

Teacher Quality Partnership

Teaching for Resilience via Understanding, Support, and Trauma-Informed Education: Project TRUSTED

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Project Overview

The Cato College of Education (CoED) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) and two of its largest rural school partners, Union County Public Schools (UCPS) and Gaston County Schools (GCS), are excited to submit a proposal to implement a re-designed teacher residency program that 1) addresses a critical need in local schools, 2) aligns with our common vision of educational equity, and 3) addresses the absolute (#2) and competitive (#1-4) priorities outlined in the funding opportunity. The global pandemic put a spotlight on the need for teachers who are well prepared to address both the academic and the social and emotional learning (SEL) needs of their students. In a post-pandemic era, as students continue to grapple with underlying emotional challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, teachers need to know not only how to teach the curriculum, but also how to address the SEL needs of their students (Casebeer et al. 2022; Ibarra, 2022). Unfortunately, few teachers have received preparation on how to support the SEL needs of children who have experienced trauma. This is especially true in rural schools where teacher vacancies and turnover are higher than national averages and where teachers have fewer opportunities for professional development (PD) because of a lack of resources (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). In response, *Project TRUSTED* seeks to prepare teachers of hard-to-staff positions (i.e., rural elementary school positions) who are well-equipped to meet both the academic and social and emotional needs of children in high-poverty rural schools, many of whom have experienced trauma in their young lives (National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services, 2018). Project *TRUSTED* would involve three diverse cohorts of 12 elementary teacher candidates (36 total) who complete customized curriculum and PD in the redesigned UNC Charlotte Teacher Residency Program leading to licensure in elementary education and a professional credential in equity-based trauma-invested care. Designed to build

capacity and promote educational equity, the 36 candidates would be hired at one of 12 strategically selected high-need rural schools (i.e., a teacher shortage area in our partner districts) with a large percentage of minoritized students experiencing poverty (under-served population) and who have suffered trauma - determined through school metrics (e.g., absenteeism, suspensions). Details of the project's goals and objectives, the steps to be taken to achieve them, and how success will be measured are provided below:

A. Quality of Project Design

i. The project demonstrates a rationale.

Goal 1: Increase educator diversity in hard-to-staff positions in high-need rural schools.

Project TRUSTED aspires to increase the diversity of teachers in Union County (UCPS) and Gaston County Schools (GCS), specifically at 12 high-needs elementary schools in these two high-needs rural districts. In alignment with TQP criteria for high-needs LEAs, UCPS serves 13,571 students from low-income families (32.2% of its total student population). In GCS, 16,309 of its students live in poverty (53.5% of its total school population). Teacher turnover and attrition rates in both districts also align with high-needs criteria. The teacher attrition rate in UCPS (15%) is higher than the state average (11.4%), and almost 1 in 10 (9.8%) of its teachers is on an emergency or temporary license. The GCS teacher attrition rate also exceeds the state average at 17.6%, and 10.1% of its teachers are on an emergency or temporary license. The 12 strategically selected elementary schools in *Project TRUSTED* also align with TQP expectations of high-need schools. As illustrated in Table 1, all have a high percentage of students qualified for free and reduced lunch, placing them in the highest quartile of UCPS and GCS schools ranked by percentage of students from low-income families.

Table 1. High-Needs Partner Schools

| Union County Public Schools (2022-2023) | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Elementary School | Report Card Grade | Title I School | % Free & Reduced Lunch |
| East | D | Yes | 66.75% |
| Marshville | C | Yes | 68.01% |
| Walter Bickett | D | Yes | 69.58% |
| Benton Heights | D | Yes | 70.97% |
| Wingate | C | Yes | 69.17% |
| Rocky River | C | Yes | 60.2% |
| Gaston County Schools (2023) | | | |
| Elementary School | Report Card Grade | Title I School | % Free & Reduced Lunch |
| Bessemer City | F | Yes | 72.4% |
| Pleasant Ridge | D | Yes | 64.1% |
| Sherwood | D | Yes | 84.7% |
| Lingerfeldt | F | Yes | 81.6% |
| Gardner Park | D | Yes | 65.1% |
| Brookside | D | Yes | 66.8% |

Speaking to the need to increase educator diversity (Goal 1), the racial background of the teachers at these schools does not match that of their students. More than 80% of the UCPS and GCS teachers are white, yet between 53% and 97% of the students at the 12 participating schools are of color (see Table 2). Contributing to this mismatch is the lack of teacher candidates of color at UNC Charlotte. Of the 198 students enrolled in our Graduate Certificate in Elementary Education program in 2023-24, only 38.4% identified as of color, in comparison with 61.6% who identified as white. Recruiting teachers of color is critical for high-need schools that have a large population of racially minoritized students (Achinstein et al., 2010), since teachers from underrepresented groups are more likely to be interested in working in these schools and provide community and societal role models (Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2017). As outlined in the Logic Model (Appendix C), *Project TRUSTED* proposes to use multiple research-informed practices to improve educator diversity. Teacher residency programs, for example, have been found to recruit teachers of color at higher rates compared to other programs (Marks et al., 2023). *Project TRUSTED* proposes to remove unnecessary barriers to the profession by offering a GPA forgiveness program for candidates whose GPA is slightly below the mandated GPA required to enter a teacher licensure program in the state. Further, *Project TRUSTED* will recruit more teacher candidates of color via the implementation of *Profound Niners*, a paid internship that involves undergraduates in their senior year at UNC Charlotte completing clinical experiences in K-12 classrooms with exemplary mentor teachers of color to ignite a passion to teach. Research has shown the motivational benefits of providing role models of color for aspiring Black teachers (Young & Easton-Brooks, 2020). To promote the recruitment of a diverse pool of candidates, we also plan to continue hosting large-scale recruitment events on campus that draw potential applicants from underrepresented groups.

Goal 2: Improve the preparation of elementary school teacher candidates to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students in rural areas. The pandemic emphasized the need to support the SEL needs of children, especially those who experienced trauma (Ibarra, 2022). Students with a history of trauma exhibit higher rates of absenteeism, discipline referrals, and lower academic performance than their peers who have not suffered trauma (Morrow & Villodas, 2018). In rural settings, 29% of students under the age of 17 have experienced two or more traumatic events (National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services, 2018), but just 7% of educators are prepared to meet the SEL needs of students (Levy, 2021). This is especially true in rural schools where teacher turnover is higher than national averages and where teachers have fewer opportunities for PD (Tieken & Montgomery, 2021).

As illustrated in Table 2, the tell-tale signs of trauma (i.e., absenteeism, discipline referrals) are evident in the 12 strategically selected high-needs elementary schools and are negatively influencing academic performance. In 2022-23, Walter Bickett Elementary (UCPS) and Bessemer City Central (GCS) reported 817 and 1271 discipline referrals, respectively, for inappropriate student behavior resulting in 256 and 246 lost instructional days due to suspension. Rocky River Elementary (UCPS) reported 169 chronically absent students in 2022-23, and Pleasant Ridge Elementary (GCS) reported over 200 chronically absent students that same year.

Table 2. Social & Emotional Learning Needs of Students at Partner Schools

| Union County Public Schools (2022-2023) | | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Elementary School | Disciplinary Referrals | Days Lost to Suspension | Chronically Absent Students | Minority Enrollment |
| East | 442 | 168 | 142 | 97% |
| Marshville | 508 | 104 | 124 | 67% |

| Walter Bickett | 817 | 256 | 231 | 92% |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Benton Heights | 384 | 74 | 78 | 92% |
| Wingate | 106 | 57 | 115 | 89% |
| Rocky River | 188 | 65 | 169 | 65% |
| Gaston County Schools (2022-2023) | | | | |
| Elementary School | Disciplinary Referrals | Days Lost to Suspension | Chronically Absent Students | Minority Enrollment |
| Bessemer City | 1271 | 246 | 95 | 53% |
| Pleasant Ridge | 788 | 369 | 203 | 77% |
| Sherwood | 772 | 107 | 123 | 77% |
| Lingerfeldt | 748 | 263 | 130 | 84% |
| Gardner Park | 560 | 181 | 143 | 70% |
| Brookside | 528 | 165 | 129 | 57% |

As noted in the Needs Assessment (Appendix B), the teachers at these participating schools have received little preparation on how to meet the SEL needs of their students. In response, *Project TRUSTED* seeks to equip a total of 36 elementary school teacher candidates and their 36 mentor teachers at the 12 schools with the skills to meet the SEL needs of students with a history of trauma (Competitive Priority #3). As illustrated in the Logic Model (Appendix C) and Table 4, *Project TRUSTED* aims to interweave coursework and PD focusing on the tenets of trauma-informed care (i.e., trauma-invested teaching practices, trauma-invested classroom management,

and trauma-invested school culture and policies) into a redesigned residency program, leading to a professional certificate in trauma-invested teaching practices and policies. Incorporating moderate and strong evidence reported in empirical studies involving elementary school students and identified in the What Works Clearinghouse, the PD will prepare candidates to 1) identify the specifics of problem student behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it, and 2) modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior (Epstein et al., 2008).

Closely connected with meeting student SEL needs (Competitive Priority #3), increasing educator diversity (Competitive Priority #1), and promoting educational equity (Competitive Priority #4), *Project TRUSTED* aspires to help teachers create more inclusive classrooms by equipping them with the skills to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. Most teachers in U.S. classrooms are white, middle-class females (Frankenberg et al., 2010), who often lack the cross-cultural understanding necessary to make their instruction meaningful to a diverse population of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Li, et al., 2017). As mentioned above, the racial and cultural mismatch between the teachers and students is striking in the participating high-needs schools. In response, *Project TRUSTED* proposes to infuse coursework and PD focusing on culturally responsive teaching practices (i.e., culturally responsive teaching strategies, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally sustaining classroom management) and then measure the impact of this training on candidate practices using a valid and reliable instrument. In a study by Caldwell (2022), teacher candidates placed in rural schools who received professional development in their teacher training program on culturally responsive teaching practices were able to more effectively build relationships with their diverse and economically disadvantaged students, develop culturally responsive lessons that met their needs, and develop a more positive classroom culture.

Goal 3: Retain diverse educators in hard to staff positions in high needs schools.

Teachers at high-need schools report greater workplace demands (Fitchett et al., 2018) and leave teaching at twice the rate of their peers (Peyton et al., 2021; Sutchter et al., 2016). Workplace challenges are compounded when these schools are in rural locations. Common challenges faced by rural schools (lower salaries, isolation, fewer resources, dissatisfaction with work conditions) negatively impact their ability to ensure adequate staffing and retention (Tran et al., 2020; Tran & Dou, 2019). Supporting these claims, the teacher attrition rates in UCPS and GCS are 15% and 17.6%, respectively, far exceeding the state average of 11.5%.

Further speaking to the need for Goal 3, research has shown that teachers of color leave the profession at a higher rate than their white peers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hernández-Johnson et al., 2023). Attrition is also a concern with respect to candidates of color in teacher preparation programs. Almost three-quarters (73%) of white students enrolled in a graduate teacher preparation program at UNC Charlotte between 2020-24 graduated within 4 semesters, compared to 64% of Black and Hispanic students. *Project TRUSTED* has a plan to help all 36 (total) diverse teacher candidates complete the program in less than 18 months and to promote their retention in one of the 12 schools for a minimum of 3 years. To ensure all candidates, and especially those from under-represented groups, successfully complete a state-required high-stakes performance assessment (edTPA), the redesigned residency program at UNC Charlotte embeds edTPA support (e.g., practice tasks) throughout coursework and offers a free edTPA bootcamp. We also offer free online bootcamps to help candidates pass a test required by the state for all elementary school teachers (Foundations of Reading Test). Research has shown that preparatory programs that help boost participant scores on admission tests tend to be costly and available in predominantly white, middle-class neighborhoods (Kendi, 2019). To

support successful program completion of candidates of color, the CoED pairs minority teacher candidates with mentor teachers of the same race/ethnicity in schools to provide social/emotional support during the candidates' internship and provide the candidate a model for success (Project M.E.N.T.O.R). Young and Easton-Brooks (2020) found that beginning Black teachers benefit from induction support from ethnically-matched mentors. To further establish support once they have completed their licensure requirements and are hired by our partnering districts, *Project TRUSTED* completers will receive mentoring and coaching support through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program (NC NTSP). Recognizing the dearth of PD opportunities for teachers in rural schools, *Project TRUSTED* also plans to offer PD to both the 36 total candidates and their mentor teachers related to trauma-informed practices.

ii. Project Goal, Objectives, Outcomes & Priority Alignment

The three project goals, their specific objectives and measurable outcomes, and alignment with absolute and competitive priorities are specified below:

Table 3. Project Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

| Goal | Objective | Measurable Outcome | Priority |
|--|---|--|---|
| 1. Increase diversity in hard-to-staff positions in high-need schools. | 1.1 Recruit 36 candidates (3 cohorts of 12) of which at least 50% are of color in the redesigned UNC Charlotte residency program in elementary education. | Enrollment of 12 candidates per cohort (36 total) of which at least six (total 18) are of color. | Absolute Priority 2 Competitive Priority 1 |
| | 1.2 Assign candidates to a | 12 candidates per cohort (36 | Competitive |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| | yearlong clinical placement in hard-to-staff positions in a high-need school. | total) are assigned a yearlong placement in an elementary classroom in a high-need school. | Priority 1 |
| | 1.3 Fill teacher vacancies in hard-to-staff positions in high-need schools. | Candidates fill a total of 36 vacancies (12 for each cohort) in hard-to-staff positions in one of the identified high-need schools. | Competitive Priority 1 |
| 2. Improve the preparation of elementary school teacher candidates to meet the SEL and academic needs of students experiencing poverty in | 2.1 Candidates earn a license in elementary education and professional credential in trauma-invested teaching. | 100% of candidates pass their licensure exams and complete the requirements for the professional credential. | Competitive Priorities 2, 3, and 4 |
| | 2.2 Enhance teacher candidates' attitudes and knowledge related to trauma-informed care (e.g., understanding of underlying causes of problem behavior and responses to behavior). | Participants demonstrate improved attitudes and increased readiness for trauma-informed care (from pre- to post-test) on the Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care (ARTIC). | Competitive Priority 3 and 4 |
| | 2.3 Increase participants' culturally responsive | Participants demonstrate a significant increase in total score | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| rural areas. | practices to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion for students experiencing poverty in rural areas. | (from initial to final observation) on the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP). | |
| 3. Retain diverse educators in hard to staff positions in high needs rural schools. | 3.1 Candidates complete a residency program and master’s degree in less than 18 months. | All 12 candidates from each cohort (36 total) successfully complete the residency program and master’s degree. | Absolute Priority 2 Competitive Priority 1 |
| | 3.2 Candidates teach their hard-to-staff position in a high-need school for a minimum of 3 years. | Over 90% of each cohort of 12 (11) remain teaching in one of the identified UCPS or GCS high-need schools after 3 years. | Absolute Priority 2 Competitive Priority 1 |

iii. Comprehensive Effort to Improve Teaching and Learning

Project TRUSTED will provide support for candidate content, pedagogical, and social emotional knowledge, and skills to ensure they are prepared to meet the standards to be recommended for licensure (minimum 3.0 GPA, passing edTPA score, principal recommendation).

Strong content knowledge. The CoED is a recognized leader in the state in training aspiring elementary school teachers to teach children to read. In a recent review of the 15 state institutions that train elementary school teachers, only UNC Charlotte received a rating of “Strong” on a four-point scale that included ratings of “Strong”, “Good”, “Needs Improvement” and “Inadequate.” In addition to receiving the highest rating in literacy instruction, the CoED was the lone program in North Carolina to earn a rating of “Strong” in training future educators

to teach writing. As a further indication of strong content knowledge, all successful applicants to *Project TRUSTED* must have completed a four-year undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited institution and have an overall GPA of at least 2.75.

Pedagogy and practice. The redesigned UNC Charlotte residency program offers a customized program of study including both elementary education and SEL-focused coursework. Program coursework outlined in Table 4 was strategically designed to provide candidates with the needed pedagogical skills in a logical progression. In semester 1, candidates will learn how to create an effective and equitable learning environment and will be introduced to classroom management strategies and lesson plan design in ELED 5110: Developing a Productive and Equitable Learning Environment. Responding to criticism that teacher education is often too theoretical and that completers lack the ability to apply what they have learned, students complete specified clinical activities within their elementary school placement. Candidates will also be prepared with the knowledge necessary to build children's foundational skills in reading and plan appropriate lessons, as well as to diagnose common reading challenges, as aligned with the Science of Reading. Semester 2 provides opportunities for candidates to understand content area reading instruction, with a focus on fluency and comprehension instruction, in READ 5211. Furthermore, they will be introduced to teaching mathematics, with emphasis on mathematics curriculum, culturally relevant teaching, and instructional materials, with reference to curriculum integration and to developmental stages of learning (see Table 4). In semester 3, the first semester of the year-long internship, candidates will focus on assessment and interventions using diagnostic results in reading (READ 5311: Literacy Assessment and Tiered Interventions) and mathematics (ELED 5310: Teaching and Assessment of Mathematics).

Remaining coursework in the master's degree focuses on individualized instructional strategies (ELED 6203: Instructional Differentiation) and using principles of trauma-informed care (TIC) to create an equitable classroom environment (ELED 6202: Creating Equitable Classroom Environments). As a culminating experience, candidates complete EDUC 6000: Equity-based Trauma-Informed Teaching to develop their knowledge of trauma-informed practices that positively impact historically marginalized students (e.g., students of color, multilingual learners, students who identify as LGBTQ+, students with exceptionalities).

Coursework will be coupled with PD opportunities that align with expectations of PD outlined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. UNC Charlotte residency candidates will receive PD offered by the NC New Teacher Support Program that focuses on critical skills for new teachers that align with the needs of our district partners (see Appendix B: Needs Assessment). Examples of intended PD topics include 1) classroom management, 2) use of technology to improve teaching and learning, 3) culturally responsive pedagogy, 4) methods of teaching children with special needs, and 5) trauma-informed instruction (see Table 4).

Knowledge of students. Teachers of diverse students and students experiencing poverty need to understand their students' background and experiences (Gorski, 2017). As shown in Table 4, our residency model has incorporated coursework and PD activities to ensure completers understand their students, acknowledging strengths and assets, as well as challenges. In ELED 5110, candidates learn to create an effective learning environment for all students. In ELED 6203, candidates learn about strategies and techniques that enable them to differentiate instruction. In READ 5310, candidates learn to effectively provide Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction using data-based decision-making, and in ELED 6202, candidates receive instruction on how to better understand their students and build a classroom community where all students feel valued.

Table 4. Program Curriculum & Professional Development

| Customized Graduate Curriculum - Cohort 1 (model repeats for cohorts 2 and 3) - 17 months to complete | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| Summer 1 | Summer 2 | Fall (internship) | Spring (internship) | Summer 1 | Summer 2 | Fall (1st half-term) |
| ELED 5110: Equitable Learning; READ 5111: Literacy Instruction | ELED 5210: Teaching Mathematics; READ 5211: Methods of Literacy | ELED 5310: Assessment of Mathematics; READ 5311: Tiered Interventions | ELED 6470: Graduate Student Teaching Internship | ELED 6203 Instructional Differentiation and Leadership for 21st Century Learners | ELED 6202: Creating Equitable Classroom Environments | EDUC 6000: Equity-based Trauma-Informed Teaching |
| Customized Professional Development Series | | | | | | |
| Supporting SEL for Students at Risk or Students with Exceptionalities | Modules Leading to Professional Credential | | | Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices | Using Technology to Improve Teaching and Learning | |
| | Foundations of Trauma- Invested Teaching | Trauma- Invested Classroom Management | Trauma- Invested School Culture & Policies | | | |

iv. Research-based Design

The UNC Charlotte teacher residency program reflects current research on effective practice (Guha et al., 2016; Marks et al., 2023). The residency program represents Phase I (22 credit hours) of a two-phase sequence of coursework that leads to a master's degree via completion of Phase II (9 credit hours), all of which can be completed in less than 18 months. The program is designed for aspiring elementary school teachers with an emphasis on the development of knowledge and practices associated with trauma-invested care and culturally relevant pedagogy. Development of the program was informed by Guha et al. (2016) and Marks et al. (2023), who identified the following characteristics of successful teacher residency programs.

1. *Strong partnerships.* *Project TRUSTED* was developed in collaboration with our longstanding partners (see Appendix E). [REDACTED] (UCPS) and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (GCS) will serve as key personnel on the advisory council and the interview panel to ensure candidates selected meet the districts' needs.
2. *Recruitment of high-quality teacher candidates and candidates of color.* The CoED plans to enlist the services of a Teacher Recruiter, Director of Graduate Recruitment, and Communications Director to recruit under-represented minoritized teacher candidates using a variety of strategies including: 1) partnering with the nonprofit Profound Gentlemen to implement *Profound Niners*, 2) offering recruitment events that attract prospective students from under-represented groups; and 3) advertising the residency program at local HBCUs (e.g., Johnson C. Smith University) and community and student organizations that support minority groups (e.g., Latin American Coalition). To ensure high quality candidates, all candidates must meet the following selection criteria: 1) an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited four-year institution; 2) a cumulative GPA of at least 2.75; 3) three

recommendations; 4) strong content knowledge; and 5) demonstration of strong communication skills via a statement of purpose and participation in an interview. During interviews candidates will be asked to describe how their cultural background and personal experiences have prepared them to work with a diverse population of students, and the interview team will be diverse and include UCPS and GCS Human Resources personnel to ensure selected applicants help to address their goal to diversify their teaching staff. High expectations for our candidates reflected in program completion and licensure requirements will further ensure high-quality candidates. Candidates must 1) complete all coursework with a GPA of 3.0 or better, 2) pass edTPA, and 3) have the principal, mentor teacher, and university supervisor sign off on the Certificate of Teaching Capacity indicating that the candidate has met all state requirements and is ready to teach.

3. *Sustained and deliberate clinical experiences.* Meaningful clinical experiences are the foundation of our residency program. When developing the program, faculty and partners collaborated to develop a year-long logical progression of clinical experiences connected to coursework. These experiences require sustained involvement in K-6 classrooms and provide opportunities for candidates to practice and receive feedback on skills learned in coursework.
4. *Relevant, clinically-driven, practice-based coursework.* The *Project TRUSTED* residency program has adopted a practice-based approach to teacher education (PBTE: Kissau et al., 2023). In ELED 5210 and ELED 5310, candidates learn about these practices and identify and deconstruct their micro-components. Under the guidance of a course instructor, candidates rehearse these strategies in low-stakes settings (with instructor feedback and coaching), before enacting them in clinical experiences in elementary school classrooms.

5. *Capable mentor teachers.* Candidates will receive mentoring support from their assigned mentor teacher, along with support from the university supervisor. Mentor teachers must be established teacher leaders, with 5 or more years of teaching experience, be recommended by their principal, collaborate with colleagues to improve instruction, use a variety of teaching strategies to engage learners, and demonstrate evidence of effectiveness (e.g., above average performance evaluations and meeting or exceeding student growth expectations). In accordance with TQP expectations, mentor teachers must have completed training in best practices in mathematics and literacy instruction. Mentors must also participate in a summer orientation to become familiar with TQP expectations and all that is required of teacher candidates, including edTPA. To further support mentor teachers, they will be invited to participate in PD offered to TQP candidates (the professional credential in trauma-informed care). In recognition of the time investment required of mentor teachers, each mentor teacher will receive two substitute teacher days during the fall and spring semesters of the yearlong internship (4 total). This instructional release time will allow the UCPS and GCS mentor to co-plan or co-teach with their mentee, provide coaching opportunities, and complete the PD modules on trauma-informed instruction together.
6. *Cohort model.* Our prior experience leading successful TQP grant projects has emphasized the value of candidates forging bonds with their peers to provide academic and emotional support. During feedback sessions, prior program completers often spoke of the strong support they received from peers in the program. The UNC Charlotte residency model employs a cohort-model where candidates complete coursework and PD with their fellow TQP peers and, at times, their mentor teachers. Social opportunities are also planned (e.g., TQP orientation, team building, group check-ins) that will bring cohort members together.

7. *Collecting and Using Data.* Teacher residencies collect, analyze, share, and discuss data with partners (Marks et al., 2023). With support from our Office of Assessment and Accreditation, we plan to collect candidate data each semester, share the data with members of the Advisory Committee, and make programmatic adjustments accordingly to better support candidates.
8. *Ongoing support for novice teachers.* Our teacher residency program offers mentoring support through an effective induction program. Upon completion of the initial licensure phase of the program, all graduates will receive two years of instructional support in their classroom from full-time coaches via the NC New Teacher Support Program (NTSP), a statewide program designed to reduce attrition (see <https://ncntsp.org>). NTSP-supported teachers are more likely to remain in teaching and are associated with higher measures of educator effectiveness (i.e., value-added scores) than their peers (Bastian & Marks, 2017). During their first two years as teachers, *Project TRUSTED* completers will also continue to receive support from the mentor teachers to whom they were assigned during the internship.
9. *Financial support for residents who commit to teaching.* *Project TRUSTED* will offer a living wage stipend of [REDACTED] to each candidate to cover tuition, fees, books, and living expenses. At a time of critical teacher shortage in North Carolina, prospective candidates know that they can find employment as a paid classroom teacher, while they complete licensure requirements. For this reason, we understand the importance of offering a stipend that is competitive with the average salary of a first-year teacher in our partner districts (UCPS: [REDACTED] GCS: [REDACTED]). Candidates who receive the stipend must successfully complete the residency and master's degree programs, as well as all state licensure requirements, commit to teaching a hard-to-staff position at one of the identified high-need rural schools in UCPS or GCS for a minimum of three years, and provide annual evidence of such employment, or be required to

repay the living wage stipend. Any repayment will be used to conduct additional activities that are consistent with the purposes of *Project Trusted*.

While grounded in principles associated with successful teacher residency programs, the re-designed UNC Charlotte program has been further customized and enhanced to prepare elementary school teachers in high-need UCPS and GCS schools to meet the SEL needs of underserved students. More specifically, candidates will complete strategically selected graduate coursework and customized PD focusing on research-based practices in culturally responsive teaching (Caldwell, 2022) and trauma-informed care (Daunic et al., 2021).

v. Continuous Improvement

Feedback from the sources indicated below was integral to the design of *Project TRUSTED*, and additional feedback will be sought moving forward to promote continuous improvement.

Stakeholders. The UNC Charlotte residency program has been deliberately crafted using feedback from various constituencies, including our school partners and program completers. At various points in development, feedback was collected, and program faculty and administrators engaged in an analysis of candidate performance to inform the development and facilitate continuous improvement. Two areas were identified including the application of teaching strategies and assessment. In response, the program adopted a practice-based approach that focused on a set of teaching practices with opportunities for rehearsal and coaching, principally in ELED 5210 and ELED 5310 (see Table 4). Further, READ 5310 was redesigned with specific emphasis on the diagnosis and remediation of reading challenges using data-based decision-making. To maximize opportunities to work directly in schools and to apply principles learned in the program coursework, the program includes a yearlong internship and checklists that direct candidates to complete required activities within elementary classrooms throughout the program.

School Partners. Members of the project team have met with UCPS and GCS leadership to discuss the project and secure the district's interest in collaborating (Appendix E). These discussions have focused on ensuring project alignment with the district's strategic plan and on critical content for the coursework and PD on trauma-informed care. For example, at a recent educational summit (November 9, 2023) held on the UNC Charlotte campus involving our school partners, district administrators underscored the need for new teachers, in a post-pandemic era, to be better prepared to meet the SEL needs of students. They emphasized that many children in their rural schools have experienced trauma that was exacerbated by the pandemic, and their teachers want to help, but are unsure how to support this group of students.

Previous TQP cohorts. We have also learned lessons from previous TQP cohorts that are now working as classroom teachers with different school partners. Cohort members reported that they felt well-prepared to meet the academic needs of their students, but ill-prepared to address student mental health and SEL needs. We also learned multiple lessons from previous TQP cohorts that will serve to facilitate successful completion of *Project TRUSTED*. For example, we have learned 1) multiple effective recruitment strategies that have allowed us to consistently fill recent cohorts (e.g., sending a mass email invitation to all UNC Charlotte undergraduate students who have applied to graduate in the fall and spring of each year and launching social media campaigns including Facebook and Instagram), 2) strategies to help candidates complete a rigorous program in less than 18 months (e.g., monthly check-in meetings, support seminars, early alerts from advisors, and edTPA peer writing groups), and 3) strategies to help candidates navigate logistical challenges (e.g., information sessions on how to apply to the master's program, apply to graduate, and apply for a teaching position in a partner school).

iv. Sustainability

Project TRUSTED will result in 36 teachers 1) who will be prepared to teach elementary learners in rural settings, and 2) who will be hired to teach at 12 high-need elementary schools with a large number of diverse students who have experienced trauma. Just starting their careers, these teachers will impact countless students. Further, the project's impact will extend beyond the 36 teacher candidates since the PD related to trauma-informed instruction will also be available to their mentor teachers. Further, many of the components of *Project TRUSTED* have the potential to be institutionalized. For example, continuing to involve school district personnel in the selection of candidates will help to ensure that our candidates meet their hiring needs and reflect the diversity in their schools. Continuing to examine district and school demographic and performance data and adjusting our preparation programs accordingly to meet their unique needs will help to ensure our programs remain relevant and beneficial. Having faculty members "in-house" with expertise in trauma-informed instruction and culturally responsive practices will also help us to institutionalize the related PD in our programs. Infusing practices into coursework that help candidates meet the SEL needs of their students has the potential to benefit all teacher candidates regardless of intended level of instruction or school setting. Other features of *Project TRUSTED* will also remain in place post-funding. For example, the mentor teacher orientation will continue to be offered each year to prepare mentors for their critically important role, and the CoED will also continue to offer mentor stipends for mentoring candidates. The testing support provided to candidates will also remain in place post-funding (i.e., Foundations of Reading and edTPA bootcamps), as well as the trauma-informed certification program.

B. Project Evaluation

EPRE Consulting LLC, an evaluation and research firm, will conduct an independent evaluation of this project. [REDACTED] is Principal Consultant with EPRE Consulting LLC and will lead the evaluation in collaboration with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is currently the evaluator of two other TQP projects and has evaluated three others over the past 14 years. [REDACTED] holds certifications in administration, science education and diversity, equity, and inclusion. [REDACTED] has 20 years of experience in education teaching diverse learners; advising and leading school, district and state-level education programs; coordinating and evaluating grants; providing professional learning; and designing instructional programs.

i. Methods of evaluation that provide valid and reliable data on relevant outcomes.

The approach to evaluation will follow Patton and Campbell-Patton's (2020) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* which structures the implementation of the evaluation process to maximize its value to project stakeholders, by explicitly identifying the key evaluation users and addressing their needs and concerns. Through this process, the aim is to provide both formative and summative feedback in a useful and timely manner for key evaluation stakeholders, so that they can use that information in the planning and management of the program.

The project evaluation has several purposes. Initially, the emphasis will be on *monitoring* the implementation of the program, and on providing *formative feedback* to key project staff and other stakeholders to assist in short-term measurement of benchmarks and project metrics. Early identification of areas that might need attention is of crucial importance. *Program monitoring* will remain a focus throughout the term of the project. Evaluation data and findings will be provided regularly and as needed for reporting to the project's key personnel, stakeholders, and to the funding agency. In the program's third year, *impact assessment* will begin to take a more

prominent role, as two cohorts of teacher candidates will have completed their degrees, become certified, and begun their teaching careers. Although the early impacts are most likely to be seen in regard to the new teachers' ability to work effectively in their classrooms, influences on their schools and colleagues within the schools will be part of the impact evaluation.

Strategies will be implemented to provide quantitative measures of short-term outcomes of project activities, and longer-term impacts on the students and faculty at UNC Charlotte, and on the students and teachers at partner schools. These measures will be supplemented by data from interviews and observations, to provide a nuanced, holistic picture of the project's work.

The evaluation measures are guided by the project's logic model (Appendix C), a conceptual map that identifies the major project components and their relationships to one another. The articulation of the initial project logic model has begun to surface an institutional "theory of change," which will allow the project's components to be articulated and the underlying assumptions be made explicit in the project's rationale. The logic model and theory of change are key for the evaluation, as they drive the evaluation approach, project metrics, and evaluation strategies. In addition, the TQP program includes a complex set of GPRA and short-term performance measures which are incorporated into the project evaluation plan.

Valid and Reliable Data

As described below and summarized in Table 5, valid and reliable data on relevant outcomes will be provided via the following strategies:

A. Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol - The Culturally Responsive

Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP: Powell et al., 2016) is a comprehensive evaluation tool that measures implementation of culturally responsive instruction associated with seven elements: classroom relationships, family collaboration, assessment, curriculum/planned

experiences, instruction/pedagogy, discourse/instructional conversation, and sociopolitical consciousness/diverse perspectives. The CRIOP utilizes a 4-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *Occasionally*, 3 = *Often*, 4 = *To a great extent*). Prior research has confirmed the validity and reliability of the CRIOP with Cronbach's alpha values of .88 and .94 (Malo-Juvera, Powell, & Cantrell, 2013; Powell et al., 2016). Candidates will complete the CRIOP at the beginning and end of the program (see Table 3). The CRIOP measures the classroom implementation of seven components of culturally responsive instruction. The evaluation will utilize repeated measures ANOVAs to assess pre/post changes in observed classroom implementation of these components. A prior study (Powell et al., 2016) found statistically significant change in six of the seven components. Although this project's planned number of participants is relatively small (36 teacher candidates), effect sizes are likely to be large enough to yield statistically significant results at the $P = 0.05$ level by the end of the project.

- B. Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) - The Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care (ARTIC; Baker et al, 2016) is a tool to understand respondents' attitudes toward a TIC approach, specifically in: underlying causes of problem behavior and symptoms; responses to problem behavior and symptoms; on-the-job behavior; self-efficacy at work; reactions to the work; personal support of TIC; and system-wide support for TIC. Candidates and their clinical educators will complete ARTIC at the outset and again at the completion of the program of study. ARTIC measures five core subscales which have been shown to inform teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding student trauma and responses to trauma and which, in turn, influence their classroom practices and approaches. The evaluation will use an ANOVA design to analyze pre/post changes in overall and subscale scores of both teacher candidates and clinical educators.

- C. Annual reflective interview of the PI and other project leadership.
- D. Interview protocols will engage participants in discussion and reflection about their experiences and perceptions. Interviews with teacher candidates will allow the evaluation team to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, and how these influence their classroom practice.

Table 5 provides a summary of the program evaluation data sources and analyses for each project objective. Data for most objectives can be analyzed with simple descriptive statistics. Changes in ARTIC and CRIOP scores will be analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques. Participant interviews will provide qualitative data to help the project understand the relationships among major project components.

Table 5: Data Sources and Analysis

| Objective | Data Source | Analysis |
|-----------|--|---|
| 1.1 | Teacher candidate characteristics | Descriptive statistics [quantitative] |
| 1.2 | Summary of school placements | Descriptive statistics [quantitative] |
| 1.3 | Summary of program completer hiring | Descriptive statistics [quantitative] |
| 2.1 | Summary of program completer certification | Descriptive statistics [quantitative] |
| 2.2 | Scores on ARTIC | Pre/post and teacher candidate/ clinical educator |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | | score comparison using ANOVA [quantitative] |
| 2.3 | Teacher candidate CRIOP scores | Pre/post score comparison using ANOVA [quantitative] |
| 3.1 | Teacher candidate program completion | Descriptive statistics [quantitative] |
| 3.2 | Program completer employment | Descriptive statistics [quantitative] |
| All | Interviews of teacher candidates and clinical educators/mentor teachers | Thematic analysis of interviews focused on participant experiences and program perceptions, and relationships among perceptions and attitudes regarding cultural responsiveness, SEL, trauma-awareness, and classroom practices [qualitative] |
| All | Annual reflective interviews with the PI and project staff | Summary of interviews will document progress toward project goals and objectives, changes to the project's plans, and will flag issues that need attention [qualitative] |

ii. Methods of evaluation are appropriate to goals, objectives, and outcomes.

As described in the proposal narrative, and summarized in the logic model, the project's goals, objectives, outcomes, and impacts form the basis for the evaluation plan. The following general evaluation questions provide foci for the implementation of the plan. In collaboration

with the project’s management and key personnel, it is expected that these questions will be prioritized and refined throughout the life of the project.

1. What aspects of the project’s activities have been implemented as planned; what opportunities, challenges, and difficulties have been encountered; and how have the project’s activities been modified as a result?
2. What have been the direct results of the project’s activities in terms of the numbers of project participants and events, and participants’ immediate outcomes?
3. What have been the impacts of this project on the teacher preparation curriculum, *Project TRUSTED* teacher candidates, teachers in partner schools, and their students?
4. How does the inclusion of the culturally responsive and SEL components affect the ability of new teachers to meet the needs of students in their schools?
5. What has been learned over the life of this project, and how and to what extent are elements of the program being institutionalized and sustained at the university or partner schools?

Table 6 below summarizes the project’s goals and objectives and identifies evaluation metrics and strategies to be used to assess them. See Table 3 for a complete description of goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes.

Table 6: Goals, Objectives, Evaluation Questions, Outcomes and Evaluation Strategies

| Goals, Objectives, Evaluation Questions | Outcomes and Criteria | Evaluation Metrics & Strategies | Timetable |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Goal 1: Increase educator diversity in hard-to-staff positions in high-need rural schools. | | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Obj. 1.1: Recruit 36 candidates (12 in each cohort) of which at least 50% are of color | > Number and characteristics of candidates | > Analysis/summary of candidate characteristics | Annually, autumn |
| Obj. 1.2: Candidates are placed in yearlong residencies | > Characteristics of schools > Candidates successfully complete residencies | > Summary of school placements > Number of candidates completing program | Annually, autumn Annually, at program completion |
| Obj. 1.3 Completers fill teacher vacancies in high-need schools. | > Hiring record of program completers | > Summary of program completer hiring | Annually, autumn, beginning in Year 2 |
| Goal 2: Improve the preparation of elementary school teacher candidates to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students experiencing poverty in rural areas. | | | |
| Obj 2.1 Candidates earn a license in elementary education and professional credential in trauma-invested teaching. | > Over 90% of candidates are successfully certified and receive the professional credential in trauma-informed care | > Summary of program completer certification | Annually, autumn, beginning in Year 2 |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Obj 2.2 Enhance teacher candidates' attitudes and knowledge related to trauma-informed care (e.g., understanding causes of problem behavior and responses to it).</p> | <p>> Increased scores on the Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care</p> | <p>> Analysis of pre/post-test scores</p> | <p>Pre: 1st month of candidacy Post: After completion of residency</p> |
| <p>Obj 2.3 Increase participants' culturally responsive practices to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion.</p> | <p>> Increased scores on the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) collected during classroom observations</p> | <p>> Analysis of pre/post-test scores on the classroom observation instrument (CRIOP)</p> | <p>Pre: 1st month of candidacy Post: After completion of residency Three observations during residency</p> |
| <p>Goal 3: Retain diverse educators in hard-to-staff positions in high-need schools</p> | | | |
| <p>Obj 3.1 Candidates complete residency &</p> | <p>> Number of program completers</p> | <p>> Summary of candidate progress</p> | <p>Annually, autumn</p> |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| master's degree in less than 18 months. | | and program completion | |
| Obj 3.2 Candidates teach in high-need schools for a minimum of 3 years | > Employment record of program completers | > Summary of program completer early careers | Annually, autumn, beginning in Year 2 |
| Evaluation Questions | | | |
| EQ1: Project implementation successes, challenges, modifications? | > Annual review of the project's progress toward completion of goals and objectives > Perceptions of teacher candidates and mentor teachers | > Implementation review meeting with PI & team > Interviews of teacher candidates and mentor teachers | April, each year and as needed Teacher candidates: May Mentor teachers: March/April |
| EQ2: Direct results of project activities? | (See goals 1, 2, 3) | > Measures as specified above | |
| EQ3: Project impacts | > Annual review of project progress | > Implementation review | April, each year |

| | | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|------------------|
| EQ4: Sustainability: What has been learned that should be institutionalized? | > Annual review of project progress | > Implementation review | April, each year |
|---|--|----------------------------|------------------|

C. Adequacy of Resources

i. Adequacy of support

Collaborating in this project are the UNC Charlotte Cato College of Education, the College of Humanities and Earth Sciences (CHESS), the School of Professional Studies, and Union County Public Schools (UCPS) and Gaston County Schools (GCS) (see Appendix E).

Cato College of Education. As one of the two largest producers of new teachers in the state, the CoED has the resources to ensure the successful completion of *Project TRUSTED*. Notably, the CoED has a well-established, convenient, and affordable online residency program (Absolute Priority #2). Online courses (see Table 4) have been developed by faculty in collaboration with an instructional designer at the university's *Center for Teaching and Learning* to meet Quality Matters (2018) standards. To support online instructional delivery, the CoED utilizes a learning management system (Canvas), a library of videos showcasing National Board-Certified Teachers exhibiting instructional best practices (ATLAS), and software that allows faculty to remotely observe candidates teach and provide immediate feedback (GoReact). Multiple departments and offices housed within the CoED will play a critical role in ensuring the success of *Project TRUSTED*. The Department of Reading and Elementary Education, for example, houses the Graduate Certificate and the Master of Arts in Teaching Elementary Education (See Table 4) and internationally recognized faculty with expertise in literacy (██████████), mathematics and

culturally responsive instruction ([REDACTED]), and experience leading grant-funded cohorts of teacher candidates through teacher preparation programs ([REDACTED]). The Departments of Counseling and Psychological Sciences have participating faculty with expertise in trauma-informed instruction ([REDACTED]) to help aspiring teachers meet the SEL needs of their students (Competitive Priority #3). The Office of School and Community Partnerships, also housed in the CoED, places all teacher candidates with exemplary mentor teachers and has university supervisors trained in coaching strategies, who observe candidates throughout the yearlong internship and provide feedback.

The CoED is at the forefront of educational initiatives in North Carolina. Under the Excellent Public Schools Act (EPSA) of 2021, North Carolina (NC) is implementing a new system of literacy support which includes literacy professional learning for all K-5 educators across the state. Demonstrating its capability and commitment to empirically-based practice and scientifically valid research on teaching and learning, UNC Charlotte has aligned its literacy curricula to address the subsequent NC Literacy Framework and LETRS professional training associated with this legislation. This has increased teacher candidates' knowledge of the Science of Reading and will enable them to implement evidence-based literacy practices that will impact student literacy achievement across contexts and characteristics of students and schools. UNC Charlotte is the statewide leader in training teachers to teach children to read. In a state-wide review of literacy instruction, only UNC Charlotte received a rating of “Strong” on a four-point scale that included ratings of “Strong,” “Good,” “Needs Improvement” and “Inadequate.” The CoED is consistently ranked by U.S. News and World Report in its top 100 graduate schools of education in the country (#71 in 2023) and is among the highest-performing teacher preparation programs in the state. In 2022-23, pass rates on all licensure assessments for our teacher

candidates (84%) were well above the statewide pass rate of 76%. As evidenced in the NC Educator Preparation Program Dashboard, in 2023, 97% of UNC Charlotte graduates employed as teachers in North Carolina public schools received ratings of proficient or above on the NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) Standards.

College of Humanities and Earth Sciences (CHESS). Formally known as the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, CHESS, is a long-standing collaborator with the CoED, and will play an important role in *Project TRUSTED*. [REDACTED] (Co-PI), Chair of the Department of Psychological Sciences, will share his expertise related to supporting children at-risk for emotional, behavioral, and/or academic difficulties, particularly children who have suffered trauma. He will also help to recruit graduates from CHESS each year to apply to our residency program and participate in *Project TRUSTED*, and will serve on the PAC.

School of Professional Studies. The UNC Charlotte School of Professional Studies (SPS) offers more than 30 professional development certificates and certifications to help professionals advance their careers. SPS has partnered with the CoED to offer the Trauma-Invested Teaching Practices Certificate program to help increase awareness and competence in trauma-responsive instruction, policy, and school culture for aspiring teachers. The professional certificate to be completed by all 36 *Project TRUSTED* candidates and their 36 mentor teachers consists of three self-paced, evidence-based, online modules and is aligned with the NC Department of Public Instruction General and Literacy Standards. Upon successful completion of the modules, *Project TRUSTED* candidates will be awarded a professional credential from SPS that will enhance their marketability and, more importantly, help them to better meet the SEL needs of their future students (Competitive Priority #3).

Union County Public Schools (UCPS). UCPS is one of our largest school partners. In 2023-24, 474 teachers employed in UCPS graduated from UNC Charlotte, and since Spring 2021, a total of 77 UNC Charlotte students have completed their yearlong internship in a UCPS classroom. With 41,000 students and 30 elementary schools, UCPS is the 6th largest district in the state, ensuring it has the capacity each year to hire *Project TRUSTED* completers. Further, UCPS is a high-need district with a very diverse student population. Almost half (48%) of the student population is non-white.

Gaston County Schools (GCS). UNC Charlotte and GCS also have a longstanding partnership. In 2023-24, 343 of all GCS teachers had graduated from UNC Charlotte. Since Spring 2021, a total of 76 UNC Charlotte students have completed their yearlong internship in a GCS classroom. Among the ten largest school districts in North Carolina with over 30,000 students and 29 elementary schools, GCS also has the capacity to place and hire *Project TRUSTED* completers. GCS is also highly diverse with more than half (53%) of its students representing a race other than white.

ii. Adequacy of budget

The proposed budget is appropriate to support *Project TRUSTED*'s goals related to recruitment, quality preparation, and retention. The requested \$2.15 million in federal funding will be utilized to recruit and support teacher candidates during initial licensure coursework (e.g., living wage stipend) and again when they become teachers (e.g., coaching support). Mentor teachers will also be incentivized to participate with a stipend (██████) that is higher than what a typical mentor teacher receives. This will compensate them for the additional responsibilities associated with *Project TRUSTED* that better prepare them to: 1) support and mentor the teacher candidates and 2) support their students with a history of trauma. Funding will also provide PD (e.g., summer

orientation, trauma-informed instruction professional certificate, substitute release days for instructional planning) for both the mentor teachers and teacher candidates. To determine the effectiveness of the project and to determine progress on the identified project goals, an external evaluator will be hired using grant funds. Finally, project personnel will use funding to disseminate the findings of the project and share lessons learned.

iii. Reasonable costs

Project TRUSTED's program budget is cost-effective, adheres to the 2% administrative cost cap, and provides the required cost-match. Costs associated with administering the project and paying instructors to teach coursework will be absorbed by UNC Charlotte to meet cost-share requirements, as are costs associated with 1) providing required technology-based resources (ATLAS videos, GoReact software), 2) conducting licensure test workshops (e.g., Foundations of Reading and edTPA boot camps), 3) offering PD opportunities (e.g., culturally responsive classroom management), 4) providing orientation sessions to teacher candidates and mentor teachers, and 5) recruiting candidates. The cost of tuition in North Carolina (covered by the living wage stipend) is also very reasonable in comparison with other states and has recently been significantly reduced in our re-designed residency model by streamlining curriculum and adopting a distance education format. Reducing transportation costs, UNC Charlotte and all the participating schools are located in the same geographic area of southwestern North Carolina, and the CoED uses GoReact software to conduct virtual teaching observations. In regard to significance, in addition to providing 36 highly qualified teachers in hard-to-staff rural elementary schools, program completers will be equipped to meet the SEL and academic needs of their students, and thus have the potential to change lives and improve overall school performance not only during their placements post-graduation, but throughout the course of their

careers. Project significance is amplified since the 36 mentor teachers employed in UCPS and GCS will also have the opportunity to complete *Project TRUSTED* PD.

iv. Resources to extend the project beyond the funding period.

Many of the elements of a residency program will remain in place post-funding. For example, the CoED has a full-time Education Recruiter and a well-established program (Profound Niners) that will allow us to continue the recruitment of high-quality teacher candidates and candidates of color. Sustained and deliberate clinical experiences are also embedded components of our Graduate Certificate in Elementary Education, as is practice-based coursework that focuses on select, high-leverage teaching practices (e.g., eliciting student thinking). We also have established criteria in place to select only high-quality mentor teachers who are compensated for their work and who receive PD to support them in their role. A distinguishing feature of UNC Charlotte that will also allow us to sustain another critical element of a residency program (ongoing support for novice teachers) is that we are one of only two sites across the state of North Carolina with an on-site chapter of the NC New Teacher Support Program (NTSP). The NTSP coaches will continue to support our graduates through PD and instructional help after the funding period. Of course, another critical component of residency models, and one that is more challenging to sustain, is the financial support of candidates. Here too, the CoEd is developing a plan in collaboration with school partners and units across campus. For example, both UCPS and GCS have expressed interest in an innovative staffing model that would have them pay our eligible residency candidates to serve as substitute teachers during their yearlong internship. During the first (fall) semester of the internship, candidates would be eligible to work three days per week, while spending two days with their mentor teacher. In the spring semester, when completing their full-time student teaching internship, candidates would work as a substitute

teacher two days per week, while fulfilling their student teaching requirements. This commitment amounts to over ██████ in financial support. We have also secured financial commitment from the UNC Charlotte Graduate School in the form of Tuition Assistance Grants to residency program candidates each year, and from the CoED (\$1,000 scholarships to residency candidates). We are also working closely with our Advancement Office to seek community partners that are willing to invest resources in supporting residency candidates.

v. Commitment of project partners to the project's success.

Project TRUSTED aligns with the vision of the CoED to be a national leader in educational equity, excellence, and engagement. Recruiting high-quality, diverse teachers (Competitive Priority #1), preparing teachers to meet the needs of underserved students (Competitive Priority #2), meeting student social, emotional, and academic needs (Competitive Priority #3), and promoting educational equity (Competitive Priority #4) are all specific objectives outlined in our [strategic plan](#). For example, Goal 1 of our strategic plan is to expand and sustain equitable and inclusive learning environments for faculty, staff, and students. Commitment to the project's success is also reflected in the goals of our two school partners. For example, UCPS's strategic plan focuses on reducing gaps in student achievement and meeting the needs of all students (Competitive Priority 2), regardless of background. Likewise, in its strategic plan GCS aims to ensure a highly qualified and diverse teacher workforce (Competitive Priority #1), provide innovative practices to meet the needs of all students (Competitive Priorities 2 and 4), and to offer every student a safe and inclusive learning environment (Competitive Priority #3). As made evident in both the Needs Assessment (Appendix B) and the letters of commitment from both school partners (Appendix E), both districts need the additional support that would be offered

through *Project TRUSTED* and are excited about this opportunity to continue their long-standing partnership with UNC Charlotte.

Quality of the management plan (20 pts)

i. Adequacy of the management plan to achieve objectives on time and within budget.

A strong management plan is in place to monitor project progress and ensure that it meets its intended goals on time and within the budget. Table 7 indicates the tasks planned to achieve each objective of the three project goals, when they will be completed, milestones indicating progress toward completion of the tasks, the person(s) responsible for completing them, and each person's commitment to the project. As outlined in Table 7, responsibility of task completion will be shared among both UNC Charlotte faculty and our school partners.

Table 7. Project Timeline & Responsibilities

| Goal 1: Increase educator diversity in hard-to-staff positions in high-need schools. | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Objective 1.1: Recruit 36 candidates (12 in each cohort) of which at least 50% are of color in UNC Charlotte residency program in a hard-to-staff licensure area. | | | |
| Strategy | Milestone | Responsible Person(s) | Time Commitment |
| Sponsor and organize recruitment events for underrepresented groups | Hold recruitment events on and off campus each fall and spring. | Education Recruiter - ██████████ | 20% |
| Host recruitment events for students enrolled in majors | Hold recruitment events on and off campus each fall | CHESS Recruiter - ██████████ | 10% |

| | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|--------|
| in CHESS. | and spring. | | |
| Advertise in social media, print, and webpage. | Social media campaign in place by spring 2025. | Communications Director - [REDACTED] | 20% |
| Implement <i>Profound Niners</i> program to ignite passion to teach among students of color. | Recruit students each spring to complete paid internship in fall of their senior year. | Education Recruiter - [REDACTED] | 20% |
| Work with Institutional Research to collect the names and email addresses of all UNC Charlotte undergraduates who apply to graduate with a relevant undergraduate degree. | After the deadline to apply to graduate each fall (October) and Spring (February) send a mass email to candidates informing them of <i>Project TRUSTED</i> . | Project Director - [REDACTED] (PI) | 15-25% |
| Scour the UNC Charlotte application portal for students who have started (but not finished) their application to the Graduate Certificate program. | Reach out individually to all prospective candidates in November and March informing them of the opportunity and encourage them to apply. | [REDACTED] (Co-PI) | 10-25% |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|------------|
| Offer GPA forgiveness program for applicants who do not have necessary GPA to be admitted. | Review applications in spring of each year for candidates that qualify for GPA forgiveness. | Director of Teacher Education & Advising - [REDACTED] | 10% |
| Offer convenient and research-based teacher residency program. | Cohorts begin the program in May and graduate within 18 months. | Residency Coordinator - [REDACTED] | 10-25% |
| Objective 1.2: Assign candidates to a yearlong clinical placement in hard-to-staff positions in a high-need school. | | | |
| Office of School and Community Partnerships works with HR administrators in UCPS and GCS to place cohort members in strategically selected classrooms. | Candidates begin yearlong clinical experience in late August of each year. | Director of the Office of School & Community Partnerships ([REDACTED]) UCPS and GCS HR administrators | 10% 15% |
| Objective 1.3: Fill teacher vacancies in hard-to-staff positions in high-need schools. | | | |
| Develop agreement with UCPS and GCS to hire program completers. | Obtain letter of district support (see Appendix E). | Project Director - [REDACTED] (PI) | 15-25% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Work with UCPS and GCS to hire candidates to fill vacancies in hard-to-staff positions in high-need rural elementary schools. | Each spring, host a session with UCPS and GCS HR personnel to inform candidates of the hiring procedures. | Project Director - ██████████ (PI) UCPS & GCS HR Administrators | 15-25% 10% |
|---|---|---|-------------------|

| Goal 2: Improve the preparation of elementary school teacher candidates to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students experiencing poverty in rural areas. | | | |
|--|--|---|-----------------|
| Objective 2.1: Candidates earn an ELED license and credential in trauma-invested care. | | | |
| Strategy | Milestone | Responsible Person(s) | Time Commitment |
| Offer customized curriculum that prepares candidates to address academic and SEL needs of students and leads to elementary school teaching license. | Participants in each cohort enroll in a customized program of study by the established deadline. | Academic Advisor - ██████████ ██████████ | 10-20% |
| Offer boot camps to help candidates pass licensure tests. | 100% attendance at boot camps. | PI - ██████████ ██████████ (PI) | 15-25% |
| Offer professional development in trauma-invested care, leading | 100% of candidates complete 3 related | Trauma-invested | 10-20% |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--------|
| to a professional credential | modules leading to the professional credential. | Instruction Coordinator - ██████████ | |
| Candidates complete their yearlong internship in a high-need school with a high percentage of students experiencing poverty and who have experienced trauma. | Upon admission to the residency program, candidates are placed in a high-need school with a high % of students experiencing poverty and who had suffered trauma. | Director of the Office of School & Community Partnerships – ██████████ | 15% |
| Objective 2.2: Enhance teacher candidates' attitudes and knowledge about trauma-informed care (e.g., underlying causes of and responses to problem behavior). | | | |
| Offer trauma-invested care modules through the School of Professional Studies leading to the professional credential. | Candidates and mentor teachers complete the 3 online modules (see Table 4) and receive the professional credential. | Trauma- invested Instruction Coordinator - ██████████ | 10-20% |
| Assess candidate attitudes of and knowledge about trauma-informed care to measure potential growth. | Candidates complete the pre-test implementation of the ARTIC in the summer preceding the | Trauma- invested Instruction Coordinator - | 10-20% |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|-----|
| | yearlong internship and the post-test implementation in the following summer. | ██████████ | |
| Objective 2.3: Increase participants' culturally responsive practices to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion for students experiencing poverty in rural areas. | | | |
| Offer professional development on culturally responsive classroom management. | Candidates complete workshop offered by NC New Teacher Support Program in Summer 2 (see Table 4). | Culturally Responsive Teaching Coordinator - ██████████ | 20% |
| Candidates complete coursework and PD focusing on equitable classroom environments and culturally responsive practices. | Candidates complete ELED 6202 and PD on culturally responsive practices in Summer 2 (see Table 4). | Culturally Responsive Teaching Coordinator - ██████████ | 20% |
| Assess candidate ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices using the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol to detect | Observe candidate instruction at the beginning of the program (fall) and again in the final semester of the | Culturally Responsive Teaching Coordinator - ██████████ | 20% |

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------|--|--|
| possible enhancements. | program. | | |
|------------------------|----------|--|--|

| Goal 3: Retain diverse educators in hard-to-staff positions in high-need rural elementary schools. | | | |
|---|--|--|-------------------|
| Objective 3.1: Teacher candidates complete residency program in less than 18 months. | | | |
| Strategy | Milestone | Responsible Person(s) | Time Commitment |
| Cohort Model | Touch base once per semester with cohort members to discuss challenges and concerns, celebrate successes, and build a community of support. | ██████████ (PI) | 15-25% |
| Offer licensure test (Foundations of Reading and edTPA) support. | Foundations of Reading boot camp will be offered each fall, edTPA support seminar will be offered each spring, and an edTPA boot camp will be offered each summer. | ██████████ (Co-PI) & ██████████ | 10-25% 10% |
| Objective 3.2: Candidates remain teaching in their hard-to-staff position in a high-need school for a minimum of 3 years. | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|-----|
| Provide induction support for new teachers via the NC. New Teacher Support Program (NC NTSP). | NC NTSP coaches visit each candidate at least once per week for two years following completion of licensure requirements. | Director of the UNC Charlotte chapter of the NC NTSP program | 20% |
|---|---|--|-----|

ii. Procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement.

Progress toward project goals will be monitored by a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) made up of university and school partners. PAC representation and responsibilities are outlined below.

██████████ (PI). ██████████ will provide project oversight, ensure boot camps and PD are prepared by facilitators and scheduled for cohorts, chair the PAC, organize, and attend meetings to collect feedback, interview candidates, and complete reporting.

██████████ (Co-PI). As Residency Coordinator, ██████████ will be responsible for the scheduling and staffing of all customized coursework.

██████████ (Co-PI). As Budget Coordinator, ██████████ will monitor expenses, ensure expenses align with the approved budget, reconcile the budget monthly, and help with reporting. His expertise leading previous successful TQP grant projects will also be instrumental.

██████████ (Co-PI). ██████████ will represent CHESS and will share his expertise related to supporting children who have suffered trauma. ██████████ will be instrumental in helping to recruit candidates graduating from undergraduate CHESS programs.

██████████ (Key Personnel). As the Culturally Responsive Teaching Coordinator, ██████████ will oversee the related professional development (see Table 4) and the pre- and post-observation of candidate instruction to measure for possible change in practices.

██████████ (Key Personnel). Will oversee the components of the trauma-invested certification program and all related PD. Capitalizing on her expertise, ██████████ will be responsible for implementation of the pre- and post-self-assessment instrument (ARTIC).

██████████ (Key Personnel). ██████████ will be responsible for the implementation of the new Science of Reading curriculum, offer the Foundations of Reading boot camps to help candidates pass the licensure test, and participate in candidate interviews.

██████████ (Key Personnel). ██████████ will represent UCPS on the interview panel, attend the summer orientation, and oversee candidate placement in UCPS schools.

██████████ (Key Personnel). ██████████ will represent UCPS on the interview panel, provide regular feedback to improve project performance, and oversee the hiring of all candidates in UCPS schools (see Appendix E).

██████████ (Key Personnel). ██████████ will represent GCS on the interview panel, attend the summer orientation, and oversee the placement of candidates in GCS schools.

The above-mentioned PAC members will continuously seek feedback from each of the following groups and will use the feedback to make recommendations to improve *Project TRUSTED*. The PAC will also work with the external evaluator.

Candidates. Once per semester, check-in meetings will be organized with members of the PAC, candidates in the residency program, and participants who are teaching and receiving induction support. In prior TQP projects, we found that bringing together cohort members at various stages in the program offered an extra layer of support, as new teacher candidates can learn from those who have already completed the licensure program and gain from their experiences. During these meetings, participants will be asked to describe their experiences, what is going well, what could be improved, and where they could use additional support.

Mentor teachers. At the beginning of the program (summer), mentors will provide feedback on the extent they feel that the orientation prepared them. Mentors will also be invited to a Zoom meeting in the first semester of the candidates' yearlong internship (fall) and again during their full-time student teaching internship (spring) to seek their feedback on candidate progress, discuss next steps, and answer any questions they may have.

New Teacher Support Coaches. Once candidates start receiving induction support, meetings will be scheduled with the Project Director, the external evaluator, Director of the UNC Charlotte chapter of the NC NTPS program, and the coaches that have been assigned to the TQP candidates to provide feedback on areas where the teachers seem well prepared, areas where they are struggling, and how we might further support them.

Absolute Priority 2— Partnership Grants for Teaching Residency Programs

As outlined in more detail above, the UNC Charlotte residency program is based on successful residency models and meets all the requirements of Absolute Priority 2. More specifically, the model has been redesigned to offer a customized plan of study that leads to a teaching license in a hard-to-staff position (rural elementary school teacher) and a professional credential (trauma-informed instruction) to meet the needs of an underserved population (students living in poverty and who have experienced trauma) at the 12 participating schools, while incorporating a number of new recruitment strategies to promote a diverse pool of candidates (e.g., GPA forgiveness, Profound Niners). The program was developed in close collaboration with our two rural school partners, who are both experiencing a critical shortage of elementary school teachers and teachers who are equipped to meet the needs of students who are exhibiting signs of trauma (office referrals, chronic absenteeism). Continued collaboration with school partners will be a hallmark of *Project TRUSTED*, as district partners will serve on the PAC, participate in the

interview and selection of candidates to ensure that admission goals reflect their staffing needs, and place and hire candidates in their strategically selected schools. In further alignment with Absolute Priority #2, *Project TRUSTED* employs a cohort-based model, where candidates complete coursework with their colleagues. The program braids meaningful clinical experiences throughout coursework, and our adoption of a practice-based approach and the Science of Reading curriculum ensures that candidates have multiple opportunities to practice the pedagogical strategies they learn in coursework. Candidates in our residency program are partnered with expert teacher mentors during a yearlong internship and upon completion of their residency are hired by our district partners and commit to serve in a high-need school in the districts for a minimum of three years. During their first two years of employment, completers receive two years of induction support through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program. Residency candidates receive a stipend that is comparable to the salary of a beginning UCPS and GCS teacher and they can complete both the initial and advanced licensure programs in less than 18 months.

Competitive Priority 1 - Increasing Educator Diversity

To remove unnecessary barriers to the profession and attract a more diverse pool of teacher candidates, we redesigned our teacher preparation program for elementary school teachers to make it more convenient and affordable by streamlining the curriculum and offering all instruction online. We employ an Education Recruiter who visits schools with diverse student populations to promote a teaching career, host annual recruitment events targeting under-represented groups, and have begun offering a GPA forgiveness program. The CoEd also offers a signature, donor-funded initiative (Profound Niners) that provides a paid internship to undergraduate seniors of color in classrooms led by exemplary teachers of color in the hope that

the experience will ignite a passion to teach and encourage them to apply to one of our graduate initial licensure programs, including elementary education. Recognizing the dearth of LatinX teachers, we have also partnered with Latin Americans Working for Achievement to sponsor an event for LatinX students and their families to discuss pathways to the teaching profession.

Recognizing that barriers to the teaching profession for under-represented groups also exist once admitted to a teacher preparation program (i.e., licensure tests), we offer free online boot camps, support seminars, and workshops to help candidates pass the Foundations of Reading test (see Appendix H) and edTPA. To help retain candidates of color, we attempt to pair minority student teacher candidates with mentor teachers of the same race/ethnicity in schools to provide social/emotional support during the candidates' practicum and provide the candidate a model for success (Project M.E.N.T.O.R). Young and Easton-Brooks (2020) found that beginning Black teachers benefit from induction support from ethnically-matched mentors. Once hired by a school partner, all *Project TRUSTED* completers will receive mentoring and coaching support through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program.

Competitive Priority 2 - Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce

Project TRUSTED will prepare a total of 36 elementary school teachers (a shortage area for our partners) in 12 high-need schools where a high-percentage of students are of color, experiencing poverty, and exhibiting signs of trauma. As a means of further preparing these teachers to meet the needs of this under-served population, *Project TRUSTED* will provide customized training to the 36 candidates (and their mentor teachers) leading to a professional credential in trauma-informed instruction and enhanced ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices that will allow them to better meet the needs of their racially and culturally diverse students.

Competitive Priority 3 - Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs

As illustrated in Table 2, the 12 participating schools have highly diverse students who are exhibiting signs of trauma (e.g., high rates of absenteeism and suspension) and whose race is not reflected in that of their teachers, who are primarily white. In response, *Project TRUSTED* seeks to equip the 36 elementary school teacher candidates at these 12 strategically selected schools with the skills to meet the needs of students with a history of trauma (Competitive Priority #3).

As illustrated in the Logic Model (see Appendix C), *Project TRUSTED* aims to interweave strategically chosen coursework and PD into a graduate program for elementary school teachers, leading to a license to teach elementary school, a professional certification in trauma-informed instruction, and enhanced ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices.

Competitive Priority 4 - Promoting Equity to Educational Resources and Opportunities

As documented in the Needs Assessment (see Appendix B), the teachers at the 12 participating elementary schools have not been prepared to meet the SEL needs of their students. Many of these students have experienced various forms of trauma that are negatively impacting their academic performance, and few of the teachers have received any training on how to meet their related needs. Further, the predominantly white teachers at these schools need additional preparation in how to design and deliver their instruction in a manner that meets the needs of their racially and culturally diverse students to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion among all students. To promote educational equity, *Project TRUSTED* proposes to recruit three diverse cohorts of 12 teacher candidates (36 total) that are preparing to become elementary school teachers and offer them customized coursework and PD that leads to a license to teach elementary school, a professional certification in trauma-informed instruction, and enhanced ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices.