

ANNUAL REPORT



Carolina Collaborative
for Alternative Preparation
Spurring Innovation Through Collaboration

2023-24



College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Overview of CarolinaCAP: Spurring Innovation Through Collaboration	4
A targeted teacher preparation pathway in SC districts	4
A pathway powered through partnership	6
Progressions to support districts and candidates	7
Staffing Classrooms Strategically: Progressing Pipelines for New Teacher Support	8
Growing a teacher pipeline for schools with the highest needs	8
A “grow your own” approach for districts	10
Preparing educators with student context in mind	10
A cost-effective recruitment solution for districts	10
Preparing Through Practice: Candidate Progression	12
Cracking the Praxis code	13
Theoretical and applied learning experiences for candidates	14
Coaching that connects principles to practice	15
Testing and evaluating effectiveness for candidates	16
Deepening Early Support: Residency Progression	17
A state-of-the-art residency model	17
Initial results from the CarolinaCAP residency	18
Systematizing What Works: District Progressions	20
The need for systematic candidate support	20
Supporting districts to become places of preparation	21
Emerging Priorities: Scaling the Pipeline	22
Appendices	
Appendix A: Original CarolinaCAP Funding Proviso	23
Appendix B: Program Evaluation Overview	24
Appendix C: Certification Areas for CarolinaCAP Candidates	25
References	27

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Preparation (CarolinaCAP) is a high-quality, targeted alternative preparation pathway administered by the University of South Carolina (USC) in partnership with Mira Education and school districts in South Carolina. As part of USC's commitment to preparing and supporting educators for systems most in need, CarolinaCAP provides wider accessibility and targeted support to school districts and candidates via this rigorous, university-based preparation program, with an emphasis on serving rural and hard-to-staff schools.

In its fourth year in operation in 2023-24, CarolinaCAP has made gains that respond to needs raised by district partners and external evaluators of the pathway:

- **Expansion to reach nearly half of all SC districts** since its inception in 2020;
- **Placement of teachers in two times the targeted number of rural and I-95 corridor districts**, as well as placing successful teacher candidates in schools and classrooms most impacted by staffing shortages;
- **A 29% increase in the size of its candidate pipeline this year**, and five times the size of the candidate pool in its first year of operation in 2020-21;
- **Effective instruction delivered to more than 5,000 SC public school students this year** based on the placement of CarolinaCAP residents and candidates;
- **Sustained commitment to serving communities with a “grow your own” model**, ensuring sustainable staffing and awareness of community context among its candidates and residents;
- **Doubling of Praxis pass rates**, ensuring that more applicants can enter the pathway and more candidates are ready to move to full professional licensure as they conclude their participation in CarolinaCAP; and
- **Launch of a residency model** that will emphasize whole-child strategies, science, and math in an enhanced preparation sequence.

The 2023-24 annual report outlines key areas of growth in its progressions for support of applicants, candidates, residents, and the districts that partner with the pathway. Further, we explore how the pathway is responding to emerging needs, so that it continues to spur innovative, collaborative, and effective responses for staffing SC schools at their points of need.

OVERVIEW OF CAROLINACAP: SPURRING INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

The Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Preparation (CarolinaCAP) is a high-quality alternative preparation pathway administered by the University of South Carolina (USC) in partnership with Mira Education and 38 school districts in South Carolina. As part of USC’s commitment to preparing and supporting educators for systems most impacted by chronic educator staffing shortages, CarolinaCAP emphasizes support of districts and candidates in rural and historically disadvantaged communities across the state, following a model tailored to the challenges faced by districts and would-be educators in SC.

A targeted teacher preparation pathway in SC districts

The impact of teacher shortages on K-12 school districts is a well-documented and growing problem, particularly for the smaller rural communities common in the state. While addressing retention is an essential consideration, targeted approaches to educator preparation such as CarolinaCAP remain a critical part of the solution for the state, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Meeting District Needs through a Well-Targeted Educator Preparation Pathway

SC DISTRICT NEEDS	CAROLINACAP'S PATHWAY DESIGN RESPONSE
Well-prepared candidates	Rigorous coursework, competency-based preparation, and coached classroom experience over three years, while serving students immediately
Candidates for special education, STEM, and other hard-to-fill positions	Recruitment targets these content areas along with early childhood education, where good teachers can have the most lasting impact
Candidates able and willing to teach in rural and/or high-poverty communities	“Grow your own” approach targets college graduates who live in the districts in which they become teacher candidates
Candidates who understand and respond to community context	Recruitment from within local communities, with a focus on educators who share experiences and identities with their students
Cost-effectiveness of new teacher support	Coaching and other learning experiences provide strong induction supports without increasing demands on districts with limited budget and capacity
<i>For aspiring educators: Low-cost supports</i>	Low-cost preparation and opportunity to earn teaching salary (main CarolinaCAP pathway) or living wage stipend (CarolinaCAP residency) from day one; districts may opt to cover all costs for candidates

The design of CarolinaCAP responds comprehensively to needs of SC impacted by teacher supply challenges, particularly ensuring that the state has an appropriate response to needs of districts that are rural and/or located along the I-95 corridor.

Responding to disproportionate needs in rural and I-95 corridor communities

Rural and disadvantaged communities experience greater difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified teachers (Edwards, D. S., et. al., 2023). The median three-year retention rate for I-95 corridor districts is two percentage points lower than the state average (authors' calculations based on SC TEACHER data). Further, the most recent SC Teacher Exit Survey results indicate that 41% of departing teachers moved to other districts, generally to access higher pay, better benefits, and enhanced supports, as well as for family or other personal reasons (Starrett et. al, 2023). CarolinaCAP's "grow your own" model helps districts identify local candidates who are college graduates and already committed to living in and serving their communities. This focus accords with the legislative proviso that funds the program.

Targeting disproportionate shortages in critical content areas

Early grades, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and special education classrooms that are essential to student and district success are most challenging for districts to fill. CarolinaCAP targets recruitment and placement in these content areas.

Increasing instructional quality

Across the state, as many as 40.9% of teaching positions this fall were categorized as either unfilled or hard-to-fill and thus at ongoing risk of being vacant (Learning Policy Institute, 2023). Based on these figures, we estimate that 28,800 SC students were without permanent, highly-qualified teachers for one or more classes last fall, adversely affecting continuity and quality of instruction and other student supports. CarolinaCAP provides well-supported career candidates to classrooms and districts that would otherwise resort to use of substitutes or temporary teacher placements through other, often more expensive, programs. Preparation pathways tend to emphasize either extensive preparation or quick entry to professional practice; CarolinaCAP effectively balances these equally important demands in resolving the teacher shortage in the state.

Lowering personnel expenses due to teacher attrition

Replacing a single teacher costs districts an average of \$9,000 for rural communities and as much as \$20,000 in urban communities (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). Because turnover is disproportionately high in rural and disadvantaged communities, even the lower replacement costs add up quickly. CarolinaCAP assists districts with recruiting and placing candidates in their schools and offsets capacity and cost requirements for induction through its three-year candidate support progression. All this is done at a cost to the district of only \$4,500/candidate in qualifying rural districts. This figure compares favorably with other programs such as the international teacher program, which can cost districts \$10,000 per year per position.

Growing teachers within a community context

Positive student outcomes—both academic and behavioral—are closely correlated with the placement of educators who share backgrounds and community contexts with their students (Gershenson, et. al., 2017; Grissom, Kern, & Rodriguez, 2017). Moreover, some recent research into rural teaching contexts suggests that especially in STEM subjects, opportunities to highlight real-world application of academic content is enhanced when teachers are highly familiar with local communities and their assets (Paradise, et. al., 2022). CarolinaCAP's "grow your own approach" ensures that candidates are more likely to deeply share and understand the contexts of the South Carolina students they serve.

A pathway powered through partnership

CarolinaCAP is designed to draw upon the expertise of the trilateral partnership among USC, Mira Education, and partnering school districts to create and refine efficient and effective recruitment, preparation, and retention practices for prospective and practicing educators across South Carolina. (A [list of district partners](#) can be found online.) Each partner brings experience and skill sets to ensure CarolinaCAP meets the needs of the alternative certification candidate and addresses district recruitment and retention needs:

- USC provides research-based practices to build and deliver high quality learning experiences for candidates, support and training for CarolinaCAP coaches, and continuation of strong partnerships with districts across South Carolina.
- Mira Education brings expertise in systemic thinking and collective leadership development to ensure that partner districts can act with CarolinaCAP to create places of preparation within each participating school, as well as developing impact stories.
- Partner districts bring with them knowledge of the unique needs of their communities, understanding of staffing needs, and the ability to identify potential within and outside of their districts.

The combined expertise of the trilateral partnership provides the talent and support needed to cultivate and sustain an innovative alternative certification pathway. (See CarolinaCAP’s website for a [full list of personnel](#) in 2023-24.)

CarolinaCAP personnel and partners use ongoing external evaluations, conducted annually, to ensure effectiveness of the program and guide programmatic improvements and growth. The external evaluation team has collected data over the past two years via a baseline survey of candidates, annual follow-ups, and periodic site visits throughout the life of the program as public health situations have permitted. (See Appendix B for the evaluation plan.) These data are the basis of the information reported here and in [quarterly reports](#) available on the CarolinaCAP website.

The total of \$1.2 million awarded by a legislative funding proviso for 2023-24 continues support for innovation, programmatic improvement, and support for a viable pathway for alternative certification for our rural districts. (See Appendix B.) Additional appropriations funded accelerated pathway support elements and the launch of a new CarolinaCAP residency in four districts, with strategic planning assistance made available to another seven “structuring supports” districts with interest in participating in future residency expansions. The balance of funding for the program comes from partner districts themselves, who pay \$4,500-7,500 per candidate depending on whether they qualify for reduced fees via Rural Recruitment support.

“ Through a partnership with CarolinaCAP, our district has adopted a unique approach to attract, support, and keep teachers.... By working together, we offer personalized coaching to teachers, surpassing traditional methods to ensure their success.”

—**Dr. Kenneth Wilson**, Assistant Superintendent
Dorchester School District Two

Progressions to support districts and candidates

The CarolinaCAP pathway is organized into a series of progressions designed to support individuals and school districts throughout their experiences:

- **Applicant progression:** Individuals who wish to pursue teaching preparation through CarolinaCAP receive a range of screening and support to ensure their qualification for the pathway and provisional licensure, including verification of initial Praxis scores, a prior bachelor’s degree (or higher), and hiring by a district.
- **Candidate progression:** After applicants are hired by a district and accepted by CarolinaCAP, they become provisionally certified CarolinaCAP candidates who receive three years of support to master content, pedagogy, and other professional skills. This progression is complete when candidates achieve full licensure.
- **Residency progression:** The CarolinaCAP residency offers a full year of stipended co-teaching experience to applicants who may benefit from additional clinical or Praxis exam preparation prior to becoming teachers of record. Following successful completion of the year, residents matriculate to leading their own classrooms within the CarolinaCAP candidate progression.
- **District progressions:** CarolinaCAP offers support not only to applicants, candidates, and residents but to the partner districts in which they teach. Preparation and support of district-embedded coaches and coaching teachers contributes to the impact and sustainability of each element of the pathway, and is thus embedded in discussion throughout the report.

This report explores evaluation results for each of the progressions, outlines programmatic improvements that CarolinaCAP is making in response to data and partner input, and shares a vision for how the pathway will continue to progress in 2024-25 and beyond.

STAFFING CLASSROOMS STRATEGICALLY: PROGRESSING PIPELINES FOR NEW TEACHER SUPPORT

Over its four years of active operations, CarolinaCAP has increased the size of its pipeline by more than five times, while sustaining a high degree of confidence among administrators and districts in the quality of candidates. The pathway also prepares candidates with life experiences and backgrounds similar to those of the students they teach, which research links to improved student outcomes over time. In 2024-25, CarolinaCAP will focus on growing the visibility of the pathway to increase the number of district placements and scale impact in future years.

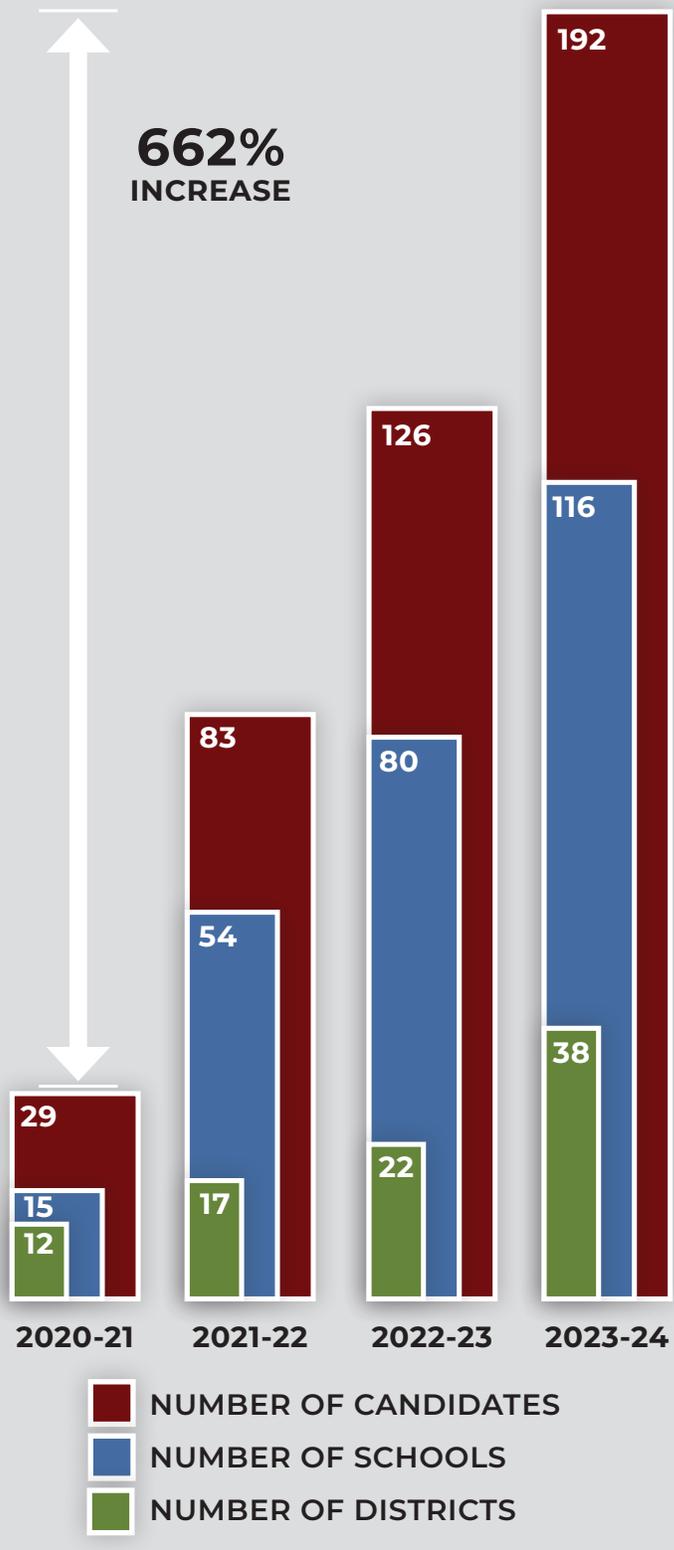
“When school began this year 100% of our classrooms were fully staffed. Without the CarolinaCAP participants we might not have been able to say this.”

—Dr. Elaine Graham, Principal
Berkeley County School District

Growing a pipeline of teachers for schools with the highest needs

For the 2023-24 school year, 192 CarolinaCAP teachers, candidates, and residents served students in 116 schools across South Carolina. (See appendices for more details about partners and candidates.) These figures translate to an additional 5,125 high-needs SC students who were able to experience the benefits of stable, continuous learning environments this past academic year through educators provided through CarolinaCAP, rather than having their classes covered by substitutes or other temporarily assigned personnel. As shown in Figure 1, CarolinaCAP has steadily increased the number of districts, schools, and classrooms served by its candidates in each of its four years of operation.

Figure 1: Expansion of CarolinaCAP candidates, schools, and districts (2020-2024)



Scale-up of the CarolinaCAP pathway has been fueled by a rapidly expanding pipeline of interested applicants. In the last year alone, the applicant pool has grown by 70% and the number of applicants eligible for school placement by 83%. (See Figure 2.)

CarolinaCAP currently partners with 38 school districts, 22 of which had active candidate placements in 2023-24. (See Figure 3.) Of the partner districts, 24 districts are considered rural districts according to the South Carolina Rural Recruitment Initiative and fifteen of those districts are along the I-95 corridor. Partner districts include some of the least economically advantaged schools in the state, with 75% of students in participating schools being eligible for Free and Reduced Priced School Meals. CarolinaCAP thus effectively meets its programmatic goals for focus on districts most in need of new, effective teachers.

CarolinaCAP also focuses on hard-to-staff positions within those schools and districts. The pathway only identifies and places applicants in certification areas where partner districts experience particular difficulty with finding qualified teachers. These areas include science, math, special education, and early grades classrooms. (See Appendix E.)

Figure 2: Applicant and Placement Growth in CarolinaCAP, 2022-23 to 2023-24

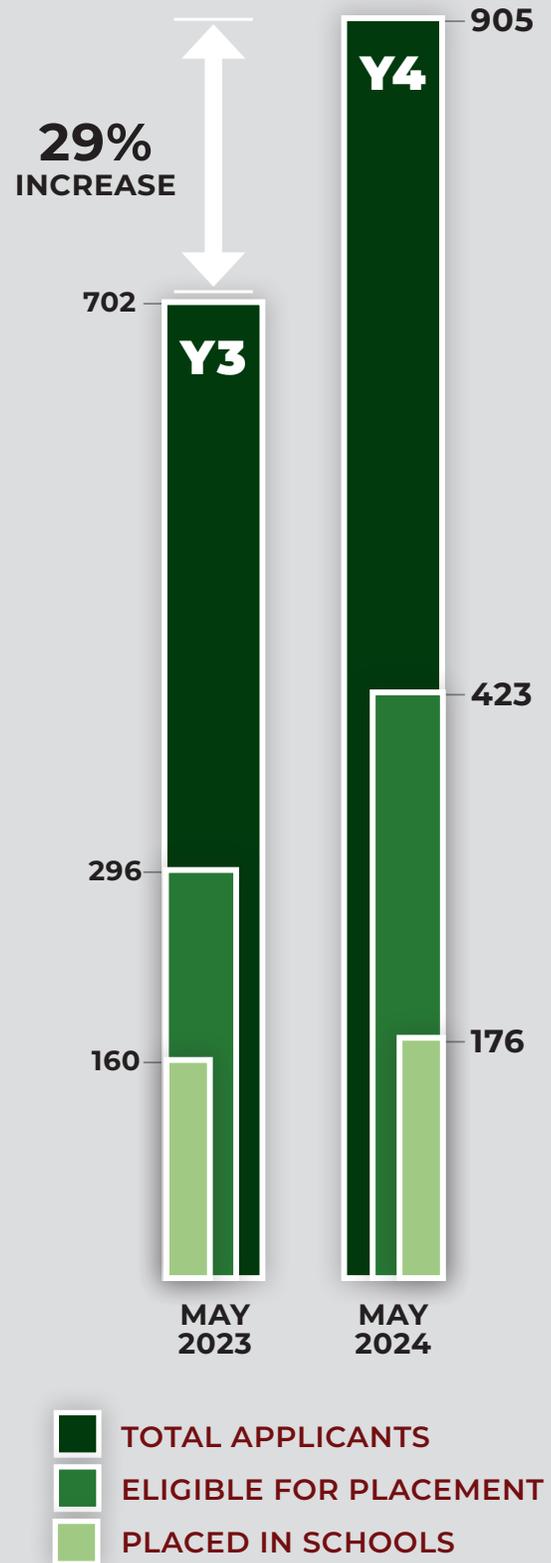
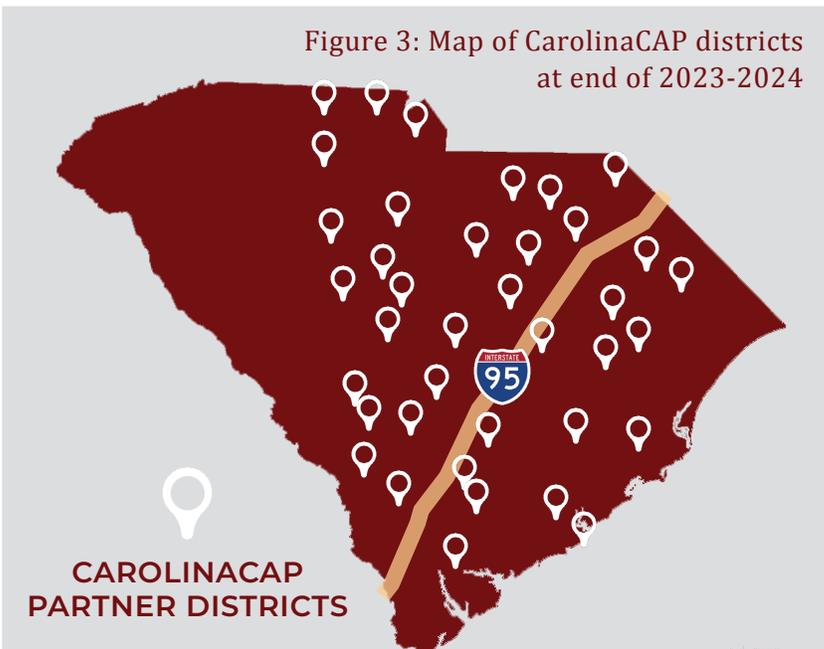


Figure 3: Map of CarolinaCAP districts at end of 2023-2024



A “grow your own” approach for districts

Teacher labor markets are hyperlocal; up to 60% of all teachers teach within 15 miles of where they attended high school themselves (Reininger, 2012). “Grow your own” programs like CarolinaCAP respond realistically by focusing not on bringing in applicants from other locations who may be likely to leave after a few years, but by developing talent from within the local community—and often from within the district itself.

More than three out of four (77%) accepted candidates for CarolinaCAP over the life of the pathway have previously served in classified roles within the school district. District leaders and principals report that these candidates’ prior experience in local schools makes them more attractive candidates and effective educators because they thoroughly understand the community context within which students live. Moreover, hiring prior employees in more advanced roles creates administrative simplicity for district offices that may have limited staff capacity.

Preparing educators with student context in mind

Research demonstrates that where teachers share backgrounds and life experiences with their students, those students accomplish better learning outcomes (Redding, 2019) and are more likely to be represented in academically gifted or accelerated programs (Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern, 2017). With its “grow your own” approach, CarolinaCAP is responding to the opportunity to recruit, prepare, and place teachers who are longtime members of the communities they serve in classrooms.

As discussed in a later section of this report, CarolinaCAP enhances that knowledge base with an eye toward growing educators who can engage and support students well. New coursework focuses on meeting students’ nonacademic needs to build their readiness to learn. Further, individuals participating in the CarolinaCAP residency have opportunities to shadow counselors, social workers, and other staff responsible for such supports, giving them more robust knowledge of what is available to students and how they can collaborate with these staff members to meet the needs of the whole student.

A cost-effective recruitment solution for districts

The total cost for CarolinaCAP is \$7,500 per teacher for three years of support, making it very competitive in the marketplace for alternative preparation models. For qualifying rural districts, \$3,000 in legislative funding is used to offset partnering district fees for each candidate. Qualifying rural districts are responsible for the remaining \$4,500 fee for each candidate. Districts are also responsible for covering the cost of the CarolinaCAP Coach.

These costs compare very favorably with other pathways for preparing and/or placing teachers. For instance, international teacher programs cost \$10,000 per teacher per year. Over the three years needed to prepare a likely-to-stay CarolinaCAP teacher, districts would spend five to five and half times that amount to secure an international teacher—and would have no assurance that the investment would keep the teacher in place over the long term. Table 2 summarizes comparisons with several programs that also commonly serve rural and/or underserved districts in SC.

Table 2: Cost Comparisons with CarolinaCAP

PROGRAM	ONE YEAR COSTS PER TEACHER	ESTIMATED THREE YEAR TOTAL PER TEACHER	ESTIMATED DIFFERENCE FROM CAROLINACAP IN QUALIFYING RURAL DISTRICTS	REQUIRED COMMITMENT BEYOND TWO YEARS OF TEACHING?
International Visiting Teachers Program	\$10,000	\$30,000	+\$25,500	No
Teach for America	\$400	\$3,500*	-\$1,000	No

**Costs assume that candidates accomplish full professional licensure, which is not required by TFASC.*

Finally, beginning teachers who are well-prepared for the content area and student context in which they teach are up to two and half times less likely to leave the classroom after their first year (Podlosky et al, 2016). Thus, access to strong, contextualized preparation not only increases the supply of incoming teachers but becomes a first step in educator retention. As noted in an earlier section of this report, likely retention also contributes to savings through CarolinaCAP of \$9,000 to \$20,000 per vacated position.

PREPARING THROUGH PRACTICE: CANDIDATE PROGRESSION

Once accepted to the CarolinaCAP pathway, “applicants” become “candidates.” While “candidates” in most preparation pathways are still only completing coursework or other theoretical learning to support the growth of their instructional practice, CarolinaCAP provides candidates an opportunity to move immediately into the classroom once they qualify to receive a provisional license from the state. This closely supervised, job-embedded approach ensures that students can benefit from these new educators quickly, and ground candidates’ learning in the context of real classrooms.

CarolinaCAP’s active preparation progression for candidate-practitioners follows four “tracks” of support: learning experiences, coaching, testing, and evaluation. (See Figure 4.) Together, these converging supports provide rich grounding in theory, content, and pedagogy that both candidates and their administrators commend—while allowing them to immediately serve students and earn full-time salaries, rather than delaying an effective entry to the classroom.

“There is something about CarolinaCAP that reduces barriers yet adequately prepares and equips teachers.”

—Director of Human Resources, CarolinaCAP Partner District

Figure 4: Three-Year Candidate Progression for CarolinaCAP

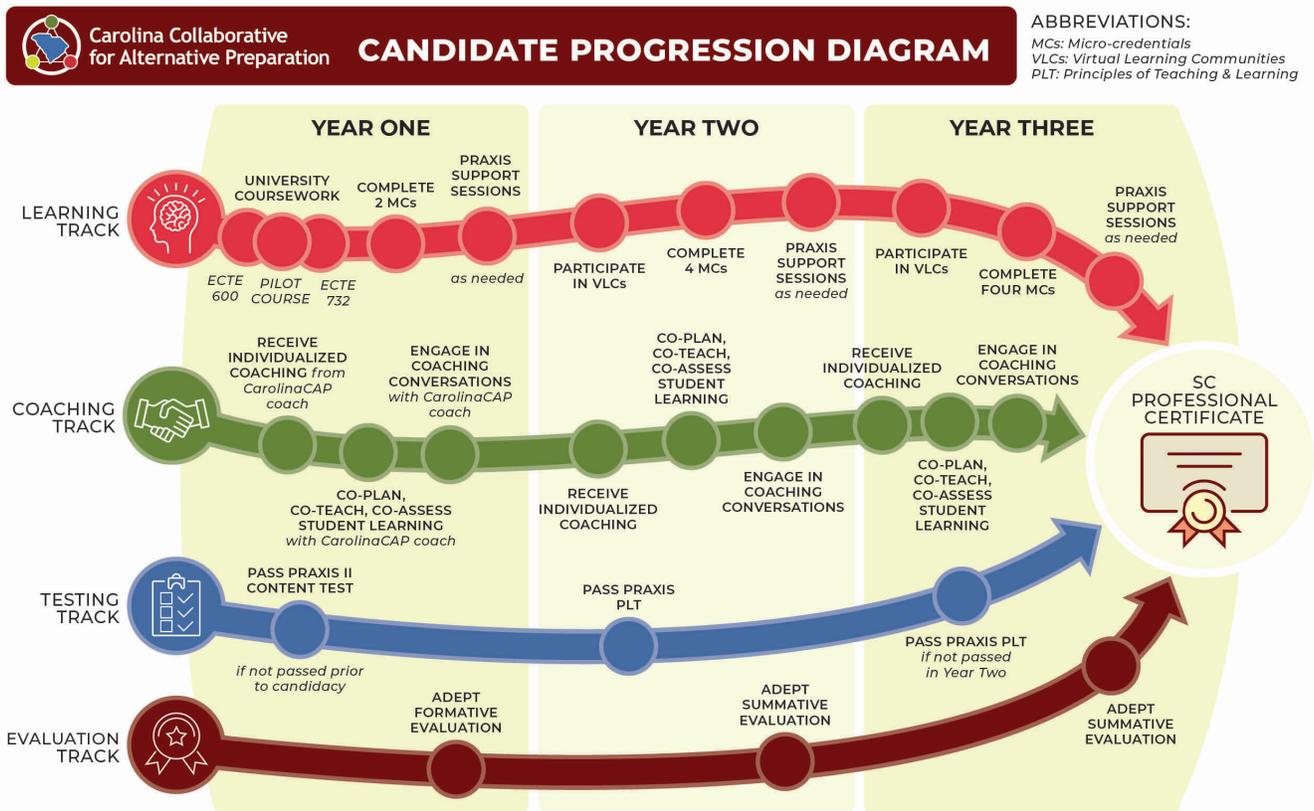
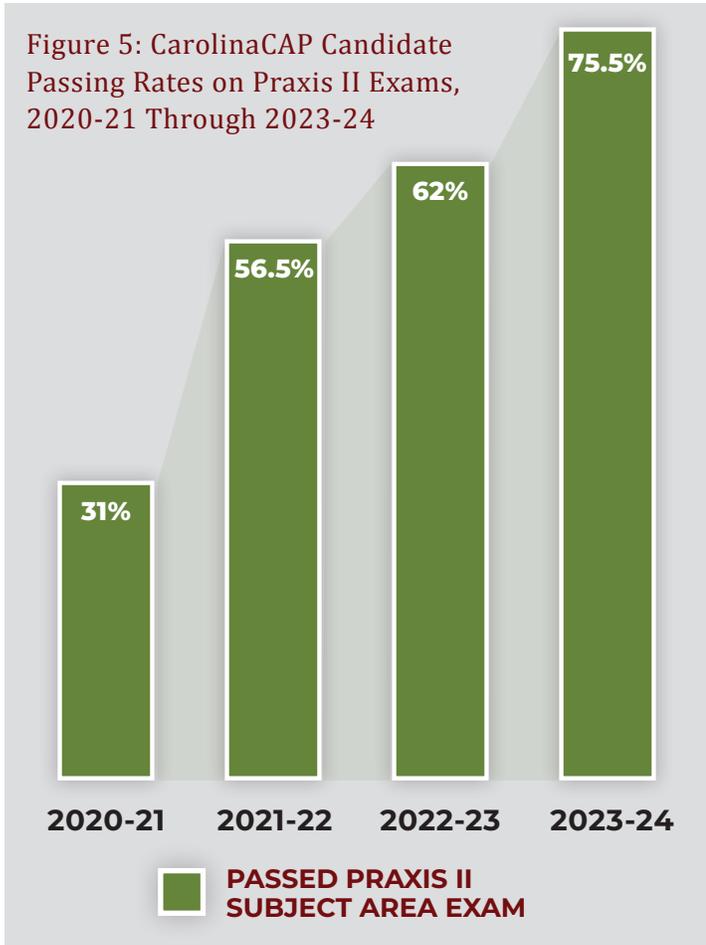


Figure 5: CarolinaCAP Candidate Passing Rates on Praxis II Exams, 2020-21 Through 2023-24



Cracking the Praxis code

Fewer than half of all teacher candidates nationally are able to pass Praxis exams on a first attempt (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2019), making these content and pedagogy tests an even larger hurdle to professional teaching certification than the bar exams are for aspiring lawyers. The pass rates are even lower for alternative route candidates, who typically have been away from standardized testing and their own academic coursework for some time.

CarolinaCAP, however, has made programmatic adjustments that has boosted its candidates’ Praxis pass rates substantially, to nearly 76%. (See Figure 5.) As a result, a greater number of candidates can successfully complete requirements for program completion and full licensure.

The pathway’s comprehensive approach to Praxis support includes three elements:

1. Starting in the application process, CarolinaCAP extends additional services from a human resources professional to guide future candidates (including residents) through the process of being provisionally hired by local school districts, including completing Praxis successfully.
2. Candidates receive additional no- and low-cost supports to prepare for the Praxis exam, including access to study guides and tutoring programs. 240 Tutoring has proven the most popular, with 95% of candidates who used that program in 2023-24 reporting it was effective or extremely effective. Because CarolinaCAP has qualified as a Registered Apprenticeship Program, some qualified candidates may receive additional resources to pay for individual learning supports that can further enhance their success.
3. Finally, the addition of the residency in 2023-24 had an explicit focus on Praxis II preparation, via targeted study sessions and targeted coaching. While intended primarily to help residents qualify for provisional licensure and entry into the main CarolinaCAP pathway, these supports may also benefit Praxis II pass rates in future years. See the “Residency Progression” section of this report for further details.

Theoretical and applied learning experiences for candidates

CarolinaCAP coursework includes two required graduate-level courses completed in Year 1 of a candidate’s progression, taught by faculty at the USC College of Education. A third course was launched in spring 2024 to assist alternative certification candidates with gaining the background information necessary to acquire knowledge of the foundation of education, the developmental nature of learners, and ways of knowing learners through assessment to inform instruction. For some candidates entering the pathway through partnerships with Voorhees University’s Educator Preparation and Innovation (EPI) Center or Transition to Teaching, additional supports may be supplied from other faculty as a precursor to entry into the main CarolinaCAP pathway.

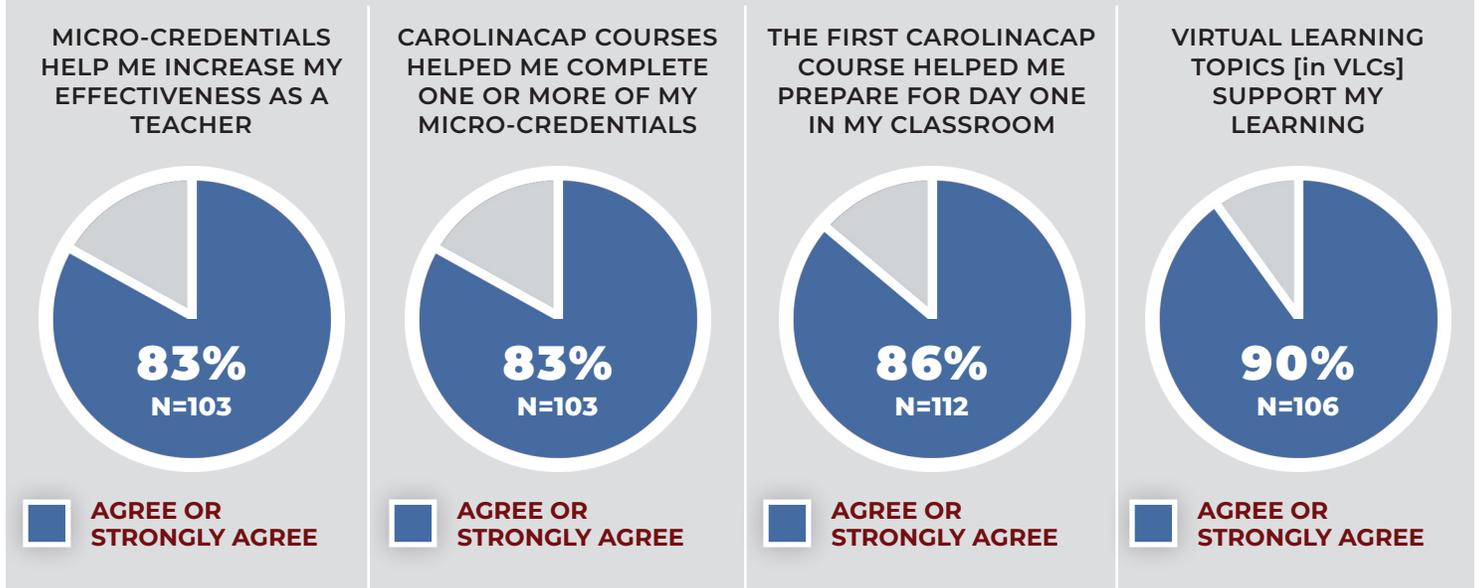
Candidates have consistently emphasized the value of coursework as a thoughtful yet practical asset to building their knowledge and skills as beginning educators. Eighty-six percent of candidates said their initial CarolinaCAP course “helped [them] prepare for day one in [the] classroom.” When considering coursework as a whole, 94% agreed or strongly agreed that it directly benefited their ability to support students well.

In addition to other academic assessments, candidates use micro-credentials offered through the College of Education’s mCrED platform to demonstrate developing competencies throughout the three years of their candidate progression. This strategy—along with observation results using the SC Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 rubric—ensures that candidates’ new skills directly translate into effective instruction experienced by their students. Eighty-three percent of candidates said that pursuing and earning micro-credentials increased their effectiveness as teachers (see Figure 6). Moreover, because these micro-credentials are aligned with both coursework and the SCTS 4.0 rubric (as well as being approved for licensure renewal credits by the SC Department of Education), their use in candidates’ preparation allows for seamless transition into more regular in-service supports after completion of CarolinaCAP.

Eighty-six percent of candidates said their initial CarolinaCAP course “helped [them] prepare for day one in [the] classroom.” When considering coursework as a whole, 94% agreed or strongly agreed that it directly benefited their ability to support students well.

Candidates were much more positive about the virtual learning communities in which candidates participate. Ninety percent of candidates this year (vs. 78% in 2022-23) agree/strongly agree the VLCs were beneficial. Generally, lowered participation seems to have affected that rating in prior years. Enhanced coaching supports this year may have directed more candidates to make regular use of VLC supports, and thus led them to see the VLCs as more effective.

Figure 6: Candidates' Perceptions of CarolinaCAP Learning Supports



“With the support of CarolinaCAP, [the candidate in our school] and her scholars have soared to a new level of excellence.... Data...have shown that her scholars are growing as a result of intentional planning and proper execution of the curriculum and instructional strategies.”

—Jennifer Murray, Principal
Williamsburg County School District

Coaching that connects principles to practice

The CarolinaCAP coaching model remains the backbone of the pathway. Candidates continue to report that coaches and CarolinaCAP team members are responsive and reliable sources of support and encouragement. This year, candidates were much more likely than in prior years not only to cite the quality of the support received but its consistency. About three quarters (74%) of candidates say they spend over an hour a week with their coaches to receive one-on-one support, and even more (81%) say that regardless of the amount of coaching they receive, they consider that time to be adequate or more than adequate to meet their needs.

A large part of this success can be attributed to the intensive support offered to the coaches themselves. Moving from one lead coach to a coordinator with two full-time regional coach leads starting in fall 2023 allowed CarolinaCAP to offer more intensive and frequent support to coaches, as well as to enhance support to candidates directly where needed. This flexibility in support by CarolinaCAP coach leads remains critical because while coaches are well trained, they are still identified and employed by partner districts. As such, competing priorities or demands on staff time within the district or school can impact the extent to which coaches have sufficient time to support all candidates to whom they are assigned.

Testing and evaluating effectiveness for candidates

Praxis passage is a well-described challenge for nontraditional teacher candidates both nationally and in SC, and one that has been previously documented in annual reports. In addition to continuing to offer supplemental tutoring supports, CarolinaCAP piloted its own “boot camp” in summer 2023 to address this issue for applicants and candidates. While useful to have this intensive focus at the start of their experience in the pathway, ongoing tutoring and other tiered supports have been found to be a more cost-effective intervention and will be the focus of efforts going forward.

Candidates also participate in regular teaching evaluations through their districts. The results of these evaluations are considered part of candidates’ personnel records and thus cannot be made available to CarolinaCAP. However, candidates cannot continue on provisional licenses or transition to full professional teaching licenses without satisfactory teaching evaluations. The successful progression of CarolinaCAP candidates is therefore a strong indicator that their practice meets or exceeds professional standards within districts. Moreover, routinely positive responses from district superintendents, principals, human resources, and other leaders suggest that the quality of CarolinaCAP candidates is evident and that coaching and other supports are sufficient to guide those candidates through early evaluation processes.

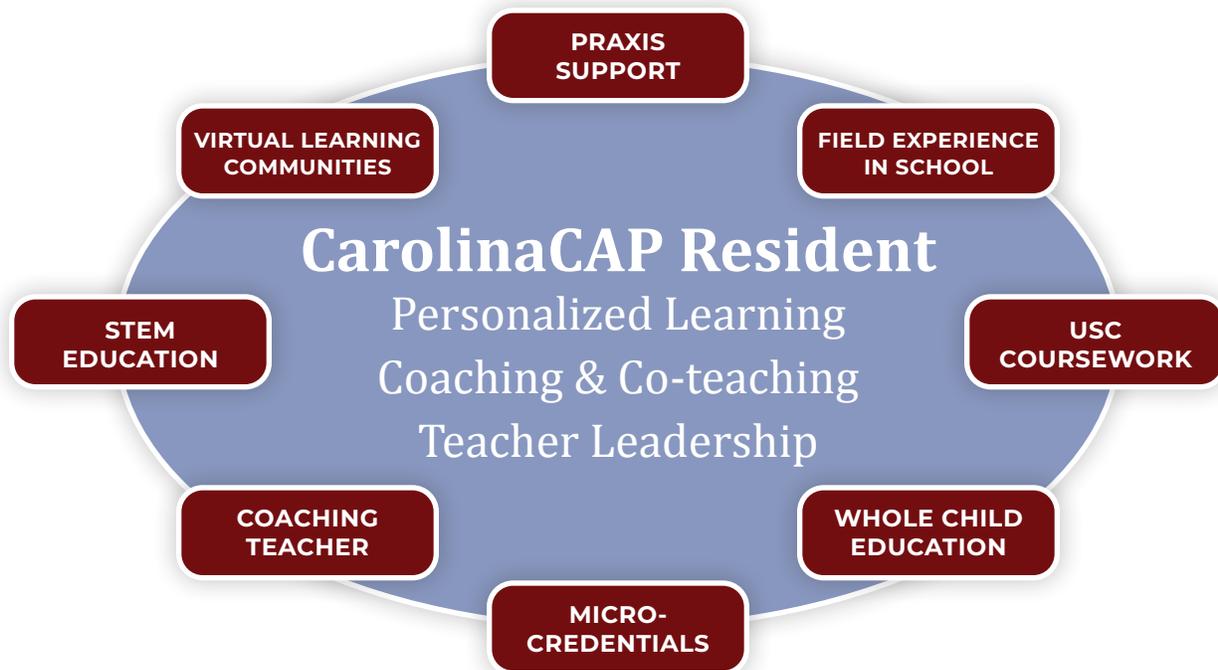
DEEPENING EARLY SUPPORT: RESIDENCY PROGRESSION

“ The purpose is not to fill a hole or vacancy with a resident, but to find a space for a teacher to grow.”

—Director of Certified Employment Services, CarolinaCAP Partner District

The CarolinaCAP Residency was developed as an intensive and innovative doorway to the main pathway, ensuring readiness for acting as a teacher of record. Its design combines national best practices with responses to district needs surfaced in a yearlong design process in a state-of-the-art model. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7: Elements in CarolinaCAP’s state-of-the-art residency model



A state-of-the-art residency model

CarolinaCAP residents experience a range of learning supports that permit additional time and opportunity to complete requirements for entry as full candidates in the main CarolinaCAP pathway. Following a “pre-apprenticeship” model, the residency also structures specific opportunities to explore education careers to ensure—prior to matriculation as a CarolinaCAP candidate—that teaching is a good professional fit for those who may not have worked in schools in other roles.

Residents receive:

- A full year of co-teaching with a “coaching teacher” who supervises and supports the clinical experience;
- A liveable wage stipend that allows the residents to forego other paid work and focus fully on co-teaching and preparation;
- Opportunities to shadow other professionals in their schools;
- Targeted learning experiences on STEM content and whole child pedagogical approaches, provided by higher education partners;
- Extended Praxis preparation to boost pass rates for each portion of the exam;
- Coursework with university faculty; and
- Micro-credentials to verify developing competencies for teaching, aligned with the SCTS 4.0 rubric.

Initial results from the CarolinaCAP residency

During 2023-24, the CarolinaCAP residency recruited 22 residents, two more than required by funding requirements. Resident placements served Charleston Co. School District, Dorchester School District Four, Richland School District One, and Williamsburg Co. School District. (See Figure 8.) Of these residents, 16 have completed the residency year and are eligible for progression to the main CarolinaCAP pathway in the coming year.

Co-teaching is extremely valuable as a job-embedded learning strategy for preparing teachers. The approach is also effective for supporting statistically significant learning growth for all students, especially in math and for students with disabilities (Jones & Winters, 2023). That said, successful co-teaching requires thoughtful planning—especially of how roles will be shared and transitioned over the year—and a good match between practitioners.

As shown in Figure 9, CarolinaCAP has been able to meet these requirements well. All residents responding to an end-of-year survey confirmed that they and their co-teacher experienced a good fit in their work together and were able to follow the recommended stages of the residency experience. Further, 100% reported that the co-teaching experience had a positive impact on their decision to progress in CarolinaCAP and the profession.

Figure 8: Map of CarolinaCAP residency districts at end of 2023-2024

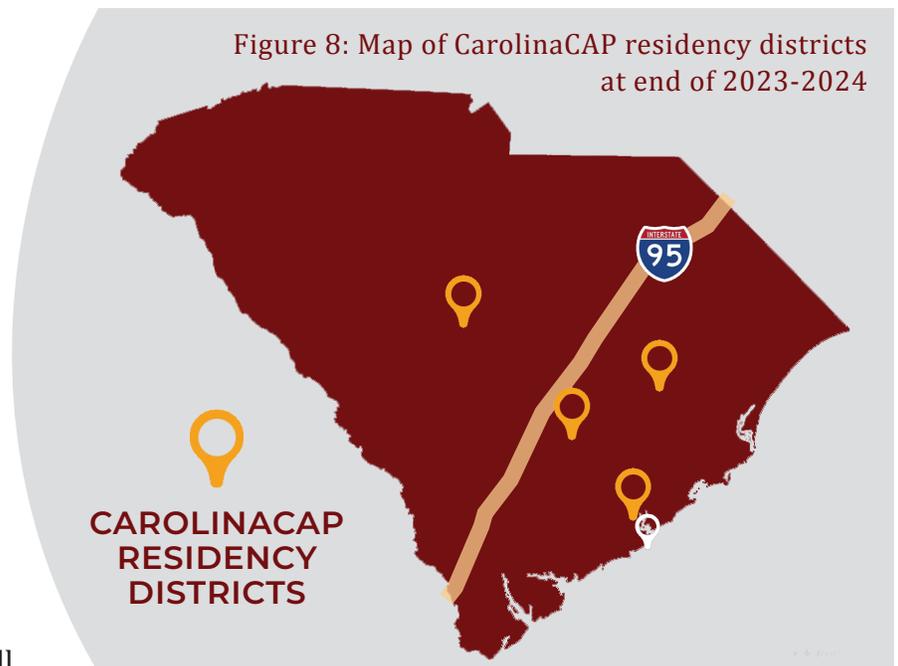
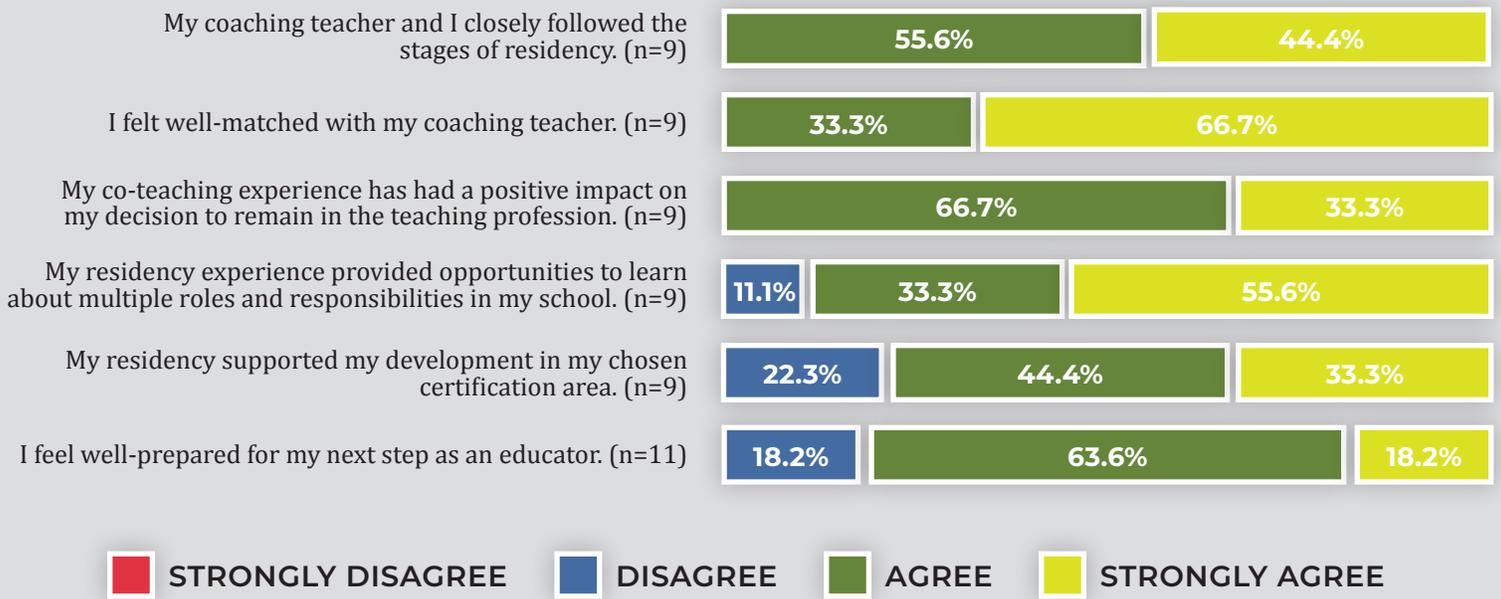


Figure 9: Resident Views on Value of Co-teaching Experience



A few residents and coaching teachers reported during site visits that even clearer communication and parameters for when residents should assume responsibilities would be beneficial. These reports were isolated and may indicate variations in how schools and individuals may have interpreted existing guidance about the co-teaching schedule. However, to make expectations about the residency stages and related benchmarks more concrete, CarolinaCAP will articulate more detailed information in upcoming materials shared with co-teachers, residents, and their principals.

SYSTEMATIZING WHAT WORKS: DISTRICT PROGRESSIONS

“ The CarolinaCAP program has allowed Williamsburg County School District to acknowledge that new teachers and non-traditional new teachers have unique professional learning needs and challenges. The CarolinaCAP program has enabled us to build systems of support for our new teachers and equip them with the tools to be successful in the future.”

—Dr. Kelvin Wymbs, Superintendent
Williamsburg County School District

A critical shift for all CarolinaCAP districts—and especially in schools where residents are placed—is to begin to see themselves as not only being K12 schools but places of teacher preparation. As described earlier in this report, districts and schools can struggle to dedicate coaching and support time from coaches, school administrators, or others providing induction support and supervision. This is particularly the case for chronically understaffed districts, as many CarolinaCAP districts are. Since coaching, collaboration, and administrator support are also critical elements of teacher retention, CarolinaCAP therefore identified a need to extend supports to districts directly to assist district partners.

The need for systematic candidate support

The addition of coach leads accelerated the felt support, the effectiveness, and the frequency of coaching received by CarolinaCAP candidates. However, districts vary widely in their capacity to support even implementation of their commitments to the pathway parameters. For instance, evaluators noted differentials in class size and access to strong grade-level teams and peer coaching support have significant influence on candidates.

Most of all, districts have varied ability to sustain coaching positions sufficient to serve the number of educators they must serve, both including and beyond the candidates. Site visits and other evaluation activities this year found direct evidence of these extremes. In some districts, coaches were observed working with small groups of students and engaged in two-to-three-hour sessions with candidates. In other locations, two coaches had 60 and 55 total coachees, respectively, including CarolinaCAP and other supported teachers. This coaching load is far more than they can effectively support with the necessary hour-plus of coaching time each week. Districts have offered a range of reasons for these challenges: the need to pull coaches to teach in understaffed schools, difficulties in staffing the coaching roles themselves, or shifting position allocations.

Supporting districts to become places of preparation

Starting in summer 2023, CarolinaCAP and Mira Education provided year-long strategic planning supports to teams of personnel administrators, principals, and other staff in each of the residency districts and in a targeted group of additional “Strengthening Support” districts that sought to qualify for future residency placements. Districts received assistance in identifying likely challenges to continuity of support to residents, developing and implementing approaches that address those challenges, and adjusting the plans through the 2023-24 school year as needed to ensure success. Table 3 shows the cadences and focuses for support.

Table 3: Cadence and Focuses for District Supports, 2023-24

FOCUS	SUPPORT	CADENCE
Strategic planning to support CarolinaCAP residents and candidates	Full-day in-person design day	Summer
Impact assessment, networking results, and replanning as needed	Full-day in-person workshops	Quarterly
Interim progress checks and small group coaching	Virtual one-hour sessions	Bimonthly
Tailored technical assistance with plan adjustment and implementation	On-demand coaching and advisory supports (in-person or virtual)	Ongoing as needed
Sharing and scaling results	District learning summit	Late spring

The late April District Learning Summit in Columbia served as an opportunity for districts to exchange very concrete interventions and results in supporting CarolinaCAP residents and candidates. It also revealed that in each district, efforts to enhance supports were beginning to spill over into how districts supported coaching and collaboration for all teachers, regardless of their certification status or tenure. For instance, several districts were able to identify additional time and opportunities for consistent coaching and professional learning for all teachers (not just residents and candidates), which research suggests will contribute to increased effectiveness and retention for all educators.

One personnel administrator reflected on the experience, saying, “This is like MTSS (multi-tier systems of support) for teachers. Whatever is needed to make sure our educators are prepared and practicing well, that is what we’ll be doing.” Given chronic teacher shortages in SC and nationally, this level of commitment is exactly what is required of every district to ensure that classrooms are each staffed by effective educators—and that is what CarolinaCAP intends to inspire and propel. As such supports continue in future years, CarolinaCAP will track how the impacts of the pathway extend well beyond it, into broader personnel planning and strategy for SC districts.

EMERGING PRIORITIES: SCALING THE PIPELINE

“The meticulous planning efforts of CarolinaCAP and Mira Education have paved the way for an inclusive and innovative learning experience, empowering candidates, coaches, and students to thrive beyond traditional academic confines.”

—Benita N. Hughes, Coordinator of Alternative Certification
Berkeley County School District

CarolinaCAP anticipates continued scale in the coming years, gradually expanding to serve most districts across the state. Based on external evaluator reports, feedback from district partners, and staff analysis of trends from the present year, the pathway will address three priorities to enable growth in 2024-25.

- 1. Supporting initial transitions into the classroom.** The residency, enhanced coursework, and Praxis supports have made notable impacts on early success of those entering the CarolinaCAP pipeline, meeting would-be teachers where they are and helping them grow into effective, persistent educators. While a one- to two-week summer intensive is a best-practice option, this approach exceeds current resources and may not be feasible for pathway participants. CarolinaCAP is continuing to explore cost-effective options for jump-starting residents' and candidates' entry into their schools.
- 2. Accelerating district supports.** While CarolinaCAP can serve short and long-term staffing needs well, it does require district partners to provide embedded coaches (though CarolinaCAP trains and supports those staff) and other resources (see “candidate progression” section). Differentials in districts' capacity can and do influence ability to implement the coaching model. To ensure consistent quality of the coaching model across the state, CarolinaCAP will continue its focus on strategic district supports to the fullest extent possible within its present budget. Because this effort will also affect longer term retention of CarolinaCAP candidates and other educators who benefit from coaching, we will explore opportunities for more resources in this area as the pathway scales in the coming years.
- 3. Enhancing communication about benefits and impact of CarolinaCAP.** Some principals or other administrators outside district offices may not be aware that they have the option to hire CarolinaCAP candidates. In 2024-25, CarolinaCAP will increase focus in this area, building a strategic communications plan that raises the profile of the pathway statewide and contributes to continued growth in scale and impact for the pathway.

APPENDIX A: ORIGINAL CAROLINACAP FUNDING PROVISO

On or before September 30th of Fiscal Year 2021-22, following the development of accountability metrics, \$750,000 of the funds appropriated in this Act to the Department of Education for “Rural Teacher Recruitment” shall be allocated to the University of South Carolina’s College of Education (COE) for the development and implementation of a new teacher recruitment pilot program to be administered by the COE in partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality [CTQ, now Mira Education].

The purpose of the pilot program shall be the employment of innovative and cost-effective teacher recruitment strategies, customized training for new teachers, and dedicated, ongoing mentoring support. The pilot program shall compliment and/or enhance the state’s ongoing rural teacher recruitment initiatives such as those supported pursuant to Part 1A.54 of this Act.

At minimum, the pilot program must assist no fewer than ten school districts to include at least four districts along the I-95 corridor and serve no fewer than 250 teacher candidates. The pilot program shall stipulate reasonable fees for participating candidates and districts and districts shall agree to release time for required on site mentors who shall be experienced, practicing teachers within the district for the purposes of co-teaching with and supporting candidates’ development.

Within participating districts, the pilot program shall emphasize high-need schools and within selected schools, the emphasis shall be on developing teacher candidates teaching in high-need subject areas to include, but not be limited to, STEM and special education with all candidates receiving training in literacy skills.

The pilot program design shall be based on emerging empirical evidence of effective teacher education as well as best practices from recent innovations in university-based and alternative certification and residency programs for the dual purpose of recruiting needed candidates with equal focus on retaining accomplished, experienced teachers utilizing, in part, a model which contains intensive mentoring and support for candidate teachers.

Before any funds are disbursed to the COE, the COE and CTQ [now Mira Education] shall develop accountability metrics for the pilot program that must include, at minimum, employment outcome indicators such as job placement and retention statistics as well as survey instrumentation in order to measure candidate, mentor, and principal satisfaction with the pilot program.

No later than June 30th, program data and evidence collected as a result of this accountability requirement must be shared in report form with the Department of Education, the Education Oversight Committee, the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, the Commission on Higher Education, the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, the Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

APPENDIX B: PROGRAM EVALUATION OVERVIEW

EVIDENCE	TIMELINE
Development, administration, analysis, and reporting of survey of district CAP partners to determine readiness and effectiveness	Baseline survey: June 2020 Impact assessment: June 2021, 2022, 2023
Annual interviews with administrators, mentors, CarolinaCAP teachers	2020-2024
Focus groups of mentor teachers, CarolinaCAP teachers	Two focus groups per district, per year, 2020-2024
Site visits for up to 10 districts for documentation and triangulation of survey and interview findings	5 days per year, 2020–2024
Student surveys of CAP teachers	June 2021, 2022, 2023, May 2024
Demographic data collected from CAP applications to link information to three years of data to determine effectiveness	Collected 2020
Student assessment data provided by the school and teachers	2020-2024
Summer experience evaluation with participant feedback via survey	2020-2024
Annual feedback survey from CarolinaCAP candidates	2020-2024

APPENDIX C: CERTIFICATION AREAS FOR CAROLINACAP CANDIDATES

CERTIFICATION AREA	NUMBER OF PLACED CANDIDATES
Early Childhood Education	100
Elementary Education	44
Multicategorical Special Education	27
Secondary Biology	1
Secondary Math	1
Middle Level Science	1

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