

# spotlight

No. 333 – December 4, 2007

## WHY UNC NEEDS CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter Demonstration Schools Can Improve Teacher Education

**KEY FACTS:** • The UNC system has initiated few efforts to strengthen teacher-education programs.

• UNC universities should use their power as charter-school authorizers to create on-site demonstration or laboratory charter schools to improve teacher-education programs.

• Charter demonstration schools provide a number of advantages to traditional demonstration schools, including greater accountability.

.....

**u**niversity of North Carolina leaders agree that improving teacher education must be a priority. In his April 2006 inaugural address, UNC President Erskine Bowles put teacher education at the top of his reform agenda for the university system. He said:

While our 15 [UNC] schools of education continue to produce the majority of the state's teachers, principals, and superintendents, we don't produce nearly enough of them. As a result, our state has a crying need for more teachers, better teachers, science and math teachers, stronger curriculum, and better trained principals. Over the course of the past year, UNC campuses produced more than 3,900 potential teachers, yet today North Carolina must hire more than 11,000 teachers each year.<sup>1</sup>

Bowles pointed to two problems with teacher-education programs in North Carolina: teacher supply and teacher quality. The limited number of teachers, particularly math and science teachers, that the UNC system produces may be a legitimate area of concern, but stronger teacher-recruitment efforts are already underway.

This year's state budget includes \$1.5 million to improve teacher recruitment and retention efforts, as well as funding for the Teacher Cadet Program (\$278,500 non-recurring), Teaching Fellows (\$650,000 for FY 07-08 and \$1.3 million for FY 08-09), and the Focused Education Reform Pilot Program (\$4.4 million for FY 07-08 and \$7.2 million for FY 08-09).<sup>2</sup> However, the UNC system

200 W. Morgan, #200  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
phone: 919-828-3876  
fax: 919-821-5117  
www.johnlocke.org

*The John Locke Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute dedicated to improving public policy debate in North Carolina. Viewpoints expressed by authors do not necessarily reflect those of the staff or board of the Locke Foundation.*

**Table 1. UNC Teacher Education Programs: Current Enrollment, Employment, and Satisfaction, 2006-07**

<i>University</i>	<i>Enrollment in undergraduate teacher education</i>	<i>Percentage employed within one year of completion of degree</i>	<i>Teacher rating of classroom management (4.00 scale)</i>	<i>Teacher rating of instructional delivery (4.00 scale)</i>	<i>Principal rating of teacher education programs (4.00 scale)</i>
Appalachian State	1,026	70%	3.26	3.51	3.48
East Carolina	1,283	67%	3.37	3.65	3.57
Elizabeth City State	136	74%	3.36	3.14	3.50
Fayetteville State	48	65%	3.25	3.45	3.58
NC A&T State	154	80%	3.30	3.70	2.94
NC Central	166	57%	3.05	3.24	3.33
NC State	506	63%	3.03	3.56	3.56
UNC-Asheville	119	61%	3.33	3.52	3.76
UNC–Chapel Hill	231	66%	3.27	3.63	3.67
UNC-Charlotte	749	77%	3.27	3.46	3.51
UNC-Greensboro	763	72%	3.34	3.63	3.57
UNC-Pembroke	205	85%	3.39	3.64	3.60
UNC-Wilmington	789	69%	3.21	3.60	3.43
Western Carolina	392	66%	3.35	3.63	3.47
Winston-Salem State	33	52%	3.13	3.38	3.57
<i>UNC System Average</i>	440	68%	3.26	3.52	3.50
<i>Private NC Colleges and Universities Average</i>	N/A	68%	3.45	3.67	3.49

has initiated few efforts to strengthen teacher quality via teacher-education programs. Therefore, the UNC system requires innovative solutions to improve the quality of teacher education.<sup>3</sup>

### **Satisfaction with Teacher Education Programs**

The 2006–2007 Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) survey asked teachers, administrators, and mentors to evaluate teacher education program in North Carolina. Using a 4.00 scale, mentors and principals evaluated the quality of the teachers’ training generally and in classroom management, technology, diversity, and instruction delivery training. Teachers assessed their own training in these areas using the same scale.

In general, teachers who graduated from UNC system schools were content with the quality of training offered by their universities in the areas of instructional delivery (3.52 out of 4.00) but less so with classroom management (3.26 out of 4.00). Principals rated teachers from UNC schools at or above the average in overall performance. The survey, conducted by the NC Department of Public Instruction, also indicated that teachers from UNC institutions were slightly less satisfied than those from teacher-education programs in private colleges and universities (see Table 1).<sup>4</sup>

The survey also reveals a number of concerns about the quality of teachers from particular UNC institutions. Overall, the classroom-management training provided by UNC constituent universities did not satisfy teachers. In fact, classroom management was one of the lowest-rated areas of the five assessed in the survey.<sup>5</sup> Students from NC Central and NC State were particularly disappointed by their classroom-management training.

Teachers rated instructional delivery much higher than classroom management, although teachers who graduated from Elizabeth City State, NC Central, and Winston-Salem State gave their former schools a very low rating on this measure. On the other hand, principals were generally more positive about the overall training that their teachers

received, but there were low ratings for teacher-training programs at NC A&T, NC Central, and UNC-Wilmington.

Taken together, the results of the survey indicate that many teachers are not satisfied with the training they received in the areas of classroom management and instructional delivery, which, along with content knowledge, are the most critical aspects of teaching. Many principals were pleased with the quality of their teachers, but there is much room for improvement.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Concept of the Demonstration School**

Demonstration or laboratory schools are not a new concept. Historians trace the idea of the demonstration school back to experimental teacher-training efforts in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and in the United States in the nineteenth century. John Dewey developed and popularized the concept in the early twentieth century. In 1896, Dewey founded the renowned University of Chicago Laboratory School in order to test educational, psychological, and philosophical theories, rather than provide teacher training.<sup>7</sup> Colleges and universities quickly replicated the concept and, despite Dewey, added a teacher-education component. Today, a number of colleges and universities operate on-campus laboratory schools (see Table 2).<sup>8</sup>

Fayetteville State and East Carolina were among a number of colleges and universities in North Carolina that established demonstration schools in the early twentieth century. Today, Elizabeth City State is the only UNC constituent university that operates a demonstration school, but the small school serves only children from ages three through five.

The Elizabeth City State University Laboratory School provides the general model for the charter demonstration school. According to the school's website, the school has four goals:

1. to provide education majors an opportunity to become familiar with young children and their characteristics
2. to enable the transition of theoretical concepts into practical application
3. to provide teacher training for education majors
4. to provide a learning environment that will help young children develop to their maximum potential physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally.<sup>9</sup>

The ECSU Laboratory School provides future teachers the practical experience necessary to be successful teachers. Teachers not only gain insight into the educational and behavioral characteristics of children, they practice, assess, and improve their own instructional practices and classroom-management skills. They also have an opportunity to evaluate the assumptions and concepts learned in education and psychology courses. Finally and most importantly, teachers learn how to adapt content knowledge to classroom instruction. All the while, the children enjoy an exceptional learning environment.

### **From Demonstration Schools to Charter Demonstration Schools**

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools that have more freedom than a traditional public school but are required to meet certain state regulations, such as participate in the state testing program. Charter schools have existed in North Carolina for 10 years, and statewide, charter-school enrollment has grown to approximately 30,000 students, increasing by approximately 50 percent over the last five years. The state has reached its statutory limit of 100 charter schools, meaning that state officials can approve new charter schools only to replace ones that have closed.<sup>10</sup>

Under the state law, the board of trustees of a constituent institution of UNC qualifies as a chartering entity.<sup>11</sup> This means that a board of trustees of a UNC institution may give preliminary approval to a charter-school application, so

**Table 2. National Association of Laboratory Schools (NALS) Member Schools**

<i>School Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>State</i>
Kilby Laboratory School	University of North Alabama	AL
Long Beach City College Child Development Center	Long Beach Community College	CA
Mills College Children's School	Mills College	CA
Corinne A. Seeds University Elementary School	University of California, Los Angeles	CA
Academy for Academic Excellence	University of Redlands	CA
The School for Young Children	St. Joseph College	CT
Florida A&M University Developmental Research School	Florida A&M University	FL
A. D. Henderson School	Florida Atlantic University	FL
Florida State University School	Florida State University	FL
P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School	University of Florida	FL
Berry College Elementary School	Berry College	GA
ISU Laboratory Schools	Illinois State University	IL
Baker Demonstration School	National-Louis University	IL
Laboratory High School	University of Illinois	IL
Burriss Laboratory School	Ball State University	IN
Model Elementary Laboratory School	Eastern Kentucky University	KY
University Laboratory School	Louisiana State University	LA
A.E. Phillips Laboratory School	Louisiana Tech University	LA
Southern University Laboratory School	Southern University	LA
Smith College Campus School	Smith College	MA
Onica Prall Child Development Center	Hood College	MD
Greenwood Laboratory School	Missouri State University	MO
Horace Mann Laboratory School	Northwest Missouri State University	MO
Windy Hill School	Colby Sawyer College	NH
Bank Street School For Children	Bank Street College	NY
The School of Columbia University	Columbia University	NY
Dutchess Community College Laboratory Nursery	Dutchess Community College	NY
Hunter College Campus Schools	Hunter College	NY
Skidmore Early Childhood Center	Skidmore College	NY
Bernice Wright Child Development Laboratory School	Syracuse University	NY
Carlow University Campus School	Carlow University	PA
Children's School-CMU	Carnegie Mellon University	PA
Grace B. Luhrs University School	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	PA
Falk Laboratory School	University of Pittsburgh	PA
Henry Barnard School	Rhode Island College	RI
Felton Laboratory School	South Carolina State University	SC
University School	East Tennessee State University	TN
Homer Pittard Campus School	Middle Tennessee State University	TN
Barbara K. Lipman Early Childhood School	University of Memphis	TN
St. Martin Hall	Our Lady of the Lake University	TX
Early Childhood Development Center	Texas A&M University Corpus	TX
Edith Bowen Laboratory School	Utah State University	UT
Regent University Lab School	Regent University	VA

long as the specific UNC institution is involved in the planning, operation, and/or evaluation of the charter school. The trustees would be required to determine that 1) all requirements are met, 2) the UNC institution has the ability to operate the school “in an educationally and economically sound manner,” and 3) the school would improve learning and meet all other goals established by the charter-school law. All current statutes and laws that apply to existing charter schools would also apply to charters approved by the UNC institution.<sup>12</sup>

While the board of trustees has the authority to provide preliminary approval to the charter school, the State Board of Education is the only entity that may grant final approval to the school.<sup>13</sup> This approval requires review by the board’s Leadership for Innovation Committee and a vote by the members of the State Board of Education. Upon final approval by the State Board of Education, the charter school would begin a yearlong planning process in preparation for opening in the fall of the following year. During the planning year, the charter-school operator would secure a suitable facility, hire and train personnel, and initiate the student-enrollment process.

Because the charter-school cap would limit the number of charter demonstration schools, the NC General Assembly would have to raise or remove the cap on charter schools. A minimum of 15 additional charter school slots would have to be created in order to place one charter demonstration school at each UNC institution.<sup>14</sup> Of the 16 universities in the UNC system, only one, the NC School of the Arts, does not have a teacher-education program.

### **Why Charter Schools?**

Obviously, the UNC system can create on-site K-12 demonstration schools without going through the charter-school process. Nevertheless, charter schools provide a number of advantages.

- 1. Funding.** The UNC system would share the cost of the charter school with the local school system and the State Board of Education. The UNC institution would be required to provide and maintain a school facility, while local and state dollars would fund teaching and administrative positions.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the startup and ongoing operational costs would not create an inordinate burden on any one party.
- 2. Accountability.** Because charter-school students are required to take state tests, any shortcomings of the school, as well as the teacher-education program that uses the school, would quickly become apparent to parents and the public. Furthermore, the public can compare those test results to schools within the district and across the state.
- 3. Demand.** There is a widespread demand for additional charter schools in North Carolina. For the 2007-08 school year, a preliminary report showed that charter schools were forced to place over 5,200 children on waiting lists.<sup>16</sup> Some North Carolina charter schools were overwhelmed with applications but state restrictions on enrollment growth prevent individual charter schools from meeting the demand. For example, Raleigh Charter High School, which *Newsweek* magazine ranks as the 53rd best public high school in the nation, had 705 applications for 79 open slots.<sup>17</sup> Franklin Academy Charter School in Wake Forest had 1,524 applications for 101 open slots.<sup>18</sup> The new Pine Lake Preparatory charter school in Mooresville received more than 2,500 applications for, at most, 1,200 slots.<sup>19</sup>
- 4. Support.** Charter demonstration schools would be able to tap the expertise of the Department of Public Instruction and its Office of Charter Schools for leadership and additional technical assistance. Furthermore, the charter demonstration school would be part of the statewide network of charter schools, creating additional opportunities for collaboration.
- 5. Neighborhood Effect.** Researchers from the University of South Florida, and East Carolina found

that competition from charter schools raised the performance of nearby district schools substantially.<sup>20</sup> In “Does School Choice Increase School Quality?” (2003), George M. Holmes, Jeff DeSimone, and Nicholas G. Rupp concluded that charter-school competition raised the performance of students at district schools who were at or near the cutoff score for grade-level proficiency. The authors concluded that school choice is a more cost-effective alternative than lowering class size. Lowering class size increased student performance by 0.36 percentage points, while school choice increased student performance by 1.0 percentage point.

## Conclusion

Many have championed the idea of improving the quality of North Carolina’s teachers, but very little structural change has occurred within schools of education. UNC President Erskine Bowles has an opportunity to demonstrate unprecedented leadership in improving teacher education in North Carolina. The UNC system can be the first state university system to create a statewide network of charter schools that use the demonstration-school model to improve the quality of teacher education in this state.

*Terry Stoops is education policy analyst for the John Locke Foundation.*

## End Notes

1. Erskine Bowles, “Inaugural Address,” April 12, 2006, p. 7, [www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/pres/index.htm](http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/pres/index.htm).
2. North Carolina General Assembly, “The Joint Conference Committee Report on the Continuation, Expansion And Capital Budgets,” July 27, 2007, pp. F1-10, F19.
3. The 2004–2009 UNC System Long Range Plan also set forth a number of goals to increase the number and quality of teachers who graduate from UNC campuses. The report says, “Expand efforts in teacher preparation to increase the supply of well qualified and more diverse teachers to serve the rapidly growing needs of North Carolina’s schools—using both traditional and innovative approaches, such as incentives to students, lateral entry programs, mid-career opportunities, e-learning and collaborative 2+2 programs with NC Community Colleges, while ensuring that the quality of teacher preparation is maintained at the highest possible level” (p. 2). The plan is available at the UNC system website, [www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/pres/publications/publications.htm](http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/pres/publications/publications.htm).
4. The NC Department of Public Instruction and the NC State Board of Education, “IHE Performance Reports, 2006–2007,” pp. 29-34, [www.ncpublicschools.org/ihe](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ihe).
5. Teachers, mentors, and principals completed the survey, and the sample size was small, totaling 1,251 teachers, 1,535 mentors, and 1,404 principals.
6. Unfortunately, we do not have data linking student test scores to teachers who received their training at a university in North Carolina. This measure would be a key measure of quality.
7. See William Harms and Ida DePencier, *Experiencing Education: 100 Years of Learning at The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools*, Orland Park, IL: Alpha Beta Press, 1996. Dewey said, “any other such laboratory it has two main purposes: (1) to exhibit, test, verify and criticize theoretical statements and principles, (2) to add to the sum of facts and principles in its special line (Dewey, The University [of Chicago] Record, I, No. 32,417, 1896).
8. National Association of Laboratory Schools, “NALS’ National Institutions,” [www.edinboro.edu/cwis/education/nals/nalsnatinstitution.htm](http://www.edinboro.edu/cwis/education/nals/nalsnatinstitution.htm).
9. Elizabeth City State University, “Laboratory School,” [tep.ecsu.edu/lab\\_school.htm](http://tep.ecsu.edu/lab_school.htm).
10. Several bills were introduced in the 2007 legislative session to raise or remove the charter school cap. They include HB 30: Raise the Cap on Charter Schools; HB 252: Remove the Cap on the Number of Charter Schools; HB 416: Remove the Cap on the Number of Charter Schools; SB 39: Raise the Cap on Charter Schools; and SB 591: Raise the Cap on the Number of Charter Schools.
11. § 115C-238.29B. *Eligible applicants; contents of applications; submission of applications for approval*: “...A chartering entity may be: (1) The local board of education of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school will be located; (2) The board of trustees of a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina, so long as the constituent institution is involved in the planning, operation, or evaluation of the charter school; or (3) The State Board of Education. Regardless of which chartering entity receives the application for preliminary approval, the State Board of Education shall have final approval of the charter school. ...”
12. § 115C-238.29C. *Preliminary approval of applications for charter schools*: “(a) The chartering entity that receives a request for preliminary approval of a charter school shall act on each request received prior to November 1 of a calendar year by February 1 of the next calendar year. (b) The chartering entity shall give preliminary approval to the application if the chartering entity determines that (i) information contained in the application meets the requirements set out in this Part or adopted by the State Board of Education, (ii) the applicant has the ability to operate the school and would be likely to operate the school in an educationally and economically sound manner, and (iii) granting the application would improve student learning and would achieve one of the other purposes set out in G.S. 115C-238.29A.”
13. *Ibid.*
14. Elizabeth City State would convert its laboratory school into a charter school.
15. § 116-43.15. *Use of college or university facilities by public school students pursuant to cooperative programs*: “The facilities of any constituent institution of The University of North Carolina and the facilities of any private college or university licensed in accordance with G.S. 116-15

that comply with applicable State, county, and local fire codes for those facilities may be used without modification for public school students in joint or cooperative programs such as middle or early college programs and dual enrollment programs (2006-66, s. 8.11(b); 2006-221, s. 5).”

16. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, “Charter School Waiting List, 2007,” March 2007.
17. Michael Biesecker, “Students’ fate rides on luck of the draw,” *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.), March 11, 2007, [www.newsobserver.com/146/story/552233.html](http://www.newsobserver.com/146/story/552233.html).
18. Dale Gibson, “Luddy’s school makes case for more charters,” *Triangle Business Journal*, February 16, 2007.
19. Lena Warmack, “2,500 Apply to New School,” *The Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 2007, [www.charlotte.com/115/story/74039.html](http://www.charlotte.com/115/story/74039.html).
20. George M. Holmes, Jeffrey DeSimone, and Nicholas G. Rupp, “Does School Choice Increase School Quality?” National Bureau of Economic Research, *Working Paper* No. W9683, May 2003, [ssrn.com/abstract=406055](http://ssrn.com/abstract=406055).