



NC First in
Teaching

Roadmap

FIT Leaders

In 2018, more than 70 current and former educators from across North Carolina came together, sharing their stories, experiences, and ideas with the goal of elevating their profession. This group is known as the FIT Leaders.

Drawing from their diverse backgrounds and perspectives, they identified the qualities that embody what it means to be treated as a highly-skilled professional. The group also identified critical barriers that are preventing North Carolina from being *First in Teaching* (FIT).

The culmination of their work, thus far, is this ***NC First in Teaching Roadmap***, which highlights practical, actionable innovations to improve the teaching experience and allow educators to better serve their students.

CAREER QUALITIES

Autonomy

- Access to, and decision-making authority for, classroom and school resources (distributed equitably)
- Accountability that respects individual strengths
- Appropriate mentorship/leadership that doesn't end when a teacher is considered high performing: everyone can improve and deserves support
- Opportunity to use individual professional skills to meet the unique needs of students
- Time to plan and apply skills

Compensation

- Competitive benefits
- Competitive compensation
- Pay and professional perks that progress as impact and leadership responsibilities grow

Culture (School Culture)

- Environment of cultural, racial, and gender inclusion
- Innovative and collaborative work environment
- Positive environment supported by school leaders who value communication and transparency
- Profession is held to a high ethical standard and possesses processes to maintain integrity
- Shared decision-making
- Shared vision for student success
- Supportive relationships, with reciprocal trust
- Willingness to fail as the team learns and grows
- Work-life balance

Mastery

- Career growth opportunities as teachers evolve professionally
- Challenging, life-long learning opportunities
- Leadership opportunities, if desired
- Meaningful feedback and opportunities for reflection
- Opportunities for continuous improvement
- Opportunities to network with peers outside of the school
- Time to collaborate during the school day

Physical Environment

- Adequate, clean buildings and facilities
- School policies and practices that foster safe environments for educators and students

Professional Team

- Great school leader who empowers all staff
- Sufficient number of other professionals to meet student needs, e.g. counselors & nurses
- Students appropriately matched with teachers' abilities to maximize student success and wellbeing
- Surrounded by high-quality, committed educators who are as diverse as our students

Purpose

- Feeling of being a part of something bigger, including transparency when policies are made at the federal, state and district level
- Impact: feeling of personally making a difference
- Providing the inspiration to encourage others to want to serve in the field
- Sense of fulfillment
- Workday satisfaction

Respect: The First in Teaching (FIT) Leaders believe that feeling respected is an important aspect of being treated as a professional and that the qualities above are indicators of respect.

PRIORITIES & SOLUTIONS

The following priorities and solutions will help overcome barriers and elevate the teaching profession beyond what is experienced in any other state. Each of these systemic changes may require school-, district-, and/or state-level shifts in policies, programs, or funding. While the emphasis here is on the teaching profession, the ultimate focus is on why the FIT Leaders teach - to positively impact student success!

Barriers to Becoming First in Teaching :

- Administrative Burden
- Inadequate Facilities
- Inadequate Teacher Evaluation
- Inflexible Schedule
- Lack of Access to Equitable Resources
- Lack of Career Opportunities
- Lack of Connectedness
- Lack of Recruitment and Preparation
- Lack of Strong School Leadership
- Lack of Time to Plan and Collaborate
- Negative Perceptions
- Outdated Compensation Model
- Teachers Play Too Many Roles

Career Advancement Opportunities (Barrier: Lack of Career Opportunities)

- Defined: Professional career advancement opportunities for teachers.
- Teacher Perspective: I deserve to have professional career opportunities, without having to leave the work I love in the classroom. The organizational structure should be designed to empower teachers to apply their individual strengths better through expanded reach, leading teaching teams, developing curriculum, etc.

Competitive Compensation (Barrier: Outdated Compensation Model)

- Defined: Advance a competitive compensation model that adjusts with cost-of-living, values effectiveness and impact, attracts top talent, and addresses staffing demands.
- Teacher Perspective: My compensation package should be competitive with surrounding states and empower me to expand my reach and effectiveness for more students and/or colleagues, teach high-demand skills/courses/students, and/or work in high-needs schools.

Equitable and Accessible Resources (Barrier: Lack of Access to Equitable Resources)

- Defined: Improved distribution of resources for schools and classrooms, and expanded school-based access to resource decision-making overall.
- Teacher Perspective: My ability to meet the needs of my students is limited by inadequate access to resources (both physical and professional development).

Increased Connectedness (Barrier: Lack of Connectedness)

- Defined: Direct and meaningful connections that bridge relationships between educators, their peers, and the local community.
- Teacher Perspective: I deserve the time and space to engage in the same types of professional networking opportunities that are present in other highly-skilled professions.

PRIORITIES & SOLUTIONS

Productive Teacher Feedback and Support (Barrier: Inadequate Teacher Evaluation)

- Defined: A culture of feedback based on an embedded teacher evaluation system and regular professional support.
- Teacher Perspective: The teacher evaluation system and practices do not provide timely and constructive feedback that allow me to promptly adapt to meet the needs of my students and grow as a professional.

Professional Learning Environments (Barrier: Inadequate Facilities)

- Defined: Infrastructure and facilities that foster a safe and positive environment for teaching and learning.
- Teacher Perspective: My school should feel like a professional environment and reflect the importance of what I do with and for students every day.

Professional Work Schedule (Barrier: Inflexible Schedules & Lack of Time to Plan & Collaborate)

- Defined: Identify best practices to protect and effectively utilize planning and collaboration time, while also creating reasonable workday flexibility to meet urgent personal needs.
- Teacher Perspective: I do not have the time and opportunity to plan and collaborate with my colleagues, so we can adapt our practices to meet the ever-changing needs of our students and community. I also need reasonable flexibility to handle family and medical issues, like other professionals.

Rigorous Recruitment & Preparation (Barrier: Lack of Recruitment and Preparation & Negative Perceptions)

- Defined: Improve the perception of the profession and establish intentional recruitment and preparation efforts that ensure every classroom has a great teacher.
- Teacher Perspective: I want to be in an industry where teachers are actively recruited into the profession and have access to the high-quality preparation and on-boarding support enjoyed by other professionals. I also want to be part of a genuinely diverse workforce that includes a wide-range of perspectives to benefit student success.

Strong School Leadership (Barrier: Lack of Strong School Leadership)

- Defined: Improve policies and programs to better attract, retain, and support outstanding school leaders.
- Teacher Perspective: I want my school leadership to be equipped to create a culture that attracts and retains great educators who are committed to excellence and working towards a shared vision for student success. I also deserve school leadership that will support my unique professional needs and empower me to innovate in my classroom and with my colleagues.

Support for the Whole Child (Barrier: Teachers Play Too Many Roles & Administrative Burden)

- Defined: Remove barriers to teaching by ensuring adequate wrap-around supports for students (nurses, psychologists, social workers, counselors, etc.) and reducing unnecessary administrative tasks, so teachers can focus on instruction.
- Teacher Perspective: I have to spend so much time on paperwork and supporting wrap-around needs for my students that I don't have time to focus on their academic needs.