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*Executive Summary of*

## North Carolina's Future-Ready Leadership Program:

An Overview of Current Data

*Authors:*

Cassandra Davis, Sarah Fuller, and Ludmila Janda  
Education Policy Initiative at Carolina, University of North  
Carolina at Chapel Hill

Jenifer Corn

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina  
State University

*Contributor:*

Sara Pilzer Weiss

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina  
State University

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# NORTH CAROLINA'S FUTURE-READY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT DATA

## Executive Summary

### *Introduction and Background*

North Carolina's four-year Race to the Top (RttT) grant supported assistant principals through a professional development initiative known as Future-Ready Leadership (FRL). The FRL program was developed and provided by the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals' Association (NCPAPA) in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Each year, participating assistant principals take part in six cohort-based face-to-face sessions and engage in assignments, projects, and readings designed to build their capacity as "future-ready" school leaders and as a result build the capacity of their schools.

There are five major intended outcomes for FRL participants:<sup>1</sup>

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives and their application to the assistant principal and principal roles;
2. Gain an awareness and understanding of the leadership competencies necessary for effective school leadership and identify their strengths and areas for growth;
3. Engage in role clarification with their principals to assure that they are making significant contributions in each of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives;
4. Develop a plan with their principals for their own professional growth as school leaders; and
5. Become involved in a statewide network and community of learners with other assistant principals.

The Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation–North Carolina (CERE–NC) conducted an independent external evaluation of the implementation and impacts of FRL activities from January 2012 to 2013. This report provides a summative evaluation of the FRL program that focuses on the following five research questions:

### *Implementation of FRL*

1. How is the FRL initiative operationalized and implemented?

### *Quality of Professional Development*

2. To what extent does FRL reach the intended participants?
3. To what extent does the FRL program meet standards of high-quality professional development?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncpapa.org/FRL.html>

### *Impact of the FRL Program*

4. To what extent did participants acquire intended knowledge and skills as a result of their participation in FRL?
5. What was the impact of FRL on participants' practices?

The report ends with an investigation of differences in participant perceptions based on whether their principals participated in a related program (NCPAPA's Distinguished Leadership in Practice program), and also of differences in the formal evaluation ratings of participants and non-participants.

### *Data and Methods*

Data for this report were assembled from administrative data maintained by NCPAPA, informal interviews conducted by the Evaluation Team, and other external artifacts to better understand the implementation, quality of professional development, and impact of FRL. In addition, the Evaluation Team developed and deployed an end-of-year FRL participant survey that was administered to all participants in the first and second cohorts. The sample for this report includes all participants enrolled between January 2012 and May 2013 (193 assistant principals).

### *Findings*

#### *Implementation of FRL*

- *Multifaceted approach to professional development.* NCPAPA developed and implemented the FRL curriculum, utilized knowledgeable facilitators to deliver high-quality professional development, and provided assignments that required participants to engage their school staff.
- *Effective selection process.* Program officials used a complex selection process to identify school leaders who were prepared to benefit from the program.
- *Diverse participant population.* Participants represented over 70 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and included leadership from elementary, middle, high, and combined schools. In addition, participants came from small (9%), medium (55%), and large (36%) LEAs. Differences in race and gender were not tracked.

#### *Quality of Professional Development*

- *Overall high quality.* Surveyed participants agreed that the FRL program was useful, with few areas for improvement. Participants also agreed that the sessions had clear objectives.
- *Importance of collaboration with peers.* Overwhelmingly, surveyed participants agreed that the most beneficial aspect of FRL was the ability to collaborate with their peers during and outside of professional development sessions.
- *Alignment of content.* Although a few respondents indicated they would prefer the content to have a better alignment with their school's needs, the majority of participants agreed that nothing needed to be improved for future cohorts.

*Impact of the FRL Program*

- *Increase in knowledge.* Overwhelmingly, surveyed participants indicated that the FRL program helped them build knowledge about effective school leadership strategies. In addition, participants agreed they had a better understanding of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives.
- *Support for collaborative school environments.* Participants also indicated that, since completing the program, they are more likely to encourage a collaborative school environment that targets student outcomes.
- *Statistically significant difference in North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) scores.* Participants from the second FRL cohort exhibited statistically significant growth in their NCEES scores after participation. Although participants from the first cohort showed growth, it was not statistically significant.

*Next Steps*

The primary goal of this evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the initiative and its impact; however, given that data for this report were limited to the first and second cohort, future research should include participants from the third cohort and should continue to follow the previous groups to assess change over a longer period of time. In addition, resources for this evaluation were limited; if further funding becomes available, the Team recommends the use of focus groups, case studies, and observations in order to gain a deeper understanding of the program and its impacts.

**Contact Information:**  
Please direct all inquiries to Cassandra Davis  
[cnrichar@email.unc.edu](mailto:cnrichar@email.unc.edu)

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of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

