

The Public School Forum's Special Report

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To Friday Report readers:

Below is a correction in the description of HB 823. We regret the error.

HB 823- Governance of the Department of Public Instruction, introduced by Rep. Bryan Holloway (R-Stokes) passed the North Carolina House this week and will go to the Senate. The original bill proposed a constitutional amendment to change the structure of K-12 governance by shifting all State Board authority to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and leaving the Board as essentially an advisory body. It would have also made the Superintendent the chair of the State Board., **However, the bill was changed by amendment and the amended version of the bill would:**

- Require a constitutional amendment to make the Superintendent of Public Instruction a member of the State Board of Education and the secretary and chief administrative officer of the State Board of Education.
- Require the Superintendent to make all state-level appointments necessary for the supervision and administration of the free public schools.
- Change the membership of the State Board of Education to include an additional at-large member.
- Require the General Assembly to elect all at-large members. (2 by the House, 2 by the Senate with staggered terms dictated by a schedule in the bill).
- Require the Governor to appoint 8 members, one from each of the eight educational districts.
- Require the Governor to appoint the Chair of the State Board of Education.
- Eliminate the requirement that appointments by the Governor be confirmed by the General Assembly.
- Create a six-year term of office for State Board of Education members.

The amendments to the state constitution shall be submitted to the voters at a statewide election on May 8, 2012. If they pass, the act becomes effective on January 1, 2013.

Teaching Fellows Graduates Share Their Passion for Teaching and the Teaching Fellows Program

May 27, 2011

Dear Members of the NC General Assembly:

My name is Nishelle Caudill and I am emailing you today to hopefully help you understand the importance of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program. As you can probably gather, I am a Teaching Fellow Alumna and a very proud and passionate one at that! I hope you will allow me this time to explain how this wonderful program has impacted my life, and in doing so, impacted the lives of the hundreds of students I have taught.

This email would not truly express my feelings if I did not give you a glimpse into how I came to be a Teaching Fellow. I grew up in a single parent home, one where my mom constantly worried about paying bills and providing for the two of us. I did not have expensive clothes or a big house; in fact, I grew up with hand-me-downs and always lived in a trailer park. I knew that if college was going to be an option the only way it was going to happen was if I got a scholarship.

Throughout my schooling I worked hard and excelled. School was my safe haven, a place that finally felt like "home." I wanted to instill that very feeling in others, so from a very young age I knew my calling was to be a teacher. When I heard of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows I was more than excited! I applied and made it to the county level interview, then the regional screening which took place at North Carolina A & T University. After this came the long wait and the many trips to the mailbox hoping my letter had arrived.

The day came when an envelope with the bright blue Teaching Fellows' logo appeared, I remember this day vividly. Since I got home from school before my mom got home from work, I stood alone in my living room holding the envelope in my shaking hands. I opened it very carefully, as to not rip it, and read the first sentence, "Congratulations on being selected as part of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows' Class of 2002!"

You see, these words might not mean much to you, but to a girl who came from very little it meant everything. In one sentence my life was set on a new course...I had a chance now! I would be going to college, I would be getting an education, I would become a teacher, and I would be able to give my children more than what I had! Teaching Fellows is more than a budget line item; it is an opportunity, it is a dream come true, it is an answered prayer, it is a way of life.

Now that you know more of my story, please allow me to explain what I gained from being a Teaching Fellow. From the moment I stepped onto my college campus I felt like I belonged. I did not feel like I was just another freshman class member trying to find their way. I was welcomed by the cohort of Fellows on my campus, I was involved in activities, and I was a part of something bigger than myself. As part of every campus program of Fellows you are required to attend a seminar for the seven semester before student teaching, it was in these seminar classes that I learned more than I did in my regular college courses. The reason for this is that we discussed “real world” topics instead of theory that will hardly ever be used. I learned how to organize my classroom, how to talk to parents, how to console students, and how to act professionally both in and out of the classroom. I heard speakers that ranged from the state teacher of the year to a group of students telling us what helps them learn. I would have missed out on all of this were it not for the Teaching Fellows Program.

During the summers you might see all of the enrichment activities that Teaching Fellows provides as more dollar bills to be spent, let me tell you what they mean to the people involved. During the summers between each year in college you are asked to attend the following events: Discovery Bus Tour (tour the state of North Carolina and visit schools and businesses that impact schools), Junior Enrichment (Sign up for an activity that is designed to take you out of your comfort zone), Junior Conference (A weekend long conference dedicated to the diversities that you will encounter in the classroom and how to handle them), Senior Orientation (Fellows visit a school system for a week and learn the ins and outs from the classroom itself to the bus garage), and finally Senior Conference (a weekend long conference dedicated to preparing Fellows to enter their student teaching and beyond).

After I went through my Discovery trip as a student I went back five more years as a bus facilitator. This allowed me to not only tour the state and see many classrooms and school systems; I also learned many leadership skills that I use to this day. I also have gone back for the past three years and presented workshops at Junior and Senior Conference on being a first year teacher. Being on the “other side” of Teaching Fellows has given me so much experience and allowed me to continue to grow as an educator. Teaching Fellows has set me above the rest of my colleagues, I have had more experiences, seen more speakers, been privy to so many techniques and ideas that as a beginning teacher I never felt ill prepared. I never felt like I did not know what I was doing and often I found myself giving ideas to veteran teachers. I am not saying that I know everything there is to know about teaching, but being a Teaching Fellow has instilled a fire and a drive that keeps me going on a daily basis.

Teaching Fellows is one of the most successful programs in the nation, to the point where other states have asked how they could start a program much like ours. It prepares future teachers to be leaders, not just someone who stands in the front of the classroom. It teaches us how to ask important questions, how to strive to always be better, and how to truly reach our students.

I am everything I am today because of the Teaching Fellows Program! I give back to the program every year in any way that I can and in doing so I am giving back to the state of North Carolina. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about where I would be if I had not become a Teaching Fellow.

As I wrote this letter I tried many times to think of all of the words that I needed to say in order to express to you the importance of this program, but to be honest, there aren't any. I could write thousands of words, check all of my punctuation and dot all of my I's, yet you will never truly understand just how much this program means to me.

When I got the email explaining that the phase out of the Teaching Fellows program was in the works I sat down and cried. I cried because if this were to in all actuality happen, I know that there is another young man or woman who will not get that letter with the bright blue Teaching Fellows' logo, telling them that their life will be forever changed. I cried because there are students out there who will never get the gift of having a North Carolina Teaching Fellow as their teacher. I cried, because I know that to you, Teaching Fellows is a line item and nothing more. I cried, because if Teaching Fellows were to be phased out, I and the rest of the 4, 000+ Fellows in the state of North Carolina in 99 counties would no longer have a place to belong.

I am pleading with you to save the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program. I would be more than happy to speak to you in person or over the phone; I am willing to do anything that it takes to save the one thing that saved me.

I AM a North Carolina Teaching Fellow!

Thank you for your time and I wish you all of the best!

Sincerely,

Nishelle V. Caudill

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7th Grade Mathematics

Macon Middle School

Macon County Schools

N.C. Teaching Fellow

Elected Officials:

Let me start by saying I am a "fiscal conservative." I, like most of you, believe spending is out of control not only in our great state but in our nation. We face hard times because we have lived outside of our limits for many years now and because of such difficult choices must be made. I understand that but I ask that you please take a moment to read this email.

In the fall of 1999 I was a high school senior at a public high school in Asheville (Erwin) and I knew then I wanted to be a teacher. Growing up I went through phases -- doctor, teacher, doctor, teacher. However, at the end of my junior year in high school I realized teaching was for me. I had an amazing, one-of-a-kind, passionate, dedicated, <insert any other positive adjective you wish>, English teacher and I knew then I wanted to be a teacher. Sure being a doctor would be fun and I knew had the academic capacity and determination to become a doctor, but teaching was my passion. I wanted my own classroom with real students and in a weird kind of way I wanted to attend faculty meetings. I knew great English teachers existed, I had a great example in Mr. Fullington, but I wanted to make sure great math teachers existed and thus I pursued a degree in Mathematics education. (My high school math teachers were not nearly the caliber as that of my high school English teachers)

Knowing this passion early lead me to apply for the NC Teaching Fellows Program. I worked hard toward this application process. I took the SAT 3 times, the ACT, wrote I think 3 practice essays, and was interviewed by a group of dedicated teachers at my high school multiple times all in effort to raise my "composite score." I wanted to be a Teaching Fellowing more than I wanted to go to Appalachian (if you knew me you would realize what a powerful statement that is because I have incredible Mountaineer Pride!!! Some would call me a "very happy appy") The day of my regional interview I was so excited, nervous, and all of the above, I showed up to Western Carolina (I'll refrain from my negative WCU comments) 2 hours early! Expecting a letter from the NC Teaching Fellows Commission either way, I checked our rural Post Office Box 4 times one particular Saturday morning. On my 4th trip to the Leicester Post Office I found a large envelope -- I had received my first choice and was an Appalachian Teaching Fellow! I cried the entire 2.7 mile drive back home to tell my parents.

The following four years as an Appalachian Teaching Fellow prepared me to be the teacher I am today. Teaching Fellows presented me with opportunities early on that have sparked continuous learning/growth for me. My first year as a Teaching Fellow at App, we read a book -- "The Power of Their Ideas" by Deborah Meier -- I have frequently referenced this book and even meet the author at a NC New Schools Project Summer Institute a few years ago. My "Discovery Trip" in the Spring of 2000" opened my eyes to parts of the state I had never seen before and now when I teach teachers in summer workshops from these counties I can relate to them because I've actually been to some of their schools. My Junior Enrichment experience of Turtle Island was the first time I ever pushed myself outside of my modern utilities comfort zone. This opened my eyes to what it's like to live without, an experience I frequently remind myself of when teaching in a school with a high poverty level (over 40% Free/Reduced Lunch).

Because Teaching Fellows are as Gladys always said "the best and the brightest", I haven't stopped learning either. I continued my education and received my Masters of Education in 2004 and furthermore achieved National Board Certification in 2009. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program has played a large role in shaping who I am as a teacher today (in fact I recently was elected Teacher of the Year at my school). I am life-long learner, dedicated, passionate, career, student oriented and result driven (my EOC scores are outstanding) teacher that was shaped in large part by the North Carolina Teaching Fellow Program.

Dissolving the NC Teaching Fellow Program, dissolves a program that encourages "the best and the brightest," those that could be doctors but choose to be teachers, from being a part of shaping our children's future. Think about your own children, grandchildren, godchildren, nieces, nephews, what kind of teachers do you want them to have? Please consider the type of future teachers the NC Teaching Fellows program attracts when you answer this question. I hope as you begin to make tough choices in the coming days you see the value and worth the NC Teaching Fellows program has had and you remember my little story. If you have time, come see my classroom and talk to the students that through the NC Teaching Fellows program I make a difference for.

Thank you for reading my email and come visit!

Stefanie Buckner

Entering Class of 1999 Teaching Fellow Appalachian State

MA. Ed

NBCT

Esteemed Legislators,

It has come to my attention that recent budget negotiations have placed the NC Teaching Fellows Program on the cut list. While I do understand that we, as a state, are in very troubling economic times, I was dismayed by the news of the possibility of the obliteration of a program that fosters excellence in the field of education. In 1987, as a junior in high school, I knew I was going to college and wanted to be a teacher. As a child of a single parent family, I also knew that I had to earn a scholarship in order to attend college without incurring monumental debt. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program provided me an option to go to school to train to do what I was meant to do as a professional. While at UNC-Chapel Hill within the first class of Teaching Fellows, I was provided opportunities to serve my community as a volunteer. In addition, I gained skills as a leader. I knew when I graduated that I had an advantage over other teacher education graduates because I had been exposed to numerous opportunities to be of service and to lead. I began teaching in Beaufort County and spent several years teaching second grade to students who were at-risk. I taught in a trailer and every day knew it was my responsibility to give back to my profession by insuring that ALL children succeeded. My experiences within Teaching Fellows provided me with this drive to serve these students and be a leader within my school district. In 2000, I was honored as North Carolina Teacher of the Year, the first individual from the northeast region to ever hold this distinction. During my tenure as NC Teacher of the Year, I visited numerous classrooms of Teaching Fellow graduates and interacted with Teaching Fellow programs throughout the state. During my visits, I discovered that these individuals were like me – dedicated to service and leadership. Further, when I attended national meetings with other state Teachers of the Year, I was proud to say that my state believed in recruiting the best and brightest individuals for our classrooms through the Teaching Fellows program. The response I received from other state representatives incorporated awe and envy at such a commitment to ensuring quality in education.

I tell you my story to illustrate that I would have never become the person that I am today without the NC Teaching Fellows Program. Teaching Fellows become leaders in their classrooms and their districts. They have gone on to become administrators and train those who are entering the profession. As a state, we need these individuals to foster innovation, creativity and the responsibility of service. I feel certain that each of you can attribute your path as a leader to a teacher who made you who you are today. If you can't, then perhaps it is attributed to the fact that you were never taught by a Teaching Fellow! I fervently urge you to ensure that future generations of students have the opportunity to have a teacher who has been a Teaching Fellow.

Emerson once said, "What lies before us, and what lies behind us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Teaching Fellows helped me be a lifelong educator who is dedicated to elevating the profession of teaching and to making a difference in the lives of North Carolina children.

Please ensure that young people have the opportunity to be Teaching Fellows and give back to our state.

*Sincerely,
Laura Bilbro-Berry
UNC-CH Teaching Fellow, Graduating Class of 1992
North Carolina Teacher of the Year, 2000-2001*

A Parent's Appreciation for the Teaching Fellows Program

May 27, 2011

Dear Wake County Legislators,

*The proposal to phase out the **NC Teaching Fellows Program in 2012-13** is **alarming** to me, my daughter and our entire family. **Our daughter, Abigail Huggins, is a current NC Teaching Fellow at NC State University.** The NC Teaching Fellow program was instrumental in inspiring Abby to become a teacher as well as enabling her to attend college and continues to elevate her confidence offering experiences and training she would never get anywhere else! As a parent who was laid off 2 years ago, Abby's NC Teaching Fellows scholarship has certainly made a difference to our family - more than we ever expected. However, the benefits of the NC Teaching Fellows Program are more far-reaching than just offering funds for college.*

During Abby's years in High School she was unsure what career direction she should take. She realized she had talents in both math and science, but seemed reluctant to acknowledge this and/or consider a career in either field. Family members encouraged her to consider teaching, but many other people discouraged her from the field saying it was a low-paying unappreciated career. Her junior year, I saw an ad about the NC Teaching Fellows Program and showed it to her. This led to many, many discussions as we learned more about the program.

*The NC Teaching Fellows program offered my daughter more than just scholarship funds. It offered **excellence** in a field often noted as career of well-meaning people who can't get a handle on how to fix the U.S. education system. It offered the **opportunity to meet the best of the best** in education and business and experiences to help my daughter evolve into an excellent teacher through exceptional learning programs. Additionally, the NC Teaching Fellows Program offered **recognition, fellowship with a special peer group and a push to achieve a higher level of academic performance** beyond the standard educational programming. All of these characteristics, along much more than can be mentioned here, are the reasons my daughter decided to become a math teacher and subsequently applied to and selected as a NC Teaching Fellow.*

*Today, Abby is a junior at NC State. I have watched Abby grow from a bright young girl into a talented engaging self-confident adult who has realized she can be a wonderful teacher. **Her experiences as a NC Teaching Fellow have broadened her understanding of education in NC and the U.S. and she is more certain than ever that she can make a difference.***

*As a citizen, parent and grandparent I feel strongly that NC must continue to fund this program which encourages **our best students to aspire to a career of teaching** as well as stay in the field. The NC Teaching Fellows Program does just this and without it, I feel certain NC will feel the negative affects immediately. As residents of Wake County, we have seen conflict and contentious verbal "fighting among educators, religious leaders, parents and students regarding how to best appropriate school assignment. This is what has been in the news.*

*But in the background **our NC Teaching Fellowship leaders and Teaching Fellows have quietly gone about their business doing what is in our best children's best interest - educating our future teachers by providing vital scholarships, experiences and leadership.** The benefits to our county and state are far-reaching and extend beyond the classroom.*

*Please **vote this proposal down** ensuring our NC Teaching Fellows Program continues to inspire and education and reach our children.*

Best regards,

Kathy Gheen

Cary, NC

The *Friday Report* is published weekly by the Public School Forum of NC and is distributed to Forum Board members, legislators active in education policy, the press, and Forum subscribers. Archived editions can be found at www.ncforum.org/doc .