

# 2024-2025

## EPP Master of School Administration

Fayetteville State University

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### North Carolina Department of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

#### **Overview of Master of School Administration Program**

The Master of School Administration (MSA) program at Fayetteville State University continues to serve as a strong foundation for developing visionary and equity-driven leaders in K–12 education. Housed in the College of Education, the MSA program offers aspiring school leaders a comprehensive experience that blends academic rigor with practical application. Through a combination of challenging coursework, immersive field experiences, and meaningful mentorship, candidates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to lead in today’s dynamic educational environment.

Throughout the program, students engage with a 42-credit hour curriculum that includes core leadership courses, six hours of electives, and a full-time, year-long internship. Coursework emphasizes instructional leadership, organizational management, and data-driven decision-making, while also integrating virtual simulations, problem-based learning, and reflective observations. Candidates are guided to become change agents—leaders capable of implementing innovative strategies, building inclusive learning environments, and promoting continuous school improvement.

A key focus of the program is preparing culturally responsive leaders who are not only aware of the diverse political, social, and economic realities that impact schools but are also prepared to advocate for equity and justice within them. The program actively supports the recruitment and preparation of candidates from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, ensuring a diverse pipeline of future school leaders.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the MSA program proudly celebrated the accomplishments of nine graduates, including one candidate who completed the MSA Add-On Certification. All candidates successfully fulfilled graduation or licensure requirements by May 11, 2024. Among this group, one MSA Add-On candidate from the previous cohort accepted a new leadership role as Assistant Principal at John Griffin Middle School for the 2024–2025 school year, exemplifying the program’s impact on educational leadership placement.

To support the field experience component, the department hosted a principal orientation in partnership with Cumberland County Schools and Hoke County Schools. This orientation prepared principals to effectively mentor MSA interns and maintain strong communication throughout the internship process. Such partnerships reflect the program’s ongoing commitment to community engagement and authentic, site-based leadership development.

To date, the MSA program has graduated 490 candidates, each prepared to make a meaningful difference in the schools and communities they serve. The program remains fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), with reaffirmation received in March 2022, and by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). It also maintains full program approval from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI).

As the MSA program moves forward into the 2024–2025 academic year, it continues to prioritize innovation, equity, and excellence—shaping the next generation of educational leaders who are committed to driving transformative change in schools across North Carolina and beyond.

### **Special Characteristics of the Master of School Administration Program**

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Master of School Administration (MSA) program at Fayetteville State University continued to deliver a high-quality, standards-aligned leadership preparation experience rooted in best practices and real-world application. The full-time MSA program remains structured around a set of key components designed to ensure candidates are prepared for the demands of school leadership. These components include course artifacts scored by multiple faculty members, the development of a personalized leadership development plan, a five-hour comprehensive examination, and a full-time, year-long internship. Candidates also participate in reflective seminars and benefit from a multi-modal instructional format, including in-person, hybrid, and virtual learning experiences. The program is delivered in a cohort model, allowing students to build strong peer connections and collaborative networks throughout their graduate experience.

Admission to the MSA program includes a formal application review, an on-campus interview, and a written assessment to evaluate candidates' readiness for advanced leadership study. Once admitted, students progress through the structured curriculum and prepare to enter the intensive internship in their second year.

The internship remains one of the most defining elements of the MSA experience. All full-time candidates are required to take a leave of absence from their school district to complete a year-

long, full-time internship. This internship spans three semesters—summer, fall, and spring—and includes field-based experiences at public school sites, an action research project, reflective seminars, and leadership enrichment activities. The internship is designed to offer authentic leadership development, guided by a school-based administrator and a university faculty supervisor.

Another key milestone in the second year is the comprehensive examination, a five-hour written assessment developed and scored by MSA faculty. The exam consists of six sections that align with the program's core academic areas. If a candidate does not pass all sections, opportunities for retesting are provided, and in select cases, oral assessments may be offered to demonstrate competency.

Each course in the program includes artifacts that allow candidates to simulate and reflect on leadership practices. These artifacts are evaluated using the North Carolina Pre-Service School Executive Rubric, with the goal of ensuring all candidates perform at or above the “developing” level. To qualify for licensure, candidates must ultimately achieve a “proficient” rating on all rubric elements.

Additionally, candidates must submit six Pre-Service Electronic Evidences as required by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). These evidences are uploaded and evaluated within the university's Taskstream platform and assessed using the state-approved rubric. Coursework is aligned to support the development of each evidence, and supplemental work may be assigned as needed to address areas of concern. Candidates are provided opportunities for remediation to ensure proficiency in all required areas before recommendation for licensure.

The Action Research Project remains a central component of the internship and is designed to reinforce problem-based learning and field engagement. Guided by a faculty advisor and site-based mentor, candidates identify a specific challenge within their school site and implement a data-informed intervention plan. The project showcases the candidate's ability to conduct research that directly improves school performance, demonstrating the practical application of leadership theory and strategic planning.

In addition to the full-time MSA program, Fayetteville State University continues to offer the MSA Add-On Licensure Only Program, which provides a flexible and practice-based path for experienced educators who already hold a master's degree and meet state eligibility requirements. Designed for working professionals, the program allows candidates to follow the same curriculum sequence as full-time MSA students, with an option to complete the requirements over two to three years. This flexible design allows participants to balance professional obligations while pursuing administrative licensure.

Since its launch in the 2022–2023 academic year, the MSA Add-On Program has attracted passionate and experienced educators. For the 2024–2025 academic year, the university currently serves two active Add-On candidates. As the program gains momentum, recruitment efforts are underway to welcome new candidates for the 2025–2026 academic year, with the goal of

expanding access to leadership development opportunities for qualified educators across North Carolina.

Together, the full-time MSA and MSA Add-On pathways reflect Fayetteville State University's continued commitment to preparing skilled, equity-focused school leaders who are equipped to transform schools and serve diverse student populations across the state.