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Manuscripts should be written in a clear, non-technical style for an audience consisting largely of preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and administrators. Each article should not exceed 15 double-spaced pages, including references and a bibliography when appropriate (APA style). Authors should email a copy of their article with a separate title page that states the author(s), institution, position within that institution, and a contact address and telephone number. Deadline for submission to the fall issue is May 15 and deadline for the spring issue is November 15.

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Residency Teacher Support and How High Leverage Practices Impact Success

by Joey Lord and Lane Wesson

For teachers, particularly those embarking on their journey in the classroom, discovering a passion for education can indeed pose a significant initial hurdle. However, surpassing the five-year mark signifies an achievement as it takes a lot of work. Teachers are often exhausted, overworked, underpaid, and desperately trying to keep up with all the grading and paperwork accompanying their day-to-day planning and instruction. Teacher discontent and burnout are real. Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate and district administrators are struggling to fill those vacancies. According to the 2021-2022 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina report, approximately 7,300 of the state's 93,832 teachers who were employed in an NC public school (charter schools excluded) in March 2021 were no longer employed in March 2022 (NCDPI, 2023). While the number of unfilled teaching vacancies in North Carolina is shockingly high, it is down from the previous year when 7,735 teachers reportedly left the state's public schools (NCDPI, 2023).

Teacher shortage concerns, increased turnover rates, and declining enrollment in university educator preparation programs (EPPs) are causing state and local officials to worry about the future of the professional education workforce. While there is still no single identifiable factor that drives teachers to stay or leave, historically research has noted common areas of concern. Teachers thinking of leaving the profession or who have already left report compensation, unreasonable expectations, and an inability to protect their well-being as their top motivators (Bryant et. al, 2023).

Making it past the first five years is crucial for new teachers. As state and local school officials search for strategies to address the current crisis in the educator workforce, one promising approach that has regained traction in the last few years is the Teacher Residency Program (formerly known as Lateral Entry Licensure) — this is in part because state and local districts were allowed to use federal pandemic relief aid when implementing these programs after COVID-19 (Worley & Zerbino, 2023).

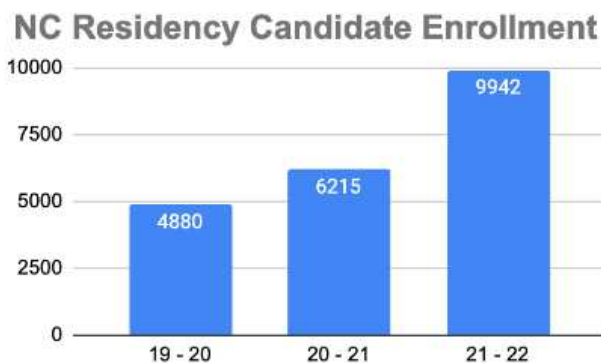
The teacher residency program is an alternative pathway for individuals who already hold an earned bachelor's degree and wish to obtain a teaching license while being employed as a classroom teacher. Residency Licensure (RL) programs are typically overseen by institutions of higher education that work in conjunction with the school district where the RL teacher is employed. North Carolina has seen a dramatic rise in RL candidates in the past three years as school districts statewide are capitalizing on these individuals to fill critical teaching needs.

Problem

Since the pandemic, NC has seen a surge in candidates seeking an alternative pathway to earn a teaching license through a residency licensure program. According to the 2021-2022 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina report, NC Residency Licensure candidate enrollment has more than doubled in the last three years (see Figure 1) and is considered the most rapidly growing population of teacher education candidates in the state (NCDPI, 2023).

Since enrollment is steadily on the rise in residency programs across the state and classroom vacancies are being filled with individuals who are seeking a new career path, things should seem optimistic.

Figure 1



However, teachers in NC continue to leave the profession at an alarming rate and classroom teachers hired under the Residency Licensure programs are leaving at the highest rate among all classroom teachers vacating the profession.

Teacher Education Enrollment Trends

The number of student candidates preparing to become classroom teachers is an indicator of not only the future teacher supply chain but also the overall appeal of the teaching profession (Kraft & Lyon, 2022). According to the 2022 Title II report, educator preparation program enrollments are equivalent to 70% of what it was 10 years earlier. In the academic year 2020-21, 591,000 people were enrolled in EPPs across the nation, compared to 880,000 in the 2010-11 academic year (USDE, 2022). In the last decade, total enrollment in both traditional and alternative educator preparation programs has continued to drop steadily until leveling out in 2015. Except for the 2018-2019 academic year, where numbers fell again, enrollment has remained relatively stable. The recovery we are beginning to see in EPPs nationwide is primarily due to alternative licensure routes. Since 2018, enrollment has increased in alternative programs by 20% nationwide, whereas enrollment in traditional programs has only increased by 4% during the same time period (NCTQ, 2023). Fortunately, for North Carolina, the state has seen a small positive change in EPP teacher candidates in both traditional and alternative (residency) licensure routes since 2018 (NCDPI, 2023).

North Carolina Enrollment Trends

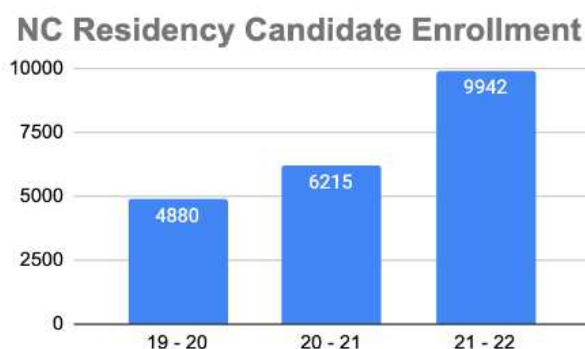
In January 2023, there were over 36,000 unfilled full-time teaching positions nationwide; over 5,000 of those were in North Carolina (Shelton, 2023). When

the 2021-2022 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina report was released earlier this year, preliminary data indicated that North Carolina was seeing an increase in teacher candidate enrollment in educator preparation programs across the state (NCDPI, 2023). According to the report, since 2019 traditional candidate program enrollment has, on average, increased by almost 48% (see Figure 2) and residency candidate program enrollment has more than doubled (see Figure 3) (NCDPI, 2023).

Figure 2



Figure 3



With routes to teacher licensure constantly shifting, the residency licensure program has become the most rapidly growing population of teacher candidates in North Carolina. Unfortunately, residency licensure candidates are also leaving the profession at an increasingly rapid rate; approximately 40% faster than that of traditional teacher candidates (NCDPI, 2023).

North Carolina Teacher Candidate Attrition

State attrition rates differ dramatically between those considered experienced and those considered beginning teachers (those with fewer than three full years of experience). Beginning teachers account for approximately 27% of all teachers who left the profession during the 2021-2022 academic year (NCDPI, 2023). Residency-licensed teachers, a subgroup of both beginning and experienced

teachers, accounted for 11.85% of all teachers who left the profession (NCDPI, 2023). Of the 6,684 residency-licensed teachers who left the teaching profession in 2022, almost 72% (4,745) were classified as beginning teachers. The state attrition rate for non-residency licensed teachers was 6.9% indicating that residency-licensed teachers, as a whole, had an approximate 58.2% higher rate of attrition than their non-residency counterparts (NCDPI, 2023).

With attrition on the rise and North Carolina public schools in crisis over staffing shortages, two unanswered questions remain: Why are the first few years in the classroom so arduous for so many teachers? and What is being done to combat the critical and growing loss of certified classroom teachers? When considering these questions, one should recognize that, unlike other professions, education rarely differentiates job responsibilities for novice teachers (Bauer & Altbergs, n.d.). Teaching is not like other professions that can allow for progression of job requirements and responsibilities that those new to other fields have time to grow into; instead, the expectation of a new teacher is that they should possess the same skills and have the same required responsibilities as their veteran colleagues (Bauer & Altbergs, n.d.).

Additionally, more often than not, schools do not have the necessary funding or the personnel required to support new teachers outside of the state-mandated Beginning Teacher (BT) program. Although the alternative pathway model of intensive teacher training while working as a full-time teacher helps those individuals in residency programs with content, there are additional ways individual schools and/or school systems can better support their novice teachers during and beyond their first three years in the classroom. Schools can create safe spaces that induct novice teachers into the field of education rather than pushing them out of the field entirely by implementing high-leverage practices in their buildings and classrooms.

High Leverage Practices (HLPs)

North Carolina is a member of the National Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center. This organization, developed at the University of Florida, focuses on supporting “students with disabilities in achieving college- and career-ready standards by building the capacity of state personnel preparation systems to prepare teachers and leaders to implement evidence-based practices within multi-tiered systems of support” (CEEDAR Center, About Us, 2023). CEEDAR has partnered with the Council

for Exceptional Children (CEC) to develop and publish twenty-two high-leverage practices. High-leverage practices are often described as frequently occurring educational practices that all educators should know how to employ. Those practices should be based on evidence and reflect methods that, when successfully implemented, can improve results for every learner.

These high-leverage practices are organized around four primary aspects of teacher practice: collaboration (HLP 1-3), assessment (HLP 4-6), social/emotional/behavior (HLP 7-10), and instruction (HLP 11-22). See Table 1 for each HLP in alignment with teacher performance.

Table 1

Teacher Practice: Collaboration, Assessment, Social/Emotional/Behavioral, Instruction

Collaboration
HLP 1: Collaborating with professionals to increase student success
HLP 2: Lead effective meetings with professionals and families
HLP 3: Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services
Assessment
HLP 4: Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs
HLP 5: Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs
HLP 6: Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes
Social/Emotional/Behavioral
HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment
HLP 8: Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior
HLP 9: Teach social behaviors
HLP 10: Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans
Instruction
HLP 11: Identify and Prioritize Long- and Short-Term Goals
HLP 12: Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal
HLP 13: Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals
HLP 14: Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence
HLP 15: Provide scaffolded supports
HLP 16: Use explicit instruction
HLP 17: Use flexible grouping
HLP 18: Uses strategies to promote student engagement
HLP 19: Use assistive and instructional technologies
HLP 20: Provide intensive instruction
HLP 21: Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings
HLP 22: Provide positive and constructive feedback

The NC CEEDAR state leadership team (SLT) is currently working on a continuum of those practices through teacher stages of development beginning with the teacher candidate, then moving to the student teacher, next to the novice/beginning teacher, and finally to the veteran teacher. This continuum shows the knowledge and skills that should be taught and practiced during each stage of teacher development and could be used as an observation instrument in the future.

Solution

After a qualitative data collection process that took place during the advising process at an NC private University, researchers identified critical support areas indicated by the pool of current NC residency candidates. With 53 participants and a range of 27 to 63 years of age, the researchers were able to get a snapshot of desired training and practice reinforcement shared by a group of NC residency teachers. The researchers organized those support areas by each year in which residency teachers are in their respective classrooms. These supports were also aligned with the current NC Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) and HLPs. Table 2 identifies the supports needed in year one of Residency candidates' teaching.

Table 2
Year One Supports

Topic/Support	Activities & Understandings	NCPTS	HLPs
Classroom Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with parents/guardians & students • Building relationships • Motivation • Establishing a positive classroom environment 	2a, 2b, 2c, 2e, 4g	HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, & respectful learning environment HLP 9: Teach social behaviors HLP 18: Use strategies to promote student engagement
Equitable Access for ALL Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation • Understanding data & how it informs instruction/planning • IEPs, 504, ELL, MTSS • NCSCOS unpacking documents • Flexible grouping, and organizing teams to develop cooperation, collaboration, & student leadership 	2b, 2c, 2d, 3c, 3d, 4b, 4c, 4f, 4h, 5a	HLP 1: Collaborating with professionals to increase student success HLP 15: Provide scaffolded supports HLP 17: Use flexible grouping HLP 22: Provide positive and constructive feedback

Although many teachers have had coursework through an EPP directly addressing classroom management, the reality is that most beginning teachers had few opportunities to practice the various styles and strategies until they were in their own classroom. In addition, many NC residency teachers have not had a classroom management course before beginning their teaching positions. Therefore, classroom management can be one of the biggest challenges that residency teachers face in their first year of teaching. According to Roth (2015), "when teachers have trouble establishing management and order, their morale unfortunately diminishes as they feel they are not up to the task, resulting in stress and burnout" (p. 14). Poor classroom management can be detrimental to student achievement and development.

In the second year of teaching, residency program candidates identified assessment as a critical support area. Despite the importance of assessment in classrooms, many teachers report having never received formal instruction on how to design or analyze assessments (ASCD, 2023). A recent survey showed that fewer than half the states in the country require competency and/or proficiency in assessment for teacher licensure (Stiggins, 2002). Table 3 shows residency teachers identified this critical support area as being needed in year two of their teaching. Those residency teachers also identified Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) as an area for support in year two of their teaching career.

Table 3

Year Two Supports

Topic/Support	Activities & Understandings	NCPTS	HLPs
Interdisciplinary instructional planning to include technology integration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use variety of research-verified instructional methods (instruction-centered and student-centered) • Engage students in higher-level thinking through integration of technology • Appropriate assessment techniques and feedback 	4c, 4d, 4e	<p>HLP 4: Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs</p> <p>HLP 6: Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes</p> <p>HLP 19: Use assistive and instructional technologies</p>
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LETRS training • Advocating for schools and students • Demonstrating high ethical standards • Leading in the classroom • Working with stakeholders 	1a, 1d, 1e, 3a, 4b	<p>HLP 1: Collaborating with professionals to increase student success</p> <p>HLP 2: Lead effective meetings with professionals and families</p> <p>HLP 3: Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services</p>

Due to the weight of End-of-Grade tests in North Carolina, many teachers feel an inordinate amount of pressure to emphasize reading and math instruction over other content areas. Content areas like science and social studies are oftentimes worked into the day if they are taught at all. Once in their third year, residency teachers see the value of integrating those two content areas into math and literacy instruction. Table 4 shows residency teachers identified this critical support area as being needed in year three of their teaching.

Table 4

Year Three Supports

Topic/Support	Activities & Understandings	NCPTS	HLPs
Methods (Science, SS, *ELA, *Math) *If state required licensure examinations aren't passed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive integrative unit plan Classroom teaching experiences (methods related) Reflective practice 	3, 4, 5	HLP 1, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> edTPA Classroom management plan Professional development plan (SMART goals) Literacy case study 	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	HLP 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22

Coaching Model Beyond the New Teacher Support in North Carolina

The authors propose that EPPs should provide systematic support beyond college coursework and classroom instruction to support North Carolina residency program candidates. EPPs should provide coaching to these candidates each semester that aligns with specific modules created around the identified critical support needs. Clinical intern support provided by the school system and EPP should be as comprehensive as that provided in the traditional student teaching experience. Further, school districts should provide residency teachers with the same level of mentor support as that provided by a classroom clinical educator to a student teacher. With an enhanced relationship between school districts and EPPs, residency program teacher candidates can thrive instead of survive.

Schools, school districts, educator preparation programs, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction need to facilitate an ongoing dialogue to address the issues discussed here. This can be done through a state-wide committee with leadership composed of one member from each group inviting key members of each stakeholder group to be involved in the discussion. This group should report to the NC General Assembly, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the North Carolina Professional Education Preparation and Standards Committee (PEPSC). All of these bodies have legislative and budgetary jurisdiction over NC Public Schools and Educator Preparation Programs and can provide support to the proposed committee.

School districts nationwide are facing a crisis with classroom teacher shortages that have been building for years. North Carolina is no exception. During the 2021-2022 academic year, NC school systems hired 14,822 teachers labeled as underqualified (defined as not professionally licensed with provisional, temporary, emergency, long-term sub, or out-of-field teaching credentials), which accounted for approximately 15% of the total teacher population (Nguyen, Lam, & Bruno, 2022). NC rounds out the top five states with the most classroom teachers who currently fall into this category (Nguyen, Lam, & Bruno, 2022). In order to move forward, North Carolina school systems need to understand the factors that are pushing teachers to leave the classroom and tailor solutions that address the root causes of attrition in the state. Utilizing high-leverage practices could potentially build more fulfilling and equitable environments that address critical gaps in supporting today's classroom teachers, in turn, laying a stronger foundation for their future in the profession.

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Supporting Adolescent Identity Development Through Teacher Curatorship Of Netflix Youth Media

By Damiana Gibbons Pyles, Christopher
Cook, and Elizabeth Campbell

*I*n July of 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly passed “An Act to Enumerate the Rights of Parents To Direct the Upbringing, Education, Health Care, and Mental Health of Their Minor Children.” More commonly known as the “Parent’s Bill of Rights” (PBOR), the legislation opens new challenges for middle school teachers as their students navigate the broad terrain of adolescent identity development. A first glance at the new law illuminates potentially benign emphases on parental notification, involvement, and consent (An Act to Enumerate, 2023). But ambiguities in the legislation’s language, contradictions between the new legislation and existing laws, and perils of the current political moment have led to wide-ranging differences in how the PBOR is being implemented, differences that vary significantly from place to place and from local school system to local school system. NC’s PBOR will call new attention to school discussions and content around particular student identities, making it even more important for teachers to articulate why they are choosing the texts that they put in their classrooms. It has always been sound pedagogical practice to align classroom materials with standards; the PBOR may make it especially important for teachers to articulate those alignments if they are having to justify their use of materials, especially media, to principals and parents.

At home, children are savvy consumers of media; they have become streaming media children (Gibbons Pyles, 2023), who are used to the ability to make choices about what they consume, based on what algorithms recommend, of course, across multiple genres geared just for their age and interests. This makes them shrewd consumers of streaming texts. When it comes to the classroom, though, their texts are often more limited than the ones that they can view at home. But we can combine what is appealing in the wide range of shows children prefer with what is pedagogically sound. Therefore, we both advocate for teachers to expand their choices of books and other reading materials; in particular, we encourage teachers to include digital texts, in particular streaming media, in their classroom resources.

In addition to providing more engagement for students, digital texts can expand teacher agency in empowering ways by using teacher curatorship (Gibbons Pyles, Buchholz, Hash, & Hagaman, 2020). Based on the idea of choosing a range of different texts to showcase many ways of being young people in the world, even in school settings (Potter, 2012), teacher curatorship involves teachers choosing from a variety of different



resources, including print, digital, and multimodal texts as a way to broaden resources students learn from in their classrooms. Teachers carefully choose texts based on pedagogical criteria, standards, and the needs of their specific students. In other words, teacher curatorship is the deliberate choice of classroom texts that teachers choose from their professional knowledge of the content, the standards, and their students. Moreover, teacher curatorship “paves the way for students to become engaged with and learn from media texts in a way that becomes inquiry-driven, informational research/reading/viewing inside and outside of school” (Gibbons Pyles et al, 2020, p. 307). Teacher curatorship allows for digital texts to come into the classroom to improve pedagogy and to engage students in new ways.

Understanding the young adolescent and their unique developmental needs is critical to the process of teacher curatorship. In fact, providing an educational experience that fosters the physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological development of young adolescents is central to middle grades education (Bishop & Harrison, 2021; Brinegar & Caskey, 2022). Young adolescents are generally eager and curious to learn about topics that are interesting and personally relevant to them, want to belong to a peer group and establish social stature, explore identity formation and their place in the community, and begin the quest for independence as a young adolescent (Brinegar & Caskey, 2022). In essence, providing academic choices where students see themselves and their personal interests in the curriculum, allowing students the opportunity to engage and discuss issues with their peers, celebrating the diverse and authentic identities present in the classroom, and examining complex issues and engaging in problem-solving can be a meaningful and captivating way to capitalize on the interests of

young adolescents while maximizing learning and engagement in the classroom.

In this article, we offer the beginnings of a curated set of Netflix shows for a teacher's digital library. Each of the shows in this list focuses on middle school tweens with recognition not only of diversity but also of quality. The shows explore young adolescents in rich ways, covering a lot of ground. Several clips could be introduced into classroom curriculum without much worry about offending parents and others, while still providing positive encouragement for tweens. Through offering some criteria and teacher questions along with this beginning of a curated list of Netflix shows, we want to showcase how streaming media celebrates adolescence in a variety of ways and experiences. We coupled this by providing some guidance for how teachers can curate streaming media collections to support their own students' learning. This use of streaming media offers relevant and authentic examples of young adolescents and allows students to see themselves in the content and potential classroom discussions taking place on a consistent basis.



Streaming media texts to build classroom streaming media resources

For this article, we are encouraging teachers to choose their streaming media from Netflix's catalog, namely Netflix's original programming for teens. We chose Netflix because it is the leading streaming service globally with nearly 247 million subscribers in 2023 (Sperling, 2023). Netflix also produces hundreds of original movies and series for youth, a collection that spans children's entire childhoods. Gibbons Pyles (2023) notes that "This gives the appearance that the content is unending; one could watch forever and not run out of programs to watch. This gives kids the idea that they could find everlasting fulfillment from this media as it will not run out" (p.7).

Though there is a paywall for Netflix, it is very accessible both to teachers and students. Also, the focus on original programming is helpful because unlike other content, which can come and go due to copyright and distribution contracts, Netflix's original programming remains accessible as long as a person subscribes to the service.

Based on the characteristics of middle school students, we created a set of criteria that teachers could use to choose their streaming media texts. Teachers can also use these questions as they think through which texts would be good for their own students (see Figure 1). We recommend that the Netflix shows that teachers choose have the following characteristics:

- Main characters are middle school-aged
- Middle school students' personal interests are depicted positively
- Characters represent a diversity of identities, backgrounds, and experiences
- Characters are authentic to middle school students
- Successes are shown along with struggles
- Complex issues are discussed
- Problem-solving is demonstrated by the youth
- The shows themselves are engaging for youth sparking discussion

Figure 1.

Questions teachers can ask as they choose streaming media
Who are the main characters in this show or movie? Who are the secondary characters? How do the characters interact with each other in positive ways?
How does this show represent adolescents in authentic ways?
Do the adults in the show foster nurturing and supportive relationships with the tweens/teens, or are the youth on their own? What does each circumstance bring out in the tween characters?
Which tweens and/or teens are represented in this show? Is there diversity, and if so, is it positive?
Would this streaming media be appropriate for students to watch on their own, or would the students analyze it better with facilitation in class?

In this article, we provide some example Netflix Original shows that represent tweens in positive, authentic ways. These shows allow for a range of different positive representations of young adolescence (see Table 1). Many of these shows represent tweens and teens who have to cope with conflicts with peer groups without adult guidance. *A Series of Unfortunate Events* follows three siblings—two tweens and a baby—as they fight against their villainous uncle who is trying to kill them to gain their inheritance. They have to problem-solve to stay alive. *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Jurassic World: Camp Cretaceous*, and *The Last Kids on Earth* all represent tweens and teens who have to work together to fight against creatures. In *The Last Kids on Earth*, the kids are on their own without adults. In *Kipo and Camp Cretaceous*, the adults are missing most of the time and/or are not helpful, and some adults are the villains in the show. Along with the plot points around conflict, the tweens and teens also go through more normal issues, such as unrequited crushes and friendship struggles.

Table 1. Selected Shows from Netflix

Show/Movie	Synopsis	Origin	Considerations
<i>Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts</i> Sechrist, R. & Wolkoff, B. (2020).	A 13 year old girl is lost, and she bands together with a group of other teens (and creatures) in a sci-fi animated series to find her parents and to battle those who try to harm her. She befriends another young tween girl and a teen boy as well who are good characters for middle schoolers.	Web comic	The first gay character in a children's animated show--positive and uplifting portrayal
<i>Hilda</i> Mueller, K., Pearson, L., Simpson, S., Eland, C. Korn, B. (2018-2023).	An 11 year old girl discovers that her world runs parallel to a fantastical world filled with elves and other characters	Graphic novel	
<i>Raising Dion</i> Barbee, C. et al. (Executive Producers). (2019–2022).	A young, Black boy discovers he has supernatural powers in this mystery sci fi series.	Web comic/short film	
<i>Jurassic World: Camp Cretaceous</i> Lueras, L., Kreamer, S., Spielberg, S., Trevorrow, C., & Marshall, F. (Executive Producers). (2020-2022).	A group of diverse teens win entry to Camp Cretaceous where they have to fight to survive against dinosaur and human enemies.	Jurassic World franchise	Teens on their own; incompetent or negative adults

<i>The Last Kids on Earth</i> Brallier, M. & Peterson, S. (2019–2021).	A group of teens with limited diversity are alone in a post-apocalyptic world in which they have to fight zombies and monsters while searching for adults.	Graphic novel series	Teens on their own
<i>Karma's World</i> Bridges, C., Commisso, V., Gaffney, C. Harris, W., O'Connell, D., Santomero, A.C., Stacey, J. (2021–2022).	A tween Black girl experiences various coming-of-age problems that she learns to cope with alongside a group of diverse friends and caring parents.	Ludacris's daughter	
<i>Motown Magic</i> Wakely, J. (2018–2019).	A tween Black boy enters a magical world that centers around Motown songs and Black cultural experiences as he learns lessons about life.	Motown songs	
<i>A Series of Unfortunate Events</i> Holland, C., et al. (2017-2019).	Two teens and their baby sister fight against villains in this fantastical world.	Book series	Unpleasant depictions of adults
<i>The Baby-Sitters Club</i> Schave, M., Martin, A.M., Friedman, L., Glazier, A., Chipera, M. (2020–2022).	A group of girls with limited diversity form a babysitting club where they learn different life lessons.	Book series	

Other shows have both realistic and fantastical elements. *Hilda* is a show that follows a tween girl who discovers a fantastical world that runs parallel to hers that only she and her friends can see. This show covers real-world issues for tweens, such as mother-daughter relationships, friendship issues, and developing a sense of agency in response to struggle. *Raising Dion* is a show about a young Black boy in Atlanta who inherits superpowers from his deceased father and his mother, and he must cope with these newfound powers along with violent threats from the outside. Dion must also form and maintain friendships in his new school, and he wants a more normal life, such as wanting to ride his bike to school on his own.

Some shows are about tweens solving problems representative of their age primarily in the real world. Though there are fantastical elements in *Motown Magic* where the young Black boy goes into a magical song world, these

forays into the songs are to learn lessons in his real life. In *Karma's World*, based on the musician Ludacris's daughter, a young Black girl problem-solves some real-world problems, mostly social and all age-appropriate. In *Baby-Sitters Club*, a group of girls start a business babysitting, but this show mostly involves learning lessons about conflicts young girls have, especially with family and friendship dynamics. All of the shows in this list, however, portray tweens problem-solving with peers and, sometimes, adults around issues they face and they do so in positive ways.

Teaching with Streaming Media

While the shows featured in this article are certainly entertaining and worth watching in general, the purpose of using streaming media in the classroom is to support the approved state curriculum and make learning more relevant and engaging for students. When using media, it is always best practice to consult one's administration regarding media choices; this is even more relevant given NC's (2023) "Parents' Bill of Rights." Still, media remains important to middle grades educators. In addition to addressing state standards, media can also be a valuable asset in supporting a middle grades advisory program. In fact, with a strong emphasis on social and emotional development and character education, most of the shows can easily be implemented in the middle school classroom. Though each of the television shows has numerous episodes, the goal in using streaming media is not to show the whole episode or series, but rather select specific scenes from the show that address relevant issues that highlight specific challenges and successes of young adolescents (e.g., peer and family relationships, self-identity, decision-making, empathy for others, having an impact on the community), as well as foster student engagement and rich classroom discussion. The goal is to select a clip that is long enough to capture student interest and introduce the content/issue being explored, typically between five to ten minutes in length.

For example, using episode one, "I am Karma" in the first season of *Karma's World*, would allow easy connections to both language arts and science. One advantage to using *Karma's World* is that the length of episodes is only 12-13 minutes long, making it easier to identify the specific clip to be used. In this case, it would also not be unreasonable to use the whole episode. In looking at the specific content standards, a 7th-grade English language arts teacher can address the reading standards (e.g., RL 7.2 and RL 7.3, Key Ideas and Evidence; RL7.4 and RL7.5, Craft and Structure) in the North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study (NC) Department of Public Instruction, 2017), while the

7th-grade science teacher can focus on the Energy: Conservation and Transfer standard, 7.P.2.4, in the North Carolina Essential Science Standards (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2019). In the episode, Karma navigates her first day of middle school, the excitement and disappointment of meeting new friends, and the hurt feelings around being teased about her name. In each episode, Karma's hip-hop and musical lyrics are highlighted as a way to navigate through her tween issues. Karma's creativity as expressed through her lyrics helps her to learn lessons about life's struggles at her age. In addition, her younger brother, Keys, an aspiring inventor, is working to develop the 'snack launcher'. In fact, each episode of the series introduces one of Keys' aspiring new inventions—a theme that can be revisited multiple times with different episodes. In regards to specific content, a language arts teacher could use the episode to address central ideas and themes, as well as poetry as text, while a science teacher could address innovation, inventions, and the use and impact of simple machines.



To be clear, the intent is not for students to learn the specifics of the video clip, but rather to use the clip to reinforce student understanding of the content in the class with a more relatable and relevant example. In the language arts class, the focus of the lesson would be on identifying the theme and how it is developed throughout the episode, analyzing the different character's perspectives, and examining how the lyrical text used influences our understanding and appreciation of the events taking place in the episode. Whereas, a science lesson may ask students to design an invention using simple machines (e.g., lever, inclined plane, wheel and axle, pulley, wedge, and screw) that could make an everyday task simpler. From a middle grades advisory standpoint, the episode highlights numerous topics worthy of discussion: beginning middle school, identity development, self-worth, and peer relationships. In this example, the use of the video clip is meant to capture student interest, provide a more engaging and relatable

context, and offer a more culturally diverse representation of what students encounter during young adolescence.

Conclusion

By collecting a set of Netflix shows that are relatable to middle school students, teachers are using their agency to curate a streaming media library that will help adolescents see themselves in positive ways. Shows such as *Karma's World* highlight significant experiences in tween's lives, such as their first day of middle school. They are opening up conversations about identity development and peer interactions. In her study of teenagers and Netflix, di Dalila (2020) found that:

[i]f handled correctly, the use of the platform can lead to the fruition of engaging stories, dense with meaning and food for thought, stories that are capable of seizing the anxieties of adolescence and post-adolescence, representing the diverse nuances of identity. Shows that have diverse casts open up these types of conversations for all of the students in class in different ways. (p. 304)

The passage of the PBOR could lead some to restrict what they use to reach the middle schoolers in their classrooms. But we hope it does not. By integrating in some Netflix streaming media, teachers can tap into multiple positive identities as they introduce this streaming media into the classroom, which can translate into greater engagement with the curriculum itself.

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Creating Communities of Care

by Shannon Baggett and Nancy Ruppert

Middle school students are our most important asset. They bring diverse funds of knowledge, skills, interests, and experiences to our schools. Both the Association for Middle Level Education (<https://amle.org>) and the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (<https://www.middlegradesforum.org/>) support similar attributes including social equity and developmental responsiveness. Both highlight organizational structures such as teaming and interdisciplinary instruction. Both advocate for dynamic leadership that is knowledgeable and visionary at the team and school levels. Resources and assessment tools provided by these organizations give middle school leaders opportunities to celebrate and share exceptional practices. We find that these organizations and their resources promote a spirit of care among all stakeholders, showcasing authentic caring as an important attribute of exemplary middle schools.

We believe great schools exist in North Carolina where academic success prevails, where all children are served well, and where exemplary teachers and leaders challenge students and produce magic in their classrooms. In this article, we have tapped into two North Carolina Schools to Watch (STW) middle schools to consider how teachers and leaders describe what “care” looks like in their personal and professional settings.

A Few Thoughts on Care Theory

Care theory, which provides the theoretical

framework for this study, is based on the act of taking care of oneself and others (Tronto, 1993). Noddings (1984) explains care ethics as the “attitude which expresses our earliest memories of both caring and being cared for” and, as such, claims it is “universally accessible” (p. 5). She continues by defining caring as “attending to the particular needs, opinions, and expectations of others” (p. 32). Monchinsky (2010) provides an overview of perspectives on care theory as well, which she supports with the work of other scholars; for example, Bowden (as cited in Monchinsky, 2010) notes that the caring perspective is marked by “a concern for care, responsiveness and taking responsibility in interpersonal relationships, and by a context-sensitive mode of deliberation that resists abstract formulations of moral problems” (p. 48). Likewise, Sevenhuijsen (as cited in Monchinsky, 2010) shares that care is directly related to “the activity of caring,” with care “primarily seen as an ability and a willingness to ‘see’ and to ‘hear’ needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met” (p. 48). Finally, Puchini (as cited in Barnes, 2015) asserts that “care goes beyond the repairing of wrongs and asserts impartial principles of equity” (p. 41).

When considered collectively, these authors provide a springboard for middle school educators to tap when discussing the culture of care that we want to establish on our teams and in our schools. As seen here, there is an art to care that includes both caring for others and being cared for oneself—all valuable tools that relate to the schoolwide equity we daily seek.

Examining Middle School Educators' Insights Related to Care

In an effort to bring practical advice to educators about what care looks like in North Carolina classrooms and schools, we invited classroom teachers and school and district leaders to share ideas. This qualitative study used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2001) and, to collect data, convenience sampling via surveys (Cochran, 1977). This sample population included colleagues from two North Carolina Schools to Watch (STW) middle schools. Participants were invited to answer four questions.

We also examined responses from interview data gathered from both NCMLE board members and NC middle school teachers and administrators. These participants shared their insights into how they care for themselves and one another by responding to the same four questions as those participants surveyed. Our sample population included a total of 30 educators who responded to these questions:

- How do you take care of yourself?
- How do you take care of your colleagues?
- How do you all take care of one another as a team?
- How do administrators create a schoolwide culture of care?

Next, we analyzed all responses to determine common themes. The results provide strong insights into the ways NC middle level educators provide care, which in turn identifies strategies and characteristics that can guide both current and future practice.

Our Findings

How educators take care of themselves.

Comments from educators reflect four general ways they take care of themselves, including physically, socially, spiritually, and through the purposeful structure of work-life balance. Physically, educators exercise and move. They walk, garden, bike, fish, and play sports. Socially, educators like spending time with friends and

family, cooking, playing games, and visiting. Spiritually, educators talked about how they reflect on their day or week, meditate, and practice yoga. Structurally, educators talk about how they arrange to leave work when they are allowed to leave on specific days, take time during the weekend for their own needs, and schedule time for self and family. The following are a few comments from participants:

- I make a practice out of being reflective and honest about my teaching and interactions with students, parents, and co-workers.
- I do not work past contract hours on Mondays and Fridays. I don't respond to parent emails or co-worker texts that are work-related on the weekends unless it's part of my weekly prep on Sunday evenings.
- I do not take things home, even if I have to stay later at school to finish something. But when I leave school, I leave the work behind.
- I started making myself leave at 3:30 at least two days a week, which gave me more time to actually do things I love.
- I do the things that make me feel good. I love doing yoga and going on walks, calling friends and family, cooking, being in nature, and reading.
- I take care of myself by living several lives, not just that of a teacher. I am a winemaker, awesome cook, husband, father, organic gardener, wild edible enthusiast, and soldier. I believe that I can fix and build almost anything if I can find the right YouTube video.
- Balance is hard. I am better now at making time to take care of myself physically and mentally, but it is always a challenge. I find ways to regularly go for walks and hikes, play music, read, and be present with my husband.
- If I nourish and honor my body, I feel more prepared to take on my days.
- "Self-care" is more of a mindset to me than actions. It is an understanding that we can control our positive outlook and project those feelings to those around us.
- Sometimes I need quiet and other times I need to be with people. I try to honor what I am feeling and be ok with that.

As middle school educators, we know that our students need critical support systems at school. We also realize that teachers cannot provide this support effectively if they do not nurture themselves first, fully seeking a life-work balance that fuels their teaching energies. Because teachers are by nature empathetic supporters of others, they want to provide the same level of care to one another.

Ways educators support one another. In successful middle schools, teachers support one another. This camaraderie outside the general assessment of students is a powerful tool for providing one another with social and emotional support. The comments from teachers and educational leaders about the experiences they had in being supported and in supporting others highlights mentoring and sharing resources, as well as co-planning and spending time within each other's classroom as effective practices they employ. Also, educators were intentional about boosting morale by creating social and celebratory events for the adults in the building. The other gift teachers share is taking time to purposefully listen. The following are some of the comments shared:

- Share information like school procedures from years past that aren't given every year to new teachers in the building.
- Create Shared Drives, Padlets, Wakelets of resources, ideas, and activities.
- Create 'how to' videos on a Shared Drive for tasks that others might want to know about, like How to Fill out a [___ form], or How to use ____.
- Allow and encourage new staff to be themselves. Do not expect them to accomplish or teach the way you do.
- If classes are reasonably small, combine classes to co-teach a topic or set up stations where students can rotate between two classes.
- Invite teachers to your classroom to view a fun activity.
- Plan together. Divide the work.
- Create common assessments.
- Boost morale by sharing supportive comments and encouragement with fellow teachers.

- Share information about professional development opportunities.
- Recognize and celebrate each other's achievements.
- Make school fun for teachers with hallway competitions like trivia, educational games, and spirit day participation.
- Give kudos to a teacher who's made your lesson or day brighter.
- If you have flexibility in your day, help out fellow teachers by covering a class for them so they can have time for self-care such as doctor appointments.
- Be solution-focused rather than dwelling on a negative situation or problem-solve to get the desired outcome.
- Be a listener.
- Work with the school counselor to engage in a mindfulness activity or help with student concerns.
- Support colleagues by listening, collaborating, celebrating, and commiserating!

The advice from educators about ways to help one another is excellent, especially when considering the unique needs of beginning teachers. Many of the suggestions focus on how teachers and leaders can work collaboratively to support each other, but those surveyed also had specific thoughts about the ways in which teams can support one another.



Ways team members support one another.

One of most recognized characteristics of middle schools is interdisciplinary teaming. When teachers, support personnel, and administrators serve a common group of students, the students learn with and are mentored by the adults in the building. Educators also shared strategies and ideas for taking care of team members. Their comments were related to setting common rules, expectations, and planning together. For team meetings, they suggested bringing group snacks and giving positive feedback to one another. Additionally, they discussed showing kindness and patience by communicating with and checking in on their colleagues, and by listening. They discussed ways to support new teachers by covering a duty time so their beginning teacher colleagues could get a snack or take a break. Representative comments included:

- Create common rules and expectations for the team.
- Set team goals.
- Make birthdays visible and find a small way to celebrate the person.
- Make team copies of something everyone needs, like field trip forms.
- Combine classes and teams periodically for a celebration or content-related activity.
- Share and collaborate on content, lessons, and expectations.
- Create anonymous acts of kindness.
- Share positive feedback from others about a teacher with that colleague.
- Offer to cover a meeting or duty for a newer or struggling teacher.
- Provide snacks and/or coffee at content or grade-level meetings.
- Set the tone for meetings to focus on positives and be solution-oriented in order to get the outcome the team desires.
- Check in with colleagues. Ask frequently, "How are you?"
- Respect everyone's voice.
- Meet others' needs; some days are tough.
- Do not down-talk behind someone's back.
- Determine how to lift someone, then act on it.
- Give grace and be kind



When teams of educators collaborate, communicate, and problem-solve, young adolescents benefit. The responses of teachers on these teams suggested that the relationships teachers have with one another are powerful models for their students to witness. Our final question asked participants to consider the ways in which administrators create communities of care.

Ways administrators create a culture of care.

We asked educators to give us insights into what administrators do to promote care in their schools. We received many strong ideas and descriptions; for example: caring administrators are present and visible—they check in on classes and notice work that happens. They also constantly engage in the art of listening. They find ways for teachers to observe and plan with one another. They recognize that professional development can include giving teachers time and resources for developing their craft and collaborating on school-wide initiatives, which ensures creative and productive opportunities. Caring administrators also use a collaborative structure for decision-making that includes feedback and suggestions. Finally, they recognize and encourage the good work of faculty and staff in their building. Allowing teachers and teams to take risks and supporting them in their efforts is a critical role of administrators. The following comments showcase the ways in which effective administrators create a school-wide culture of care; specifically, they:

- Stop by the classrooms to say good morning.
- Visit classrooms often for just a few minutes. This allows for students and teachers to be comfortable so a formal observation isn't intimidating.
- Provide time for teachers to observe one another and debrief on their learning from the observations.
- Give thoughtful and meaningful feedback during observation cycles and walkthroughs.
- Encourage teachers to try new things while recognizing the value of proven techniques/resources.
- Provide opportunities for useful professional development with engaging leaders.
- Honor school improvement team decisions and planning.
- Be present and available to teachers to vent or question without judgment.
- Remember what it is like to be a teacher.
- Minimize tasks that take teachers away from instruction, like excessive paperwork.
- Recognize teachers who are really trying to improve.
- Set the tone for the building—look for positives and celebrate the success of students and staff. They are solution-focused.
- Leave notes for teachers in mailboxes recognizing something they did great or just words of encouragement.
- Plan staff outings so the staff can get to know each other outside of the school building and create relationships.
- Pay attention to what is important to staff.
- Practice thoughtfulness, like thank you notes, chocolate, and kind words.
- Put good people around you and strive to work with passionate educators.
- Find ways to lift the load.
- Give "Happy Friday" bags to the staff.

Administrators, teachers, and school leaders who participated in this survey and these interviews illustrated the myriad ways they are present and intentional in supporting staff. They use proven structures and are mindful of solid suggestions and teacher needs, remaining purposefully present in the lives of their educators. They value the teachers in their buildings and are quick to show them their worth.

Conclusions

Care theorists invite us to look for ways to engage with one another and to care for ourselves by interpersonal, social, and physical means. They invite us to create interdependence and promote humane, joyful spaces (Barnes, 2015; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1993). In this article, we discuss the importance of care as it relates to middle school teachers and leaders, and we share, through our participants, suggestions for creating this foundational culture within a school. We believe that when leaders and team members are intentional about creating communities of care, when caregivers and educators take care of themselves, and when those who work together take care of one another, morale increases and educators are better prepared to support their students. Further, we believe building camaraderie is a critical element in promoting care.



As seen through AMLE, communities of care have been part of middle schools since they were first designed as spaces that support young adolescents; our hope is to promote a more intentional focus on care, starting with school leadership. Bishop and Harrison (2021) provide specific characteristics of successful middle school leaders including “leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about young adolescents, equitable practices, and educational research” (p. 11). Data from the 2022 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS), Q10.3, indicate faculty from our North Carolina Schools to Watch feel that school leadership affects “an educator's willingness to keep teaching at their school” (NCDPI, 2022, 10.3). These data suggest middle school leaders truly impact teacher retention. It stands to reason that creating a schoolwide culture of care is inherent to this style of effective leadership.

We are grateful for those who participated in this reflection of how they take care of themselves, one another, their teams, and their school communities. We recommend middle school leaders invite their teachers, support staff, and all stakeholders to share descriptions of the ways in which they care for themselves and one another, and in doing so target a culture of authentic care as a schoolwide focus. We believe strong academic support and intentionally focusing on developing communities of care will allow middle school students and their advocates to thrive in meaningful and equitable ways.



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Who is Leaving North Carolina Middle Schools?

By Holly J. Thornton

The Teacher Shortage

The nation, including North Carolina, has been facing a teacher shortage with 86% of public schools this past year struggling to find teachers. Forty-days into the 2022-2023 school year, 5,095 classrooms, approximately one in every eighteen classrooms in North Carolina, did not have an appropriately licensed teacher (North Carolina Justice Center, 2023). Confounding issues such as the pandemic, economic strife and the nation's political divide, complicate addressing the shortage in a meaningful, productive way. School districts struggle to find qualified, licensed teachers, while the enrollment in teacher preparation programs has been declining. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2023) stated that children in the state are receiving a less than stellar education experience thus causing concern about a future workforce that cannot meet the needs of a modern economy. This has led to simplified, unvetted, and likely less rigorous alternative paths to teaching.

Studies have examined novice teachers' experiences and the attrition rate of those new to the profession. In the 2021-22 school year, teachers in eight states left the profession at their highest rate in at least five years. A national poll of more than 1,300 teachers conducted in spring 2022, indicated 20% of respondents said they were "very likely" to leave the teaching profession within the next two years, and 24% reported being "fairly likely" to leave (Education Week, 2023). Approaches to addressing teacher shortage have included a variety of tactics. These include the creation of new and easier pathways to becoming a teacher, providing educators with more resources, increasing educator pay, supporting employee wellness, and efforts to promote the profession (American Association of School Personnel Administrators, 2023). However,



recent steps taken by North Carolina universities are reflective of a production model of teacher education. Doubling down on questioning the efficacy of teacher preparation by legislators, administrators, and universities has been coupled with universities mimicking a business model approach. The goal is to fill empty seats in the university classrooms, emphasizing the bottom line in finances and even suggesting a revenue-generated model of professor compensation. The potential impact of this approach to motivating students to become teachers and to teachers and professors remaining in education is problematic.

There has also been a focus on why veteran teachers leave the profession and what can be done to counter the current exodus, which is the main cause of the teacher shortage (EdWeek, 2023). Frequent reasons reported for teacher loss center on out-of-touch administration and a lack of autonomy for teachers. Teachers report an increasing disincentive, namely, administrators interfering with how teachers teach, which is often the result of state legislation such as Texas's House Bill 3979 (EdWeek, 2023). Middle grades has long been an area of fluctuating shortages in North Carolina, especially in the content areas of math and science. There has been a need to prepare

highly qualified and competent teachers in the middle level that has led to the increased development of middle school and adolescent-specific courses, concentrations, degrees, and licensure over the last few decades. However, the current approach to addressing the shortage runs counter to the development of and support for middle level degrees and licensure that honor the unique nature of young adolescent learners. There has been talk about K-9 teacher preparation programs and licensure, once again neglecting the need for a unique knowledge base beyond content understanding to be able to teach and reach adolescent learners.

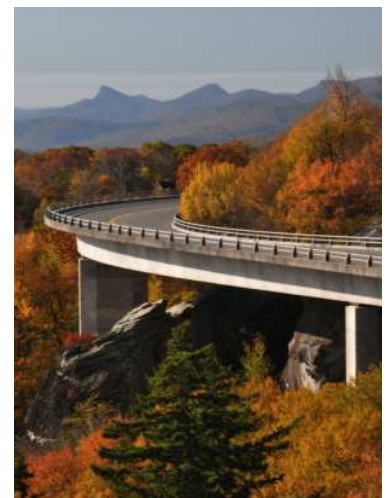
Teaching middle school is challenging. It takes a special kind of person who embraces the complex and ever-changing nature of young adolescent learners. Adolescent development and needs, the middle school concept and structure, and responsive relationship-based instruction are at the heart of teaching middle school. Finding the right teachers to meet this challenge is vital, especially in light of the continuing predictions for a teacher shortage.

The Study

The author conducted a study to take a closer look at the middle level teachers that remain in or leave the classroom and who they are. Why do middle level teachers, who love their jobs teaching and reaching young adolescents, end up leaving the profession? Are some of the most passionate and committed teachers the ones who have left? To answer these questions, an analysis using the dispositions in action (DIA) framework identified and compared teachers who were inclined to leave teaching to those who remained. DIA provides a framework developed from grounded theory, resulting in an observation rubric as well as other tools with established validity and reliability (Thornton, 2006, 2019). DIA is aimed at

identifying teacher dispositions evidenced in teaching. This framework goes beyond identifying dispositions as professional behaviors or student self-analysis to actually indicate how dispositions manifest in the classroom through teaching and learning. Dispositions in action evidence a teacher's habits of mind within curriculum, assessment, management, and professional aspects of teaching. Teachers, who are more technically disposed, view learning as a set of processes focused on teaching that is consistent, efficient, and centered on prescriptive teaching behaviors where the teacher's role is to implement givens. Teachers who evidence a responsive disposition are student-centered and view themselves as instructional designers and decision-makers, employing a variety of approaches and strategies to meet individual students' needs (Thornton, 2006, 2013, 2019). The DIA framework was used to analyze North Carolina middle school teachers who have been in the profession between 10 and 15 years. The results of this study indicate that the teachers who are responsively disposed, and thus more positively impact student learning (Thornton, 2006), are more likely to leave the profession than those with a technical focus.

The study surveyed 50 North Carolina middle school teachers from regions representative of the state. Participants were licensed middle level teachers who all graduated from long-standing and recognized middle level teacher preparation programs in the state. Initial anecdotal data suggested that a main cause for teachers leaving the classroom was the lack of fit when comparing their own beliefs and practices with those that were being supported and required in their middle schools. The survey comparatively ranked the importance of what teachers perceived as valuable to what they perceived as valued in their schools overall. The survey was structured to compare this across significant domains of teaching including



instruction and assessment, students' needs, classroom management, and professionalism. These are represented in the domains that the DIA framework examined. The survey results were analyzed to identify which teacher beliefs and values were most similar between the teacher and the school and those that were the most different. These differences have the potential to cause angst, frustration and a lessened sense of efficacy.

The survey instrument includes 48 questions, 24 of which indicated the teacher's perception of importance and 24 which indicated how teachers believed the school ranked their importance. A Likert scale of 1-4 was employed with scores of 1 or 2 coded as being of low importance while scores of 3 or 4 were coded as high importance. High and low scores were averaged for each item to compare the school and the teacher values. Two open-ended questions were also included. These were:

1. Have you left the teaching profession? If so, after how many years of teaching?
2. What is the main reason you left or stayed?

Identified Similarities

Sixteen items indicated that teachers perceived an item's level of importance as more similar than different to the schools' level of importance. The top five items that teachers reported the closest match between their schools' emphasis and their own (in order of less important to more important) were:

- acknowledging and embracing diverse perspectives and experiences
- teachers deciding, directing and explaining learning
- assessment focused on continually informing parents about student grades
- accountability evidenced through record-keeping such as attendance, discipline referrals, student grades and test scores leading to school evaluations such as school grades
- coverage of required curriculum

The items where participants perceived the most agreement between their own level of importance and their schools' focused on more technical areas of schooling. Covering curriculum, producing grades, informing parents, and having a teacher-centered classroom are grounded in traditional teacher norms and representative of technical dispositions in the DIA schema. The non-technical aspect of embracing diverse perspectives has been a more recent emphasis as schools' populations become more diverse, reflecting shifting populations and addressing



the cultural and economic divides that are evident in the world beyond school. This may explain this outlier in terms of similar DIA ratings for that item.

Identified Differences

Eight identified items reflected that the teachers' level of importance is at odds with how they perceived the schools' level of importance. The five top items that teachers reported as the least congruent (less difference to most difference) were:

- assessment focused on students demonstrating higher-level and deep thinking/understanding
- promoting creativity and a variety of approaches to teaching and learning
- teacher voice and power in making decisions about how to assess learning
- measuring student learning based on standardized tests or other content test scores
- students making choices about their learning processes

The survey items that showed the greatest divergence of importance were largely student-centered, reflecting a responsive teaching disposition where teachers can make decisions that allow them to meet diverse students' needs as individual learners. A responsive disposition also involves students in making choices. Standardized testing was viewed as highly important to the school but not to the responsively disposed teachers, who viewed



themselves as diametrically opposed to the technical focus on testing. Responses further evidenced a theme of freedom with an emphasis on teacher voice where the teacher's role was making instructional choices to design learning.

The open-ended questions related to why teachers remained in the classroom, or left, revealed that the primary reason middle school teachers went into teaching and continued as teachers was to make a difference in the lives of the young adolescent learners whom they care for genuinely. The responses were student-centered and focused on being responsive to their students as individuals and making a difference in their current daily reality and their future lives. The reasons teachers gave for leaving the profession centered on a lack of support, poor work/life balance, and lack of respect as professionals.

Those who had left teaching reported that they had weak or negative principals who gave little help or support when challenges or conflicts arose. They felt they received little to no support regarding student behavior and interactions with parents. They reported that the school administration did not involve them in any professional decision-making. Teachers felt like much of what they were required to do was jumping through hoops without questioning higher administration and without any support to challenge this trend from their principals.

Work/life balance was reported as significantly skewed towards work, with continually increasing demands for more time and energy with no extra support or compensation. They reported burnout and many teachers were trying to raise their own children or desired to be with their own families more. Lack of teacher and student motivation was often tied to having too many students in the classroom with increasing limits on decision-making, and a lack of variation in their work. Teachers had to take on extra work without extra pay outside the hours of schooling, such as attending athletic events, evening and weekend professional development, and staying after hours to complete required administrative tasks or even being required to be school bus drivers. This was in addition to their already challenging classroom and teaching duties.

Teachers stated there was a lack of being viewed as professionals or even being vilified in the political tug-of-war. Teachers had to follow mandates that used prepackaged curriculum and pacing guides instead of being allowed to use their professional training to

create student-centered learning to meet all students' needs. The teacher role became more dictated and controlled, creating another disincentive as their days became repetitive and stagnant. This sense of a lack of respect coupled with low pay exacerbated the number of teachers leaving the classroom. Legislative and societal pressures that limit materials, books, and curriculum ran counter to the very items that responsibly disposed teachers indicated as important. Teachers stated they were being kept from meeting students' needs and using best practices. Middle level teachers in particular have had to deal with parents and the community questioning the value of the middle school concept, coupled with reports of young adolescents becoming increasingly less motivated, less responsible, and more aggressive and violent post-pandemic.



Implications

The search for and value of middle level teachers who are committed to teaching against the grain and embrace middle school philosophy and practices is becoming even more difficult. A good fit between a responsively disposed middle grades teacher and a school that is dedicated to understanding and building on young adolescent needs and assets not only increases student learning (Thornton, 2006), but is also a major factor in retaining effective middle level teachers. They are much-needed advocates and educators of young adolescents. A lack of qualified and effective teachers and the increase of employing quickly produced, less competent teachers to fill classrooms, is impacted by many factors. These include low pay, student behavior, lack of parental support, and lack of incentives to teach. What does it mean for middle level education if typically technical teachers remain while those responsively disposed reluctantly leave?

It is problematic that teachers who are responsively disposed to teach young adolescent learners and make a difference in their lives are the ones who are more likely to leave. Teachers, legislators, and administrators, who perhaps only view teaching as a technical act, continue to strip away the responsive aspects of teaching as a human endeavor. The more technical and less human teaching becomes, the less need for teachers, beyond covering and testing information. As technology has been quickly embraced in schools, largely due to the pandemic, the development and likelihood of artificial intelligence have increased. Teachers as technical implementers of standardized curriculum, instruction, and assessment are easily replaced in this scenario. We currently find ourselves replacing highly qualified and responsive teachers of young adolescent learners with underprepared and under-certified individuals who very likely do not fully understand or embrace the middle school concept to meet young adolescents' needs. In this reality, every day we become one step closer to the extinction of qualified, caring, and committed middle level teachers.

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Holly J. Thornton is a professor on the Appalachian State University middle grades team. Her primary research focus is on teacher quality and how dispositions affect teachers' choices and student learning.



North Carolina Schools To Watch



NCMLE partners with The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform to identify Schools to Watch in North Carolina. The extensive process is based on criteria established by The National Forum to recognize schools that have established successful practices and are on a trajectory of continued success.

CONGRATULATIONS

Initial Designations:

Montford North Star Academy

Selma Middle

Redesignations:

Albemarle Road Middle

Alexander Graham Middle

Ashe County Middle

Crestdale Middle

East Yancey Middle

Mint Hill Middle

Northview Middle

Rockingham County Middle

Rugby Middle

Thomas Jefferson Middle

North Carolina Schools To Watch



National Forum Schools to Watch Mission:

To develop, identify, honor, and nurture schools with middle-level grades that are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, socially equitable, organized and structured for continuous improvement, and are exemplars of the implementation of the National Forum's Schools to Watch criteria.

National Forum Schools to Watch Vision:

Every middle-grades student will attend a school that is academically excellent, socially equitable, developmentally responsive, organized and structured for continuous improvement, and is an exemplar of the implementation of the National Forum's Schools to Watch criteria.

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS TO WATCH:

Apple Valley Middle School (2009)	McGee's Crossroads Middle School (2011)
C.W. Stanford Middle School (2014)	Midway Middle School (2019)
Carmel Middle School (2005)	Newton-Conover STEM Middle School (2017)
Carrington Middle School (2007)	North Lincoln Middle School (2017)
East Lincoln Middle School (2004)	Piedmont Open IB Middle School (2011)
Ellerbe Middle School (2017)	Reid Ross Classical School (2004)
Flat Rock Middle School (2007)	Rogers-Herr Middle School (2008)
Hamlet Middle School (2013)	School for Creative Studies (2020)
Harold E. Winkler Middle School (2020)	Sherwood Githens Middle School (2017)
Hendersonville Middle School (2010)	Smithfield Middle School (2023)
J.M Fries Middle School (2021)	South Charlotte Middle School (2004)
Jay M. Robinson Middle School (2005)	West Alexander Middle School (2019)
John Griffin Middle School (2004)	West Pine Middle School (2008)
Lakewood Montessori School (2015)	William Lenoir Middle School (2010)
Lowe's Grove Middle School (2019)	

*A*s the winter chill gradually recedes and nature begins to awaken, spring emerges as a season of renewal and transformation. With the vibrant colors of blossoming flowers, the sweet melodies of songbirds, and the gentle warmth of the sun, spring breathes new life into the world around us. It is a time to discard the old and welcome the new, to awaken our senses, and to be inspired by the endless possibilities that lie on the horizon.

In this spirit of renewal and inspiration, we are excited to introduce NCMLE Inspire—the upcoming conference dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and growth among middle school educators. Through curated content, engaging discussions, and collaborative initiatives, NCMLE Inspire aims to ignite passion, spark ideas, and empower educators to make a meaningful impact in their classrooms and communities, and our spring journal is just the beginning!

This issue presents a diverse array of articles tailored to educators who champion every aspect of middle schools with innovative ideas, encouragement from new teachers and veteran administrators, and support from our partners at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. From exploring Residency Teacher Support for High-leverage practices to shedding light on Who is Leaving North Carolina Schools, this issue offers strong suggestions and insights. From delving into the role of teacher curatorship of Netflix youth media as a means of Supporting Adolescent Identity Development to discussing the importance of Communities of Care, each article offers valuable insights and strategies to enhance the middle school educational experience and embolden educators to continue their impactful work, fostering growth and inspiration in their students.

In this issue, we've included a special inset to honor the recent Schools To Watch designees and the schools currently holding this prestigious status. This recognition spotlights a remarkable achievement! These schools will be celebrated at the upcoming middle school conference in Charlotte this spring, and we eagerly anticipate sharing in their success as fellow advocates for middle school excellence, inspiring others with their achievements.

Our journal's featured columns serve as steadfast anchors, designed to engage, enlighten, and empower our readers. In the "10 out of 10: New Teacher Spotlight" column, Daniel Maxwell interviews Amber White, a shining example of a lifelong learner who underscores the critical importance of building relationships with parents as central to her teaching philosophy. Continuing in our "Topics, Tech, and

Trends" series, Jade Tornatore and Holly Williamson from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, specifically focusing on Student Problem Solving Teams. They generously share valuable resources available from the state to support schools in their MTSS endeavors. In her column, 'Encore, Encore,' Hannah Detters shares a collaborative project with her school's art teacher, Meghan Buckman, emphasizing the transformative power of seeking collaborative opportunities within our schools to push both students and educators beyond their comfort zones. Toni Sain offers insight into the GLO-girls club in "Between Teachers," a program connecting elementary school girls to middle school girls, providing crucial support during formative transitions into middle school. Asari Ekpenyong, a doctoral student at UNC-Charlotte, contributes foundational work on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy for middle school classrooms. In this piece, Asari elucidates the research underpinning this practice and offers practical tips for its implementation by classroom teachers. In "Admin Corner," Melody March shares invaluable insights into her school's transition from a low-performing institution to one focused on arts integration, offering valuable lessons and strategies for schools undergoing similar transformations. We believe these columns will not only inform but also inspire our readers, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose among middle school educators across our state.

As we continue to advocate for the middle school concept, we encourage you to continue supporting NCMLE by sharing our articles with your friends and colleagues, engaging with us on social media, and providing feedback to help us improve further. I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our readers, contributors, and staff. Your unwavering commitment to quality content and thoughtful engagement has been instrumental in shaping NCMLE. Together, we have fostered a community built on intellectual curiosity, creativity, and a shared passion for support of our middle school learners.

Join us on this journey of discovery and transformation as we embrace the spirit of spring and embark on a collective quest to inspire excellence in middle level education. We are proud to be a part of your middle school educator team and hope to see you at the NCMLE Inspire Conference in March!

Yours in Education.



10 Out of 10: New Teacher Spotlight

By Daniel Maxwell

10 Out of 10 aims to highlight the exceptional work of new middle school teachers across the state of North Carolina. We asked one beginning teacher to take 10 minutes out of her day to respond to 10 questions about the teaching profession.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Amber White is a third-year teacher at China Grove Middle School in China Grove, North Carolina, where she teaches eighth-grade mathematics and Math 1. The 2022-2023 Rowan-Salisbury Schools Beginning Teacher of the Year and a finalist for the 2023 North Carolina Beginning Teacher of the Year, Amber is a fierce advocate for her students and a positive, uplifting young educator. Amber graduated from Catawba College with a B.A. in Middle School Math Education with a minor in Psychology and earned an M.A.Ed. in Instructional Technology at East Carolina University. Currently, Amber is pursuing an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Gardner-Webb University.



WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO ENTER THE TEACHING PROFESSION?

Ever since I was little, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I was the kid who got excited when school supplies came out; it was just a passion of mine. But as I went through school, I watched my teachers and learned that I wanted to be the teacher who welcomes and encourages students to use any strategies to show their learning and then uplifts any mistakes they might make while they learn, empowering them to improve that understanding. I do this in my classroom by providing detailed feedback to help them learn and develop a growth mindset. In my classroom, my students have a safe environment to make mistakes and fall forward. I even have a class motto – it's on my shirt right now – “Mistakes allow thinking to happen.”

TELL US ABOUT A TEACHER WHO INSPIRED YOU. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS PERSON, AND HOW DOES THAT DRIVE YOU IN YOUR WORK WITH YOUR OWN STUDENTS?

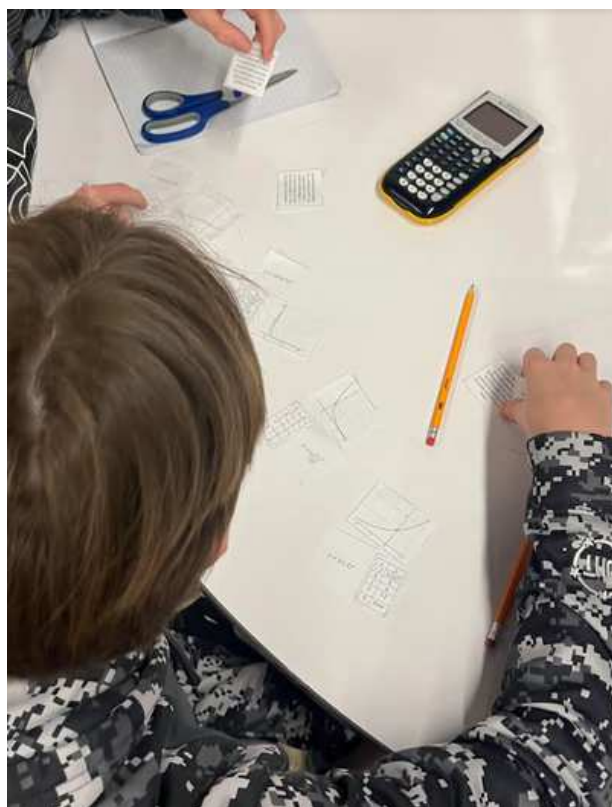
I remember my high school math teacher. Her name is Mrs. Waldo, and she's actually the director of math now so I still get to work with her. But what I remember about her classroom is she always made math fun through her instruction and the activities we did. So in my classroom now, I love to use Gamification where I take any activity we do in class, and I turn it into a game – whether it's trashketball or jeopardy – anything that I can do to show my students that math can be fun, and they can remember math being fun.

AWHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WERE GIVEN AS YOU ENTERED THE TEACHING PROFESSION?

The best advice came from my mother who is a veteran educator. Her advice was to always stay one week ahead with your planning because planning is important for a teacher. For example, she taught me to first do my year-long plan at the very beginning of the year, and try to get a rough idea of what the full year looks like. Then from there, break it down into units and then break it down into weeks and days. This served me well ever since I started teaching. I've been able to be at least one week ahead, and it has helped me to not get overwhelmed in teaching because I can give myself some time with being a week ahead.

VWHAT DO YOU WANT VETERAN TEACHERS TO KNOW ABOUT NEW TEACHERS?

We just want a seat at the table as beginning teachers (BT's). Even if we're brand new to the profession or straight out of college, we all have something to bring to the table because we are all educators with unique experiences and perspectives. We have ideas that can help our school, help our students, and help our colleagues. The most important thing for me is that everybody has a voice, whether you've been teaching for a year or teaching for 30 years.



"One of the greatest things about this profession is the opportunity we have to build relationships with our students and their families."

C WHAT IS A CHALLENGE YOU FACED DURING YOUR FIRST YEAR AS A TEACHER, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

In my first year here, I taught seventh-grade and eighth-grade Math I, but I was the only Math I teacher in the building. So the biggest challenge for me was not having a colleague to collaborate with in the building other than instructional coaches. I worked to overcome that challenge by actively seeking new contacts to work with and finding my own resources. For example, I worked with Mrs. Waldo, our math coach for the district. I also worked with another middle school teacher who taught Math I in our district and worked to remain one week ahead with my planning. That experience prepared me to help another middle school Math I teacher with their plans as well as another math teacher in my school.



S WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS IN THE STUDENT TEACHING SEMESTER RIGHT NOW?

Take time to go observe other classrooms in the building that you're teaching in. It does not matter if it is the same content or even the same grade level, go see other teachers running their classrooms – see how they plan, teach, build relationships, everything – because you can use any of that for your own classrooms. Go observe and meet as many teachers as possible, and consider ways in which you might even work with them later to build something together.

B WHAT IS THE BEST LESSON YOU EVER TAUGHT?

One of my favorite lessons was when I took my students outside of the classroom for what I call Real World Quadratics Day. For reference, a quadratic function forms a U-shape, so my kids and I went out and found these shapes in the real world. Then, students reflected on connecting their prior knowledge from class with real-world examples. They found the function for their real-world example, connected the vocabulary terms to put it in word form, and through that, they were able to better conceptualize how the work we are doing in class exists beyond the walls of the classroom, which was really cool..

To nominate an exceptional beginning teacher for this column, please write to dmaxwel8@charlotte.edu with your recommendation and support.

M WHAT IS YOUR BEST CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PRACTICE AND WHY DO YOU BELIEVE IT IS EFFECTIVE?

My first and greatest management practice is building relationships with students because if you do not have a relationship with your students, it is hard for them to connect when you get to academic content. One of the ways I use relationships to guide my management practices is through a strategy I call “working modes.” Working modes are based on places, and I create mine about places that are relevant for the kids. For example, we have movie theater mode, which means voice level zero. Next up is coffee shop mode, which represents voice level one. We have restaurant mode, used often with small groups, that is voice level two. And finally, we have supermarket mode, where they can get up and move around and talk to other kids at voice level three. So, essentially, facilitating the connection between the outside and the inside is what makes learning more relevant for my kids to comprehend our class expectations. Another example of how I build those relationships is by always greeting my kids at the door. They need to see me when they enter the classroom because it is an opportunity to check in on them personally and ensure they have a happy face whenever they enter the classroom.

T HOW CAN SCHOOLS BEST SUPPORT THEIR BEGINNING TEACHERS?

First and foremost, provide resources for BTs to use to get started in teaching their curriculum and provide BTs with eager mentors who are available and willing to help them grow in the profession. Intentionally selecting strong mentors is so important. For example, we want mentors who are willing and able to give us real feedback - the things we need to hear when we need to hear them. We are all professionals; we all want to learn and improve. So intentionally pairing us with a mentor capable of giving us real feedback now ensures that we are not struggling later.

P IF YOU COULD PROVIDE ANY EDUCATOR WITH ONE PIECE OF ADVICE, WHAT WOULD THAT ADVICE BE?

This is a profession to be proud of; be proud to be a teacher because not everybody has this gift. One of the greatest things about this profession is the opportunity we have to build relationships with our students and their families. To leverage this opportunity, I don't teach for the first several days of class. I take time to build those relationships with my kids before I even start content because I want to grow that safe and welcoming environment. Sometimes, this is the only caring space that the kids have. I want to show them that I care and support them. I am all-in for the entire 180 days that I have them. But it is also important to build relationships with students' families. Students' parents and guardians place their trust in us every day they send their children to school, so it is essential to build that school-to-home connection with parents. I like to do this by making positive calls home at the beginning of the year to start that positive relationship with parents. Then, if I have to make any negative phone calls throughout the year, I know those parents have my back because they know who I am and that I want and believe the best for their child.



Daniel Maxwell is a Lecturer and University Supervisor for middle and secondary education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

TOPICS, TECH, AND TRENDS

Spring Into Action: Team-Driven Problem Solving and Support

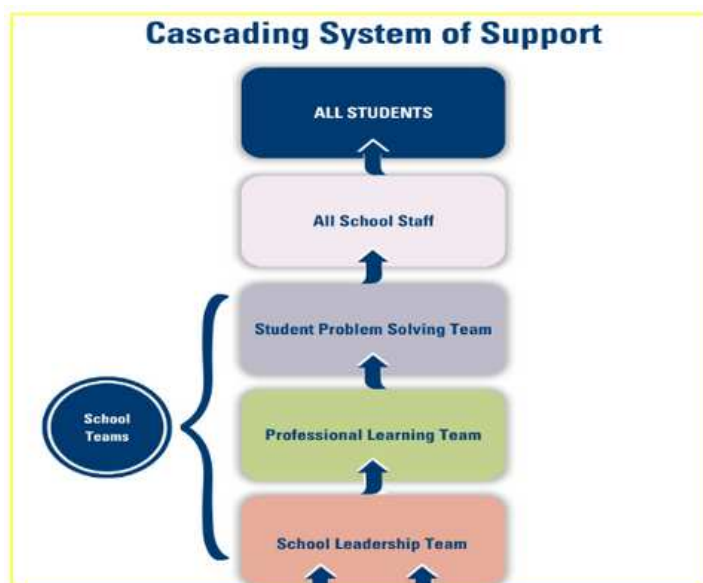
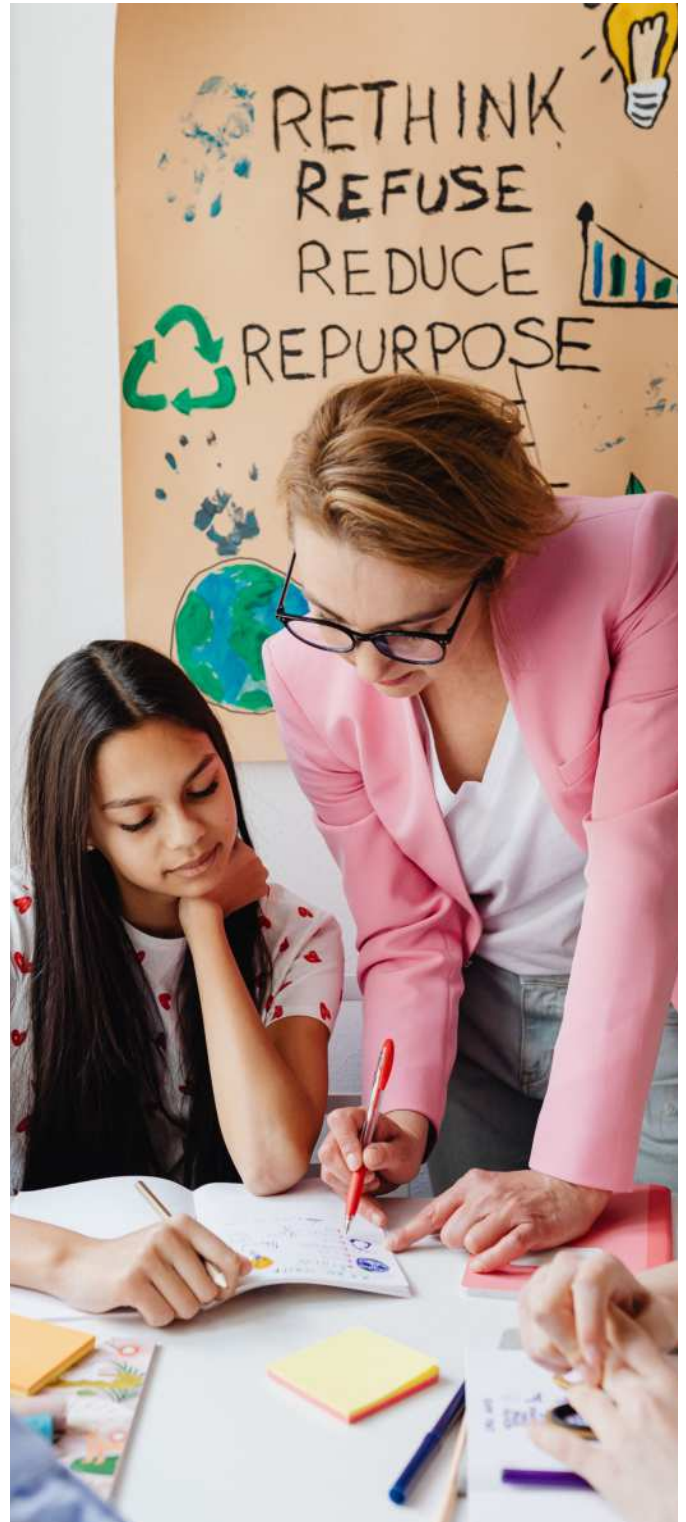
By Jade Tornatore and Holly Williamson

Who is ready for a boost? The natural vibrance of Spring– lasting sunlight, warmer temperatures, and longer days– often brings a positive mood, inspiration, and increased energy. This increase in motivation and productivity couldn't occur at a more important time. The second semester is the time when educators review instructional goals, reflect on the effectiveness of instruction thus far, assess the progress of our students, and evaluate middle-to-end-of-year targets. After all, spring is about growth, and our goal is to help each and every one of our students grow!

In North Carolina, we believe that the utilization of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework is an effective and efficient system for student growth and school improvement. In order to best support students, it is essential that school leaders establish the necessary structures to promote data-based problem solving, encourage communication and collaboration, and ensure the provision of instructional support for students and staff.

MTSS Implementation and School Teams

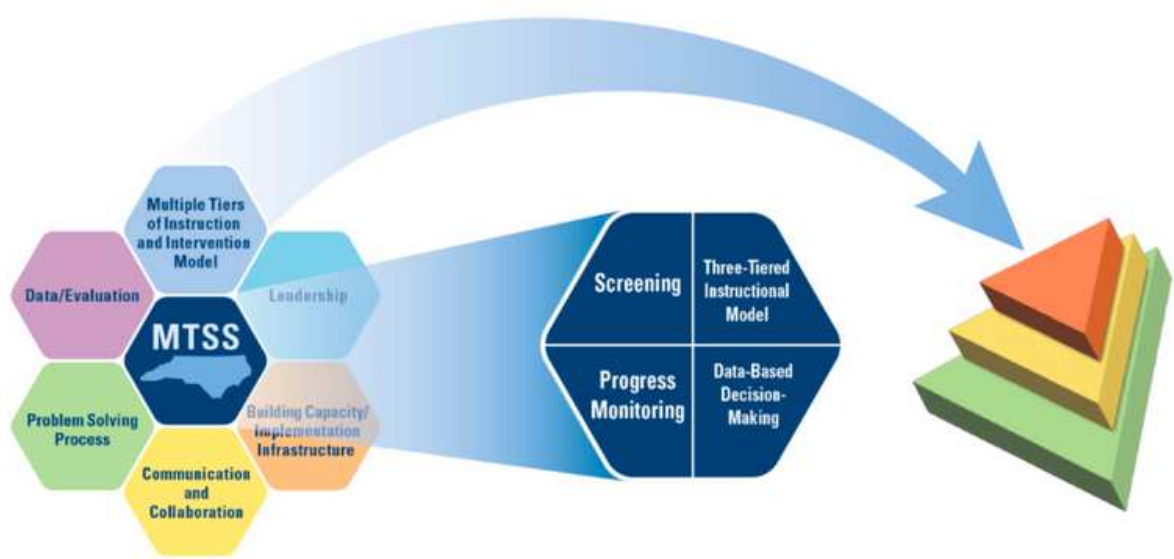
Within the MTSS framework, these efforts start within the context of well-defined teams. In this article, we will walk you through North Carolina's recommendations for MTSS teaming structures, giving you an overview of the function of each team, the stakeholders involved, and examples of how these teams work together in pursuit of a common goal–overall school and student improvement!



The graphic shown previously illustrates the teaming structures deemed essential for effective MTSS implementation in schools. As we think about the growth and renewal that spring brings, let's consider how your school teaming structures may be renewed in order to better support your school and student needs.

MTSS School Leadership Team

The foundation of MTSS implementation is the School Leadership Team. With a focus on school-wide improvement, this team is responsible for facilitating and supporting MTSS implementation through the six critical components of MTSS and the four essential elements (universal screening, multiple tiers of instruction, data-based decision making, and progress monitoring) are pictured below. The MTSS School Leadership Team is tasked with reviewing school-wide data across areas of concern (attendance, academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs). This team routinely engages in problem solving for each of these areas to ensure effective systems of support first at the school-wide level, then group or class level, and individual level. The MTSS School Leadership Team then responds to school-wide needs by making adjustments to the school master schedule, allocating resources to support staff and students, and through the provision of professional development and coaching opportunities for staff. In addition, this team communicates with community partners to ensure collaborative support and resources for students both inside and outside of the school setting. Finally, the MTSS School Leadership Team is responsible for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the instruction and interventions offered across grade levels and tiers of support.



School Leadership Team Membership

The members of the MTSS School Leadership Team (SLT) may vary but should be composed of cross-disciplinary representation to include the principal and/or administration, grade span and/or department representatives, and specialized support personnel. Ideally, the make-up of this team includes educators with the knowledge and skills to do the work previously described, while also providing a true representation of the demographic makeup of the school.

Considering the purpose, responsibilities, and suggested membership of this team, many districts and schools organize their teaming structures so that the School MTSS Leadership Team is situated as a subset of their school improvement team (SIT) or so that it exists as a standalone problem-solving team with team members common to the School Improvement Team. The MTSS School Leadership Team analyzes school-wide data and proactively shares information with appropriate members of other teams (e.g., PLCs, grade level, department) to ensure streamlined collaboration and communication around school and student needs.

Professional Learning Teams

This brings us to our next recommended level of teaming within MTSS, our Professional Learning Teams (PLT). These teams may go by many different names (e.g., PLTs, PLCs, and others), but this is most often the team of educators that share groups of students and problem-solve around instructional needs by grade level, content, or department. In this team, teachers play a crucial role as they use their expertise of both content knowledge and knowledge of their students to improve instruction and support specific needs.

PLT Responsibilities

Members of the PLT work with one another while also collaborating with other school problem-solving teams to address school and student needs. The responsibilities of the PLT include efforts to strengthen core instruction and identify students in need of additional supports. PLTs work alongside the Leadership Team to analyze universal screening data to review the effectiveness of the core, make adjustments to the core to enhance the instruction provided to all students, and plan for differentiated instruction in the classroom. In addition to core problem-solving, PLTs also utilize screening and diagnostic data to match students to supplemental or intensive intervention.

PLT Membership

Typically, PLT meetings will include teacher representation by grade, department, or content along with instructional coaches, MTSS coaches, interventionists, and administrators. Schools may also hold PLT meetings that are centered around specific supports for students, such as PLTs for specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers, nurses, and behavior specialists).

SLTs, PLTs, and Attendance

Let's take a look at an example of how school MTSS teams may problem-solve around issues with chronic absenteeism – a common and challenging problem in the Spring. The School Leadership Team may examine first-semester attendance data to determine if school attendance is in alignment with school-wide goals and expectations. While analyzing this data and problem-solving factors that could be contributing to the school-wide attendance, the leadership team may also notice trends at a particular grade level, in this example, 8th grade. While focusing on problem-solving and improving school-wide attendance, the School Leadership Team also collaborates with the 8th-grade Professional Learning Communities (PLC) regarding the specific concern.

Example: Star Middle School First Semester

Total Students: 1146		
Students chronically absent: 387 (34%)		
Grade level chronically absent/total (%)		
6th	7th	8th
130/431 (30%)	111/389 (29%)	146/326 (45%)

In a well-functioning MTSS, we use these teaming structures to be more efficient and effective in our problem-solving. Instead of each 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade counselor and teacher all individually going student by student, talking about attendance for each of the 387 students, we have teams that examine the issue from large to small. The School Leadership Team first reviews school-wide attendance data and notices 34% of students are chronically absent, which is indicative of a school-wide core attendance

issue. Representatives from the School Leadership Team, who also serve on PLC teams, then communicate their findings and initiate problem-solving discussions around the attendance concerns. Working together, the SLT and 8th-grade PLC determine contributing factors and develop possible hypotheses for the attendance problem, to better develop possible solutions or interventions to support students who may need additional attendance support.

The shared collaboration of the School Leadership Team and Professional Learning Team is beneficial in several ways. First, The SLT supports the 8th-grade PLC and shares in the problem-solving effort by running needed attendance reports in advance, conducting and sharing information from the initial data analysis, and taking steps to improve overall issues with school attendance. Secondly, this teaming and collaboration structure allows the 8th-grade teachers to share their expertise and be directly involved in the decisions and supports that will impact the students they work with daily. Finally, instead of addressing attendance issues per individual student (which would require scheduling multiple teacher/parent meetings), educators use the existing teaming structures (PLCs) to look at concerns and develop solutions for groups of students, making the work much less time-consuming while also being effective for more students.

This work is not limited to this attendance example. Once the structure of the teams is in place, this structure can be leveraged to support Literacy, Math, any content, or Behavior. MTSS is about putting systems in place such as teams and data analysis procedures to make the difficult job of supporting students easier and more effective.

Student Problem-Solving Teams

In addition to the School Leadership Team and PLCs, the next recommended structure within NC MTSS is the Student Problem-Solving Team (for this article, we will abbreviate it as SPST).

SPST Responsibilities

Like the PLC, the name of this team may vary from school to school. In addition, the membership composition is also flexible based on the specific student situation and the purpose of the problem-solving meeting.

In general, the Student Problem Solving Team is responsible for designing intensive general education supports for students who demonstrate academic, behavioral, social-emotional, or attendance needs beyond those offered through core or supplemental instruction.

SPST Membership

The individual problem-solving team school-based membership should include: 1) representatives from the Leadership Team (to ensure cross-team communication and resource allocation), 2) team members with strong knowledge of the MTSS framework, 3) teachers and specialized instructional support personnel with expertise

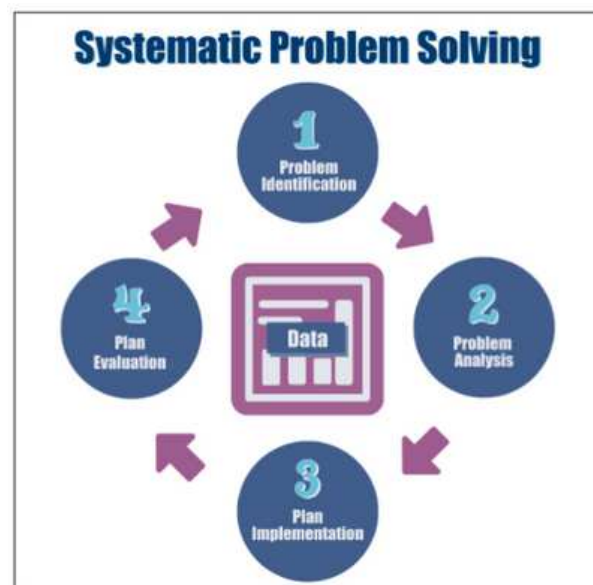
in the area of concern (attendance, behavior, academics, social-emotional needs), and 4) teacher(s) most familiar with the student and his/her needs.

It is always recommended that Student Problem Solving Teams include family and the student to the maximum extent possible. Many times individual problem-solving teams will invite parents and the student to attend when they engage in problem-solving to better understand the unique needs of the student and to ensure everyone is on the same page about how to best support the student.

SPSTs and Attendance Support

Let's go back and examine our attendance example, from the perspective of the Student Problem Solving Team. To begin, the SPST would review the school-wide intervention and the additional 8th-grade intervention that was provided to the student through core and supplemental supports, examining how the individual student responded to these previously offered supports. The Student Problem Solving Team would then conduct another layer of problem-solving to address the student's chronic absenteeism, asking questions to determine any underlying factors that contribute to the student missing school. Understanding these factors better helps teams in developing the appropriate support for the student.

Ideally, the Student Problem Solving Team (and each of the other MTSS teams that we have discussed) would use a systematic problem-solving model to guide their analysis of the problem, as shown in the diagram below.



Once root causes have been identified, the SPST will then work together to establish an intervention plan to support the student, including details such as what intervention will be provided, how and when progress monitoring data will be collected and analyzed, and how to evaluate the success of the interventions provided.**

A Continuum of Teaming to Support Students

An important aspect to note is that we continue to have an

overlap in membership across these teams. Members from the School Leadership Team, along with teachers from the Professional Learning Team, serve on the Student Problem Solving Team as well. This ensures that there is continuity of support and that communication and collaboration are occurring, thus increasing effectiveness. These structures also allow greater efficiency as we reduce the potential number of back-and-forth emails, meetings, and any duplicity of efforts, saving our teachers, counselors, and students time.

If school sports are a part of what you think about with the spring season, It may be helpful to think of an analogy of a relay team. The relay members are part of the larger track team, and part of the same relay team. Each individual is responsible for their leg of the race, which all contributes to one goal time or distance. In a typical relay, the runners do not stop and start, but they overlap. The first runner overlaps and runs alongside the second runner and does not let go of the baton until they are sure the second runner is up to speed, has a grip, and is ready to go.



These recommended teaming structures operate in a similar way to the relay team. Our Leadership Team starts the race and does not hand off the baton (identified problem, data, or information) until the Professional Learning Team is supported and “ready to run.” Likewise, as the Professional Learning team runs their leg, their information and expertise are used to pass additional information to the Individual Problem Solving Team to continue running the race. The “race” we are talking about here is supporting the needs of all students.

These teams are the recommended essential teams for school-based implementation of MTSS. Although the need for other teams may arise and be needed for effective implementation (curriculum team, behavior team, admin team, etc), these teams should link in communication, planning, and implementation back within this structure. The three teams laid out in this article support school-wide, grade or department level, and then individual level, mirroring the three tiers of support. With strong communication and collaboration, these teams allow for a cascading system of support improving outcomes in our schools.

Where to Start

For those beginning the work or wanting to do some “spring cleaning” with their systems and practices, the NC Department of Public Instruction's Integrated Academic Behavior Systems Team has a resource that can help. The “School Teams in an MTSS” template (linked in resources), can assist implementers by asking questions about their teams such as; “What current team does this work? Current staff on these teams? Do we need to restructure? How?”

This piece about the teams in MTSS supports the MTSS Critical Component Leadership. We will continue to build understanding by releasing a series of articles focusing on North Carolina's MTSS Model and practical school-level application of the six critical components. We believe that MTSS is the most efficient and effective model for school improvement and that this well-implemented framework can help middle school administrators, teachers, students, and families work together to spring forward maximizing outcomes for all.

For more information on NC MTSS visit:
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/integrated-academic-behavior-systems>

****It is important to note that when individual students are discussed, the problem-solving team has an obligation to consider whether the student is suspected of having a disability. If so, the continuum of teaming extends/expands to include the IEP Team for an initial referral.**

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Integrated Academic and Behavior Systems, NC DPI., School Teams in an MTSS: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XtPWf-oKttI9N_ruW0iUd8Fr5c82QRMV/view

Integrated Academic and Behavior Systems, NC DPI., MTSS Cascading System of Support-Teaming Structures: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a2TDkXTBxSKt7aM2FvCnZPJvQ39LafPw/view>

Jade Tornatore, is a 20+ year North Carolina educator who has dedicated himself to the “on the ground” implementation of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) serving as part of the Integrated Academic and Behavior Systems (IABS) Team at NCDPI.

Holly Williamson believes in the implementation of the MTSS framework to support student needs and promote overall school improvement. An educator since 2001, she currently serves as a regional consultant with NCDPI's Integrated Academic & Behavior Systems Team (IABS), assisting districts and schools with this effort.

Encore, Encore

Using Canva To Cross Curriculums

By Hannah Detter

Hello from the land of electives! I am a CTE teacher at North Lincoln Middle School, where my classes focus on computer skills from typing to coding. I spent the first ten years of my career teaching middle school science before transitioning to my current role. Moving into an elective position has been extremely rewarding. I find myself able to engage with my students in a different capacity, including how I adapt my curriculum to meet academic standards and the interests of my students simultaneously. In this column, I'd like to share a rewarding experience I had recently that exemplifies this idea, and perhaps give readers some ideas for how to implement a collaborative experience with a fellow elective teacher at your school.

I feel confident saying that at some point in each of our careers, we've probably given students an assignment that involved completing something like a poster, slideshow, or webpage to demonstrate their learning. I frequently found myself in the position of giving students feedback to improve the academic content of their posters, but struggling to coach them on how to make their presentations look more refined and sophisticated. I could show students examples of excellent work, but I struggled to provide specific direction that would take their own presentations from acceptable to exceptional.

As I met with a few other colleagues during back-to-school workdays, this topic came up. I explained my artistic ignorance and how I lacked the technical eye and vocabulary to help students improve their work. We also discussed how students tend to see their classes as isolated entities even though tasks are rarely that separate and discrete in our day-to-day

lives. This led to a conversation about the limitations of our school's elective schedule. Based on the way our classes are offered, some students in my class had never taken an art class in their three years of middle school. Conversely, some students in other elective classes had never taken a computer education class like the ones I teach.

Our school's art teacher, Meghan Buckman, realized these challenges would be a great opportunity for our two classes to work together. She and I created a collaborative unit to show students how art and computer skills are both utilized in a field like graphic design. We wanted students to develop skills they could continue to use in their lives, from working on a school assignment to creating a fundraiser flier for their extracurricular activity.

We knew we needed a project that students would be highly invested in to yield the best results. Otherwise, we were concerned students would feel resentful at being forced outside of the comfort zone of their selected class. Meghan had the idea to center this unit on creating theme days for a spirit week, where students were required to design fliers to communicate the days' themes. We also recognized this would allow students to practice professional communication with a "client" and their "colleagues." We felt like Canva would be an ideal platform to facilitate our instruction, as it incorporates artistic concepts, computer skills and is also a little bit intimidating with the breadth of its offerings.

One of the things I admire most about Meghan is the level of differentiation she builds into instruction.



She incorporates pre-assessments into many of the units she teaches as part of this differentiation, so that's how we began this unit. On the first day that we met as a collaborative group, each student proposed three theme days for spirit week and had to create fliers in Canva to showcase those days. We had our own ideas about what concepts we should teach based on our observations of students' prior knowledge and skills, but the pre-assessment elicited further questions and challenges students encountered. Students' questions ranged from "What is Canva?" to "How do I adjust the layering of these two pictures?" As students asked us questions that day, we recorded the questions to ensure we incorporated them into the days of instruction we'd planned. That afternoon, we finalized student groups based on the strengths and weaknesses we observed during the pre-assessment. Each three-person group contained a mixture of art students and computer students.

Over the next three days, half of the groups reported to my classroom, where I taught them technical skills in Canva and guidelines related to fair use and licensing of images. Meanwhile, Meghan taught the other half of the group basic artistic principles like hierarchy, balance, color, and value. During this instruction, Meghan and I had to get comfortable with not being perfect. (We are both perfectionists, so this was perhaps the most challenging part of our experience!) Meghan embraced using EdPuzzle to deliver blended instruction, which she had previously used in only a limited capacity. While I am familiar with the basics of Canva, I would not categorize myself as an expert by any stretch of the imagination. And yet, we felt so strongly about the skills our students were going to gain in this unit that we decided it was worth it to try, acknowledge our shortcomings, and adjust accordingly. After three days of Canva instruction with me, groups then reported to Meghan for their three days of art instruction, and vice versa.



After those six days of instruction, the real fun began! Our groups reconvened in the library for the final portion of the unit. In the pre-assessment, we allowed students to use all parts of Canva, including templates. For the culminating assignment, students had to create fliers for five theme days for spirit week completely from scratch. They started with a blank whiteboard in Canva. They then spent three days selecting fonts and color schemes, layering textures, and positioning supporting elements on each flier to communicate their vision for spirit week. We guided students through resolving disagreements without alienating group members and remembering to design their proposals with the client in mind (not just their preferences).

I printed out each group's proposal on the final day and students rotated through each set of fliers, utilizing their new vocabulary and technical expertise to communicate feedback to other groups about whether they met the expectations of the assignment. Meghan and I forwarded the six best proposals to our student council, who ultimately selected their favorite proposal and implemented the spirit week at the end of the semester. Meghan and I were both extremely proud of all the proposals, but we were even more thrilled with the way students engaged with concepts that were outside of their original expectations for our classes.

After seeing this experience from conception to execution, Meghan and I both reflected on how we want to modify this opportunity in the future. We plan to conduct another joint graphic design unit this school year and we already recognize changes we hope to implement to use our time more efficiently. Meghan has also experimented with other elective collaborations. This fall, our Communities In Schools elective students joined her for a unit on pottery. We have also wondered about the possibility of teaming up with a third teacher to do a prototyping unit that would involve the artistic design of a product, building a prototype, and then creating marketing materials to promote the product. While we're not ready to implement that idea yet, we are excited to explore the possibilities that come from collaboration and hope you find a way to incorporate some of our ideas into your classes, too.

Hannah Detter is a teacher at North Lincoln Middle School. She is in her 13th year of teaching middle school and is a graduate of UNC at Chapel Hill. Outside of school, she enjoys reading and gardening with her husband and two little girls.

Between Teachers

GLO - GIRLS LEADING OTHERS

By Toni Sain

Starting middle school can be an exciting experience. Yet, for many, the anticipation of a new school, teachers, and new friends can be overwhelming. This transition can be especially challenging for young ladies entering sixth grade. In recognition of these challenges at West Lincoln Middle School, we formed a new club: GLO (Girls Leading Others). The purpose of this group is to develop young mentors for our rising sixth-grade girls. The hope is to also encourage leadership within our young ladies and model for them how to be supportive of each other as they grow into adult women. This group of young ladies uses GLO power to encourage, support, and empower other girls. The mission of this club is to develop relationships and support our newest students while simultaneously using the talents of our existing club members.

The jumping off point began with teachers and administrators nominating 7th and 8th-grade girls who displayed qualities of servant leadership such as kindness, patience, commitment, and respect to serve as mentors for our rising sixth-grade girls. Once students were chosen, they completed an application including their interests and hobbies as well as what they believe to be their strengths. With this information in hand, group leaders carefully paired an 8th-grade GLO girl with a 7th-grade GLO girl. The first order of business was to allow these young ladies a little time to meet and form bonds. Activities such as decorating cupcakes and having “girl time” were used to provide space for these girls to get to know one another a little better. Once our middle school ladies had met and started their journey to relationships, members of the group began to determine what they felt rising sixth-grade girls would need to feel welcomed and supported. They discussed the challenges they faced and what could be put in place to help ease some of those challenges. Their insight and commitment to this task were wonderful. As a leader of the group, I could not have been more impressed. These young ladies were truly invested in creating an atmosphere at our school that would empower their fellow students. While the girls were developing plans for our new school family



members, elementary schools in our feeder district were contacted, and they began to create lists of any young ladies who they felt could benefit from participating in the GLO group. Students were then nominated and paired with members of the group from the middle school based on interests and talents.

Finally, the day had arrived when our GLO girls would all be together and meet. This was accomplished in stages so as not to overwhelm any of the girls. Our first introduction to the rising sixth graders was to visit their individual elementary schools and have lunch with them in a small setting. This took place in the spring before the fifth-grade girls were to come to middle school. Following this, the GLO girls met at our local library and played games together in small groups. This time they were put into slightly larger groups, introducing the rising GLO girls to others from feeder schools in our district. Finally,

the entire group met and spent time together at a local park to enjoy each other's company and a picnic lunch. The hope was that the rising sixth graders would have new friends and familiar faces they could lean on when they began their careers at West Lincoln Middle School. It was wonderful watching these young ladies start the transition to middle school in a more relaxed environment and with a greater air of confidence.

Once the elementary girls made the transition to middle school, they, along with their 7th and 8th-grade mentors, held meetings designed to support and offer help and guidance as our 6th-grade GLO girls were becoming Chiefs. Together, these young ladies have supported each other and have expanded their efforts to assist others. They have organized several service projects and worked to not only help one another but help others as well. As we look to the spring, the GLO girls are now preparing for our next group of rising 6th graders.

Moving forward, GLO hopes to carry on with its mission of girls leading others. We are working to continue what we have already put in place for rising sixth graders and plan to develop a program in conjunction with our high school to assist with the transition for rising freshmen. Our hope is that these young ladies will take what they've learned from GLO and create a community of young ladies who support and empower each other.



"The GLO group has shown me how much I can help and impact people." - Holyn



"GLO girls have helped me become less shy and make new friends." - Lainey

"GLO helped me get comfortable with leaving 5th grade and going into 6th grade." - Jamie



"GLO girls is an awesome group. I love being a part of this group." - Harper



"Glo has been such a wonderful experience. What started as a hope to better our school, grew into a responsible and empowering community of bright young women. I am truly glad to have been a part of it." - Madeline

Toni Sain is the Rising Leaders elective teacher and MTSS Coordinator at West Lincoln Middle School.

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

By Asari Ekpenyong

The United States has a diverse population of immigrants, and educators need to adopt culturally relevant pedagogy to meet their students' unique needs. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) can bridge the gap between mainstream education and diverse cultures in classrooms. CRP highlights the importance of integrating students' cultural heritage into their curriculum, classroom environment, and teaching methodologies. It observes three fundamental elements: academic achievement, cultural proficiency, and critical awareness. By prioritizing these dimensions, CRP can provide a range of benefits like fostering cultural identity, embracing diverse viewpoints, and encouraging analytical thinking.

Extant research has shown that Culturally Responsive Pedagogy recognizes the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. It empowers teachers to effectively engage students from diverse backgrounds and make learning experiences relevant to their communities and meaningful to their cultural identities. While CRP offers elaborate empirical and theoretical conventions for becoming an effective teacher of diverse youth, helping teachers and teacher candidates conceptualize and translate themes of this research into practice is a constant challenge in teacher education. However, scholars in the field of CRP have succinctly offered evidence-based practices in CRP.

Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014, 2022) suggests that academic outcomes, cultural competence, and

awareness can be assessed through students' achievements, which depend on how teachers act on their commitments. Similarly, Gay (2010) argues that classroom experiences should be relevant to students' cultural lives. According to research by Gay (2018) and Tosolt (2008, 2010), teachers who respect students' personhood and make them feel heard and valued help create a positive classroom community. Finally, Howard (2010) and Paris and Alim (2014, 2017) emphasize the importance of affirming and sustaining students' ethnic and cultural identities in the school environment. Using the indicators outlined above, the following approaches can be employed to ensure the successful implementation of CRP in middle school classrooms.





Get to Know Your Students: Try understanding your students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and life experiences. This information will enable you to connect the curriculum to their personal lives.

Integrate Diverse Perspectives: Your teaching materials should incorporate a range of perspectives. Incorporate literature, history, and examples from various cultures to provide a comprehensive and inclusive view of the world.

Establish a Culturally Inclusive Classroom: Adorn your classroom with a variety of diverse materials that reflect your students' cultural backgrounds. These can include posters, books, and artifacts that celebrate different cultures. I make sure to display flags in my classroom according to the nationalities of students in my class every school year. The school administration could display flags to represent the countries of origin of students enrolled in the school each year.

Use Relevant Cultural Examples: Teachers must connect the lesson content to students' real-life experiences and cultural contexts. This approach will make the material more relevant and relatable to them.

Promote Inclusive Conversations: Create a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences and learning from each other. Encourage open discussions about different cultural perspectives.

Enhance Your Professionalism: Continuously develop your cultural competence to enhance your professionalism. Stay current on cultural advancements, diversity matters, and effective CRP techniques.

Engage Families and Communities: Create collaborative partnerships with families and communities by inviting guest speakers, involving parents in the learning process, and utilizing community resources in your teaching.

Evaluate Your Personal Biases: Recognize your cultural prejudices and consistently analyze how they can affect your teaching. This self-awareness is essential in cultivating an inclusive classroom.

By implementing these strategies, educators can create a learning environment that meets the academic needs of middle school students and acknowledges and values their cultural identities, promoting a sense of belonging and engagement.

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Asari Ekpenyong is a third-year doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, specializing in curriculum and educator development. She is also a high school world language teacher. Her research interests include leveraging comparative and international education to promote culturally relevant pedagogy, internalizing teacher education curricula, and effectively reaching Black African immigrant students in US schools.

Admin Corner

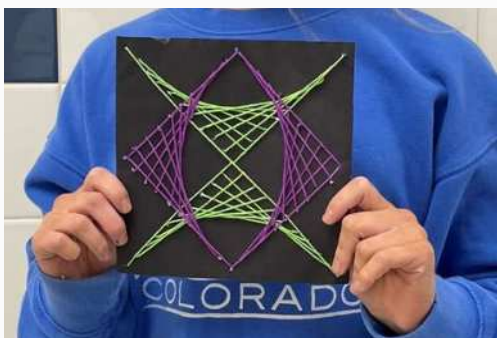
By Melody Marsh

Transforming a Low Performing School Through Arts Integration: A Success Story from Royal Oaks School of the Arts

In the heart of Kannapolis, North Carolina, Royal Oaks School of the Arts (ROSA) has undergone a remarkable transformation, turning the tides of academic decline and disengagement. As the principal of this institution, I am honored to share the journey of our school's resurgence through arts integration.

When I assumed the role of principal, Royal Oaks School was grappling with numerous challenges. It was designated as a recurring low-performing school in the NC state accountability system with declining academic scores and a negative community reputation. The school, originally kindergarten through fifth grade named Royal Oaks Elementary, had a diverse student population of approximately 300 students, facing issues such as high teacher turnover, increasing student discipline problems, and declining enrollment. In addition, Royal Oaks School was Title 1, serving students from a high-poverty community, one of the highest in the district.

In 2018, we embraced the opportunity to become a Restart school and embarked on a journey to transform through arts integration. The school was rebranded as Royal Oaks School of the Arts, expanding from kindergarten-fifth grade to kindergarten-eighth grade. With a focus on the fine arts, we became a Program Choice school, accepting students not only from our school zone but from the entire district, attracting families eager to immerse their children in arts-focused learning.



To facilitate this transformation we hired an Arts Coordinator, tasked with coaching and supporting teachers to integrate arts standards into core content teaching. We joined the A+ Network of NC and received an immersive week of training with all staff during the summer of 2018 to become an arts-focused school. Our curriculum expanded to include dance, theater, and strings classes for all students, alongside visual arts, music, and physical education.



Our mission at Royal Oaks School of the Arts is to use the arts as an inspiration for engagement, creativity, collaboration, and lifelong learning. We, as a staff, now understand that students have different and unique ways of learning and expressing their knowledge, which requires innovation. At Royal Oaks, we have a unique method of instruction that involves interdisciplinary teaching. Our classroom teachers and fine arts teaching staff collaborate regularly to interweave the arts standards into core classroom lessons. Using both arts integration and core integration, the students receive a double exposure to the state-mandated curriculum. This approach to teaching and learning is available to each of our students, kindergarten through eighth grade.

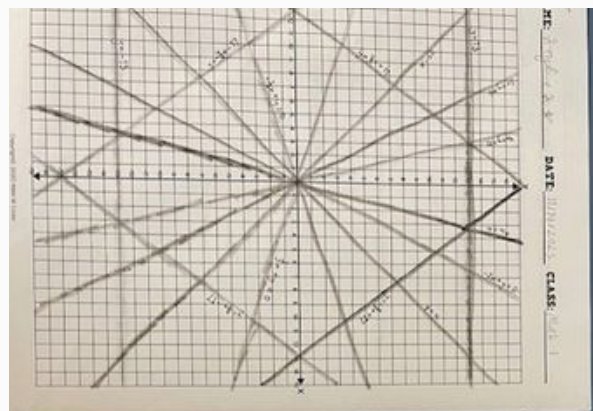
The impact of arts integration on student engagement was evident from the beginning. Teachers, initially hesitant, witnessed higher student engagement and retention of concepts and became staunch advocates of this innovative teaching approach. In addition to an arts-enriched classroom experience, Royal Oaks also offers optional after-school clubs to all students interested in participating. The clubs, a mix of arts-focused and non-arts-focused, such as Performance Club, Pottery Club, Dance Club, Drumline, Robotics, Run Club, and Chess Club, became immensely popular with approximately 300 students participating.

From 2018 to 2024, our student enrollment doubled from 300 to 600 students. At present, the school remains diverse with 30% White, 30% Black, 30% Hispanic, and 10% Multi. Royal Oaks School of the Arts continues to receive Title 1 funding due to the elevated levels of economic disadvantage of the school population. The demand for our fine arts program continues to rise, with a waiting list for enrollment through Program Choice. Our school community is made up of students who live in our school zone and students who have been granted a seat through Program Choice, as space allows. Approximately 30% of our students are Program Choice students, coming from all parts of Cabarrus County and 70% live within our zoned area. The success is reflected in the high number of our current fifth-graders, who have first priority in accepting a middle school seat, deciding to remain at ROSA through middle school, showcasing the commitment of our school families.



The school's transformation has been nothing short of extraordinary. No longer a low-performing school, Royal Oaks moved from a D to a C school as rated by the NC state accountability model and exceeded expected growth during the previous school year. Teachers report higher engagement in the classroom, fewer student discipline issues, increased academic achievement among subgroups, and elevated morale. The positive school culture and climate have led to greater parent engagement and community support. Once struggling to bring in families at curriculum event nights, the school is now overflowing with family support and engagement throughout the year at curriculum events and school performances. Among the most highly attended events are our yearly Disney Broadway Junior musical performances, a culmination of the hard work of the after-school Performance Club, and the yearly Dinner Theater Broadway Junior Revue, a collaborative effort that involves all middle school theater, dance, chorus, arts, and strings students, showcasing their hard work during the first semester.

Thanks to Restart Calendar Flexibility, we have added three additional half-days yearly to the calendar reserved for staff professional development on arts integration. This ensures continued learning and support for our program, contributing to sustained success.



The journey of Royal Oaks School of the Arts is a testament to the transformative power of arts integration. From a struggling institution with a negative reputation, we have become a school of high demand, fostering a diverse community of engaged learners. Our commitment to innovation, collaboration, and the arts has not only elevated academic performance but has also instilled a sense of pride and confidence in our students. The success of Royal Oaks serves as an inspiration for schools seeking innovative approaches to education and a reminder that every child can thrive when given the right environment and opportunities.

Melody Marsh is principal at Royal Oaks School of the Arts in the Cabarrus County School system. She has 26 years of experience in education, 12 as a school administrator, and absolutely loves working at an arts-focused school.

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Additional Information:
North Carolina Middle Level Education Association

Web page Address: ncmle.org

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An invitation to join the North Carolina Association for Middle Level Education

The purpose of the North Carolina Association for Middle Level Education is to foster excellence in education for emerging adolescents. Membership in the Association enables one to become well informed about middle level education in our state, to meet colleagues who share similar interests and concerns, and to work to improve our schools through varied activities.

Members receive annually:

- *Access to editions of the Journal
- *Access to virtual workshops in collaboration with other Association for Middle Level Education affiliates
- *Discounted registration to the annual NCMLE conference

NCMLE has both individual and institutional memberships-

Individual memberships:

- *Full-time educators are \$50.00
- *Retired teachers, retired professors, active undergraduate college students, and first-year teachers are \$25.00

Institutional Memberships are based on a sliding scale and determined by the number of teachers listed in the North Carolina Directory:

- *1-20 teachers, \$150.00
- *21-50 teachers, \$170.00
- *51 and more teachers, \$200.00

All educators on the school roster enjoy the benefits of the school's membership.

The opportunity to join NCMLE and AMLE as a dual membership is available for a reduced rate.

We welcome your participation! To join, simply complete the form and payment options at <https://ncmle.org/school-based-membership>

We look forward to seeing your ideas and experiences in future issues of the Journal and at our annual conference!