District and School Support and Services

ODSSS: Five Departments, One Mission

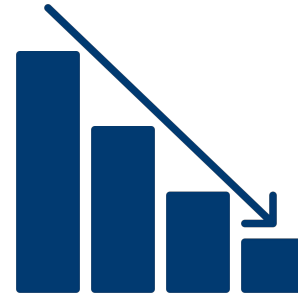|	Supports & Services	Description
School Improvement Support	- NCSTAR - Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) & Abbreviated Needs Assessment (ANA) - Instructional Leadership Coaching	**NCSTAR** serves as the online platform for district/school improvement planning The **CNA** & **ANA** are structured, third-party diagnostic reviews designed to help districts and schools uncover strengths and areas for improvement across six CNA and two ANA dimensions. **Instructional Leadership Coaches** provide targeted, job-embedded coaching to district & school leaders.
Transformation Support	- District Curriculum Coaching - Restart Schools - SBE Committee Partnership *(Weldon, Anson, Washington, Northampton)*	**District Curriculum Coaches** partner with districts designated as low performing to customize support of teaching and learning systems. **Restart Schools** are a targeted improvement strategy for schools designated as continually low-performing Approved by the NC State Board of Education and gainscharter-like flexibility while remaining under the authority of their local school board.
IABS Statewide Team	NC Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Implementation and Sustainability	**Integrated Academic and Behavior Supports** lead the implementation of standards-aligned MTSS approach that supports the whole-child by integrating academics, behavioral, social, emotional, and attendance supports from Pre-K through 12th grade.
Regional Support Teams	Geographically based leadership a structure, led by Regional Directors, supporting districts and schools	**Regional Support Teams,** led by **Regional Directors**, serve the eight regions by supporting the consistent implementation of policies, processes, and school improvement strategies.
Golden LEAF Schools	Boost academic outcomes in selected Low Performing and Non-Low Performing rural middle schools	**Golden LEAF Schools** strengthen school culture, pedagogy, leadership, math instruction, career readiness and foster peer networking and collaboration among grantees.

ODSSS
Our Priority, Alignment & Focus Areas

THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO
THE **PRIVILEGE OF EDUCATION,**
AND IT IS THE DUTY OF THE STATE TO
GUARD AND MAINTAIN THAT RIGHT.

THE CONSTITUTION OF NORTH CAROLINA
ARTICLE 1, SEC. 15

Top Priority

Reduce the number of Continually Low-Performing and Low-Performing Districts & Schools

Strategic Plan Alignment

Pillar I: Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life

Pillar VI: Lead Transformative Change

Focus Areas

Keeping the Main Things the Main Things

- High-Quality Core Instruction

- Instructional Leadership

Our Approach to Partnering

UNIVERSAL PARTNERSHIP *Least Intensive Support*	TARGETED PARTNERSHIP	PRIORITY PARTNERSHIP *Most Intensive Support*
All Districts and Schools	**Low-Performing Districts** **Districts with Low-Performing Schools** **Low-Performing At-Risk Districts** **Districts with Low-Performing At-Risk Schools** **Recently Exited Low-Performing Districts** **Districts with Recently Exited Low-Performing Schools**	**Low-Performing Districts** **Districts with Continually Low-Performing Schools** **Districts with Schools with Dual State and Federal Designations**

Through Line of Impact
ODSSS to Classrooms

ODSSS   Districts   Schools   Classrooms
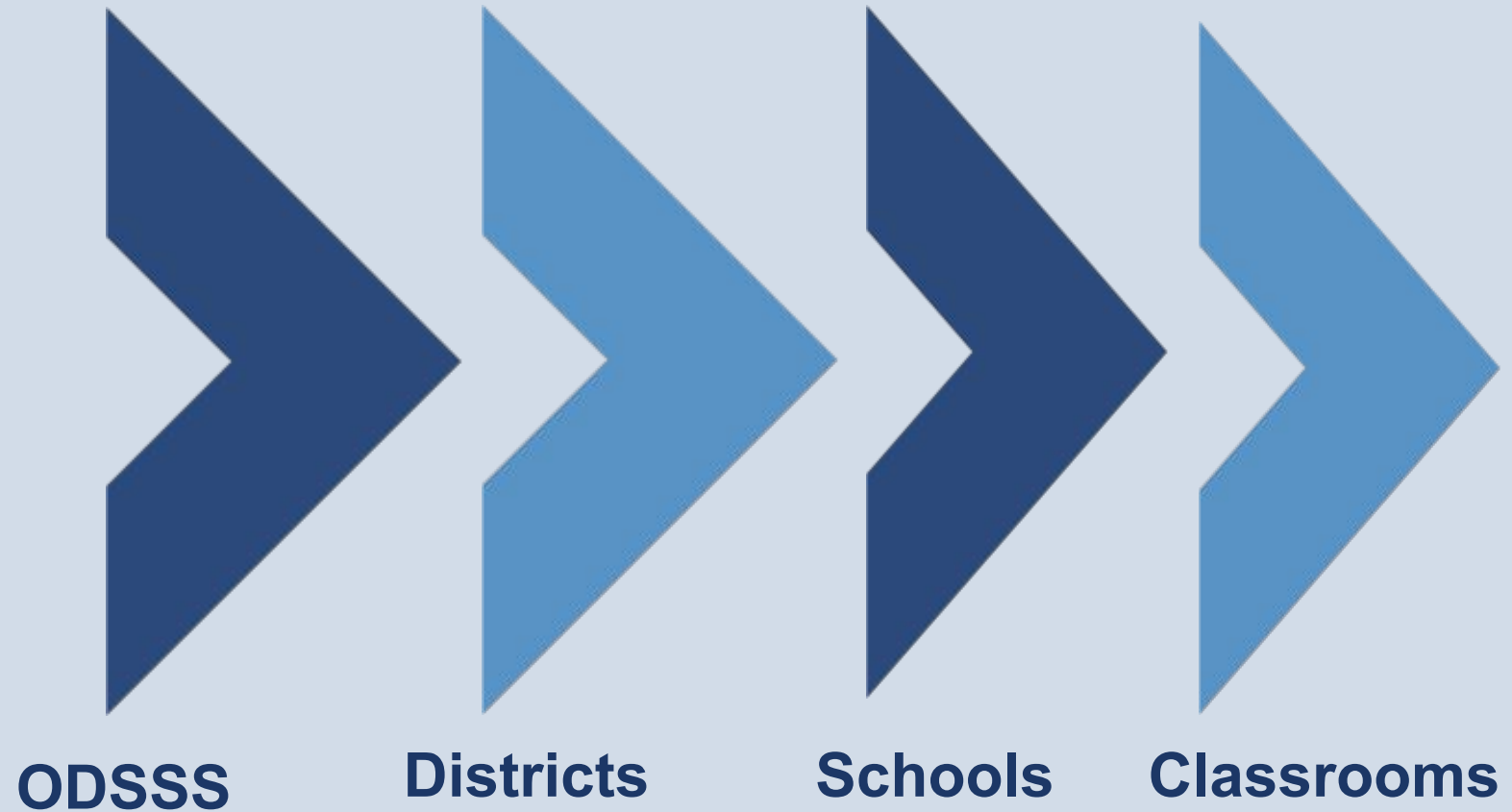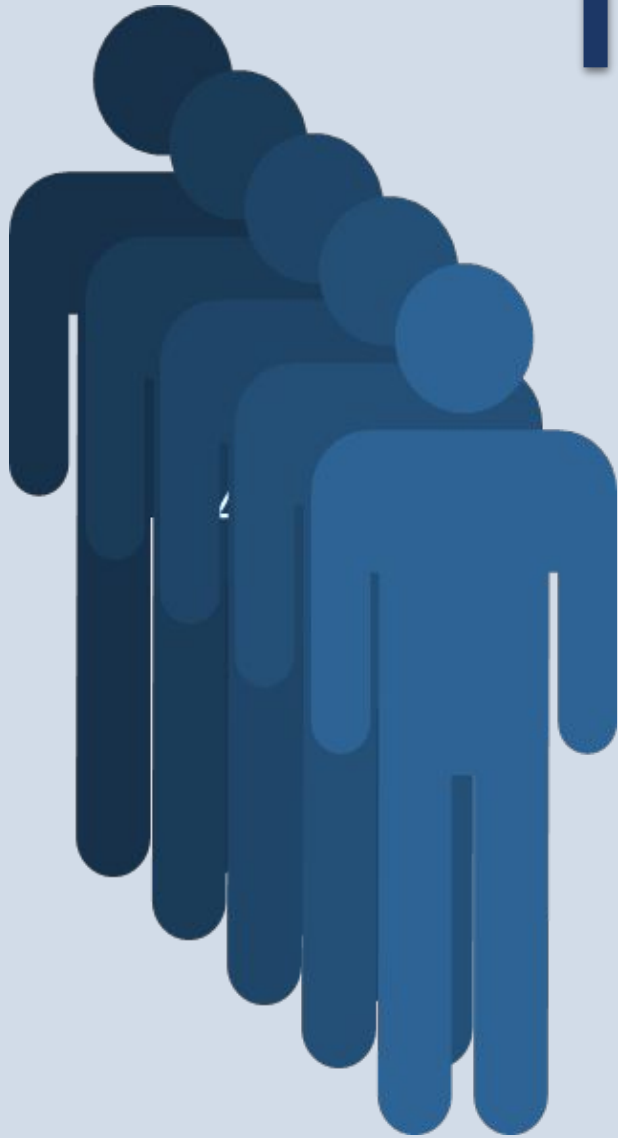
"Strong districts → Strong schools → Strong classrooms → Student success"

ODSSS' Theory of Action

IF

ODSSS partners with districts to strengthen their capacity to support:

- **Core (Tier I) Instruction in Every Classroom**
- **Instructional Leadership that Prioritizes Teaching and Learning**
- **Tiered, Data-Informed Supports Matched to District Context**
- **Alignment with Each District's Improvement Plans**

THEN

Districts will be better equipped to:

- **Accelerate Student Achievement**
- **Reduce the Number of Low-Performing Schools and Districts**
- **Sustain Improvement Over Time Through Local Stewardship**

How ODSSS Brings Support Together

Office of District and School Support and Services

- School Support
- School Transformation
- Golden LEAF Schools
- Regional Directors Regional Support Teams
- Integrated Academic Behavior Systems (IABS)
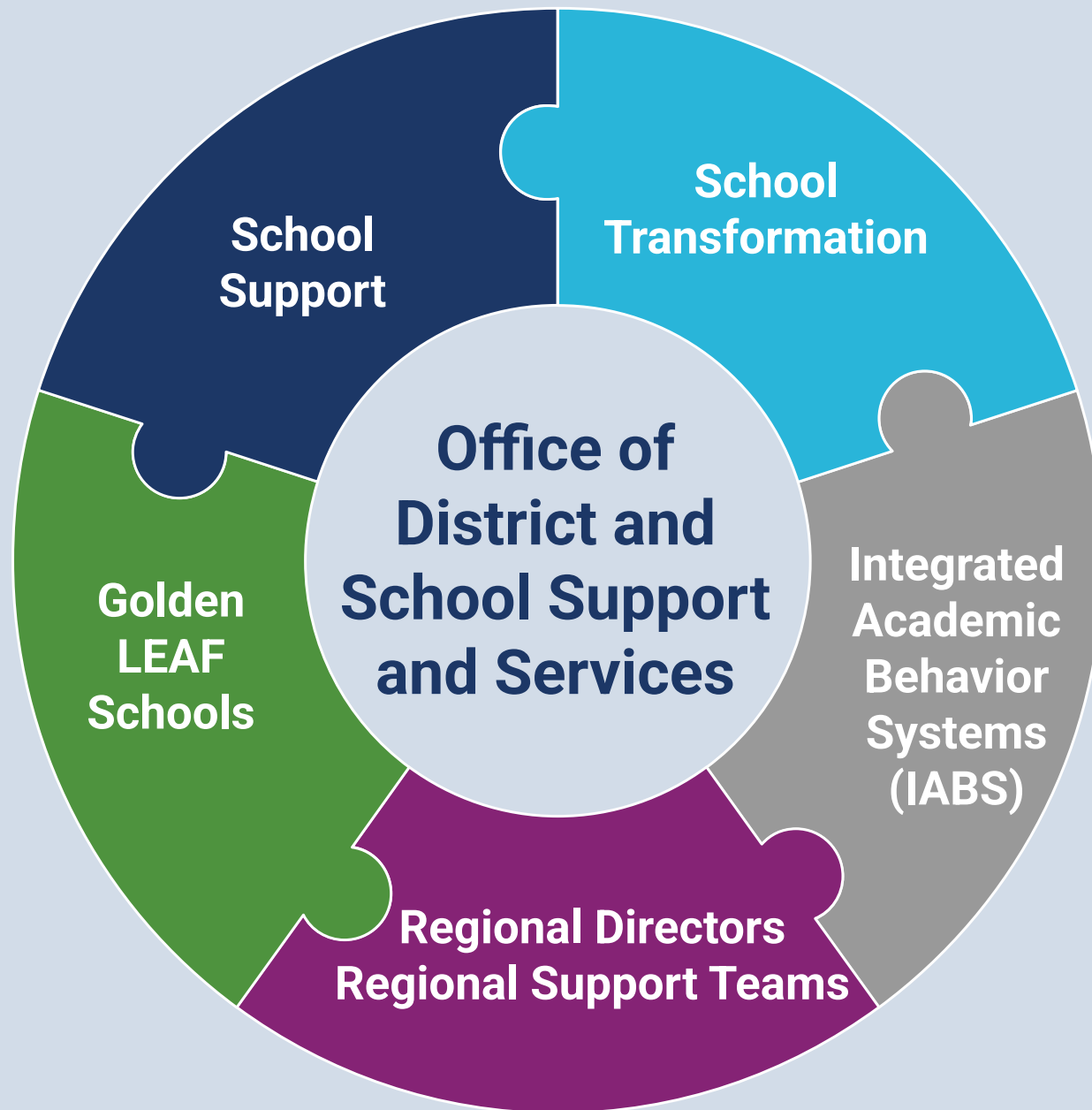
Support for Low-Performing Schools: Academics Division

- THE OFFICE OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

- OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS (OCS)

- THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING (OEL)

- THE OFFICE OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (OEC)

- OFFICE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS (OFP)

- THE OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (OTL)

School Improvement Plans
Trends & Patterns

Areas for Growth	Promising Practices
• Goals unclear or not measurable, limiting accountability	• Leadership teams meet regularly, strengthening collaboration
• Monitoring structures inconsistent or absent	• Roles assigned, building distributed leadership
• Data and needs assessments missing, hindering decisions	• Action steps tied to PD and PLCs, supporting growth
• Plans not updated as conditions change, reducing impact	• Performance measures added, helping define goals and track progress
• District coaching feedback seldom included, limiting valuable guidance for schools	

Cleveland County Schools
Continuous Improvement

Dr. Stephen Fisher
Superintendent

Creating & Sustaining Continuous Improvement in Middle Schools

State Board of Education Meeting

October 1, 2025

Cleveland County
S C H O O L S

- Start with 'why'
- Growth is not accidental
- Aligned, intentional systems, structures, and processes
  - State → District → School → Team/Teacher goals
- Collaboration is critical
- Flat leadership structures
- Core & tiered focus on academics, attendance, and behavior

You do not rise to the levels of your goals,
you fall to the level of your systems.
-James Clear

- High Reliability Schools (HRS) provides structure
- Living frameworks
  - Collective Commitments
  - Instructional Framework
  - Instructional Snapshot
- Teaming structures to measure and monitor
  - SIT, MTSSLT, PST, PLT, 360°
- Common bell schedule

Systems produce behaviors.

- Urgency v. panic
- Explicit, relentless focus on learning, not teaching
- Collaboration is a non-negotiable
- Research/Evidence-based programs
- Balanced assessment
- Defined autonomy

Excellence is a process of evolution, cumulative learning, and incremental improvement.
-James Kerr

- Continuity
- Coaching
- Building teacher leaders
- Measuring and monitoring
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Strategic staffing

A bad system will beat a good person every time.
-W.E. Demming

- Board of Education support
- University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KUCRL)
  - Strategic Instruction Model/Literacy strategies
  - UNC-Charlotte trainer/coach
- Adolescent Literacy & Co-teaching Teams
- Instructional rounds

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.
-Warren Bennis

Montgomery County Schools
A Priority Partnership

Dr. Karen Roseboro
Superintendent

Montgomery County Schools Strategic Support

Enhancing educational outcomes through focused planning

Formation and Purpose of Strategic Support

Cross-Functional Team Formation

A cross functional team from DPI (Office of District & School Support Services) was formed in June 2025 to provide strategic support aligned to the Superintendent and District priorities.
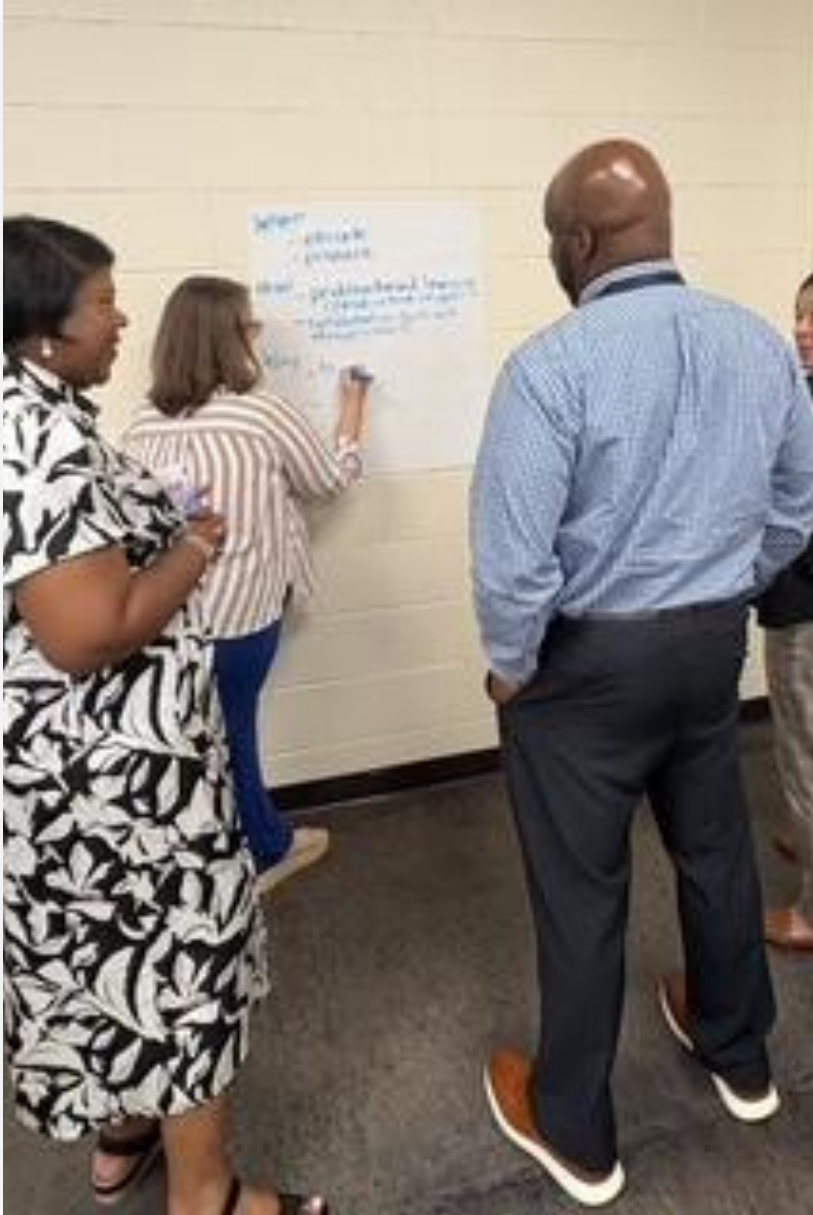
Focus Areas of Support

The team targeted leadership capacity, curriculum, instructional frameworks, and professional learning using data from various stakeholder groups.
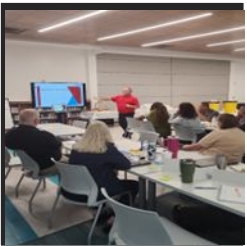
Goals and Outcomes

Efforts aimed to build leadership capacity and improve student outcomes to insure a strong instructional infrastructure that will lead to sustainable district growth.

Academic and Systemic Focus Areas

Core Academic Improvement

Focus on boosting student proficiency in literacy, mathematics, and science for foundational academic success.

Supportive Learning Environments

Promote environments that enhance student well-being, engagement, and overall positive learning experiences.
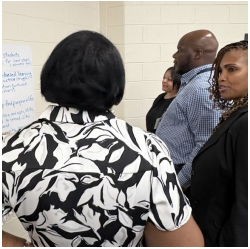
Sustainable Educational Systems

Implement scalable systems aligned with statewide goals to ensure consistent and sustainable educational improvements.
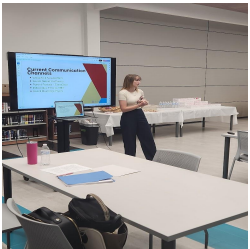
Data-Driven Decisions

Utilize data analysis and stakeholder input to inform initiatives that promote equity and foster continuous improvement.
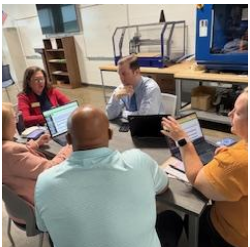
Mechanisms for Sustained Impact

Leadership and Accountability

Weekly superintendent check-ins and leadership meetings maintain strategic alignment and address key priorities.

Professional Learning Collaboratives

Monthly sessions enable principals and facilitators to analyze data, monitor instruction, and exchange best practices.

Coaching and Curriculum Collaboration

Coaching cycles and teamwork on curriculum tools and walkthrough protocols foster consistency and informed decisions.

Instructional and Leadership Outcomes

Collaborative Instructional Calibration

Joint classroom walkthroughs ensure consistent teaching standards and aligned instructional expectations across schools.

Strengthened Collaborative Planning

Co-facilitate PLCs to promote standards-based instruction and teamwork among educators for improved lesson planning.

Enhanced Special Education Resources

Align resources and staffing to better meet special education student needs, increasing fairness and access.

Leadership Development and Outcomes

Efforts foster leadership growth, instructional quality improvements, and sustainable systems for ongoing progress.

Sustaining Progress and Partnership

Commitment to Student Achievement

The district prioritizes measurable gains in student achievement to ensure continuous educational progress.

Strong Instructional Alignment

Align instructional strategies to support consistent teaching practices and improved learning outcomes.
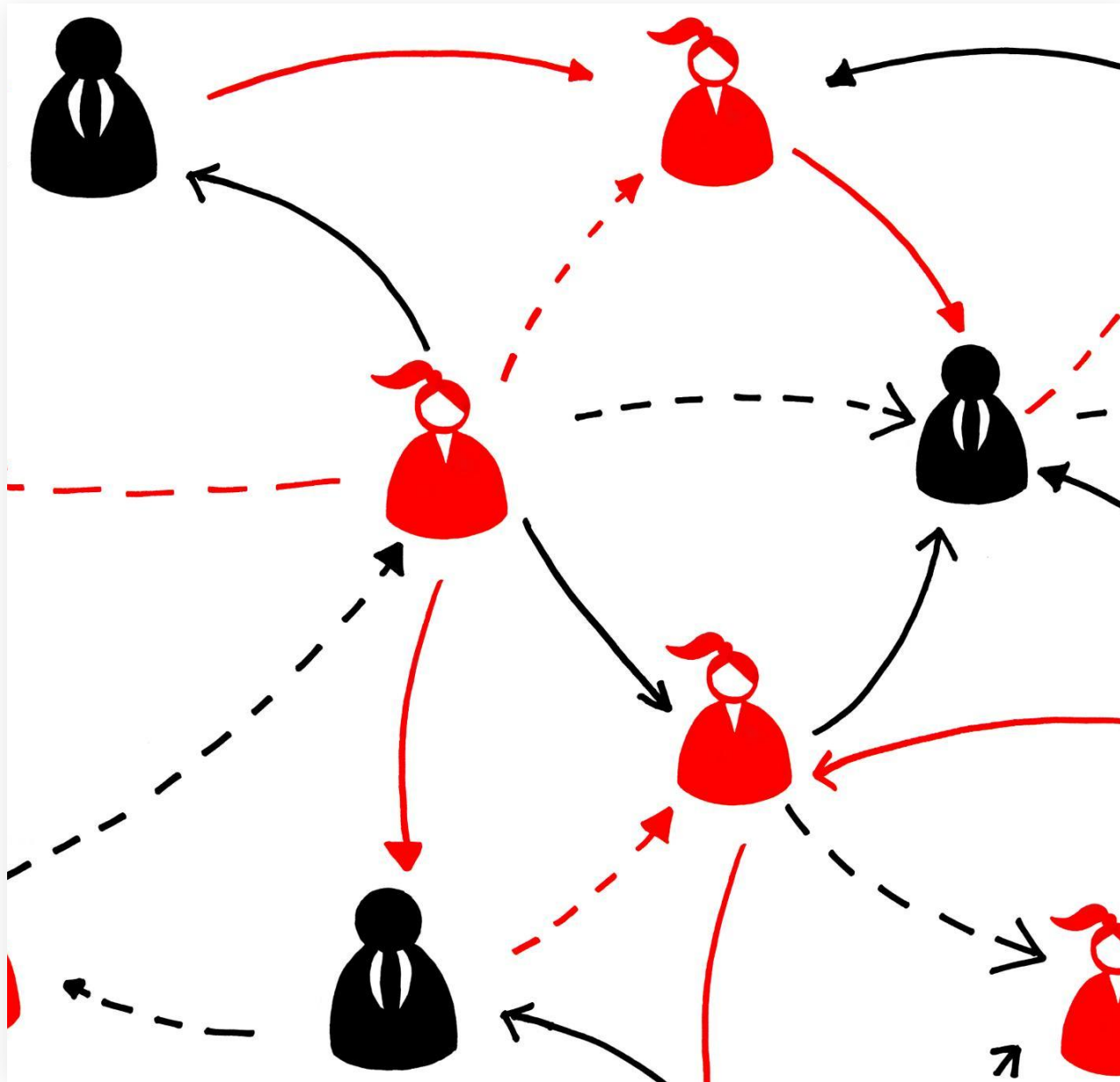
Empowered Leadership and Partnership

Leadership empowerment, coupled with an ongoing partnership, fosters a shared vision for excellence that aligns with the District and State Strategic Plan.

Sustainable Systems for Growth

Implementing sustainable systems ensures long-term success and adaptability to future educational needs.

Benefits of a Single Point of Contact

Centralized Communication

A single contact point streamlines (Dr. A. Taylor) communication between the Regional Support team and the Office of District & School Support Services.

Efficient Issue Resolution

This role enables immediate responses to critical issues, reducing delays and improving problem-solving efficiency.

Enhanced Collaboration

Clear and consistent liaison strengthens trust and collaboration among departments, supporting proactive district improvements. Our NCDPI liaison is in our district every Tuesday or as needed to support district leaders and provide real-time feedback to our school leaders regarding their school turnaround efforts related to standards-aligned instruction and building leadership capacity.

Comments & Questions

North Carolina Department of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION