

2020

North Carolina

Education Primer

Critical Education Issues in North Carolina



PUBLIC SCHOOL
FORUM *of north carolina*

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STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

KEY ISSUES

North Carolina's student population is increasingly diverse and growing, leaving policymakers and school administrators with the challenge of meeting a new variety of unique needs in every classroom.

POPULATION GROWTH IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina had an estimated population of 10,488,084 residents in 2019. Between 2018 and 2019, North Carolina ranked 4th in population growth with a population change of 1% in the year. Between 2010 and 2019 North Carolina's population grew at a rate of 10.0% compared to a national rate of 6.3%.¹

North Carolina is projected to gain approximately one million residents in each decade through 2040; however, population growth is not distributed consistently across all counties. Urban areas such as Raleigh and Charlotte have experienced significantly more growth since 2000 and are the main causes of the state's population growth. Seven counties concentrated in the northeast and central coast portions of the state decreased in population from 2000 to 2010, and thirty-eight counties are projected to lose population between 2010 and 2020.²

In North Carolina, the number of children in public schools is tracked by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) as Average Daily Membership, commonly referred to as ADM.

AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP (ADM) BY SCHOOL DISTRICT (2008-09 AND 2018-19)

The state total ADM in 2018-19 for North Carolina's 117 LEAS was 1,410,911 compared to 1,410,497 in 2008-09.

School District	2008-09 ADM	2018-19 ADM	School District	2008-09 ADM	2018-19 ADM
Alamance-Burlington Schools	22,304	22,579	Mooresville City Schools	5,375	5,966
Alexander County Schools	5,537	4,746	Jackson County Schools	3,623	3,584
Alleghany County Schools	1,493	1,332	Johnston County Schools	31,042	36,210
Anson County Schools	3,924	3,148	Jones County Schools	1,188	1,007
Ashe County Schools	3,206	2,946	Lee County Schools	9,498	9,790
Avery County Schools	2,230	1,910	Lenoir County Schools	9,309	8,425
Beaufort County Schools	7,135	6,370	Lincoln County Schools	12,039	11,344
Bertie County Schools	2,880	2,078	Macon County Schools	4,315	4,367
Bladen County Schools	5,141	4,120	Madison County Schools	2,592	2,234
Brunswick County Schools	11,673	12,383	Martin County Schools	3,902	2,898

¹ "State Population Totals and Components of Change: 2010-2019." U.S. Census Bureau. December 30, 2019. Available at https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-state-total.html#par_textimage_1574439295

² Carolina Demography, *Population Growth & Population Aging in North Carolina Counties*. Available at <https://demography.cpc.unc.edu/2013/10/14/population-growth-population-aging-in-north-carolina-counties/>.

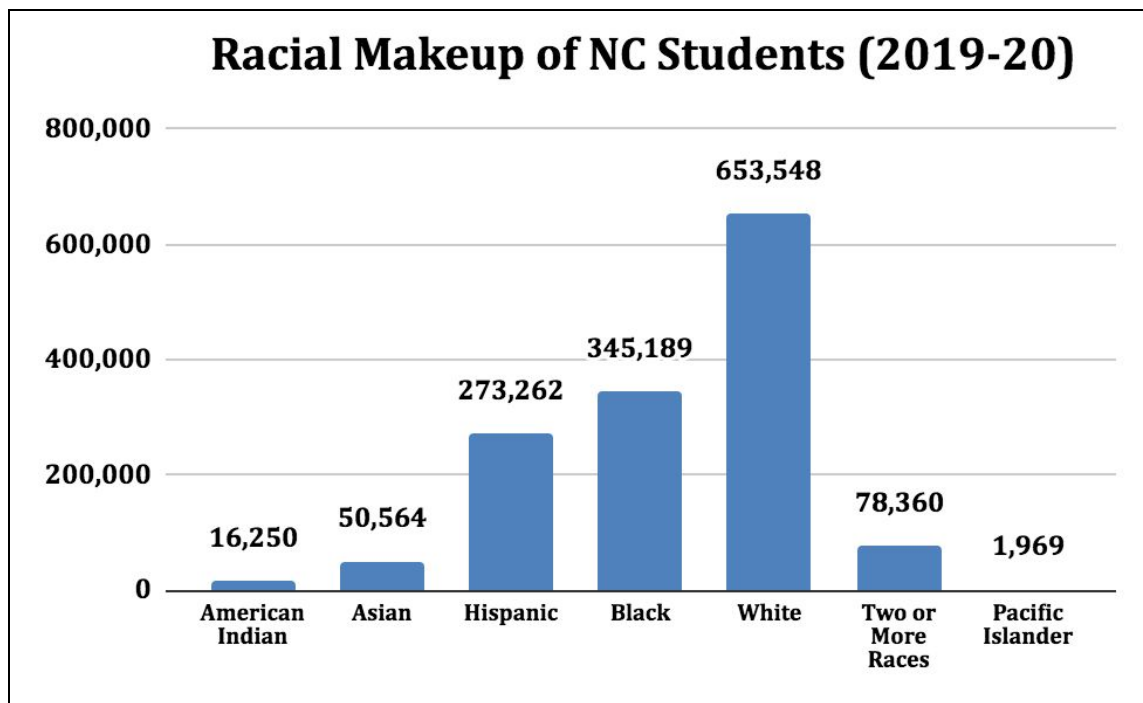
Buncombe County Schools	25,399	23,460	McDowell County Schools	6,444	5,871
Asheville City Schools	3,686	4,281	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	132,042	146,661
Burke County Schools	13,833	11,820	Mitchell County Schools	2,121	1,824
Cabarrus County Schools	27,510	32,949	Montgomery County Schools	4,330	3,786
Kannapolis City Schools	5,056	5,369	Moore County Schools	12,190	12,668
Caldwell County Schools	12,899	11,236	Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	17,412	14,763
Camden County Schools	1,885	1,854	New Hanover County Schools	23,825	25,512
Carteret County Schools	8,144	7,986	Northampton County Schools	2,537	1,517
Caswell County Schools	3,117	2,425	Onslow County Schools	23,361	26,410
Catawba County Schools	17,389	15,724	Orange County Schools	6,971	7,276
Hickory City Schools	4,466	4,042	Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	11,614	12,296
Newton Conover City Schools	2,833	2,939	Pamlico County Schools	1,402	1,308
Chatham County Schools	7,593	8,809	Pasquotank Schools	6,035	5,355
Cherokee County Schools	3,523	3,113	Pender County Schools	8,146	9,161
Edenton-Chowan Schools	2,377	1,935	Perquimans County Schools	1,718	1,607
Clay County Schools	1,382	1,274	Person County Schools	5,209	4,305
Cleveland County Schools	16,390	14,216	Pitt County Schools	22,756	23,228
Columbus County Schools	6,768	5,475	Polk County Schools	2,444	2,100
Whiteville City Schools	2,405	2,196	Randolph County Schools	18,615	15,853
Craven County Schools	14,570	13,329	Asheboro City Schools	4,510	4,459
Cumberland County Schools	52,317	49,503	Richmond County Schools	7,717	7,045
Currituck County Schools	3,959	4,049	Robeson County Schools	23,393	21,487
Dare County Schools	4,766	5,108	Rockingham County Schools	13,860	11,534
Davidson County Schools	20,416	18,620	Rowan-Salisbury Schools	20,643	18,592
Lexington City Schools	3,034	2,973	Rutherford County Schools	9,298	7,775
Thomasville City Schools	2,539	2,254	Sampson County Schools	8,384	7,934
Davie County Schools	6,582	6,100	Clinton City Schools	3,057	2,936
Duplin County Schools	8,815	9,450	Scotland County Schools	6,528	5,538
Durham Public Schools	31,891	32,256	Stanly County Schools	9,276	8,289
Edgecombe County Schools	7,221	5,753	Stokes County Schools	7,057	5,747
Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools	51,255	53,475	Surry County Schools	8,605	7,549
Franklin County Schools	8,362	8,061	Elkin City Schools	1,202	1,171
Gaston County Schools	32,002	30,857	Mount Airy City Schools	1,580	1,611
Gates County Schools	1,915	1,618	Swain County Schools	1,883	1,913
Graham County Schools	1,151	1,093	Transylvania County Schools	3,686	3,308
Granville County Schools	8,786	7,314	Tyrrell County Schools	585	626

Greene County Schools	3,290	2,885	Union County Schools	37,701	41,149
Guilford County Schools	70,968	71,029	Vance County Schools	7,380	5,433
Halifax County Schools	4,265	2,303	Wake County Schools	137,092	159,588
Roanoke Rapids City Schools	2,915	2,795	Warren County Schools	2,590	1,879
Weldon City Schools	981	799	Washington County Schools	1,940	1,266
Harnett County Schools	18,682	20,097	Watauga County Schools	4,430	4,549
Haywood County Schools	7,779	7,026	Wayne County Schools	19,119	18,039
Henderson County Schools	13,069	13,151	Wilkes County Schools	9,969	8,972
Hertford County Schools	3,162	2,682	Wilson County Schools	12,395	11,024
Hoke County Schools	7,516	8,696	Yadkin County Schools	5,918	5,122
Hyde County Schools	628	561	Yancey County Schools	2,462	2,105
Iredell-Statesville Schools	21,168	20,155	Innovative School District	-	238

NC DPI ADM 2008-09 and ADM 2018-19. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:39::NO:::>

RACIAL MAKEUP OF NORTH CAROLINA'S STUDENT POPULATION

North Carolina's student population is becoming increasingly diverse. In the 2019-20 school year, 1.2% of traditional public school students were American Indian, 3.6% were Asian, 19.3% were Hispanic, 24.3% were Black, 46% were white, 5.5% were two or more races, and 0.1% were Pacific Islander.³ These percentages do not include charter schools. Charter school demographics are presented in a subsequent chart.



Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year.

³ NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15::NO:::>

RACIAL MAKEUP OF N.C. STUDENTS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT (2019-2020)

School District	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
Alamance-Burlington Schools	76	338	6,254	5,327	9,598	25	1,233
Alexander County Schools	4	57	510	189	3,715	3	260
Alleghany County Schools	3	2	341	6	969	0	49
Anson County Schools	11	54	182	1,718	1,041	0	141
Ashe County Schools	2	14	363	13	2,416	0	125
Avery County Schools	4	13	232	3	1,575	2	63
Beaufort County Schools	8	23	1,060	1,977	2,888	3	354
Bertie County Schools	5	5	54	1,579	242	0	99
Bladen County Schools	82	2	1,162	1,480	1,454	3	243
Brunswick County Schools	72	85	1,862	1,774	7,917	15	869
Buncombe County Schools	78	283	4,296	1,575	15,606	100	1,731
Asheville City Schools	8	43	375	786	2,736	34	331
Burke County Schools	19	713	2,077	530	7,865	15	678
Cabarrus County Schools	112	2,124	5,996	6,957	16,248	52	2,079
Kannapolis City Schools	17	62	1,873	1,467	1,633	7	340
Caldwell County Schools	6	94	1,321	609	8,612	5	582
Camden County Schools	4	13	77	162	1,443	4	154
Carteret County Schools	24	81	802	450	6,145	32	551
Caswell County Schools	6	5	209	828	1,190	0	104
Catawba County Schools	11	1,087	2,689	844	10,164	11	921
Hickory City Schools	4	202	1,057	799	1,633	13	414
Newton-Conover City Schools	1	198	841	331	1,312	0	245
Chatham County Schools	20	118	2,810	1,005	4,585	10	433
Cherokee County Schools	26	23	219	55	2,526	1	242
Edenton-Chowan County Schools	1	3	156	822	788	0	98
Clay County Schools	8	4	106	10	1,081	0	78
Cleveland County Schools	16	91	927	3,695	8,357	3	1,048
Columbus County Schools	251	5	636	1,546	2,750	4	195
Whiteville City Schools	24	8	243	927	825	0	170
Craven County Schools	23	600	1,580	3,513	6,457	35	1,075
Cumberland County Schools	730	921	7,039	22,220	14,054	268	4,820
Currituck County Schools	5	24	280	174	3,280	4	403
Dare County Schools	4	37	932	108	3,900	1	271
Davidson County Schools	48	219	1,917	674	14,929	6	773
Lexington City Schools	7	125	1,054	887	628	14	324
Thomasville City Schools	5	12	776	842	431	2	190
Davie County Schools	12	54	921	410	4,384	1	295
Duplin County Schools	89	32	4,109	2,050	3,094	5	279
Durham County Schools	64	677	10,785	13,705	6,247	28	1,422
Edgecombe County Schools	5	10	620	3,165	1,562	2	246
Forsyth County Schools	86	1,413	14,736	15,317	19,703	78	2,412
Franklin County Schools	35	53	1,695	2,434	3,323	5	507
Gaston County Schools	62	462	4,635	6,761	16,586	29	2,299
Gates County Schools	5	3	50	455	957	0	121
Graham County Schools	182	6	45	5	884	0	10

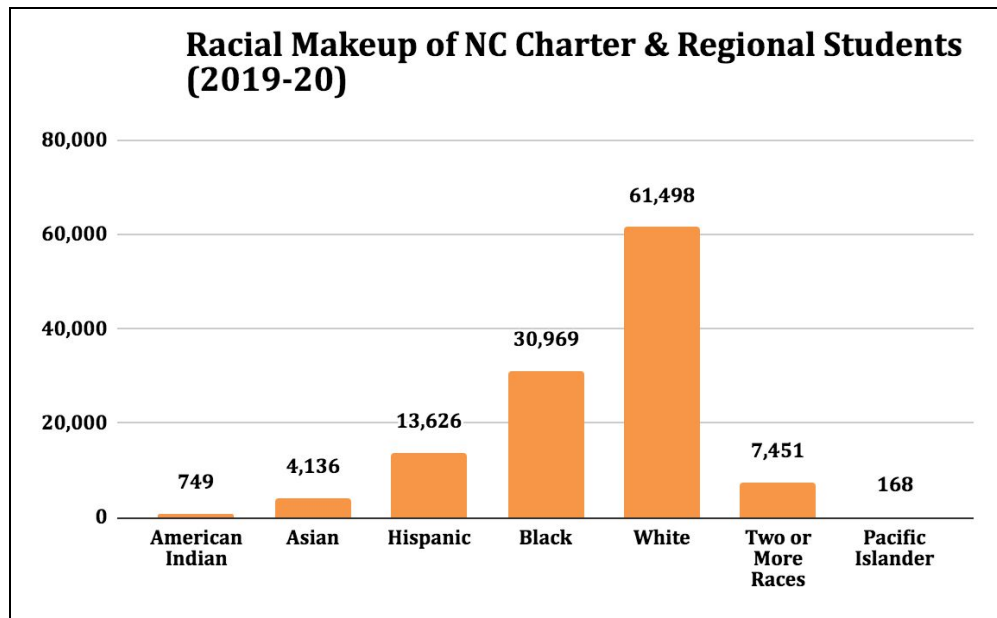
Granville County Schools	17	42	1,455	2,481	2,913	1	318
Greene County Schools	5	5	925	1,046	813	0	80
Guilford County Schools	245	4,729	12,049	28,488	21,584	101	4,023
Halifax County Schools	152	3	78	1,810	71	12	60
Roanoke Rapids City Schools	10	59	218	713	1,628	2	136
Weldon City Schools	4	0	8	709	14	2	18
Harnett County Schools	154	141	4,550	4,928	8,831	58	1,529
Haywood County Schools	42	55	624	84	6,032	8	256
Henderson County Schools	24	184	3,446	508	8,551	94	589
Hertford County Schools	17	20	117	2,048	318	11	100
Hoke County Schools	680	69	2,029	2,893	2,132	25	962
Hyde County Schools	0	0	125	123	270	0	19
Iredell-Statesville Schools	28	630	2,950	2,784	12,852	24	1,135
Mooresville City Schools	20	114	703	945	3,774	6	425
Jackson County Schools	222	48	587	48	2,494	3	181
Johnston County Schools	109	289	9,462	5,804	19,291	25	1,912
Jones County Schools	1	0	110	365	484	0	71
Lee County Schools	48	63	3,759	1,922	3,532	9	550
Lenoir County Schools	13	83	1,203	3,982	2,909	6	297
Lincoln County Schools	9	87	1,326	670	8,263	1	1,017
Macon County Schools	14	29	885	28	3,386	2	106
Madison County Schools	6	9	93	7	2,081	1	47
Martin County Schools	1	18	262	1,414	976	5	117
McDowell County Schools	18	54	828	198	4,497	2	308
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	319	10,233	39,136	52,926	39,410	185	4,679
Mitchell County Schools	1	14	213	5	1,531	0	73
Montgomery County Schools	6	58	1,303	726	1,422	5	162
Moore County Schools	121	119	1,836	1,853	8,004	19	846
Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	80	130	1,975	7,764	4,496	13	544
New Hanover County Schools	82	454	4,042	4,392	15,488	15	1,334
Northampton County Schools	0	0	67	1,117	144	0	76
Onslow County Schools	108	309	4,138	4,504	14,768	98	2,846
Orange County Schools	13	100	1,826	985	3,907	2	523
Chapel-Hill/Carrboro City Schools	24	1,714	2,128	1,348	6,211	0	900
Pamlico County Schools	7	8	112	246	750	0	121
Pasquotank County Schools	11	50	518	2,251	1,953	4	430
Pender County Schools	22	51	1,467	1,229	6,193	4	591
Perquimans County Schools	2	3	60	387	1,036	1	137
Person County Schools	22	15	450	1,389	2,141	0	295
Pitt County Schools	48	350	2,896	10,346	8,331	25	1,513
Polk County Schools	1	3	271	109	1,576	1	145
Randolph County Schools	54	300	3,005	608	10,926	12	880
Asheboro City Schools	7	70	2,249	637	1,281	3	311
Richmond County Schools	224	53	902	2,424	2,934	12	459
Robeson County Schools	8,666	123	3,927	4,733	2,561	34	1,315
Rockingham County Schools	19	60	1,711	2,011	6,626	11	1,130
Rowan-Salisbury County Schools	41	174	3,657	3,274	10,376	12	1,208
Rutherford County Schools	7	28	706	917	5,376	3	556
Sampson County Schools	63	18	3,271	1,394	2,944	7	306
Clinton City Schools	75	21	971	1,070	690	1	110

Scotland County Schools	868	63	198	2,559	1,560	13	328
Stanly County Schools	26	237	770	1,069	5,450	5	758
Stokes County Schools	11	14	277	180	4,995	1	314
Surry County Schools	8	22	1,844	177	5,103	0	261
Elkin City Schools	0	9	256	36	822	0	73
Mount Airy City Schools	0	19	346	125	1,026	0	94
Swain County Schools	410	14	118	16	1,246	2	119
Transylvania County Schools	9	17	337	139	2,560	2	275
Tyrrell County Schools	0	8	127	176	220	1	54
Union County Schools	73	2,158	7,756	4,917	24,591	22	1,874
Vance County Schools	7	58	784	3,472	756	5	191
Wake County Schools	396	15,855	29,775	36,038	73,471	189	6,111
Warren County Schools	135	9	167	1,133	251	4	78
Washington County Schools	1	7	90	929	105	0	44
Watauga County Schools	13	77	443	60	3,920	4	129
Wayne County Schools	28	205	4,511	6,028	6,119	21	1,125
Wilkes County Schools	13	43	1,362	299	6,582	1	692
Wilson County Schools	25	142	2,284	4,754	3,193	10	545
Yadkin County Schools	11	18	1,344	151	3,365	3	183
Yancey County Schools	10	2	285	9	1,701	1	63

NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year. Source: <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15:::NQ::>

RACIAL MAKEUP OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER AND REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS

In the 2019-20 school year, 0.63% of charter and regional school students were American Indian, 3.5% were Asian, 11.5% were Hispanic, 26.1% were Black, 51.9% were white, 6.3% were two or more races, and 0.14% were Pacific Islander.⁴



Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 37-Charter and Regional School Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year.

⁴ NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 37 - Charter and Regional School Membership by Race and Sex School Year 2019-20. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:73:::NQ::>.

RACIAL MAKEUP OF N.C. CHARTER AND REGIONAL SCHOOLS (2019-20)

School Name	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	Two or More Races	Pacific Islander
NC Connections Academy	16	44	315	426	1069	378	1
NC Virtual Academy	38	27	299	603	1380	258	5
River Mill Academy	3	15	79	103	578	44	0
Clover Garden	0	1	40	23	569	20	0
The Hawbridge School	0	3	26	8	238	27	0
Grandfather Academy	0	0	4	5	18	5	0
Williams Academy (Crossnore)	0	0	14	5	82	10	0
Washington Montessori	0	3	22	15	333	30	0
Three Rivers Academy	0	0	6	71	5	6	1
Paul R Brown Leadership Academy	10	0	9	94	28	13	0
Emereau: Bladen	9	2	25	93	393	37	0
Charter Day School	12	5	69	91	709	67	3
South Brunswick Charter School	1	3	21	22	317	31	2
Evergreen Community Charter	0	1	13	3	408	18	0
ArtSpace Charter	1	4	34	6	322	32	0
Invest Collegiate - Imagine	1	14	101	25	918	106	0
The Franklin School of Innovation	2	3	24	13	473	53	0
Francine Delany New School	2	4	18	43	103	10	0
The New Dimensions School	1	5	14	16	284	21	0
Carolina International School	4	50	152	278	306	90	4
Cabarrus Charter Academy	0	26	145	373	286	72	2
A.C.E. Academy	3	3	57	301	9	29	0
Concord Lake STEAM Academy	1	3	70	184	179	28	0
Tiller School	0	2	12	5	169	18	0
Chatham Charter	0	1	34	52	448	35	0
Woods Charter School	3	15	47	25	402	21	1
Willow Oak Montessori	1	9	13	5	174	14	0
The Learning Center	2	5	12	3	156	11	0
Pinnacle Classical Academy	1	14	53	89	774	56	0
Flemington Academy	3	0	4	25	43	11	0
Columbus Charter School	55	6	37	184	430	59	2
Alpha Academy	1	6	152	533	105	101	15
The Capitol Encore Academy	2	2	68	205	183	80	1
Water's Edge Village School	0	1	1	2	30	4	0
Davidson Charter Academy: CFA	1	3	27	35	332	48	0
Maureen Joy Charter	0	2	386	187	1	63	1
Healthy Start Academy	0	0	263	189	5	13	0
Carter Community Charter	0	0	32	183	2	14	0
Kestrel Heights School	2	30	91	277	60	45	0
Research Triangle Charter	4	9	165	515	20	19	0
Central Park School For Children	1	12	78	148	292	82	2
Voyager Academy	1	48	95	338	769	102	1
Global Scholars Academy	0	0	98	117	0	2	0
Research Triangle High School	1	97	57	82	278	46	0
The Institute for the Development of You	1	4	104	244	4	5	0

Reaching All Minds Academy	0	0	226	115	0	3	0
Excelsior Classical Academy	0	9	94	165	379	57	2
KIPP Durham College Preparatory	0	0	196	155	0	19	0
Discovery Charter School	0	1	21	56	35	2	1
North East Carolina Preparatory School	3	14	120	357	459	25	2
Quality Education Academy	0	1	113	430	0	25	0
Carter G Woodson School	0	0	197	166	0	1	0
Forsyth Academy	3	4	312	314	61	32	3
Arts Based School	1	4	20	93	371	32	0
The North Carolina Leadership Academy	2	16	74	45	695	98	4
B.L.U.E.-G.R.E.E.N. Academy	0	0	3	45	2	3	0
ASU Academy at Middle Fork	1	1	112	130	20	14	2
Crosscreek Charter School	1	1	23	47	254	22	0
Youngsville Academy	0	2	28	26	323	12	0
Piedmont Community Charter	0	25	191	226	816	97	0
Mountain Island Charter	3	26	101	363	939	118	2
Ridgeview Charter School	0	0	20	136	7	7	0
Community Public Charter	1	1	3	4	226	2	0
Falls Lake Academy	5	8	76	122	810	68	0
Oxford Preparatory High School	1	8	27	56	387	28	0
Greensboro Academy	4	129	53	89	459	20	4
Guilford Preparatory Academy	2	0	26	284	10	16	0
Phoenix Academy	3	62	124	287	430	94	1
Triad Math and Science Academy	5	62	260	750	111	77	3
Cornerstone Charter Academy	2	38	73	137	893	102	0
The College Preparatory and Leadership Academy	0	0	39	654	5	68	5
Summerfield Charter Academy	7	125	54	85	501	11	0
Piedmont Classical High School	1	3	32	224	141	37	0
Gate City Charter Academy	14	15	101	473	36	23	1
Next Generation Academy	2	1	16	231	3	8	0
The Experiential School of Greensboro	0	8	39	86	172	13	2
KIPP Halifax College Preparatory	3	0	23	441	27	26	0
Hobgood Charter Academy	0	0	13	55	154	1	0
Anderson Creek Club Charter School	7	0	41	22	169	23	0
Shining Rock Classical Academy: CFA	2	3	15	12	270	14	0
The Mountain Community School	0	1	17	8	166	7	0
FernLeaf Community Charter School	0	0	24	3	286	14	0
American Renaissance School	0	5	49	71	415	50	0
Success Charter School	0	0	1	93	5	4	0
Pine Lake Preparatory	4	96	92	39	1566	79	1
Langtree Charter Academy	4	66	149	99	1116	130	2
Iredell Charter Academy	1	3	91	63	440	52	0
Summit Charter	0	1	45	0	176	12	1
Catamount School	2	1	4	0	43	9	0
Neuse Charter School	8	4	114	124	634	61	2
Johnston Charter Academy	3	8	102	136	436	26	5
Ascend Leadership Academy: Lee County	3	2	42	45	207	21	0
Children's Village Academy	0	0	0	167	0	3	0
Lincoln Charter School	4	23	218	68	1690	152	0

West Lake Preparatory Academy	0	3	13	3	93	5	0
Bear Grass Charter School	0	2	16	6	393	3	0
Sugar Creek Charter	0	9	223	1451	8	33	0
Lake Norman Charter	4	181	125	285	1377	130	1
Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy	0	229	15	12	101	16	0
Queens Grant Community School	1	26	160	296	691	56	1
Community School of Davidson	4	38	64	50	1171	71	0
Socrates Academy	1	89	77	71	466	37	2
Charlotte Secondary School	0	0	76	122	48	31	0
KIPP: Charlotte	0	0	69	690	88	15	0
Corvian Community School	0	54	88	172	745	43	2
Aristotle Preparatory Academy	0	0	5	104	10	13	4
Charlotte Choice Charter	0	0	13	99	0	4	0
Invest Collegiate	2	1	23	312	11	18	0
Bradford Preparatory School	1	49	127	392	749	127	0
Commonwealth High School	0	3	57	103	22	28	0
Pioneer Springs Community School	3	2	37	16	273	35	1
Thunderbird Preparatory School	1	3	38	30	74	10	2
United Community School	2	3	39	106	70	23	1
Stewart Creek High School	0	3	52	129	8	13	0
Charlotte Lab School	1	12	71	196	323	51	0
Queen City STEM School	3	241	46	319	35	72	1
VERITAS Community School	1	1	20	81	9	11	0
Mallard Creek STEM Academy	9	102	107	532	99	56	1
Matthews-Mint Hill Charter Academy	1	25	156	209	340	15	1
Unity Classical Charter School	0	10	45	67	64	12	0
Movement Charter School	2	1	24	439	12	6	0
UpROAR Leadership Academy	0	0	14	103	1	0	0
Bonnie Cone Classical Academy	0	10	11	57	142	14	0
East Voyager Academy	0	14	33	55	22	14	0
Mountain Island Day School	1	5	34	180	242	42	0
Steele Creek Preparatory Academy	1	7	88	208	39	25	0
Tillery Charter Academy	0	0	3	5	51	4	0
Southwest Charlotte STEM Academy	1	28	86	226	62	37	2
The Academy of Moore County	9	5	29	45	307	50	1
Sandhills Theatre Arts Renaissance	5	3	65	53	404	41	2
Moore Montessori Community School	0	4	12	19	79	1	2
Rocky Mount Preparatory	26	4	59	877	68	27	2
Cape Fear Center for Inquiry	0	1	11	14	349	29	1
Wilmington Preparatory Academy	0	0	9	84	28	8	0
Douglass Academy	0	0	9	98	7	11	0
Island Montessori Charter	2	3	14	0	191	10	0
Coastal Preparatory Academy	0	5	11	12	492	35	2
Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington	1	1	53	142	82	16	1
D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy	0	0	11	190	8	7	0
Gaston College Preparatory	14	14	72	983	112	96	0
Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology	0	1	24	99	16	30	1
Orange Charter	1	5	60	26	590	41	0
The Expedition School	0	7	22	5	296	28	1
Arapahoe Charter School	2	1	48	52	383	50	1

Northeast Academy of Aerospace & AdvTech	2	3	29	105	416	35	1
Bethel Hill Charter	4	2	32	46	289	27	0
Roxboro Community School	3	0	50	60	564	38	0
Ignite Innovation Academy - Pitt	1	0	8	137	15	10	0
Winterville Charter Academy	1	14	72	376	207	6	1
East Carolina Laboratory School	0	0	1	113	2	1	0
Uwharrie Charter Academy	6	13	76	68	1488	60	0
CIS Academy	109	0	4	2	0	5	0
Southeastern Academy	36	4	2	19	147	9	1
Bethany Community Middle	1	2	32	44	400	28	0
Moss Street Partnership School	1	0	42	232	61	47	0
Essie Mae Kiser Foxx Charter	0	1	16	88	15	1	0
Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy	1	35	115	92	1022	97	2
Lake Lure Classical Academy	2	8	40	8	435	24	1
Gray Stone Day School	1	31	42	16	693	30	1
Millennium Charter Academy	1	15	54	22	711	16	3
Mountain Discovery Charter School	18	1	4	5	143	10	0
Brevard Academy	1	7	28	8	352	25	4
Union Academy Charter School	1	41	250	179	1417	88	1
Union Day School	2	51	53	29	289	26	0
Union Preparatory Academy at Indian Trail	4	20	168	200	523	56	0
Monroe Charter Academy	0	0	19	43	14	7	0
Apprentice Academy High School of North Carolina	0	1	49	19	144	10	2
Vance Charter School	2	27	36	87	745	35	1
Henderson Collegiate	3	30	286	852	76	80	1
The Exploris School	3	7	31	50	315	49	1
Magellan Charter	0	26	15	11	309	45	0
Sterling Montessori Academy	15	225	21	43	279	14	12
Franklin Academy	4	60	73	97	1354	63	1
East Wake Academy	0	10	92	117	930	53	0
Raleigh Charter High School	2	141	28	25	339	26	1
Torchlight Academy	0	0	232	310	1	24	0
PreEminent Charter School	7	8	160	476	16	20	1
Quest Academy	1	4	2	5	112	19	0
Southern Wake Academy	0	12	50	57	615	69	0
Casa Esperanza Montessori	1	31	233	96	183	22	0
Endeavor Charter	1	27	18	30	409	28	0
Triangle Math and Science Academy	0	328	49	128	321	74	0
Longleaf School of the Arts	0	3	31	73	220	20	2
Wake Forest Charter Academy	4	34	83	133	497	13	3
Cardinal Charter	3	135	117	172	362	129	4
Envision Science Academy	0	25	47	98	508	46	2
Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School	107	0	4	16	7	16	0
PAVE Southeast Raleigh Charter School	1	2	82	297	15	15	0
Central Wake Charter High School	1	1	81	121	18	7	0
Peak Charter Academy	5	184	80	61	407	13	1
Pine Springs Preparatory Academy: CFA	1	42	53	49	548	71	1
Rolesville Charter Academy	2	18	73	110	439	13	1
Carolina Charter Academy	0	1	74	30	287	30	0

Raleigh Oak Charter	2	9	25	15	207	15	0
Pocosin Innovative Charter	0	2	16	29	90	2	0
Northeast Regional School - Biotech//Agriscience	0	3	20	34	119	17	1
Two Rivers Community School	0	0	2	2	152	3	0
Dillard Academy	0	1	12	273	6	2	0
Wayne Preparatory	1	8	85	270	454	63	1
Bridges Academy	1	0	3	14	144	11	0
Sallie B Howard School	0	7	368	632	21	29	0
Wilson Preparatory Academy	3	12	94	379	366	57	0

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 37 - Charter and Regional School Membership by Race and Sex. School Year 2019-20. Source:
<http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:68:::NO::>

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

KEY ISSUES

The collection of student performance data is the state's way of ensuring accountability in students, teachers, and the education system as a whole. North Carolina has posted dramatic student performance gains in recent years on many national and international standardized tests. However, there is much room for growth.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally mandated project led by the National Center for Education Statistics for twenty-eight years. NAEP periodically measures student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. Beginning in 1990, state-level NAEP comparison data became available for states that volunteered to participate.

In the 1990s, the National Education Goals Panel recognized North Carolina and Texas for making more progress toward achieving the national education goals than any other states. North Carolina and Texas led all states in combined gains in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress from 1990-96. Both 4th and 8th grade math scores show that North Carolina made the most gains of any state in both grades throughout the 1990s. North Carolina has been recognized in the past for the progress that its students have made on NAEP.

As part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, Congress mandated that all states participate in NAEP reading and math assessments every two years as a way to validate state scores, but permits states to use their own assessments to measure student performance and progress. The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced NCLB as the newest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization, keeps the NAEP requirement in place.

NAEP assesses mathematics in five content areas: number properties and operations; measurement; geometry; data analysis, statistics, and probability; and algebra. NAEP also tests students for literacy and reading abilities.

RESULTS OF NAEP TESTING 2019: MATHEMATICS

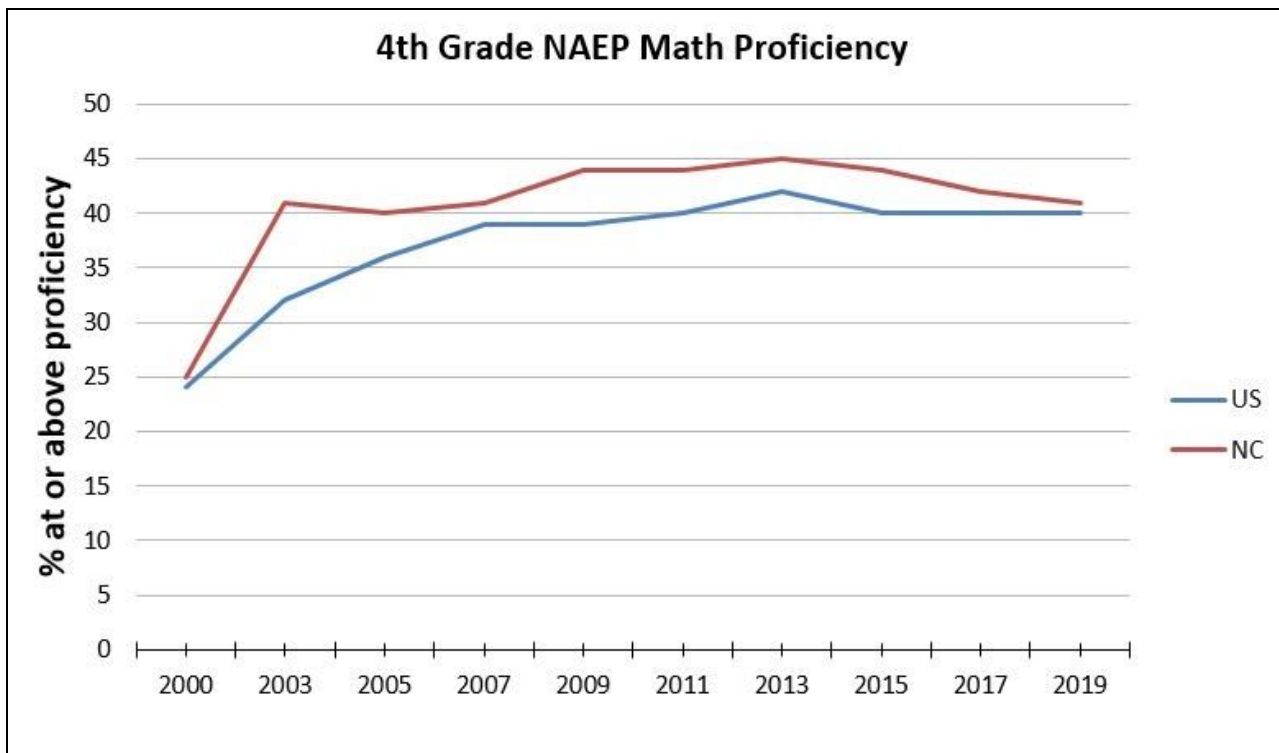
Nationally, NAEP results fell from 2015 to 2017, but rose from 2017 to 2019 in 4th grade mathematics. North Carolina's 4th grade math average score remained the same from 2017 to 2019, and was above the national average, as it has been since 1996.¹ NAEP national results decreased by one point for 8th grade mathematics from 2017 to 2019. North Carolina's average score for 8th grade math was above the national average, improving after being stagnant with the national average since 2015.²

¹ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 4. Available at <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/mathematics/states/scores/?grade=4>

² The Nation's Report Card, 2019 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 8. Available at <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/mathematics/states/scores/?grade=8>

FOURTH GRADE MATHEMATICS: 2019 RESULTS

- North Carolina's average mathematics score for 4th graders was 241, compared to the national average of 240.
- North Carolina's average 4th grade mathematics score was higher than 18 other states and the District of Columbia, lower than 9 other states, and not statistically different from 24 other states.
- 82 percent of North Carolina 4th graders scored at the basic achievement level or above; 41 percent at the proficient level or above; and 8 percent at the advanced achievement level.³
- Between 1992 and 2019, the percentage of 4th graders in NC scoring below basic level in mathematics decreased from 50 percent to 18 percent. Between 2017 and 2019, the percentage increased from 19 percent to 18 percent.⁴

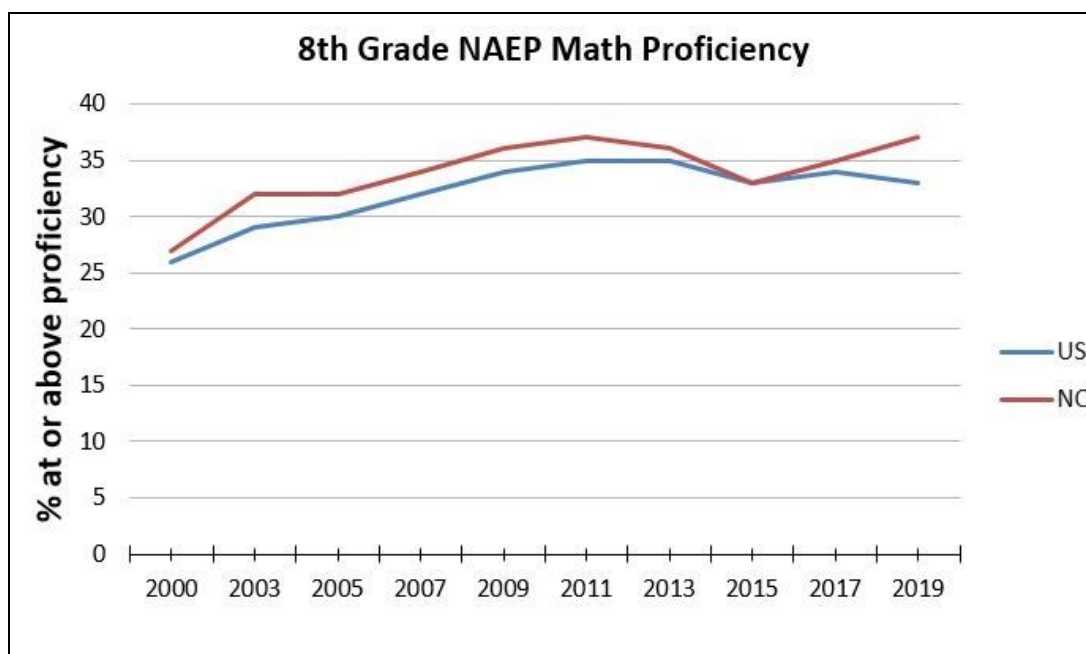


³ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 North Carolina Grade 4 Overview. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

⁴ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 State Profiles. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

EIGHTH GRADE MATHEMATICS: 2019 RESULTS

- North Carolina's average mathematics score for 8th graders was 284, three points above the national average score of 281.
- North Carolina's average 8th grade mathematics score was higher than 23 other states and the District of Columbia, lower than 7 other states, and not statistically different from 21 other states.
- 71 percent of North Carolina 8th graders scored at the basic achievement level or above; 37 percent at the proficient level or above; and 11 percent at the advanced achievement level.⁵
- Between 1990 and 2019, the percentage of 8th graders in NC scoring below basic level in mathematics decreased from 62 percent to 29 percent. From 2017 to 2019, the percentage decreased from 32 percent to 29 percent.⁶



RESULTS OF NAEP TESTING 2019: READING

In 2019, the national average reading score for fourth-grade students went down one point compared to 2017. North Carolina's 4th grade reading average scale score remained slightly above the national average, as it has since 2011.⁷

⁵ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 North Carolina Overview Grade 8. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=2&sub=MAT&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

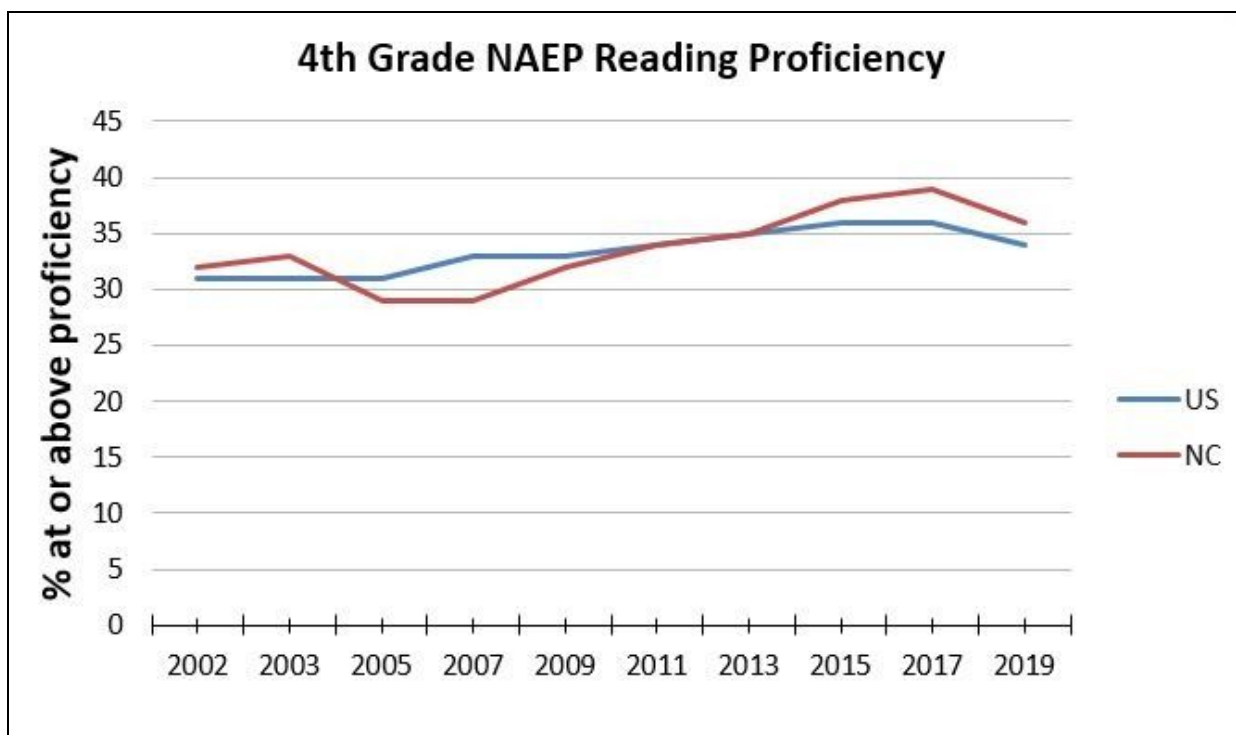
⁶ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 State Profiles. Mathematics State Snapshot Report, Grade 8. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=2&sub=MAT&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

⁷ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 Reading State Snapshot Report, Grade 4. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=RED&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=AP&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

Nation-wide, eighth-grade students scored three points lower in reading than in 2017. The average scale score for 8th grade reading in North Carolina matches the national average in 2019.⁸

FOURTH GRADE READING: 2019 RESULTS

- In 2019, the average score of 4th grade students in North Carolina was 221. This was higher than the average score of 219 for public school students in the nation.
- The average score for students in North Carolina in 2019 (221) was lower than their average score in 2017 (224) and in 2015 (226).
- 67 percent of North Carolina 4th graders scored at the Basic achievement level or above; 36 percent at the Proficient level or above; and 9 percent at the Advanced achievement level.⁹
- The percentage of students in North Carolina who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level was 36 percent in 2019, 3 percentage points lower than in 2017 (39 percent). This percentage is greater than that in 1998 (27 percent).¹⁰



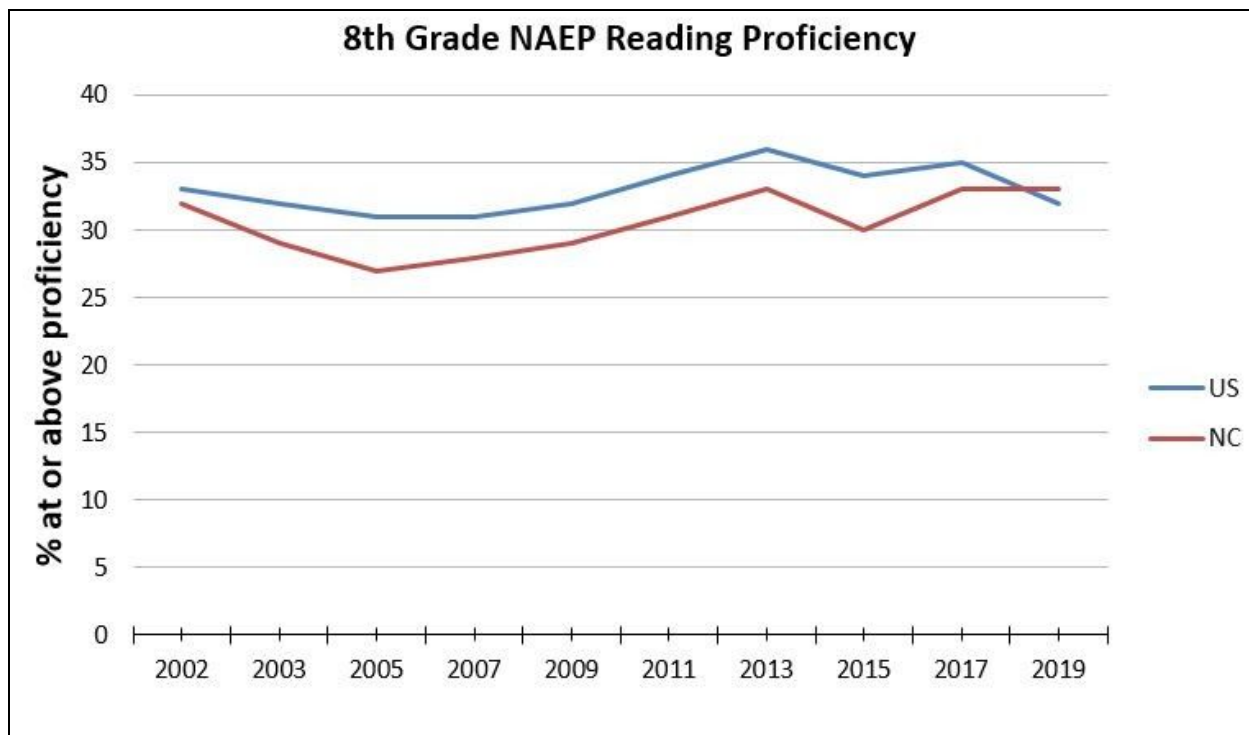
⁸ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 Reading State Snapshot Report, Grade 8. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=2&sub=RED&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=AP&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

⁹ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 North Carolina Overview, Grade 4. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

¹⁰ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 Reading State Snapshot Report, Grade 4. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=RED&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=AP&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

EIGHTH GRADE READING: 2019 RESULTS

- In 2019, the average score of 8th students in North Carolina was 263. This was slightly above the average score of 262 for public school students in the nation.
- The average score for students in North Carolina in 2019 (263) was not significantly different from their average score in 2017 (263) and in 1998 (262).
- 72 percent of North Carolina 8th graders scored at the Basic achievement level or above; 32 percent at the Proficient level or above; and 4 percent at the Advanced achievement level.¹¹
- The percentage of students in North Carolina who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level was 32 percent in 2019. This percentage was not significantly different from that in 2017 (33 percent) and in 1998 (30 percent).¹²



SCHOLASTIC ASSESSMENT TEST (SAT)

One of the most commonly used indicators of high school students' performance is the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). Offered several times during the year, the test is designed to measure verbal and mathematical reasoning skills and is used to predict success during the first year of college. Only college-bound students (not all high school graduates) generally take this test. However, participation rates among (and within) states vary widely, ranging from a low of 3 percent to a high of 100 percent. In North Carolina, 47,842

¹¹ The Nation's Report Card, 2019 North Carolina Overview, Grade 8. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NC?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=2&sub=MAT&sj=NC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

¹² The Nation's Report Card, 2019 Reading State Snapshot Report, Grade 8. Available at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/NP?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=2&sub=RED&sj=NP&fs=Grade&st=AP&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2019R3&sfj=NP

students took the SAT in 2018-19.¹³ If only the very highest performing students take the test, a state's overall scores are likely to be much higher than a state where the majority of high school graduates take the test. Because these variations create large biases in SAT score data, the scores can cause misperceptions about variations in state educational quality. Thus, the use of SAT scores for state-by-state comparisons is controversial. In fact, the College Board no longer publishes state rankings, in order to discourage drawing ill-fitting comparisons between states. The SAT has evolved greatly since its initial administration in the late 1920s. Prior to March 2016, the SAT was composed of three subsections (critical reading, mathematics, and writing), each worth 800 points for a total possible SAT score of 2400.

2016 REDESIGNED SAT

In March 2016, the College Board issued a newly redesigned SAT. The new SAT consists of three sections: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, Math, and an Optional Essay. The exam will be returned to its original grading scale of up to 1600 total points. The Reading and Writing section and the Math section will be graded on a scale of 200-800 with the Essay section graded completely separately. The redesigned SAT is focused on eight key changes to promote a higher level of career and college readiness:

1. Relevant Words in Context
2. Command of Evidence
3. Essay Analyzing a Source
4. Math Focused on Three Key Areas (Problem Solving and Data Analysis, the Heart of Algebra, and Passport to Advanced Math)
5. Problems Grounded in Real-World Contexts
6. Analysis in Science and Social Studies
7. Founding Documents and Great Global Conversation
8. No Penalty for Wrong Answers

SAT PERFORMANCE IN 2018-19

- 47,842 (47 percent) of 2019 North Carolina high school graduates took the SAT. This is a slight decrease from the 48,535 graduates (49 percent) who took it in 2017-18.¹⁴ The decrease in the number of students taking the SAT could be due to the new requirement passed in 2012 that all high school juniors take the ACT.
- North Carolina's mean total SAT score in 2018-19 was 1091, compared to a national mean score of 1039.¹⁵ These numbers only include public school students.

Past SAT scores show that race and gender are relevant variables to analyzing SAT performance. The data below suggests the influence of such factors on student performance in North Carolina and across the nation.

SAT & RACE

White and Asian American students have historically attained higher SAT scores than other racial/ethnic groups in North Carolina, including Hispanic, American Indian and Black students. For the twelfth

¹³ College Board North Carolina Public Schools Overview. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/accountability/reporting/ncps-overview-2018-19.pdf>.

¹⁴ NC DPI, North Carolina Widens Lead with Nation on SAT Exam. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2019/09/24/north-carolina-widens-lead-nation-sat-exam>

¹⁵ NC DPI, North Carolina - Accountability Reporting 2018-19. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/accountability/reporting/ncps-overview-2018-19.pdf>

consecutive year in North Carolina, Asian American students scored higher than other racial/ethnic groups, followed by White students.¹⁶

2019 Mean Reading & Math SAT Score by Race/Ethnicity	
Asian American	1238
White	1151
Two or More Races	1080
Hispanic	1039
American Indian	981
Black	956

Source: NC DPI; College Board North Carolina - Public Schools Overview 2018-19

AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING (ACT)

Since 2012-13, the ACT College Admissions Assessment has been administered to all North Carolina public school students in the 11th grade for no cost. The ACT test measures what students have learned in their courses and measures their skills in English, math, science and reading. The ACT also has an optional writing section, in which students formulate an essay in response to a written prompt.

The ACT is scored on a scale of 1-36 in each of the four sections. A student's composite score is calculated by averaging that student's scores on each individual section. The benchmark scores are 18 for English, 22 for Mathematics, 22 for Reading, and 23 for Science. To assess college readiness, the ACT tests English composition with the English section, algebra with the mathematics section, social sciences with the reading section, and biology with the science section. The graph below shows the percentage of students who met benchmark scores in each subject area on both a state and national level.

PERCENT OF STUDENTS READY FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSEWORK

Among 2019 graduates, 27 percent met three or four ACT benchmarks in North Carolina compared to 37 percent nationally. This percentage is slightly lower than in 2018 (28 percent) and 2015 (28 percent).¹⁷ In 2019, 56 percent of 11th grade students earned an ACT composite score of 17 or higher to meet the state's definition of college-ready. This is the minimum score required to be considered admission into a UNC system school.¹⁸

In 2012, only 18,817 NC students took the ACT. However, with the 2012 legislation requiring all 11th graders to take the ACT, 110,339 NC students took the ACT in 2019.¹⁹

¹⁶ NC DPI; College Board North Carolina Public Schools Overview. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/accountability/reporting/ncps-overview-2018-19.pdf>

¹⁷ The Condition of College & Career Readiness. North Carolina Key Findings. Available at <http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/cccr-2019/North-Carolina-CCCR-2019.pdf>

¹⁸ myFutureNC. ACT Performance. Available at <https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/act-performance/>

¹⁹ The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2019. North Carolina Key Findings. Available at <http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/cccr-2019/North-Carolina-CCCR-2019.pdf>

ACT COMPOSITE SCORES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The chart below shows the percentage of students who earned an ACT composite score of 17 or higher (the minimum score necessary to meet the state's definition of college readiness and to be considered for admission into a university in the UNC System) by race.²⁰

Percent of students earning ACT composite score of 17 or higher by race/ethnicity	
Asian	78%
White	70%
Two or More Races	57%
Hispanic/Latino	40%
American Indian	37%
Black/African American	32%
All Students	56%

ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES

An Advanced Placement (AP) course is a class which a student takes while still in high school that can potentially earn him/her college credit. Students scoring a 3 or higher out of a possible 5 on the AP exam typically earn credit towards college. Courses offer different levels of credit. For example, students enrolling in "AB" Calculus can earn 3 hours of college credit, while the "BC" course has the potential for 6 hours of credit. Below is an overview of AP exams taken by students in North Carolina and across the nation.

The percentage of students that take AP exams differs widely across states, and the numbers also vary based on the type of AP exam taken. As with SAT scores, these variances make it difficult to meaningfully compare scores across states, or to compare state scores with regional or national averages. In states where only college-bound seniors take AP exams, for example, one would expect to see higher average score results. In other states, where larger percentages of students are encouraged to take AP exams, average scores will likely be lower. The following chart compares the numbers of students taking AP exams in 2019 and their mean scores, in North Carolina and across the nation. Scores varied widely depending on the test so it is difficult to offer blanket observations on whether North Carolina is preparing students as well as other states to perform well on AP exams.

Advanced Placement Course Examination Scores 2019				
AP Course	NC	US	NC	US
	# students taking exam	# students taking exam	Mean Score	Mean Score
Art History	741	24,476	2.65	2.99
Biology	6,903	260,816	3.00	2.92
Calculus AB	6,970	300,659	2.75	2.97
Calculus BC	4,531	112,683	3.54	3.80
Chemistry	3,667	158,847	2.65	2.74
Chinese Language and Culture	125	13,853	4.11	4.19

²⁰ myFutureNC. ACT Performance. Available at <https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/act-performance/>

Computer Science A	1,387	69,685	2.74	3.26
Computer Science Principles	3,138	96,105	3.09	3.11
Economics: Macro	1,311	146,091	3.12	2.94
Economics: Micro	1,172	91,551	3.25	3.28
English Language and Composition	16,569	573,171	2.79	2.78
English Literature and Composition	13,110	380,136	2.56	2.62
Environmental Science	13,871	172,456	2.77	2.68
European History	2,298	100,655	2.80	2.90
French Language and Culture	423	17,926	3.34	3.30
German Language and Culture	124	5,160	3.47	3.30
Government and Politics: Comparative	720	15,517	3.32	3.20
Government and Politics: U.S.	6,396	173,481	2.78	2.73
Human Geography	8,369	225,235	2.75	2.55
Italian Language and Culture	4	2,658	N/A	3.02
Japanese Language and Culture	26	2,479	2.96	3.69
Latin	200	6,083	2.79	2.95
Music History	594	12,011	2.81	3.11
Physics 1	2,690	161,071	2.47	2.51
Physics 2	412	23,802	2.90	3.06
Physics C: Elec. & Magnet	276	25,342	3.49	3.60
Physics C: Mechanics	744	57,131	3.75	3.76
Psychology	15,214	311,215	2.74	3.09
Research	607	15,724	3.12	3.15
Seminar	1,550	43,441	2.96	3.08
Spanish Language	2,056	187,133	3.75	3.71
Spanish Literature and Composition	268	29,345	3.39	3.10
Statistics	9,469	219,392	2.72	2.87
Studio Art: 2-D Design	882	37,749	3.57	3.57
Studio Art: 3-D Design	106	6,040	3.09	3.08
Studio Art: Drawing	353	21,769	3.65	3.65
U.S. History	17,679	496,573	2.62	2.71
World History	7,647	313,317	2.84	2.75

Source: College Board, North Carolina State Report. Available at

<https://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/participation/ap-2019>; National Student Distribution. Available at <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/research/2019/Student-Score-Distributions-2019.pdf>

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

Another method for analyzing high school achievement is to examine the high school completion rate, or how many ninth graders that enter high school in a given year graduate four years later. The graduation rate is different from the dropout rate because the graduation rate tracks students by cohort. For example, a student with a disability entering ninth grade may not graduate with the cohort s/he entered high school with, but

may graduate one or two years later. S/he would detract from the graduation rate of their cohort but s/he is not a dropout. Despite unique cases like these, the graduation rate is a useful metric for judging how well our school systems are serving children in North Carolina.

In the 2018-19 school year, 105,480 students graduated out of the cohort of 121,943 students that entered 9th grade together in 2015-16.²¹ The graduation rate, at 86.5 percent, is one of the highest in state history. In 2008-09, the graduation rate was 71.8 percent.²²

The following chart shows graduation numbers and percentages for four-year graduation rate by student subgroup. As is the case nationwide, North Carolina data show that female students, Asian and white students, and English-speaking students are more likely to complete high school in four years than male, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, disabled, and economically disadvantaged students, and those with limited English proficiency.

North Carolina Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate, 2018-19			
Subgroup	Students entering 9th grade in 2015-2016	Students graduating in 2018- 2019	Percentage of students graduating in four years
All Students	121,943	105,480	86.5
Male	62,453	52,148	83.5
Female	59,490	53,362	89.7
Asian	3,493	3,300	94.5
White	61,297	54,922	89.6
Black	31,524	26,385	83.7
American Indian	1,523	1,236	81.2
Hispanic	19,203	15,573	81.1
Two or More Races	4,776	4,007	83.9
Economically Disadvantaged	47,428	38,796	81.8
English Learners	6,832	4,878	71.4
Students With Disabilities	15,364	10,724	69.8

Source: NC DPI, Cohort Graduation Rate. Available at <http://accrpt.ncpublicschools.org/app/2019/cgr/>

DROPOUT RATE

While student test scores are often the focus of discussions on student achievement, the high school completion and dropout rates tell a great deal about how students fare in an education system. The State Board of Education defines a dropout as “any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another elementary or secondary school.” Students who leave high school for a community college or GED, adult high school, or other program are counted as dropouts. Schools make an effort to record the reasons students drop out, but due to the nature of

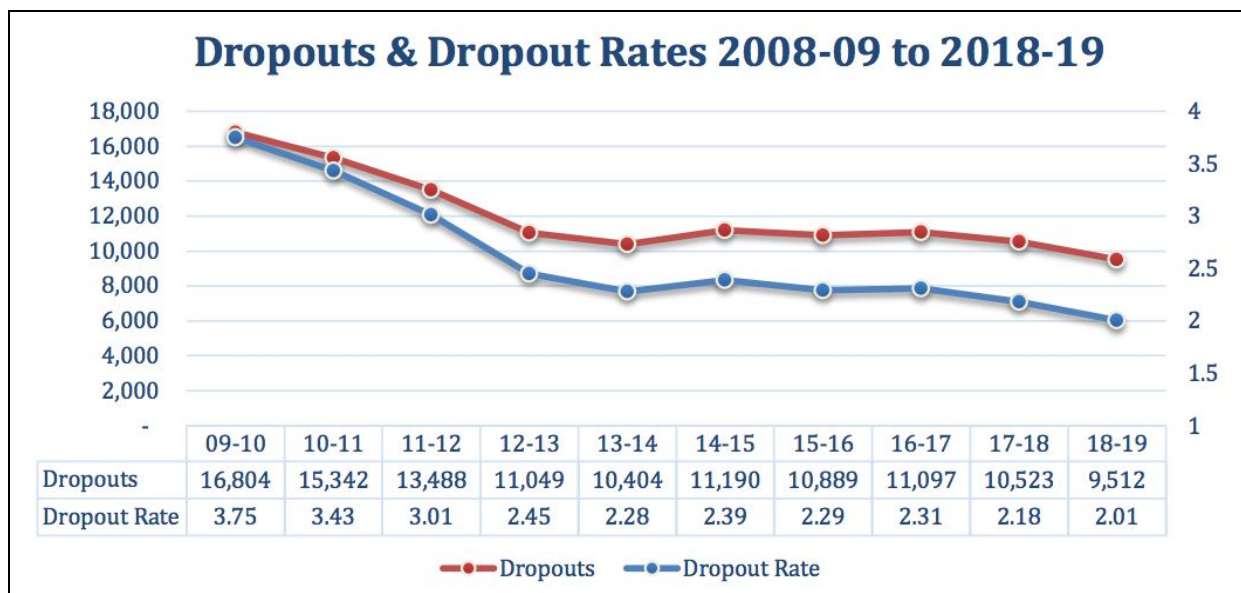
²¹ NC DPI, Cohort Graduation Rate. Available at <http://accrpt.ncpublicschools.org/app/2019/cgr/>

²² NC DPI, Cohort Graduation Rate. Available at <http://accrpt.ncpublicschools.org/app/2009/cgr/>

dropping out it is difficult to get an accurate picture of why many students leave. An estimated 45.7 percent of dropouts are due to attendance issues. Lack of engagement with school or peers, enrollment in community college, working, academic problems, and unknown reasons are some of the other explanations cited for dropping out.²³

- The state reported 9,512 dropouts in 2018-19, a decrease from the 10,523 dropouts in 2017-18.
- High schools in North Carolina reported a dropout rate of 2.01% in 2018-19, a decrease from 2.18% the previous year.
- Males accounted for 63% of the dropouts in 2018-19.
- Dropout rates by race in 2019 were as follows: American Indian (3.13%), Hispanic (3.03%), Pacific Islander (2.53%), two or more races (2.46%), Black (2.4%), white (1.5%), Asian (.63%).²⁴

The graph below tracks changes in the state’s dropout rate over the past ten academic years.²⁵



Source: NC DPI Consolidated Data Report, 2018-19. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/consolidated-reports/2018-19_cdr-report-2018-2019-final-20200302.pdf

²³ NC DPI Consolidated Data Report, 2018-19. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/consolidated-reports/2018-19_cdr-report-2018-2019-final-20200302.pdf

²⁴ NC DPI Consolidated Data Report, 2018-19. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/consolidated-reports/2018-19_cdr-report-2018-2019-final-20200302.pdf

²⁵ NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report, 2017-18. Figure D1.

STATE AND LOCAL ROLE IN EDUCATION

KEY ISSUES

The Governor, the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Public Instruction, and the North Carolina General Assembly all have influence on the direction of education policy and governance in North Carolina.

With a majority of the education budget for public schools coming from the state, these state entities play an important role in providing resources, setting policy, and ensuring equity and quality in North Carolina schools. Still, while the majority of resources and major policies come from the state, local education agencies have a great deal of control over the functions of schools, including the hiring and firing of teachers and administrators and developing curricula.

STATE-LEVEL GOVERNING ENTITIES AND THEIR ROLES IN EDUCATION POLICYMAKING

North Carolina's public school system is heavily funded by the state government, with 66% of school funds coming from the state for the 2018-19 school year. In the same year, local dollars contributed 24% of the total and federal dollars amounted to 10% of total education funding for the state's public schools.¹

During the Great Depression, the North Carolina state government took on the responsibility for funding the operations of public schools with the passage of the School Machinery Acts (enacted in 1931 and amended in 1933). As the State took on the role of funding a larger percentage of school budgets, it also assumed additional governance and decision-making authority. Since the passage of the Machinery Acts, North Carolina's state government responsibilities have grown to include:

- Most personnel issues, i.e. state salary schedules, standardized fringe benefits and retirement plans;
- Personnel allocations through class size provisions and a variety of other allocation formulas;
- Standardized testing policies;
- Pay for performance rewards and consequences based on student performance on tests; and
- Certification and licensing standards for educators.

DIVISION OF AUTHORITY AT STATE LEVEL

While the State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with setting overall state policy regarding education, the SBE generally does not have the authority to provide funding for education policy initiatives. The North Carolina General Assembly's control over the allocation of funds for public schools gives it great power in directing education policy in North Carolina. The Governor also influences education policy by proposing new initiatives through his/her annual budget presentation, appointing members to the State Board of Education, issuing executive orders, and by exercising veto power of legislation passed by the General Assembly.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) is charged with carrying out the directives of the State Board of Education and the General Assembly. NC DPI employees are responsible for all federal and state requirements of the public education system, including testing, accountability, curriculum, and state

¹ NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 22 – Current Expense Expenditure by Source of Funds. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:32:::NQ:::>

licensure and personnel issues. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction is an elected official chosen by North Carolina voters in general elections every four years to lead the Department of Public Instruction. Like the Governor, the State Superintendent commands positional power and frequently advances new initiatives.

In recent years, the NC General Assembly has passed laws affecting the division of powers and responsibilities of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent, with the courts weighing in on compliance with the state constitution.

NC SUPREME COURT CASE: NC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION V. THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA AND [STATE SUPERINTENDENT] MARK JOHNSON, IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY

On June 8, 2018, the NC Supreme Court issued a 32-page decision in public education, ruling that HB 17 (Session Law 2016-126) was constitutional in granting new and significant authority to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction; authority that had previously been maintained by the State Board of Education. This was the first decision to have reached the highest state court that addressed: 1) the balance of powers between the State Superintendent and State Board of Education, 2) what is an allowable balance under the state constitution, and 3) to what degree the General Assembly can change the balance of powers.

Additionally, in the week after this court decision, the General Assembly passed a new bill, House Bill 374 “Regulatory Reform Act of 2018” (Session Law 2018-114). This law further delineates how the State Board of Education should proceed with policies and rulemaking in light of the above NC Supreme Court ruling upholding S.L. 2016-126.

THE EDUCATION DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Given the many policymakers and stakeholders involved, the process of education decision-making is anything but simple. A new idea proposed by the Governor, the State Board of Education, or the State Superintendent may be supported or opposed by any of the same three entities. A proposed bill will advance through the General Assembly where it must be approved by the Education Committee and the Education Appropriations Committee in both the House and the Senate (if it requires funding); from there, it goes to the full House or Senate Budget Committee and then to a vote of the entire membership of each respective body.

This process must be completed in both the House and Senate and, typically, the bill’s final budget proposal will be decided by a joint House and Senate Budget Conference Committee. A proposed bill will then return for a vote in both the House and Senate. The budget and other education initiatives that survive the process are then subject to approval or veto by the Governor. Once legislation is enacted, the State Board of Education takes over the process of setting policy that follows the directives enshrined in law.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION & COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

While the state government has increasingly assumed education decision-making authority; locally elected officials have considerable influence over public education. Locally elected school boards shape policy and make critical decisions related to schools, while the county commissioners approve any local initiatives that require new local funds. Local school boards and/or county commissioners are responsible for:

- Construction and maintenance of school facilities;
- Providing transportation to students;
- Hiring personnel, especially local school superintendents; and
- Funding programs, equipment, material, technology, and personnel not provided by state funding.

GOVERNANCE OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Constitution

Article I Declaration of Rights

Sec. 15 Education

The people have a right to the privilege of education,
and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right.

Article III Executive

Sec. 5 Duties of the Governor

To prepare and recommend to the General Assembly
a comprehensive budget of the anticipated revenue and proposed expenditures of the State...
and administer [the budget as enacted by the General Assembly.]

Article IX Education

Sec. 4 State Board of Education

(Lieutenant Governor, the Treasurer, and eleven members appointed by the Governor)
shall supervise and administer the free public school system and the education funds
and... make all rules and regulations...
subjected to the laws enacted by the General Assembly.

Article IX Education

Sec. 4 Superintendent of Public Instruction

(elected by the people)

Shall be secretary and chief administrative officer of the State Board of Education

Article IX Education

Sec. 2 The General Assembly

By Taxation shall provide a general and uniform system of free public schools...
wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all children.
(Final decision on policy & funding)

Sec. 2 Local Units of Government

Boards of County Commissioners have
responsibility for the financial support of the
free public schools as the General Assembly
deem[s] appropriate.
Fund buildings, transportation, utilities, and
other items as per the LEA Budget.
(General Statutes 153A, 115C-426 to
115C-437)

Local Boards of Education

Provide general control and supervision of all
matter pertaining to public schools in the local
administrative unit and enforce the school law.
Prepare LEA Budget for submission to County
Commission.
(General Statutes 115C-35 to 115C-50)

Local Superintendent
(serves at pleasure of Local Board)
(General Statute 115C-271)

THE BUDGET PREPARATION PROCESS

Article III, Section 5 of the North Carolina Constitution stipulates that *"the Governor shall prepare and recommend to the General Assembly a comprehensive budget of the anticipated revenue and proposed expenditures of the State for the ensuing fiscal period."* In addition, the Constitution requires that the Governor's budget *"shall not exceed the total of receipts during that fiscal period and the surplus remaining in the State Treasury at the beginning of the period."*

The Governor is directed by the Constitution to *"continually survey the collection of the revenue and shall affect the necessary economies in State expenditures..."* The Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) implements the budget process under the direction of the State Budget Officer.

The Governor can choose to reflect the priorities of certain state agencies by recommending the same level of funding for an item, the same source of funding (non-recurring or recurring) for an item, or not including an item at all in his/her proposed budget.

The budget process runs on a "dual" track during the even numbered years when the General Assembly revisits the second year of the biennial budget. During the Short Session, the General Assembly debates the Governor's supplemental request, state agencies' requests, and its own items that are under consideration.

Once the Governor's budget is presented to the General Assembly, it is not considered in isolation. The House and Senate also propose their own budgets for consideration during this process. State agencies are then given an opportunity to respond to the budget requests and make a case for items not recommended. In addition, other organizations and associations have recommendations for budget items. Some of these groups are well organized and have strong constituencies. Depending upon their "modes of leverage," (political endorsements, financial contributions, etc.) these organizations can garner support for their issues, or provide the ammunition to "kill" an item. The flow chart on page five outlines the path of the budget bill as well as agency requests.

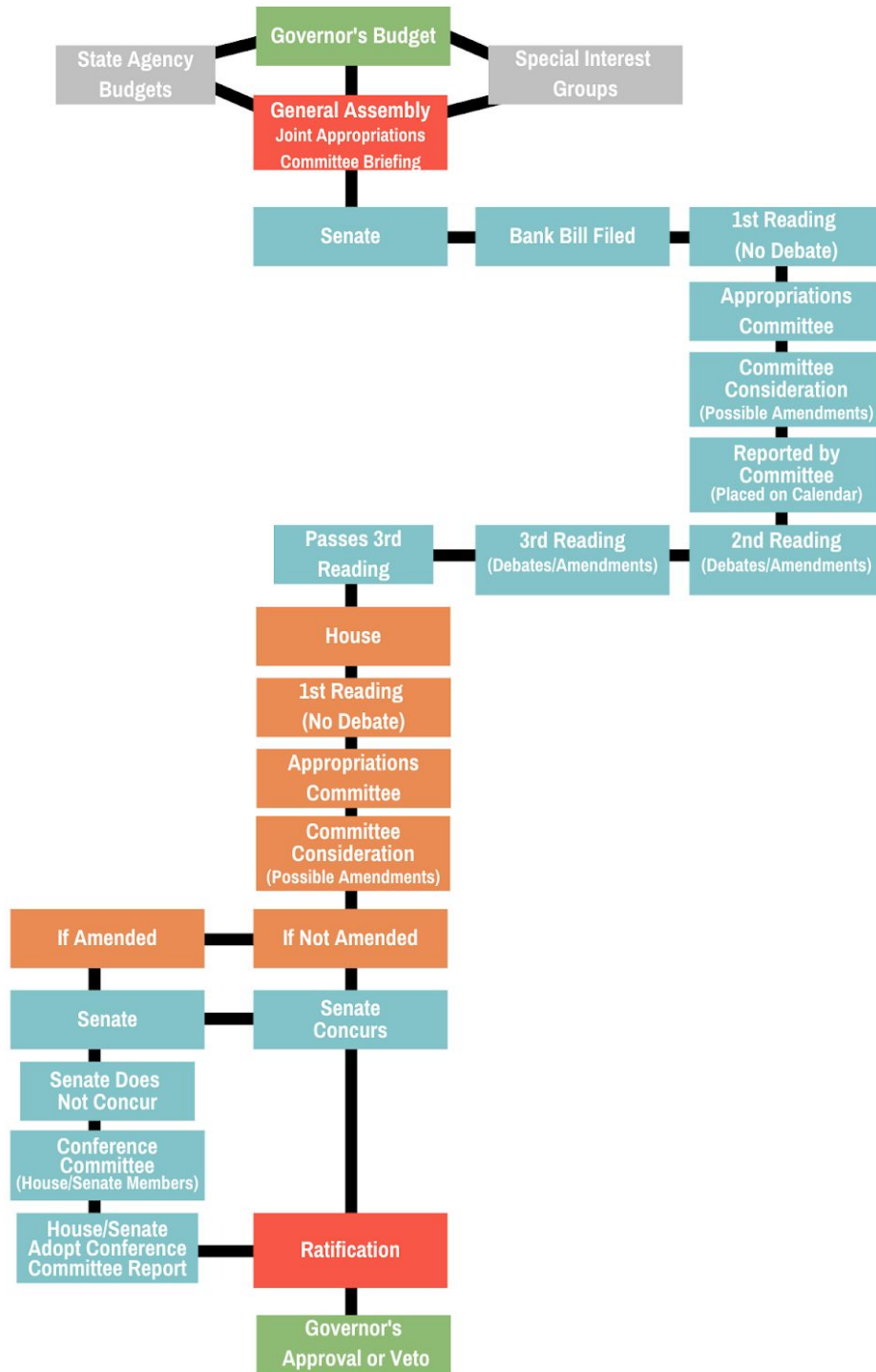
In 2018, for the first time in modern state history, the budget bill was not open for amendment on the House or Senate floor. The budget bill did not move through committees for amendments; it was fast-tracked and exclusively introduced as a conference report for an up or down vote by each chamber.

THE STATE BUDGET ACT OF 2016

Without a new fiscal budget, North Carolina continues to operate on its previous years budget as allowed by the State Budget Act of 2016.² The Act states that if no Current Operations Appropriations Act is enacted by the respective date then the state shall continue operating based on the previous budget allocations.

² § 143C-5-4, available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/ByChapter/Chapter_143C.pdf

THE BUDGET PROCESS³



³ At the Joint Appropriations Committee briefing, the State Budget Officer presents the Governor’s budget to a joint session of the House and Senate Appropriations committees. Education subcommittees will be briefed jointly until the chamber of bill origination begins to make decisions. Then Committees meet separately. The Chamber leadership gives parameters for spending. Subcommittees will determine budgets. The full Appropriations Committee will vote on the Budget Bill. The bill then becomes the Committee substitute for the Blank Bill and goes to the Chamber Floor and proceeds from that point. The Budget Bill originates in each chamber in alternate years.

THE 2019 - 2021 BUDGET

In March 2019, Governor Cooper proposed a two-year biennium budget to the General Assembly. The General Assembly then passed a compromise budget in June 2019, which the Governor vetoed, stating that it included fewer education funds overall and continued corporate tax cuts without offering a plan to expand medicaid. Despite their efforts, GOP leaders were unable to gain enough votes to override the Governor's veto of the compromised budget. Thus, after one of the longest legislative sessions in history, North Carolina legislators concluded the 2019 legislative session without enacting a 2019-2021 state budget. The state is currently still operating on the previous year's budget allocations.

2019 MINI BUDGET BILLS

Despite not passing a full budget for 2019-2021,, a series of "mini budget" bills have allowed legislators to pass many of the budget priorities they placed in the compromise budget.

House Bill 111, established a "base budget" for the 2019-21 biennium, including for public schools. The bill works in conjunction with the continuation budget already in place to keep state spending going at 2018-19 levels in the absence of a new budget law. H111 did not allow for any new or expansion funding for 2019-20 or 2020-21, including for public school enrollment growth or continuing K-12 costs covered only by one-time funds in 2018-19. The bill simply created a budget framework that state agencies such as the Department of Public Instruction need in order to operate.⁴

House Bill 226, appropriated \$239,220,554 from the General Fund for the 2019-2020 fiscal year and \$572,705,157 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year to fund public benefit increases and state employee salary increases. Of this, \$112,355,491 was appropriated to the Department of Public Instruction for fiscal year 2019-20 and \$281,835,841 was appropriated for 2020-21.⁵

House Bill 377, appropriated \$16,300,000 in recurring funds for both the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years to provide legislatively mandated salary increases for principals and to ensure that teachers, instructional support personnel and assistant principals receive salary increases based on qualifications and years of experience.⁶

⁴ Legislators Push Forward Mini-budgets On Educator Raises, available at <https://www.ncasa.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=9&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=6832&PageID=1>

⁵ SL 2019-209, available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/House/PDF/H226v8.pdf>

⁶ SL 2019-247, available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/House/PDF/H377v6.pdf>

FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION

KEY ISSUES

The majority of decisions on public education are made at the state and local levels, but the federal government contributes resources to and plays a role in establishing policies that impact North Carolina's public school system. Although it fluctuates year-to-year, about 11% of North Carolina's education comes from the federal government.¹

In December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for the first time since 2001 when No Child Left Behind was signed into law.

OVERVIEW

In the United States, it is the responsibility of states and communities to establish schools, develop standards and curricula, set graduation requirements, and determine the logistics of school governance. While education policy is mostly determined by state and local administrative units, the federal government plays an important role in funding, overseeing, and developing education policies. The federal government currently provides about 11% of the funding to schools in North Carolina in the forms of grants and recurring support.

Much of that funding is channeled through the US Department of Education, but portions of it come through the Department of Health and Human Services (Head Start Program) or the Department of Agriculture (School Lunch Program). Generally speaking, these funds are targeted to areas of highest need. Allocating federal funding in a targeted way has allowed the U.S. Department of Education to become an "emergency response system," to fill in funding gaps between state and local support in areas of highest need. The role of the federal government in education is minimal when compared to the state and local roles, but the federal government does play an important role in guiding and overseeing education on a national scale.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The U.S. Department of Education was created in 1867 and became a Cabinet level agency in 1980. The Department's mission is to promote student achievement by ensuring equal access and developing efficient school systems. The chief tasks of the U.S. Department of Education include:

- Establishing, allocating, and monitoring federal financial aid programs for education
- Collecting data on schools nationwide
- Focusing national attention on key educational issues
- Prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education²

FEDERAL PROGRAM MONITORING AND SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

¹ Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget , 2019. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/fbs/resources/data/highlights/highlights-of-the-nc-public-school-budget-2019>

² An Overview of the U.S. Department of Education. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/what.html>.

The NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) houses the Federal Program Monitoring and Support Services Division, which provides oversight of state and local programs to ensure compliance with federal regulations. The division oversees federal programs such as Title I, Title IV, the Rural Education Achievement Program, and Homeless Education, and monitors the allocation of federal funds. The Division is divided into two sections: the Program Monitoring Section, which works to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to access a high-quality education; and the Support Service Division, which aids LEAs in ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for students.³

TITLE I: IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Title I provides financial assistance through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.

Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of students from poor families are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs. Schools with poverty rates below 40 percent, or those choosing not to operate a schoolwide program, offer a "targeted assistance program" in which the school identifies students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the state's performance standards, then designs, in consultation with parents, staff, and district staff, an instructional program to meet the needs of those students. Both schoolwide and targeted assistance programs must be based on effective means of improving student achievement and include strategies to support parental involvement.

Title I reaches about 1.5 million students enrolled in both public and private schools in North Carolina. Title I funds may be used for children from preschool age to high school, but most of the students served (65 percent) are in grades 1 through 6; another 12 percent are in preschool and kindergarten programs.⁴

ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 as part of the "War on Poverty" program. ESEA has been the most far-reaching federal legislation affecting education passed at the national level. The bill aims to narrow the achievement gaps between students by allocating funding for primary and secondary education, emphasizing equal access to education, and establishing high standards and accountability. The act was originally authorized through 1965; however, the government has reauthorized the act every five years since its enactment until 2001. The current reauthorization of ESEA is the Every Student Succeeds Act, signed in December 2015. Below are the main provisions of the original ESEA and a few of the earliest additions to the act.

- Title I—Financial Assistance To Local Educational Agencies For The Education Of Children Of Low-Income Families
- Title II—School Library Resources, Textbooks, and other Instructional Materials
- Title III—Supplementary Educational Centers and Services
- Title IV—Educational Research And Training
- Title V—Grants To Strengthen State Departments Of Education
- Title VI—General Provisions
- New Titles Created by Early Amendments to 1965 Law
- 1966 amendments (Public Law 89-750)
- Title VI - Aid to Handicapped Children (1965 title VI becomes Title VII)

³ NC DPI, Federal Program Monitoring. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/>.

⁴ NC DPI, Title I. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/program-monitoring/titleIA/>.

- 1967 amendments (Public Law 90-247)
- Title VII - Bilingual Education Programs (1966 title VII becomes Title VIII)

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 into law, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act at that time. The major focus of the legislation was to raise academic standards for all students and to hold states accountable for student performance. NCLB was based on four principles of President George W. Bush's education reform plan:

1. Stronger accountability for results
2. Expanded flexibility and local control
3. Expanded options for parents
4. Emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work

NCLB mandated that by 2005-06, states must annually test students in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics and by 2007-08, students must be tested once in elementary, middle, and high school in science. States were also required to participate in the 4th and 8th grade reading and mathematics National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests to provide a common measure of comparison across states. The law required that all students must be proficient on state assessments by 2013-14.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act is the latest reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and was approved by Congress in December 2015. This law provides significant federal support for programs to serve students in kindergarten through 12th grade and replaces the No Child Left Behind legislation. North Carolina and all other states operated under their current federal plan until the final rules were completed for the Every Student Succeeds Act. ESSA will be up for reauthorization again after the 2020-21 school year. Some of the aspects of the current law are below:⁵

GENERAL

- ESSA places many limitations on the authority of the U.S. Secretary of Education, including the inability to require additions or deletions to a state's academic content standards or to prescribe specific goals of progress, specific assessments, weights of measures or indicators, etc.
- The U.S. Department of Education will still need to issue regulations but they cannot add new requirements that go beyond what is required in the law.
- All current ESEA Flexibility Waivers were to be null and void as of August 1, 2016.

ASSESSMENTS AND REPORTING

- ESSA maintains annual assessments in grades 3-8 and high school.
- It reaffirms that states are in control of their standards (which must be challenging) and assessments.
- It eliminates "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) under NCLB.
- It provides for innovative assessment pilots at the state level so states can research new and improved methods of measuring student progress from year to year. Up to seven (7) states may be

⁵ NC DPI, Brief Highlights of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Available at <https://nceln.fpg.unc.edu/sites/nceln.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/ELN%20%20ESSA%20Brief%20Highlights%20LMF%2001282016.pdf>.

selected but that number could increase over time. It will be up to the Secretary of Education to determine the application process and timeline for submission to be one of the pilot states.

- It maintains many reporting requirements including the State Report Card (SRC). SRC data are expanded to include information on homeless students, foster youth, students of parents on active duty in the military, information on acquisition of English proficiency by English Learners and professional qualifications of teachers.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- It sets parameters for a state's accountability system, but gives each state the flexibility to design a school accountability system that best meets the needs of the students in the state.
- The accountability plans must include goals for academic indicators (improved academic achievement on state assessments, a measure of student growth or other statewide academic indicator for elementary and middle schools, graduation rates for high schools, and progress in achieving proficiency for English Learners) and a measure of school quality and student success (examples include student and educator engagement, access and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety). Participation rates on the assessments must also be included in the plan.

TEACHER QUALITY

- ESSA gives states the flexibility to work with local stakeholders to determine how educators should be evaluated and supported each year.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS

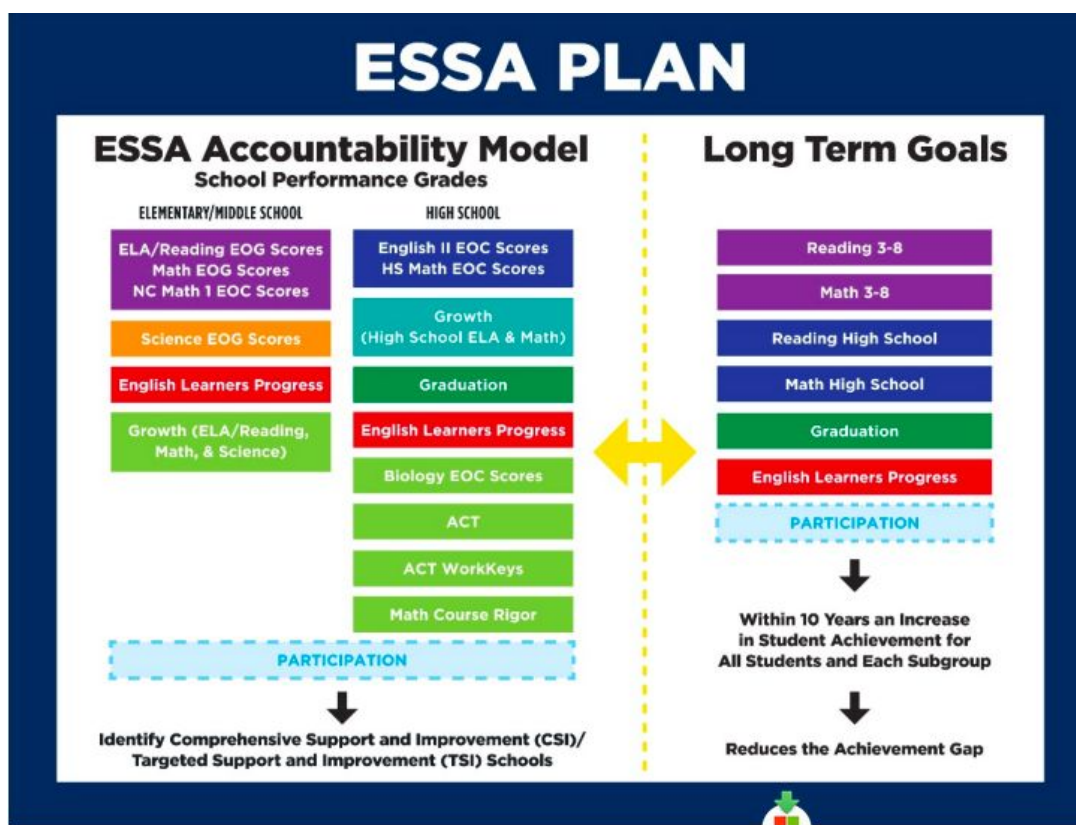
- There is no set of required federal sanctions, but interventions used in schools needing assistance and support must be evidence-based.
- States will have to identify, at a minimum, the lowest 5% of Title I schools and high schools with graduation rates lower than 67%. These are the schools that are part of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI).
- LEAs must develop and implement CSI plans for lowest-performing schools – State must approve plans.
- States also have to identify schools with consistently underperforming subgroups for Targeted Support and Improvement.

FUNDING AND FORMULAS

- Eliminates the federal School Improvement Grants (SIG), but allows states to reserve 7% of Title I funds to make grants available to low-performing schools.
- A portion of State Assessment grants will be made available as a separate allocation to states to conduct audits of state or local assessments as a way to reduce redundant assessments.
- Combines some 50 programs into a big block grant under Title IV.
- Authorizes a Preschool Development Grants Program through the Department of Health and Human Services.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NORTH CAROLINA’S ESSA PLAN

The U.S. Department of Education approved the final draft of North Carolina’s ESSA plan in June 2018.⁶ The Every Student Succeeds Act North Carolina Plan focuses on a number of key educational aspects for K-12 education throughout the state, including 21st century learning, student support, rural and low-income school programs, and tools for measurement of success. There are two key features of the state ESSA plan that encapsulate the broader scope of the plan’s intent.



SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

- The state of North Carolina will utilize an A-F Performance Grade Scale for whole-school measurements of success.
 - Note: in the 2017 long session, the General Assembly made the A-F grading system a state law (G.S. 115C-83.15).⁷ The state ESSA plan addresses this law and restates the intent of the state’s educational system to utilize this measurement tool.
- Schools will be given a 10 year trajectory for the following:⁸
 - Number of students who have graduated high school (95% trajectory, all students)
 - Number of students who are proficient (3+ or higher) in reading and in math

⁶ NC DPI. Every Student Succeeds Act. Available at

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring/every-student-succeeds-act-essa>

⁷ G.S. 115C-83.15. Available at

https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115c/GS_115C-83.15.pdf.

⁸ NC DPI, North Carolina ESSA State Plan. Available at

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/succeeds/nc-essa-state-plan-final.pdf>.

- Increased performance of students as English Language Learners (ELL) to be proficient in the English Language
- NCDPI will report out:
 - The bottom 5% of Title I schools, statewide
 - High Schools that do not meet at least 66.6% graduation rate

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- Continued use of the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS)
- Delivery of school support through two coordinations:
 - Service Support Coordination
 - Professional Development Coordination
- Ongoing professional development support for the school leads in critical areas: such as Multi-Tiered Support Services (MTSS) and digital learning competencies.

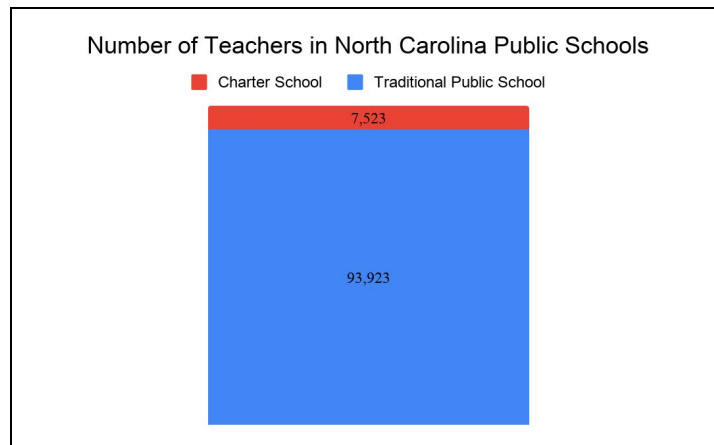
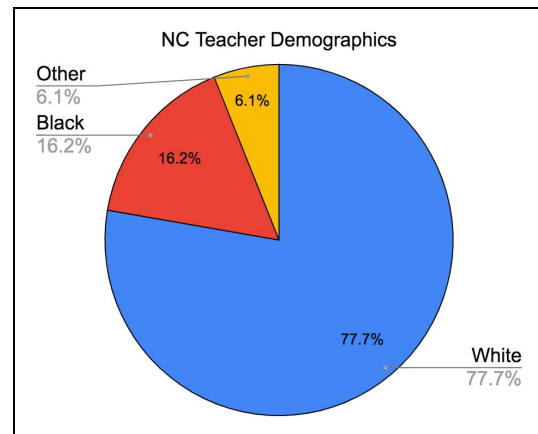
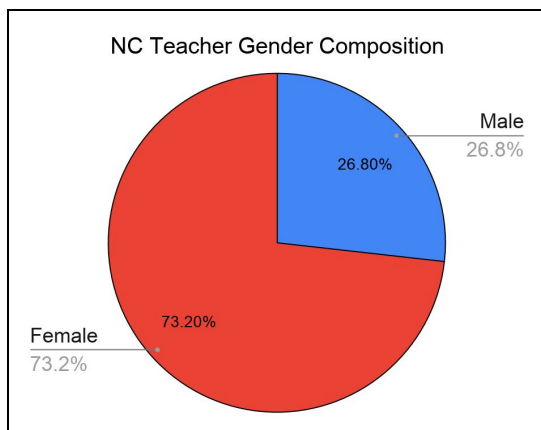
TEACHERS

KEY ISSUES

Teachers have the largest influence of any school-based factor on student outcomes. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers for North Carolina's classrooms is a top priority, and an increasing challenge. Many experienced teachers are approaching retirement; fewer young people are choosing teaching as a profession; and it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit teachers for hard-to-staff subjects (e.g., math, science, special education) and to teach in high-need schools. Schools in rural areas and high-poverty urban areas have had a particularly difficult time attracting and retaining teachers. Additionally, North Carolina, like other states, has a teacher workforce that does not reflect that racial/ethnic diversity of our student population.

Teacher pay is an essential component of North Carolina's ability to keep the best teachers, but we continue to rank below most other states, in the Southeast and nationally, on this crucial measure. Opportunities for career growth and professional development are also important for keeping teachers in the classrooms.

QUICK LOOK: DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE TEACHER WORKFORCE 2019-20¹



¹ Number of Teachers, Gender and Race (2019-20) – NC DPI Statistical Profile Table 16. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:21::NQ::>

The teacher workforce in North Carolina is not representative of the students in our state. As seen in the charts above, 80% of North Carolina's teachers are female, compared to a fairly consistent 50% male/50% female student population. Additionally, nearly 80% of North Carolina's teachers are white, compared to a 46% white student population.

Public School Full-time Personnel Summary 2019-20									
	State Funds	Federal Funds	Local Funds	Total	Male	Female	White	Black	Other
Official Admin, Managers	921	114	991	2,026	890	1,122	1,520	438	68
Principals	2,369	1	63	2,433	989	1,422	1,747	613	73
Assistant Principals	2,092	12	901	3,005	1,167	1,789	1,929	968	108
Total Administrators	5,382	127	1,955	7,464	3,046	4,333	5,196	2,019	249
Elementary Teachers	43,575	2,607	3,283	49,465	8,527	39,429	39,356	7,098	3,011
Secondary Teachers	24,246	397	2,171	26,814	10,927	15,115	20,473	4,691	1,650
Other Teachers	14,500	2,076	1,068	17,644	4,931	12,211	13,168	3,430	1,046
Total Teachers	82,321	5,080	6,522	93,923	24,385	66,755	72,997	15,219	5,707
Guidance	3,320	98	649	4,067	835	3,171	2,711	1,182	174
Psychological	614	83	77	774	160	597	658	80	36
Librarian, Audiovisual	1,809	1	280	2,090	230	1,844	1,856	169	65
Consultant, Supervisor	695	484	480	1,659	352	1,277	1,256	336	67
Other Professional	5,004	743	2,356	8,103	1,420	6,463	5,773	1,821	509
Total Professionals	11,442	1,409	3,842	16,693	2,997	13,352	12,254	3,588	851
Teacher Assistants	15,393	4,069	1,882	21,344	3,889	16,649	12,215	7,535	1,594
Technicians	504	180	991	1,675	963	653	1,072	484	119
Clerical, Secretarial	5,537	209	4,065	9,811	970	8,389	6,757	2,324	730
Service Workers	12,390	507	6,807	19,704	7,164	11,611	8,582	9,370	1,752
Skilled Crafts	988	2	2,130	3,120	2,661	396	2,414	584	122
Laborers, Unskilled	92	15	278	385	212	163	273	93	19
Total Other	34,904	4,982	16,153	56,039	15,859	37,861	31,313	20,390	4,336
TOTAL	134,049	11,598	28,472	174,119	46,287	122,301	121,760	41,216	11,143

Source: NC DPI 2019-20 Statistical Profile Table 16. Note: This chart does not include Charter/Regional Schools personnel. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:21:::NO:::>

SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR TEACHERS

A growing number of quality teachers will be needed in North Carolina over the coming years. Driving the demand for new teachers are three major factors:

- 1) **Growing Student Population:** North Carolina's student population is growing and changing. Urban areas are growing in population annually and an estimated 20,000 students are expected to be added to the North Carolina school system every year.
- 2) **Retiring Educators:** A large number of baby boomers are approaching retirement age. As an entire generation of teachers prepares for retirement, North Carolina faces a teacher shortage predicament.

- 3) **Teacher Turnover:** 7,115 teachers left their schools in 2018-19. The majority (58.3%) of teachers who left cited “Personal Reasons” for their decision to depart. The high level of teacher turnover requires a great deal of yearly recruitment and places a heavy financial burden on districts as they recruit and train new teachers.²

While teacher supply shortages affect the state as a whole, some regions face dilemmas that are unique to their circumstances. In large, populous counties like Wake or Mecklenburg, the largest challenge may be recruiting additional teachers to fill classrooms for a growing student population. In slow growing counties, it may be combating high retirement rates of long-term faculty members. Data on teaching in North Carolina shows us that virtually all counties face the problem of finding qualified educators to teach specialized subjects including mathematics, special education, science, and limited English proficiency.

The schools facing the greatest challenges are those in rural areas, those with low teacher salary supplements, and those that serve high numbers of disadvantaged young people. Not surprisingly, teachers tend to gravitate toward school regions that offer an attractive quality of life, higher pay, or the opportunity to work with motivated students. Conversely, teachers are more likely to leave school systems that offer fewer financial or other rewards, and those that serve more challenging student populations.

In addition to teachers leaving the classroom, enrollment in the UNC System’s Colleges of Education has declined dramatically over the last few years. This crucial tributary flowing into the state’s teacher pipeline produces more than a third of all North Carolina teachers, and researchers have found that these teachers outperform those prepared through channels outside the UNC System.

Change in Education Degree Enrollment (2011-2018)		
UNC System Program	Enrollment Change (Number of Students)	Enrollment Change (Percentage)
Appalachian State	-634	-25.02%
Elizabeth City State University	-322	-78.92%
East Carolina University	-808	-24.96%
Fayetteville State	-417	-63.09%
North Carolina A & T	-386	-36.28%
North Carolina Central University	-292	-40.44%
North Carolina State University	-240	-16.63%
UNC-Chapel Hill	-168	-33.14%
UNC-Asheville	-29	-22.23%
UNC-Charlotte	-665	-28.23%
UNC-Greensboro	-441	-26.96%
UNC-Pembroke	-386	-34.81%
UNC-Wilmington	119	14.20%
Western Carolina University	-360	-25.32%
Winston-Salem State	-238	-65.93%

Source: Enrollment Trends. Available at <https://eqdashboard.northcarolina.edu/preparation/>

² NC DPI 2018-19 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina. Available at https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/meetings/TempFolder/Meetings/2002_ESP%203_attachment%202_2048800c3rea5eqw51sapi50qp24qy.pdf

TEACHER TURNOVER

The overall North Carolina teacher attrition rate, which includes teachers leaving their jobs as well as the “teacher mobility rate,” or teachers leaving one LEA for another, increased slightly last year (2018-19), to 7.5%. The rate has decreased from 13.45% in 2016-17. Below is a list of the reasons teachers left the school system in 2018-19.

Reason for Leaving School System (2018-2019)	Percentage of teachers leaving for this reason	Number of teachers leaving for this reason
Total: Turnover for personal reasons	60.7%	4,315
Resigned due to family responsibilities/childcare	9.2%	653
Resigned to continue education/ sabbatical	3.1%	219
Resigned due to family relocation	11.6%	822
Resigned to teach in another state	9.0%	642
Dissatisfied with teaching	1.7%	123
Resigned due to career change	12.5%	890
Resigned due to health/disability	2.2%	159
Retired with reduced benefits	7.6%	541
Re-employed retired teacher resigned	1.4%	101
Total: Turnover initiated by LEA	8.0%	567
Dismissed	0.2%	15
Non-renewal (probationary contract ended)	1.8%	128
Interim contract ended/not rehired	3.2%	225
Resigned in lieu of dismissal	1.2%	82
Resigned in lieu of non-renewal	0.8%	56
Did not obtain or maintain license	0.9%	61
Total: Turnover beyond control of LEA	23.7%	1,689
Reduction in force	0.1%	3
Retired with full benefits	19.1%	1,360
Deceased	0.5%	37
Resigned due to movement required by Military Orders	1.8%	127
End of VIF term	1.6%	114
End of Teach for America term	0.7%	48
Total: Turnover by other reasons	7.6%	544
Resigned for other reasons	4.1%	288
Resigned for unknown reasons	3.6%	256
Totals	100%	7,115

Source: NC DPI 2018-19 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina. Available at https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/meetings/TempFolder/Meetings/2002_ESP%203_attachment%202_2048800c3rea5eqw51sapi50qp24qv.pdf

TEACHER LICENSURE

All professional employees of public schools must hold a professional educator's license, issued by NC DPI, for the subject or grade level they teach or for the professional education assignment they hold. NC DPI offers three main variations of the professional educator's license, listed below.

- **The Initial Professional License (IPL)** is valid for a maximum of three years and allows the educator to begin practicing the profession on an independent basis in North Carolina. To be issued a SP1 Professional Educator's License, an individual must:
 - Complete a North Carolina Educator Preparation Program (EPP) and be recommended for licensure by the cooperating EPP; or
 - Hold a Residency License and be recommended for a professional license by the cooperating EPP; or
 - Hold a license from another state or completed an out-of-state educator preparation program.
 - An applicant for North Carolina licensure who has successfully completed all the academic, field, clinical, and professional requirements for licensure as prescribed for program completion by his/her cooperating EPP, except passing required licensure exams, may petition the State Board of Education for an Initial Professional License (IPL). The petition must be initiated at the request of a North Carolina public school unit (PSU) that seeks to employ the applicant for licensure.

- **The Continuing Professional License (CPL)** allows an educator to serve on an on-going basis, and must be renewed every five years. To convert an Initial Professional License or Residency License to a Continuing Professional License, an educator must have completed at least three years of teaching (either in North Carolina or in another state), complete a beginning teacher support program (if required) and pass all SBE-approved, or comparable, licensure exams required for the license(s) before or during the third year of licensure. Applicants must attempt the exams at least once during the first year of licensure.³

- **The Residency License (RL)** has replaced the **Lateral Entry License** as of June 30, 2019, and is an alternative pathway to licensure intended for individuals who do not follow a traditional path to teaching preparation but who wish to enter teaching, either straight out of college or as mid-career professionals. The Residency License is a one-year license that is renewable twice. To qualify for a Residency License, meet the following criteria:
 - License is requested by the local board of education and accompanied by a certification of supervision from the recognized educator preparation program in which the individual is enrolled.
 - Holds a bachelor's degree
 - Has completed coursework relevant to the requested licensure area or passed the content area examination relevant to the requested licensure area approved by the State Board.
 - Is enrolled in a recognized educator preparation program.
 - Meets all other requirements established by the State Board, including completing pre service requirements prior to teaching⁴

- **The Limited License (LL)**, created by Senate Bill 219 and signed into law on July 1st, 2019, allows teachers who have not been able to meet the requirements to obtain a CPL in the allotted 3 year time period more time to do so. The Limited License is a three year non-renewable license that can only be used for employment in the local school administrative unit in which it was applied. To qualify for a Limited License, an individual must meet the following criteria:

³ NC DPI, Beginning the Process for Educator's License. Source: [https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educators-licensure/beginning-process-educators-license#initial-professional-licens e-\(ipl\)](https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educators-licensure/beginning-process-educators-license#initial-professional-licens-e-(ipl))

⁴ NC DPI, Alternative Preparation Pathways. Source: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educator-preparation/alternative-preparation-pathways>

- Holds an IPL, but has not met the requirements for an CPL
- An affidavit, signed by both the principal and superintendent for which the teacher is currently assigned, is submitted to the State Board of Education by the local board of education stating that the teacher is currently employed by that local board, is an effective teacher, and will be encouraged to pursue a CPL.

or

- Holds a current teacher licensure in another state that is in good standing.
- An affidavit, signed by the superintendent for the local board of education seeking to employ the teacher, is submitted to the State Board of Education stating that the local board seeks to employ the teacher, that the teacher has been employed as a licensed teacher in another state for at least 3 years, and that the teacher will be encouraged to pursue an IPL or CPL.⁵

LICENSURE ISSUES

The topic of teacher licensure reveals a tension between keeping up with high demand for new teachers while maintaining high teaching standards for those entering the profession. The high standards held for North Carolina teachers have resulted in fewer teacher candidates qualifying for licensure. Therefore, the increasing demand for teachers has resulted in heightened pressure for less stringent licensure standards.

Policymakers confronted with the maze of rules and regulations governing teaching quickly discover that there is no consensus in the education community as to what would represent adequate minimum preparation for someone coming into the field. Issues of contention include essential coursework as well as how to effectively balance hours of classroom experience with traditional college-level coursework.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND STANDARDS COMMISSION (PEPSC)

Created on September 1, 2017 as part of the passing of Senate Bill 599, the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC) is an advising body to the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE). In this role, PEPSC is tasked with involving stakeholders in establishing high standards for North Carolina educators, making rule recommendations for the SBE regarding all aspects of preparation, licensure, continuing education, and standards of conduct for public school educators, and exercising its powers and duties independently of-while located administratively under- the State Board of Education. Topics that the Commission has focused on include the Residency License Model, the authorization process for Educator Preparation Programs, and school administrator preparation standards.⁶

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

National Board Certification was created to elevate the level of teaching and to establish a high, national standard that would recognize the nation's best teachers. To gain national certification, teachers must prepare a detailed portfolio illustrating their work. Panels of teachers then scrutinize and review their teaching skills and portfolios to determine each teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

⁵ North Carolina State Board of Education, Licensing Testing Requirements, Policy LICN-001. Source: <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/ePolicy/policy.aspx?PC=LICN-001&Sch=10399&S=10399&C=LICN&RevNo=3.68&T=A&Z=P&St=ADOPTED&PG=6&SN=true>

⁶ The Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission Available at: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educator-preparation/professional-educator-preparation-and-standards-commission#what-are-some-of-the-topics-pepsc-has-focused-on-since-september-2017>

Pay incentives have been incorporated by North Carolina and other states to encourage more teachers to undergo the process of national board certification. Since 2013 and continuing today, North Carolina has by far the largest number of nationally board certified teachers in the nation.⁷ In 2018-19 North Carolina had 22,653 nationally board certified teachers. Wake County is the number one district in the country for nationally board certified teachers in the United States with 2,922 certified teachers.⁸

To support teachers working towards national board certification, the state of North Carolina offers a loan of \$1,900 to cover the assessment fee to eligible teachers. Teachers repay the loan over three years. North Carolina provides every eligible initial candidate three days of paid professional leave.⁹

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO TEACHING

In recent decades, national and statewide programs have been developed to supplement traditional paths for teacher preparation and recruitment. Below is an overview of programs that are recruiting and preparing individuals for teaching in North Carolina.

TEACH FOR AMERICA

Teach for America (TFA) recruits individuals with proven leadership abilities and strong academics to commit to two years of teaching in high-need school systems across the United States. The majority of TFA corps members are immediate college graduates. Individuals are trained in instructional methods and given hands-on teaching experience during an intensive Summer Institute the summer before their first fall as teachers. Throughout the two year commitment, TFA corps members are employees of the school system to which they are assigned but receive in-depth mentoring and support from TFA.

TFA has placed teachers in Eastern North Carolina since the organization's inception in 1990. Today, approximately 160 corps members teach at every grade level across 12 counties in eastern NC.¹⁰ TFA has been working in Charlotte since 2004, and ten years later, in 2014, Teach For America Piedmont Triad was founded, working with schools in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and High Point. Over 200 corps members currently work across the Charlotte-Piedmont Triad communities creating opportunities for students.¹¹ Since December 2014, TFA has submitted annual reports to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on their progress.¹²

NORTH CAROLINA TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM

Established in 1986, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program was one of the premier teacher recruitment and development programs in the nation. The program gave 500 scholarships per year to graduating high school seniors dedicated to teaching in North Carolina after their graduation from college. The Program was founded to change the face of the workforce in North Carolina – to make it more diverse,

⁷ NCPTS. Available at <https://www.nbpts.org/in-your-state/in-your-state/nc/>

⁸ NC DPI, National Board Certification. Available at https://www.nbpts.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Profiles_NC.pdf

⁹ NC DPI, National Board Certification. Source:

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/national-board-certification/application-for-state-funding>

¹⁰ Teach for America Eastern North Carolina. Available at

<https://easternnorthcarolina.teachforamerica.org/teaching-here>.

¹¹ Teach For America Charlotte. Available at <https://charlotte.teachforamerica.org/>.

¹² Joint Legislative Oversight Committee Reports Received. Available at

<http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/DocumentSites/browseDocSite.asp?nID=19&sFolderName=\Reports%20Received>.

and to attract some of the state’s top students. The average Teaching Fellow graduated high school with a GPA of 4.0 or higher on a weighted scale and ranked in the top 10% of his or her class. Each year, approximately 20% of the program’s recipients were minorities and 30% were male. The program included a scholarship to one of 17 participating North Carolina colleges or universities, a discovery trip across the state to learn about North Carolina’s schools, and other development and enrichment programs. In exchange for the scholarship and program, Teaching Fellows committed to teaching in North Carolina for at least four years.

Between 1986 and 2011, the Teaching Fellows Program recruited nearly 11,000 of the best and brightest high school students to become teachers. Seventy percent of Teaching Fellows remained employed after four years, with 64 percent employed six years or more after completing their initial four-year teaching service requirement. Funding for the program expired in 2011, and was not restored in the 2012 NC General Assembly budget. The repeal became effective in 2015 when the final class of Teaching Fellows graduated.

In the 2017 long session of the General Assembly, legislators voted to enact a new version of the Teaching Fellows Program. The first cohort of the new program included 107 Fellows, who began in the fall of 2018.¹³ The new iteration looks significantly different than its original inception from the 1980s:

Original Teaching Fellows Program	New Teaching Fellows Program
Operated by the Public School Forum of NC	Operated by the University of North Carolina System
Open to any candidate entering any field of K-12 education	Open to any candidate willing to teach in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) or Special Education field.
Offered through 17 universities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. University of North Carolina at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Greensboro ii. Asheville iii. Charlotte iv. Pembroke v. Wilmington vi. Chapel Hill b. Other State Universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. North Carolina State University ii. North Carolina Central University iii. East Carolina University iv. North Carolina A&T University v. Western Carolina University vi. Appalachian State University c. Elon University d. Meredith College e. Campbell University f. Queens University g. Lenoir-Rhyne College 	Offered through 5 universities, beginning in 2018-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. North Carolina State University b. Meredith College c. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill d. Elon University e. University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Participants must commit to teaching for 4 years, post-degree in a North Carolina public school, or repay the cost of the fellowship program.	Participants must commit to teaching in a STEM field for 4 years in a low-performing NC school, 8 years in a school not identified as low-performing, or repay the forgivable loan in cash + interest.

¹³Joint Legislative Oversight Committee Reports Received. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Documents/19#Reports%20Received\2020%20Reports%20Received>

TEACHER SALARIES

School personnel pay is the single largest item in the state budget. Policymakers typically aim to set a salary level that assures the teaching profession's competitiveness and attracts an adequate number of educators to meet the needs of classrooms across the state, while balancing other budget priorities.

Former Governor Jim Hunt put forward a plan to move North Carolina teachers to the national average in pay by the year 2000. That plan, incorporated into the Excellent Schools Act of 1997, resulted in teacher pay raises of over 20% in a four-year period. In 2003-04, North Carolina ranked 22nd in the nation for average teacher salaries. Unfortunately, the state still fell short of the national average and has slipped more since the 2008 recession. The average teacher salary in the state dropped 14.7 percent from 1999-2000 to 2012-13- more than any other state. The national average salary decreased by just 1.3 percent over the same period.¹⁴

In 2018-19, North Carolina is estimated to rank 30th in the nation, with an average teacher salary of \$53,940. This figure includes local salary supplements, which vary widely across districts. The average teacher pay in North Carolina falls \$8,364 below the national average salary of \$62,304.¹⁵

There is a statewide teacher salary schedule that applies to every traditional public school teacher in NC. Teachers may move up the schedule based on a combination of their years of experience, education level, and National Board Certification.¹⁶

2018-2019 Salaries For Teachers With Bachelor's Degrees		
Years of Experience	Annual Salary	Annual Salary with National Board Certification
0	35,000	N/A
1	36,000	N/A
2	37,000	N/A
3	38,000	42,560
4	39,000	43,680
5	40,000	44,800
6	41,000	45,920
7	42,000	47,040
8	43,000	48,160
9	44,000	49,280
10	45,000	50,400
11	46,000	51,520
12	47,000	52,640
13	48,000	53,760
14	49,000	54,880
15-24	50,000	56,000
25+	52,000	58,240

¹⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. Table 211.60. Estimated average annual salary of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, 1969-70 through 2012-13. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_211.60.asp.

¹⁵ National Education Association, Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020. Available at <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2020%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁶ A complete salary schedule can be viewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2018-19schedules.pdf>.

The 2017-19 budget passed by the NC General Assembly maintained beginning teacher pay at \$35,000, but recalibrated the step bands beginning in Year 2, where each year until year 15 has a \$1,000 increase. Beginning at year 15, base pay is \$50,000 and has no additional increase in pay until Year 25, where it caps out at \$52,000.

A disagreement over teacher raises was one reason that the state failed to pass a 2019-21 budget during the 2019 long session. Governor Cooper’s proposed budget would have included an average raise of 9.1% over two years, with the goal of elevating North Carolina to having the highest teacher pay in the Southeast within four years.¹⁷ The NCGA budget included pay raises averaging 3.9%, which would have gone only to teachers with 16 or more years of experience.¹⁸ Because no budget was passed, teachers were not guaranteed pay increases for 2019-21.

In June 2020, the NCGA passed and Governor Cooper signed Senate Bill 818, which funded step increases for teachers and gave all teachers a one-time bonus of \$350.¹⁹

In 2013, the General Assembly passed legislation removing salary supplements for advanced degrees. Teachers who were already receiving the supplement when the law was passed, and those who started advanced degree programs and completed at least one course by August 1, 2013 continued to be eligible for the pay supplement. A teacher who earns National Board Certification automatically receives an additional 12% in pay.

After a base salary is set by the state, a teacher’s salary is then augmented by local school system supplements. However, there is wide deviation among local salary supplements. In some school systems, teacher supplements are as little as \$0. In other systems, such as Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Wake County, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, salary supplements are over \$8,000. The average local salary supplement in the state is \$5,216.

LOCAL SALARY SUPPLEMENTS

As mentioned earlier, many school districts in North Carolina add a salary supplement to the salary allotment provided by the state in an effort to recruit teachers to work in their schools. Listed below are the average teacher salary supplements by district for the 2019-20 school year.

Local Average Teacher Salary Supplement in 2019-20 (\$)					
School System	Supplement	School System	Supplement	School System	Supplement
Alamance-Burlington	4,812	Edgecombe County	3,173	Chapel-Hill/Carrboro City	8,466
Alexander County	2,896	Forsyth County	4,309	Pamlico County	3,364
Alleghany County	500	Franklin County	4,076	Pasquotank County	1,778
Anson County	1,152	Gaston County	3,004	Pender County	4,077

¹⁷ Stronger Public Schools. Available at: https://files.nc.gov/ncosbm/documents/files/REC2019-21_StrongerPublicSchools.pdf

¹⁸ On the budget, it’s now up to the governor. Available at: <https://www.ednc.org/on-the-budget-its-now-up-to-the-governor/>

¹⁹ Senate Bill 818. Available at: <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2019/S818>

Ashe County	600	Gates County	1,100	Perquimans County	1,515
Avery County	1,471	Graham County	0	Person County	4,724
Beaufort County	1,681	Granville County	4,415	Pitt County	2,356
Bertie County	1,716	Greene County	991	Polk County	2,224
Bladen County	1,939	Guilford County	4,929	Randolph County	3,188
Brunswick County	3,340	Halifax County	2,891	Asheboro City	3,298
Buncombe County	7,616	Roanoke Rapids City	2,426	Richmond County	1,494
Asheville City	4,660	Weldon City	0	Robeson County	2,684
Burke County	2,067	Harnett County	3,208	Rockingham County	2,251
Cabarrus County	3,776	Haywood County	2,643	Rowan-Salisbury County	2,922
Kannapolis City	2,913	Henderson County	4,099	Rutherford County	1,151
Caldwell County	1,290	Hertford County	1,403	Sampson County	3,227
Camden County	1,659	Hoke County	2,551	Clinton City	4,215
Carteret County	2,891	Hyde County	866	Scotland County	1,973
Caswell County	0	Iredell-Statesville	2,946	Stanly County	2,164
Catawba County	3,899	Mooresville City	3,370	Stokes County	1,934
Hickory City	3,874	Jackson County	960	Surry County	1,273
Newton-Conover City	3,315	Johnston County	5,353	Elkin City	2,556
Chatham County	6,481	Jones County	2,489	Mount Airy City	1,452
Cherokee County	0	Lee County	4,586	Swain County	0
Edenton-Chowan County	1,452	Lenoir County	2,000	Transylvania County	4,118
Clay County	0	Lincoln County	3,229	Tyrrell County	1,084
Cleveland County	2,013	Macon County	957	Union County	4,448
Columbus County	2,380	Madison County	450	Vance County	3,021
Whiteville City	2,387	Martin County	1,200	Wake County	8,569
Craven County	4,050	McDowell County	1,353	Warren County	1,900
Cumberland County	3,523	Charlotte-Mecklenburg County	8,782	Washington County	600
Currituck County	4,204	Mitchell County	108	Watauga County	2,355
Dare County	4,137	Montgomery County	2,000	Wayne County	3,596
Davidson County	2,944	Moore County	3,773	Wilkes County	2,299
Lexington City	3,963	Nash-Rocky Mount	4,772	Wilson County	3,846
Thomasville City	3,389	New Hanover County	4,037	Yadkin County	2,649
Davie County	2,662	Northampton County	1,711	Yancey County	300
Duplin County	3,185	Onslow County	4,461	STATE AVERAGE	5,216
Durham County	7,487	Orange County	6,522		

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 20. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:25:::NO>

TEACHER CONTRACTS AND TEACHER TENURE

In North Carolina, teacher tenure, or “career status” of K-12 teachers, previously guaranteed due process protections (including notice of reasons for dismissal, a right to a hearing, and other job protections) to teachers who successfully completed four years of teaching. However, in 2013 the NC General Assembly eliminated the prospect of tenure for new teachers and those who had not yet received tenure. Teachers ineligible for career status are employed on one-, two-, or four-year contracts.

The 2013 legislation also would have phased out career status for all other teachers, but in April 2016, the NC Supreme Court unanimously ruled that portion of the law unconstitutional, affirming that teachers who

earned tenure before the 2013 law was passed could keep it.

ADVANCED TEACHER ROLES

In 2016, North Carolina launched the Advanced Teaching Roles Initiative to:

- Enable outstanding teachers across NC to extend their reach to more students without leaving the classroom,
- Recognize teacher leaders with higher compensation,
- Provide developing teachers with embedded, personalized professional development,
- Allow principals to expand their leadership capabilities, and – most importantly –
- Support improved student outcomes.

In 2017, The State Board of Education approved a plan to provide up to \$10.2 million over the next three years to six school systems to test their alternative models for paying teachers. Lawmakers directed the State Board to create a pilot program that links “teacher performance and professional growth to salary increases.” A dozen districts submitted applications, with Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Edgecombe, Pitt, Vance and Washington County school systems being chosen. Today, more than ten districts are taking part in the Advanced Roles Initiative.²⁰

RECENT POLICIES REGARDING TEACHERS IN NORTH CAROLINA

SENATE BILL 219 (SB 219)

As a result of the increase in demand for licensed teachers and declining passing rates for required licensure examinations, the General Assembly proposed Senate Bill 219 in the 2019 legislative session. This bill was signed into law by Gov. Cooper July 1st 2019.

The law created the Limited License (LL) in order to alleviate some of the impacts of North Carolina’s experienced teacher shortage and extended the time period during which an applicant with an IPL must fulfill examination requirements to obtain a CPL from two years to three years. The law also mandates that the Department of Public Instruction monitor and notify teachers of their compliance status.

This bill also requires that out-of-state applicants seeking licensure in North Carolina are required to provide evidence of their effectiveness, including growth measures, as measured by the evaluation system used by the applicant’s state. If an out-of-state applicant is unable to provide evidence of their effectiveness, they are ineligible for an CPL but are eligible for an IPL or LL.²¹

EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM (EPP) WEIGHTED ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

Most recently, PEPSC has been working with the State Board of Education to create an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Accountability Model. In July 2019, the General Assembly approved House Bill 107 to make changes to the performance standards that EPPs must meet in order to continue recommending candidates for licensure and to avoid sanctions. Specifically, H107 requires the State Board to work with the Department

²⁰ Advanced Teaching Roles in North Carolina. Available at:
<http://best-nc.org/advancedroles/>

²¹ S.L. 2019-71. Available at: <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/Senate/PDF/S219v6.pdf>

of Public Instruction (DPI) and PEPSC to develop a “formulaic, performance-based weighted model” to compare annual report card information for each EPP.

Since October 2018, DPI and PEPSC have discussed which accountability measures should be included in the final proposed EPP accountability model. Representatives from both groups have continued to debate whether diversity of teacher candidates enrolled should be included as an initial accountability measure in order to encourage EPPs to recruit more teaching candidates or color.²²

DEVELOPING A REPRESENTATIVE AND INCLUSIVE VISION FOR EDUCATION (D.R.I.V.E.) TASK FORCE

In North Carolina, the traditional K-12 student population is roughly 50 percent students of color, but only 20 percent of the public school educator workforce consists of educators of color. Research shows that all students, particularly students of color, are more successful in school when they have a diverse teaching population leading their classrooms. Representation and inclusion lead to equity for all students.

However, people of color wanting to become teachers face barriers, including the cost of college. She said that people of color are more likely to report that student debt influences their career choices, and Black college graduates are likely to owe more money than their Caucasian counterparts years after graduation.²³

In order to address this issue in North Carolina, Governor Cooper announced Executive Order No. 113 that created a Task Force focused on matters of equity and inclusion in education. The Governor highlighted the Executive Order at the DRIVE Summit: Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education, co-hosted by the Office of the Governor, the North Carolina Business Committee on Education (NCBCE), and The Hunt Institute. The Summit served as the first step towards developing a statewide plan of action to ensure that there is equitable representation of educators across North Carolina. It brought together educators, school and district leaders, educator preparation programs, philanthropists, parents, advocates, and policymakers to share ideas and to begin to develop strategies to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of our educator workforce.

Executive Order No. 113 calls for the Task Force to submit a report to the Office of the Governor that accomplishes the following:

- Assesses the state’s progress in increasing educator diversity in K-12 public schools;
- Identifies short, mid-range, and long-term strategies to increase educator diversity;
- Identifies stakeholders, assets, and sources of funding that can be leveraged to recruit, retain, develop, and support more educators of colors;
- Proposes metrics and standards by which the Governor can evaluate the state’s success in achieving its goals under the Plan and improving recruitment, retention, development, and support of educators of colors; and
- Identifies what recommendations for increasing educator diversity in the state should be prioritized and addressed.²⁴

²² Debate Continues Over Proposed EPP Accountability Model. Available at: <https://www.ncasa.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=9&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=6856&PageID=1>

²³ Learning Policy Institute: Diversifying the Teacher Profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color. Available at: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-report>

²⁴ <https://governor.nc.gov/news/governor-cooper-announces-his-drive-task-force-recommend-education-equity-measures>

SCHOOL CHOICE

KEY ISSUES

While traditional public schools serve approximately 80 percent of North Carolina's students, parents have other options available to them when deciding how to educate their children. This section covers basic information about public charter schools and magnet schools, as well as long standing choice options outside the public school system: private schools and homeschooling.

In 2018-19, out of 1,800,578 students, 102,400 students (5.69%) were in private school,¹ 111,604 students (6.20%) were in public charter schools,² and 142,037 students (7.89%) were homeschooled.³ Approximately 1,444,537 students (80.22%) were enrolled in traditional public schools (including magnet schools).⁴

INTRODUCTION TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are publicly funded, privately governed schools operating in 44 states, including North Carolina, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico.⁵ Charter schools are granted autonomy in exchange for accountability; that is, they are exempt from many state and local laws but must meet performance and operational standards. Charter schools are nonsectarian and tuition-free. Charter schools are not obligated to provide transportation or access to free and reduced lunch services.

A charter is essentially a contract to run a school, negotiated between a charter school operator (often a nonprofit organization) and a charter school "authorizer," which is an entity vested by state law with the authority to grant charters and oversee chartered schools. Many states have multiple authorizers, often including local school districts, state education agencies, independent charter boards, and/or higher education institutions. North Carolina had a single charter school authorizer: the State Board of Education.

The charter agreement describes how the school will be governed, what will be taught, how student achievement will be measured, and what students are expected to achieve. Schools meeting the terms their charters are free from many of the rules and regulations that apply to other public schools in areas such as staffing, calendars, school finances, and curriculum. Charter schools are required to comply with health and safety regulations, anti-discrimination laws, and laws mandating a minimum number of school days. They are also bound by open meetings laws and, like other public schools, are required to disclose names, salaries, and positions of employees, though some charter schools and supporters dispute this.⁶ Charter schools are required to administer and report results on state-mandated end-of-grade and end-of-course tests, and thus cover the same core subjects as traditional public schools. However, if a charter school fails to meet the terms of the charter agreement, the authorizer may revoke the charter and close the school.

¹ 2019 North Carolina Private School Statistics. Available at https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/Annual_Conventional_Schools_Stats_Report_2018-2019_1.pdf

² NC DPI: Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, February 2019. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2019highlights.pdf>

³ 2019 North Carolina Home School Statistical Summary. Available at https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/18-19_Home_School_Annual_Report.pdf

⁴ NC DPI: Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, February 2019.

⁵ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Available at <https://data.publiccharters.org/>.

⁶ Charlotte Observer, "NC education officials: Charter schools must disclose salaries." Available at <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article9113006.html>.

CHARTER SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

The number of charter schools in the United States is growing. The first charter school opened its doors in St. Paul, Minnesota, in September 1992. As of the 2018-19 school year, there are 7,500 charter schools across the country serving over 3.3 million students.⁷

Some charter schools are independent, “stand-alone” schools that operate at a single site. Others are part of networks run by management organizations, either nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) or for-profit education management organizations (EMOs).

1. Independent - a charter school that is run independently of any management organizations, and the nonprofit board overseeing the charter school typically consists of local community residents (but not always). An example of an independent charter school in NC is Raleigh Charter High School.
2. Charter Management Organization (CMO) - a non-profit entity that manages two or more charter schools. Those charter schools do not have to be a part of the same network, but often are. An example of a CMO-run charter school is KIPP Charlotte, which is one of several North Carolina charter schools operated by the national KIPP CMO.
3. Education Management Organization (EMO) - a private, for-profit entity that manages two or more schools. Like CMOs, the schools do not have to be a part of the same network, but often are. An example of an EMO-run charter school is North Carolina Virtual Academy, which is operated by the national EMO K12, Inc.

CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

On June 21, 1996, the North Carolina General Assembly passed House Bill 955, the “Charter Schools Act of 1996,” which enabled charter schools to operate across the state with the purposes of:

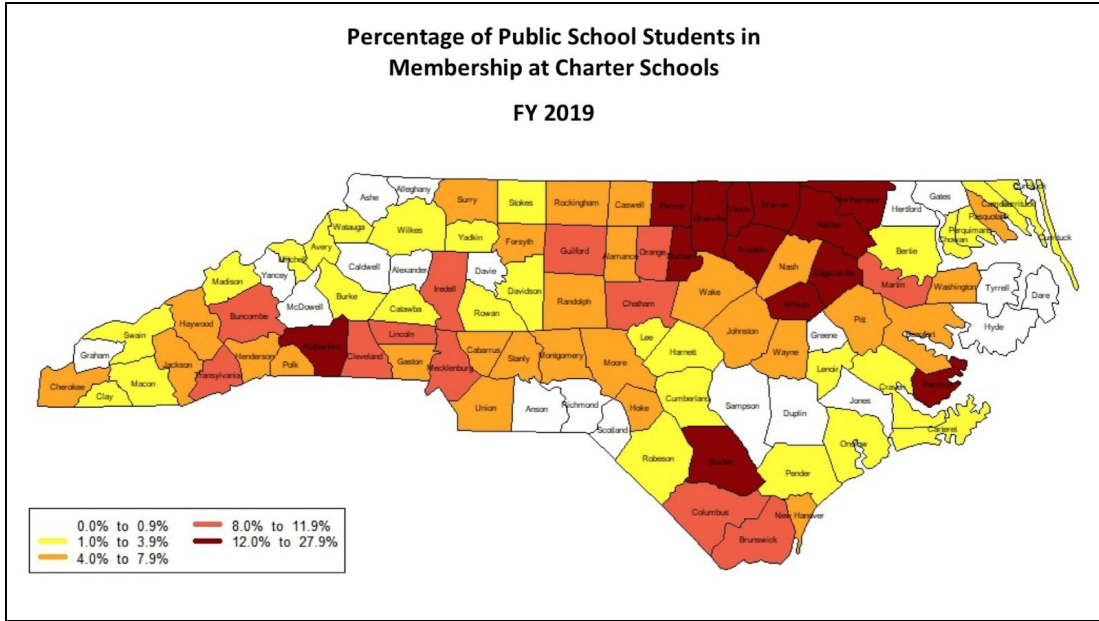
- Improve student learning;
- Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning opportunities for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and,
- Hold the schools . . . accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.⁸

In 2019, North Carolina had 196 operating charter schools, including two virtual charter schools.⁹ Charter school enrollment is not uniform across counties in North Carolina. The map below illustrates the percentage of the public school student population who attended charter schools by county in 2019. The following table shows charter enrollment by district in 2018-19.

⁷ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, National Charter School Facts. Available at <https://data.publiccharters.org/>

⁸ Session Law 1995-1996, House Bill 955. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/1995/Bills/House/PDF/H955v4.pdf>.

⁹ NC DPI: 2019 Annual Charter School Report. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/charterschools/resources/report-charter-schools-annual-report-2.15.2020.pdf>.



Source: Percentage of Public School Students in Membership at Charter Schools. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/fbs/resources/data/csmembersmap.pdf>. NOTE: For purposes of illustration, city LEAs are combined with county LEAs.

2018-2019 Charter Enrollment by District			
LEA	2019 Charter membership	2019 LEA Allotted ADM for Traditional Public School	Charter Membership as % of LEA
Alamance-Burlington	1,515	23,019	6.2%
Alexander	23	4,960	0.5%
Alleghany	3	1,362	0.2%
Anson	32	3,382	0.9%
Ashe	22	2,986	0.7%
Asheboro City	210	4,671	4.3%
Asheville City	388	4,446	8.0%
Avery	41	1,972	2.0%
Beaufort	443	6,661	6.2%
Bertie	26	2,209	1.2%
Bladen	643	4,360	12.9%
Brunswick	1,256	12,771	9.0%
Buncombe	2,110	24,064	8.1%
Burke	344	12,151	2.8%
Cabarrus	2,002	33,241	5.7%
Caldwell	64	11,610	0.5%
Camden	44	1,853	2.3%
Carteret	242	8,313	2.8%
Caswell	215	2,612	7.6%
Catawba	232	16,182	1.4%
Chapel Hill-Carrboro	155	12,474	1.2%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	19,591	148,109	11.7%
Chatham	1,077	9,006	10.7%
Cherokee	162	3,244	4.8%
Chowan	76	1,973	3.7%

Clay	34	1,292	2.6%
Cleveland	1,306	14,597	8.2%
Clinton City	2	3,017	0.1%
Columbus	563	5,673	9.0%
Craven	242	13,813	1.7%
Cumberland	1,275	50,093	2.5%
Currituck	43	4,113	1.0%
Dare	35	5,322	0.7%
Davidson	216	19,147	1.1%
Davie	11	6,169	0.2%
Duplin	27	9,652	0.3%
Durham Public	6,957	33,080	17.4%
Edgecombe	829	5,916	12.3%
Elkin City	34	1,180	2.8%
Forsyth	2,974	54,480	5.2%
Franklin	1,224	8,198	13.0%
Gaston	2,255	31,804	6.6%
Gates	3	1,671	0.2%
Graham	9	1,152	0.8%
Granville	1,500	7,511	16.6%
Greene	28	3,063	0.9%
Guilford	7,308	72,259	9.2%
Halifax	959	2,472	28.0%
Harnett	560	20,536	2.7%
Haywood	454	7,277	5.9%
Henderson	758	13,527	5.3%
Hertford	28	2,812	1.0%
Hickory City	22	4,166	0.5%
Hoke	425	9,000	4.5%
Hyde	-	-	-
Iredell	2,725	20,437	11.8%
Jackson	320	3,755	7.9%
Johnston	1,892	36,550	4.9%
Jones	1	1,086	0.1%
Kannapolis City	313	5,451	5.4%
Lee	125	9,945	1.2%
Lenoir	211	8,620	2.4%
Lexington City	133	3,094	4.1%
Lincoln	1,514	11,441	11.7%
Macon	71	4,455	1.6%
Madison	32	2,292	1.4%
Martin	409	3,111	11.6%
McDowell	44	6,092	0.7%
Mitchell	27	1,862	1.4%
Montgomery	284	3,976	6.7%
Moore	842	12,768	6.2%
Mooresville City	488	6,005	7.5%
Mt. Airy City	195	1,649	10.6%
Nash	1,256	15,067	7.7%
New Hanover	1,600	26,361	5.7%

Newton City	11	3,050	0.4%
Northampton	530	1,651	24.3%
Onslow	317	27,317	1.1%
Orange	837	7,345	10.2%
Pamlico	230	1,250	15.5%
Pasquotank	317	5,549	5.4%
Pender	321	9,404	3.3%
Perquimans	50	1,619	3.0%
Person	1,134	4,449	20.3%
Pitt	1,126	23,791	4.5%
Polk	128	2,107	5.7%
Randolph	1,152	16,726	6.4%
Richmond	27	7,222	0.4%
Roanoke Rapids City	175	2,871	5.7%
Robeson	523	22,387	2.3%
Rockingham	576	12,099	4.5%
Rowan	710	19,150	3.6%
Rutherford	1,236	8,183	13.1%
Sampson	28	8,274	0.3%
Scotland	12	5,741	0.2%
Stanly-Albemarle	487	8,455	5.4%
Stokes	138	5,921	2.3%
Surry	484	7,882	5.8%
Swain	82	2,023	3.9%
Thomasville City	55	2,293	2.3%
Transylvania	339	3,449	8.9%
Tyrrell	2	607	0.3%
Union	3,100	41,416	7.0%
Vance	1,853	5,928	23.8%
Wake	13,809	162,618	7.8%
Warren	378	2,039	15.6%
Washington	115	1,485	7.2%
Watauga	158	4,690	3.3%
Wayne	818	18,670	4.2%
Weldon City	251	899	21.8%
Whiteville City	180	2,301	7.3%
Wilkes	100	9,418	1.1%
Wilson	1,834	11,554	13.7%
Yadkin	57	5,257	1.1%
Yancey	13	2,204	0.6%
2019 State Total	107,172	1,444,537	6.9%

Source: NC DPI Charter School Membership By LEA 2018-19.

Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/fbs/resources/data/csmembersregion18-19.pdf>

CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

Charter schools in North Carolina receive funding based on the average per pupil allocation in the local education agency (LEA) from which the student came. For example, if a student attends a charter school in Person County, but their residency is in Durham County, the charter school will receive the per pupil expenditure from Durham County.

In 2018-19, charter schools received \$674,314,240 in state funds for 111,604 expected students.¹⁰ This breaks down to an average of \$6,042 per charter student from the state. State funds may be used for any purpose other than purchasing a building. Charter schools also receive local funding on a per pupil basis equal to local funds for program costs for all other public school students. Unlike traditional public schools in their districts, charter schools do not receive capital funds and must locate and lease or purchase facilities on their own. Some charter schools have located facilities in renovated storefronts, church facilities, mobile structures, or traditional school buildings throughout the state.

Charter schools do receive federal funding. As with traditional public schools, federal funding is targeted towards specific populations, including low-income children and children with special needs. Charter schools who meet eligibility of federal requirements may apply for federal funding.

In North Carolina, anyone may seek to establish a charter school. In order to apply for a charter school, applicants must form a 501-c3 non-profit organization and submit an application to the state along with a \$1,000 fee.¹¹ This means that EMOs are ineligible to directly apply to open a charter school in North Carolina; however, once a non-profit entity has applied and been approved to open a charter school, then they may contract with a for-profit EMO to help run the charter school. There are three primary overseers of charter schools:

1. State Board of Education (SBE) - oversees and approves all charter schools in North Carolina, based on the recommendations of the Charter School Advisory Board. The State Board may grant the initial charter for up to 5 years and may renew the charter upon the request of the chartering entity for subsequent periods of up to 10 years each.
2. Charter School Advisory Board (CSAB) – a subcommittee of the SBE, the CSAB develops the rules, regulations, and policies related to charter schools in North Carolina; vets all applications; and serves as an oversight body when charter schools face performance, governance or financial problems and seek renewals. The CSAB's final recommendations are sent to the SBE for final approval.
3. Office of Charter Schools (OCS) - a division of North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, OCS implements and oversees the rules, regulations, and policies that are set forth by the CSAB.

A charter school's non-profit board of directors governs the school. The board is ultimately responsible for decision-making in all matters relating to the day-to-day operations of the school, including budgeting, hiring/firing, curriculum, instructional materials, operating procedures, transportation, insurance, and food services.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA'S CHARTER SECTOR

NO CAP ON NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS (SENATE BILL 8)

In July 2011, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Senate Bill 8, which reformed the state's charter school law. The legislation redefined previous law by:

- 1) Removing the 100-school cap on charter schools statewide;

¹⁰ NC DPI: 2019 Annual Charter School Report. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/charterschools/resources/report-charter-schools-annual-report-2.15.2020.pdf>.

¹¹ NC DPI, Charter School Application Resource Manual. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/charterschools/applications/2020-application-resource-manual-ocs.pdf>.

- 2) Allowing the State Board discretion in granting final approval of charter schools;
- 3) Raising the enrollment growth cap in charter schools to 20 percent of all students;
- 4) Permitting charter schools to charge fees charged by the local school administrative unit;
- 5) Strengthening the standards for retaining a charter; and
- 6) Requiring the State Board of Education to report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the act, including the creation, composition, and function of an advisory committee; charter school application process; a profile of applicants and the basis for acceptance or rejection; and resources required at the State level for implementation of the current charter school laws.¹²

NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD (SENATE BILL 337)

In July 2013, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Senate Bill 337 reforming several components of the charter school law. The main provision of the law repealed the Charter School Advisory Council and created the North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board, which will make recommendations to the State Board of Education on the adoption of rules related to charter schools. Members of the Advisory Board are appointed by the General Assembly, Governor, State Board of Education, and Lieutenant Governor. Under the law, charter schools can no longer choose to be accountable to their Local Board of Education instead of the State Board of Education. Information the State Board of Education receives from the Local Board of Education does not have to be considered in reviewing a charter application. The law also mandates that fifty percent of teachers must be licensed and all charter school teachers teaching a main subject (mathematics, science, social studies, language arts) must be college graduates.¹³

CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND CHARTER REVISIONS (HOUSE BILL 250)

Several elements of charter school enrollment were addressed in HB 250 bill, passed in July 2013. The major provision of the law stated that “charter schools must attempt to reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the general local population or the special population served by the school.”¹⁴

VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS

Section 8.35 of the Appropriations Act of 2014 authorized the creation of two pilot K-12 virtual charter schools. The length of the pilot was initially set for 4 years. The maximum enrollment in each pilot was capped at 1,500 students in the first year, rising to 2,592 in year four. North Carolina Virtual Academy, managed by for-profit K12, Inc., and North Carolina Connections Academy, once affiliated with Pearson, opened in fall 2015. In the 2018 short session, the General Assembly passed legislation extending the pilot program from its initial 4 years to 8 years, now scheduled to end in spring of 2023.

Nationally, virtual schools operated by these two for-profit companies have generated significant controversy. Stanford University released a study in 2015 finding that virtual charter school students lost an average of 72 days’ worth of learning in reading and a year’s worth of learning in math compared to their peers in traditional brick-and-mortar schools.¹⁵ The North Carolina virtual charter schools have seen their own share of controversy. Over the course of this pilot program, both of North Carolina’s virtual charter schools have received “D” markings on their overall performance. In addition, both schools have been flagged

¹² Session Law 2011, Senate Bill 8. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2011/Bills/Senate/PDF/S8v8.pdf>.

¹³ Session Law 2013, Senate Bill 337. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/Senate/PDF/S337v9.pdf>.

¹⁴ Session Law 2013, House Bill 250. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/House/PDF/H250v7.pdf>.

¹⁵ Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) (2015). Online Charter School Study 2015.

for overall academic growth scores landing in the category of “Not Met.”¹⁶ Despite these low scores, lawmakers have decided to extend the pilot program through 2023.

In May 2019, the State Board of Education granted permission to N.C. Connections Academy to break ties with Pearson and become a locally-managed virtual charter school. In this process, the virtual charter school also renamed itself, becoming N.C. Cyber Academy.

CHARTER RENEWAL AND OTHER CHARTER LAW CHANGES (HOUSE BILL 334)

In 2015, House Bill 334 was passed, making it more difficult for the state to refuse to renew schools’ charters by making renewal the default, in contrast to the law it replaced, which required charter schools to earn renewal through solid academic performance. Other states that have gone down this path, including Ohio, Texas, and Utah, have suffered declines in charter school accountability and performance. The same bill shifted some control and oversight responsibilities for charter schools away from NC DPI.¹⁷

NORTH CAROLINA LAB SCHOOLS

In the 2016 budget, the General Assembly included a provision to establish eight lab schools (later increased to nine) in North Carolina. Lab schools are operated similarly to charter schools in that they are given much flexibility in exchange for accountability. Unlike charter schools, lab schools must be operated by constituent institutions of the University of North Carolina System, and overseen by the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. The purpose of lab schools is to provide an enhanced education program for students residing in local school districts where at least 25% of schools are designated low-performing and to provide exposure and training for teachers and principals to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings.¹⁸ The following institutions of the UNC System have been selected to run lab schools:

- Appalachian State University
- East Carolina University
- North Carolina Central University
- UNC-Charlotte
- UNC-Greensboro
- UNC-Pembroke
- UNC-Wilmington
- Western Carolina University

The following lab schools are currently open or scheduled to open in the fall of 2020:

- Catamount School, located on campus of Smoky Mountain High School (WCU)
- ECU Community School (located within South Greenville Elementary) (ECU)
- Moss Street Elementary (UNCG)
- Middle Fork Elementary School (ASU)
- Niner University Elementary School (UNC Charlotte)
- D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy School (UNCW)¹⁹

¹⁶ NC’s online charter schools continue to struggle academically, new data show. Available at

<https://www.wral.com/ncs-online-charter-schools-continue-to-struggle-academically-new-data-show/18609042/>

¹⁷ Session Law 2015, House Bill 334. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/PDF/H334v6.pdf>.

¹⁸ Session Law 2016-94, Section 11.6. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/sessions/2015/bills/house/html/h1030v8.html>.

¹⁹ Public Schools First, The Facts on Lab Schools. Available at

Currently, there are two models of lab schools:

- *School within a school*: a certain percentage of the currently existing student population attends the lab school while the remainder of the students attend the traditional school. Currently, South Greenville Elementary and Catamount School utilize this model.
- *Whole school*: an entire school is transformed into a lab school, and all students and faculty are overseen and managed by the university system.

MUNICIPAL CHARTERS (HOUSE BILL 514)

In 2018, the General Assembly enacted legislation allowing municipalities to operate charter schools. House Bill 514²⁰ only authorizes four towns in Mecklenburg County to exercise this option: Cornelius, Huntersville, Matthews and Mint Hill. These municipal charter schools can give preferential treatment for their own residents for admission purposes. In the Appropriations Act of 2018, there is a companion funding provision with statewide effect that allows any town or city to use certain local revenues to fund a public school (traditional, charter, or otherwise) of its choosing, including this newly-created municipal charter.

On April 30, 2020, the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the law firm Tin Fulton filed litigation challenging the constitutionality of HB 514, claiming that it violates the state's constitutional guarantees of a uniform system of free public education, and equal protection.

MAGNET SCHOOLS

In contrast to charter schools, magnet schools are considered part of the traditional public school system, operating under the same local administration and local school board. The unique feature of magnet schools is that they have a focused theme and a curriculum aligned to that theme. Some of these themes include STEM, fine and performing arts, Montessori, language immersion and international studies. Students are still taught the complete range of subjects required by the state's curriculum, but teaching is tailored to the magnet school's theme.

Magnet schools first came into being in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a tool to facilitate desegregation in large urban school districts. Magnets were intended to attract students from across different school zones by providing an environment or experience that would attract students and families from other school zones. By encouraging enrollment rather than forcing enrollment, the hope was that families would voluntarily desegregate their schools.²¹

The number of magnet schools has increased rapidly since federal court rulings accepted magnet programs as a method of desegregation in the mid-1970s. By the 1991-92 school year, more than 1.2 million students were enrolled in magnet schools in 230 school districts. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that as of 2015-16, 3,421 magnet schools were in operation in the United States.²²

Students do not attend magnet schools based on the location of their home and zoned school boundaries as they do for traditional public schools. Interested students instead have to apply and are selected based on a

<https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-on-lab-schools/>.

²⁰ Session Law 2018-3, House Bill 514. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H514v7.pdf>.

²¹ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School? Available at <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/2>.

²² National Center for Education Statistics.

Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_216.20.asp.

lottery (within the school district) or prioritized criteria. Prioritized criteria often include an expressed interest in the theme of the magnet school or indicators of potential. Approximately one-third of magnet schools use academic performance as a selection criterion.²³

Magnet schools tend to be mainly an urban phenomenon. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than half of large urban school districts have magnet school programs as compared to only 10% of suburban districts. Magnet schools often have a much more racially diverse student body than other schools in their districts because the students do not come solely from specific neighborhoods or geographic zones; however, students of low socioeconomic status tend to be underrepresented in magnet schools. Students who attend magnet schools are also more likely to live in two-parent households and to have parents who graduated from college than students who attend traditionally zoned public schools.²⁴

Local districts finance magnet schools the same way they finance other public schools. Magnet schools also have access to additional federal funds through the Magnet Schools Assistance program. The Magnet Schools Assistance Program provides grants to eligible local educational agencies to establish and operate magnet schools that are operated under a court-ordered or federally approved voluntary desegregation plan.²⁵ In 2020, there are 188 magnet schools in North Carolina serving 138,661 students.²⁶ Seventy-three percent of the students who attend magnet schools are students of color compared to the state average of 52 percent.²⁷

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Private schools are largely unaccountable to government institutions and are traditionally privately funded (although that is changing). Funding for private schools comes from a variety of sources including tuition, private grants, and fundraising from parents or private organizations—and today there are public sources of aid. Students typically have to apply to be admitted to a private school. Private schools do not have to meet state-approved academic standards, make budgets public, adhere to open meetings and records laws, or, for the most part, publicly report student achievement. Private schools, however, must comply with health and safety regulations, anti-discrimination laws, and laws stating the minimum number of school days.²⁸ In the United States, a wide variety of schools are classified as “private schools,” including boarding schools and religiously-affiliated schools.

In 2018-19, North Carolina private schools served 102,400 students at 769 schools.²⁹ Over 68 percent of these students attended religious schools. In 2019-20, the average NC private school tuition rates were estimated at \$8,417 for elementary schools and \$10,303 for high schools.³⁰

²³ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School? Available at <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/what-is-a-magnet-school>.

²⁴ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School?

²⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Magnet School Assistance Program.

Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/magnet/index.html>.

²⁶ Public School Review, North Carolina Magnet Public Schools.

Available at http://www.publicschoolreview.com/state_magnets/stateid/NC.

²⁷ Public School Review, North Carolina Magnet Public Schools.

²⁸ Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, School Choice FAQs. Available at http://www.edchoice.org/school_choice_faqs/are-participating-private-schools-held-accountable/.

²⁹ NC Department of Administration, 2019 North Carolina Private Schools Statistics. Available at https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/Annual_Conventional_Schools_Stats_Report_2018-2019_1.pdf.

³⁰ Private School Review, North Carolina Private Schools. Available at <http://www.privateschoolreview.com/north-carolina>.

Enrollment and Number of Private Schools in North Carolina by County, 2018-19					
County	Enrollment	Number	County	Enrollment	Number
Alamance	1,636	11	Jones	0	0
Alexander	134	4	Lee	675	4
Alleghany	31	1	Lenoir	1,031	5
Anson	10	1	Lincoln	113	5
Ashe	32	1	Macon	59	2
Avery	70	2	Madison	62	4
Beaufort	411	3	Martin	0	0
Bertie	371	2	McDowell	222	2
Bladen	88	2	Mecklenburg	18,530	94
Brunswick	539	10	Mitchell	66	2
Buncombe	3,407	31	Montgomery	89	3
Burke	214	4	Moore	1,074	11
Cabarrus	2,003	10	Nash	1,280	8
Caldwell	134	1	New Hanover	3,144	21
Camden	0	0	Northampton	159	2
Carteret	373	5	Onslow	1,378	19
Caswell	0	0	Orange	1,087	8
Catawba	1,643	12	Pamlico	68	1
Chatham	190	4	Pasquotank	584	8
Cherokee	27	2	Pender	48	2
Chowan	6	1	Perquimans	0	0
Clay	50	1	Person	101	2
Cleveland	179	2	Pitt	1,777	14
Columbus	179	4	Polk	26	1
Craven	1,098	8	Randolph	755	10
Cumberland	4,754	30	Richmond	267	4
Currituck	22	1	Robeson	369	8
Dare	86	2	Rockingham	325	6
Davidson	1,242	10	Rowan	1,048	13
Davie	72	1	Rutherford	340	8
Duplin	117	6	Sampson	656	6
Durham	4,926	37	Scotland	317	3
Edgecombe	0	0	Stanly	443	6
Forsyth	4,255	23	Stokes	176	3
Franklin	144	3	Surry	113	3
Gaston	2,220	8	Swain	79	2
Gates	0	0	Transylvania	125	4
Graham	0	0	Tyrrell	0	0
Granville	45	1	Union	2,256	13
Greene	104	1	Vance	489	5
Guilford	6,523	35	Wake	18,567	80
Halifax	451	3	Warren	19	1
Harnett	398	7	Washington	0	0

Haywood	129	5	Watauga	134	2
Henderson	922	17	Wayne	1,326	10
Hertford	447	4	Wilkes	223	3
Hoke	115	6	Wilson	1007	6
Hyde	25	1	Yadkin	50	2
Iredell	1,184	18	Yancey	65	3
Jackson	206	3			
Johnston	496	7	TOTAL	102,400	769

Source: NC Department of Administration, 2019 North Carolina Private Schools Statistics. Available at: https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/Annual_Conventional_Schools_Stats_Report_2018-2019_1.pdf

RECENT LEGISLATION AFFECTING PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

SCHOOL VOUCHERS, OR “OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS”

Section 8.29 of Senate Bill 402 created a voucher program for students who met certain criteria and income thresholds to attend private schools beginning in the 2014-15 school year.³¹ In 2015, following a legal challenge, the NC Supreme Court ruled that the program was constitutional, setting the stage for expansion of the program in 2015-16 and likely continued growth in the years ahead.³²

The voucher program is overseen by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA), whose primary mission is to oversee financial aid programs for post secondary legislation. For a child to be eligible for a voucher, he or she must be a resident of North Carolina, have not graduated from high school, be at least five years old on or before August 31, have a household income that does not exceed 133% of the amount required to receive free or reduced lunch, and meet one of the following criteria:

- was a full-time student attending a North Carolina public school the previous semester;
- received a scholarship grant in the previous year;
- is entering kindergarten or first grade;
- is in foster care; or,
- adoption was finalized in the past year.

Nonpublic schools that accept school voucher funds must meet some state-mandated requirements, including the following: provide tuition information to the state; conduct a criminal background check on the highest-ranking staff person at the school (not required for teachers); provide information to the voucher recipient’s parents on his or her academic progress; administer national grade level tests for third grade and above; disclose some standardized test results and graduation rates for scholarship recipients; and conduct a financial review if the amount of voucher funds received exceeds \$300,000 in a given year.

In the wake of the 2015 NC Supreme Court ruling, the 2015 state budget added \$6.8 million for vouchers in 2015-16 and \$14 million in 2016-17.³³ In 2016-17, total support for the state’s voucher program reached \$24.8 million. This funded approximately 6,000 vouchers at the maximum grant of \$4,200 per year. In 2017-18 and onward for ten years, the General Assembly appropriated a \$10 million recurring increase per

³¹ Session Law 2013, Senate Bill 402. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/Senate/PDF/S402v7.pdf>.

³² News & Observer, NC Supreme Court upholds school voucher program. Available at <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article28437271.html>.

³³ NC Supreme Court. Available at <https://appellate.nccourts.org/opinions/?c=1&pdf=33175>.

year for the Opportunity Scholarship Program. For 2017-18, the legislature appropriated \$44.8 million for this program and by 2027-28, there will be \$144.8 million public funds appropriated to private schools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS

In 2013, the General Assembly repealed the tax credit for children with disabilities and related funds for Special Education and Related Services, and created a program called the Special Education Scholarship Grants for Children with Disabilities that provided up to \$3,000 per semester for qualifying students to use for reimbursement of tuition and eligible services. This program is administered and overseen by the State Educational Assistance Authority (SEAA). The Appropriations Act of 2016 increased funding by \$5.8 million for these grants which revised the net appropriation to \$10 million.³⁴ As of 2020, the Disabilities Grant Program awards up to \$4,000 per student per semester for tuition and fees at a participating nonpublic school, and certain other expenses related to educating a child with a disability.

PERSONAL EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

The General Assembly created Personal Education Savings Accounts (PESAs) with the 2017 Appropriations Act; the program began in the fall of 2018. Much like the above-referenced school vouchers and special education grants, PESAs are also overseen and administered by the SEAA. PESAs are individual savings accounts that can distribute up to \$9,000/year funded by state taxpayer dollars where the funds are received in the form of a debit card to parents of eligible special education students. Eligible children are those who have a disability and who are otherwise eligible to attend a public school. The General Assembly appropriated \$3 million in recurring state funds for PESAs for 2018-19. Eligible students and their families can use these funds for educational expenses in private schools and home schools. In 2018, the legislature expanded the scope of eligible children and further recognized part-time students in certain nonpublic schools as eligible for up to \$4,500/year per student.

HOMESCHOOLING IN NORTH CAROLINA

In the school year 2018-19, there were 90,688 home schools operating in North Carolina serving an estimated 142,037 students.³⁵ Of these schools, 57.6 percent identify as religious schools and 42.4 percent identify as independent schools.

2018-19 Estimated NC Home School Enrollment by Age/Grade³⁶			
Age	Enrollment	Age	Enrollment
6 (1st)	11,443	13 (8th)	12,262
7 (2nd)	13,012	14 (9th)	12,352
8 (3rd)	10,903	15 (10th)	13,908
9 (4th)	11,318	16 (11th)	11,462
10 (5th)	11,378	17 (12th)	89,468
11 (6th)	12,001		
12 (7th)	12,530	Total	142,037

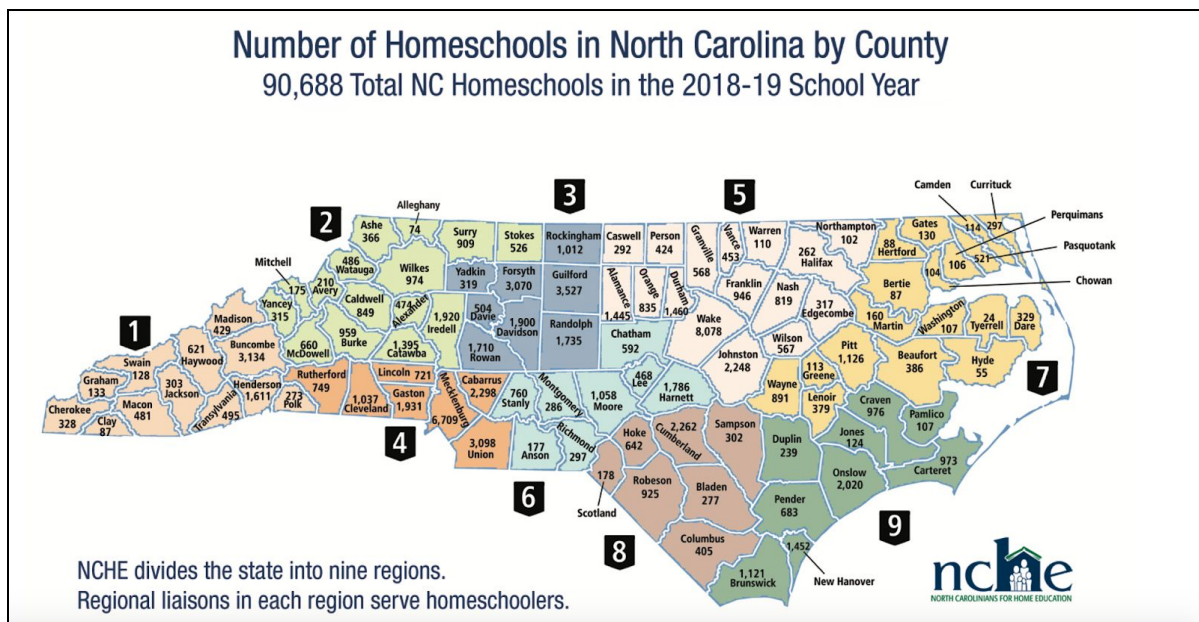
³⁴ Session Law 2016-94. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/sessions/2015/bills/house/html/h1030v8.html>.

³⁵ 2019 NC Home School Statistical Summary. Available at https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/18-19_Home_School_Annual_Report.pdf

³⁶ 2019 NC Home School Statistical Summary.

Parents or guardians residing in North Carolina with at least a high school diploma are permitted to home school their children if they submit a Notice of Intent to the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education and agree to minimum requirements, including maintaining immunization records, administering a nationally standardized test each year in spelling, reading, English grammar, and mathematics, and operate "on a regular schedule, excluding reasonable holidays and vacations, during at least nine calendar months of the year." Home schools in North Carolina are elect to operate as either non-religious or religious schools..³⁷

Because the Division of Non-Public Education does not record the number of students enrolled at each home school, the total home school enrollment is estimated by the number of home schools and the average number of children per household rate of 1.6. The number of home schools has grown dramatically over the last 20 years. In January 1988, there were an estimated 1,046 homeschools in North Carolina. Since then, the number of home schools in North Carolina has grown at an estimated annual growth rate of 14%. As of July 2019, North Carolinians for Home Education estimated there were more than 90,000 home schools in North Carolina.³⁸



Source: North Carolinians for Home Educations, Statistics. Available at <https://www.nche.com/stats/>

RECENT LEGISLATION REGARDING HOMESCHOOLING

The NC General Assembly passed legislation in 2013 amending the definition of a home school. SB 189 amended the definition to allow parents, legal guardians, or members of the household to determine the scope and sequence of academic instruction, provide academic instruction, and determine additional sources of academic instruction for the children in the home school.³⁹

³⁷ North Carolina General Statutes, Article 39. Available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_115C/Article_39.html

³⁸ North Carolinians for Home Educations (NCHE), 2019 Statistics. Available at <https://www.nche.com/stats/>.

³⁹ Session Law 2013, Senate Bill 189. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/Senate/PDF/S189v3.pdf>.

SCHOOL FINANCE

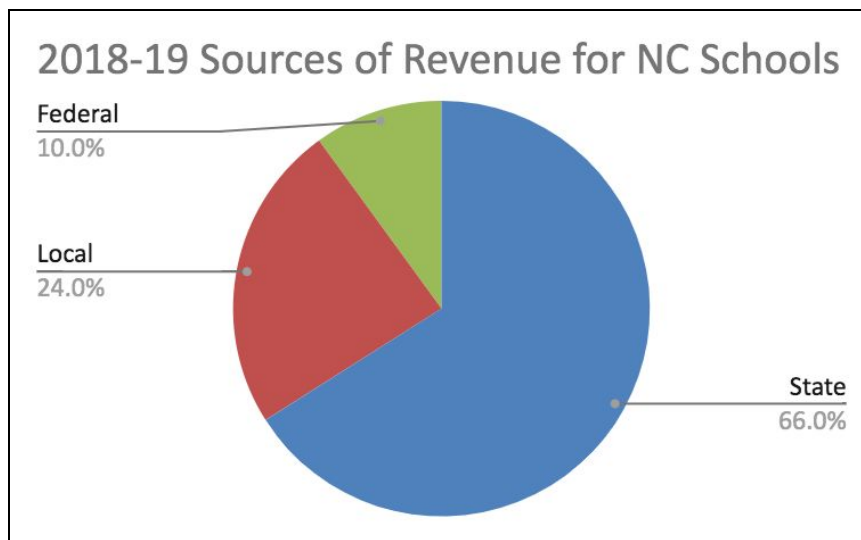
KEY ISSUES

State, federal, and local resources contribute to public education. With the distribution of resources from all three sources changing yearly, schools and districts are continually anticipating shifts in funding so they can appropriately budget for recurring expenses and larger investments.

For over 25 years, North Carolina has been involved in legal proceedings regarding the state’s constitutional obligation to provide a “general and uniform system of free public schools.”¹ The central issues presented in these cases relate to the provision of equitable educational opportunities to all North Carolina students. In 1997, the Supreme Court of North Carolina unanimously ruled in *Leandro vs. State* that all children residing in North Carolina have a fundamental right under the state constitution to the “opportunity to receive a sound basic education.”²

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Funding for North Carolina’s public schools comes from a combination of federal, state, and local resources. According to North Carolina’s State Constitution, the North Carolina General Assembly is responsible for providing, through taxation and otherwise, a general and uniform system of free public schools. Thus, the state maintains the main responsibility for all current expenses of public education. North Carolina public schools spent nearly \$14 billion in the 2018-19 school year using a combination of state, federal, and local resources, with the majority of that funding coming from the state.³



¹ North Carolina State Constitution, Article IX, Section 2.
Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Legislation/constitution/nconstitution.html>.

² *Leandro v. State*, 488 S.E.2d 249 (N.C. 1997).
Available at <http://www.law.unc.edu/documents/civilrights/briefs/leandrosupremecourtdecisionjuly97.pdf>.

³ NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 22 – Current Expense Expenditure by Source of Funds.
Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:32:::NO::>

TYPES OF FUNDING

STATE FUNDING

- Funding for personnel and services necessary for basic instruction.
- Allocations based on student and personnel numbers and district characteristics.
- Supplemental funding to small county school systems and low wealth school systems in an attempt to close the gap between resource-rich and resource-poor districts.

FEDERAL FUNDING

- Federal grants are accessible by competitive grant programs, state plans or applications, or direct appropriation.
- Many federal programs are targeted to low-income students and students with disabilities.
- Child nutrition is federally funded.

LOCAL FUNDING

- Provide facilities, arts and language courses, advanced coursework, salary supplements, and additional teachers and staff.
- Local funding varies significantly across districts because it is based on local property tax levels (See the Forum's *2020 North Carolina Local School Finance Study* for a complete analysis of local school finances).⁴
- In 2018, the General Assembly enacted a new local funding statute, G.S. 160A-690 authorizing cities and towns to use their property tax revenues and other unrestricted revenues to supplement funding for public schools, including traditional public schools, charter schools, innovative schools, lab schools and regional schools.⁵

Education remains the single largest budget item in most state budgets. States use income taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, and fees to fund a portion of the budgets in elementary and secondary schools.

Nationally in 2018-19, the NEA estimated that 47.3% of funding for public schools came from state governments, 45.4% from local governments, and 7.3% from the federal governments.⁶ In North Carolina, a relatively higher percentage of school funding comes from the state compared to the national average, due to the state's constitution placing responsibility for public education squarely on the state.

CHANGES TO EDUCATION FUNDING

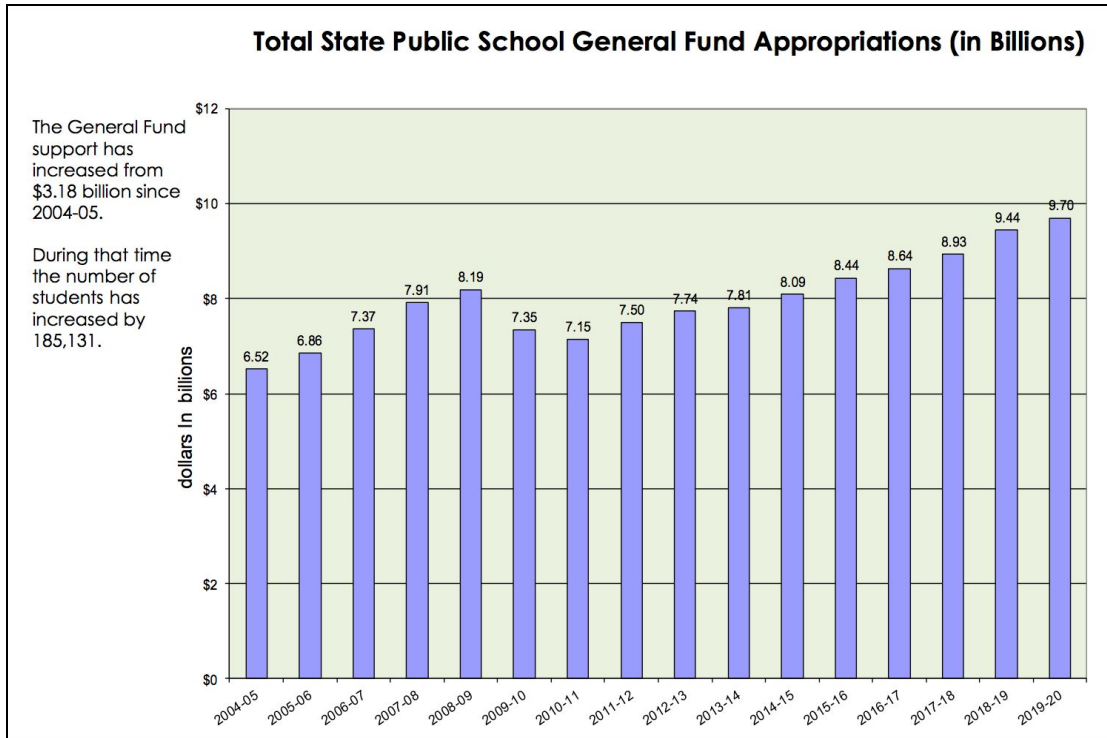
The Great Recession resulted in a major drop in state spending in North Carolina that took seven years to recover. In 2015-16, overall state dollars spent for education (unadjusted for inflation) finally eclipsed pre-recession levels. However, when adjusting for inflation, current funding for education remains below what they were prior to the recession. In 2009-2010, state appropriations dropped to \$7.35 billion, down from \$8.19 billion in 2008-2009. This was a national trend and, at least in part, a result of the recession. Overall, funding has increased in North Carolina from \$5.92 billion in 2002-03 to \$9.7 billion in 2019-20, largely in response to a growing student population (see chart on next page).⁷

⁴ Public School Forum of North Carolina, *Local School Finance Study*. Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/local-school-finance-study/>.

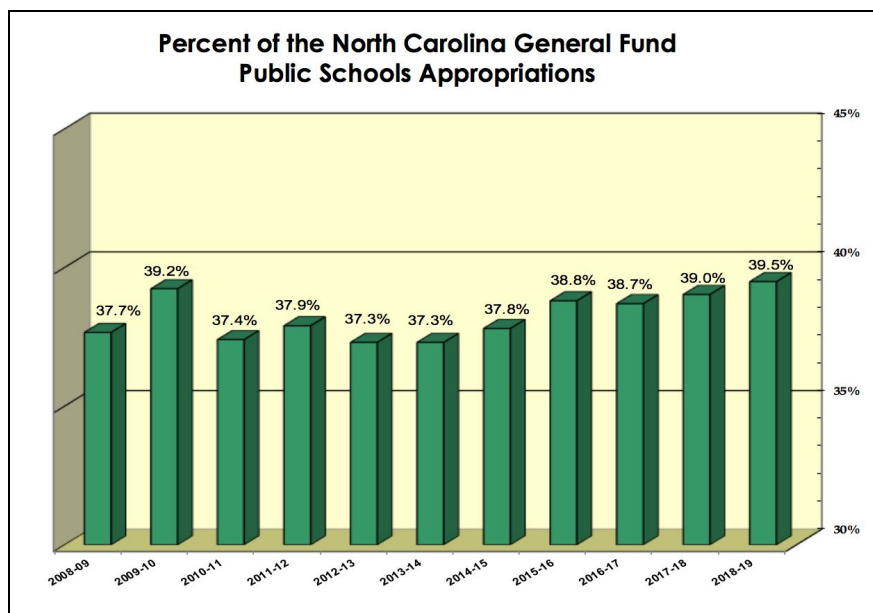
⁵ Session Law 2018-5, Section 38.8. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/Senate/PDF/S99v6.pdf>.

⁶ National Education Association, *Rankings of the States 2018 and Estimates of School Statistics 2019*. Available at <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2019%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report.pdf>.

⁷ NC DPI, *Highlights of the North Carolina School Budget, May 2020*. Available at



While total dollars have increased for education funding since 1970, the share of the General Fund going to public schools has decreased by approximately 13%. If public schools were currently funded at the same percentage as in FY 1969-70, an additional \$3 billion would be available for schools.⁸



<https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2020highlights.pdf>

⁸ NC DPI, Highlights of the North Carolina School Budget, February 2019. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2019highlights.pdf>

PER-PUPIL SPENDING

According to a 2020 NEA report, North Carolina's per-pupil spending was ranked 40th nationally, in comparison with all 50 states and the District of Columbia, based on data from the 2018-19 school year.⁹ The state's highest rank on this measure was 34th in 1994-95. Based on the same report, North Carolina was estimated to have spent \$10,632 per student in 2019-20, which is 79 percent of the US average of \$13,384. Since funding sources vary widely among states and within states, the total amount of money spent on each school age child in this country ranged from \$6,797 to over \$25,000 for the 2019-20 school year. If North Carolina spent at the national average, schools would have an additional \$2,752 dollars to spend per student.

Estimated Expenditures for K-12 Public Schools per Student Enrollment, 2019-20			
STATE	EXPENDITURES	STATE	EXPENDITURES
New York	\$25,344	Kentucky	\$12,423
New Jersey	\$21,742	Kansas	\$12,380
Washington DC	\$20,882	Virginia	\$12,251
Connecticut	\$20,721	Louisiana	\$12,005
Alaska	\$20,719	Iowa	\$11,928
Massachusetts	\$20,099	Colorado	\$11,891
New Hampshire	\$18,032	Montana	\$11,806
Pennsylvania	\$17,964	Nebraska	\$11,789
Wyoming	\$17,503	Missouri	\$11,685
Rhode Island	\$17,324	Georgia	\$11,187
Vermont	\$17,260	South Dakota	\$11,076
Illinois	\$17,236	Michigan	\$11,062
North Dakota	\$15,702	North Carolina	\$10,632
Washington	\$15,639	Texas	\$10,583
Hawaii	\$15,392	South Carolina	\$10,471
Maryland	\$14,960	Arkansas	\$10,465
Delaware	\$14,655	Alabama	\$10,313
Maine	\$13,847	Indiana	\$10,269
Minnesota	\$13,751	Florida	\$10,210
US AVERAGE	\$13,384	Nevada	\$10,125
West Virginia	\$13,246	Tennessee	\$9,526
Oregon	\$13,236	Mississippi	\$9,476
California	\$13,200	Arizona	\$9,399
Ohio	\$12,796	Oklahoma	\$9,235
Wisconsin	\$12,587	Utah	\$7,409
New Mexico	\$12,573	Idaho	\$6,797

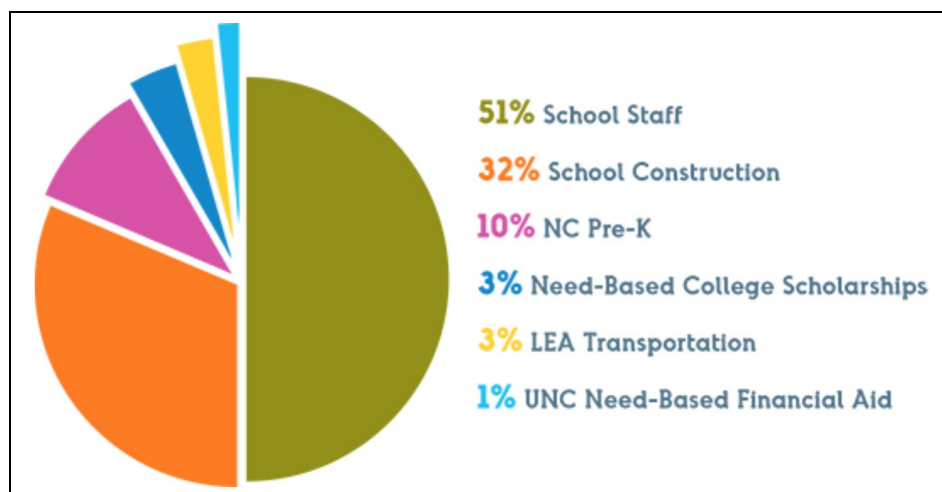
Source: NEA, Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020.

NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION LOTTERY

In August 2005, the General Assembly voted to create the North Carolina Education Lottery. The net proceeds of the lottery go to education expenses, including personnel, academic pre-kindergarten programs, school construction, transportation, and scholarships for college and university students with financial need.

⁹ National Education Association, Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020. Available at <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2020%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS RECEIVING LOTTERY FUNDS IN FISCAL YEAR 2019



Source: NC Education Lottery

In Fiscal Year 2019, the lottery provided \$709.2 million to education.¹⁰ School systems and charter schools in North Carolina received nearly \$386 million from lottery proceeds for non-instructional support personnel. Across the state, approximately \$240.7 million was allocated for school construction and repairs. Over \$78 million went to the state Pre-K program. Students who qualify for federal Pell Grants were eligible for over \$30 million in scholarships made available through lottery funds in 2019, and another \$10.7 million provided grants to students attending a UNC system school.¹¹

DPI reports that approximately 30 percent of lottery revenue goes to education. The remaining revenue goes to prize payouts, commissions, and administrative expenses.¹²

SCHOOL FINANCE LITIGATION IN NORTH CAROLINA – THE LEANDRO CASE

In North Carolina, parents in five low-wealth school districts (Cumberland, Halifax, Hoke, Robeson, and Vance) filed a lawsuit against the state in 1994: *Leandro v. State*. They argued their lower tax bases and smaller populations made it impossible to offer the same educational opportunities offered by public schools in wealthier districts. Wealthier school districts, including Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Public Schools, Durham Public Schools, Wake County Schools, and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Public Schools, plus Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, joined the lawsuit, arguing that the amount that the state pays for public schools did not adequately provide for the extra costs of educating low-wealth and exceptional children.

In July 1997, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that North Carolina's Constitution does not guarantee a right to equal education opportunities in every school district. In its ruling, however, the court held that all children residing in the state have a constitutional right to a "sound basic education." The court defined the type of education to which students are entitled by listing four components of a sound basic education:¹³

¹⁰ NC Education Lottery: Earnings for Education. Available at <https://www.nclottery.com/Education>.

¹¹ NC Education Lottery History of Lottery Fund Assignments. Available at <https://nclottery.com/Content/Docs/HistoryofLotteryFundAssignment-FY19.pdf>.

¹² AskNC: What percentage of lottery money goes to education? Available at <https://nccppr.org/asknc-percentage-lottery-money-goes-education/>.

¹³ *Leandro v. State* Case Summary. Available at <http://law.duke.edu/childedlaw/schooldiscipline/attorneys/casesummaries/leandroystate/>.

1. Ability to read, write and speak the English language and sufficient knowledge of mathematics and physical science.
2. Sufficient knowledge of geography, history, and basic economic and political systems.
3. Sufficient academic and vocational skills to engage in post-secondary or vocational training.
4. Sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable a student to compete on an equal basis with others in further education or future employment.

Further, a Trial Court and the state Supreme Court later found that the following mandates must be upheld: that a well-trained, competent teacher in every classroom, a well-trained, competent principal in every school and enough resources that every child has an equal opportunity for education.

While the *Leandro* case mandated a basic level of education for all North Carolina students, its decision allowed counties to help finance their schools based on local property taxes, which has enabled funding disparities between low-wealth and high-wealth counties to persist and even increase.

In an effort to better address the state's constitutional obligation as it pertains to at-risk students, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) developed a Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Fund (DSSF) to provide additional resources to districts. In December 2004, NC DPI revised, and the court endorsed, a new identification model that considers several factors: the percent of public school students living in a single parent family, the percent of population age 5-17 below the poverty line, and the percent of public school students with at least one parent with less than a high school diploma.

From 2004-2014, the Supreme Court afforded the State ten years to use its initiative, discretion, and expertise to develop and implement a *Leandro* remedial plan. While the State took some promising initial steps, its progress was curtailed by the subsequent elimination of most of these initiatives.

On the 20th anniversary of the first *Leandro* Supreme Court decision, in 2017 plaintiffs and state defendants filed a Joint Motion asking the Trial Court to appoint "an independent, non-party consultant to develop detailed, comprehensive, written recommendations for specific actions necessary to achieve sustained compliance with the constitutional mandates articulated in this case." That motion was granted, and the third party is tasked with recommending the specific actions the State must take to provide competent well-trained principals and teachers in every school and classroom in North Carolina, and to identify the resources necessary to ensure that all children in public school, including those at-risk, have an equal opportunity to obtain a sound basic education as defined in *Leandro*.

The Trial Court appointed WestEd, a major national education consulting firm, to serve as the Court's independent, non-party consultant and to deliver its final report to the Court in 2019.

In 2017, Governor Roy Cooper introduced his own Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education to examine the state's efforts to comply with the *Leandro* mandates and to "implement comprehensive, inter-disciplinary measures that allocate the resources necessary to ensure that the promise of a sound basic education for children in this state is realized."¹⁴

On December 10th, 2019, independent consultants WestEd, in collaboration with the Learning Policy Institute and the Friday Institute at NC State University, released their findings and a sequenced action plan to meet the State's constitutional obligation. Their 287 page report, entitled "Sound Basic education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina," was based on 13 extensive research studies and issued a series of

¹⁴ Stancill, J. "Long-running debate over NC school funding". The News and Observer. Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article163380363.html>.

recommendations to the State to ensure compliance with *Leandro*. The report focused on eight critical needs for the state's public schools:

- 1) Finance and resource allocation
- 2) A qualified and well-prepared teacher in every classroom
- 3) A qualified and well-prepared principal in every school
- 4) Early childhood education
- 5) High-poverty schools
- 6) State assessment system and school accountability system
- 7) Regional and statewide supports for school improvement
- 8) Monitoring the state's compliance

In January 2020, following the release of WestEd's report, Judge David Lee signed a consent order, agreeing with the conclusion by all parties in the *Leandro* suit that a definite action plan must be implemented starting in 2020 for the successful provision of the constitutional *Leandro* rights- a sound basic education for all. Judge Lee noted in his response, "North Carolina's PreK-12 public education system leaves too many students behind, especially students of color and economically disadvantaged students. As a result, thousands of students are not being prepared for full participation in the global, interconnected economy and the society in which they will live, work, and engage as citizens."

In June 2020, the parties in the *Leandro* case submitted a "Joint Report to the Court on Sound Basic Education for All: Fiscal Year 2021 Action Plan for North Carolina" to Judge Lee. The action plan included steps for initial investments in Fiscal Year 2021 for the state to begin to work towards *Leandro* implementation. The steps, detailed below, would require an additional state investment of \$426,990,610.

1. A system of teacher development and recruitment that ensures each classroom is staffed with a high-quality teacher who is supported with early, ongoing professional learning and provided competitive pay.
 - a. Increase the pipeline of diverse, well-prepared teachers by expanding the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program.
 - b. Significantly increase the racial and ethnic diversity of North Carolina's qualified and well-prepared teacher workforce and ensure all teachers employ culturally responsive practices.
 - c. Provide high-quality comprehensive mentoring and induction support for novice teachers in their first three years of teaching to increase both their effectiveness and their retention.
 - d. Implement differentiated staffing models that include advanced teaching roles and additional compensation to retain and extend the reach of high-performing teachers.
 - e. Increase educator compensation and create compensation incentives to enable low-wealth districts to attract and retain qualified and well-prepared teachers.
2. A system of principal development and recruitment that ensures each school is led by a high-quality principal who is supported with early, ongoing professional learning and provided competitive pay.
 - a. Update the State's school administrator preparation and principal licensure requirements to align program approval standards with effectiveness practices.
 - b. Continue to expand access to high-quality principal preparation programs.
 - c. Expand professional learning opportunities for current principals and assistant principals.

3. A finance system that provides adequate, equitable and predictable funding to school districts and, importantly, adequate resources to address the needs of all North Carolina schools and students, especially at-risk students as defined by the *Leandro* decisions.
 - a. Revise the State's school funding formula so that current and additional funding is distributed to students with the greatest need.
 - b. Increase Local Education Agency (LEA) budgetary flexibility by lifting restrictions on critical allotments through the ABC transfer system.
 - c. Increase flexible funding for Student Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) to meet the academic, physical, and mental health needs of students and to ensure that schools are safe and supportive learning environments.
4. An assessment and accountability system that reliably assesses multiple measures of student performance and provides accountability consistent with the *Leandro* standard.
 - a. Establish a more balanced and student-centered assessment system.
 - b. Include additional assessment item types that provide a broader understanding of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities.
 - c. Amend the current accountability model to include measures of progress toward providing all students with the opportunity to obtain a sound, basic education.
 - d. Amend the current annual school report cards to include additional demographic information on students and staff.
5. An assistance and turnaround function that provides necessary support to low-performing schools and districts.
 - a. Develop the State's capacity to fully support the improvement of its lowest performing schools and districts.
6. A system of early education that provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities to ensure that all students at-risk of educational failure, regardless of where they live in the State, enter kindergarten on track for school success.
 - a. Expand the NC Pre-K program to provide high-quality, full-year services to all at-risk 4-year-old children.
 - b. Increase high-quality early learning opportunities for at-risk children from birth to age three.
 - c. Expand the NC Infant-Toddler Program to provide high-quality early intervention services for children with special needs and increase access to services.
 - d. Incrementally scale up the Smart Start program to increase quality, access, and support for at-risk children and families.
 - e. Increase the volume and quality of the early childhood educator pipeline.
 - f. Ensure quality transitions and alignment from early childhood programs to K-3 classrooms and strengthen elementary schools' readiness to support all children to achieve early grade success.
 - g. Facilitate reliable access to high quality data supporting early childhood education.
7. An alignment of high school to postsecondary and career expectations, as well as the provision of early postsecondary and workforce learning opportunities, to ensure student readiness to all students in the State.
 - a. Ensure students graduate prepared for college-level coursework.
 - b. Ensure all high school students have the option to complete high school courses leading to college credit, an associate degree, or a career-ready credential.

c. Strengthen college and career advising for high school students.¹⁵

<i>Fiscal Year 2021: Cost Summary</i>	FY 2021 COST¹
A Qualified and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom	\$237,700,000
A Qualified and Well-Prepared Principal in Every School	\$0
A Finance System that Provides Adequate, Equitable, and Efficient Resources	\$144,876,975
An Assessment and Accountability System that Reliably Assesses Multiple Measures of Student Performance	\$0
An Assistance and Turnaround Function that Provides Necessary Support to Low-Performing Schools and Districts	\$4,375,000
A System of Early Education that Provides Access to High-Quality Prekindergarten and Other Early Childhood Learning Opportunities	\$35,650,000
Alignment of High School to Postsecondary and Career Expectations for All Students	\$4,388,635
Total Costs	\$426,990,610

¹All dollar amounts indicate additional funding required above current funding levels. *N/A* indicates that there are no costs associated with this action step in 2021. *Funded for FY 2021* indicates that funds have currently been secured from federal, state, or private sources for fiscal year 2021.

Source: Joint Report To The Court On Sound Basic Education For All: Fiscal Year 2021 Action Plan For North Carolina. Available At https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/leandro_fy2021_plan_rev06152020-final.pdf

In addition to these Fiscal Year 2021 action steps, the Parties are developing longer-term action steps the State will take that will comprise the comprehensive eight-year Action Plan for meeting the Leandro mandate, which are expected to be presented to the Court by the end of 2020.

Additional Resources for School Finance:

Public School Forum of North Carolina’s Local School Finance Study
<https://www.ncforum.org/local-school-finance-study/>

NC DPI Highlights of the Budget
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/budget/>

West Ed Report: Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina
<https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Sound-Basic-Education-for-All-An-Action-Plan-for-North-Carolina.pdf>

Leandro Information and Resources
<https://www.ncforum.org/leandro/>

¹⁵ The full action plan and detailed recommendations can be accessed at https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Leandro_FY2021_plan_rev06152020-FINAL.pdf

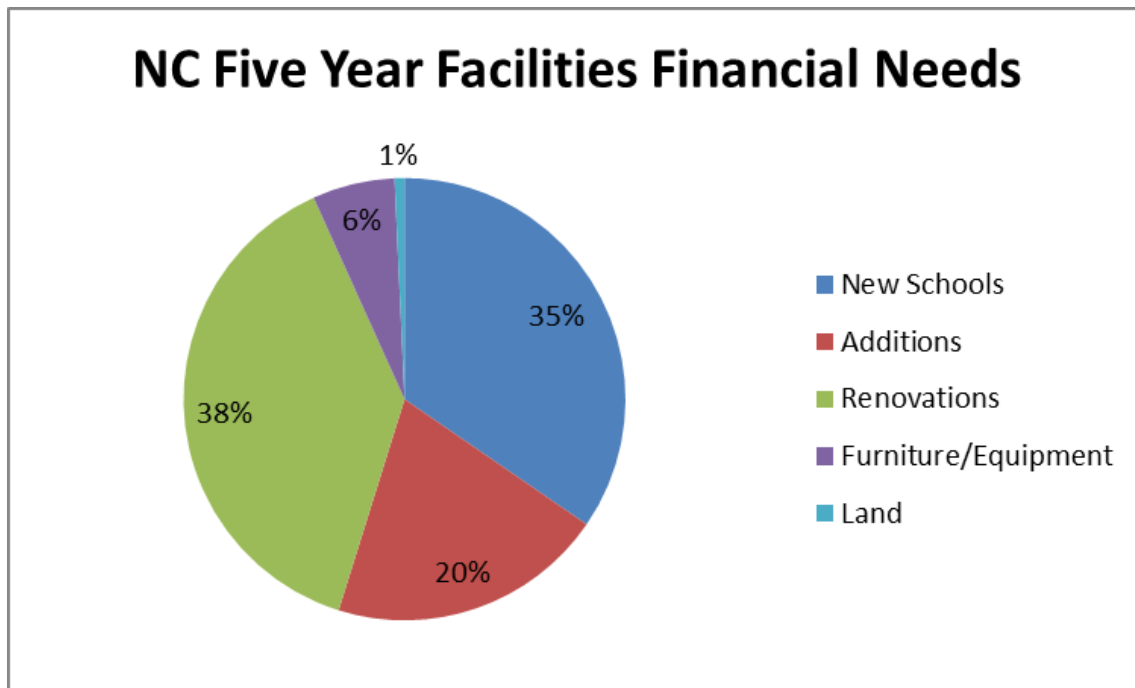
SCHOOL FACILITIES

KEY ISSUES

Since the 1930s, North Carolina's school finance system has mandated that school facility costs are officially the responsibility of local districts, while the responsibility for operating costs (e.g., textbooks, instructional supplies, salaries) rests with the state. At present, however, the lines between these responsibilities have been blurred, with local school districts funding significant portions of operating costs. For example, in 2018-19, counties spent over \$3.4 billion to fund instructional expenses (i.e., operating costs), making up 24% of total instructional costs for NC schools. The state contributed around 2.7% of school capital (i.e., facility) costs.¹

FACILITIES NEEDS SURVEY

The most recent NC DPI Facilities Needs Survey, published in 2015-16, estimated that \$8.1 billion was needed at the time for new schools, additions, renovations, furniture and equipment, and land.² This survey also found that at least 118 new schools were needed across North Carolina: 50 were needed immediately, and approximately 68 were needed within three years. Besides new construction, the survey concluded that 1,560 schools needed renovations to comply with safety and building code requirements and to address deferred maintenance, and an estimated 459 schools needed additions for new classrooms.



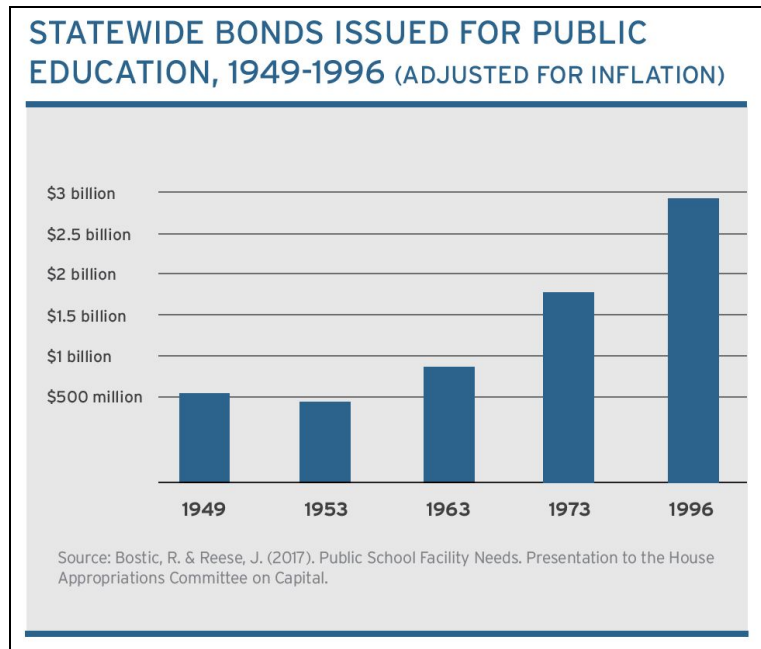
Source: 2015-16 NC DPI Facilities Needs Survey

¹ NC DPI Statistical Profile. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:1:.....>

² NC DPI 2015-16 Facilities Needs Survey. Available at [http://www.schoolclearinghouse.org/otherinf/FacilityNeedsSurvey/2015%20Facility%20Needs%20Survey%20\(SBE\).pdf](http://www.schoolclearinghouse.org/otherinf/FacilityNeedsSurvey/2015%20Facility%20Needs%20Survey%20(SBE).pdf).

STATEWIDE SCHOOL BONDS IN NORTH CAROLINA

School facilities experts agree that the best solution to the statewide need for significant school building construction, renovation and repair is a statewide bond referendum. Historically, North Carolina has passed a statewide school bond referendum approximately every ten years in order to address significant school facility needs. However, the last such statewide referendum was in 1996, at a cost of \$1.8 billion.



Public school advocates and legislators have continuously advocated for school bonds to be placed on election ballots. In both 2019 and 2020, House leaders passed bills to include bonds on the November 2020 ballots in all 100 counties to begin to address the state's school construction needs. House Bill 241, passed in the House in 2019, proposed a bond including \$1.9 billion in construction funds for public schools.³ House Bill 1225, passed by the House in June 2020, proposed \$1.05 billion for K-12 schools.⁴ Both bills stalled in the Senate. Proponents of the bills explained that interest rates are low, and the state has the debt capacity to support such a bond.

An alternative to a statewide bond referendum was proposed in the Senate in 2019. Senate Bill 5, Building North Carolina's futures, would have taken a pay-as-you-go approach to addressing school construction needs, using money from the State Capital and Infrastructure Fund (SCIF) to raise about \$6 billion over a nine-year period to be split across K-12, community colleges, and the university system. Proponents of this approach argued that it would save significant interest costs for the state in the long-term. Opponents, however, argue that this approach does not guarantee the funding will actually reach districts in subsequent years, as each allocation has to be approved by the General Assembly. Thus, the pay-as-you-go approach would rely on future General Assemblies continuing to support the funding.⁵

³ House Bill 241. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2019/H241>

⁴ House Bill 1225. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2019/h1225>

⁵ NCSBA Legislative Update. Available at <https://www.ncsba.org/2019/02/ncsba-legislative-update-february-1-2019/>

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING CAPITAL FUND

In 2017, the General Assembly enacted a Needs-Based Public School Building Capital Fund in the state budget with start-up funds at \$30 million. In 2018, the legislature increased this Fund by appropriating \$117,320,354 for 2018-19. The stated intent is to build up this Fund with additional Education Lottery revenues over time such that 40% of Lottery revenue will be dedicated to local school capital needs by 2028-29.⁶ This Fund, which is located in the NC Department of Public Instruction with the State Treasurer as its custodian, awards grants to counties designated as Development Tier 1 or Development Tier 2 to assist with their critical public school building capital needs. There is a matching requirement such that for Tier 1 counties, the grant cannot exceed \$3.00 in grant funds for every \$1.00 provided by the county. For Tier 2 counties, it is a 1:1 match. In November 2019, six North Carolina Counties, including Camden, Graham, Hertford, Northampton, Rutherford, and Wilson, were awarded a total of \$73 million in grant funds from the Needs-Based Public School Building Capital Fund to build new schools. As of Fall 2019, total awards to local districts from the Fund totaled \$242 million, resulting in 22 new schools and the replacement of 32 schools.⁷

In 2018, the General Assembly also enacted a new school building operational leasing option that allows districts in Tier 1 and 2 counties to enter into leasing agreements with developers that are not to exceed 25 years in length. These districts are able to use grant funds not to exceed \$15 million (Tier 1) and \$10 million (Tier 2) from the Needs-Based Public School Building Capital Fund to enter into these leasing agreements.

Additionally, the General Assembly appropriated another \$100 million of Education Lottery funds in each year of the biennium (2017-2019) to a different fund, the Public School Building Capital Fund. From 2012-2018, the legislature has provided a “lump sum” appropriation every year in the amount of \$100 million statewide, to be shared among 100 counties. This equates to roughly 17% of the lottery proceeds.⁸ Based on approximations over the past three years, it costs about \$19 million on average to build an elementary school in North Carolina, \$27 million to build a middle school, and \$60 million to build a high school. Counties are also facing substantial debt obligations for school-related costs. Between 2011 and 2015, 75% of the lottery funds allocated to counties were spent to pay off debt rather than finance new construction.

CLASS SIZE MANDATE (HOUSE BILL 90)

For several years, the General Assembly has expressed its intent through budget provisions and legislation to reduce class sizes in elementary grades in an effort to improve student achievement, especially increased literacy by the third grade. The General Assembly has done so in grades Kindergarten – Grade 3, as enacted in House Bill 90 “Changes to Education and Elections Laws.”⁹ The reduction of these class sizes (decreasing the student:teacher ratio) is relevant to school facilities needs in a significant way, as a reduced number of students per class requires increased facilities, especially when the student population has been on a steady increase in NC. Notably, the above-referenced NC DPI 2015-16 Facility Needs Survey did not take into account the new costs of construction to accommodate this reduction of class sizes as the survey occurred years before the General Assembly enacted this 2018 law. Therefore, the projected \$8.1 billion need for school facilities will be higher as a result of these enacted class size reductions through 2022.

⁶ Session Law 2017-57, Section 5.3, Education Lottery Funds/Changes to Revenue Allocations/Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/SessionLaws/HTML/2017-2018/SL2017-57.html>.

⁷ Six NC counties awarded \$73M in grants to build new schools. Available at <https://www.wral.com/six-nc-counties-awarded-73m-in-grants-to-build-new-schools/18780553/>.

⁸ Lottery Funding for School Construction Isn't Enough. Available at <https://www.ncschoolbond.com/copy-of-environment>.

⁹ Session Law 2018-2. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H90v5.pdf>.

Session Law 2018-2 set forth the following on Class Size reductions and state funding for personnel:

1. In 2018-19, “program enhancement” teachers (e.g., Music, Arts, Physical Education, World Languages, etc.) for K-5 will be funded at \$61,359,225.
2. Phases in K-3 class size reductions over a 4-year period through 2021-22. Funding will increase by 25% each year so that the 1:191 ratio for K-5 “program enhancement” teachers will be 100% funded by 2021-22 as follows:

School Year	Grades	Class Size Average	Individual Class Size Cap
2018-19 ¹⁰	K-3	20	23
2019-20	K-3	19	22
2020-21	K-3	18	21
2021-22 & beyond	K	18	21
	1	16	19
	2-3	17	20

Source: Connect NC

¹⁰ See NC DPI’s Financial & Business Services webpage for the 2018-19 projected new positions (estimates only) by LEA. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/hb90projections18-19.pdf>.

ACCOUNTABILITY

KEY ISSUES

North Carolina's school accountability systems have historically been intended to support every student in meeting college and career ready expectations. Teachers, students, and schools are all held accountable for the growth and achievement of students. But developing accountability measures that accurately reflect student performance and the degree to which schools and teachers have had an impact on achievement has been an ongoing challenge.

North Carolina currently utilizes an accountability model that relies on a system of assigning A-F grades to all schools in the state based on a formula that combines student achievement (80%) and student growth (20%). In addition, North Carolina places a strong emphasis on third grade reading scores, as seen with the 2012 Read to Achieve legislation that requires students to meet certain reading proficiency benchmarks in order to move on to the fourth grade. Finally, low performing schools in North Carolina are defined by law as "those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth."¹ These schools must submit to the state and share with the public plans for improvement that specifically addresses the strategies the school will implement to improve both the School Performance Grade and School Growth designation.

OVERVIEW

Since North Carolina began to earnestly focus on accountability in 1989, state systems for holding students, schools, and teachers accountable have gone through several iterations.

Measurement and assessment are important components of accountability. Assessments can be "summative," occurring at the ends of grades or courses to capture what students have learned. Or they can be "formative," meaning they are used in the short-term to influence what teachers teach and students learn, sometimes week-to-week, day-to-day, or even moment-to-moment.

North Carolina is in the process of developing technology-based platforms that will track student performance and assist teachers and schools in targeting student needs more efficiently. Streamlined information will not only make accountability clearer and simpler, but also may also improve teaching and learning. At all grade levels, the issue of how to support struggling students so they can progress to more advanced work is something policymakers and educators must continually address.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

The Excellent Public Schools Act, enacted by the General Assembly in 2012, included among its provisions a new policy to assign school performance grades to every public school in North Carolina.² The first school performance grades of A, B, C, D or F were released in February 2015 based on data from the 2013-14 school year. School performance grades are calculated on a 15 point grading scale (A = 85, B = 70, C = 55, D = 40, F = less than 40).

¹ G.S. 115C-83.15. School achievement, growth, performance scores, and grades. Available at http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-83.15.pdf.

² G.S. 115C-83.15.

North Carolina is one of 18 states nationally to have adopted an A-F grading system.³ Supporters of these systems say that they hold schools and districts accountable for results, provide parents with an understandable marker of performance, and encourage school improvement efforts. Common complaints include that many A-F grade systems inadequately account for student growth and other important measures of school quality, and that they create incentives for schools to serve students on the borderline at the expense of the lowest- and highest-performing students. Additionally, critics of A-F grading say that the letter grades are too often used to criticize and punish failing schools rather than to target resources and assistance to schools and students that need it most.

Due to the COVID-19 disruption of the 2019-20 school year, The Department of Education granted North Carolina’s request to waive standardized testing requirements for the school year, thus, A-F school grades will not be issued for this year.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADE INDICATORS

Elementary/Middle Schools:	High Schools:
EOG Mathematics	Math I EOC
EOG English/Language Arts/Reading	English II EOC
EOG Science	Biology EOC
Math/ELA/Science EOCs (middle schools)	Graduation Rate
	ACT/ ACT WorkKeys

(EOG: End-Of-Grade Test; EOC: End-Of –Course Test)

Schools Performance Grades are based on two components: a *school achievement score* and a *school growth score*. A combination of the school achievement score and the school growth score make up the overall *school performance grade*. Currently, 80% of the school performance grade is the school achievement score and 20% of the grade is the school growth score. Deliberations in the General Assembly have been underway for the past several years re-evaluating the weight given to each of these components.

School Achievement Score. Schools earn one point for each school-wide percent of:

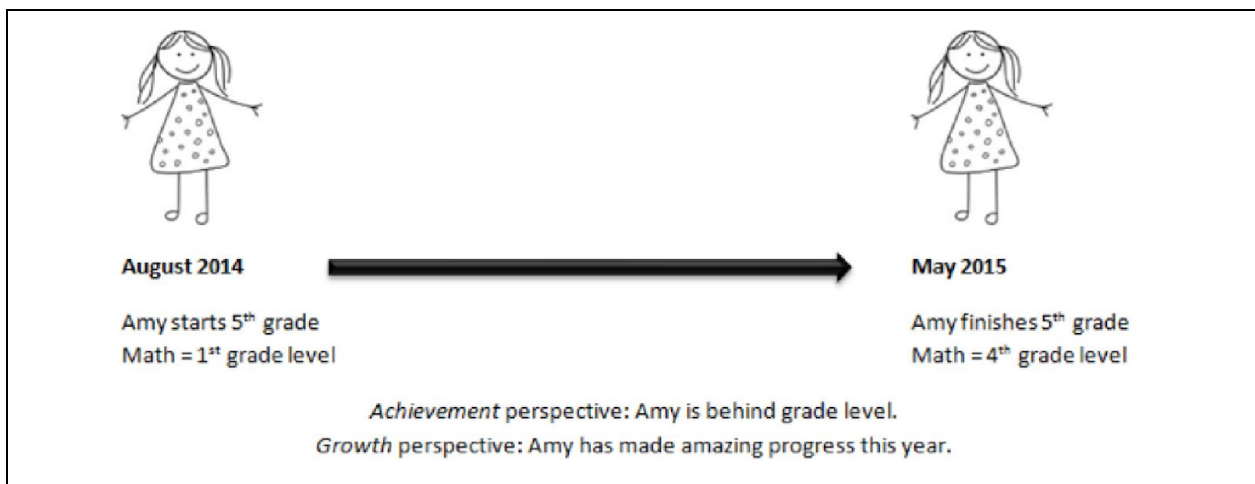
- Students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for mathematics in grades three through eight.
- Students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for reading in grades three through eight.
- Students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for science in grades five and eight.
- Students who score at or above proficient on the Algebra I or Integrated Math I end-of-course test.
- Students who score at or above proficient on the English II end-of-course test.
- Students who score at or above proficient on the Biology end-of-course test.
- Students who complete Algebra II or Integrated Math III with a passing grade.
- Students who achieve the minimum score required for admission into a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina on a nationally normed test of college readiness.
- Students enrolled in Career and Technical Education courses who meet the standard when scoring at Silver, Gold, or Platinum levels on a nationally normed test of workplace readiness.
- Students who graduate within four years of entering high school.

The total points are then converted to a 100-point scale.

³ Burnette, D. “A-F School Rankings Draw Local Pushback” Education Week. Available at <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/03/08/a-f-school-rankings-draw-local-pushback.html>.

School Growth Score. Using EVAAS (SAS® EVAAS™ (Education Value-Added Assessment System) for K-12 is a customized software system available to all North Carolina school districts. EVAAS provides North Carolina's educators with tools to improve student learning and to reflect and improve on their own effectiveness.), the overall growth score earned by schools is calculated. Growth is calculated by weighting achievement indicators used to calculate the School Performance Grade, but only those indicators with growth values (End of Grade and End of Course test scores) through EVAAS are included. The numerical values used to determine whether a school has met, exceeded, or has not met expected growth shall be translated to a 100-point scale.

All other states that use A-F grades place a greater emphasis than North Carolina on growth while deemphasizing achievement. The reason for this is simple: school achievement scores reflect single point-in-time test results, over which schools have far less control than growth, which is designed to measure the impact schools and teachers have on students' academic progress.⁴



ADDITIONAL REPORTING

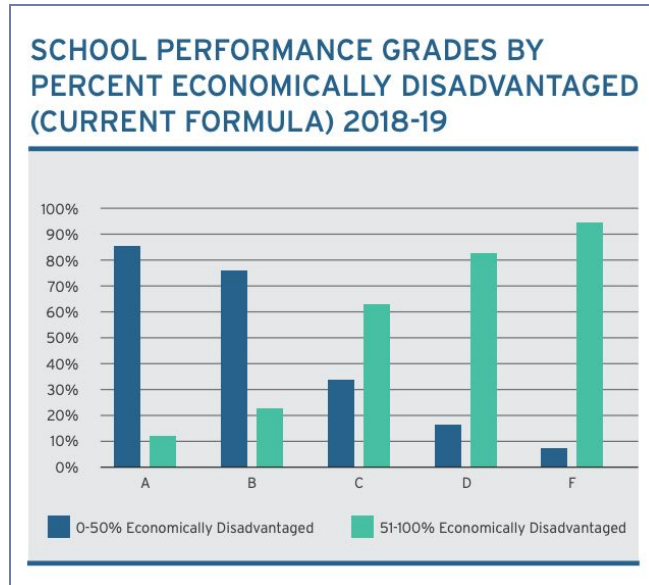
- Growth is reported separately for each school: exceeds, meets, or does not meet expected growth
- A separate achievement score for math and reading is reported for schools serving grades K-8
- The report card that shares the school performance grade for schools serving 3rd graders contains information on the number and percentage of third graders who are retained or promoted based on reading performance

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES AND POVERTY

There is a significant correlation between school performance grades and the proportion of students in a school who are economically disadvantaged. In 2018-19, over 80 percent of schools receiving an A had student populations in which 50 percent or fewer students were economically disadvantaged. Over 90 percent of schools receiving an F had student populations in which 51% or more students were economically disadvantaged.⁵

⁴ Public School Forum of NC. "A is for Affluent." Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/A-is-for-Affluent-Issue-Brief-Format.pdf>.

⁵ Mapping the 2018-19 school report cards. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/map/2019/10/mapping-the-2018-19-school-report-cards/>



Source: Public School Forum of North Carolina, Top Education Issues 2020.

Table 1. Number and Percent of Schools by Letter Grade and EDS Percent Ranges*

Percent EDS	Measure	School Performance Grade					Total
		A	B	C	D	F	
State Level	Percent	8.0	29.3	41.1	18.1	3.6	2,543
0–20%	Number	91	110	33	5	0	239
	Percent	38.1	46.0	13.8	2.1	0.0	
20.1%–40%	Number	66	292	118	19	2	497
	Percent	13.3	58.8	23.7	3.8	0.4	
40.1%–60%	Number	40	264	494	139	17	954
	Percent	4.2	27.7	51.8	14.6	1.8	
60.1%–80%	Number	5	79	356	230	49	719
	Percent	0.7	11.0	49.5	32.0	6.8	
80.1%–100%	Number	1	0	43	67	23	134
	Percent	0.7	0.0	32.1	50.0	17.2	

*Due to rounding, the percent of schools may not total 100%.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

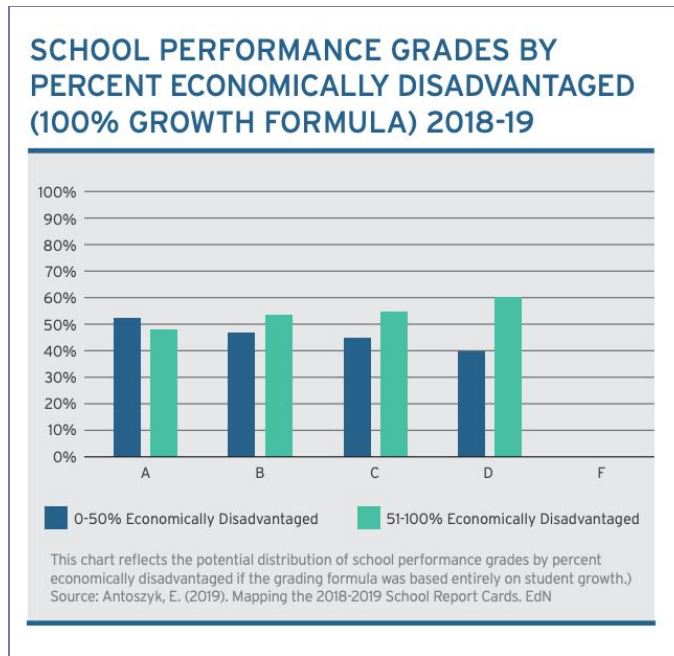
In 2018-19, only 11.7% of schools with 60.1-80% economically disadvantaged students received A's or B's for school performance, while only 0.7% of schools with 80.1-100% EDS received an A or B. In contrast, of the same set of schools with 80.1-100% economically disadvantaged students, 32.1% received C's while 67.2% received D's or F's.⁶

In addition, there is varied performance within individual measures of progress within the subgroup of 1,892 schools with students who are economically disadvantaged. Of the economically disadvantaged subgroup in 2018-19, only 8.0% of schools were meeting the interim progress for mathematics in grades 3–8; out of 1,892 schools, 1,740 of them did not meet the interim progress expectation with an overall rate of 92.0%.⁷

⁶ NC DPI, 2018–19 School Performance Grades and School Accountability Growth by Percentage of Students Identified as Economically Disadvantaged. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/accountability/reporting/spg_growth_by_eds_10022019.pdf

⁷ NC DPI, 2018-19, Table 20 in 2018–19 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools Executive Summary. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/accountability/reporting/exsumm19.pdf>

An analysis of North Carolina’s 2013-14 school performance grades by a Duke University researcher revealed a 61 percent correlation between a school’s free and reduced-price lunch population and its achievement score. By contrast, Wilson found only a two percent correlation between that same measure and a school’s growth score.⁸ The chart below, based on 2018-19 data supports these findings, showing that if performance grades were based entirely on growth rather than proficiency, grades would be much more evenly distributed across schools with different levels of economic disadvantage.⁹



Source: Public School Forum of North Carolina, Top Education Issues 2020.

READ TO ACHIEVE

The Read to Achieve program is a part of the Excellent Public Schools Act which became state law in 2012 and applied to all schools at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. The program focuses on preparing students to read at grade level by the end of third grade, and prevents them from moving to the next grade level until they can prove their reading competency. Under this law, third-grade students who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade will receive special help, including summer reading camp and other interventions to make sure that they can read well enough to be able to do fourth-grade work.

The original 2012 Read to Achieve law required 36 tests to assess whether third-graders are up to grade level in reading comprehension, but greater flexibility has been provided after the specific requirements of the law proved to be challenging to implement. Teachers, parents and school administrators complained that the law is overly strict and requires too much testing – three tests for each of 12 reading standards, all administered in the second half of the school year. In June 2014 Governor McCrory signed a law passed by the General Assembly to give school districts more flexibility in how and when they test students. Alternative assessments

⁸ Meyer, G., Common ground on school grades: We need to grade our schools, but we need to grade them differently. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/2015/03/18/common-ground-on-school-grades-we-need-to-grade-our-schools-but-we-need-to-grade-them-differently/>.

⁹ Mapping the 2018-19 school report cards. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/map/2019/10/mapping-the-2018-19-school-report-cards/>

are allowed as long as they are approved by the State Board of Education and teachers are allowed to spread testing throughout the third-grade year.

The state has spent more than \$150 million on Read to Achieve implementation since its inception. However, in 2019, NC DPI data showed that despite the efforts of Read to Achieve, only 52 percent of first graders, 56 percent of second graders, and 55.9 percent of third graders are reading at grade level. The third grade reading level is down from 60.2 percent in the 2013-2014 school year. A separate study by NC State researchers found no achievement gains from implementing Read to Achieve.¹⁰

In 2019, State leaders proposed the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2019 that would have revised the current Read to Achieve legislation. Some recommendations included requiring K-3 teachers to create individualized reading plans for any student not reading at grade level, the development of a Digital Children’s Reading Initiative under DPI, and revising training standards for teachers to promote early childhood literacy. Governor Cooper vetoed the bill, citing that while early reading skills are central to students’ success, the Read to Achieve program has been costly and implementation has been ineffective, warranting the need for more changes than those proposed.¹¹

NC DPI has a wealth of resources available for parents and teachers to better understand the policies and implementation of Reach to Achieve at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/k-3literacy/achieve/>.

LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

The North Carolina General Assembly provides the definitions for “low-performing schools” as well as “low-performing school districts.”

- Low-performing schools are defined as those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth" as defined by G.S. 115C-83.15.¹²
- A low-performing school district is a local school administrative unit in which the majority of the schools in that unit that received a school performance grade and school growth score as provided in G.S. 115C-83.15 have been identified as low-performing schools, as provided in G.S. 115C-105.37.¹³

By law, low-performing schools and districts must develop a plan for improvement that is accessible to the public.

Beginning in 2011 and with the support of the federal Race to the Top grant, North Carolina implemented a successful state-wide program to turn around the state’s lowest-performing schools. These interventions included comprehensive needs assessments, planning support, as well as coaching and professional development. After four years of services provided by the state’s District and School Transformation (DST) division, 83 percent of the 118 schools ranked in the bottom five percent of public schools improved their overall performance and no longer fall in the bottom five percent. And 70 percent of those schools met or exceeded growth.

¹⁰ News & Observer, ‘Moving backwards’ on reading. NC is not seeing gains from its Read To Achieve program. Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article224161310.html>

¹¹ News & Observer, ‘If some things need fixing, let’s fix them.’ NC leaders want to improve Read To Achieve. Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article228668034.html>

¹² G.S. 115C-105.37(a).

¹³ G.S. 115C-105.39A(a).

However, state lawmakers chose not to continue this support strategy, known as “Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools” (TALAS), which was largely funded with federal dollars through the Race to the Top grant. The NC Department of Public Instruction is now only able to serve less than half of the low-performing schools that they used to serve, and in a limited capacity, through TALAS.

A different alternative for low-performing schools is the Innovative School District (formerly known as the Achievement School District). The intention of the ISD, as enacted by the General Assembly in 2016, was to place up to five of the state’s lowest performing schools into a new school district run by charter management organization (CMO). Similar efforts have been met with intense controversy in Tennessee and other locales. In North Carolina, the ISD proposal has faced considerable local pushback.

Low-performing schools do have another option to pursue in an effort to lift themselves out of low-performing status. These schools can apply for the state’s “restart” program, which offers them charter school-like flexibility in terms of how they structure their school days, hire and fire teachers, and spend state funds.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

KEY ISSUES

Standards outline what each student should learn by the end of each grade level. Standards in North Carolina are put in place at the state level to ensure all students will be taught the content deemed essential and necessary by the state. Each content area's standards are reviewed every five-to-seven years to ensure the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) consists of clear, relevant standards and objectives.¹ Standards allow teachers and parents to assess student progress.

Curriculum is made up of the methods and techniques used by teachers to explain key concepts and subject areas. Curriculum is established by teachers and local school leaders.

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards into its Standard Course of Study for English and Math, with statewide implementation beginning in 2012-13. To complement the Common Core, North Carolina implemented the newly developed Essential Standards as the parallel Standard Course of Study in all remaining areas of study including science, social studies, information and technology, world languages, arts education, occupational course of study, healthful living, guidance, and English as a Second Language. The standards set by the Common Core and Essential Standards define the knowledge and skills students should acquire by the end of each school year from Kindergarten through 12th grade.

While they have been the topic of much debate in North Carolina and nationally, Common Core and the Essential Standards do not dictate the curriculum taught by North Carolina's teachers, which consists of the methods and techniques used by teachers to explain key concepts and subject areas. Local school leaders are responsible for making decisions about the curriculum that they choose to deliver to students based on the statewide Standard Course of Study (whether it is the Common Core or something else). In addition, local schools and districts may offer electives and coursework that go above and beyond the Standard Course of Study's content standards. Classroom instruction is a partnership between the state, which sets content standards in the Standard Course of Study, and local educators who determine which curriculum materials they will use to deliver instruction to reach standards set by the state.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

In the past, each state set its own standards, leading to results that varied widely from state to state, and making it difficult to compare performance across states or to design assessments or materials aligned with multiple states' different standards. The Common Core grew out of a 20-year effort to design a set of standards that would be rigorous and facilitate interstate collaboration while retaining local control over curricular decisions.

The effort started with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics publishing in 1989 what was intended to be a consensus statement of mathematics standards. The publication helped spur a period of widespread, state-led development of standards and assessments, which coincided with broad rejection of

¹ Standard Course of Study. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/k-12-standards-curriculum-and-instruction/standard-course-study>

the idea of creating *national standards*. The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 required states to develop proficiency standards, but left it to each state to set its own standards. But at around the same time, international data showed the U.S. badly underperforming other countries, particularly in math, leading policymakers to become concerned that low standards were holding back students and states' economic development efforts. In response, the organization Achieve, led by governors and business leaders, sparked the American Diploma Project, an effort by 30 states to align high school graduation requirements with entrance requirements for colleges and work-based training programs. Through this project, state leaders discovered substantial agreement among states on what students should be able to know and do in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

On the heels of this work, in 2007, an alliance of state education leaders (the Council of Chief State School Officers) and the National Governors Association (NGA) issued a report calling for a "common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K-12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive."² In 2009, they invited state leaders to participate in an effort to develop common standards. Nearly every state agreed to participate (48 states). The group developed committees of educators and subject matter experts from across the country to develop standards for every grade level, K-12. By 2012, 46 states and the agency that runs schools on military bases in the U.S. and abroad had signed on and agreed to adopt the standards in their entirety, though every state retained discretion to add up to 15 percent locally developed standards.

North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 as its Standard Course of Study for English language arts and mathematics and began implementation statewide in all public schools in the 2012-13 school year. The standards outline what each student should learn by the end of each grade level so that teachers and parents can assess student progress. For grades K-8, grade-by-grade standards exist in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. For grades 9-12, the standards are grouped into grade bands of 9-10 grade standards and 11-12 grade standards. Supporters of the standards argue that they are:

1. Research and evidence based
2. Clear, understandable, and consistent
3. Aligned with college and career expectations
4. Based on rigorous content and the application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills
5. Built upon the strengths and lessons of current state standards
6. Informed by other top-performing countries to prepare all students for success in our global economy and society³

Opponents of Common Core argue that the standards may be too rigorous in some areas and not rigorous enough in others, or that the federal government has played too heavy a role in encouraging states to adopt the standards.

While the standards set grade-specific goals, they do not define how the standards should be taught or which materials should be used to support students. States and districts recognize the need for a range of supports to ensure that all students, including those with special needs and English language learners, can master the standards. Even though no set of grade-specific standards can reflect the great variety of abilities, needs,

² Rothman, R. (2013). *Common Core State Standards 101*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, citing National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve (2008), *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*. Washington, DC: Author, p. 6.

³ Common Core State Standards Initiative (2014), *About the Common Core State Standards*. Available at <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/>.

learning rates, and achievement levels of students in a classroom, the standards provide checkpoints of college and career readiness for all students.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

The standards establish guidelines for English Language Arts (ELA) as well as for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Because students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, the standards promote the literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness across multiple disciplines.

The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards form the backbone of the ELA/literacy standards by articulating core knowledge and skills, while grade-specific standards provide additional specificity. Beginning in grade 6, the literacy standards allow teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects to use their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields. In developing the English Language Arts standards, Common Core focused on a few fundamental shifts in curriculum to guide student learning. These key shifts include:

- **Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language:** to prepare students for the demands of college- and career-level literature and vocabulary.
- **Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational:** to ensure that students are capable of answering text-dependent questions based on a specific reading, rather than a student's prior knowledge or experiences.
- **Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction:** to help students develop strong general knowledge and an improved vocabulary through informational nonfiction readings in history, social sciences, technical studies, and the arts.⁴

MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

The development of the new math standards began with research-based learning progressions detailing what is known today about how students' mathematical knowledge, skill, and understanding develop over time. The standards encourage students to solve real-world problems and develop the knowledge and skills they will need in order to be prepared for mathematics in college, career, and life. The mathematics standards do not include separate Anchor Standards like those used in the ELA/literacy standards. In developing the Mathematics standards, Common Core again focused on a few fundamental shifts in curriculum to guide student learning. These key shifts include:

- **Greater focus on fewer topics:** to ensure that mathematics teachers cover fewer topics in greater detail rather than provide a superficial outline of all topics. The concentrations on a grade-level basis are as follows:
 - Grades K–2: Concepts, skills, and problem solving related to addition and subtraction
 - Grades 3–5: Concepts, skills, and problem solving related to multiplication and division of whole numbers and fractions
 - Grade 6: Ratios and proportional relationships; early algebraic expressions and equations
 - Grade 7: Ratios and proportional relationships, and arithmetic of rational numbers
 - Grade 8: Linear algebra and linear functions
- **Coherence and linking of topics across grades:** to ensure that mathematics topics are approached as interwoven and connected concepts that can be developed further from grade to grade.

⁴ English Language Arts Standards. Available at <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>

- **Rigor:** to pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity.
 - Conceptual Understanding: Students will be taught to view math from a conceptual standpoint and apply key concepts like place value and ratios across different perspectives.
 - Procedural Skills and Fluency: Students will utilize speed and accuracy for calculations in order to further develop more complex skills.
 - Application: Students will be encouraged to apply mathematical concepts in real-life situations to improve problem-solving capabilities.⁵

NORTH CAROLINA ESSENTIAL STANDARDS

North Carolina's Essential Standards constitute its Standard Course of Study for science, social studies, information and technology, world languages, arts education, occupational course of study, healthful living, guidance, and English as a Second Language. The Essential Standards were written using the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT), a model for qualitative expression of different types of thinking. The RBT was chosen because it has well-defined verbs and is built on modern cognitive research that will help progress students towards the complex thinking expected of 21st Century graduates. The RBT categorizes both the cognitive process and the knowledge dimension of the standards.

1. **Cognitive Process Dimension:**

The cognitive process refers to the verbs used in the standard. The RBT has specific definitions for all the verbs used in its model. For example:

- a. **Explaining** requires constructing a cause-and-effect model of a system (e.g. explain the recent downturn in the global economy)
- b. **Inferring** requires drawing a logical conclusion from presented information (e.g. In learning a foreign language, infer grammatical principles from examples)

2. **Knowledge Dimension:**

The knowledge dimension is a way to categorize the type of knowledge to be learned. For instance, in the standard "The student will understand the concept of equality as it applies to solving problems with unknown quantities", the knowledge to be learned is "*the concept of equality as it applies to solving problems with unknown quantities.*" Knowledge in the RBT falls into four categories:

- a. **Factual Knowledge** of terminology; specific dates and elements
- b. **Conceptual Knowledge** of classifications and categories; principles and generalizations; theories, models, and structures
- c. **Procedural Knowledge** of subject-specific skills and algorithms; subject-specific techniques and methods; criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures
- d. **Meta-Cognitive Knowledge** of strategic knowledge; knowledge about cognitive tasks; self-knowledge

REVISION CYCLE

The NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) reviews the standards for each content area every five to seven years to ensure the NCSCOS consists of clear, relevant standards and objectives. The standards Review, Revision, and Implementation process provides a comprehensive study of each content area organized by grade level, proficiency level, and/or course. The five-to-seven-year cycle allows time for review, revision, and consistent implementation of the standards.

⁵ Mathematics Standards. Available at <http://www.corestandards.org/Math/>

K-12 SOCIAL STUDIES

The K-12 Social Studies Standards (both current and proposed revisions) are conceptually-written or broadly stated to focus on concepts and transferable ideas, and are intended to help students to recognize patterns and make connections in their learning that transfer beyond a single grade, discipline, topic, or isolated fact.

Current legislation dictates specific content for K-12 social studies courses. A law passed in the 2019 legislative session prompted a controversial change in Social Studies requirements, which mandated a new Economics and Personal Finance class for NC students. Required Social Studies courses now include World History, American History, American History 1, American History 2 and Civic Literacy and Economics and Personal Finance.⁶

The K-12 Social Studies Standards are currently undergoing revision. The revised standards will include an additional focus on conceptual ideas, such as leadership, conflict resolution, movement, values, environmental challenges, justice, and other concepts. A three-step process is used to make changes to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) for Social Studies: review, revise, and implement.

1. Revision (Completed)

NCDPI K-12 Social Studies facilitates the standards review phase with the assistance of national and state-level data, standards research, and input of educator and citizen stakeholders.

2. Review (Currently in Progress)

The revision process will facilitate writing and review teams consisting of educators and external stakeholders selected from individuals who submit their interest through a public survey.

3. Implementation

Following State Board of Education (SBE) approval of the new or revised standards, K-12 Social Studies will support the implementation of the newly approved Social Studies NCSCOS by providing training and collecting data and feedback to evaluate the implementation process.⁷

In July 2020, the State Board of Education voted to postpone the approval of new K-12 social studies standards for one year so that more work could be done to ensure that the revised standards more deeply address historical issues such as slavery and racism. This postponement was prompted by students advocating for the addition of historical content that ensures that the views of minoritized groups are included. The Department of Public Instruction proposed including an introductory statement in the social studies standards saying teachers are expected to include diverse histories, experiences and perspectives of racial, ethnic, gender, and identity minority groups.

For more information on North Carolina's Standard Course of Study visit

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/>.

For more information on the Common Core State Standards visit <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

⁶FAQ Social Studies Standards Revision 2019-2020. Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jgbGpCuVSSQfChBgxz1oHH9MFpDAH2Qj/view>

⁷The Standards Revision Process for K-12 Social Studies. Available at <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/social-studies/standards/ss-standards-revision>

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL LEARNING

KEY ISSUES

Keeping pace with technological developments can be a challenge for public schools. Used well, technology can be a tremendous support to teaching and learning, particularly when it expands learning opportunities or allows teachers to meet the needs of students more effectively. Schools often struggle with the challenges associated with accessing modern technologies, from ensuring broadband infrastructure is available at school and at home to vetting the numerous content options available and incorporating digital learning into classroom practice.

Technology and digital learning represent a broad range of devices, software or applications, and tools. Technology can be used in face-to-face instruction, virtually, or with a combination of both, which is often referred to as “blended learning.” Distance learning and virtual learning enable students from all over the state, nation, and world, particularly those living in remote areas, to access educational opportunities that may not be available otherwise. Such options may be particularly useful in smaller schools because they give students access to sophisticated course offerings and content expertise that might otherwise be found only in larger, more comprehensive schools.

In 2020, COVID-19 brought about an entirely new context with regard to technology and digital learning. With public school buildings closed for a significant portion of the 2019-20 school year, remote learning and the reliance on technology have become a new way of life for much of the world. While many schools and districts had devices and even broadband support for students, the need to shift from using digital learning and technology some of the time to a fully remote setting was a major undertaking for schools, educators, and students. Some form of remote learning will be in place in districts across the state for at least the start of the 2020-21 school year as well, as researchers search for a vaccine to stop the virus’ spread and the public learns to live differently during a global pandemic. The urgency to find equitably accessible remote-based learning solutions for all households cannot be understated.

INTRODUCTION

North Carolina is transitioning our state from providing an industrial age, one-size-fits-all education to providing the personalized digital-age education K-12 students need to be successful in college, in careers, and as globally engaged, productive citizens. Important steps forward have been made by recent legislative actions that address preparing educators for digital learning, providing digital resources, and ensuring technology access across all schools. North Carolina has already made significant progress with statewide initiatives, such as those providing professional learning for educators and administrators, and many districts in the state have digital learning initiatives well underway. However, much remains to be done to ensure that all students throughout the state have equitable access to high-quality digital-age teaching and learning.

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at NC State University, in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and policymakers, education leaders, practitioners, business leaders and other partners from throughout the state, prepared the North Carolina Digital Learning Plan for the North Carolina State Board of Education. This Plan provides recommendations for state actions to support K-12 schools as they become digital-age learning organizations. The North Carolina General Assembly, via the 2016 Appropriations Act (SL 2016-94), provided funding and stipulated that the State Board of Education/NCDPI, in collaboration with the Friday Institute, carry out specific tasks for professional learning, cooperative

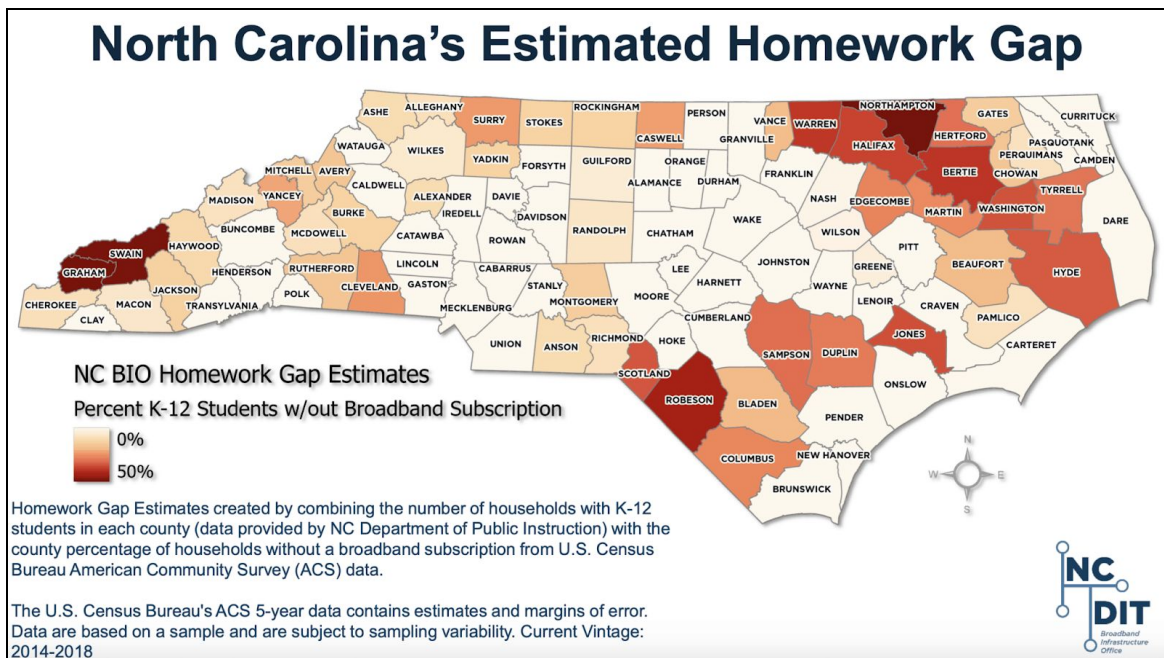
purchasing of digital content, infrastructure maintenance and support, updating state policies, continuous improvement processes, and assessments for technological and pedagogical skills.¹

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Broadband internet access is a top education policy issue, particularly in light of COVID-19 and the transition to remote learning. For many students, particularly in rural areas, their school building may be the only place where they have access to high-speed internet. Students may lack home access for a number of reasons, including not having connection options or parents not subscribing due to either cost or not finding it to be important. Even if students have internet at home, they must also have adequate devices (and enough of them for all youth in the home) in order to effectively use the internet for their school work.

The lack of broadband access in rural communities creates a critical issue known as the homework gap. Without home internet access or devices, students may have a more difficult time accessing online learning resources and research tools and completing or turning in their homework on time than their peers with connection. Importantly, given that many assignments are now completed or turned in online, having home internet connection may essentially be a required class material.

When the COVID-19 Pandemic forced NC schools to close their doors to in-person instruction in March 2019, the “Homework Gap” became “the School Gap,” and ensuring that all students have access to broadband internet and devices quickly moved to the top of the list of urgent education policy issues facing the state. The current Homework Gap is estimated at 197,139 households in the state.²



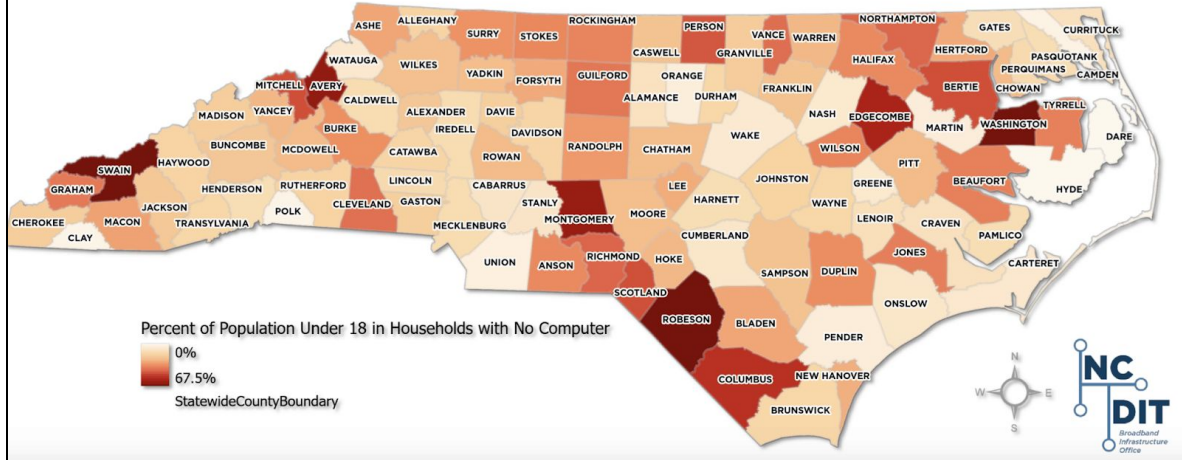
¹ Session Law 2016-94, House Bill 1030 Section 8.23. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/sessionlaws/html/2015-2016/sl2016-94.html>.

² NC Department of Information Technology. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/house2019-199/Economic%20Support%20Working%20Group/April%202021,%202020/House%20COVID19%20Committee%20Economic%20Support%20WG%204%2014%202020.pdf>.

NC Population Under 18 without Computers

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year data contains estimates and margins of error. Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability.

Current Vintage: 2014-2018



Source: NC Department of Information Technology, Broadband Infrastructure Office

FEDERAL LEGISLATION ON TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As a part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set up the Schools and Libraries Program (commonly known as “E-rate”) funded by the Universal Service Fund. The purpose of E-rate is to make telecommunications and information services more affordable for schools and libraries by providing discounts for eligible telecommunications, telecommunication services, internet access, and internal connections. The discount ranges from twenty to ninety percent, with schools or libraries in high poverty or rural areas receiving higher discounts. This program works through a competitive bid process for the desired service and the reimbursement of funds to eligible applicants through the Universal Service Administrative Company. Since the beginning of the program, demand for services has exceeded the cap all but one year.³

In 2014, the FCC adopted the E-rate Modernization Order and the Second E-rate Modernization Order as part of a comprehensive review to modernize the program. In the Second E-rate Modernization Order, the FCC increased the cap for the E-rate program to \$3.9 billion in funding year 2015, indexed to inflation going forward. In the E-rate Modernization Order, the FCC refocused the program from legacy services to broadband by setting a target of \$1 billion in support for category two services (internal connections, managed Wi-Fi, and basic maintenance) to expand Wi-Fi to more than 10 million students in funding year 2015. The Order also phased down support for voice services by 20 percentage points each funding year and eliminated support for non-broadband, legacy services. Category one services (telecommunications, telecommunications services and Internet access services) will still be ensured funding. Funding is allocated first to the highest poverty schools and libraries, then the next highest poverty applicants, and continues down the list of applicants.⁴

³ Federal Communications Commission, FAQs on E-Rate Program for Schools and Libraries. Available at <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/universal-service-program-schools-and-libraries>.

⁴ Federal Communications Commission, Summary of the Second E-Rate Modernization Order. Available at <https://www.fcc.gov/general/summary-second-e-rate-modernization-order>.

Enacted by Congress in 2000, the Children’s Internet Protection Act requires schools to have an internet safety policy if they receive E-rate funds. The internet safety policy must include the blocking of any content considered to be obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors. Schools must also monitor the online activities of minors and, as included in the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act, educate minors about appropriate online behavior.⁵

The most comprehensive federal program supporting education technology in elementary and secondary schools is the Enhancing Education Through Technology Act of 2001. The program’s purpose is to increase technology access, technology-related teacher professional development, technology integration, and student technology literacy. It is specifically targeted to “high-need school districts” as defined by the number or percent of low-income students in the district or districts in substantial need for assistance in obtaining technology.⁶

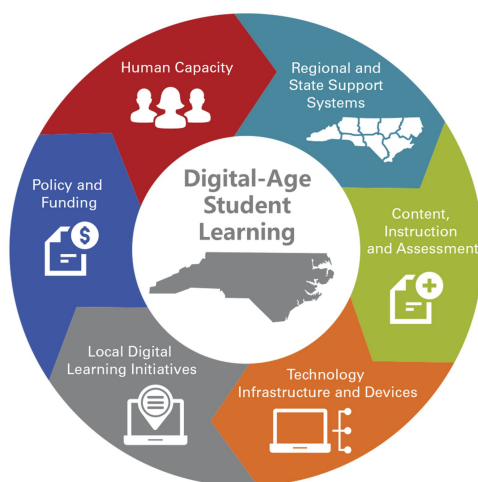
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law passed in 1974 that protects the privacy of personal identifiable information in students’ education records. The law applies to any school that receives funding from a program of the U.S. Department of Education.⁷ In February 2014, the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) of the U.S. DOE issued guidance on protecting student privacy while using online educational services. PTAC offers guidance to schools to help them evaluate Terms of Service agreements with online educational service providers to ensure that they are FERPA compliant.⁸

NORTH CAROLINA DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN

In 2013, The Friday Institute was commissioned to begin working on a long-term Digital Learning Plan (DLP) for the state of North Carolina. This plan was created to:

1. Research current digital activities and practices statewide in K-12 schools, and districts.
2. Make recommendations to the State Board of Education and Legislature based on research findings.

In September 2015, the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation submitted the North Carolina Digital Learning Plan to the North Carolina State Board of Education—Department of Public Instruction. The Plan spotlighted activity, recommendations, and goals in six areas:



⁵ Federal Communications Commission. Available at <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>.

⁶ US Department of Education. Evaluation of the Enhancing Education Through Technology Program: Final Report Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/netts/finalreport.pdf>.

⁷ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

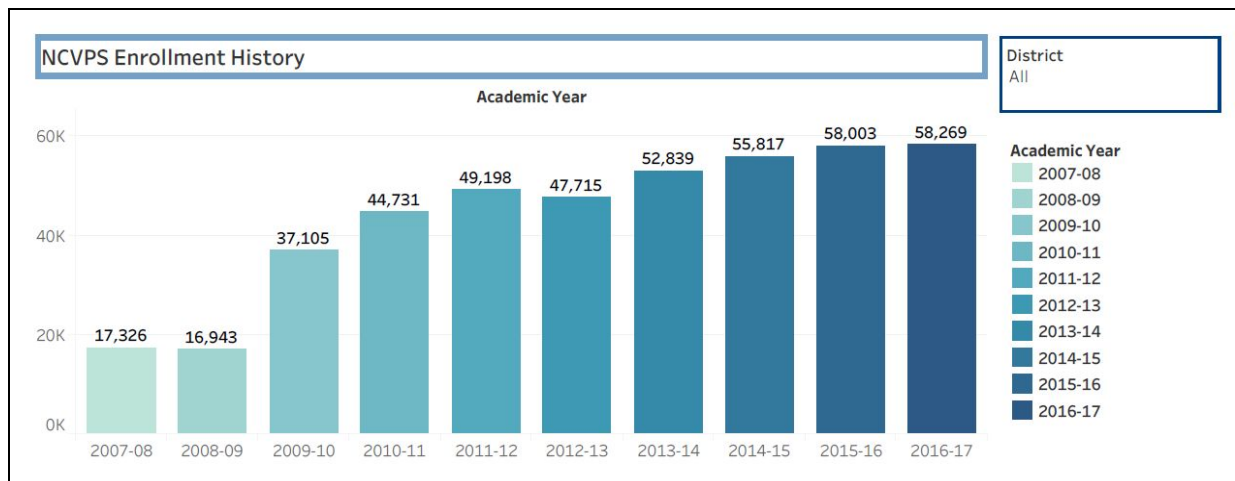
⁸ Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services: Model Terms of Service https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/TOS_Guidance_Mar2016.pdf

1. Human Capacity: provide adequate support structures for teachers and school leaders to develop and implement digital learning competencies and ensure graduates are ready to engage in digital-age schooling.
2. Regional and State Support Systems: establishment of the North Carolina Digital Learning Collaborative, and regional digital learning networks.
3. Content, Instruction, and Assessment: provide digital tools for educators to use student data as a tool for curricula improvements, as well as creating an open-share network for teacher-created resources.
4. Technology, Infrastructure, and Devices: expand the School Connectivity Initiative to all schools statewide, and expand community/home access to broadband ensuring connectivity for all students.
5. Local Digital Learning Initiatives: provide systems of support, including grant funding, to local LEAs to implement digital learning initiatives.
6. Policy and Funding: support State and local funding models that offer flexibility for local digital learning initiatives and innovations, and ensure equity of digital learning opportunities for all students.⁹

Proposed legislation and budgetary provisions since the release of the Digital Learning Plan have continued to reflect state leaders’ desire to prioritize investments in infrastructure, professional learning programs that enable the transition to digital-age teaching and learning, cooperative purchasing, and flexible policies. The detailed plan and additional background can be found at: <http://ncdlplan.fi.ncsu.edu>.

NORTH CAROLINA VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS (NCVPS)

The North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) is the nation’s second largest state-led virtual school with over 51,000 enrollments from 32,000 students in the 2018-19 school year in all 115 North Carolina school districts. NCVPS offers over 150 secondary school courses online to students across the state, including course offerings in advanced placement, electives, traditional, honors, core, STEM, occupational course of study, and credit recovery courses. NCVPS began in 2007-08 and has served almost 541,950 student enrollments since that first year.¹⁰



Source: North Carolina Virtual Public School 2018-19 Annual Report. Available at <https://ncvps.org/annual-report-2018-19/>

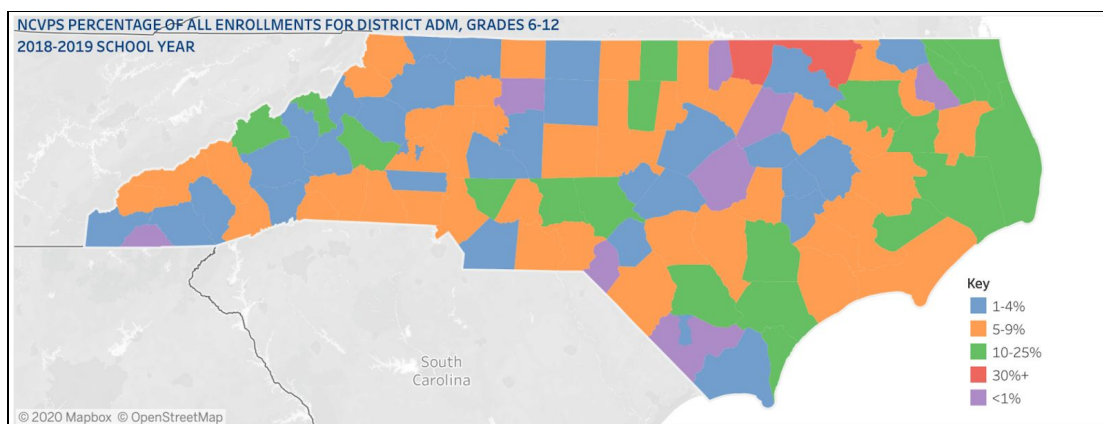
⁹ Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina Digital Learning Plan. Available at <https://ncdli.fi.ncsu.edu/dlplan/docs/dlplan.pdf>.

¹⁰ North Carolina Virtual Public School 2018-19 Annual Report. Available at <https://ncvps.org/annual-report-2018-19/>.

NCVPS is committed to closing the achievement gap between well-funded and poorly-funded school systems by providing access to world class learning opportunities for all North Carolina students. The NCVPS mission is to provide skills, student support, and opportunities for 21st century learners to succeed in a globally competitive world. The courses utilize blackboard course management software to maximize student interaction in each class. NCVPS courses are taught by highly qualified teachers who employ video, interactive whiteboards, wikis, active worlds, and online discussion tools to engage 21st century learners.

The purpose of NCVPS is to provide courses that students are unable to take at their local schools and therefore enhance their learning experience. All courses are taught by certified teachers with experience in the subject matter. Once the online course is completed, the student receives credit on his or her school transcript from the student's participating school.

Initially, NCVPS courses were only offered to high school students. However, in recent years, course offerings have been made available for middle school students as well. In 2008, NCVPS added Learn and Earn Online, which is an extension of the face-to-face Learn and Earn program that allows students in public high schools to earn college credit. The program allows students in rural or low-wealth areas to be linked directly with universities to receive advanced instruction and earn up to two years of college credit while still in high school.¹¹



Source: North Carolina Virtual Public School 2018-19 Annual Report. Available at <https://ncvps.org/annual-report-2018-19/>

2018-19 NORTH CAROLINA VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

According to the NCVPS 2018-2019 Annual Report:¹²

- Total Enrollment for 2018-2019 was 51,950 course enrollments.
- Total Student Participation for 2018-19 was 32,081 students.
- 123 LEAs participated in NCVPS online courses.
- 84 charter schools participated in NCVPS online courses.
- Per student teacher pay was \$390 per year. NCVPS contracted with 745 teachers and conversation coaches in 2018-19.

¹¹ Learn and Earn Online: A National Model of Innovation in Prekindergarten-20 Education. Available at: <https://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/ILEOC/Reports%20Received/Archives/2009%20Reports%20Received/Learn%20and%20Earn%20Online%20Sites.pdf>.

¹² North Carolina Virtual Public School 2016-17 Annual Report.

- The pass rate for students taking NCVPS courses in 2016-2017 was 84.6%.
- 41.1% of the students enrolled in NCVPS courses registered for General courses, 33.5% for Occupational Course of Study (OCS) blended courses, 19.0% for Honors courses, 0.8% for Credit Recovery courses, and 5.6% for Advanced Placement courses.
- The most popular NCVPS courses were OCS blended courses, Success 101, Spanish II, and science courses.
- The districts with the most NCVPS enrollments were Charlotte-Mecklenburg (5,082), Charter Schools (4,458), Wake County Schools (3,891), New Hanover (2,802), Cumberland County (2,270), and Cabarrus County (2,118).

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATH ONLINE

North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) Online offers a supplemental, two-year, sequenced honors program that provides the NCSSM experience to students enrolled at their local schools. NCSSM Online, begun in 2008, provides valuable preparation for college along with a learning community of accomplished, motivated peers.¹³

- **Institution.** North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics is a constituent campus of the University of North Carolina system.
- **Degree Type.** The online program provides an honors recognition certificate and option for an academic concentration. The residential program provides a high school diploma. Both programs provide a transcript.
- **Coursework.** Students take NCSSM Online courses outside of school or dual enroll the courses with their local school. Students take 1-2 courses per semester and earn a certificate for meeting program requirements. Shorter Accelerator and seminar courses explore special topics such as mechanatronics, neuroscience research, and the research process.
- **Cost.** The program is tuition free. Special course fees, transportation costs, and technology access outside of home are the responsibility of the student/family. Some costs are waived for students meeting financial need eligibility.
- **Students.** The NCSSM Online Program serves 11th and 12th grade students. The Class of 2015 represented 55 counties throughout North Carolina.
- **Faculty.** Faculty hold advanced degrees in their content area of expertise and teach advanced courses in a college-like environment.
- **Size.** 184 students made up the NCSSM Online Class of 2018.
- **SAT.** The entering class of 2018 has mean SAT scores of 612 (Math), 594 (Critical Reading), and 552 (Writing).¹⁴

RECENT POLICIES REGARDING TECHNOLOGY

SCHOOL CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVE (S.L. 2007-323)

In 2007, the School Connectivity Initiative was created with a focus on connecting every school district to broadband internet access, bringing all districts into the 21st century. This initiative was led in partnership by MCNC, The Friday Institute, ITS, and NC DPI, and is sponsored and monitored by NC DPI.¹⁵ In the spring of 2018, the initiative met its goal of connecting all school districts with broadband internet access. North

¹³ NC School of Science and Mathematics Online. Available at <http://www.ncssm.edu/online-program>.

¹⁴ NC School of Science and Math, Online Profile 2017-18. Available at <https://www.ncssm.edu/uploads/files/88585506310865994-online-profile-2017-18.pdf>.

¹⁵ DPI, Connectivity Services. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/connectivity/>.

Carolina has become the first state to integrate broadband access to all school districts in the nation. This was considered a first step in the process. Next steps include training for students, school leaders, as well as data management trainings and integrating technology into curricula.¹⁶

DIGITAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES (S.L. 2013-11, HOUSE BILL 23)

The NC General Assembly passed HB 23 in its 2013 session requiring the State Board of Education to develop digital teaching and learning requirements for school administrators and students in school administrator preparation programs. These requirements must be met by school administrators to renew their license beginning July 1, 2017. This bill is meant to ensure high quality digital teaching and learning is provided to North Carolina students.¹⁷

TRANSITION TO DIGITAL LEARNING IN SCHOOLS (S.L. 2013-12, HOUSE BILL 44)

The NC General Assembly passed HB 44 in March 2013, with the intent to transition from funding for textbooks, both traditional and digital, to funding for digital materials, including textbooks and instructional resources, to provide educational resources that remain current, aligned with curriculum and effective for all learners by 2017.¹⁸

TRANSITION TO PERSONALIZED DIGITAL LEARNING (HOUSE BILL 660, 2015-16 SESSION)

This bill, passed by the House in 2015, would prepare for the next phase of the state's digital learning work, moving from the development of a comprehensive plan to the nuts and bolts of a major transition, including:

- Expanding the School Connectivity Initiative to improve schools' technology infrastructure
- Establishing a collaborative procurement service for districts
- Improving access to digital learning resources to help schools move to digital curriculum materials by 2017 as required under current law
- Providing professional development for educators leading digital learning initiatives
- Creating a grant program to support development and dissemination of digital learning models

The bill established the NC Digital Learning Initiative at the Friday Institute to support this work.¹⁹

DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Effective starting in the 2020-21 school year, North Carolina has adopted the International Society for Technology in Education Standards for Students to serve as the state's standards for K-12 digital learning. The digital learning standards are to be implemented by teachers in all subject areas and are intended to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn in digitally-enabled classrooms. The standards include:

- Digital citizenship, data privacy, and cyber safety
- Digital-aged skills that enable students to be college and career ready
- Creation, collaboration, communication and critical thinking skills

¹⁶ Marchello, L. (23 May, 2018) Carolina Journal. Available at <https://www.carolinajournal.com/news-article/fcc-chairman-visits-north-carolina-high-school-to-celebrate-school-connectivity/>.

¹⁷ Session Law 2013-11, House Bill 23. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/House/PDF/H23v5.pdf>.

¹⁸ Session Law 2013-14, House Bill 44. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/House/PDF/H44v3.pdf>

¹⁹ Session 2015-16. House Bill 660. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/PDF/H660v2.pdf>

- Inquiry and design thinking and learning opportunities²⁰

²⁰ DTL Standards. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/digital-teaching-and-learning/dtl-standards>

SCHOOL CALENDAR

KEY ISSUES

In North Carolina, there are significant debates regarding the length of the school calendar and when the school year should start.

Advocates for lengthening the school calendar suggest that more instructional time will lead to improved student performance. Nationally, the United States mandates less instructional time for students than many other industrialized countries. Opponents of a longer calendar typically point to employers' reliance on low-cost student labor during the summer months, economic benefits of increased tourism (more time out of school arguably translates to more and/or longer vacations), and costs of keeping schools open longer.

The date when LEAs can begin their school year is a strongly debated topic. In current legislation, traditional public schools can open no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and close no later than the Friday closest to June 11. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Assembly passed legislation mandating that the first instructional day is August 17, 2020 and the last instructional day is no later than June 11, 2021.¹ This lack of calendar flexibility continues to be an issue for LEAs across the state.

While traditional public schools operate on an August to June school calendar, alternative schedules are becoming a growing trend, both in North Carolina and throughout the country.

HISTORICAL LOOK AT THE NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL CALENDAR

Prior to 2012, North Carolina had maintained a 180-day school year for decades. North Carolina's 180-day school year reflected the state's agrarian roots: young people were needed to harvest crops in the summer. Therefore, schools were closed during the peak-growing season. While the economy has shifted away from traditional agriculture, the tradition of summer vacation has remained.

CURRENT SCHOOL CALENDAR POLICY

In 2012, the North Carolina legislature increased the state's minimum to 185 instructional days, up from 180.² This is higher than all but one other state: Kansas (186). Over half of all states mandate 180 days. Adjustments to the School Calendar in G.S. 115C-84.2, beginning in the 2013-14 school year, include:

- 185 days or 1025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months. This applies to traditional public schools and charter schools.
- Requirement that traditional public schools open no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and close no later than the Friday closest to June 11.
- On a showing of "good cause," (schools in an LEA closed for eight days per year during any four of the past 10 years due to severe weather conditions) the State Board may allow the LEA to set an opening day no earlier than the Monday closest to August 19. Partial days due to inclement weather, such as delayed starts or early closings no longer count toward good cause waivers.

¹ Requirements and Guidance on School Calendar, NC DPI. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/fbs/accounting/calendar/calendar-requirements-2020-21-sb113revisions-07012020v2.pdf>

² Session Law 2012, Senate Bill 187. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2011/Bills/Senate/PDF/S187v7.pdf>

- Elimination of educational waivers that had previously allowed counties to avoid providing the additional 5 days of instruction.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools participating in the public-private partnership Project LIFT and their feeder schools will be exempt from the mandated start and end dates.
- Have a minimum of ten (10) annual vacation leave days.
- Must have at least nine (9) teacher workdays. Local Boards shall designate two (2) workdays on which teachers may take accumulated vacation leave. Local Boards may designate the remaining workdays as days teachers may take accumulated vacation leave.³

COMPARISON OF U.S. STATES

Each state determines the number of school days for each calendar year. The majority of states require 180 days of student instruction, but some variation does exist. Many states also specify a minimum number of hours that constitutes a full instructional day. In North Carolina, a full school day must consist of at least 5.5 hours of instructional time, and schools must have 185 days or 1025 instructional hours in a school year.

Minimum Instructional Days per Year in Each State			
State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year
Alabama	180	Montana	N/A
Alaska	180	Nebraska	N/A
Arizona	180	Nevada	180
Arkansas	District option	New Hampshire	180
California	180	New Jersey	180
Colorado	160	New Mexico	N/A
Connecticut	180	New York	180
Delaware	N/A	North Carolina	185
District of Columbia	180	North Dakota	N/A
Florida	180	Ohio	District option
Georgia	180	Oklahoma	180
Hawaii	180	Oregon	N/A
Idaho	District option	Pennsylvania	180
Illinois	185	Rhode Island	180
Indiana	180	South Carolina	180
Iowa	180	South Dakota	District option
Kansas	1st-11th: 186; 12th: 181	Tennessee	180
Kentucky	170	Texas	N/A
Louisiana	177	Utah	180
Maine	180	Vermont	175
Maryland	180	Virginia	180
Massachusetts	180	Washington	180
Michigan	180	West Virginia	180
Minnesota	165	Wisconsin	N/A
Mississippi	180	Wyoming	175
Missouri	N/A		

Source: "50-State Comparison: Instructional Time Policies, Minimum number of days or hours per school year." Education Commission of the States. January 2020. Available at <https://c0arw235.caspio.com/dp/b7f930008d0b660281104a9c90b2>.

³ NC DPI. Legislation Summary for LEAs. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/accounting/calendar/>.

ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULES

Alternative scheduling has become a popular form of education reform in recent years. As issues over school crowding, student performance, and other concerns rise, many school systems in North Carolina and around the nation are implementing scheduling alternatives, such as year-round schools and block scheduling, as solutions.

YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

According to a report from the Center for American Progress⁴, young children can lose more than two months of reading and math skills during the summer months, with the greatest learning loss occurring among low-income children. Year-round school schedules attempt to combat this learning loss. Varying models exist for year-round schools, but typically, the year-round calendar divides the school year into sections so that students attend school for 45 days and then have 15 consecutive days off. The students, therefore, attend school throughout the entire year, but are not actually in school for more days than they would be on a traditional schedule.

In year-round schools, students are often assigned to one of the "tracks" in the school with each track having a slightly different schedule. If a school has four tracks, for example, students in three of them would be in session while students in the fourth would be on break.

A year-round school can have significant advantages, including:

- A more continuous learning process without a long summer break lessens the need for extensive review at the beginning of the school year.
- Three-week break periods allow schools to offer remedial and enrichment activities.
- More students can be served in a single building using "tracks," which can ease the burden of serving large student populations, particularly in high growth areas.

Currently, year-round models are in place at the elementary and middle school level across North Carolina. Year-round high schools are limited for several reasons including the fact that many high school programs must coordinate scheduling with other schools (for such activities as competitions in athletics, music, etc.). This coordination could be quite difficult if all schools were not following similar schedules.

Current research is inconclusive about whether year-round schools impact student achievement. The results vary from classroom to classroom, and school to school. Whether or not the year-round school model increases student performance, more school districts dealing with declining tax revenues, overcrowding, and low capital funds are considering moving to year-round schedules.

BLOCK-SCHEDULING

Block scheduling has been adopted at an increasing rate by schools across the nation. A block schedule allocates 90-minute periods of time for basic course work, rather than the traditional 45-minute class period. Therefore, a block schedule has fewer, but longer classes, per instruction day. One of the more popular forms of block scheduling is the 4x4 schedule where students take four 90-minute courses each semester and then enroll in four different 90-minute courses the following semester. This allows students to take eight courses

⁴ Center for American Progress, Expanded Learning Time in Action. Available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2008/07/pdf/elt1.pdf>.

each year, rather than six under the traditional schedule. A 1997 Department of Public Instruction survey of high school principals cited several reasons for changing from the traditional schedule to the block schedule, including:

- Greater variety of academic courses
- Increased time for teachers and students to focus on a more limited number of courses
- Teachers have more planning time to prepare lessons plans and concentrate their teaching methods⁵

While principals, teachers, and students have reported being pleased with many of the aspects of block scheduling, research is inconclusive on whether the new schedule structure increases student performance on state tests.

CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY

School districts in North Carolina have continued to push for more calendar flexibility, arguing that the legislation hinders their ability to make up lost school time for inclement weather and hurts high school students academically. The calendar law as it stands prevents districts from aligning their calendar with their local community college, and also pushes the end of the fall semester, including many final exams, to after winter break. In the 2019 legislative session, over twenty bills were filed in the House and Senate to allow school districts more flexibility.

The North Carolina tourism industry is a primary reason for the continued denial of calendar flexibility. The \$23.9 billion industry continues to lobby against the proposed bills that would allow for more flexibility. In fact, the tourism industry, along with some parents, requested the original calendar law in 2004, arguing that schools were cutting into summer vacation time by starting earlier and earlier in August.⁶

⁵ NC DPI, Block Scheduling in NC. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/researchandeval/survey>.

⁶ News & Observer, Protect tourism or give schools flexibility? The calendar fight is raging again in NC. Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article226277690.html>

SCHOOL SAFETY

KEY ISSUES

School safety is a top priority at the local, state and national levels as the number of school shootings on campuses across the United States has increased. Schools are grappling with the topic of school safety from a number of different angles, including increasing school mental health personnel and services, employing school resource officers on campuses, or addressing the issue of guns on school property.

The 2018 Federal Commission on School Safety chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos was created to recommend policy and funding proposals for school violence prevention. NC's Center for Safer Schools was codified in state statute in 2018 and is housed in the Department of Public Instruction. The General Assembly's House Select Committee on School Safety conducted a series of in-depth committee meetings studying the wide-ranging needs for school safety measures during the 2018 legislative short session. NC's Center for Emergency Management and its School Risk & Response Management System continue to improve statewide technical efforts to maintain the physical safety of school buildings and coordinate safety efforts across state agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring schools are safe places to learn is the responsibility of parents, administrators, teachers, and policymakers. Creating safe environments in schools involves supporting the mental health of students and staff, putting safeguards in place to prevent crime and bullying, and implementing appropriate and equitable discipline practices.

MENTAL HEALTH AND NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mental health has increasingly been at the forefront of school safety discussions. In 2017, 13.3% of North Carolina adolescents youth aged 12-17 had a past-year major depressive episode¹, and nearly 1 in 5 students ages 8-15 years old have a mental health or substance abuse disorder.²

The youth suicide rate in North Carolina has nearly doubled in the past decade. In addition to mental health, other factors that may lead to thoughts of suicide among adolescents include bullying, trauma, and persistent stress. Suicidal thoughts are more prevalent among students of color and LGBTQ students. A recent report found that 43 percent of LGBTQ high schoolers reported thoughts of suicide, compared to 12 percent of heterosexual youth. African American high school students attempted suicide at double the rate of white students, and were much less likely to have undergone treatment for depression.³

Mental health is tied directly to academic success, substance abuse and risky behavior, graduation rates, and school climate. Schools are considered to be the best setting for addressing mental health needs in young

¹ North Carolina Child Health Report Card 2019. Available at https://ncchild.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-NCreportcard-FINAL_low.pdf

² NC Department of Public Instruction School Mental Health Initiative. Available at <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/instructional-resources/behavior-support/mental-health/smhi-summary-final.pdf>.

³ North Carolina Child Health Report Card 2019. Available at https://ncchild.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-NCreportcard-FINAL_low.pdf

people. School counselors, school nurses, and school psychologists work with students in a variety of capacities to strengthen mental health services in public schools.

School psychologists screen for academic, behavioral, and emotional barriers to learning, participate on crisis prevention and intervention teams, and direct therapeutic services to students in need. School counselors address academic, career, and social-emotional development and are comprehensive in scope. School social workers provide support and intervention with individual students and families and offer early intervention services. School nurses screen and assess for actual and potential health issues and risks, both physical and mental, including suicide risks and crisis assessment.

Unfortunately, North Carolina’s ratios of mental health professionals to students are far higher than recommended ratios.

Role	NC Ratio	Recommended Ratio
Psychologists	1:1,798	1:500
Counselors	1:353	1:250
Social Workers	1:1,289	1:250
Nurses	1:1,013	1:750 or 1 per school

Source: NC Department of Public Instruction. Available at:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/19LdKv_1pDntB2KnoYuL8Fqg8JfKf8gHl/view

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

School resource officers are law enforcement officers who are assigned to work in a school or multiple schools. They are trained to perform three roles: law enforcement officer, law-related counselor, and law-related education teacher. The intended purpose of the School Resource Officer program is to create and maintain safe, secure, and orderly educational environments.⁴

In 2020, school districts across the country began to reconsider the role of school resource officers and police on school grounds. While some consider these officers vital to protecting students from violence, especially mass school shootings, others question whether the presence of police in schools has a disproportionate impact on students of color regarding discipline and arrests. In 2017, there were an estimated 1200 school resource officers across the state who are disproportionately male and white (77% and 79% respectively). More than a quarter of NC school resource officers suggest that more or improved training would improve the job of a school resource officer statewide.⁵

BULLYING

According to the NC Department of Public Instruction, bullying is defined as “acts or written or spoken words intended to intimidate or harass a person or to cause physical harm to a person or his or her property.” Bullying is aggressive, repetitive, and involves an imbalance of power. There are three main types of bullying, detailed below.⁶

⁴ School Resource Officers. Available at
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools/school-resource-officers>

⁵ 2018 North Carolina School Resource Officer Survey. Available at
<https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/cfss/law-enforcement/2018-srosurvey.pdf>

⁶ Bullying Prevention. Available at
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools/bullying-prevention#what-is-bullying>

Types of Bullying		
Verbal bullying: saying or writing mean things	Social/relational bullying: hurting someone's reputation or relationships	Physical bullying: hurting a person's body or possessions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teasing • Name-calling • Inappropriate sexual comments • Taunting • Threatening to cause harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving someone out on purpose • Telling other children not to be friends with someone • Spreading rumors about someone • Embarrassing someone in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting/kicking/pinching • Spitting • Tripping/pushing • Taking or breaking someone's things • Making mean or rude gestures

REPORTED CRIMES IN NORTH CAROLINA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In North Carolina, there were 9,554 total reported crimes in public schools in 2018-19. The rate of crimes reported decreased to 6.29 acts per 1000 students in 2018-19 compared to 6.48 acts per 1000 students in 2017-18. The table below shows the total acts of crime reported and rates for grades K-13 for the last nine years.⁷ Reported crimes include: assault on school personnel, bomb threat, burning of a school building, possession of alcoholic beverage, possession of a firearm or powerful explosive, possession of a weapon, homicide, assault resulting in serious bodily injury, assault involving the use of a weapon, rape, sexual offense, sexual assault, kidnapping, robbery with a dangerous weapon, and taking indecent liberties with a minor.

Reporting Year	Total Acts	Acts Per 1000 Students
2018-19	9,554	6.29
2017-18	9,747	6.48
2016-17	9,834	6.5
2015-16	10,020	6.6
2014-15	10,347	6.9

Source: NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19.

DISCIPLINE IN NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In North Carolina, principals have discretion to use several different types of disciplinary measures that remove students from the classroom for varying periods of time:

1. **Short term in-school suspensions or short-term out-of-school suspensions:** suspension lasting up to 10 days for lesser offenses committed by students.
2. **Long-term out-of-school suspensions:** suspension for a serious offense lasting anywhere from 11 days to the remainder of the academic year. For a very serious offense, a student can be suspended for an entire calendar year (365-day suspension). School Superintendents and/or local schools boards often assist the principal in making decisions about long-term suspensions.
3. **Expulsion:** student is permanently removed from the school and cannot return to the home school or another school in the district.

⁷ NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/consolidated-reports/2018-19_cdr-report-2018-2019-final-20200302.pdf

The number of short-term and long-term suspensions decreased slightly from 2017-18 to 2018-19, as shown in the chart below.⁸

School Suspensions and Expulsions, Trends 2017-18 to 2018-19			
	2017-18	2018-19	Percent Change
Short-term suspensions	211,228	203,298	Decreased 3.8%
Long-term suspensions	673	587	Decreased 12.77%
Expulsions	22	23	Increased 4.5%

Source: NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19

DISPROPORTIONATE DISCIPLINE IN NORTH CAROLINA’S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 2018-19, male students, black students, ninth graders, and students receiving special education services were disproportionately represented among suspended students.⁹ The graphs below represent disproportionalities among suspended and expelled students in North Carolina.

Number of Short-Term Suspensions By Gender, 2018-19	
Male	148,258 (72.9%)
Female	55,037 (27.1%)

Source: NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19.

Black students had the highest rate of short-term suspension in 2018-19, followed by American Indian students. Black students received over 54 percent of short-term suspensions in 2018-19 but made up less than 25 percent of the total student population. On average, Black students are approximately 4 times as likely as white students to receive short-term suspensions in North Carolina.¹⁰ Studies suggest that students of color are judged more harshly for subjective offenses (e.g. insubordination, disrespect, aggressive behavior, etc.), while white students receive punishment more for objective offenses (e.g. weapons, drugs, vandalism, etc.)¹¹

Short-Term Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-19		
	Percentage of all Short-Term Suspensions	Percentage of Total Student Population
American Indian	1.9%	1%
Asian	.01%	3%
Black	54.1%	25%
Hispanic	10.9%	17%
Multi Racial	5.5%	4%
White	26.7%	48%

Source: NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19.

⁸ NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/consolidated-reports/2018-19_cdr-report-2018-2019-final-20200302.pdf

⁹ NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19.

¹⁰ NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2018-19. Available at https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/consolidated-reports/2018-19_cdr-report-2018-2019-final-20200302.pdf

¹¹ Committee on Racial Equity: Action Plan and Recommendations. Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/committee-on-racial-equity/>

Research has shown that exclusionary discipline practices like suspensions and expulsions do little to improve student behavior, and could lead to negative feelings towards school.¹² A 2015 study found that each suspension decreases a student's likelihood of graduating high school by an additional 20 percent and reduces likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary school by 12 percent.¹³

NORTH CAROLINA'S EFFORTS TO MAKE SCHOOLS SAFER

In North Carolina, two historical school safety policies have been implemented in the state during the past few decades. These policies are the Safe Schools Act of 1993 and the School Violence Prevention Act of 2009.

SAFE SCHOOLS ACT OF 1993

In 1993, The North Carolina General Assembly passed the Safe Schools Act. The Act requires LEAs to report certain acts of crime and violence to the State Board of Education. General Statute 115C-228(g) explains that it is the school principal's responsibility to report certain violent acts to law enforcement.

To evaluate school safety in North Carolina, the State Board of Education publishes an annual report on violence in public schools. The State Board defined 16 criminal acts to be included in this report. Schools may be labeled "Persistently Dangerous Schools" if a school reports at least two violent criminal offenses and at least five or more of such offenses were committed per thousand students in two consecutive years.¹⁴

SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACT OF 2009

Through a bipartisan effort to eliminate bullying and harassment in North Carolina's schools, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the School Violence Prevention Act in 2009. The Act defines bullying and harassing behavior as any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, that takes place on school property at place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, and that:

- Places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or
- Creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits." For purposes of this section, "hostile environment" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior" (General Statute 115C-407.15a)

Also, the School Violence Prevention Act:

- Requires all schools to adopt policies that clearly define and prohibit bullying and harassment, and to create a clear system of reporting and responding to incidents
- Enumerates specific categories to identify and protect those children statistically shown to be most vulnerable to bullying and harassment

¹² Costenbader, Virginia, and Samia Markson. "School suspension: A study with secondary school students." *Journal of School Psychology* 36, no. 1 (1998): 59-82.

¹³ Losen, D.J. (2015). *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Equitable Remedies for Excessive Exclusion*. New York: Teachers College Press.

¹⁴ Session Law 1993, Senate Bill 429. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/1993/Bills/Senate/PDF/S429v1.pdf>.

- Protects all students, teachers and staff from violence in schools, and does not assign special rights, special protection or preferred status to any groups or types of students¹⁵

NC CENTER FOR SAFER SCHOOLS

The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools was established in 2013 by Governor Pat McCrory. The Center is housed within the NC Department of Public Instruction, and serves as a hub of information and technical assistance on school safety. The work of the Center includes the administration of the NC School Safety Grants Program and as well as the following:¹⁶

- Education and training of schools and other stakeholders.
- Receiving consultation and assistance from advisory Task Force
- Anonymous Reporting
- Focusing on 6 sub-areas:
 - Mental Health
 - Physical Security & Emergency Preparedness
 - School Climate & Discipline
 - Substance Use
 - Gang Intervention
 - School Resource Officers (SROs)

RECENT LEGISLATION ON SCHOOL SAFETY IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina has passed several pieces of legislation related to school safety in the last several years. Below is a brief summary of the key components of recent legislation. State leaders appropriated \$38,833,333 for FY 2019-2020 and \$29,800,000 for FY 2020-2021 to implement school safety measures throughout the state.

HOUSE BILL 75/ SESSION LAW 2019-222¹⁷

- Additional \$20 million in recurring funding for the Instructional Support Allotment (which funds non-teacher, non-school administrative certified personnel (school psychologists, school nurses, school counselors, school social workers) in FY 2019-20. Increased additional funding to \$23 million in FY 2020-21, bringing total to \$418 million.
- For every \$1 of local funds dedicated, the state will provide \$2 to supplement funds for school resource officers serving in elementary and middle schools.
- Additional \$3 million in recurring funds for school resource officers in 2019-20 and \$6 million in recurring funds in 2020-21, bringing total to \$18 million in 2020-21.
- \$4.5 million in non-recurring funding for community partners engaged in crisis services for targeted, intensive therapies for 2019-20.
- In 2019-2020, \$6.1 million in non-recurring funding allocated for school safety equipment in school buildings.
- \$4.5 million in non-recurring funding for FY 2019-20 for School Safety training to help students respond to trauma and stress.

SENATE BILL 476/SESSION LAW 2020-7¹⁸

¹⁵ Session Law 2009, Senate Bill 526. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/HTML/S526v5.html>.

¹⁶ Center for Safer Schools. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools>

¹⁷ Session Law 2019-222, House Bill 75. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/House/PDF/H75v7.pdf>

¹⁸ Session Law 2020-7, Senate Bill 476. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/Senate/PDF/S476v6.pdf>

- Each K-12 school unit must adopt a school-based mental health plan that includes a mental health training program and suicidal referral program. Each school must implement this plan by July 1st, 2021.

EARLY EDUCATION

KEY ISSUES

The most rapid period of development in human life occurs from birth to age eight. In fact, 90% of critical brain development happens in the first five years of life. What happens in these first eight years sets the foundation for all of the years that follow.

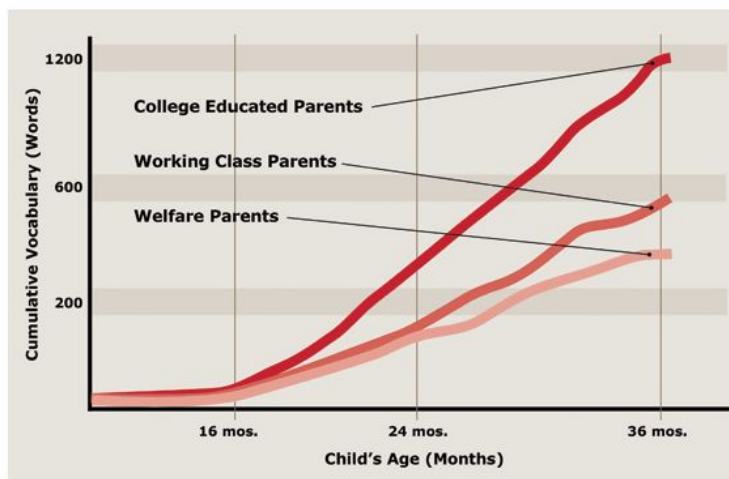
THE CASE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A wealth of research has documented the importance of the early years of a child's life and development, and the potential for quality early education programs to promote strong trajectories for a child's life and success in further education, health, and later employment. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University has compiled many of the most prominent studies on early education and some of the most compelling data on the value of investment in a child's early years.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY YEARS

The early years matter because, in the first few years of life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second, a higher rate than at any other time of life.¹ Neural connections are formed through the interaction of genes and a baby's environment and experiences. These are the connections that build brain architecture – the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend. Early experiences and the environments in which children develop in their earliest years can have a lasting impact on later success in school and life. In fact, by about age five, the brain has reached 90 percent of its adult volume, creating 85

18 18 MONTHS: AGE AT WHICH DISPARITIES
IN VOCABULARY BEGIN TO APPEAR



percent of the intellect, personality, and skills that a child will carry through life.² Barriers to children's educational achievement linked to their environment and experiences start early, and continue to grow without intervention. Differences in the size of children's vocabulary first appear at 18 months of age, and vary based on family education and income. By age 3, children with college-educated parents or primary caregivers have vocabularies 2 to 3 times larger than those whose parents did not complete high school. Children who lack a language-rich environment early in life reach kindergarten already behind their peers, and some will never catch up.³

¹ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. Available at <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>.

² From *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. Available at <http://www.nap.edu/read/9824/chapter/1>.

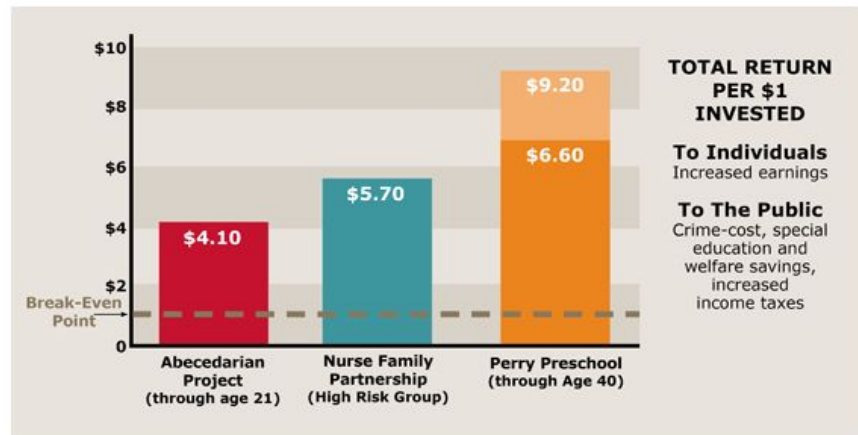
³ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION

Fifty years of research prove that students in high-quality preschool programs score significantly higher in reading and math when they enter school. Those children are less likely to drop out, repeat grades or need special education, and they are more likely to attend college. A study of 111 North Carolina children in a high-quality full-day, year-round, birth-to-kindergarten program found that 67 percent of participating children graduated from high school by age 19, compared with 51 percent for the control group. What's more, 36 percent of children enrolled in the program attended a four-year college, versus 14 percent among those who did not enroll in the program.⁴

Providing young children with a healthy environment to learn and grow is not only good for their development—economists have also shown that high-quality early childhood programs bring impressive returns on investment to the public. Three of the most rigorous long-term studies found a range of returns between \$4 and \$9 for every dollar invested in early learning programs for low-income children. Program participants followed into adulthood

4-9 \$4 - \$9 IN RETURNS FOR EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS



benefited from increased earnings while the public saw returns in the form of reduced special education, welfare, and crime costs, and increased tax revenues from program participants later in life.⁵

CHILD CARE IN NORTH CAROLINA

Compared to the national average, North Carolina has one of the highest rates of working mothers with young children, making the need for child care one of the state's top priorities. Almost 250,000 children spend part or all of their day in regulated child care arrangements.⁶ The need and availability of child care is essential for North Carolina's economic development and stability.

North Carolina Census Data Estimates 2019	
Total Population	10,448,084
Children under 5 years old	618,797
Total children under 18	2,319,475
Children under 5 as percent of population	5.9%
Children under 18 as percent of population	22.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2019 Estimates.

Available at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/nc.US/PST045217>.

⁴ Perry Preschool Study, Heckman & Masterov.

⁵ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child.

⁶ NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, Monthly Statistical Detail Report - June 2019. Available at https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/S/statistical_detail_report_june_2020.pdf?ver=2020-07-01-143925-103.

Child Care Highlights 2019	
Number of Regulated Child Care Centers	4,404
Number of Children Enrolled in Child Care Centers	236,324
Number of Regulated Family Child Care Homes	1,342
Number of Children Enrolled in Family Child Care Homes	8,787
Total Number of Regulated Facilities	5,746
Total Number of Children Enrolled in Regulated Facilities	245,111

Source: NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, Monthly Statistical Detail Report - June 2019. Available at https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/S/statistical_detail_report_june_2020.pdf?ver=2020-07-01-143925-103.

NORTH CAROLINA’S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SYSTEM

A variety of programs and funding streams come together to make up North Carolina’s early childhood education system. Federal funding supports North Carolina’s Head Start program and a variety of other programs. State funding supports NC Pre-K and other specific programs targeted for children with disabilities. North Carolina’s early childhood system includes the following programs and departments:

NORTH CAROLINA INFANT TODDLER PROGRAM

Children aged zero to three with certain levels of developmental delay or established special needs conditions, and their families, are eligible for the Infant Toddler Program (ITP). No family is denied services because of the inability to pay. Services are provided in children’s homes or community settings such as parks, playgrounds, or child care facilities. The North Carolina Infant Toddler Program addresses requirements under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that states must provide early learning support for individuals with documented disabilities.

NC OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

The Department of Public Instruction’s Office of Early Learning is a state office that supports children’s success from Pre-K through third grade by administering state and federally funded programs, including the Preschool Exceptional Children’s Program, Title I Preschool, and the Head Start.⁷

PRESCHOOL EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN PROGRAM

Since 1991, all three- four- and pre-k five-year-old children with disabilities in North Carolina have been entitled to a free and appropriate public education mandated through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).⁸

TITLE I PRESCHOOL

A Title I Preschool is a program of high-quality educational experiences designed to enable young children to meet challenging state standards. Although Title I legislation allows its preschool programs to serve children from birth up to age five, most North Carolina Title I Preschools serve four-year-olds only. These programs usually follow the school calendar and school day, and are staffed with both a licensed teacher and highly qualified teacher assistant. Curricula used in Title I preschools must be comprehensive, research-based, and aligned with North Carolina’s early learning standards.

⁷ NC Early Childhood Foundation. Available at <https://buildthefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Early-Learning-in-North-Carolina-Program-Descriptions.pdf>

⁸ NC Early Childhood Foundation. Available at <https://buildthefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Early-Learning-in-North-Carolina-Program-Descriptions.pdf>

HEAD START

Head Start is a federally funded preschool program designed to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs of children aged 3 to 5 and their families. Head Start helps develop social competencies in children and promotes self-sufficiency through a comprehensive family-focused approach.

DEVELOPMENTAL DAY CENTER PROGRAM

Developmental day funds are made available through the State Board of Education to assist in providing special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities who are placed in accredited development day centers by local education agencies. The program serves children with disabilities ages 3 through 21 in a developmental day center approved by the NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Child Development and Early Education.⁹

NORTH CAROLINA PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM (NC PRE-K, FORMERLY MORE AT FOUR)

North Carolina's Pre-K Program is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to the 2011-12 school year, NC Pre-K was known as "More at Four," and was located within the Department of Public Instruction. The More at Four program was initiated in 2001-02 as a state-funded initiative for at-risk four-year-olds that aimed to prepare them for success entering elementary school. NC Pre-K has served approximately 410,000 children since its inception. In 2019-2020, the program served approximately 32,073 students in 2,165 classrooms located at 1,225 sites.¹⁰

The NC Pre-K Program delivers a high-quality educational experience to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children. A child that meets the age requirement and is from a family whose gross income is at or below 75 percent of the State Median Income is eligible for NC Pre-K. Some children of military families are eligible. Additionally, up to 20% of children whose families have incomes above 75 percent of the State Median Income are allowed to enroll if they have documented risk factors such as developmental disability, Limited English Proficiency, educational need, or a chronic health condition.

The NC Pre-K Program requirements are based on the National Education Goals Panel's premise that children must be prepared in five key developmental domains in order to be successful in school: approaches to play and learning; emotional and social development; health and physical development; language development and communication; and cognitive development.

The state allocated \$18.3 million in FY 2018- 19 and 9.35 million in FY 2019-20 to NC Pre-K. In 2019, North Carolina's Division of Child Development and Early Education was awarded a renewal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five for \$40.2 million over three years. With this money, North Carolina intends to provide family engagement activities, improve individualized transitions from preschool to kindergarten, expand access to early learning programs, and improve the overall quality of early learning in the state.¹¹

NC Pre-K classrooms are available statewide in private licensed Head Start programs, child care centers, and public schools. All programs must earn high-quality ratings under the state child care licensing system to

⁹ NC DPI Exceptional Children Division. Available at <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/finance-grants/applications/developmental-day-center-program>.

¹⁰ NC Division of Child Development and Early Education

¹¹ The State of Preschool 2019 North Carolina State Profile. Available at http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/North_Carolina_YB2019.pdf

qualify for participation in NC Pre-K and the state's child care subsidy system. Program standards set for NC Pre-K must be met in both public and nonpublic settings.¹²

In 2018, the U.S. Congress passed legislation, signed by President Trump, that assisted more working families in their ability to afford high-quality childcare. This legislation known as the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), also known as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), doubled funding to \$5.8 billion over the course of two years.¹³ North Carolina was provided with \$74 million to be utilized for PreK provisions, as outlined by the legislation. However, during the 2018 short session, North Carolina legislators accepted the \$74 million, but allocated the funding to other funding sources, rather than designating it directly toward child care as intended.

SMART START

Smart Start is a nationally-recognized public/private partnership that works toward helping every child reach his or her potential and be prepared to succeed in a global community. Smart Start aspires to help working parents pay for child care, improve the quality of child care, and provide health and family support services in every North Carolina county. Smart Start was created in 1993 as an innovative solution to the problem of children entering school unprepared to learn. The initiative is funded by the NC General Assembly and several prominent foundations and operates through independent, private organizations working in all 100 North Carolina counties through The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) and 75 local partnerships.

Smart Start's purpose is to increase the well-being of children birth to five by:

- Increasing the quality of early care and education across the state, promoting high quality early care that is child-focused, family-friendly and fair to providers;
- Offering family-focused programs that improve parenting and promote involvement;
- Improving outcomes for children by increasing young children's access to healthcare; and
- Providing programs that develop early literacy skills needed for success in school, work and life.

NORTH CAROLINA EARLY LEARNING NETWORK

The North Carolina Early Learning Network, funded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, provides early learning communities with professional development and technical assistance to support preschool children with disabilities and their families.

Goals of the Early Learning Network:

- Provide support and training to the NC Preschool Exceptional Children Coordinators.
- Increase the knowledge, skills, and capacity of early learning communities across the state through evidence-based training and technical assistance.
- Develop and disseminate evidence and research-based materials.
- Contribute to the development of state level guidance documents, processes, and training materials.
- Scale-up multi-tiered systems of support to ensure early childhood learning through program wide implementation.

¹² National Institute for Early Education Research, The State of Preschool 2015 (North Carolina, p 127-128). Available at <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/2015%20Yearbook.pdf>.

¹³ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Non-Public Education. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oji/nonpublic/childcare.html?exp=2>

- Collaborate among and within agencies to maximize resources.¹⁴

RECENT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE EARLY EDUCATION

In 2019, the North Carolina legislature asked the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education to complete a study of all four-and-five star rated centers who are not participating in NC Pre-K to identify the challenges associated with becoming a NC Pre-K site. The legislature also asked the division to complete a county-by-county analysis of additional local challenges. The purpose of these studies will be to help inform recommendations on funding and to move towards the goal of enrolling at least 75% of eligible children in each county.¹⁵

ThinkBabies NC, created in 2018, led by the NC Early Education Coalition, released their first Policy Priorities for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. ThinkBabies NC aims to advance policies to better help North Carolina's infants and toddlers, and it is aligned with the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative and the NC Early Childhood Action Plan.¹⁶

¹⁴ North Carolina Early Learning Network. Available at <http://nceln.fpg.unc.edu/>.

¹⁵ General Assembly of North Carolina, Session Law 2019-87, House Bill 886. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/SessionLaws/PDF/2019-2020/SL2019-87.pdf>

¹⁶ Think Babies NC. Available at <https://buildthefoundation.org/initiative/think-babies-nc/>

WHOLE CHILD

KEY ISSUES

There is recognition that a child’s academic achievements can’t be separated from his or her mental health and social-emotional learning. Stemming from this recognition is a growing movement to encourage schools to refocus their educational efforts in a way that takes a “whole child approach.” This approach shifts away from simply targeting a child’s academic achievements and instead promotes the overall well-being of a child and considers ways to improve his or her physical and emotional health as well.

INTRODUCTION

When discussing school reform, policymakers and educators have often focused on accountability standards, curriculums, and teaching styles. However, in recent years, the health and wellness of students has appeared more in the discussion. Extensive research and practical knowledge prove that physical health, nutrition, family and community environment, and social and emotional health are essential ingredients that can greatly contribute to, or greatly hinder, a child’s ability to learn.

WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD MODEL

The *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* model, created by the CDC and adopted by the NC State Board of Education in 2016, recognizes that health, behaviors and academic performance of students are inextricably linked to each other. The model was designed to support the alignment across education, public health, and school health sectors to improve childrens’ cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. The model includes 10 components, illustrated below.



NUTRITION

In recent years, increased attention has been paid by school and district leaders and policymakers to improving student nutrition, addressing food insecurity, and making school food options healthier. While there is wide agreement about the importance of helping students be well-nourished, the issue still poses several challenges for schools and school systems:

- **Healthier foods cost more**, so eliminating foods with high sugar, salt, and fat contents reduces revenue for school food service groups.
- **Low participation leads to higher prices.** Federal programs provide more funding to schools with higher participation rates, so schools with lower participation rates lose out on two fronts: students are not fully served, and schools pay higher prices for participating students.

North Carolina and the United States face a dual dilemma: rising youth obesity and rising youth poverty. Rising poverty rates increase the need for schools to provide adequate meals to their students. At the same time, increasing rates of childhood and adolescent obesity oblige school agencies to limit unhealthy food in exchange for more nutritious options in schools. Studies have shown that nutritious meals not only supply students with fuel for the school day, but also enhance attentiveness and improve school attendance and classroom behavior. Consuming a nutritious breakfast is especially important because students who eat a filling breakfast exhibit general improvement in their school performance and enhanced cognitive abilities. However, many students do not have access to healthy foods, and may skip breakfast and/or consume high-fat and high-sugar foods in the morning. Since children can receive up to 50 percent of their daily food intake in school, it is vital that schools make healthy food more accessible to students.

STATE LEGISLATION REGARDING SCHOOL NUTRITION

North Carolina has passed several laws to ensure that students have access to nutritious foods at public schools and institutions, including:

- GS 115C-264.3: North Carolina's Nutrition Standards for Elementary Schools
 - Oversees the distribution of food offered through the National School Lunch Program, the After School Snack Program, and a la carte items
 - Sets health requirements for school food offerings to control for fat and sugar calories, whole grain content, fruit and vegetable offerings, as well as milk varieties available
 - Prohibits the sale of a la carte items that do not meet minimum nutritional values and processed foods that are predominantly made from sweeteners, including soda, chewing gum, and candy
- Senate Bill 415
 - Requires that school breakfasts must be provided "at no cost to children who qualify for reduced-price meals"
- General Statute 115C-264
 - Mandates that "all school food services shall be operated on a nonprofit basis, and any earnings therefrom over and above the cost of operation... shall be used to reduce the cost of food, to serve better food, or to provide free or reduced-price lunches to indigent children"
- General Statute 143-64
 - Allows local administrative units, community colleges, and other public institutions to set nutritional standards on the types of beverages sold at each respective institution

NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Recognizing the public school as a place where children both eat and learn, the federal government has created several laws, guidelines, and subsidy programs that help schools provide nutritious food and health education to students. Below is a brief overview of current federal school nutrition programs.

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR ALL NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

All public and non-profit private schools as well as residential childcare institutions that serve children are eligible to participate in federal school nutrition programs. National school nutrition programs offer United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) subsidies to schools serving meals that meet the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Children at participating schools and institutions are able to receive meals at full price, reduced-price, or for free depending on family income.

Income Eligibility Standards for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (2019-2020)		
Household Size	Annual Income	
	Free	Reduced
1	\$16,237	\$23,107
2	\$21,938	\$31,284
3	\$27,728	\$39,461
4	\$33,475	\$47,638
5	\$39,221	\$55,815
6	\$44,967	\$63,992
7	\$50,713	\$72,169
8	\$56,459	\$80,346
Each additional family member add:	\$5,746	\$8,177

NC DPI, 2019-20 Income Eligibility Standards for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. Available at <https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/information-resources/eligibility/2019-20-ieg-ncdpi-mediarelease.pdf>

At the federal level, school nutrition programs are administered by the Food and Nutrition Services at the USDA. At the state level, school nutrition programs are operated by State Education Agencies, which have agreements with school food authorities.

NORTH CAROLINA'S PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

North Carolina school nutrition programs are administered and monitored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, specifically in the Child Nutrition Services (CNS) branch. In the 2018-2019 school year, approximately 791,788 students qualified for free meals and 57,237 students qualified for reduced price meals.¹

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP)

The National School Lunch Program helps provide nutritionally balanced meals to students in elementary, middle and high schools. Under the NSLP, school food authorities must serve meals that meet the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans and must offer these meals at a reduced price or at no additional charge to students who qualify. In return, the USDA grants the school or institution a monetary subsidy for every meal served.²

¹ NC DPI, SY 18-19 Economically Disadvantaged Data - School Nutrition Claim Data.

² USDA National School Lunch Program. Available at

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Under the School Breakfast Program, schools and institutions that provide their students with breakfast meals that meet the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans receive monetary subsidies from the USDA. All children can participate in the program and meals are offered at full price, reduced price, or no charge, depending on the student's family income.³

SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM

In the Special Milk program, the USDA provides monetary subsidies to all eligible schools and institutions that serve milk to children. The milk must meet state and local standards concerning fat content and flavoring options as well as comply with the fat and vitamin requirements set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Schools and institutions must offer milk at full price, reduced-price, or no charge, depending on students' household family income.⁴

FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM (FFVP)

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program provides fresh produce to select schools across the nation. The USDA finances this program and aims to combat childhood obesity by educating students about healthy food choices and offering healthy food to students. Eligibility of schools and institutions is need-based.⁵

NORTH CAROLINA INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR CHILDREN

There are several initiatives housed in the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) within the NC Department of Health & Human Services that further promote healthy eating and lifestyles for children and their families.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST INITIATIVES

In regard to breakfast, the state has tried various ways to make the food offered through the Innovative School Breakfast Program more accessible to students by using innovative distribution methods. Under this program, depending on home income levels, students may purchase breakfast at a full price, a reduced-price, or receive breakfast for free.⁶

NO KID HUNGRY NC

In addition to innovative distribution methods, North Carolina piloted a program entitled "No Kid Hungry" in September 2011. Administrators introduced the program in 28 schools to increase participation in School Breakfast Programs. Under "No Kid Hungry," free breakfast was widely offered and the number of children who could receive free meals during the summer was increased. In 2014, No Kid Hungry NC became an initiative based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. No Kid Hungry now has 4 focus areas: school breakfast, summer meals, afterschool meals, and nutrition education.⁷

http://ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/national-school-lunch-program.aspx#_Uu-9GdLiTM.

³ USDA, School Breakfast Program. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/sbp-fact-sheet>

⁴ USDA, Special Milk Program. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/smp/special-milk-program>

⁵ USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/ffvp-fact-sheet>

⁶ NC DPI, Innovative School Breakfast Programs. Available at <https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/programs/sbp/innovative-school-breakfast-programs>.

⁷ No Kid Hungry NC. Available at <http://nokidhungrync.org/>.

EXPANDED LEARNING

Expanded learning programs are opportunities for children before school, after school, on weekends and during summers, including community programs such as those provided by the YMCA or Boys & Girls Clubs, community-based programs, faith-based programs, and school-led programs. Expanded learning programs have a proven ability to contribute greatly to a child's education and overall wellbeing.

In 2019, 10.2 million K-12 children participated in afterschool programs in the United States. In addition, parents of 19.4 million children said they would participate in afterschool programs if a quality program were available in their community.⁸ North Carolina has seen a steady increase in afterschool program participation during the past 10 years- 15 percent of North Carolina's K-12 children participate in afterschool programs. Approximately 39% (523,140) of children not currently in afterschool programs would likely participate if they had access to a quality program in their community.⁹

SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

Summer learning loss is an important issue facing our public schools. According to a survey administered by the National Summer Learning Association, two-thirds of the teachers polled spend at least a month reviewing old material at the start of the school year.¹⁰ This leads to the loss of valuable learning time in the classroom and the loss of critical skills over the summer. Summer programs, as a component of expanded learning programs, are one of the best strategies to combat this phenomenon. Students from low-income families are more likely than their peers from higher-income families to experience learning loss over the summer. Part of the achievement gap between students of different income levels is due to the differences in learning rates over the summer.¹¹

21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) federal program serves students in high-poverty communities across the country by giving them the opportunity to participate in academic enrichment and youth development programs. Centers may provide a wide range of activities including but not limited to tutoring, homework help, recreational activities, career training, community service, and youth leadership activities. The 21st CCLC is the only federal funding source in North Carolina specifically devoted to before school, afterschool, and summer learning programs. In FY 2020, \$34,696,481 was appropriated to 21st CCLC in North Carolina. President Trump's proposed FY 2021 budget eliminates the funding.¹²

CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT FUND

In addition to 21st CCLC, the federal government provides funding for the Child Care & Development Fund (CCDF) which provides vouchers or subsidies for low-income parents to pay for childcare including

⁸ Afterschool Alliance, National One Pager 2020

Available at <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/National-One-Pager-2020.pdf>

⁹ Afterschool Alliance, Afterschool in North Carolina

Available at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=NC>

¹⁰ Education Week, After Summer, Teachers Spend a Month Reteaching Students. Available at

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/beyond_schools/2013/06/after_summer_teachers_spend_a_month_re-teaching_students.html.

¹¹ Education Week, Programs Found to Stem Summer Learning Loss and Boost Achievement. Available at

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/time_and_learning/2014/10/students_struggling_the_most_in.html.

¹² Afterschool Alliance, Afterschool in North Carolina. Available at:

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=NC>.

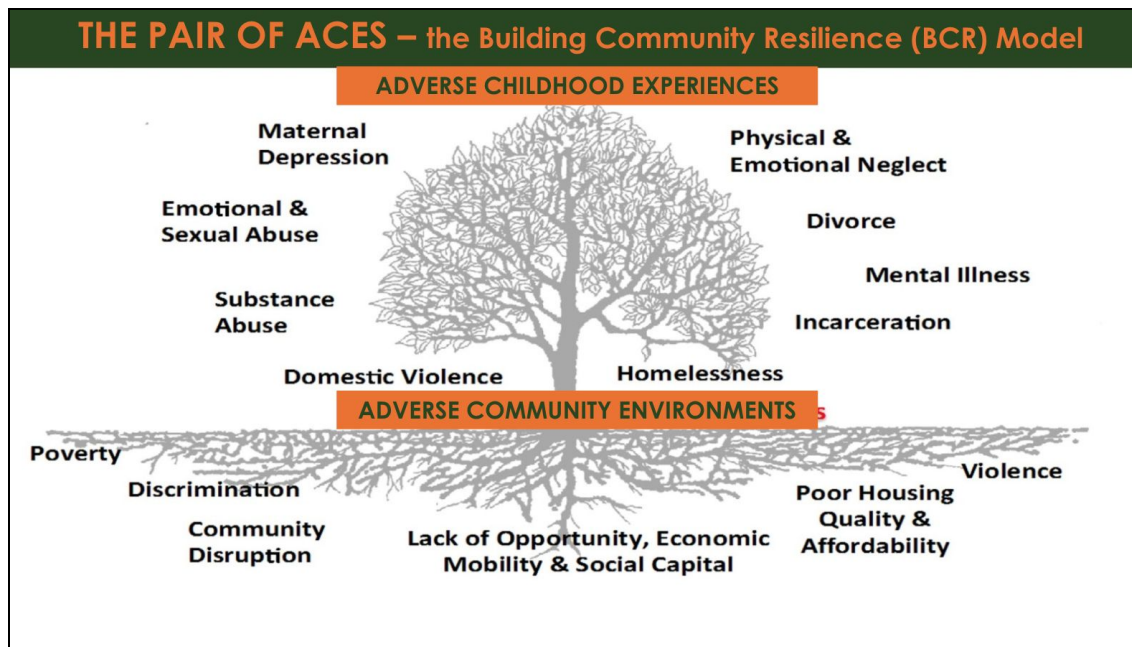
preschool, before school, after school and summer care for children age 6 to 12. In 2018, Congress increased funding for the CCDF block grant by \$2.4 billion, giving North Carolina an additional \$74 million in funds. However, state legislative leaders redirected funds, resulting in a decrease of \$50 million of the original funding that was allocated to the program. The remaining funds were used to serve 3,700 children in afterschool programs.¹³

NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Established in 2002, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) is a statewide afterschool and expanded learning network, with key partners including afterschool providers, state agencies, state and local policymakers, law enforcement, universities and community colleges, business, and the philanthropic community, working together to increase access to high quality afterschool and expanded learning programs for all children and youth in North Carolina, especially for those at-risk of education failure.¹⁴

THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON LEARNING

A CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study in the 1990s documented the high prevalence of traumatic experiences in childhood, with 64% of respondents reporting adverse experiences in at least one area and 22% reporting adversity in three or more areas.¹⁵ More recent studies have confirmed these rates and determined that ACEs are even more common for youth from low-income homes and ethnic minority groups.¹⁶ When adverse experiences are unpredictable, severe, or prolonged, resulting traumatic stress can impact both the chemistry and structure of a child’s developing brain.¹⁷



¹³ The Missed Opportunity for North Carolina’s Youngest Children. Available at <https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/the-missed-opportunity-for-north-carolinas-youngest-children/#:~:text=Child%20Care%20Development%20Block%20Grant,support%20for%20high%20quality%20care>

¹⁴ North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs. Available at www.ncafterschool.org

¹⁵ Anda et al., 2006

¹⁶ Busby, Lambert, & Ialongo, 2013

¹⁷ De Bellis & Zisk, 2014

Source: Building Community Resilience, Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University.

Too often, students arrive at school besieged by the neurological responses of a stress response system that is operating on high alert, with attention focused on scanning the environment for danger rather than concentrating on school work. Educators may see this manifest in negative or disruptive behavior, but students may be simply responding to their bodies' heightened vulnerability to experience the stress reaction of "fight" (e.g., violence; aggression), "flight" (e.g., absenteeism; dropouts), or "freeze" (e.g., shut down; withdraw).

Added to behavioral challenges, early adversity can take a significant toll on academic performance. Students who experience three or more ACEs score lower than their peers on standardized tests; are 2.5 times more likely to fail a grade; are up to 32 times more likely to be labeled as learning disabled; and are more likely to be suspended and expelled.¹⁸

NORTH CAROLINA RESILIENCE AND LEARNING PROJECT

The North Carolina Resilience and Learning Project aims to design and implement whole-school and district-wide strategies to improve the academic performance and social-emotional wellbeing of students affected by trauma. The Project model involves two main components: (1) broad-based educator training for all school staff, with more intensive training for a core group of school-level leaders; and (2) intensive coaching across the school year to support trauma-sensitive strategy selection and implementation.

The Project began in the 2017-2018 school year as a pilot in two schools in Edgecombe County Public Schools and one school in Rowan-Salisbury Schools. Since the 2019-2020 school year, it has expanded to 22 school districts across the state. In similar models being implemented in other states, early evidence has shown reductions in office referral and suspension rates, improved attendance, and improvements in various academic achievement measures.¹⁹

¹⁸ Bethell et al., 2014; Perfect et al., 2016; Porsche et al., 2016

¹⁹ NC Resilience and Learning Project. Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/resilience/>

COVID-19 IMPACT ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

KEY ISSUES

A global pandemic swept the world in 2020, forcing many nations to close school buildings to limit the spread of a virus known as both “coronavirus” and “COVID-19.” The virus forced North Carolina schools, along with schools across the country, to close their buildings in the spring of 2020, having a significant impact on students, educators, and business operations.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, COVID-19 forced the closure of school buildings across the state. As local school districts rushed to find new ways to deploy technology to accommodate students while they learned at home, many of the state’s inequities with regard to ensuring all students were able to access a sound basic education were brought into sharp focus. Unequal broadband access, the varied ability of parents to work remotely, funding disparities across districts, and many more inequities were exacerbated by efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

In March 2020, an executive order from the Governor of North Carolina required all public schools across the state to close their school buildings and launch alternative learning plans in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. While schools were initially told to close their doors for four weeks, ultimately students remained home for the rest of the 2019-20 school year, and school buildings remained closed throughout the summer of 2020.

On July 14, 2020, Governor Cooper announced that schools across the state had the option to open for the 2020-21 school year under a plan that included both in-person and remote learning (known as Plan B). This plan would allow schools to practice safe social distancing while accommodating students inside the classroom on a part-time basis, with students learning at home for a portion of time as well. Families across the state also had the ability to choose an all-remote learning option, and educators and staff considered higher-risk for COVID-19 complications had the option to work remotely as well. Districts were also given discretion to operate schools using Plan C, which would be a full-time remote learning schedule. As of early August 2020, approximately 60 districts had made the decision to begin the 2020-21 school year online only. The State Department of Health and Human Services issued a [toolkit](#) to advise districts on recommendations and requirements under plans B and C.

REMOTE LEARNING

With little time for planning, teachers and staff in school districts across the state created remote learning plans in March 2020 to enable students in grades K-12 to finish the school year online. Depending on the district and the resources available, remote learning options typically included a combination of live instruction and online resources students could work through independently.

In order to successfully meet the requirements for remote learning, students required access to broadband internet, in most cases. However, approximately 197,000 households with students across the state of North

Carolina lack access to high-speed broadband internet, presenting a formidable challenge to accessing a sound basic education during COVID-19.¹

As a temporary solution to this problem, districts, partnering with local businesses in some cases, distributed portable WiFi hotspots and chromebooks to students to help mitigate the broadband access and device shortage problems.

FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT

North Carolina has received more than \$2 billion as part of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The State Board of Education approved in May 2020 the distribution of [\\$356.1 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act funds](#) to public schools. The board also approved the distribution of [\\$75 million in CARES funding](#) to help districts reimburse their costs for providing meals to students while schools were closed during Spring 2020.²

In June 2020, the State Board of Education approved the allocation of \$70 million from federal CARES Act funds for school districts and charter schools to provide summer programs aimed at helping elementary students who were in kindergarten through fourth grades during the 2019-20 school year needing extra instruction in reading or math because of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Board also approved a formula for allocating \$35 million from federal CARES Act funds for the purchase of computers or other devices for use by students and staff.³

As of August 8th 2020, [North Carolina had made available approximately \\$727 million to K-12 schools in COVID relief funding](#), most of which comprised federal funds. On August 12th 2020, Governor Cooper directed an additional \$95.6 million from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief, part of the CARES Act, to support students who are most impacted by COVID-19.⁴

ACCOUNTABILITY

In Spring 2020, the U.S. Department of Education granted North Carolina a waiver so that the state did not have to administer standardized tests in public K-12 schools for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Schools also received waivers on state tests.

For the 2020-21 school year, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has recommended that students take standardized tests either when they return to school for in-person instruction, or when the district decides to administer the tests "at a school-sanctioned site that meets the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services guidelines for COVID-19."

As of August 2020, no federal waiver for standardized testing appeared to be forthcoming for the 2020-21 school year.

¹ NC Broadband Infrastructure Office, Department of Information Technology

² Coronavirus hurt NC school budgets. Now they'll get \$431 million in relief funds. Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article242877216.html>

³ DPI Press Release. Available at

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2020/06/04/state-board-approves-allocation-70-million-cares-act-funds-remediation-and-summer-bridge-programs#:~:text=The%20State%20Board%20of%20Education,year%20needing%20extra%20instruction%20in>

⁴ Governor Cooper Directs \$95.6 Million to Support Students Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Available at <https://governor.nc.gov/news/governor-cooper-directs-956-million-support-students-impacted-covid-19-pandemic>

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