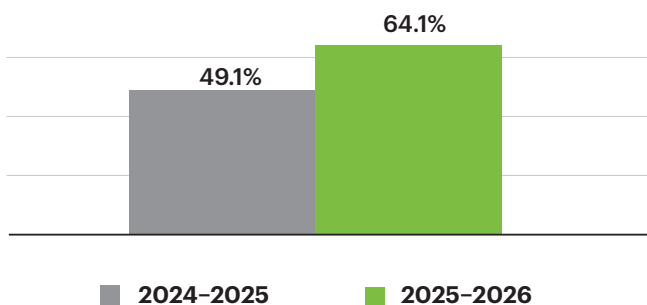




A New **Stile** of Science Instruction

How Cleveland County Transformed Science Learning in the Classroom

**Cleveland County Schools:
Grade 8 Science Proficiency Rises 15 Points**

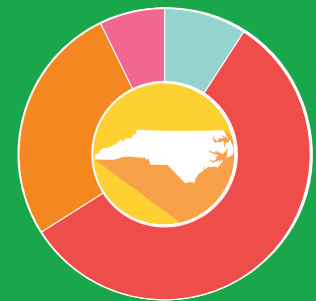


Percentage of Cleveland County Schools Grade 8 students scoring proficient or above (Level 3+) on the NC End-of-Grade (EOG) science assessment, the statewide test administered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Scores rose from 49.1% in 2024-2025 to 64.1% in 2025-2026, a 15-point year-over-year gain.

Cleveland County Schools

Shelby, North Carolina

14,458 Grades Pre-K-12
Students



Asian Black Hispanic
Other White

69%

Students with
Socioeconomic
Disadvantages

15%

Students
with
Disabilities

Choosing Stile, Changing Student Outcomes

When Cleveland County Schools' 8th grade science results came back flat at the end of the 2024-2025 school year, Executive Director of Middle Schools and Accountability Chris Bennett knew something had to change. The existing curriculum wasn't delivering, and with the school year ending, the district faced a choice: find a new curriculum quickly or build one entirely in-house.

Bennett brought together a panel of middle school science teachers to put Stile—the [NC state-adopted](#) science curriculum for Grades 6-8—to the test. What won them over wasn't just the program; it was how quickly and directly the Stile team answered their questions. Teachers and district leaders left the review feeling confident not just in the curriculum, but in the partnership—certain that if challenges came up during implementation, they wouldn't be facing them alone.

One year later, middle schools that utilized the program with high fidelity experienced significant gains on the state's 8th grade science EOG assessment, contributing to an average districtwide proficiency increase of 15 points in spring 2026 compared to the prior year.

"The level of outreach we had from Curriculum Associates, the responsiveness—we decided to go with it, and thankfully we did. Stile is closely aligned to our standards, and it's really helped our teachers unpack, dig into, and ensure that they were teaching the standards, assessing the standards, and responding to the assessment data." —Chris Bennett, Executive Director of Middle Schools and Accountability

Tools That Empower Teachers

For beginning teacher Leighia Jones, Stile provided tools that strengthened both student engagement and her instructional confidence. Anonymous polling gave students a safe way to participate, while built-in engagement strategies helped her explore new techniques, adapt lessons for different classes, and continue growing as a science teacher.

“As a beginning teacher, I’m still learning all of the engagement techniques, like polling, turn-and-talks, and other discussion strategies. Having those options built right into the lesson helps me try new things and figure out what works best for each class.”

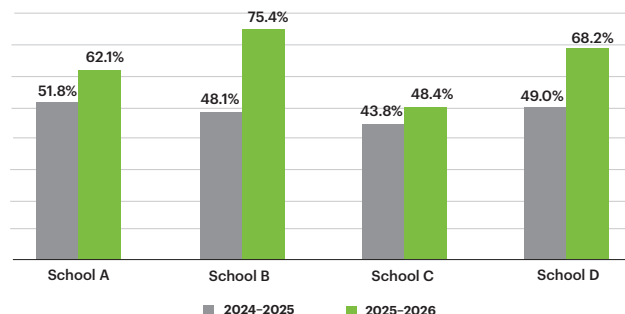
—Leighia Jones, Crest Middle School Science Teacher

Transforming Classroom Instruction

For Bennett, the shift Stile enabled wasn’t just about materials; it was pedagogical. “This is not ‘put it in Canvas and go,’ or ‘get your Chromebook out and work,’” he said. “This is really driven by the discourse, by doing, and that appealed to our teachers, to our superintendent, and to our board. You’re not going to walk in and see 35 kids on Chromebooks.”

The shift also showed up in data from classroom observations. The pattern was unmistakable: less independent work, more monitoring, more engagement, and teacher-led instruction. “Taking what we saw in the classrooms and connecting it to the results we got, that was pretty exciting,” he said.

**Cleveland County Schools:
NC EOG Proficiency by Middle School
Grade 8 Science**



Building a Foundation for Lasting Impact

Bennett’s advice to districts looking to adopt Stile is simple: listen to teachers, protect time for learning, and embed coaches and administrators in the process from the beginning.

“Really give them that space to familiarize themselves with the program and the standards,” he said. “And then, with the data, make sure through your check-ins that you’re meeting the needs of kids.”

In just one year, Cleveland County has built strong momentum with Stile. Teachers and coaches have developed confidence with the program, and the district is excited to continue building on the progress already underway.



**Discover Stile—
the science
curriculum that
teachers love.**