

# ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

2025-2030  
Strategic Plan for  
North Carolina Public Schools



# ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



## PILLAR 1

Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life



## PILLAR 2

Revere Public School Educators



## PILLAR 3

Enhance Parent, Caregiver, and Community Support



## PILLAR 4

Ensure Healthy, Safe and Secure Learning Environments



## PILLAR 5

Optimize Operational Excellence



## PILLAR 6

Lead Transformative Change



## PILLAR 7

Celebrate the Excellence in Public Education



## PILLAR 8

Galvanize Champions to Fully Invest in and Support Public Education



ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL  
**EXCELLENCE**

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By 2030, North Carolina will  
have the **best** public school  
system in the nation.



# ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL **EXCELLENCE**

Actions launched  
as of May 2026:

**37**

Actions launched  
since February 2026:

**11**

Actions launching  
in 2026:

**69**

**By the end of 2026, 78 of the 110 actions in the  
Strategic Plan will have launched**

# Strategic Plan Dashboard Preview

## Best in the Nation — Our 2030 Plan

Tracking our progress to make North Carolina's public schools the best in the nation.

Celebrating Excellence in NC Public Schools

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL  
**EXCELLENCE**

Best in the Nation—Our 2030 Plan  
for North Carolina Public Schools

### STRATEGIC PILLARS

-  Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life
-  Revere Public School Educators
-  Enhance Parent, Caregiver, and Community Support
-  Ensure Healthy, Safe and Secure Learning Environments
-  Optimize Operational Excellence
-  Lead Transformative Change
-  Celebrate the Excellence in Public Education
-  Galvanize Champions to Fully Invest in and Support Public Education

### Welcome to the *Achieving Educational Excellence* dashboard.

The *Achieving Educational Excellence: 2025–2030 Strategic Plan* represents the shared vision of the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction — **to have our public schools be the best in the nation!** To be clear: to be the best is the only option. This dashboard is how we hold ourselves accountable to that commitment, sharing our progress openly with the people of North Carolina and every partner working with us.

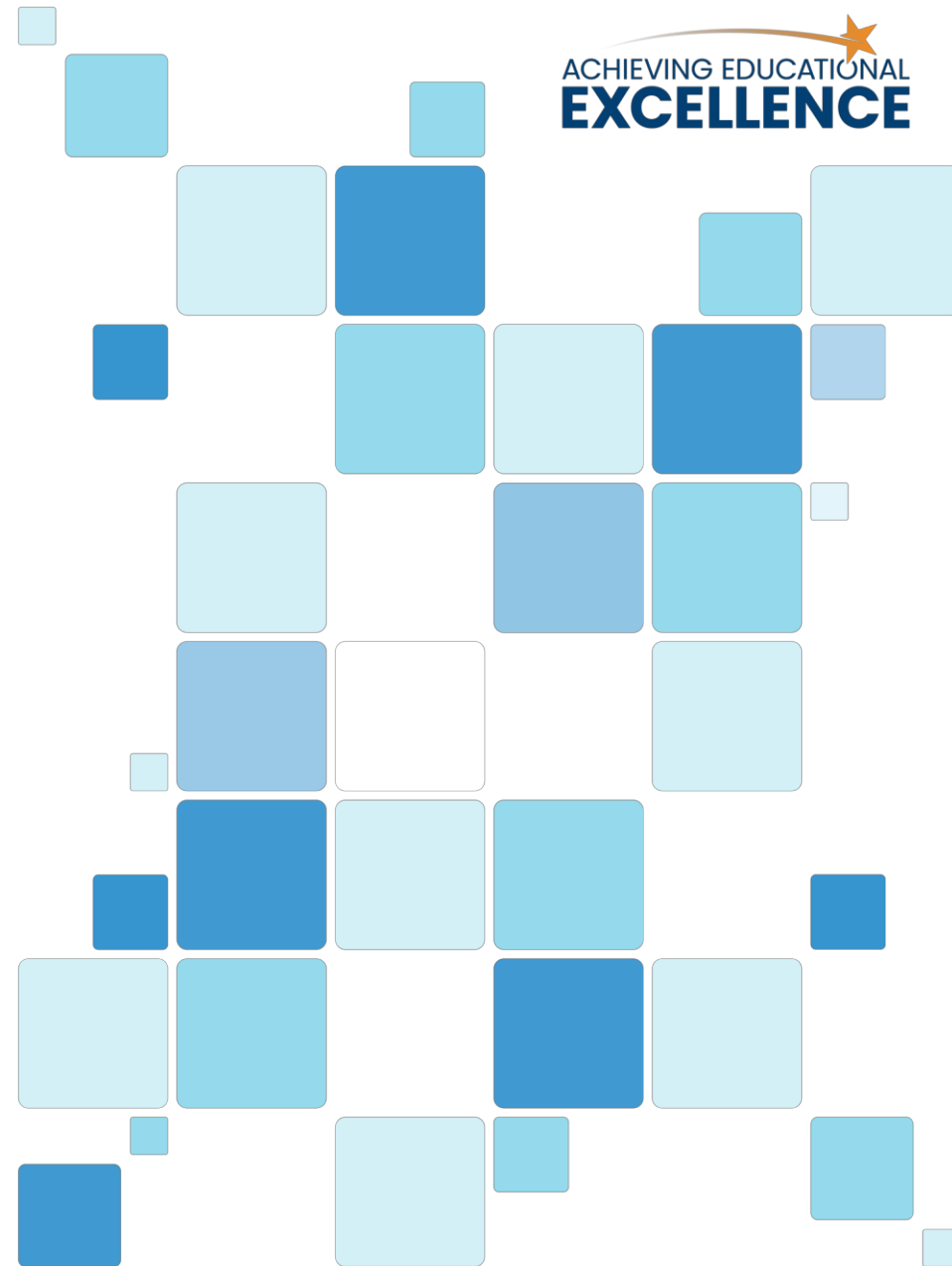
Our [Best in the Nation Measures](#) are the statewide indicators we have chosen to track whether our public schools are, in fact, becoming the best in the United States by 2030. While we acknowledge our students are more than metrics, these measures tell us whether the eight transformative pillars of *Achieving Educational Excellence* are delivering for every child, in every community, across North Carolina.

The eight pillars of *Achieving Educational Excellence* are listed on the left-hand side of this dashboard. Click on any of the pillars to see more information on the 110 actions we are undertaking to make sure our public schools are the best in the nation by 2030.

[Explore the Best in the Nation Measures](#) →



# Questions and Discussion





ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL  
**EXCELLENCE**

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## **Updates on Key Strategic Plan Actions**

# Golden LEAF Schools Initiative (GLSI)

## *Comprehensive Needs Assessment & Early Implementation Momentum*

*Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin, Deputy State Superintendent*

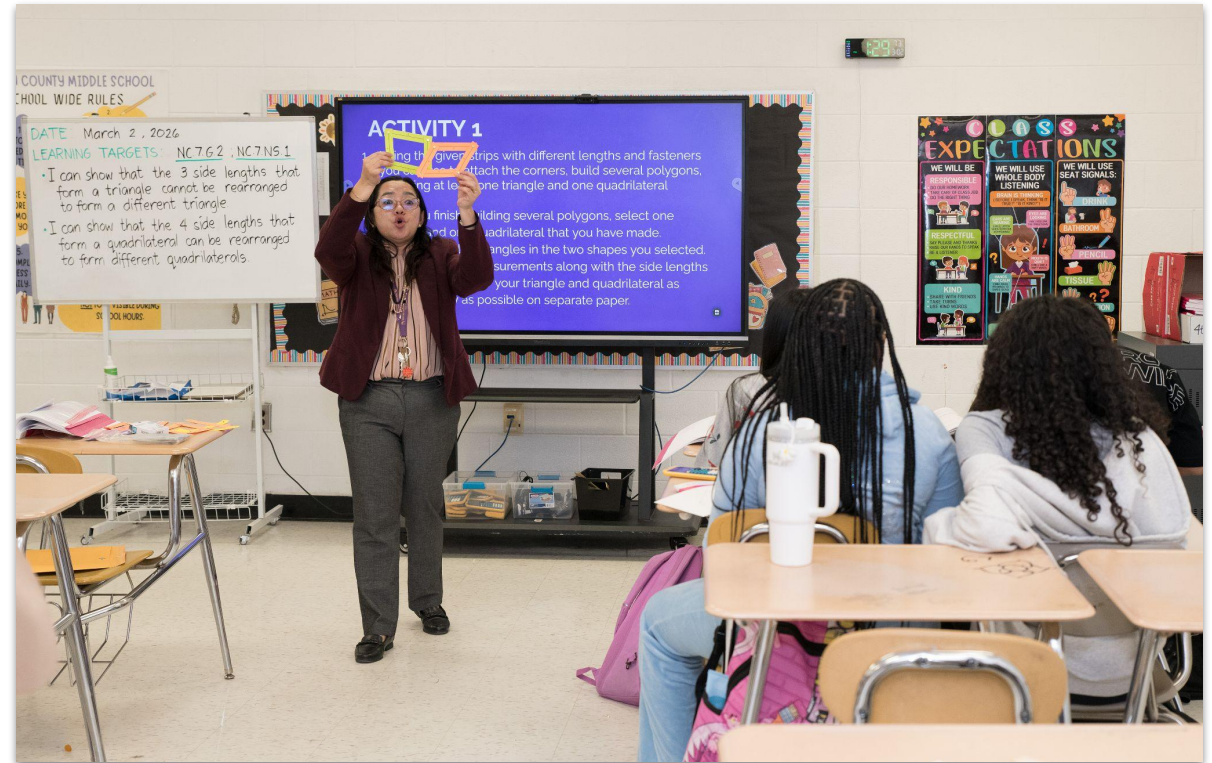
*Dr. Monique Felder, Deputy Chief Academic Officer, Office of District & School Support & Services*

*Rachel Wright Junio, Director, Office of Golden LEAF Schools Office of District & School Support & Services*

*Cole Smith, Mixed Methods Research Analyst, Office of Golden LEAF Schools Office of District & School Support & Services*

# Purpose

- 1) Share key findings from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA).
- 2) Highlight early implementation progress from the Biannual Report.
- 3) Clarify what we've learned so far from Year 1 implementation.
- 4) Outline how early momentum positions us for sustainable impact.



# Program Overview & Theory Of Change

# ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL **EXCELLENCE**



Prepare Each Student  
for Their Next Phase  
in Life

Focus Area 2 | Elevate Teaching and Learning

## **ACTION 1**

Implement the **Golden LEAF Schools Initiative** through **cross-agency collaboration** to **transform educator practice and student outcomes** in **rural schools**, focusing on high-quality mathematics instruction via the High Reliability Schools model.

“**Improving practice is the pathway to improving outcomes.**”

# Golden LEAF Schools Initiative's Vision

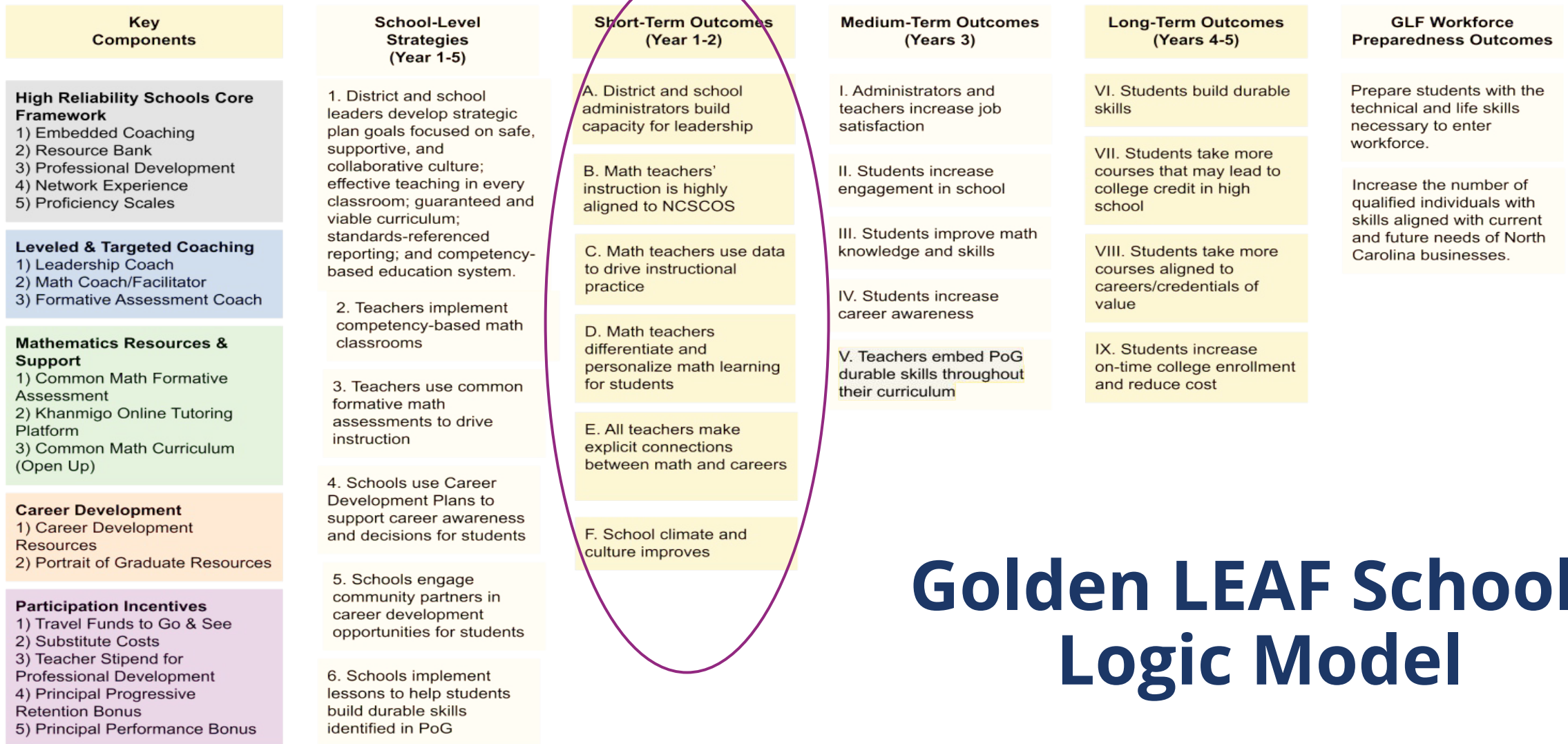
- NC will have a **new, evidence-based model** for turning around low performing schools
- Schools and districts in distressed counties will be a:
  - Model for **innovation and success**
  - **Catalyst for change** in their communities
- Students will be prepared academically and technically, with skills and knowledge **aligned to the future needs of North Carolina employers**
- Students are experiencing career opportunities through course offerings and career development planning so they can enter high school more prepared to pursue the **postsecondary plan of their choice**



**Prepare Each Student  
for Their Next Phase  
in Life**



## Golden LEAF Schools Logic Model



# Golden LEAF Schools Logic Model

Golden LEAF's mission is to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina's rural, tobacco-dependent, and economically distressed communities through leadership in grantmaking, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship as an independent and perpetual foundation.

# Two Cohorts, One Vision

## ***Transformative Schools (TS)***

*Stabilization and systems strengthening*

## ***PCBE Schools***

*Deepening personalization and competency-based learning*

*Together, every student in rural North Carolina experiences high-quality, relevant, future-ready learning.*

# Comprehensive Needs Assessment Findings

Leadership Capacity & Workforce Stability

Instructional Alignment & Quality in Mathematics

School Climate, Culture, and Workforce Stability

Career Alignment & Postsecondary Pathways

# What We Learned About Leadership

## Strengths:

- Strong professional pride
- Commitment to students
- Early engagement in High Reliability Schools (HRS) framework

## Challenges:

- Fragile leadership systems
- Limited protected time
- Staffing instability in some TS schools

***Every one of our schools are equipped with strong leaders.  
This is not a lack of commitment — it is a systems capacity challenge.***

# Early Leadership Momentum

- **Coaching cycles established**  
(Learn–Plan–Apply–Reflect)
- **Tiered coaching structure operational**
- **School team designed SMART goals aligned to STOs**
- **Monthly PDSA cycles underway**



***We are already moving from awareness to rigorous improvement routines.***

# Mathematics: Alignment Is Improving

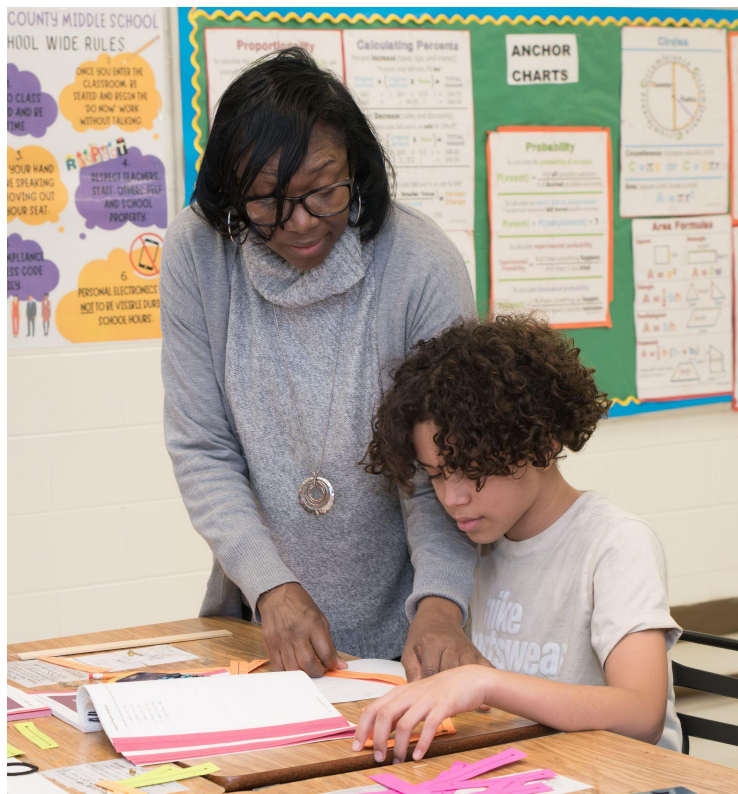
## Strengths:

- Adoption of high-quality instructional materials
- Grade 6 has been easiest entry point as evidenced by the CFA data in Y1

## Growth Areas:

- Data-to-instruction cycles
- Variation in CFA scores in Grades 7–8
- Student confidence with challenging math

# Early CFA Evidence of Momentum



- **Grade 6:** “Unit 2 bump” across many schools
- **Grade 7:** Strong sustained proficiency gains

# Coaching as the Engine

- Leadership, math, and assessment coaching aligned
- Dashboard use increasing
- Walkthrough tools deployed and in early implementation
- Coaching logs documenting intensity & focus

# Climate Findings

## Strengths:

- Strong professional identity
- Pride in schools

## Variation:

- Trust and psychological safety differ across schools
- Leadership coherence linked to stability

# Early Implementation Focus on Culture

- **Marzano HRS indicator surveys administered**
- **Monthly PDSA reflection cycles**
- **Coaching tied directly to culture indicators**
- **Structured progress reports for accountability**

# What We Learned About Career Alignment

## Strengths:

- Local labor market alignment
- Career & College Promise pathways established

## Gap:

- Middle school career awareness data
- Durable skills measurement

# Early Steps Toward Career Integration

- **Portrait of a Graduate integration**
- **Career Plan Builder tools introduced**
- **Planning for expanded student-level measurement**

# Implementation Evaluation and Next Steps

# GLSI as a Learning System

## Three integrated measurement components:

1. Needs Assessment
2. Implementation Measurement
3. Impact Analysis

## Analysis of the Evidence

- Years 1–3: Descriptive trend monitoring
- Years 4–5: Quasi-experimental (PSM + DiD)
- Student and teacher outcomes analyzed

# What We're Learning

1. Coaching intensity matters
2. Leadership stability shapes fidelity
3. Grade 7 shows strong implementation potential
4. Systems alignment predicts culture stability
5. Differentiation needs deeper support

# Early Implementation Priorities

Based on Needs Assessment conclusions

1. Protect instructional leadership time
2. Deepen data-to-instruction cycles
3. Strengthen upper middle grade rigor
4. Expand student-level career awareness measurement
5. Differentiate support by school context

# Why We Are Optimistic

1. Schools are meeting baseline compliance
2. Coaching systems operational
3. CFA early gains visible
4. Leadership engagement strong
5. Data systems in place

# The Work Ahead

GLSI schools are not struggling due to lack of effort.

They are navigating fragile structural conditions.

We see schools growing:

- Leadership is more coherent
- Instruction is more aligned
- Data cycles are established
- Career connections are expanding

We are in early implementation — and early implementation is where systems take root.

The conditions for durable, scalable improvement are being built right now.

# Questions?

Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin, [Maria.Pitre-Martin@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Maria.Pitre-Martin@dpi.nc.gov)

Dr. Monique Felder, [Monique.Felder@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Monique.Felder@dpi.nc.gov)

Rachel Wright Junio, [Rachel.WrightJunio@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Rachel.WrightJunio@dpi.nc.gov)

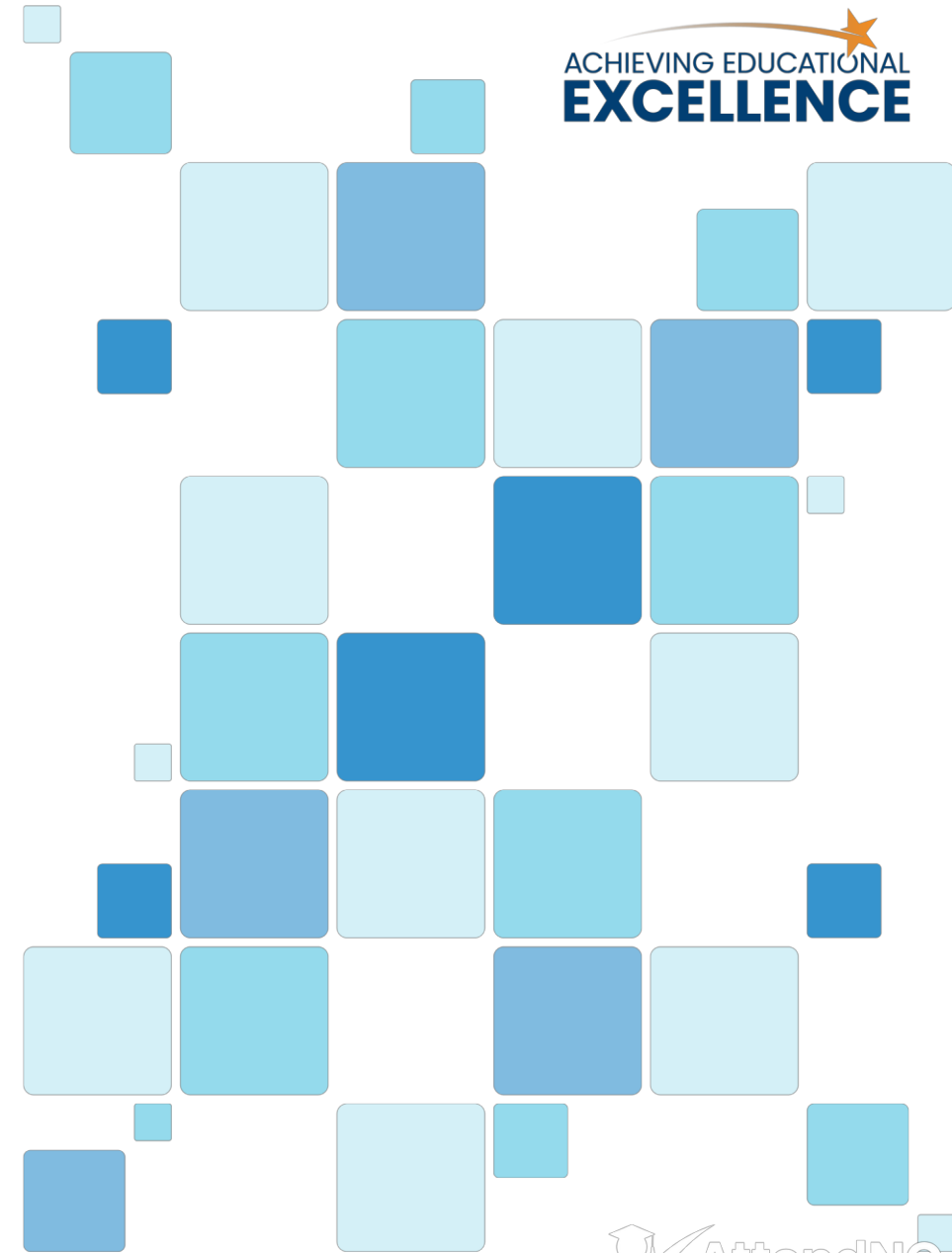
Cole Smith, [Cole.Smith@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Cole.Smith@dpi.nc.gov)

# AttendNC Counts Update

**Dr. Shaun Kellogg, Senior Director**

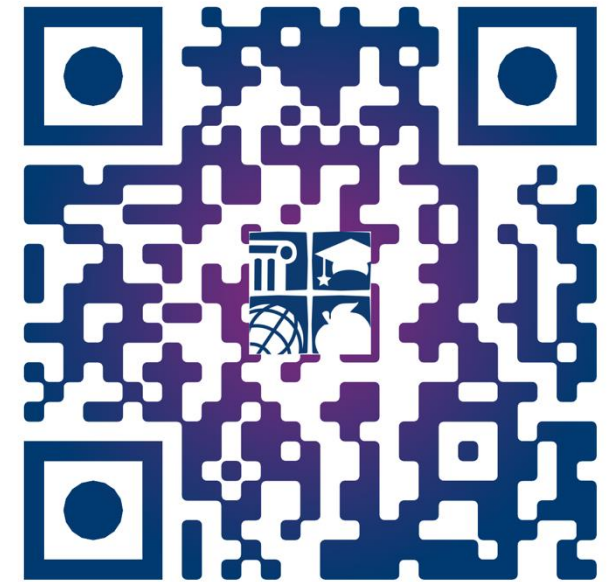
*Office of Research and Promising  
Practices*

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026



# AttendNC Counts

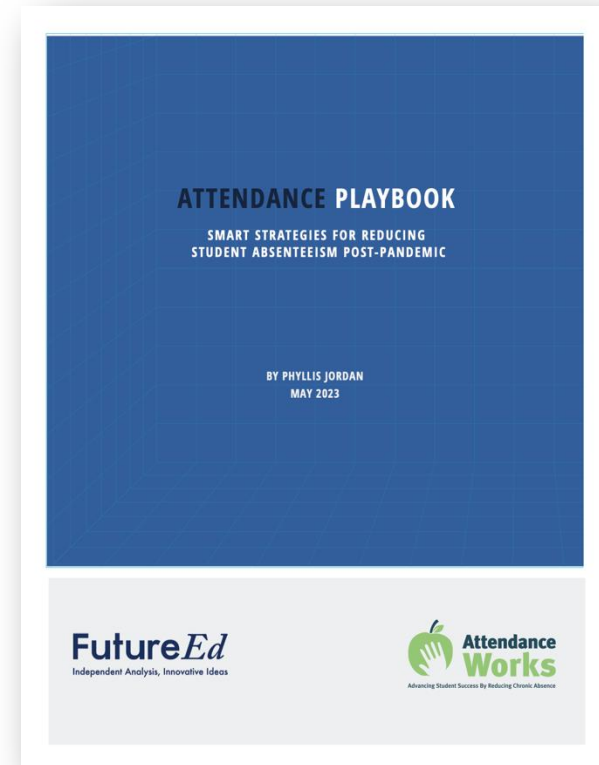
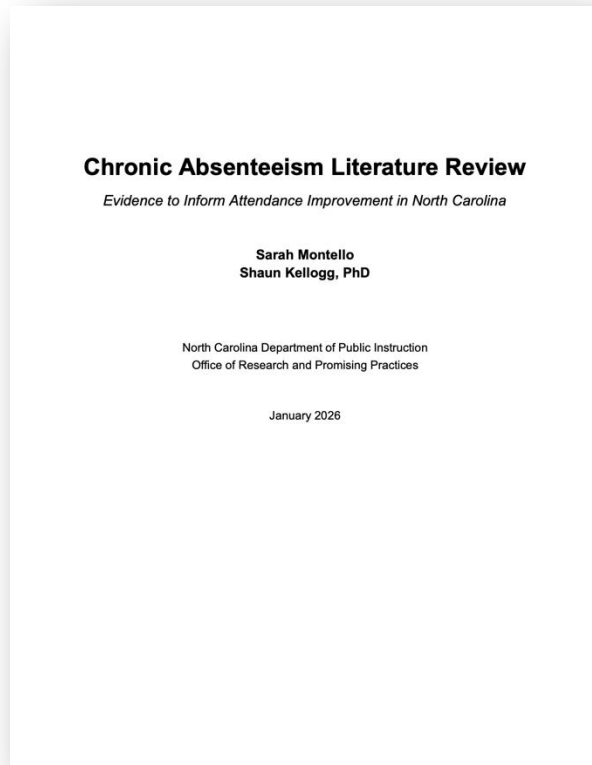
- AttendNC Counts is a statewide initiative focused on reducing chronic absenteeism by 50% by 2030.
- We support local attendance improvement by connecting schools and districts with attendance data and research, planning tools, and examples of promising practices.



[go.ncdpi.gov/attendnc-counts](https://go.ncdpi.gov/attendnc-counts)

# Guided by Research

*Research guides the strategies, tools, and examples shared through AttendNC Counts.*



# AttendNC Planning Guides

*Planning guides translate attendance research into practical steps for schools and districts.*



## Families and Caregivers

Plain-language guidance and resources to address barriers and build routines.



## Teachers and School Teams

Tiered supports, routines, templates, and progress monitoring tools.

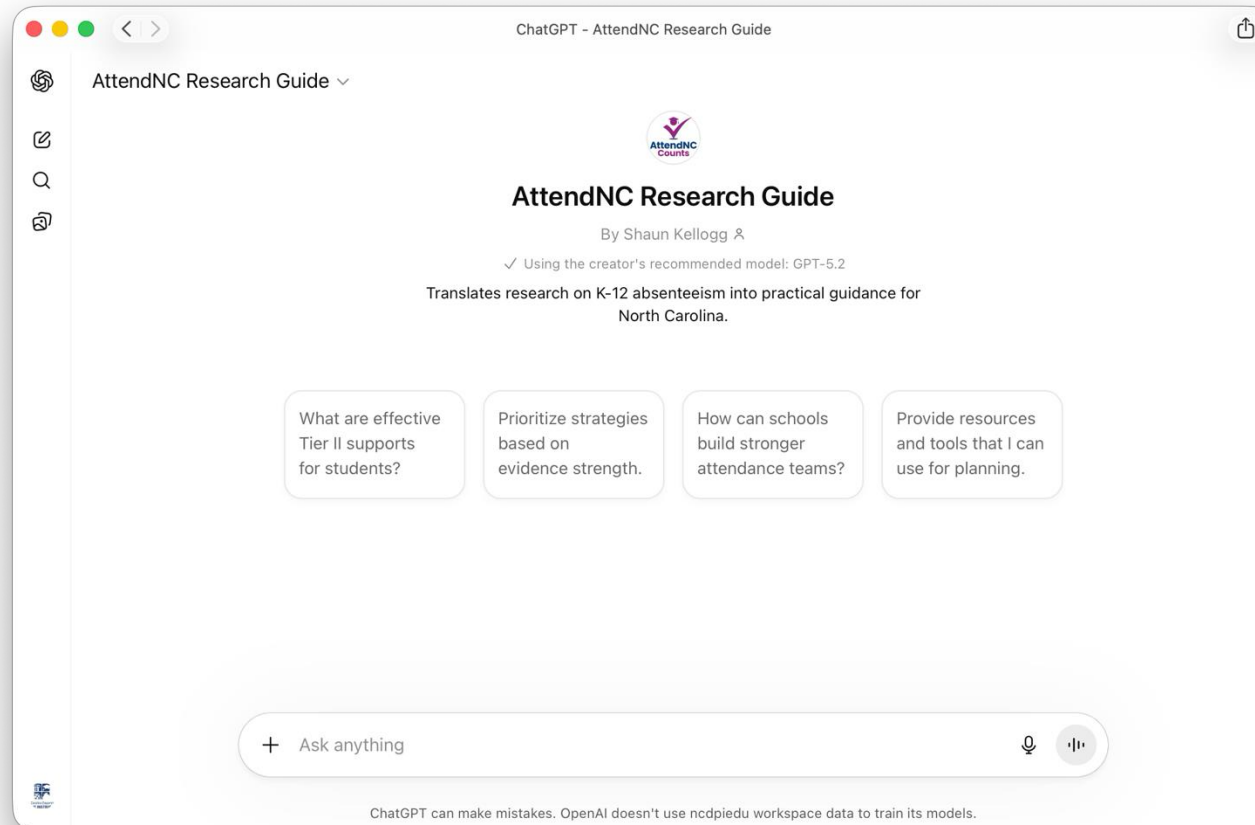


## District and State Leaders

Policy guidance, planning tools, communications assets, and tiered strategies.

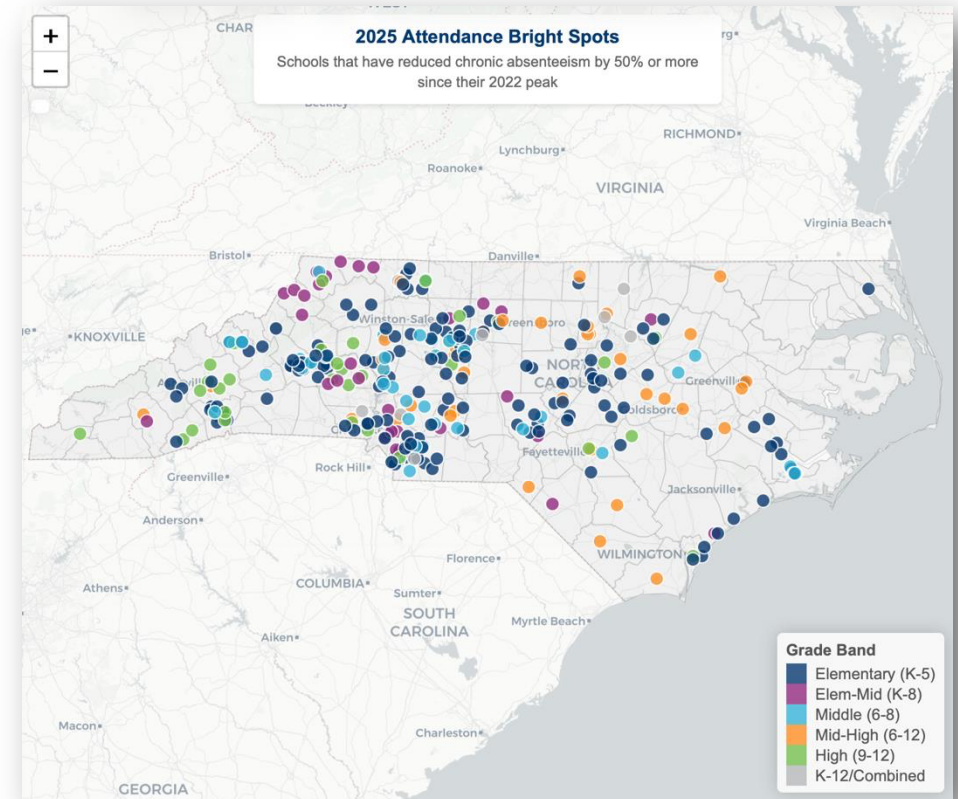
# Accessible and Actionable for Educators

*An AI-powered research guide helps educators quickly find, understand, and apply attendance research.*



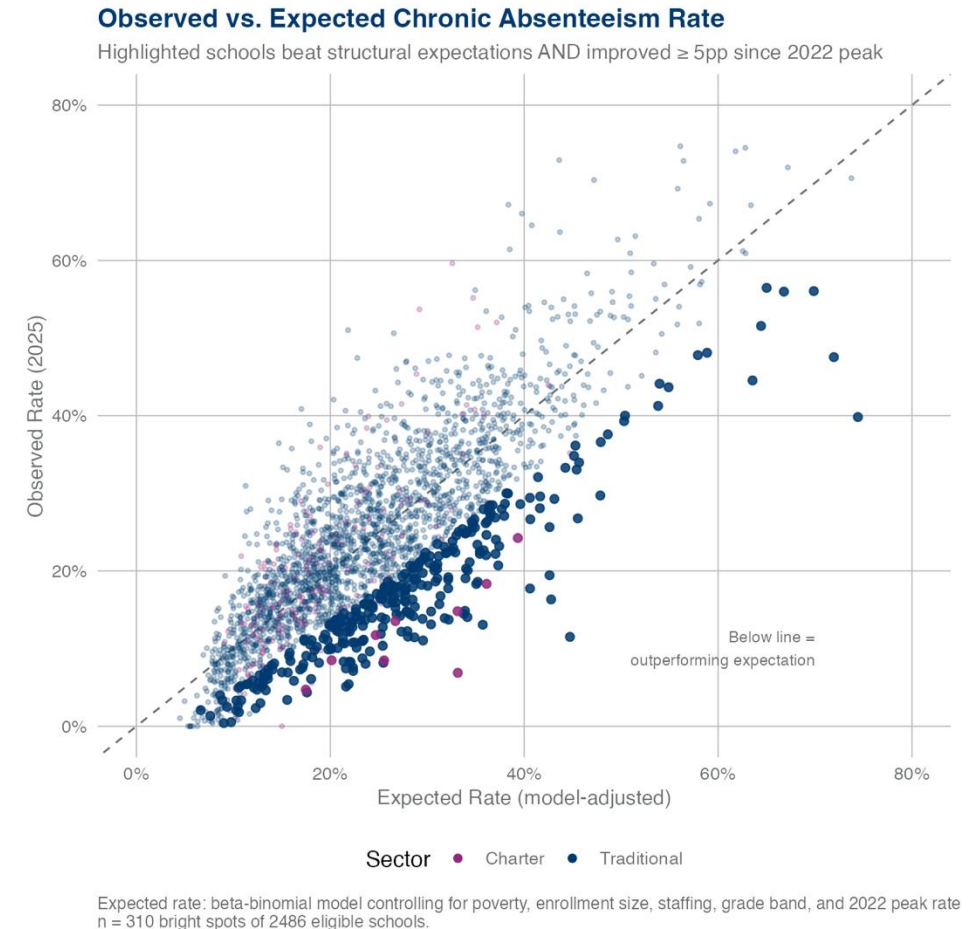
# AttendNC Bright Spots

- The first Bright Spots approach used a simple, transparent rule: schools with a **50% or greater reduction** in chronic absenteeism from the 2021–22 peak.
- This made the results **easy to explain, share, and replicate**, but it did not account for differences in school context.
- This approach **overlooked schools making significant progress** in more challenging contexts.



# Improved Bright Spots Model

- The improved model **identifies schools reducing chronic absenteeism more than expected**, given their context.
- It **accounts for structural and socioeconomic factors**, reducing the risk of misleading comparisons across very different schools.
- This **better surfaces schools that are making meaningful progress** even when they face substantial socioeconomic or structural barriers.

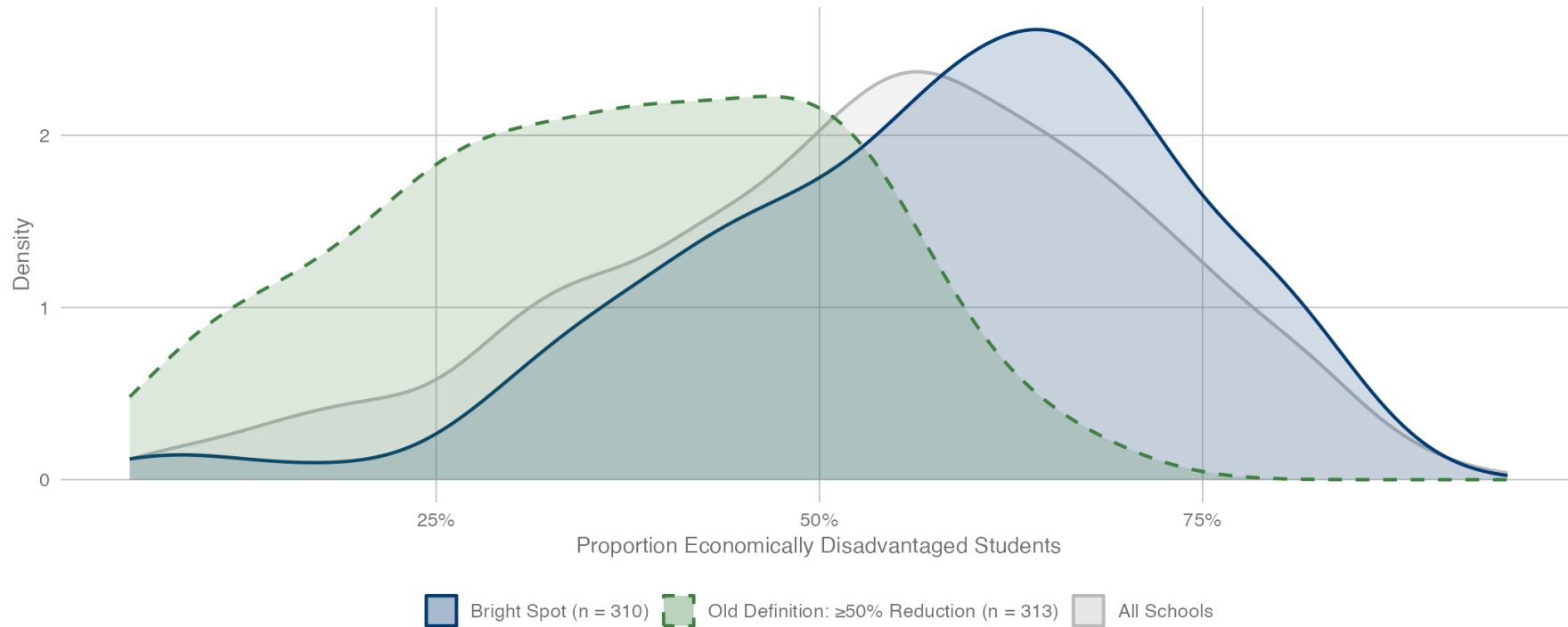


# Making Hidden Bright Spots Visible

*The context-adjusted model identifies more bright spots in higher-poverty schools that were overlooked by using a simple percent-reduction rule.*

## Economic Disadvantage Share: Current Model vs. Old Definition

Simple  $\geq 50\%$  reduction rule (green) favors lower-poverty schools vs. value-added model (blue)



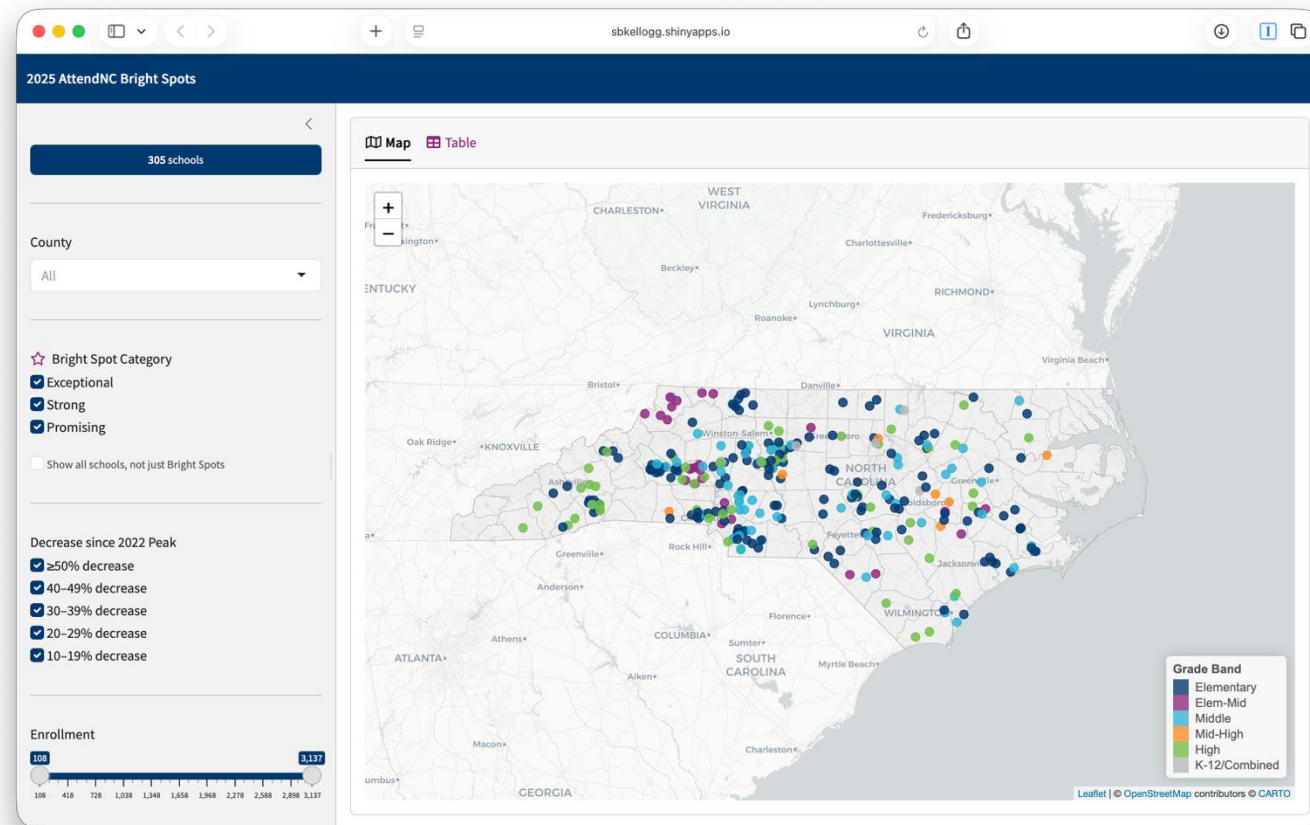
Grey = all NC schools. Old definition:  $\geq 50\%$  reduction from 2022 peak.  
Current model bright spots excluded from old-definition group.

# Statewide Findings

- Identified **310 bright spot schools** that significantly outperformed expectations for reducing chronic absenteeism from the 2021–22 peak to the 2024–25 school year.
- Bright spots span **62 counties** and **75 districts**, showing that meaningful attendance improvement is occurring across a broad range of communities.
- The median bright spot school reduced chronic absenteeism by **19.2 percentage points**, with an average reduction of **55.6%** from its 2021–22 peak.

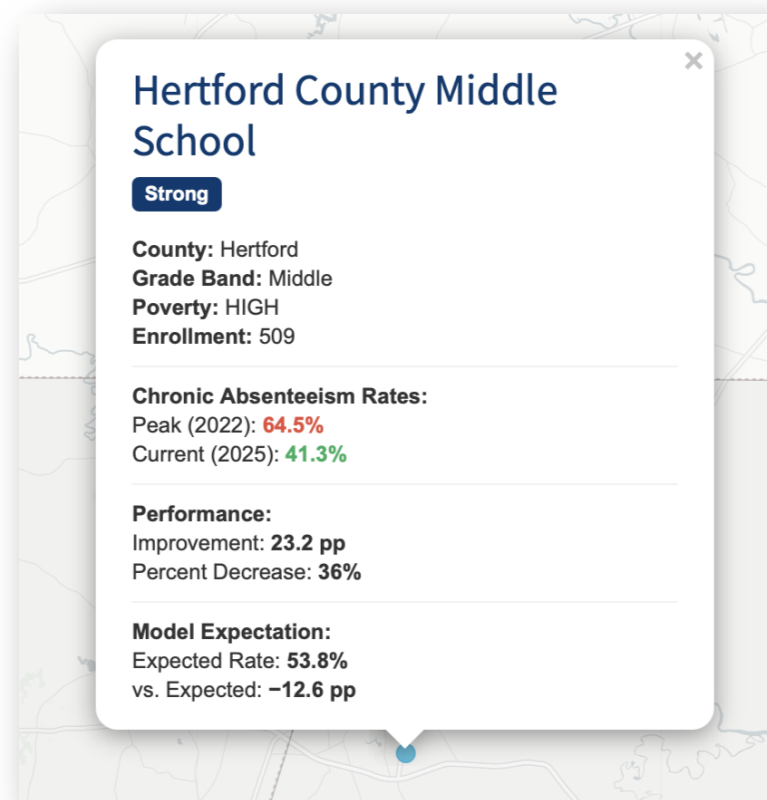
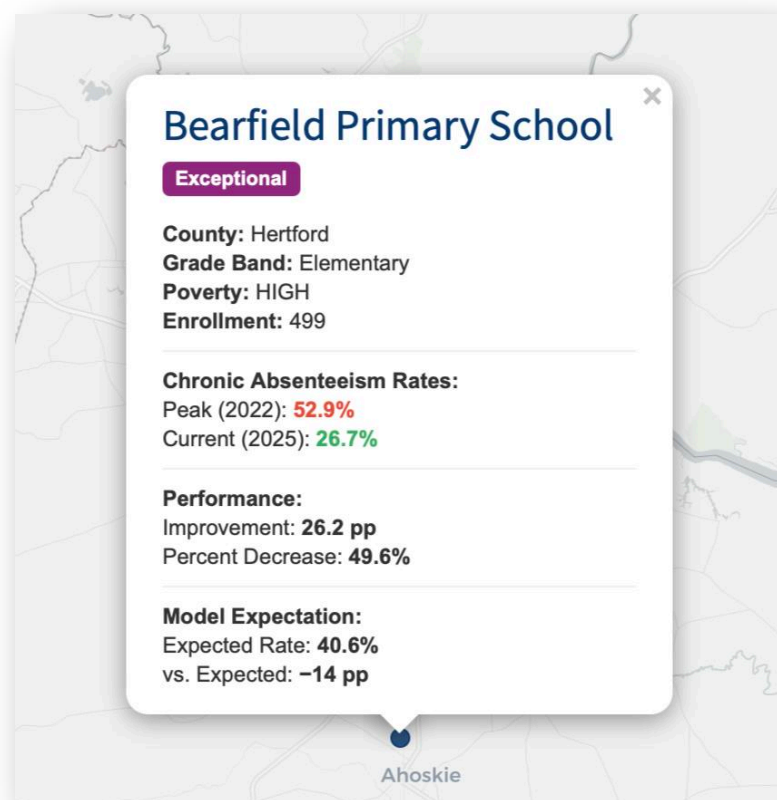
# Updated Bright Spots Dashboard

*The dashboard makes the Bright Spots results explorable so districts, regions, and partners can identify schools to learn from.*



# Hertford County Schools Spotlight

*The improved model surfaced two previously overlooked Bright Spot schools in Hertford County, highlighting the significant progress they made.*



# What's Next for AttendNC Bright Spots?

Our Brady Education Foundation proposal has been recommended for funding to:

- **Conduct a 12-month feasibility study** focused on reducing chronic absenteeism in northeastern North Carolina.
- Use the Positive Deviance framework to **identify and learn from Bright Spot schools.**
- Translate local practices into school-owned **Attendance Action Plans.**
- Engage research, district, school, and community partners to **support implementation, evaluation, and scale-up.**