

EPP Subcommittee Report

I. Introduction

At the February 1, 2024 monthly meeting of the State Board of Education, the Chair established a subcommittee to review the initial authorization process for educator preparation programs in North Carolina, as well as a study on how alternative educator preparation programs have performed post-approval.

The subcommittee, consisting of Educator Standards & Preparation Committee Chair Olivia Oxendine, Vice Chair Donna Tipton-Rogers, and State Board Member Catty Moore met five times between February 2024 and June 2024 with the goals of (1) identifying all of the so-called alternative EPPs; (2) reviewing the performance data for each EPP and the cohort as a whole; (3) reviewing the initial authorization process and criteria used prior to recommendation for approval by the State Board of Education; and (4) developing a final report and recommendations.

II. Alternative EPPs Initially Authorized in North Carolina

A. With assistance from staff at the Department of Public Instruction, the subcommittee identified the following EPPs to fit within its definition of alternative educator preparation programs initially authorized in North Carolina:

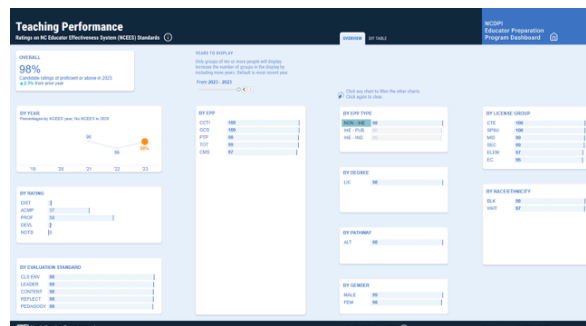
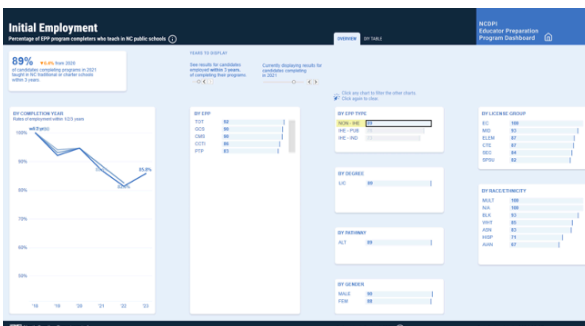
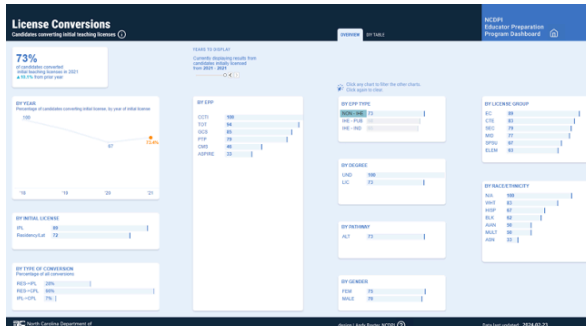
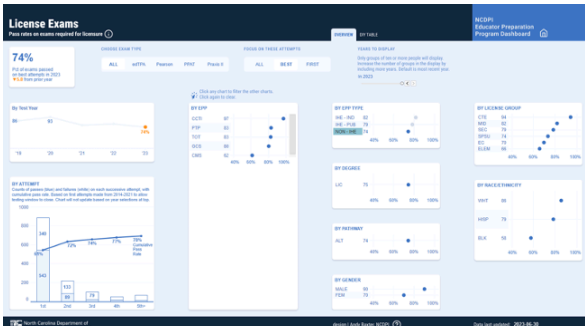
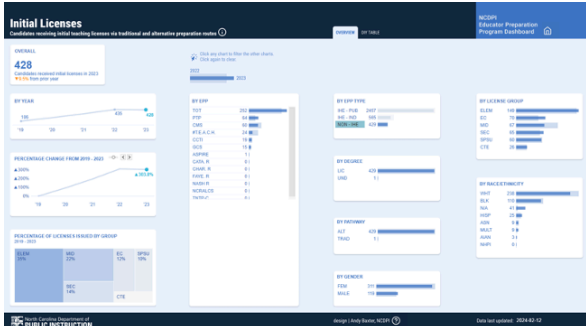
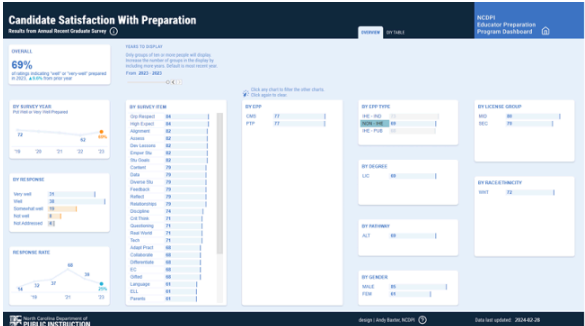
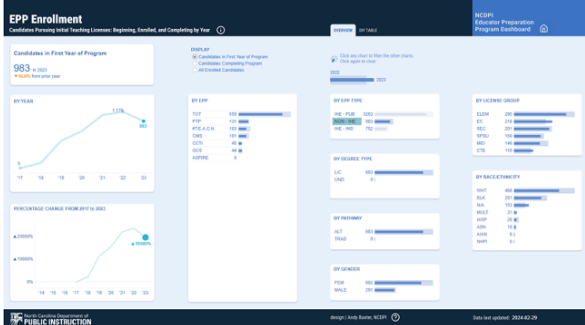
1. Teachers of Tomorrow (Texas)
2. # T.E.A.C.H. (Michigan)
3. CCTI (Wake-Durham)
4. Pathways to Practice (NCSU and UNC partnership)
5. Guilford County Schools ACT (Guilford)
6. CMS Teaching Residency (Charlotte-Meck)
7. Aspire Teacher Prep (RTI International)
8. Winston-Salem/Forsyth¹

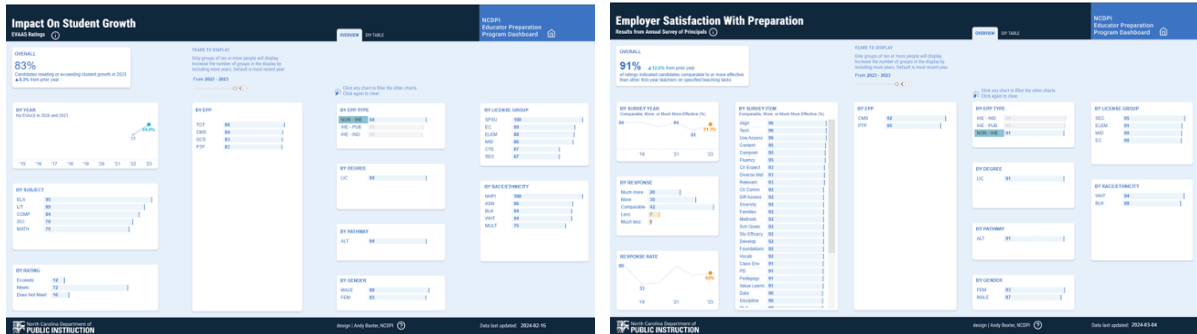
III. Review of Alternative EPP Data

A. DPI's Director for Educator Preparation, Andrew Sioberg, provided the subcommittee with an overview of EPP performance and the subcommittee utilized data from the [Interactive EPP Dashboard](#). Several screenshots are provided below.

B. The subcommittee determined that the alternative educator preparation programs were performing mostly in line with so-called traditional preparation programs.

¹ Winston-Salem/Forsyth, operating within its first year, had no data reported yet.





IV. Review of Initial Authorization Process

Next, the subcommittee reviewed the process for initial authorization. The subcommittee started with the legislation, enacted in 2017 as part of SB 599:

"§ 115C-269.5. Educator preparation programs.

- (b) State Board Authority. – The State Board shall initially authorize and recognize an EPP as required by this Article. The State Board shall have authority to regulate EPPs in accordance with this Article.
- (c) Initial Authorization. – The State Board shall assign the status of initially authorized to an EPP if it has not yet generated sufficient data to meet the performance standards, but the EPP meets one of the following criteria:
 - (1) The EPP is approved by the State Board.
 - (2) The EPP is nationally accredited by CAEP.

Pursuant to legislation, if an applicant is accredited by CAEP, it is automatically initially authorized. The subcommittee researched the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) to understand why it is specifically named in legislation. CAEP is one of two national accreditation agencies for educator preparation programs, with the other being the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP).

CAEP trains and deploys reviewers who work and lead educator preparation programs around the country. The reviewers consider a program’s application and supporting materials. It is a comprehensive review process that takes multiple years for an applying program to prepare for and multiple days for the reviewers to get through. Given the rigor of the review, legislation calls for automatic approval. Accreditation requires an on-site review and analysis of an institution’s prior performance. However, if the entity applying for state approval is a new educator preparation program, it will not have data to satisfy the accreditation process and will be ineligible for CAEP accreditation. In this case, legislation states that the State Board must establish rules for initial authorization.

Again, the subcommittee sought guidance from the legislation regarding what the State Board should look for.

"§ 115C-269.10. Educator preparation program approval process.

(b) Rules for Granting State Approval. – The State Board shall adopt rules for granting approval to EPPs in accordance with this Article. The rules shall ensure the following:

- (1) A rigorous approval process that requires that the criteria in this Article are met.
- (2) An application process, peer review, and technical assistance provided by the State Board.
- (3) An approval period of five years and process for renewal of approval.

The subcommittee reviewed prior approaches to the peer review process and learned that, for a number of years, North Carolina leveraged the few educator preparation faculty across the state who are also CAEP reviewers to do the peer reviews at no charge. The challenge with this approach was that the review body (made of North Carolina EPP faculty) were reviewing applications from future competitors. Whether this resulted in an actual conflict of interest, it presented the appearance of a conflict of interest.

DPI then shifted to the current approach, with CAEP serving as the peer review body for recommendations on initial authorization. [This link](#) takes you to the DPI document on the process. One advantage to this is the rigor of this phase of CAEP's review. Outside of site visits and data review (as new programs there is no data to review), the review is the same as for accreditation. The review covers the requirements in legislation; namely:

"§ 115C-269.10. Educator preparation program approval process.

(c) Minimum Approval Standards. – At a minimum, the rules established as provided in subsection (b) of this section shall include the following standards:

- (1) Students shall develop a deep understanding of the critical concepts and principles of their discipline and, by completion, be able to use discipline-specific practices flexibly to advance the learning of all students toward attainment of college- and career-readystandards.
- (2) Effective partnerships and high-quality clinical practice shall be central to preparation so that students develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to demonstrate positive impact on all elementary and secondary students' learning and development.
- (3) Quality of students shall be a continuing and purposeful part of the EPP's responsibility from recruitment, at admission, through the progression of courses and field experiences, and to decisions that completers are prepared to teach effectively and are recommended for

licensure. The EPP shall demonstrate that development of student quality is the goal of educator preparation in all phases of the program through evidence of impact under subdivision (4) of this subsection.

- (4) The EPP shall demonstrate the impact of its completers on elementary and secondary student learning and development, classroom instruction, and schools, and the satisfaction of its completers with the relevance and effectiveness of their preparation.
- (5) The EPP shall maintain a quality assurance system comprised of valid data from multiple measures, including evidence of students' and completers' positive impact on elementary and secondary student learning and development. The EPP shall support continuous improvement that is sustained and evidence-based and that evaluates the effectiveness of its completers. The EPP shall use the results of inquiry and data collection to establish priorities, enhance program elements and capacity, and test innovations to improve completers' impact on elementary and secondary student learning and development.

The peer review also covers an exhaustive list of standards. [This link](#) provides a list of standards that CAEP utilizes in making its recommendation. [This link](#) provides an example. A second advantage to this approach is that the peer review is done at no additional cost to the state. For accreditation, CAEP is paid both by programs who seek accreditation and by the states (which enter into agreements with CAEP to make the application process easier for the applicants). Because North Carolina already had an agreement with CAEP in place for the accreditation process, DPI successfully amended it to add — at no extra charge — that CAEP would perform the initial authorization review. Around that time, the State Board approved use of AAQEP as well — however, AAQEP charges each applicant an additional \$10,000 so it is not widely used (if at all).

V. Recommendations

A. Study Considered Complete

The subcommittee recommends that this phase of its work be considered complete and that DPI staff be authorized to resume bringing applications to the State Board for EPP approval.

B. Expand single-accreditor preference

Legislation names two paths to approval: (1) CAEP accreditation; or (2) approval by State Board based on its adopted policy. There are only two approved national accreditors, and the

subcommittee questioned whether North Carolina is inadvertently granting a preference to one over the other. The subcommittee recommends asking the General Assembly to add AAQEP accreditation as a path to approval. The subcommittee further recommends, in the meantime, adding AAQEP accreditation to its policy for approval.

C. Independent review of criteria

The subcommittee was impressed by the CAEP standards as criteria for its recommendation, but believes the criteria should be reviewed by DPI staff to ensure it meets the standards by which North Carolina EPPs are held accountable. The subcommittee would like DPI to conduct this review and present any recommendations to the State Board.

D. Need for accountability to go through rulemaking

The subcommittee believes a higher-impact method of ensuring approved EPPs are meeting future teacher workforce needs and quality is to have the ability to hold approved EPPs accountable for meeting legislative requirements. Currently, while legislation creating EPP accountability was enacted in 2017, the enforcement mechanisms have not gone through rulemaking. This limits the State Board's enforcement capacity. The subcommittee would like recommendations from DPI staff regarding a process and timeline for proposing and adopting rules.

VI. Motion

The subcommittee moves that the State Board adopt these recommendations.