

**For Immediate Release**  
March 30, 2021

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## **Distinguished Leadership for Remote Learning Program Expands to Include Mentorship and Networking**

**Raleigh, North Carolina** – Following the graduation of one hundred forty school leaders from across the state in the inaugural cohort of Distinguished Leadership in a Remote Learning Environment (DLR), the North Carolina Principals & Assistant Principals' Association (NCPAPA) is expanding its program to include mentorship and peer networking.

Through funding from the North Carolina State Employee's Credit Union Foundation (NCSECU), and in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), NCPAPA will establish the Distinguished Practitioners Network (DPN). The DPN will focus initially on North Carolina's highest needs districts to provide support for principals through ongoing virtual networks led by school leaders with proven, evidenced-based school results over time in high-needs schools. School leader on-the-job professional networks have been shown to reduce isolation and promote principal retention and improved student performance. Though the need for school leaders to learn from one another has always existed, this need has been amplified by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"Clearly, our school leaders having the opportunity to observe, model, engage, and be involved with outstanding peers is a practice that will change positive learning outcomes for our students. NCDPI is so happy to continue this partnership with NCPAPA," said Dr. Beverly Emory, NCDPI Deputy Superintendent.

"SECU Foundation understands the importance of providing support for a community forum where principals can discuss shared school challenges and address educational concerns that have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Both new and experienced school leaders who are facing mounting pressures will benefit from this additional support and professional development. We believe the Network will accelerate the development and dissemination of 'leadership best practices,' thus promoting school and student success," said Jo Anne Sanford, SECU Foundation Board Chair.

To respond to the most pressing COVID-19-impacted issues, the three initial DPN focus areas will be:

- Leadership for instructional success focused on raising achievement in the areas of reading and math literacy.
- Leadership for equity focused on equitable instructional access and high expectations for every student while reducing and eliminating disparities in outcomes of student success.
- Leadership for social and emotional well-being focused on creating an educational environment in which all students, their family members, and school staff can thrive.

"Like our students, school leaders build professional capacity by learning from each other. Actual application is different from theory and this is where the network adds value. Invest in your human capital and the results will take care of themselves. I am proud to partner with NCPAPA to support this work," said Tabari Wallace, Special Advisor to the Superintendent for Principal Engagement at NCDPI.

The DPN facilitators will be stand-out school leaders who have also been engaged in NCPAPA's various professional development programs focused on improvement science and change leadership such as the signature leadership program, Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) and most recently, the new Distinguished Leadership in a Remote Learning Environment (DLR).

Drawing on the unique and vast expertise of other principals, the network will use a proven inquiry-based, collaborative coaching model based on improvement science to discuss and resolve the unprecedented challenges they now face. Through their structured participation in the network and interactions with their assigned facilitator, the school leaders in the network will increase their leadership capacity and develop an aligned strategic direction for the three network focus areas designed to positively impact student achievement in their schools.

“Research shows that school leaders can improve student outcomes more quickly and significantly by learning from and collaborating with their peers who are focused on the same problems of practice. This is especially true as school leaders navigate the uncertainty of instructional leadership during the pandemic. School leaders are eager to learn from other school leaders’ successes and lessons learned to inform their own practice. With no clear roadmap, principals must rely on the collective insight and instincts of other successful principals as they figure out how to apply what they know about effective school leadership to these new, unpredictable situations,” said Dr. Shirley Prince, NCPAPA Executive Director.

The SECU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization funded by the contributions of SECU members, promotes local community development in North Carolina primarily through high impact projects in the areas of housing, education, healthcare and human services. Since 2004, SECU Foundation has made a collective financial commitment of over \$200 million for initiatives to benefit North Carolinians statewide. In addition to the website, highlights are also available on the SECU Foundation Instagram page.

NCASLD’s mission is to grow leadership capacity among aspiring and practicing school leaders through programs that are aligned to the research-based NC performance evaluation standards and competencies for highly effective school leadership. NCASLD works in concert with its affiliate organizations, NCASA, NCSSA, and NCPAPA to promote achievement of NC’s educational objectives with emphasis on the welfare and needs of all children. In existence since 1976, the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals’ Association is the preeminent organization and state voice for principals, assistant principals and aspiring school leaders.

