

Annual Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division

Principal Recruitment Supplement Program Report

General Statute # SL 2019-247 Section 2.5 G.S.115C-285.1

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

March 2026

Desired Outcomes

Program Participation and Compliance

The report clearly identifies participating principals and schools and demonstrates implementation consistent with statutory eligibility, selection, and reporting requirements.

Statutory alignment: § 115C-285.1(g)(2), (g)(3)

Principal Retention and Tenure

The report documents the length and rate of principal retention within the Program and at participating schools, highlighting leadership stability in low-performing schools.

Statutory alignment: § 115C-285.1(g)(4)

School Performance Context and Impact

The report provides context on school performance trends for schools receiving principals through the Program and for schools that lost principals as a result of the Program.

Statutory alignment: § 115C-285.1(g)(1)



Purpose of Session Law 2019-247 (§115C-285.1)

The purpose of Session Law 2019-247, Section 2.5 (§ 115C-285.1), is to **attract, recruit, and retain highly effective principals to the State's lowest-performing schools** by offering a **significant, time-limited salary supplement**.

Principal Recruitment Supplement Program

When was the program established?



2019

Which principals qualify?



A principal who is paid on the Exceeded Growth column of the Principal Salary Schedule.

Which Schools are Eligible?



Low-performing schools, as defined in G.S. 115C-105.37, receiving an overall school performance score that placed it in the **bottom five percent (5%)** of all schools in the State in the prior school year.

What is the salary supplement amount?



\$30,000/year, paid monthly, as long as the principal is employed as the principal of that school, up to a maximum period of 36 months

How many supplements are available annually?



40

How many supplements are currently in use?



20 (50%)

What is the number of principal cohorts to date?



6

What is the timeline for execution of the program?



October 1st – August 1st

Program Implementation: 2020-2026

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
# cumulative year to year participation	13	14	18	20	13	20
# of qualifying schools	110	110	137	126	120	124
# of supplements available	40	40	40	40	40	40
# of schools declining	17	16	6	0	13	22

1

Phase I

- **Eligibility Notification:** The first 40 schools with eligible bottom 5% schools are notified and invited to participate.
- **District Acceptance (Phase I):** District superintendents accept or decline participation. Accepted districts advance to Phase II.

2

Phase II

- **School Identification (Phase II)**
- DPI provides participating districts a list of eligible schools categorized as **priority**, **alternative**, or **currently participating**.

3

Phase III

- **Candidate Submission (Phase III):** Districts submit proposed principal candidates for vetting by the Office of Financial and Business Services
- **Final Approval:** Once a candidate is deemed eligible, districts submit required documentation in accordance with G.S. 115C-285.1

Recruitment Efforts

Implementation Results & Strategies

Recruitment is increased in the spring to include:

- brainstorming sessions with districts
- intra-district recruitment
- increased communications

Phase I Notice of Eligibility

- All **47** eligible districts (**124 schools**) were contacted.

Phase II Participation Acceptance

- **5** districts declined (**22 schools**)

Phase III Participation Acceptance

Since March 2025, **27** principals have been submitted and vetted through Financial Business Services

- **52%** did not qualify
- **30%** were successfully placed at a qualifying school
- **18%** qualified but were not placed by district

Program Progress

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools accounts for approximately **32%** of participating schools and **Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools** accounts for approximately **26%**, the highest representation among districts.

Cohorts I–II (2020–22)

16 principals completed the full 36-month participation period; Upon completion approximately **50%** of participating schools exited low-performing status.

Post-Participation Sustainability:

One Cohort I principal remains at the school, which has sustained gains achieved during program participation.

Cohort IV (2023–24)

8 principals currently serving; **50%** of schools exceeded growth, removing the low-performing designation.

Cohort V (2024–25)

3 principals currently serving; **67%** of schools exceeded growth, removing the low-performing designation.

Cohort VI (2025–26)

8 principals began service in Fall 2025.

District-Identified Barriers to Program Participation

1

Limited School Eligibility

Statutory criteria restrict eligibility to the **bottom 5%** of schools, resulting in 124 eligible schools statewide compared to 628 traditionally, low-performing schools.

2

Compensation Inequities

Districts report perceived inequities when principals at similarly situated schools do not qualify for supplemental pay.

Recommendations

SY 2025-2026

Top Recommendation

Expand the definition of a qualifying school to include all low performing schools as defined in G.S. 115C-105.37.

This will allow:

- Local superintendents the flexibility to consider all low-performing schools within their district instead of one or two schools in the district that fall into the lowest 5% of schools.
- The program to serve as a complement to State statute §115C-105.39 which directs local superintendents to evaluate the current principal's performance when a school is designated as low performing. By all schools designated as low performing being eligible, the supplement could serve as a recruitment tool for superintendents deciding to recommend to the local school board the transfer, dismissal, or demotion of a current principal.

Other Recommendations

- Direct DPI to conduct a study of this program alongside all statutory requirements for low-performing districts and schools to ensure the timelines, needs, and work of public-school units align optimally.
- Remove the restriction of subsection (c)(3) in this statute so that principal supplemental pay counts toward the pension formula for purposes of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.
- Hold principals harmless from negative consequences of moving to a school under this program.
- Increase the number of years a principal can stay at an eligible school from 3 years to 4-5 years.

Questions?

Dr. Stacey Wilson-Norman, stacey.wilson-norman@dpi.nc.gov

Dr. Monique Felder, monique.felder@dpi.nc.gov

Dr. Cynthia Martin, cynthia.martin@dpi.nc.gov