

Fall 2022 Update: South Carolina Principal Leadership Network

In 2020, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), in partnership with the University of South Carolina (UofSC) and the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED), received a 3-year grant from the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program to form the collaborative South Carolina Principal Leadership Network (SCPLN).

SCPLN is a two-year cohort-based program aiming to build and accelerate the leadership capacity of 150 school leaders from high-need districts in South Carolina through high-quality virtual professional development, quarterly on-site coaching, and quarterly networking opportunities via virtual communities of practice (CoPs).

In fall 2021, progress during the first year of the grant was reported in "[Building Capacity Locally: Supporting Principals and School Leaders in South Carolina](#)." This document highlights updates on progress towards project goals since the release of that report.

Goal 1: Create new, sustainable Principal Leadership Networks for 150 school leaders serving in underserved communities over the duration of the grant.

The recruitment target of 150 school leaders has been **exceeded by 14%**. As of September 2022, **171 school leaders** from **78 schools** in **five districts** have participated in SCPLN. Partner districts saw value in this unique approach to supporting school leaders on-the-job, increasing demand for participation. As a result, the number of participants in each cohort has increased since the program started, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. SCPLN Participants Over Time

Cohort	# School Leaders	Program Start Dates
1	50	December 2020
2	56	June 2021
3	65	June 2022

Over a two-year period, school leaders connect and collaborate through **eight virtual CoP meetings**. These meetings provide structured opportunities for school leaders to share and reflect on experiences applying new knowledge and skills in their schools. School leaders from all three cohorts have had the opportunity to participate in CoPs; CoPs are complete for Cohort 1 and ongoing for Cohort 2 and Cohort 3. School leaders report these meetings provide opportunities for much-needed collaboration, reflection, and learning.

93% of Cohort 1 survey respondents said that they learned something new during CoPs that would enrich their work.



I believe that change is constant, but growth is optional. SCPLN has shown me how to support my teachers and staff from within. We are utilizing learning walks and building a shared leadership approach to instruction and are now seeing the results in the classroom in teacher instruction, student growth, and student ownership. Being able to collaborate with other administrators from across the state has been beneficial as I continue to build my leadership skills and the instructional capacity of our teachers.

Robert Hemby, Orangeburg County Schools



Cohort 3 SCPLN school leaders and NIET leadership coaches came together for a two-day summer kickoff meeting.

Goal 2: Build instructional leadership capacity of school leaders serving in underserved communities through quarterly virtual training and personalized on-site coaching to support effective leadership practices.

To support SCPLN school leaders' professional learning needs and build their leadership capacity, NIET provides the **Principal Leadership Series** training—a multi-day virtual professional learning series based on the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and aligned with South Carolina's school leader evaluation. This training has been delivered to both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2; the training for Cohort 3 began during a two-day summer kickoff meeting in June 2022. School leaders report satisfaction with the training and positive impacts on their leadership capacity.

To build on this learning, each SCPLN school leader receives a **quarterly on-site school visit** from an NIET leadership coach, who provides support in applying the evidence-based practices in daily work. All Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 planned on-site coaching has been completed; Cohort 3 coaching sessions began this summer, and are ongoing. School leaders report that the on-site coaching allows them to learn common language around leadership, practice learning walks, brainstorm ideas with a coach, and reflect on what's happening at their school.

89% of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 survey respondents reported that their leadership capacity has improved.

96% of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 survey respondents reported that the on-site coaching sessions have allowed them to apply the information they learned during the Principal Leadership Series training.



Cohort 2 SCPLN school leaders met for an in-person summer meeting.

Goal 3: Build the knowledge of school leaders serving in underserved communities in leading and strengthening rigorous programs to improve student outcomes.

To successfully lead and strengthen rigorous programs, school leaders must critically reflect on whether their leadership practices support growth of all students in their school. This process begins with school leaders reflecting on their school mission and vision and analyzing student data for equity issues. Then, using the inquiry cycle, school leaders develop **equity action plans** to address achievement gaps and learning inequities in their schools. Examples of equity plan outcomes that school leaders plan to achieve are shown in the box on the right. NIET leadership coaches support participants as they implement the action plans during their first year in the program.

Critical conversations related to equity and culture continue during **social-emotional learning trainings focused on culturally responsive and sustaining practices** and during CoP meetings. School leaders report these opportunities empower them to build a school culture that prioritizes advancing instructional practices and improving outcomes for all students, which aligns to state, district, and school policy and priorities.

87% of Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated their capacity to lead and strengthen programs to develop positive relationships among students improved.

Examples of Equity Plan Anticipated Outcomes

- Increased percentage of all minority students qualifying for Honors classes.
- Increased number of male students successfully completing and passing the English 1 end-of-course exam.
- Increased number of students who identify as going directly into the workforce completing a Career and Technical Education program.