



North Carolina Education Policy Primer 2022





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

North Carolina Constitution Article 1 Section 15

An Introduction to the Education Policy Primer

Education policy involves a wide range of interconnected issues such as school finance and facilities, accountability and assessment, technology, teachers and so much more. In order to make well-informed and evidence-based decisions, policymakers and voters face the challenge of understanding complex educational issues.

The Public School Forum’s Education Policy Primer serves as a fact-based guide to public education in North Carolina. The Primer provides a comprehensive overview of how education policy is made, along with the current state of public education and the policies guiding it. The Forum produces this guide in order to inform current policymakers, candidates for public office, and voters.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

[North Carolina's Public Schools and Students](#)

Governance of NC Public Schools

[State and Local Role](#)

[Federal Role](#)

[School Finance](#)

[COVID-19](#)

Important Issues in North Carolina Education Policy

[Teachers](#)

[School Facilities](#)

[School Calendar](#)

[Accountability](#)

[Standards and Curriculum](#)

[School Choice](#)

[Technology and Digital Learning](#)

[School Safety](#)

[Early Childhood Education](#)

[Student Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning](#)

[Out-of-School Time](#)

INTRODUCTION

North Carolina's Public Schools and Students

North Carolina contains 116 public school districts with more than 2500 district public schools, as well as 180 charter schools and three residential schools that serve students with hearing and visual impairments. School districts, also known as a Local Education Agency (LEA), are maintained by a public board of education or other public authority. A public school unit (PSU) refers to an individual school administrative unit, including both charter schools and regional schools.

The number of children attending North Carolina public schools is measured by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) as Average Daily Membership, commonly referred to as ADM. The state total ADM in 2020-2021 for North Carolina's traditional public schools and charter schools was 1,477,872.¹ The state is experiencing rapid population growth, thus, the number of students served by public schools is expected to continue to rise over time. The student population is also becoming increasingly diverse and has seen significant improvements in performance measures over time, although there remains room to grow.

Population Growth in North Carolina

North Carolina had an estimated population of 10,551,162 residents in 2021. Between 2020 and 2021, North Carolina ranked 4th in population growth with a population change of 1.1% in the year.² Between 2010 and 2020 North Carolina's population grew at a rate of 9.5% compared to a national rate of 7.4%.³

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 than rural areas since 2010 and are the main causes of the state's population growth. Fifty-one counties concentrated in the northeast and central coast portions of the state decreased in population from 2010 to 2020.⁴

North Carolina has the second largest population living in rural areas and over 76% of all public schools are in one of the state's 80 rural counties.⁵

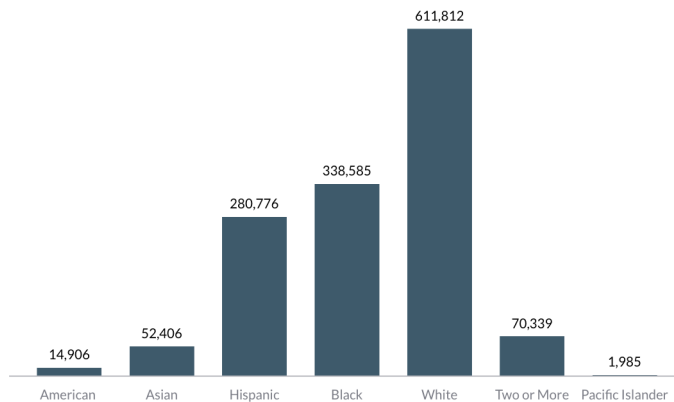
By 2050, North Carolina is expected to reach 13.8 million people and the child population is expected to reach 2.7 million (20%) compared to the current 2.3 million.⁶ Further, by 2050, just over half (52%) of the population will be Non-Hispanic White, compared to 61% in 2020.⁷

Diversity of North Carolina's Student Population

North Carolina's student population is becoming increasingly diverse. In the 2021-22 school year, 1% of traditional public school students were American Indian, 3.8% were Asian, 20.4% were Hispanic, 24.6% were Black, 44.6% were white, 5.1% were two or more races, and 0.01% were Pacific Islander.⁸ These percentages do not include charter schools; In the 2021-22 school year, 0.07% of charter and regional school students were American Indian, 3.8% were Asian, 12.6% were Hispanic, 26.6% were Black, 49.6% were white, 6.3% were two or more races, and 0.013% were Pacific Islander.⁹ Additionally, in October of 2021, DPI estimated there were 131,247 English Learners (EL) in North Carolina's traditional public schools and charter schools, an increase of 6,742 from the prior year.¹⁰

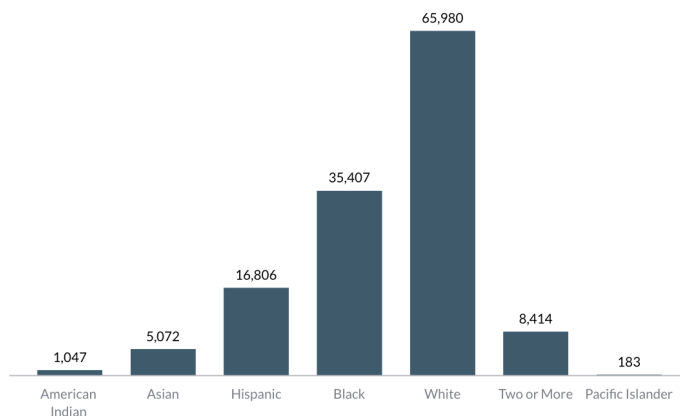
Racial Demographic Makeup

of North Carolina's Traditional Public School Students (2021-22)



Racial Demographic Makeup

of North Carolina's Charter School and Regional Students (2021-22)



[North Carolina's Student Population by Race and Sex.](#)

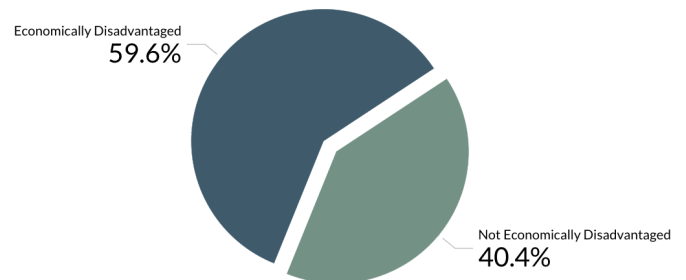
[North Carolina's Charter and Regional Schools Student Population by Race and Sex.](#)

Over half of North Carolina students are classified as “economically disadvantaged.” In the 2019-20 school year, 57.7% of North Carolina’s traditional public school students and 59.6% of charter students received either free or reduced lunch.¹¹ Moreover, in 2020, nearly one in five North Carolina children lived at or under the federal poverty level.¹²

Economically Disadvantaged Students
in North Carolina's Traditional Public Schools (2019-20)

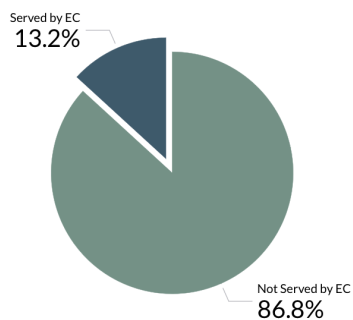


Economically Disadvantaged Students
in North Carolina's Charter Schools (2019-20)

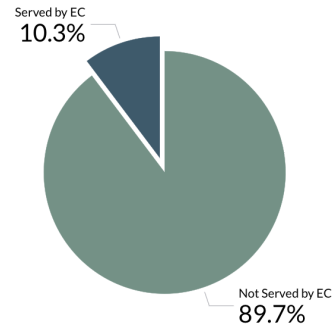


In the 2021-22 school year, 181,350 students in North Carolina’s traditional public schools and 13,642 students in charter schools were served by exceptional children programs.¹³

Students Served by Exceptional Children Programs
in North Carolina's Traditional Public Schools



Students Served by Exceptional Children Programs
in North Carolina's Charter Schools



Student Performance

The collection of student performance data is the state's way of ensuring accountability in students, teachers, and the education system as a whole. Overall, North Carolina has seen dramatic student performance gains in recent years, however, there is much room for growth. The state's graduation rate has also improved in recent years. Increasing demands from employers has prompted state leaders to emphasize the importance of increasing the percentage of North Carolinians who hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential. In 2019, a new statewide attainment goal was established by the myFutureNC Commission and codified into state law. Reaching the statewide attainment goal will require investments and efforts across the pre-K to postsecondary pipeline.¹⁴

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.

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.

The scheduled 2021 NAEP testing was delayed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first national scores since the pandemic began were released in September 2022. The National Center for Education Statistics administered the 2022 NAEP assessments between January and March of 2022 to approximately 224,400 fourth graders from approximately 5,780 schools and approximately 222,200 eighth graders from approximately 5,190 schools across the country.¹⁵

As experts predicted, results indicated nation-wide declines in both reading and math scores as compared to pre-pandemic scores released in 2019. The most significant nation-wide declines were seen in 4th and 8th grade math. Fourth grade math scores dropped by five points, and 8th grade math scores declined by eight points. Math score declines for both grades were the largest decreases from a

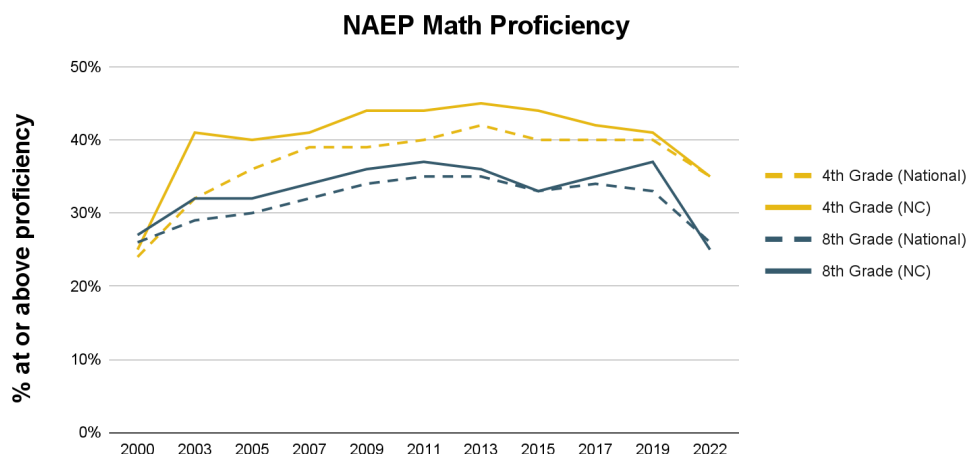
previous year since 1990.¹⁶ Reading scores were declining nation-wide even before the pandemic. Post-pandemic reading scores declined by 3 points for both 4th and 8th graders as compared to 2019.¹⁷

NAEP results from 2022 reflect an unprecedented challenge for our schools and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and disaggregated data indicate exacerbated gaps between lower and higher performing students. The results, however, do not indicate that students did not learn during the pandemic, but rather that learning gains as measured by NAEP were less than in previous years. Other more recent data indicates that learning recovery has begun.

2022 NAEP Results: 4th and 8th Grade Math

North Carolina's 2022 NAEP score declines were consistent with trends seen in the nation as a whole. North Carolina's 4th grade NAEP average math score (236) was above the national average (235) in 2022, as it has been since 1996.¹⁸ The state's average 4th grade mathematics score was higher than 14 other states/jurisdictions, lower than 8 other states/jurisdictions, and not statistically different from 29 other states/jurisdictions. Seventy-five percent of North Carolina 4th graders scored at the basic achievement level or above; 35% at the proficient level or above; and 8% at the advanced achievement level.¹⁹ Between 1992 and 2022, the percentage of 4th graders in NC scoring below basic level in mathematics decreased from 50% to 25%.

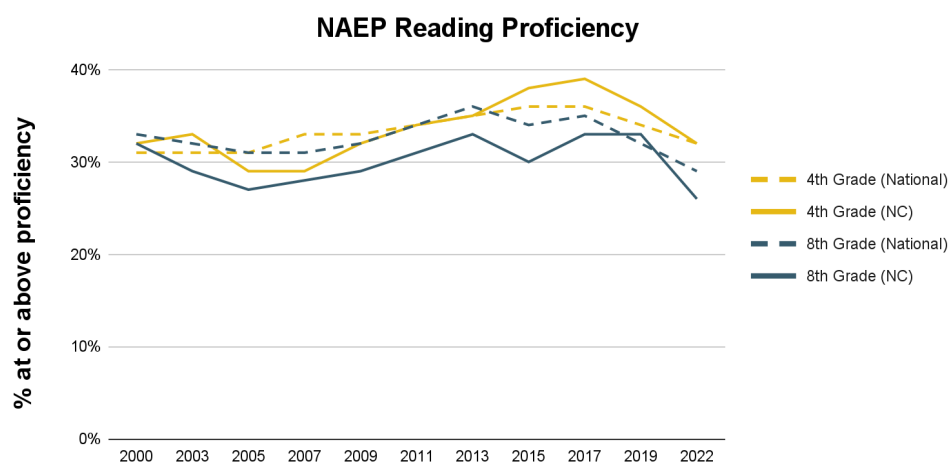
North Carolina's average score for 8th grade math (274) was also above the national average (273), after being stagnant with the national average since 2015.²⁰ North Carolina's average 8th grade mathematics score was higher than 16 other states and the District of Columbia, lower than 15 other states, and not statistically different from 20 other states. Sixty-two percent of North Carolina 8th graders scored at the basic achievement level or above; 25% at the proficient level or above; and 6% at the advanced achievement level.²¹ Between 1990 and 2022, the percentage of 8th graders in NC scoring below basic level in mathematics decreased from 62% to 39%. From 2019 to 2022, the percentage increased from 29% to 39%.²²



2022 NAEP Results: 4th and 8th Grade Reading

In 2022, North Carolina's average 4th grade NAEP reading score (216) was the same as the national average (216). North Carolina's average 4th grade reading score was higher than 14 other states/jurisdictions, lower than 8 other states/jurisdictions, and not statistically different from 29 other states/jurisdictions. Sixty-one percent of North Carolina 4th graders scored at the basic achievement level or above; 32% at the proficient level or above; and 8% at the advanced achievement level. The percentage of students in North Carolina who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level in 2022 (32%), is an increase from 28% in 1998.²³

In 2022, the average NAEP reading score of 8th grade students in North Carolina (256) was slightly below the national average (259). North Carolina's average 8th grade reading score was higher than 4 other states/jurisdictions, lower than 17 other states/jurisdictions, and not statistically different from 30 other states/jurisdictions. Sixty-six percent of North Carolina 8th graders scored at the basic achievement level or above; 26% at the proficient level or above; and 3% at the advanced achievement level. The percentage of students in North Carolina who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level (26%) in 2022 is a decrease from the percentage in 1998 (30%).²⁴

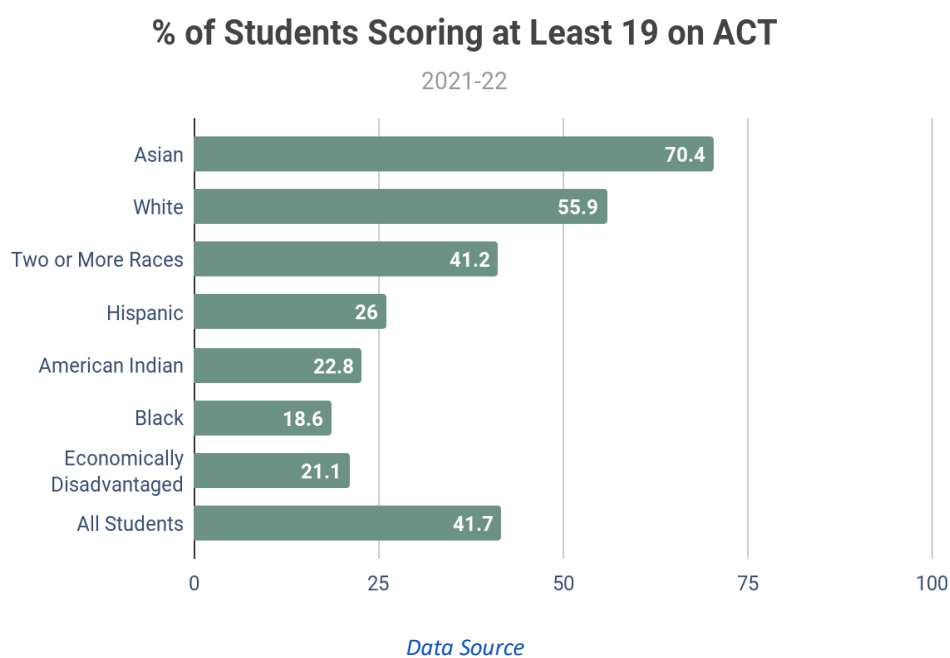


American College Testing (ACT)

Since 2012-13, state legislation has required that the ACT College Admissions Assessment be administered to all North Carolina public school students in the 11th grade for no cost. In the 2020-21 school year, 104,837 NC students took the ACT, compared with only 18,817 who took the test in 2011-2012, prior to the passage of the new legislation.

The ACT measures students' 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 with a composite score that is calculated by averaging the individual section scores. Until the 2021-22 school year, the statewide measure of college-readiness for North Carolina was a composite score of 17, the minimum score required for admission to a UNC-system school. This minimum score has been updated to 19 for the 2021-22 school year, as required by the UNC Board of Governors action in March 2020. The mean composite ACT score for North Carolina's 11th-grade students was 18.2 in 2021-22, compared to 18.4 in 2018-19. The chart below shows the percentage of students who earned an ACT composite score of 19 or higher by race.²⁵



Advanced Placement Courses

An Advanced Placement (AP) course is a class which a student takes while still in high school that can potentially earn them 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.

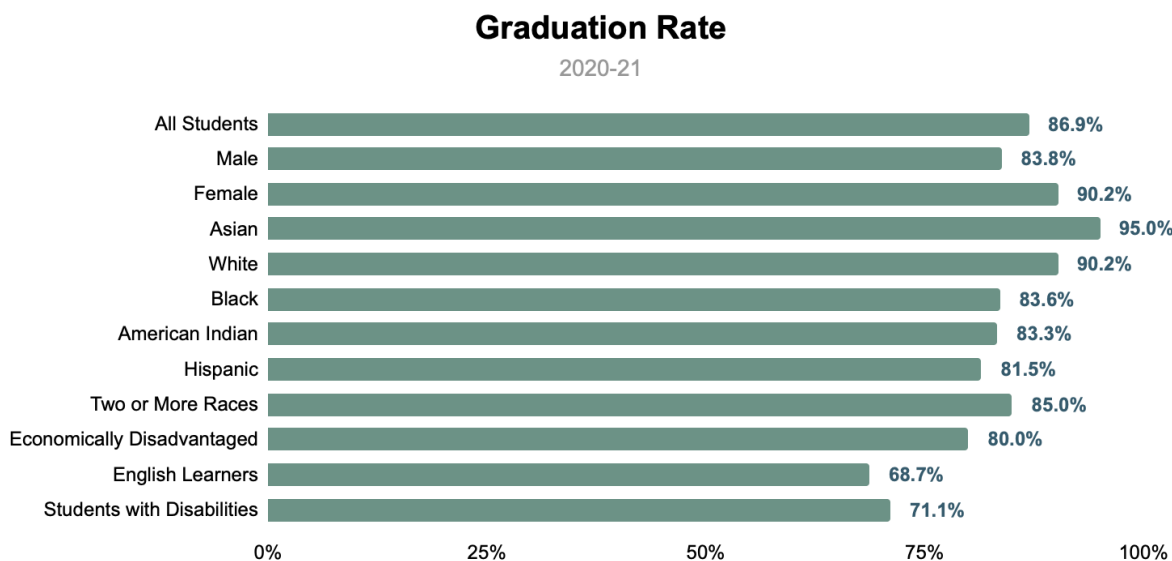
The percentage of students that take AP exams differs widely across states, and the numbers also vary based on the type of AP exam taken. As with SAT scores, these variances make it difficult to meaningfully compare scores across states, or to compare state scores with regional or national averages. 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.

In 2021, 70,041 students took AP exams (not including students from the North Carolina School of Science and Math or the North Carolina School of the Arts), a participation rate of 15.7% of high school students in North Carolina. Out of these students, 50.9% scored at least a 3 on at least one of their exams.²⁶ Nationally 55% of AP students scored at least a 3 on at least one of their exams in 2021.²⁷ Access to AP courses differs for students across the state. Rural districts in North Carolina report that 5.8% of their course offerings are made up by AP classes, while urban districts report that 11.9% of their course offerings are AP classes.²⁸

High School Graduation and Dropout Rates

While student test scores are often the focus of discussions on student achievement, the high school graduation and dropout rates tell a great deal about how students fare in an education system.

The high school graduation rate tracks how many ninth graders that enter high school in a given year graduate within four years. In the 2020-21 school year, 104,724 North Carolina students graduated out of the cohort of 120,479 students that entered 9th grade together in 2017-18.²⁹ The graduation rate, at 86.9%, is one of the highest in state history. In 2010-11, the graduation rate was 77.9%.³⁰ The graph below illustrates the 2020-21 four-year graduation rate by student subgroup. As is the case nationwide, North Carolina data show that female students, Asian and white students, and native English-speaking students are more likely to complete high school in four years than male, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, disabled, economically disadvantaged students, and those with limited English proficiency.



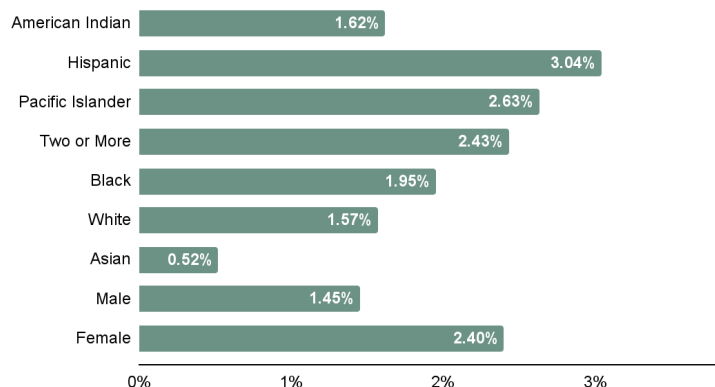
Source: [NC DPI, Cohort Graduation Rate](#).

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.”³¹ 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 dropping out it is difficult to get an accurate picture of why many students leave. An estimated 45.9% of dropouts are due to attendance issues.³² 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.³³

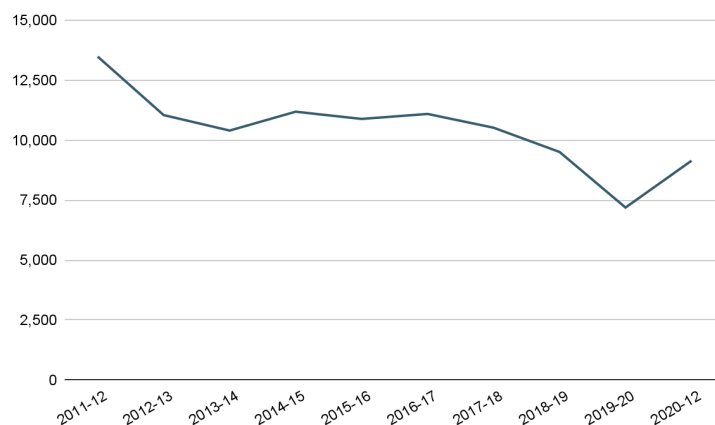
The state reported 9,147 dropouts (1.94%) in 2020-21, a 27.1% increase from the 7,194 dropouts in 2019-20 (1.53%)³⁴. It is important to note that there was a significant decline in dropouts during the 2019-20 school year compared to previous years. More data are needed to understand the impact of COVID-related policies that may have contributed to the notable dip in dropout rates for that year. The 2020-21 rates remain lower than 2018-19 (9,512). The chart below illustrates dropout rates by students’ race/ethnicity and gender.

Dropout Rates by Subgroup

2020-21



North Carolina Dropouts over Time



Source: [NC DPI Consolidated Data Report, 2020-21](#).

Postsecondary Attainment and myFutureNC³⁵

Over the past 30 years, our state has experienced unprecedented surges in skilled service jobs such as finance or healthcare that require a credential or postsecondary degree.³⁶ This trend is projected to continue, yet North Carolina's talent supply is not keeping pace. To meet projected demands of North Carolina businesses, at least 60% of workers will need a non degree credential or postsecondary degree by 2030; however, fewer than half of North Carolinians have achieved that level of education. In fact, only 31% of students who begin 9th grade in North Carolina will go on to complete a 2- or 4-year college degree within six years of graduating high school.³⁷

In addition to meeting the needs of businesses, the long-term return on the investment for individuals who obtain a postsecondary degree is invaluable. Individuals with a high school degree or less will make on average \$27,000 15 years after high school graduation. However, those with a 2-year degree can double their earnings and those with a 4-year degree can triple their annual income. Higher wages also equate to a higher tax base and money to feed back into our local economies. In addition to higher levels of income, people with a college education are significantly more likely to remain employed during economic crises, benefiting not only the individual but also the government systems which would otherwise support them.³⁸

In response to the State's workforce requirements and the need for all North Carolinians to earn family-supporting wages, in February 2019 the myFutureNC Commission established a goal to have 2 million North Carolinians between the ages of 25-44 to hold a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree by the year 2030, representing one of the highest educational attainment targets in the nation.³⁹ On June 26, 2019, with bipartisan support and a signature from the Governor, the North Carolina General Assembly turned the goal into law through HB664/S.L.2015-55. As part of the statute, myFutureNC will be responsible for reporting annually to the General Assembly on the progress of the State reaching the postsecondary attainment goal, and activities of the Commission to further North Carolina towards the goal.

To help local North Carolina communities develop action plans grounded in data across the continuum, myFutureNC also launched the State Attainment Dashboard and County Attainment Profiles in partnership with Carolina Demography, which include a series of data and performance indicators uniquely developed for each of the 100 counties. Data from the county attainment profiles are also aggregated into a single State Attainment Profile, which calls out three specific "Opportunities for Growth" where North Carolina and its counties can focus to achieve maximum impact on progress towards increased postsecondary attainment. Based on analysis of data compiled for the 2020 County Attainment Profiles, the areas where the most North Carolina counties have opportunities for improvement include: (1) increasing NC Pre-K enrollment, (2) decreasing the number of low performing schools and (3) increasing FAFSA completion.⁴⁰

GOVERNANCE OF NC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

State And Local Role In Education

Introduction

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.

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 and are responsible for the following:

- 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.

The local level of North Carolina education policymaking includes the following roles:

- **County Commissioners:** The County Commissioner is responsible for appropriating local funds to the county, including the budget for public schools. This elected official also has the authority to approve any local initiatives that require new local funds or to cover funding that is not provided by the state.
- **Boards of Education:** Local school boards do not have taxation authority and must develop a budget based on the appropriation from the county commissioner. Additionally, the locally elected school boards shape policy and make critical decisions related to schools in their districts. Local school boards also elect a district superintendent.
- **District Superintendent:** The local superintendent oversees all schools in a district and carries out state and local policies at the district level.

State-level Governing Entities and Their Roles in Education Policymaking

North Carolina's public school system is heavily funded by the state government, with 67% of school funds coming from the state for the 2020-21 school year. In the same year, local dollars contributed 21% of the total and federal dollars amounted to 12% of total education funding for the state's public schools.⁴¹ This is largely due to the fact that the state constitution guarantees the right to education for the people of North Carolina:

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."

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).⁴² 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.⁴³

With the transition of power from localities to the state came a need for clear roles for each state-level educational entity. Authority at the state level is divided into the following roles:

- **State Board of Education (SBE):** The SBE sets overall state policy and procedures regarding education, including testing, teacher pay, and curriculum. The SBE generally does not have the authority to provide funding for education policy initiatives. Instead, it manages the state education funds. Any rules and regulations issued by the SBE are subject to the laws governed by the NC General Assembly.
- **NC General Assembly (NCGA):** The NCGA holds control over the allocation of funds for public schools, giving it great power in directing education policy in North Carolina. The NCGA also creates legislation for public education.
- **Governor's Office:** The Governor influences education policy by proposing new initiatives through their 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.

- **NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI):** 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 licensure and personnel issues.
- **The State Superintendent of Public Instruction:** The State Superintendent 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.

NC Supreme Court Case: NC State Board of Education v. The State of North Carolina and [State Superintendent] Mark Johnson, in his official capacity

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.

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.

NORTH CAROLINA CONSTITUTION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

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.

STATE

ARTICLE III SEC. 5 DUTIES OF 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 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 SEC. 4 SUPERINTENDANT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

(elected by the people) Shall be secretary and chief administrative officer of the State Board of Education

ARTICLE IX SEC. 2 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)

LOCAL

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 SUPERINTENDANT

Serves at pleasure of Local Board. (General Statute 115C-271)

The Education Decision-Making Process

Given the many policymakers and stakeholders involved, the process of education decision-making at the state level is anything but simple. A new idea can be proposed by the Governor, the State Board of Education, or the State Superintendent; this idea 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 State 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."⁴⁴

The Governor is directed by the Constitution to "continually survey the collection of the revenue and shall affect the necessary economies in State expenditures."⁴⁵ 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 their 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 State Budget Act of 2016

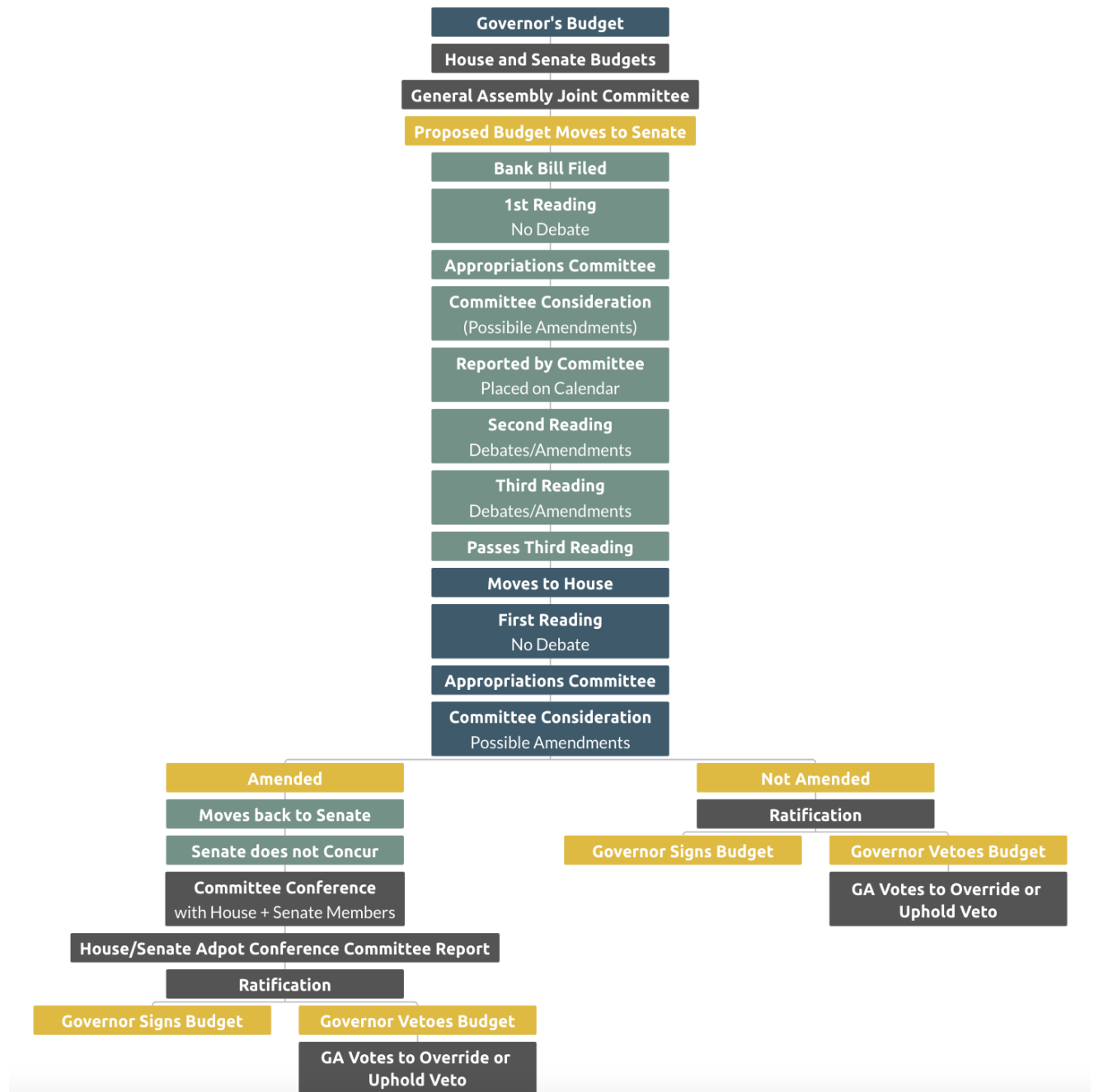
Without a new fiscal budget, North Carolina continues to operate on its previous year's budget as allowed by the State Budget Act of 2016.⁴⁶ The Act states that if no Current Operations Appropriations Act is enacted by the respective date then the state shall continue operating based on the previous budget allocations.

The 2022-23 State Budget

In March 2021, Governor Cooper proposed a two-year biennium budget to the General Assembly, followed by the Senate's proposed budget in June and the House's proposed budget in August. The General Assembly released a budget in November, which Governor Cooper signed on November 18th, marking the first state budget since 2018. The budget allocated \$21.5 billion to K-12 education over the biennium, including⁴⁷:

- **Pay Raises:** The budget provides an average 5% raise in teacher salaries, made up of 2.6% for pay raises and 2.4% for salary step increases. The state is also providing \$100 million to fund local salary supplements to decrease salary gaps across districts.
- **Districts Held Harmless:** Districts will be held harmless if Average Daily Membership has decreased from the projected numbers. The state provides funding to districts based on projected ADM numbers at the beginning of the school year.
- **\$360 million in COVID Funds:** The budget allocates \$360 million from federal COVID funds. The funds include \$20 million to increase per pupil spending by \$400 in each district, \$72 million for COVID-related needs, and \$100 million for a \$1000 teacher bonus.

North Carolina State Budget Process



Federal Role in Education

Introduction

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 12% of North Carolina's education comes from the federal government.⁴⁸

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 12% 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 (for the Head Start Program) or the Department of Agriculture (for the School Lunch Program). Generally speaking, these funds are targeted to students with the highest levels of 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.⁴⁹ 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 education⁵⁰

Federal Program Monitoring and Support Services Division

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.⁵¹

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 low-income 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.⁵² In the 2020-21 school year, there were 2,002 public schools in North Carolina eligible for Title 1 funds.⁵³

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.⁵⁴

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

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 replaced the previous No Child Left Behind legislation. ESSA has been up for reauthorization since the 2020-21 school year, but, likely due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress has not yet moved forward with reauthorization.⁵⁵ Some of the aspects of the current law are below:⁵⁶

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 are required to 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 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 2018.⁵⁷ 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).⁵⁸ 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:
 - 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
- 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:
 - 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.⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰

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 2019-20 school year, approximately 779,818 students qualified for free meals and 62,943 students qualified for reduced price meals.⁶¹

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.⁶²

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.⁶³

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.⁶⁴

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.⁶⁵

School Finance

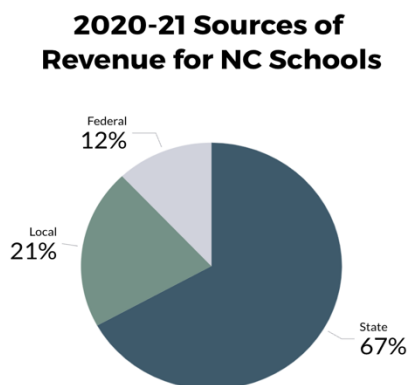
Introduction

North Carolina’s State Constitution established that the state bears responsibility for providing, through taxation and otherwise, a general and uniform system of free public schools. State statute further outlines the state’s responsibility to fund operational expenses for public school instruction (including personnel) while county governments are responsible for the cost of capital expenses (buildings and maintenance).⁶⁶ The federal government also provides funding for public schools, mostly through grant funds targeted to specific populations or programs.

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.”⁶⁷ 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.”⁶⁸ Despite this, research shows that North Carolina continues to fall short of its constitutional obligation to provide adequate and equitable education for its children.

Sources of Funding for North Carolina Public Schools

Funding for North Carolina’s public schools comes from a combination of federal, state, and local resources. As required by the North Carolina Constitution, the state maintains the main responsibility for all operational expenses for public education. North Carolina public schools spent nearly \$14.5 billion in the 2020-21 school year using a combination of state, federal, and local resources.⁶⁹



Source: [NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 22 – Current Expense Expenditure by Source of Funds.](#)

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 [North Carolina Local School Finance Study](#) for a complete analysis of local school finances).⁷⁰
- 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.⁷¹

Education remains the single largest budget item in most state budgets, including in North Carolina.⁷² States use income taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, and fees to fund a portion of the budgets in elementary and secondary schools.

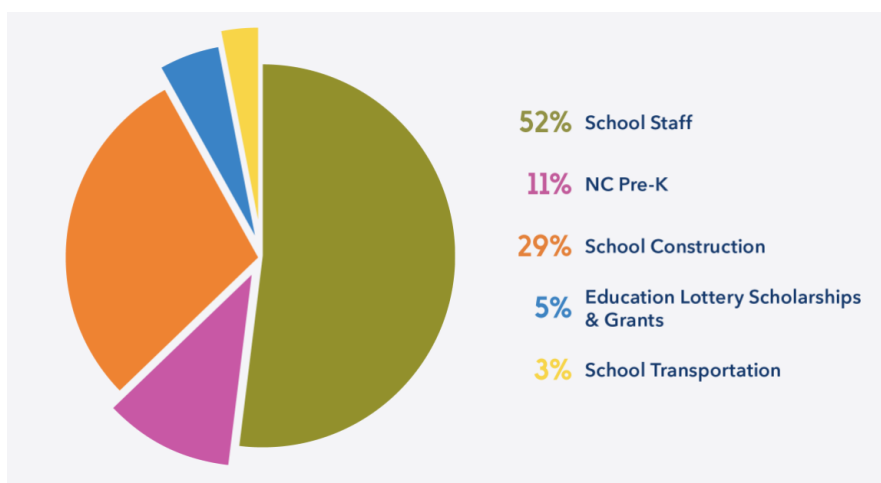
Nationally in 2020-21, an estimated 46.8% of funding for public schools came from state governments, 44.5% from local governments, and 8.8% from the federal governments.⁷³ In North Carolina, a relatively higher percentage (67%) of school funding comes from the state compared to the national average, due to the state's constitution placing responsibility for public education squarely on the state.⁷⁴

North Carolina Education Lottery

In August 2005, the General Assembly voted to create the North Carolina Education Lottery. DPI reports that approximately 30 percent of lottery revenue goes to education expenses, including personnel, academic pre-kindergarten programs, school construction, transportation, and scholarships for college

and university students with financial need. The remaining revenue goes to prize payouts, commissions, and administrative expenses.⁷⁵

Education Programs Receiving Lottery Funds in Fiscal Year 2021



Source: NC Education Lottery

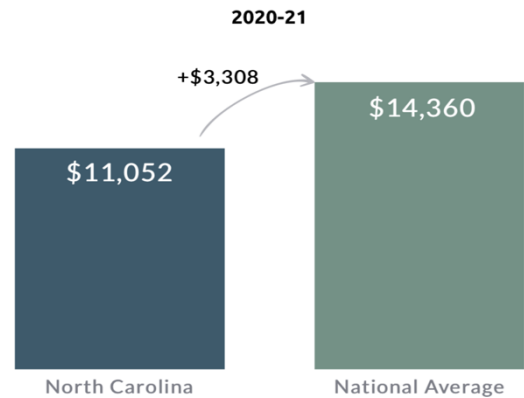
In Fiscal Year 2021, the lottery provided \$936.8 million to education.⁷⁶ School systems and charter schools in North Carolina received nearly \$386 million from lottery proceeds for non-instructional support personnel. Across the state, approximately \$215.3 million was allocated for school construction and repairs. Over \$78 million went to the state Pre-K program. Students who qualify for federal Pell Grants were eligible for over \$32 million in scholarships made available through lottery funds in 2021, and another \$10.7 million provided grants to students attending a UNC system school.⁷⁷

State Spending on Public Education

According to a 2022 report, North Carolina's per-pupil spending was ranked 41st nationally, in comparison with all 50 states and the District of Columbia, based on data from the 2020-21 school year.⁷⁸ North Carolina was estimated to have spent \$11,052 per student in 2020-21, compared with the national average of \$14,360. If North Carolina spent at the national average, schools would have an additional \$3,308 dollars to spend per student. The state's highest rank on per student spending was 34th in 1994-95.

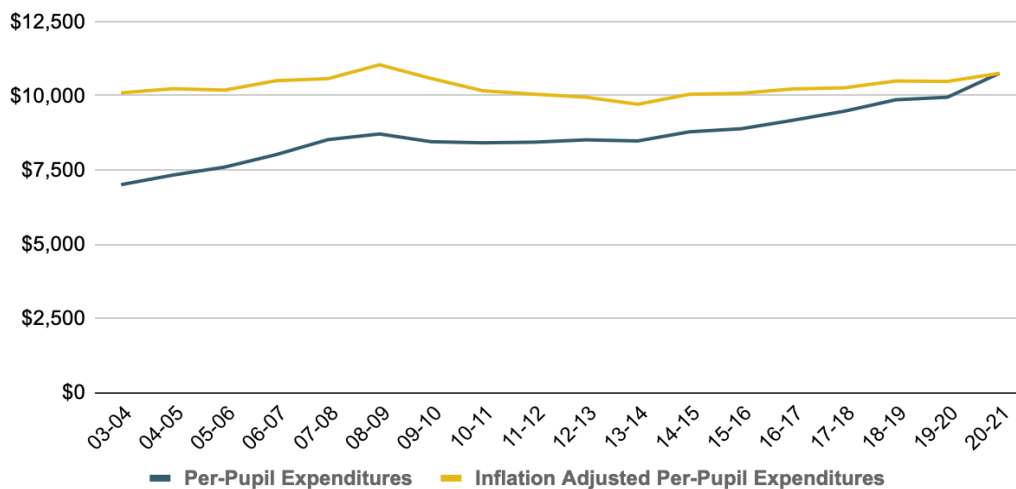
Actual spending on education has increased in North Carolina from \$7.37 billion in 2006-07 to \$10.46 billion in 2020-21, largely in response to a growing student population. However, adjusted for inflation, spending has remained fairly stagnant (see chart below).⁷⁹ Additionally, while total dollars have increased for education funding since 1970, the share of the General Fund going to public schools has decreased by approximately 13% during that same time. If public schools were currently funded at the same percentage as in FY 1969-70, an additional \$3 billion would be available for schools.⁸⁰

North Carolina Spending per Student Compared to the National Average



North Carolina Per-Pupil Expenditures

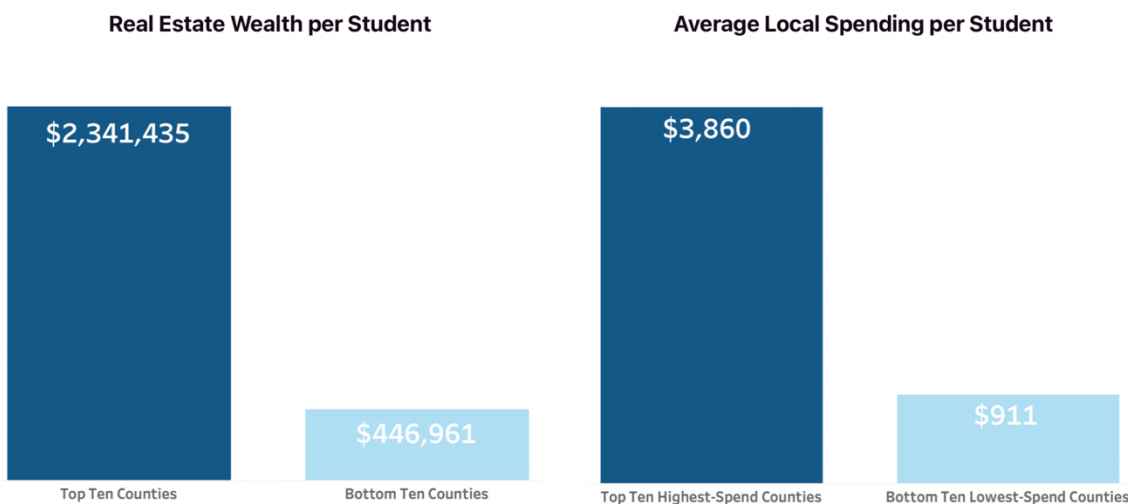
Inflation Adjusted to 2021 Dollars



Local Spending on Public Education

Local spending on public education varies widely across the state. The Public School Forum's annual Local School Finance Study has identified several key trends that have led to deepened educational inequity across districts over time. First, there is a large and widening gap between real estate wealth in wealthier counties and poorer counties. As a result, there are significant disparities in the ability of counties with different levels of wealth to provide their schools with the resources they need, particularly given the increasing role of local spending over time.

Second, lower wealth counties tax themselves at higher rates than wealthier counties, but are still unable to generate comparable tax revenue to wealthier counties that make less taxing effort. The ten poorest districts taxed themselves at 1.7 times the average tax rate of the ten wealthiest counties in 2019-2020. Residents living in lower wealth districts face substantially greater financial burden to support public education while still finding that their schools are more poorly resourced than those in wealthier counties.



Disparities in local capacity to fund public education has a significant impact on the opportunities available to students depending on where they live. For example, local districts often provide teacher salary supplements on top of the amount provided by the state in an effort to recruit and retain highly effective educators. However, the disparities in wealth across counties lead to disparities in salaries for teachers across the state, making it particularly difficult for lower-wealth districts to attract and retain teachers. For instance, in 2019-2020, Wake County Schools offered its teachers an average salary supplement of \$8,569. Just 60 miles east, Greene County, a lower-wealth, rural district that taxes itself at a higher rate than Wake County in an effort to adequately fund its schools, teachers received an average supplement of \$991 in the same year. Lower wealth counties also tend to struggle to offer certain extracurricular opportunities and advanced courses that wealthier districts are more able to afford.

School Finance Litigation in North Carolina – The Leandro Case

In 1994, parents in five low-wealth North Carolina school districts (Cumberland, Halifax, Hoke, Robeson, and Vance) filed a lawsuit against the state, in a case known as *Leandro v. State*. They argued that their lower tax bases and smaller populations made it impossible to offer the same educational opportunities offered by public schools in wealthier districts. Several larger urban school districts also 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.⁸¹

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:⁸²

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 ruled that the following must be in place in order for a sound basic education to be achieved: 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.⁸³

While the *Leandro* case mandated a basic level of education for all North Carolina students, its decision allowed counties to help finance their schools beyond what is provided by the state. Local funding for education is 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.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

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 was 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 tasked with identifying 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.⁸⁶

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.”⁸⁷

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 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.”⁸⁸

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.⁸⁹

In March 2021, the state submitted its comprehensive remedial plan to Judge Lee, using recommendations from the WestEd report and the Governor’s commission. The eight-year Action Plan outlines steps that the state will take in order to meet the Leandro mandate and achieve compliance with the state constitution. In June, Judge Lee ordered that the state had to implement the comprehensive Action Plan. In November, Judge Lee ordered the General Assembly to transfer \$1.7 billion of state funding to increase education funding and implement the Action Plan.⁹⁰

In March 2022, Judge Michael Robinson replaced Judge Lee to oversee the ongoing case. In April, Judge Robinson ruled that the state budget passed in the 2021 legislative session underfunded years two and three of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan by over \$785 million. However, Judge Robinson removed Judge Lee’s previous order requiring a state budget transfer.⁹¹

The North Carolina Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case for the fourth time on August 31, 2022 and will issue a decision in the coming months. Read more about the ongoing trial [here](#).

Additional Resources for School Finance:

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

COVID-19

Introduction



The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools is not yet fully understood and lingering effects continue to unfold. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in education, hitting students of color and low-income students the hardest. After quickly adapting to remote learning, parents, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers continue to navigate the challenges that accompany these effects.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education across the world. Rising cases and full hospitals led to school closures and a shift to remote or hybrid learning.⁹² On March 14th, Governor Cooper announced that all public schools in the state would close for two weeks, although it was eventually extended through the end of the 2019-20 school year. Throughout the 2020-21 school year, the state provided guidance on school reopening with the majority of schools beginning the year in either remote or hybrid learning environments. By the end of that school year, most schools in the state were providing in-person instruction. With a few exceptions, the 2021-22 school year saw normal in-person operations.

The Impact of COVID on Learning

The pandemic had a significant impact on students' opportunity to learn, leading to what researchers call unfinished learning. Unfinished learning refers to the fact that as a result of the pandemic, students were not given the opportunity to complete the amount of learning that one would expect in a typical year. Nationally, students ended the 2020-21 school year five months behind in math and four months behind in reading on average.⁹³ Students in predominantly Black and low-income schools faced even larger impacts, ending the year with six months and seven months of unfinished learning respectively.⁹⁴

Cumulative months of unfinished learning due to the pandemic by type of school, grades 1 through 6

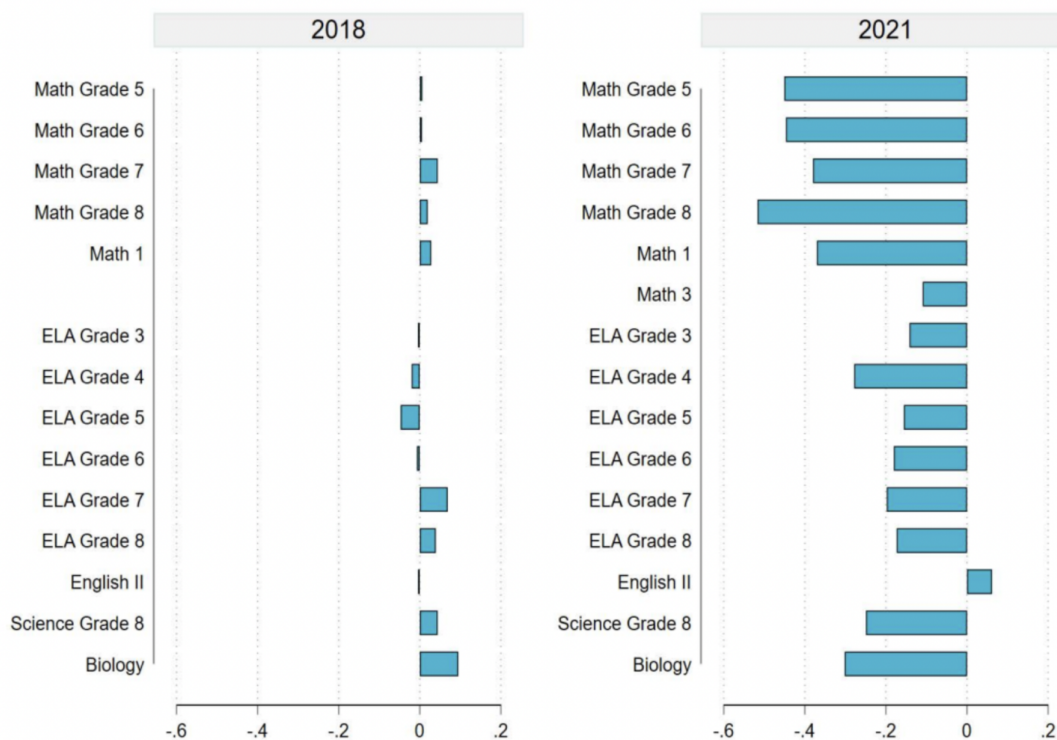
Learning gap	By race Schools that are majority ...	By income Household average, per school	By location School site
Math 5 months behind 	Black 6	<\$25K 7	City 5
	Hispanic 6	\$25K–\$75K 5	Suburb ¹ 5
	White 4	>\$75K 4	Rural 4
Reading 4 months behind 	Black 6	<\$25K 6	City 4
	Hispanic 5	\$25K–\$75K 4	Suburb ¹ 4
	White 3	>\$75K 3	Rural 3

¹Town or suburb.
Source: Curriculum Associates I-Ready assessment data

Source: [McKinsey & Company, The Lingering Effects of Unfinished Learning](#)

In North Carolina, by the end of the 2020-21 school year, fewer than half of all public school students were meeting typical grade-level expectations.⁹⁵ As a whole, no district in the state performed better in 2020-21 than in 2018-19 and test scores dropped, on average, 13 percentage points across the state.⁹⁶

The Department of Public Instruction’s Office of Learning Recovery & Acceleration released initial findings in 2022 that found all grade levels experienced a negative impact on learning for all but one (English II) subject area.⁹⁷ Importantly, students continued to progress throughout the pandemic, although they made less progress than expected during a typical year. The report also found that existing disparities for students of color and economically disadvantaged students widened during this time.



Source: [Unpacking the COVID-19 Learning Loss](#)

Office of Learning Recovery

In April 2021, State Superintendent Catherine Truitt announced her four-year strategic plan for public schools, Operation Polaris, which included a new Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration (OLA).⁹⁸ The mission of OLA is to serve public schools by “providing the research and support needed to make evidence-based decisions to combat learning loss and accelerate learning for all students.”⁹⁹ The vision of OLA includes:

- Identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement as public school units (PSUs) address learning recovery
- Developing and curating programs, policies, and interventions related to learning recovery
- Providing technical and other assistance to those who need it via the Office of District and School Transformation

In March 2022, OLA released its first report: COVID-19 Impact Analysis of Lost Instructional Time. Much of this analysis was funded through ESSER II funding. The goals of the impact analysis are to establish baseline data in order to monitor progress over time, understand the impact of interventions, and target resources and funding for students most in need.¹⁰⁰

Federal COVID Relief Funding for K-12 Education

In response to the pandemic, Congress provided emergency relief funding known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. ESSER funds are awarded to State Education Agencies (SEAs) in order to provide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with funding to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Since 2020, Congress has allocated nearly \$200 billion to the ESSER Fund.¹⁰¹

- March 2020: Congress allocated \$13.2 billion through the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to the ESSER Fund
- December 2020: Congress allocated an additional \$54.3 billion to the ESSER II Fund through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act
- March 2021: The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act provided another \$122 billion of ESSER funding, known as ARP ESSER Funds, or ESSER III

In addition to the ESSER Fund, the federal government also provided financial assistance through the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund. Since 2020, Congress has allocated \$7 billion to the GEER Fund.¹⁰²

- March 2020: Congress allocated \$3 billion through the CARES Act to the GEER Fund
- December 2020: Congress allocated an additional \$4 billion through the CRRSA Act to the GEER Fund

North Carolina received over \$5.7 billion in K-12 COVID relief funding from the federal government.¹⁰³ These funds were distributed through the following:

- ESSER I: \$396 million
- GEER I: \$95 million
- ESSER II: \$1.6 billion

- GEER II: \$42 million
- ARP ESSER: \$3.6 billion

Federal law requires that State Education Agencies must distribute at least 90% of ESSER funds to LEAs through subgrants. Subgrants must be proportional to the funding each LEA received through Title 1, Part A during the most recent year. The allotments made to each LEA in North Carolina can be found [here](#). Because ESSER funds were distributed as subgrants, LEAs have had some control over how they spend the funding, although the spending must meet [federal guidelines](#) from the Department of Education.

For example, Surrey County is spending over \$60 million to create additional intervention teacher positions and over \$30 million for new student support positions, including nurses, psychologists, and social workers.¹⁰⁴ Moore County is providing internet hotspots to students who do not have access at home, adding teacher assistants to second grade classrooms, and covering the upcoming loss of state funding due to enrollment declines.¹⁰⁵ Wake County used funding to provide over 5 million meals and spent over \$60 million on staff retention and signing bonuses.¹⁰⁶

Governor Cooper invested GEER funding in a number of ways to support students, including hiring student health staff and academic support personnel in 170 public school units, granting \$60 million in student success and wellness grants, and expanding student mental health services.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, Governor Cooper invested \$1 billion of ARP funding in broadband expansion to close North Carolina's digital divide.¹⁰⁸ These funds, which will be spent through 2026, will build new infrastructure to provide high-speed broadband access to currently unserved areas.

IMPORTANT ISSUES IN NC EDUCATION POLICY

Teachers

Introduction

Teachers are the number one school-based factor impacting student outcomes.¹⁰⁹ Recruiting and retaining quality teachers for North Carolina’s classrooms is a top priority, and an increasing challenge. Many experienced teachers are approaching retirement or leaving the profession for other reasons, and fewer young people are choosing teaching as their profession. It is particularly difficult to recruit teachers to fill positions in hard-to-staff subjects (e.g., math, career and technical education, special education) and to teach in high-need schools.¹¹⁰

Teacher recruitment and retention challenges pose significant equity concerns because schools in high-poverty areas have had a particularly difficult time attracting and retaining teachers, resulting in higher rates of teacher vacancies—up to 13% for some counties in the Northeastern portion of the state.¹¹¹ As a result, there are lower percentages of highly experienced and effective teachers in these schools—up to 20% of teachers in low-poverty schools in North Carolina are unlicensed.¹¹² 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, both in the Southeast and nationally on this crucial measure. Opportunities for career growth and professional development are also important factors for keeping teachers in the classroom.

The North Carolina Teacher Workforce

North Carolina public schools employ more than 100,000 teachers across the state. In 2021-22, 93,962 teachers were employed in traditional public schools and 8,502 were employed in charter schools. Nearly 80% of North Carolina’s teachers are female, compared to a fairly consistent 50% male, 50% female student population. The traditional K-12 student population is roughly 50% students of color, but just over 20% of the public school educator workforce consists of educators of color.¹¹³

Supply and Demand for Teachers

A growing number of highly qualified 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:** 7,737 teachers left their schools in 2020-21. The majority (44.6%) 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.¹¹⁴

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 rapidly growing student population. In slow growing counties, it may be combating high retirement rates of long-term faculty members, or struggling to offer pay that is competitive to larger, wealthier districts. Data on teaching in North Carolina shows us that virtually all counties face the problem of finding and retaining qualified educators to teach, especially in specialized subjects including mathematics, special education, science, and limited English proficiency.

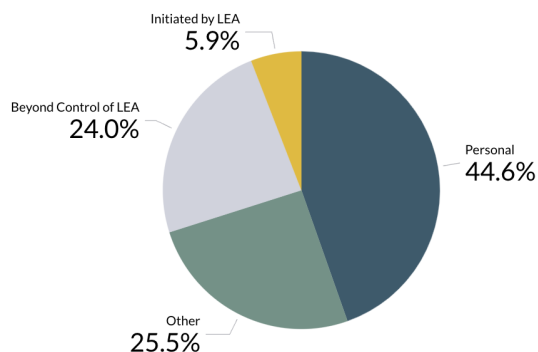
Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition has long been a challenge when considering educator supply and demand, and has become even more of a concern in recent years. A recent nation-wide survey stated that 55% of teachers who responded were considering leaving the profession earlier than anticipated.¹¹⁵ The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction recently released the results of its biennial Teacher Working Conditions Survey. In 2022, the survey received a 92% response rate from educators—a record number for the state. When asked about future plans, 78% of educators said that they planned to remain at their current school. Over 7% said they planned to leave the education profession altogether.¹¹⁶ 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 in 2020-21, to 8.2%.

The graph below shows the reasons for teacher attrition using four categories based on self-reported reasons for leaving. The category “Beyond Control of LEA” includes retirement with full benefits and resignation due to military movement, and the category “Initiated by LEA” includes dismissal, non-renewal of contract, and not maintaining a license. The category “Personal” includes career change, family responsibilities or relocation, and retirement with reduced benefits.

The schools facing the greatest teacher attrition challenges are those that serve high numbers of disadvantaged young people, and those that have been deemed “low-performing.” North Carolina had eight districts that were identified as low-performing in the 2018-19 school year (this status has been retained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic due to a waiver on accountability requirements through the 2021-22 school year). Out of these districts, 7 had teacher attrition rates that were higher than the state average of 11.44%, with some LEAs having nearly triple the state average. The data suggest that there is an association between higher teacher attrition rates and the designation of low-performing districts.¹¹⁷

Teacher Attrition: Reasons by Category

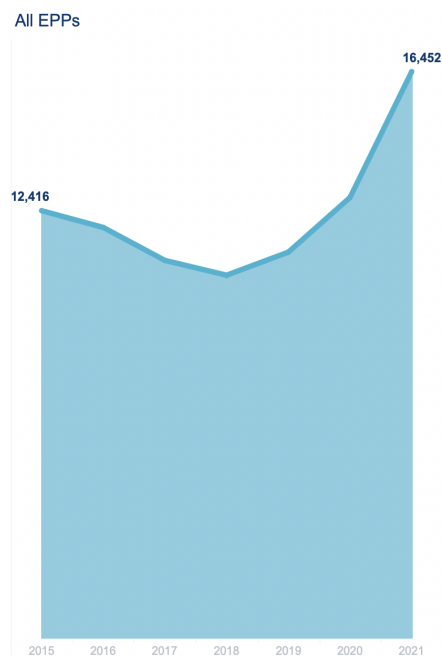


Source: [NC DPI 2020-21 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina](#).

The Teacher Pipeline

In addition to teachers leaving the classroom, enrollment in the UNC System’s Colleges of Education has declined significantly over the past decade, although enrollment began to increase again somewhat starting in 2018.¹¹⁸ The UNC System produces more than a third of all North Carolina teachers, and North Carolina independent colleges and universities produce approximately a quarter of the state’s teachers. Research shows that teachers prepared in North Carolina’s EPP Programs – both public and private – outperform those prepared through channels outside of North Carolina.¹¹⁹

Source: [EPP Enrollment. NCDPI](#).

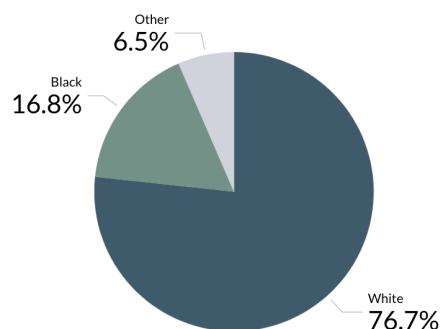


Teacher Diversity

Research shows that all students, particularly students of color, are more successful in school when they are taught by a diverse teacher workforce, yet in North Carolina, the teaching profession is far less diverse than the student population.¹²⁰

Research has identified barriers facing prospective teachers of color, including the cost of college. 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 white counterparts years after graduation.¹²¹ Entrance and certification exams for prospective educators can pose additional barriers to entry into the education field, and disproportionately impact prospective educators of color.¹²²

**North Carolina
Teachers by Race**



In December 2019, Governor Cooper announced his plan to address these inequities via Executive Order No. 113. This executive order created a task force whose goals included increasing recruitment and retention of teachers of color, including diversity goals in performance indicators across the state, and revising North Carolina standards to include anti-racist education. The task force was unveiled at the inaugural 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 brought together a wide range of participants including educators, philanthropists, and leaders from educator preparation programs.¹²³ The Task Force released a [final report](#) in January 2021, which included the following recommendations:

1. Offer affordable postsecondary access through scholarships, loan forgiveness, and tuition reimbursement programs to encourage diverse people to become teachers.
2. Expand and develop entry points into the educator pipeline that are based on models with proven success in recruiting racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educators.
3. Embed diversity goals into key performance indicators for schools and districts across the state.
4. Provide sustainable investments in educator preparation programs at North Carolina's Historically Minority Serving Institutions to elevate and build capacity of these institutions to increase their impact as leaders in equity-minded educator preparation.
5. Adopt evidence-based elements of successful national residency models across the state's educator preparation programs.
6. Revise the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards to directly incorporate anti-racist, antibias, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and require Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to report how they incorporate these proficiencies across their course offerings and programming.

7. Invest in state- and district-level initiatives that increase the sustainability of the profession by strengthening support networks for educators of color and providing professional development that strengthens practice and fosters inclusive school environments.
8. Develop and sustain pathways for advancement that are tailored to the needs of educators of color.
9. Release an annual statewide Educator Diversity Report that tracks North Carolina's progress in developing and sustaining a representative educator workforce.
10. Establish a body to monitor North Carolina's progress towards implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

Teacher Salaries

In 2020-21, North Carolina is estimated to rank 38th in the nation in teacher pay, with an average teacher salary of \$53,458.¹²⁴ This figure includes local salary supplements, which vary widely across districts. The average teacher pay in North Carolina falls \$11,835 below the national average salary of \$65,293.¹²⁵ Adjusting for inflation, the average teacher salary in the state dropped 11.5% between 1999-2000 to 2020-21, while the national average salary increased by .3% over the same period.¹²⁶

There is a statewide teacher salary schedule that applies to every traditional public school teacher in the state. Teachers may move up the schedule based on a combination of their years of experience, education level, and National Board Certification.¹²⁷ 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 receives an additional 12% in pay.

2021-22 Salaries For Teachers With Bachelor's Degrees		
Years of Experience	Annual Salary	Annual Salary with National Board Certification
0	35,460	N/A
1	36,470	N/A
2	37,480	N/A
3	38,490	43,110
4	39,510	44,250
5	40,520	45,380
6	41,530	46,510
7	42,550	47,660
8	43,560	48,790
9	44,570	49,920
10	45,590	51,060
11	46,600	52,190
12	47,610	53,320
13	48,620	54,450

14	49,640	55,600
15-24	50,650	56,730
25+	52,680	59,000

Source: [NC DPI, Fiscal Year 2021-22 North Carolina Public School Salary Schedules](#)

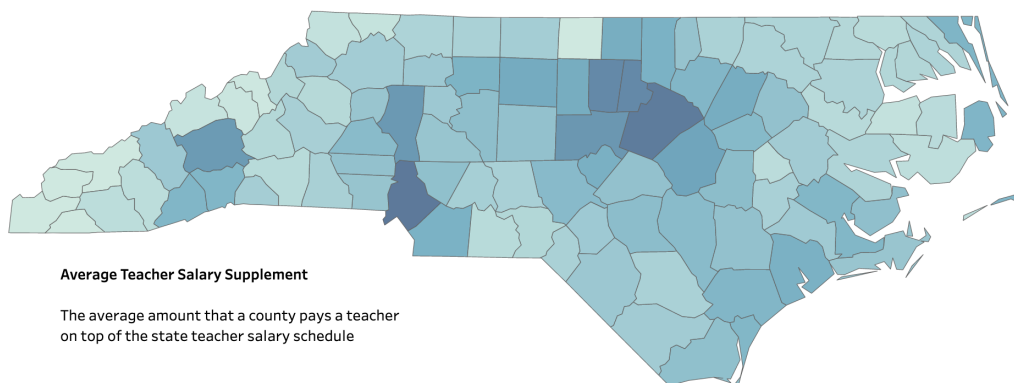
The 2022 budget passed by the North Carolina General Assembly reflects a small increase in teacher pay. Beginning teachers will now make \$37,000 annually, compared to the previous \$35,000 salary rate. The salary schedule allows for a \$1,000 increase in pay annually through year 15. Teachers who have 15-24 years of experience will make \$52,000 annually, and teachers with 25+ years of experience max out at \$54,000.¹²⁸

Local Salary Supplements

After a base salary is set by the state, a teacher's salary may then be augmented by local school system supplements in an effort for districts to recruit teachers to work in their schools. 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. Counties with greater local real estate wealth are often able to offer more competitive salary supplements than less wealthy districts.

In 2021, the General Assembly allocated \$100 million in the budget for state-funded teacher salary supplements up to \$4,250.¹²⁹ The goal of the allocation is to decrease the salary supplement gaps between lower-wealth and high-wealth districts.

The average teacher salary supplements by district for the 2020-21 school year are available [here](#). View our [interactive teacher supplement map](#) to compare local supplements across the state.



The Teaching Profession

North Carolina utilizes professional standards for its teaching profession and created an advising body to guide these standards. In addition to the standard licensure process for educators, North Carolina allows alternative pathways to joining its teacher profession.

Professional Educator Preparation Standards Commission

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.¹³⁰

Teacher Licensure

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 increasing demand for teachers has led to heightened pressure for less stringent certification and licensure standards.

There is little 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, testing requirements, as well as how to effectively balance hours of classroom experience with traditional college-level coursework.

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 IPL, 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 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, individuals must 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 teaching¹³¹
- **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.¹³²
- **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:
 - 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.¹³³

Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals

In 2022, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC) of the State Board of Education are working on a new teacher licensure pathways proposal, Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals (Model). This proposal, if enacted, would restructure the state's system of teacher licensure and the various pathways and compensation approaches, affecting every district, school, teacher, and student.

The draft model stems from research and recommendations from the North Carolina Education Human Capital Roundtable and subcommittees composed of members from PEPSC. In December 2021, NCDPI staff worked to condense the recommendations of the subcommittee into a draft proposal. NCDPI then presented this draft to PEPSC in March 2022, and the State Board of Education in April 2022. An [updated draft model](#) developed by PEPSC subcommittee members was shared during the September 2022 PEPSC commission meeting. PEPSC will continue to discuss and revise the model before sending it to the State Board of Education for approval.

This proposed model would shift away from the current licensure and compensation policies that rewards longevity, and shift towards a system in which educators can reach more advanced levels and receive higher pay based on the demonstration of effectiveness. The initial draft has received mixed responses from educators and educational leaders across the state.

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 115 corps members teach at every grade level across 12 counties in eastern NC.¹³⁴ TFA has been working in Charlotte since 2004, and 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.¹³⁵ Since December 2014, TFA has submitted annual reports to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on their progress.¹³⁶

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, 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 people of color and 30% were male. The program included a scholarship to one of 17 participating public and private 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 high school students to become teachers. Seventy percent of Teaching Fellows remained employed after four years, with 64% 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 2018.¹³⁷ The new iteration, administered by the University of North Carolina System, looks significantly different from its original inception from the 1980s- it is restricted to candidates willing to teach in a STEM or Special Education field and was offered through 5 public and private colleges and universities (Elon University, Meredith College, NC State University, UNC Chapel Hill, and UNC Charlotte) instead of the original 17. Today, the number of partner institutions has increased to 8, with the inclusion of three historically minority serving institutions (Fayetteville State University, NC A&T University, and UNC Pembroke).¹³⁸ 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.

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.¹³⁹

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.

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.¹⁴⁰ In 2020-21 North Carolina had 23,418 nationally board certified teachers. Wake County is the number one district in the country for nationally board certified teachers in the United States with 3,113 certified teachers.¹⁴¹

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.¹⁴²

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.¹⁴³

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.¹⁴⁴

North Carolina prohibits any state workers, including teachers, from collective bargaining and forming unions. Instead, teachers can join the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), which is committed to advancing public education and supporting educators at all levels. NCAE members have access to benefits, including representation, professional development opportunities, legal assistance, news and information, and liability insurance.

School Facilities

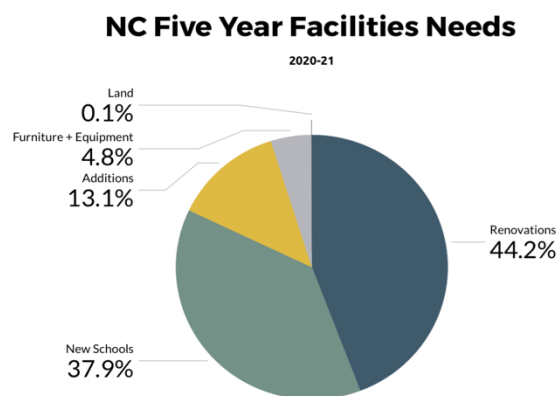
Introduction

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 2020-21, counties spent over \$3 billion to fund instructional expenses (i.e., operating costs), making up 21% of total instructional costs for NC schools. The state contributed around 2% of school capital (i.e., facility) costs.¹⁴⁵

Based on new school construction in 2020, it costs about \$26 million on average to build an elementary school in North Carolina, \$51 million to build a middle school, and \$43 million to build a high school.¹⁴⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷

Facilities Needs Survey

The most recent NCDPI Facilities Needs Survey, published in 2020-21, estimated that \$12.8 billion was needed at the time for new schools, additions, renovations, furniture and equipment, and land.¹⁴⁸ This survey also found that at least 131 new schools were needed across North Carolina: 83 were needed immediately, and approximately 48 were needed within three to five years. Besides new construction, the survey concluded that 1,594 schools needed renovations to comply with safety and building code requirements and to address deferred maintenance, and an estimated 221 schools needed additions for new classrooms.

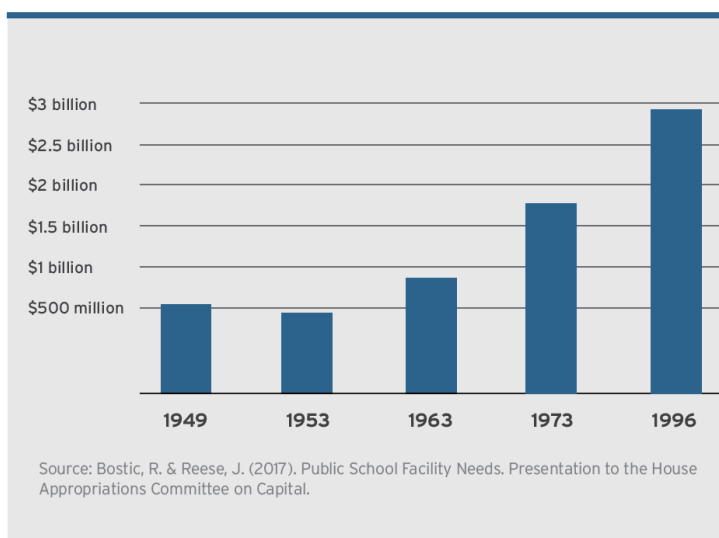


Source: [2020-21 NCDPI Facilities Needs Survey](#)

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.¹⁴⁹ 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.¹⁵⁰

STATEWIDE BONDS ISSUED FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, 1949-1996 (ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION)



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, but these bills stalled in the Senate. In 2021 and 2022, no statewide school bond bills were passed by the General Assembly.

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.¹⁵¹

Public School Building Capital Fund

To assist local governments in addressing school facilities needs, the General Assembly established the Public School Building Capital Fund (PSBCF) in 1987.¹⁵² Initially, the PSBCF was funded through corporate tax revenue, which supplied over \$1.3 billion to local districts for projects. However, after the creation of the state Education Lottery in 2006, the funding source shifted to lottery revenues. Initial legislation required that 40% of lottery funds be distributed through the PSBCF, but the General Assembly instead began distributing a lump sum to districts in the 2010-11 school year. As a result, only 30% of lottery funds have been allocated to districts over time through PSBCF, declining to only 16.9% in fiscal year 2017.¹⁵³ In 2020-21, the General Assembly appropriated \$100 million.¹⁵⁴

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. 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 2028-29.¹⁵⁵ In 2021, the legislature increased this Fund by appropriating \$395 million for the 2021-22 grant cycle due to the increase in lottery revenue.¹⁵⁶

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. Since 2017, the Needs Based Public School Capital Fund has awarded a total of \$739 million dollars to local school districts, providing funding for 60 new K-12 construction projects, including 33 new schools, eight new buildings, and the replacement of 44 existing schools.¹⁵⁷

In 2021, the state budget made several changes to the program, including:¹⁵⁸

- New maximum grant amounts: \$30m for elementary schools, \$40m for middle schools, and \$50m for high schools.
- Grant funds can now be used for new buildings, additions, repairs, and renovations.
- Local matching requirements now range from 0% to 35%, based on property tax data.
- New eligibility criteria based on property tax data: 95 counties are now eligible.
- Elimination of the 5-year period of ineligibility for receipt of annual PSBCF capital funds.
- Elimination of the 5-year restriction for prior recipients to re-apply for another NBPSCF grant.
- Prior NBPSCF grant recipients who have not started construction may apply for increased grant funding.

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.

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 Kindergarten – grade 3 in an effort to improve student achievement, especially early literacy. 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 given that the student population has been on a steady increase in NC.

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
2018-19 ¹⁵⁹	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](#)

School Calendar

Introduction

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, unless a weather-related calendar waiver has been approved. If a weather waiver is approved, schools can start no earlier than the closest Monday to August 19th. 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.

North Carolina School Calendar Policy

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.

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.

In 2012, the North Carolina legislature increased the state's minimum to 185 instructional days.¹⁶⁰ This is higher than all but one other state: Kansas (186).¹⁶¹ Adjustments to the School Calendar in G.S. 115C-84.2, beginning in the 2013-14 school year, included:

- 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.
- 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.¹⁶²

School 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 2021 long legislative session, 24 separate bills were filed in the House and 16 were filed in the Senate to allow calendar flexibility for specific school districts. The House also passed a bill for statewide calendar flexibility. However, lack of support from Senate leadership has continued to prevent the legislation from passing.¹⁶³

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.¹⁶⁴

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 Progress, 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.¹⁶⁵ 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.¹⁶⁶ 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 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 methods¹⁶⁷

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.

Accountability

Introduction

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."¹⁶⁸ 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.

However, due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools, students, and educators, certain aspects of the school accountability model were waived and will not be published for the 2020-2021 school year. These include school performance grades for schools and school sub-groups, growth indicators, and long-term goals for schools to improve their achievement and close opportunity gaps. Schools that did not meet performance or growth standards for the 2018-19 school year and were identified as low-performing will continue to retain that status until school report card data are released again. The NC Department of Public Instruction also warns that due to differences in testing and modes of learning across the state, that it is difficult to compare any data from 2020-21 to prior school years.¹⁶⁹

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.

School Performance Grades

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.¹⁷⁰ 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).

North Carolina is one of 13 states nationally to have adopted an A-F grading system.¹⁷¹ 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.¹⁷²

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 and accountability requirements for the school year. Standardized testing resumed in the 2020-21 school year, but some accountability requirements, including A-F grades were still waived. 2020-21.¹⁷³ In Fall 2022, the state resumed identifying low-performing schools and reviewing student performance data from the 2021-22 school year to determine schools' status.¹⁷⁴

NCDPI released school performance data for the 2021-22 school year in September 2022 which found that school performance increased from the 2020-21 school year.¹⁷⁵ Yet, schools continue to face challenges as they recover from COVID; nearly 400 schools were designated as "low-performing" for the start of the 2022-23 school 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.¹⁷⁶ 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:¹⁷⁷

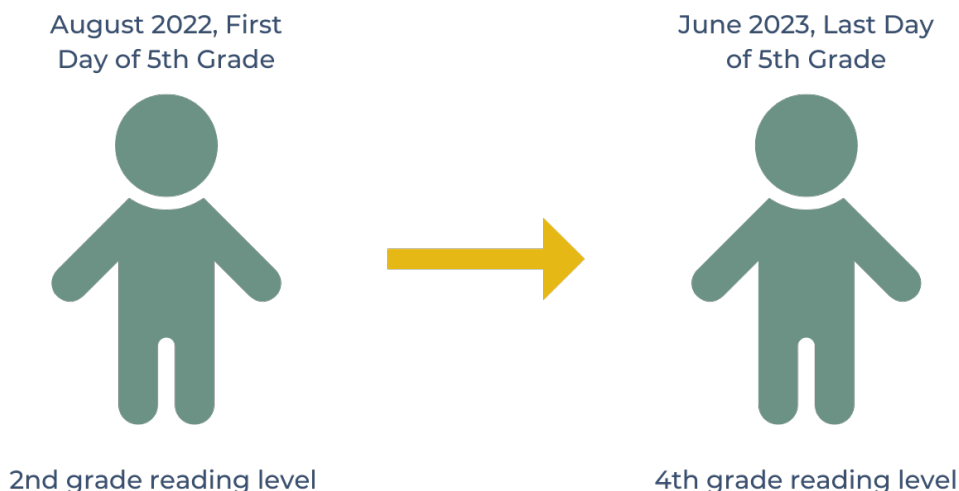
- Students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for mathematics in grades three through eight.
- Students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for reading in grades three through eight.
- Students who score at or above proficient on annual assessments for science in 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.

School Growth Score

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.¹⁷⁸

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 indicators, such as test results, over which schools have far less control than growth, which is designed to measure actual learning and the impact schools and teachers have on students' academic progress.



Achievement mindset: The student is reading below grade level.
Growth mindset: The student has demonstrated amazing progress.

Growth is reported separately for each school in the categories of exceeds, meets, or does not meet expected growth. Each school in the state that serves K-8 students receives an achievement score for math and reading. For each school that serves third grade students, the report card also contains numbers and percentages for third graders who are retained or promoted based on reading performance.¹⁷⁹

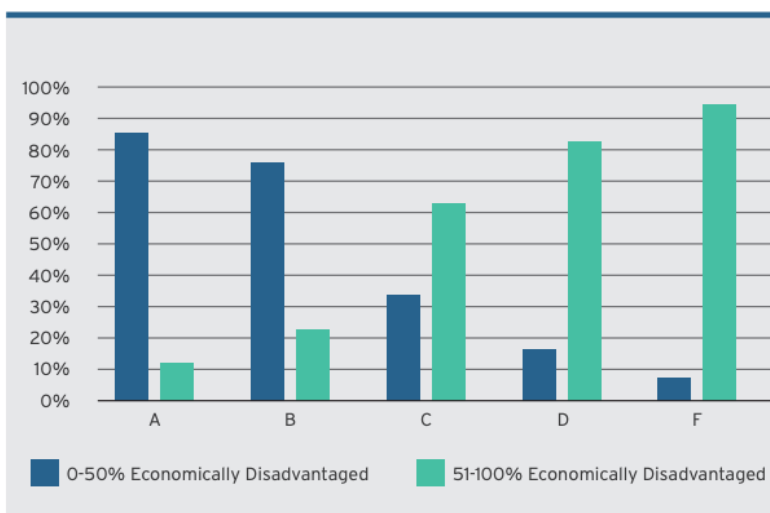
Additional Reporting

- 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.¹⁸⁰

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES BY PERCENT ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED (CURRENT FORMULA) 2018-19



Source: [Public School Forum of North Carolina, Top Education Issues 2020.](#)

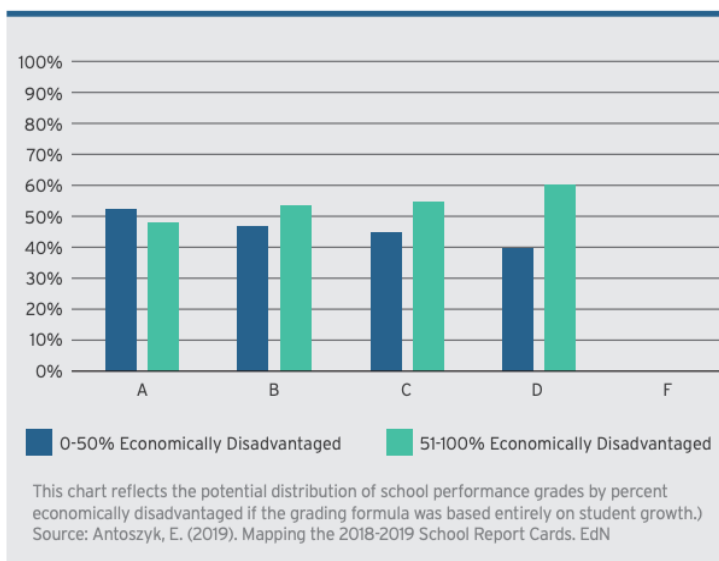
In 2018-19, only 11.7% of schools with 60.1-80% economically disadvantaged students received A's or B's for school performance, while only 0.7% of schools with 80.1-100% EDS received an A or B. In contrast, of the same set of schools with 80.1-100% economically disadvantaged students, 32.1% received C's while 67.2% received D's or F's.¹⁸¹

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%.¹⁸²

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.¹⁸³ 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.¹⁸⁴

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES BY PERCENT ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED (100% GROWTH FORMULA) 2018-19



Source: [Public School Forum of North Carolina, Top Education Issues 2020](#).

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-83.15.¹⁸⁵
- 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-105.37.¹⁸⁶

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.¹⁸⁷

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 approach to turning around low-performing schools was implemented as 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). The ISD proposal faced considerable local pushback¹⁸⁸ and only one school was taken over as part of ISD. After two years, the Innovative School District program was dissolved, however the original low-performing schools cited by the program will continue to receive assistance from the state.¹⁸⁹

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. As of January 2022, there were 153 Restart Schools across the state.¹⁹⁰

Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability

Teachers are also evaluated and held accountable for student's academic success. The goal of evaluating teachers is to "assess the teacher's performance in relation to North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and to design a plan for professional growth."¹⁹¹ The five North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards that teachers are used to assess teachers are:

1. Teachers Demonstrate Leadership
2. Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
3. Teachers Know the Content They Teach

4. Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students
5. Teachers Reflect on Their Practice¹⁹²

North Carolina’s current system for measuring teacher effectiveness is the HomeBase NCEES (North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System). Utilizing the application HomeBase, traditional public schools and charter schools can evaluate educator’s classroom performance, and assign professional development. In October 2008, the NC State Board of Education adopted the first Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and the Teacher Evaluation Process. Over the years, the rubric has undergone revisions, with the current version having been approved in 2015. Teachers are typically evaluated by the principal at their school. All teachers, regardless of subject, are evaluated using this model.

The evaluation process is conducted annually, using one of three evaluation cycles: comprehensive evaluation cycle, standard evaluation cycle, or abbreviated evaluation cycle. Any educator who has been teaching for three years or less will be reviewed using the comprehensive evaluation cycle, and educators with more than three years of experience can be evaluated by any of the three cycles. The teacher evaluation process includes 8 main components, broken down into 4 steps:

1. Step One: Training and Orientation
 - a. Training
 - b. Orientation
2. Step Two: Self-Assessment, Goal Setting, and Pre-Conference
 - a. Teacher Self-Assessment
 - b. Pre-Observation Conference
3. Step Three: Observation Cycle
 - a. Observations
 - b. Post-Observation Conference
4. Step Four: Summary Evaluation and Goal Setting
 - a. Summary Evaluation Conference and Teacher Summary Rating Form
 - b. Professional Development Plans¹⁹³

Following the observations, aspects of teacher performance will be rated as developing, proficient, accomplished, distinguished, or not demonstrated. If teachers are rated as “developing” or “not demonstrated” in any categories, they will work with their school administrators to formulate goals to achieve at least a “proficient” for their next evaluation.

Test Scores and Bonuses

Educators are also evaluated based on their students’ test scores using EVAAS, the same system that the NC State Board of Education uses to assess schools as a whole. EVAAS data are available for educators who teach tested subjects including reading, math, or language arts for grades 3-8, educators

who teach science and social studies grades 4-8, and educators who teach courses with EOC exams (English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History).¹⁹⁴

Teachers at traditional public schools and charter schools who teach 4th and 5th grade ELA, or 4th-8th grade math could be eligible for a bonus if they have test scores in the top 25% of their LEA, and/or the top 25% of the state.¹⁹⁵ Teachers can also be eligible for performance-based bonuses for AP, IB, or AICE test results. Teachers receive \$50 per every AP exam that scores a 3 or above, every IB exam that scores a 4 or above, or every AICE exam that scores a C or above. Teachers may not receive more than \$3,500 for this advanced course proficient test scores bonus.¹⁹⁶

While current methods of teacher evaluation and accountability do not factor into teachers' base salary, this could be changing for educators across the state soon. The newly proposed teacher licensure model, Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals, would use standardized test scores, student surveys, and principal and peer evaluations to determine the compensation for educators, instead of the current model that bases pay on years of experience. Many educators have expressed concern about potential subjectivity in the evaluations and that the EVAAS model would not honor the growth of students who may not be performing on grade level, but have shown immense growth throughout the school year.¹⁹⁷

Standards and Curriculum

Introduction

Academic 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.¹⁹⁸

Curriculum – including texts, lesson plans, activities, tasks, and assignments – is established by teachers and local school leaders. Instruction includes strategies and approaches used by teachers to deliver the curriculum, explain key concepts, and differentiate instruction to students.

North Carolina Standard Course of Study

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) aims to ensure that each grade or proficiency level and each high school course in every public school are utilizing a uniform set of learning standards outlining what students are expected to know and be able to do upon completion of the course or school year. Per NC State Board of Education policy, each content area's standards are reviewed every five to seven years to ensure the NCSCOS consists of clear, relevant standards and objectives.

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. 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 and techniques they will use to deliver instruction to reach standards set by the state.

Revision Cycle and Process

The Office of Academic Standards of 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. On February 3rd, 2022, the State Board of Education approved an internal procedures manual for reviewing, revising, and implementing standards. This manual aims to provide guidance on the processes to be used when developing or revising part of the standards; the topics, categories, and supporting materials included for standards; and the considerations that must be made in the review, revision, and implementation process.¹⁹⁹

NC DPI uses a uniform, formalized process based on four principles to guide the revision process:

- 1) Feedback-based. DPI collects feedback on the current standards from educators, administrators, parents, students, institutions of higher education, business/industry representatives, national organizations, and other education agencies.
- 2) Research-Informed: NCDPI reviews research on standards and learning in the content area being reviewed.
- 3) Improvement- Oriented: NCDPI submits an annual report presenting feedback on the standards and implementation from stakeholder groups.
- 4) Process- Driven: The revision process includes three phases: review, revision, and implementation.²⁰⁰

K-12 Social Studies Standards Revision

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 change in Social Studies requirements, which mandated a new Economics and Personal Finance class for NC students. Now, social studies educators are required to teach American History in one semester, instead of the previous 2-semester course. Required Social Studies courses now include World History, American History, Civic Literacy, and Economics and Personal Finance.

Latest Revision of Social Studies Standards

In April 2019, the State Board of Education voted to begin reviewing and considering revisions to the social studies standards.²⁰¹ In July 2020, they voted to postpone the approval of new K-12 social studies standards for one additional 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.²⁰²

These new standards were adopted by the NC State Board of Education on February 3rd, 2021 and were implemented beginning in Fall 2021. These revised standards include an additional focus on conceptual ideas, such as leadership, conflict resolution, movement, values, environmental challenges, justice, and other concepts. The standards also include a greater emphasis on equity, and viewing North Carolina

and American history through the perspectives of a variety of different racial and ethnic groups. These new standards have been seen by some North Carolina lawmakers as controversial, with some state legislators expressing concern that they were too equity-focused.²⁰³

Since the protests surrounding racial equity and police reform became the center of the national spotlight during the Summer of 2020, schools and educators have come under scrutiny for how they are teaching history. Specifically, the academic concept of Critical Race Theory (CRT) has sparked debate amongst legislators, school boards, and parents alike. CRT is an academic theory often used in graduate-level studies, that uses racism, racial inequities, and slavery as a lens through which to view American history and institutions.²⁰⁴

Some North Carolina lawmakers have expressed concerns that using this theory in teaching in public education, citing that it is casting American history in a negative light. As a result, lawmakers proposed House Bill 324, a bill that prohibits North Carolina educators from teaching students that the United States was founded on oppression, amongst other things.²⁰⁵ This bill was touted as an “anti-Critical Race Theory bill”, and was passed by both the North Carolina house and senate before being vetoed by Governor Roy Cooper in September 2021.²⁰⁶ Yet, many localities across the state have taken matters into their own hands, passing local legislation that would withhold funding if school boards did not ban Critical Race Theory in classrooms.²⁰⁷ The debate continues across the state as school board meetings become sites of parent concern.

However, racial inequity isn’t the only topic that some parents are concerned about. New legislation in North Carolina, dubbed the “Parents Bill of Rights,” aims to ban teaching K-3 students about gender and sexuality, and requires that parents be notified if their child opts to use different pronouns while at school. This bill also includes specific rights outlined for parents, and a system for parents to report to local school boards if they believe their rights have been infringed upon, or if their students are being taught material that they are not comfortable with. The bill has passed the Senate, but awaits a vote in the House.²⁰⁸

For more information on North Carolina’s Standard Course of Study visit <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/>.

Early Literacy

In April 2021, the NC General Assembly passed legislation titled the “Excellent Public Schools Act 2021”²⁰⁹ that requires Pre-K through 5th grade teachers to be trained on a method of literacy instruction that stresses the importance of phonics, known as the “science of reading.” This training, often referred to by its acronym LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) requires more than 160 hours of training for teachers over two years. The rollout and adoption of this program aims for

teachers to have a common language to discuss reading instruction and literacy, and to allow districts to collaborate more effectively.²¹⁰

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 state has spent more than \$150 million on Read to Achieve implementation since its inception. However, in 2021, NC DPI data showed that despite the efforts of Read to Achieve, only 38.2 percent of first graders, 43.2 percent of second graders, and 43.7 percent of third graders are reading at grade level, and 31% of 3rd grade students in the 2020-21 school year were retained for not reading proficiently for their grade level.²¹¹ This rate is double the rates prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹² A separate study by NC State researchers found no achievement gains from implementing Read to Achieve.²¹³

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/>.

Academic Transparency Legislation

In 2021, North Carolina Republicans introduced HB755, titled the “Academic Transparency Bill” which would require schools to post all curriculum, lesson plans, and learning materials online.²¹⁴ Lawmakers suggested that virtual learning provided parents new access to their child’s education and that the bill would enable this access to continue with the reopening of schools.²¹⁵

In 2022, the Senate amended and renamed HB 755 the “Parents’ Bill of Rights.” The new version removed much of the text from the original bill, replacing it with provisions including the creation of a process for parents to object to curriculum and the banning of teaching content related to LGBTQ+ issues in grades K-3.²¹⁶ The expansion of the bill followed a national trend of state legislatures banning the instruction of LGBTQ+ issues in elementary schools.²¹⁷ The NC Senate passed the bill along party lines, but House Republicans did not vote on the bill in the House due to an inability to override Governor Cooper’s likely veto.²¹⁸

School Choice

Introduction

While traditional public schools serve approximately 76 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 2020-21, out of 1,754,164 students, 107,341 students (6.2%) were in private school,²¹⁹ 121,960 students (6.95%) were in public charter schools,²²⁰ and 179,900 students (10.25%) were homeschooled.²²¹ Approximately 1,344,963 students (76.7%) were enrolled in traditional public schools, which includes magnet schools.²²²

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.²²³ Charter schools are exempt from many state and local laws governing public schools, but are required to 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, and a charter school “authorizer,” which is an entity vested by state law with the authority to grant charters and oversee charter schools. Many states have multiple authorizers, which may include local school districts, state education agencies, independent charter boards, and/or higher education institutions. North Carolina has 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 of 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.²²⁴ 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, charter schools do not need to comply with many other rules and regulations that apply to traditional public schools. While a traditional public school must staff fully licensed teachers, only 50% of charter school teachers must be fully licensed and have a college degree.²²⁵ Charter schools are also exempt from following state curriculum requirements, school calendar laws, and providing free and reduced lunch.²²⁶

The number of charter schools in the United States is growing. As of the 2019-20 school year, there are 7,700 charter schools across the country serving over 3.4 million students.²²⁷ 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,

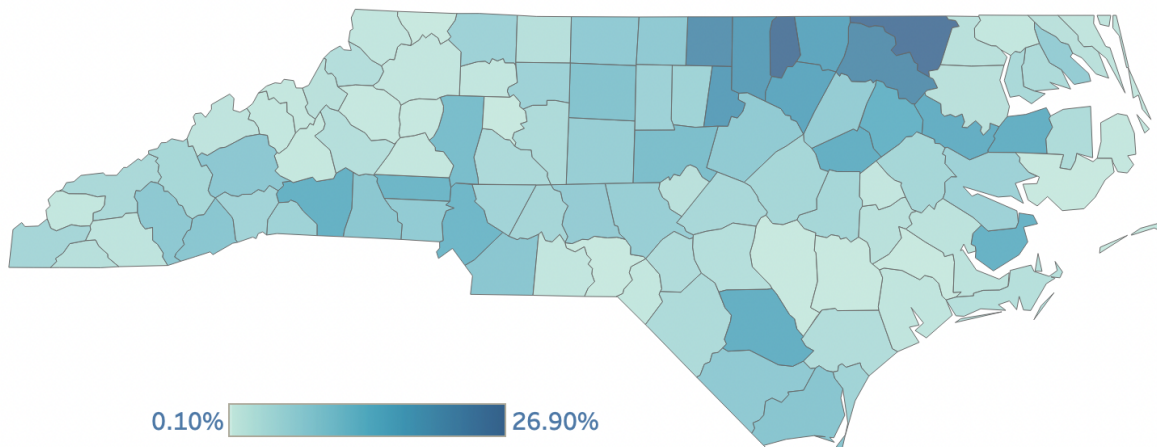
- Hold the schools . . . accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.²²⁸

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;
- 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.²²⁹

In 2021, North Carolina had 203 operating charter schools, including two virtual charter schools.²³⁰ 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 2020.

Percentage of Public School Students Enrolled in Charter Schools



Data source: [Percentage of Public School Students in Membership at Charter Schools.](#)

North Carolina 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 2020-21, charter schools received \$817,976,766 in state funds for 111,604 expected students.²³¹ This breaks down to an average of \$7,329 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.

Charter schools also 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.²³² 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.

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.²³³

In 2018, the General Assembly enacted legislation allowing municipalities to operate charter schools, authorizing four towns in Mecklenburg County to exercise this option.²³⁴ Municipal charter schools can give preferential treatment for their own residents for admission purposes. Thus far, no town has applied to create a municipal charter school.

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.²³⁵ 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 for overall academic growth scores landing in the category of "Not Met."²³⁶ 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.

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.²³⁷ 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)²³⁸

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.

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.²³⁹

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.²⁴⁰

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 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.²⁴¹

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.²⁴²

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.²⁴³ In 2022, there are 188 magnet schools in North Carolina serving 138,661 students.²⁴⁴ Seventy-three percent of the students who attend magnet schools are students of color compared to the state average of 52 percent.²⁴⁵

Private Schools and School Vouchers in North Carolina

Private schools are largely unaccountable to government institutions and are traditionally privately funded, through a variety of sources including tuition, private grants, and fundraising from parents or private organizations. Today, many private schools in North Carolina also receive substantial public dollars through state voucher programs. 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 can also utilize admissions policies that exclude children based on certain characteristics, such as religion, sexual orientation, and academic performance. Private schools, however, must comply with health and safety regulations, civil rights laws, and laws stating the minimum number of school days.²⁴⁶ In the United States, a wide variety of schools are classified as “private schools,” including boarding schools and religiously-affiliated schools.

In 2020-21, North Carolina private schools served 107,341 students at 783 schools.²⁴⁷ Over 68 percent of these students attended religious schools. In 2019-20, the average NC private school tuition rates were estimated at \$8,210 for elementary schools and \$10,220 for high schools.²⁴⁸

[Private School Enrollment by County](#)

North Carolina provides financial assistance through school vouchers to some families seeking school choice opportunities. The state currently has two voucher programs: Opportunity Scholarships and Personal Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities.

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.²⁴⁹ 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 2015-16.²⁵⁰

In 2017-18, the legislature established a \$10 million recurring increase per year for ten years, which was extended and increased to \$15 million per year in 2021. More than \$3.1 billion will be spent on the voucher program over the next 15 years.²⁵¹ By the 2031-32 school year, the Opportunity Scholarship program is expected to have \$240.5 million held in reserve.²⁵² The 2021 state budget also increased the income cap from 150% of the income required for free or reduced lunch to 175% and increased the amount of money recipients can receive from \$4,200 to \$5,900.

In the 2020-21 school year, North Carolina provided over \$61 million in vouchers to 16,042 recipients enrolled at 480 nonpublic schools.²⁵³ 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 175% 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.

Private 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.

Personal Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities (PESA)

The 2021 state budget consolidated two previous programs into one voucher program, titled Personal Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities (PESA) Program. Its funding allocation was increased to \$31.6 million in FY 2022-23.²⁵⁴ The PESA voucher program combines the Special Education Scholarship Grants program with North Carolina's Personal Education Savings Accounts.

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.²⁵⁵ 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 2020-21, there were 112,614 home schools operating in North Carolina serving an estimated 179,900 students.²⁵⁶ Of these schools, 55.3 percent identify as religious schools and 44.7 percent identify as independent schools.

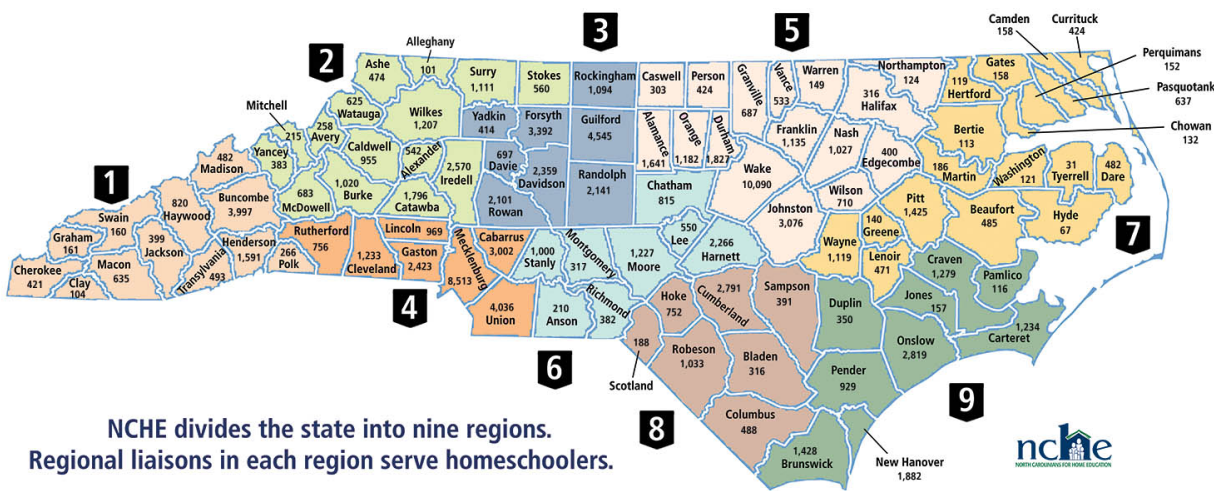
2020-21 Estimated NC Home School Enrollment by Age/Grade ²⁵⁷			
Age (Grade)	Enrollment	Age (Grade)	Enrollment
6 (1st)	16,693	13 (8th)	14,423
7 (2nd)	18,137	14 (9th)	14,845
8 (3rd)	14,825	15 (10th)	16,607
9 (4th)	15,235	16 (11th)	13,156
10 (5th)	14,774	17 (12th)	10,699
11 (6th)	15,059		
12 (7th)	15,447	Total	179,900

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 elected to operate as either non-religious or religious schools.²⁵⁸

The NC General Assembly passed legislation in 2013 amending the definition of a home school 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.²⁵⁹

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%. From the 2019-20 school year to the 2020-21 school year, the number of homeschooled students grew by 18.7%, likely due in large part to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts to remote learning. As of July 2021, North Carolinians for Home Education estimated there were more than 112,000 homeschools in North Carolina.²⁶⁰

Number of Homeschools in North Carolina by County 112,614 Total NC Homeschools in the 2020-21 School Year



Technology and Digital Learning

Introduction

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. North Carolina schools have struggled 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 became 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. Many districts across the state continued with some form of remote learning for at least the start of the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years.²⁶¹ Despite the availability of COVID-19 vaccines for all people older than 5, COVID outbreaks amongst students, faculty, and staff caused many individual schools and districts to return to a partially-online format. Many districts also relied on remote-learning formats to account for school missed due to inclement weather.²⁶² The urgency to find equitably accessible remote-based learning solutions for all households cannot be understated.

North Carolina is transitioning 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.²⁶³

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.²⁶⁴ 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.²⁶⁵ North Carolina has the second largest population of rural students in the nation.²⁶⁶ 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 a 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 2020, 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. Most recent estimates show that 30% of North Carolina students do not have adequate enough internet access to stream videos (often the main mode of remote instruction), and 23% do not have adequate devices for remote learning.²⁶⁷

In 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Cooper established the nation’s first Office of Digital Equity and Literacy.²⁶⁸ Through this office, North Carolina will invest \$1.2 billion in American Recovery Plan (ARP) funds to close the digital gap by 2025. The plan will enable 100% of households with children to subscribe to affordable broadband services.

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.²⁶⁹

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.²⁷⁰

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.²⁷¹

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.²⁷² However, in 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provided \$30.75 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund, which provides funding for states with the highest COVID-19 burden on their educational communities, with an emphasis on providing access to remote learning. The CARES Act was renewed in December 2020, and an additional \$81.9 billion was provided for the Education Stabilization Fund.²⁷³

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.²⁷⁴ 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.²⁷⁵

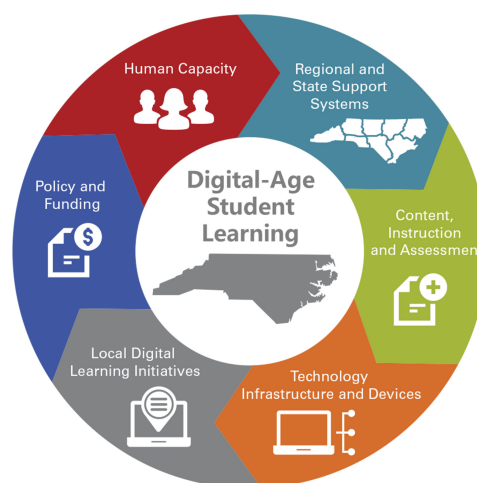
North Carolina Digital Learning Plan

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:

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.²⁷⁶

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. In 2020, the Friday Institute conducted focus groups with over 50 school and district leaders to provide updated recommendations and policy steps for the plan. Many of these recommendations focused on the effect of COVID-19 on public schools, with districts asking for more information on the best devices to purchase for students, advice on virtual academies, increased funding to provide more technology staff, and more.²⁷⁷

The detailed plan and additional background can be found at: <http://ncdlplan.fi.ncsu.edu>.

Digital Teaching and Learning Standards

Effective starting in the 2020-21 school year, North Carolina 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 must 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
- Inquiry and design thinking and learning opportunities²⁷⁸

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 55,000 enrollments from 31,000 students in the 2020-21 school year in all 115 North Carolina school districts. NCVPS offers over 150 secondary school courses and 15 middle 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 648,466 students since that first year.²⁷⁹

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 asynchronously 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.²⁸⁰

2020-21 North Carolina Virtual Public School Student Performance

According to the NCVPS 2020-21 Annual Report:²⁸¹

- Total Enrollment for 2020-21 was over 55,000 course enrollments.
- Total Student Participation for 2020-21 was approximately 31,000 students.
- 115 LEAs participated in NCVPS online courses.
- 112 charter schools participated in NCVPS online courses.
- Per student teacher pay was \$390 per year. NCVPS contracted with 741 teachers and conversation coaches in 2020-21.
- The pass rate for students taking NCVPS courses in 2021-22 was 77.4%.
- 30,820 students enrolled in NCVPS courses registered for General courses, 17,594 students for Occupational Course of Study (OCS) blended courses, 10,423 for Honors courses, 285 for Credit Recovery courses, and 3,148 for Advanced Placement courses.
- The most popular NCVPS courses were OCS blended courses, Spanish II, and blended science courses.
- The districts with the most NCVPS enrollments were Wake County Schools (9,463), Charlotte-Mecklenburg (7,593), Charter Schools (6,333), Cabarrus County (2,181), and Cumberland County (1,841).

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, began in 2008, provides valuable preparation for college along with a learning community of accomplished, motivated peers.²⁸²

- **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 mechatronics, 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 2021 represented 59 counties throughout North Carolina.
- **Faculty.** 100% of faculty hold a Master's degree, and 45% hold a Doctoral degree.
- **Size.** 179 students made up the NCSSM Online Class of 2021.²⁸³

School Safety

Introduction

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.

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.

According to the Center for Safer Schools, there were 431 reports of a planned school attack in North Carolina during the 2021-22 school year, 254 of which were considered credible threats.²⁸⁴ Additionally, guns are the second-leading cause of death among children and teens in North Carolina.²⁸⁵

Reported Crimes in North Carolina's Public Schools

In North Carolina, there were 1,535 total reported crimes in public schools in 2020-21. The rate of crimes reported decreased to 1.04 acts per 1000 students in 2021-21 compared to 6.29 acts per 1000 students in 2018-19. The table below shows the total acts of crime reported and rates for grades K-13 for the last nine years.²⁸⁶ It is important to note that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools transitioned to remote learning starting in March 2020. As a result, caution should be taken when comparing data to previous years.

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
2020-21	1,535	1.04
2019-20	7,158	4.69
2018-19	9,554	6.29
2017-18	9,747	6.48
2016-17	9,834	6.5

Source: [NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2020-21.](#)

School Shootings

Adjusted for population, the United States has the 2nd highest rate of mass shootings in countries with a population over ten million.²⁸⁷ Research has shown that high numbers of guns and gun ownership are to blame. Between 1960 and 2012, the United States experienced 90 mass shootings and had over 270 million guns.²⁸⁸ In the same period, no other country experienced more than 18 mass shootings or had more than 46 million guns.

Since 1970, the United States has had 2,032 school shootings, including 948 since December 2012.²⁸⁹ Given the alarming increase in school shootings in recent years, policymakers and the public have debated on how to keep students safe in schools.

Many have called for stricter gun laws as a preventative measure, including banning the sale of assault weapons, increasing the minimum purchase age, and enforcing universal background checks.²⁹⁰ In June 2022, following one of the deadliest school shootings at Uvalde Elementary School, Congress passed the first major gun safety legislation in over thirty years.²⁹¹ The bill expands background checks on purchasers between ages 18 and 21, incentivizes states to pass red-flag laws, and prevents people convicted of domestic abuse, including dating partners, from owning a gun. Importantly, a majority of Americans support passing stricter gun laws, including 80%-90% supporting universal background checks and over 60% supporting an assault weapons ban.²⁹²

Yet, the Republican party has largely been opposed to changing gun laws and instead has focused on increasing safety measures in schools, including arming teachers and replacing doors.²⁹³ Twenty states, not including North Carolina, currently allow teachers and staff to carry guns on K-12 campuses to some degree.²⁹⁴ To implement an armed teachers program, a school would need to spend between \$1000 and \$5000 per teacher on training programs to arm teachers for active shooter situations.²⁹⁵

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.²⁹⁶

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 actually makes them safer, and whether their presence has a disproportionate impact on students of color regarding discipline and arrests.²⁹⁷

In 2017, there were an estimated 1200 school resource officers across the state who are disproportionately male and white (77% and 79% respectively). Data have shown that SROs increase suspensions, expulsions, police referrals, and arrests at a rate that is twice as high for Black students compared to White students.²⁹⁸ Nationally, Black students make up 31% of the students referred to law enforcement or arrested, despite making up only 15% of the student population.²⁹⁹ Students of color are also more likely to attend a school with an SRO on campus. Over 51% of high schools with large Black and Brown populations have an SRO, compared to 42% of all high schools.³⁰⁰

Research also indicates that the presence of SROs on campus does not stop school shootings from occurring. The Washington Post found that SROs stopped only two out of 200 school shootings, and an officer was present during four of the five worst school shootings.³⁰¹

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.³⁰² The 2022 state budget nearly doubled the funding for school resource officers, increasing the amount from \$18 million to \$33 million.³⁰³ The goal, according to Representative John Torbett, is to put a SRO in every school in the state.

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.³⁰⁴

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
- 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 students³⁰⁵

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:³⁰⁶

- 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)

School Risk Management Plan

In 2014-15, the state passed a requirement for local school boards to submit a School Risk Management Plan (SRMP).³⁰⁷ The plans are intended to document how schools prevent and respond to school safety threats in coordination with law enforcement and first-responders. The SRMP also includes digital layouts of each school to assist first-responders in case of an emergency.

Early Childhood Education

Introduction

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.³⁰⁸ What happens in these first five years sets the foundation for all of the years that follow.

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 Case for Early Childhood Education

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.³⁰⁹ 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 percent of the intellect, personality, and skills that a child will carry through life.³¹⁰

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.³¹¹

Return on Investment in Early Education

Fifty years of research has proven that students who attended high-quality preschool programs score significantly higher in reading and math when they enter elementary school, are less likely to drop out, repeat grades or need special education, and 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.³¹²

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 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.³¹³

Child Care in North Carolina

Nearly 70 percent of children under age 6 in North Carolina have all available parents in the workforce, making access to affordable and high-quality child care one of the state's top priorities. Almost 220,000 children spend part or all of their day in regulated child care arrangements.³¹⁴ Availability and access of child care is essential for North Carolina's economic development and stability.

North Carolina Census Data Estimates 2021	
Total Population	10,551,162
Children under 5 years old	611,967
Total children under 18	2,310,704
Children under 5 as percent of population	5.8%
Children under 18 as percent of population	21.9%

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2019 Estimates.](#)

Child Care Highlights 2022	
Number of Regulated Child Care Centers	4,343
Number of Children Enrolled in Child Care Centers	210,259
Number of Regulated Family Child Care Homes	1,261
Number of Children Enrolled in Family Child Care Homes	7,890
Total Number of Regulated Facilities	5,604
Total Number of Children Enrolled in Regulated Facilities	218,149

Source: [NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, Monthly Statistical Detail Report - May 2022](#)

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 developmental delays 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.³¹⁵

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 Head Start.³¹⁶

- **Preschool Exceptional Children Program:** Since 1991, all three-, four-, and 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).³¹⁷
- **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.
- **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.³¹⁸

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 eligible 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 order to participate in the NC Pre-K program, a child or their family must meet one of the following criteria:

- Child's family income falls at or below 75 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) or
- Child has limited english proficiency or
- Child has an identified disability or
- Child has a chronic health condition or
- Child has a developmental or educational need or
- Child has a parent who is active duty military

In 2020-21, the program served approximately 23,236 students in 2,067 classrooms located at 1,184 sites.³¹⁹ 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. Recent research has confirmed that NC Pre-K produces benefits for children, including the following³²⁰:

- Children score higher on third-grade EOGs in both math and reading
- Children have better language, literacy, and math skills
- Dual-language learners perform better on literacy and math skills

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 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.³²¹

The state currently only allocates enough money to fund 30,152 slots for eligible children to enroll in NC Pre-K.³²² In 2019, myFutureNC set a goal for North Carolina to enroll 75% of eligible children in NC Pre-K in each county by 2030. In 2020-21, only 51% of eligible four-year-olds were enrolled in NC Pre-K, and only 37 out of 100 counties have met the goal.

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.³²³

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.
- Collaborate among and within agencies to maximize resources.³²⁴

Recent Initiatives to Improve Early Childhood 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.³²⁵

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.³²⁶

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 through December 2022. 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.³²⁷

Student Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning

Introduction

Mental health has increasingly been at the forefront of education policy discussions, as students' mental and emotional wellbeing is foundational to their ability to succeed in school. Mental health is tied directly to academic outcomes, substance abuse and risky behavior, graduation rates, and school climate. In 2019, 15.1% of North Carolina adolescents aged 12-17 had a past-year major depressive episode.³²⁸ Nearly 1 in 5 students ages 8-15 years old have a mental health or substance abuse disorder.³²⁹

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns over student mental health have grown. Over 3,600 children in North Carolina lost a parent or a caregiver to COVID, and there has been a 46% increase in youth with one or more major depressive episodes between 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the rate of children discharged from emergency facilities with a behavioral health condition increased by 70% during the pandemic.³³⁰

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 social and emotional health are essential ingredients that can greatly contribute to, or greatly hinder, a child's ability to learn.

Long term trends have revealed a serious decline in youth social and emotional health. The youth suicide rate in North Carolina has nearly doubled in the past decade. Factors impacting youth suicide rates include bullying and social discrimination, social isolation, trauma, persistent stress, acute loss, child abuse, and family violence or disruption. Many of these risk factors increased for North Carolina's children during the pandemic, with children of color and LGBTQ youth suffering disproportionately. 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.³³¹

At the same time that the social and emotional health needs of students' have increased, the role that schools play in supporting their students' social and emotional health has been shown to be vitally important. High school students who report a sense of being cared for, supported and of belonging at school are nearly a third less likely to report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and nearly one half as likely to report attempting or seriously considering attempting suicide.³³²

Mental Health in North Carolina Public Schools

Schools are important settings for addressing mental health needs in young people. Schools can reduce students' risk of mental health concerns through policies and practices which foster a sense of safety, connection and belonging, and which build social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies. Practices which promote wellbeing and support among educators also benefit the mental health of students.³³³

For students needing mental health intervention, school-affiliated mental health services are an important tool to increase access and reduce barriers to mental health treatment and early intervention for youth, especially youth of color and youth from other marginalized communities. 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. As a result, North Carolina ranks 42nd in the nation for youth mental health according to a 2022 report.³³⁴ The 2021-23 state budget did include funding for 115 additional school psychologist positions, but the ratio remains far behind recommendations. No additional positions for social workers, nurses, or counselors were allotted in the 2021-23 state budget.

Role	NC Ratio 2022	Recommended Ratio
Psychologists	1:1,815	1:500
Counselors	1:335	1:250
Social Workers	1:1,025	1:250

Source: [NCDPI, School Health Support Personnel Professional Entry Report](#)

School mental health policy

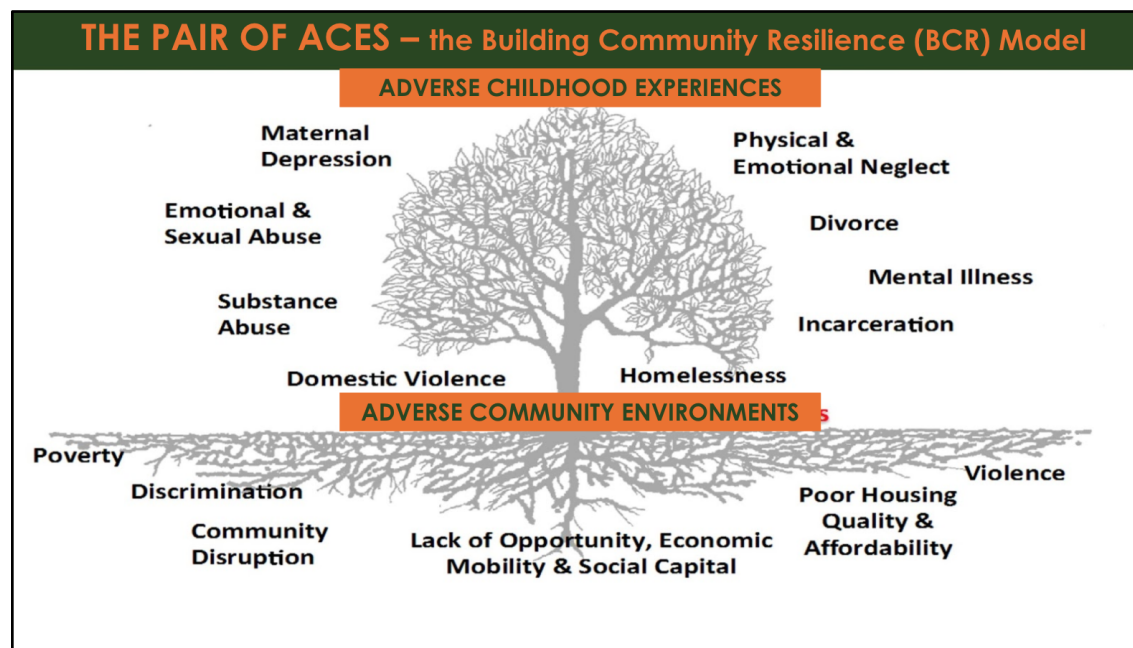
In order to promote student mental health and well-being, each K-12 school unit is required to adopt a school-based mental health plan that includes a mental health training program and suicidal referral program.³³⁵ The mental health training program is for any school personnel working with students in grades K-12 and must cover the following³³⁶:

- Youth mental health.
- Suicide prevention.
- Substance abuse.
- Sexual abuse prevention.
- Sex trafficking prevention.
- Teenage dating violence.

The State Board of Education specifies this mental health training program as in addition to the universal promotion of mental and social-emotional wellness for staff and students through the integration of core SEL and mental wellness supports into curriculum, instruction and school climate. Unfortunately, state funding has significantly lagged behind what is needed to fully support schools in effectively implementing these evidence-based practices.³³⁷

The Impact Of Trauma On Learning

A CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study in the 1990s documented the high prevalence of adverse experiences in childhood, with 64% of respondents reporting adverse experiences in at least one area and 22% reporting adversity in three or more areas.³³⁸ When adverse experiences are unpredictable, severe, or prolonged, resulting traumatic stress can impact both the chemistry and structure of a child's developing brain.³³⁹



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., withdrawal; apathy).

Early adversity can also 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.³⁴⁰

As of 2020 in North Carolina, 13.4 percent of children ages 17 and below have experienced at least two ACEs, with the most common being parental or guardian divorce or separation (23.2 percent), household mental illness (8.4 percent), household substance misuse (8.4 percent) and discrimination (7.1 percent).³⁴¹

North Carolina Center for Resilience and Learning

The North Carolina Center for Resilience and Learning (formerly the North Carolina Resilience and Learning Project) is a whole school, whole child framework working with districts and schools across the state to create trauma-informed learning environments that are safer and more supportive for all children. The Center works with schools to create school-wide culture shifts through professional development and ongoing coaching that build understanding and awareness about trauma, stress, and their potential impacts on learning, and help schools to create and implement an action plan of resilience-building strategies tailored to the needs of their students, staff, and community.

The Center is an initiative of the Public School Forum of North Carolina, created to take action on the recommendations of a 2015-2016 Study Group of over 100 stakeholders and subject matter experts investigating the top issues in public education in NC. It 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 its inception, the Center for Resilience and Learning has worked with 32 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.³⁴²

Out-of-School Time

Introduction

How students spend time outside of school can be a determining factor in school success and long-term life outcomes. Quality afterschool, expanded learning and out of school opportunities help to improve learning and provide engaging experiences beyond the school day. Research shows that high quality afterschool and expanded learning programs improve academic performance and school attendance, nurture youth development, decrease high-risk behaviors, and help to meet the needs of working families.

Before the pandemic, results from a survey of parents in North Carolina indicated that for every child who is enrolled in an afterschool program, three more would participate in an afterschool program if one were available. In a 2020 survey, 75 percent of parents noted that the pandemic led them to appreciate afterschool providers even more than before.³⁴³

Out-of-school time 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. Out-of-school time programs have a proven ability to contribute greatly to a child's education and overall wellbeing.

Research has shown a \$3 return on every \$1 invested into afterschool programs through increasing a child's adult earning potential, reducing crime and juvenile delinquency, and improving academic performance.³⁴⁴ Parents of children participating in out-of-school time programs see key benefits, including³⁴⁵:

- Interaction with peers and the opportunity to build social skills
- Healthy snacks or meals
- Homework help
- STEM learning opportunities
- Physical activities
- Life skills

Out-of-School Time in North Carolina

North Carolina's out-of-school time programs are nationally ranked, coming in at 6th in the nation for quality and 1st overall for parent satisfaction.³⁴⁶ Over 96% of North Carolina parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program experience and 81% agree that the programs help kids learn life skills.³⁴⁷ As a result, there is significant bipartisan public support in North Carolina for funding afterschool programs with nearly 90% of parents in favor of public funding.³⁴⁸

In 2020, nearly 200,000 (12%) of North Carolina’s K-12 children participated in afterschool programs, but there is still significant unmet demand.³⁴⁹ In 2020, more than 666,000 children in North Carolina would have been enrolled in a summer program if one were available to them.³⁵⁰ That means that there are three children waiting to participate in an afterschool program for every one child currently enrolled. Over 40% of North Carolina parents say that programs are not available in their community.³⁵¹

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.³⁵² 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.³⁵³

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 2021, \$35,459,693 was appropriated to 21st CCLC in North Carolina, allowing over 35,000 children to participate.³⁵⁴

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 preschool, before school, after school and summer care for children aged 6 to 12.

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.³⁵⁵

¹ [North Carolina's Average Daily Membership by School District.](#)

² "State Population Totals and Components of Change: 2020-2021." U.S. Census Bureau. December 21st, 2021. Available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-total.html>

³ Rebecca Tippet, "NC Gains 14th Seat in House," Carolina Demography, April 27, 2021, <https://www.ncdemography.org/2021/04/26/census-2020-nc-gains-a-14th-seat-in-the-house-of-representatives/>.

⁴ Rebecca Tippet, "First Look at 2020 Census for North Carolina," Carolina Demography, September 10, 2021, <https://www.ncdemography.org/2021/08/12/first-look-at-2020-census-for-north-carolina/#section-team>.

⁵ Public School Forum of NC. "Study Group XVII: Supporting North Carolina's Rural Students." 2021. Available at: <https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Study-Group-XVII-Supporting-North-Carolinas-Rural-Students-2.1.21.pdf>

⁶ Cline, M. "Population Projections Provide Glimpse into Our Future." February 2022. Available at <https://www.ncdemography.org/2022/02/17/population-projections-provide-glimpse-into-our-future/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2021-22 School Year. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15::NO::...>

⁹ NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 37 - Charter and Regional School Membership by Race and Sex School Year 2021-22. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:73::NO::...>

¹⁰ NC DPI. Report to the General Assembly: Headcount of English Learners. 2021. Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eEyAtxCblgiTDOTK9Q5M05s45xIqkO-e/view>

¹¹ NC DPI. Economically Disadvantaged Student Data. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/school-nutrition/sn-data-reports#economically-disadvantaged-student-data-eds>

¹² Kids Count Data Center. Children in poverty in North Carolina. 2022. Available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/2238-children-in-poverty#detailed/2/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/any/12873,4680>

¹³ NC DPI. Tables 9 and 38, Statistical Profile. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:14::NO::...>

¹⁴ myFutureNC. "North Carolina Statewide Education Attainment Goal." For more information, visit www.myFutureNC.org.

¹⁵ "News Release: Mathematics and Reading Scores of Fourth- and Eighth-Graders Declined in Most States During Pandemic, Nation's Report Card Shows." <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

¹⁶ NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Mathematics Assessment. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/mathematics/2022/>.

¹⁷ NAEP Report Card: Reading. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/>

¹⁸ The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 4. Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023011NC4.pdf>

¹⁹ The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 4. Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023011NC4.pdf>

²⁰ The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 8. Available at

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023011NC8.pdf>

²¹ The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 8. Available at

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023011NC8.pdf>

²² The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Mathematics State Average Scores, Grade 8. Available at

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023011NC8.pdf>

²³ The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Reading State Snapshot Report, Grade 4. Available at

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023010NC4.pdf>

²⁴ The Nation's Report Card, 2022 Reading State Snapshot Report, Grade 8. Available at

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023010NC8.pdf>

²⁵ State Board of Education Meeting: 2021-22 Accountability Reports. Available at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Dm9QeSd4CQltpiDSCFwDXl6cwbjiNPe_/view

²⁶ 2021 AP Score Reports, NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/north-carolina-sat-and-ap-reports#advanced-placement-ap-reports>

²⁷ AP Score Distributions All Subjects, 2001-2021. Available at https://reports.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/2021-ap-score-distributions-all-subjects_1.pdf

²⁸ The Facts on Rural Schools, Public Schools First NC. Available at <https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-on-rural-schools/>

²⁹ NC DPI, Cohort Graduation Rate. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/12833/open>

³⁰ NC DPI, Cohort Graduation Rate. Available at <http://accrpt.tops.ncsu.edu/app/2011/cgr/>

³¹ NCDPI, "Dropout Prevention and Intervention," Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/student-support/dropout-prevention-and-intervention#:~:text=The%20state's%20dropout%20rate%20rose,The%20>

³² NC DPI Consolidated Data Report, 2020-21. Available at

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14171/open>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ myFutureNC, "A Call to Action for the State of North Carolina," Available at https://www.myfuturenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/A-Call-to-Action-Final-Report_040319.pdf

³⁷ Tippet, Rebecca and Jessica Stanford. 2019. North Carolina's Leaky Educational Pipeline & Pathways to 60% Postsecondary Attainment: Report for the John M. Belk Endowment. Chapel Hill, NC: Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Available at: https://ncedpipeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NC-Leaky-Pipeline_FINAL.pdf

³⁸ myFutureNC, "A Call to Action for the State of North Carolina," Available at https://www.myfuturenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/A-Call-to-Action-Final-Report_040319.pdf

³⁹ myFutureNC. "North Carolina Statewide Education Attainment Goal." For more information, visit www.myFutureNC.org.

⁴⁰ myFutureNC. "Measuring our Progress." Available at: <https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/>

⁴¹ 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::>

⁴² Graham, Gael. "'The Sanest Way Out': The Politics of Public School Funding in North Carolina, 1929-1933." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (2017): 253–82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45184852>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ North Carolina State Constitution, Article III. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Constitution/NCConstitution.html>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ § 143C-5-4, available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/ByChapter/Chapter_143C.pdf

⁴⁷ <https://www.ednc.org/12-13-2021-at-long-last-a-budget-what-does-it-mean-for-education/>

⁴⁸ Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, 2022. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14619/download?attachment?attachment>

-
- ⁴⁹ Federal Role in Education, U.S. Department of Education. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>
- ⁵⁰ An Overview of the U.S. Department of Education. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/what.html>.
- ⁵¹ NC DPI, Federal Program Monitoring. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/>.
- ⁵² Title I Program Description, U.S. Department of Education. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>
- ⁵³ NCES Table 3. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/202021_summary_3.asp
- ⁵⁴ Catherine A. Paul, “Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.” VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project. Available at <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/education/elementary-and-secondary-education-act-of-1965/>
- ⁵⁵ NC DPI. Every Student Succeeds Act. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring/every-student-succeeds-act-essa>
- ⁵⁶ 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>.
- ⁵⁷ NC DPI. Every Student Succeeds Act.. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring/every-student-succeeds-act-essa>
- ⁵⁸ G.S. 115C-83.15. Available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115c/GS_115C-83.15.pdf.
- ⁵⁹ NC DPI, North Carolina ESSA State Plan. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/succeeds/nc-essa-state-plan-final.pdf>.
- ⁶⁰ NC DPI, School Nutrition. <https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/information-resources/eligibility/2019-20-ieg-ncdpi-mediarelease.pdf>
- ⁶¹ NC DPI, SY 19-20 Economically Disadvantaged Data - School Nutrition Claim Data. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/school-nutrition/sn-data-reports#economically-disadvantaged-student-data-eds>
- ⁶² USDA National School Lunch Program. Available at <http://ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/national-school-lunch-program.aspx#.Uu-9GdLiiTM>.
- ⁶³ USDA, School Breakfast Program. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/sbp-fact-sheet>
- ⁶⁴ USDA, Special Milk Program. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/smp/special-milk-program>
- ⁶⁵ USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/ffvp-fact-sheet>
- ⁶⁶ N.C. Const. art. I, § 115C-1
- ⁶⁷ North Carolina State Constitution, Article IX, Section 2. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Legislation/constitution/ncconstitution.html>.
- ⁶⁸ Leandro v. State, 488 S.E.2d 249 (N.C. 1997). Available at <http://www.law.unc.edu/documents/civilrights/briefs/leandrosupremecourtdecisionjuly97.pdf>.
- ⁶⁹ 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::>
- ⁷⁰ Public School Forum of North Carolina, Local School Finance Study. Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/lfsf>.
- ⁷¹ Session Law 2018-5, Section 38.8. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/Senate/PDF/S99v6.pdf>.
- ⁷² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “State Budget Basics,” updated on May 24th, 2022. Available at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/state-budgets-basics>
- ⁷³ National Education Association, Rankings of the States 2021 and Estimates of School Statistics 2022. Available at <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2019%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report.pdf>.
- ⁷⁴ North Carolina Public School Finances, NCDPI. Available at <https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/srcfinance/state?year=2020&lang=en>
- ⁷⁵ AskNC: What percentage of lottery money goes to education? Available at <https://nccppr.org/asknc-percentage-lottery-money-goes-education/>.
- ⁷⁶ NC Education Lottery: Earnings for Education. Available at <https://www.nclottery.com/Education>.
- ⁷⁷ NC Education Lottery History of Lottery Fund Assignments. Available at https://nclottery.com/Content/Docs/History_of_Lottery_Fund_Assignment_FY2021.pdf
- ⁷⁸ National Education Association, Rankings of the States 2021 and Estimates of School Statistics 2022. Available at <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2020%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>.
- ⁷⁹ NC DPI, Highlights of the North Carolina School Budget, March 2022. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14619/download?attachment>

-
- ⁸⁰ 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>
- ⁸¹ Public School Forum of North Carolina, “Leandro v. State of NC: Background and Resources,” Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/leandro/>
- ⁸² Leandro v. State Case Summary. Available at <http://law.duke.edu/childdedlaw/schooldiscipline/attorneys/casesummaries/leandrovstate/>.
- ⁸³ Education Law Center, “North Carolina: Major Cases,” Available at [https://edlawcenter.org/litigation/states/northcarolina.html#:~:text=State%20\(Leandro%20II\)%2C%20the,Superior%20Court%20to%20monitor%20compliance.](https://edlawcenter.org/litigation/states/northcarolina.html#:~:text=State%20(Leandro%20II)%2C%20the,Superior%20Court%20to%20monitor%20compliance.)
- ⁸⁴ Gary T Henry and C. Kevin Fortner, “The Impact of the Disadvantaged Students Supplemental Fund on Middle School Student Performance in Pilot Districts,” Public Policy @ UNC, April 2009, https://publicpolicy.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/107/2014/02/Impact-of-MS-Math_DSSF_Apr2009_Final.pdf.
- ⁸⁵ Ann McColl, “Everything You Need to Know about the Leandro Litigation,” EducationNC, October 29, 2021, <https://www.ednc.org/leandro-litigation/>.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ Stancill, J. “Long-running debate over NC school funding”. The News and Observer. Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article163380363.html>.
- ⁸⁸ Leandro Court Order, January 2020 available at <https://www.ncjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/EdLaw-Leandro-File-stamped-Order-dated-1-21-2020.pdf>
- ⁸⁹ Leandro v. State. (June 15, 2020). Joint Report to the Court on Sound Basic Education for All: Fiscal Year 2021 Action Plan for North Carolina.
- ⁹⁰ State of NC v. Leandro, “Comprehensive Remedial Action Plan” March 2021. Available at https://www.ednc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Leandro-Comprehensive-Remedial-Plan-2021-28_03152021_final.pdf
- ⁹¹ Alex Granados, “Supreme Court to Hear Leandro Once Again,” EducationNC, March 24, 2022, <https://www.ednc.org/2022-03-22-supreme-court-to-hear-leandro-once-again/>.
- ⁹² Ballotpedia. “School Responses in NC to the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Available at [https://ballotpedia.org/School_responses_in_North_Carolina_to_the_coronavirus_\(COVID-19\)_pandemic](https://ballotpedia.org/School_responses_in_North_Carolina_to_the_coronavirus_(COVID-19)_pandemic)
- ⁹³ Differences in student scores were translated into months by McKinsey for more intuitive comparisons. The translation into months is based on a student’s reading level from one grade to the next, and the average growth usually gained within a traditional year of learning. Available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>
- ⁹⁴ Dorn, E., Hancock, B., & Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. “COVID-19 and education: The lingering effects of unfinished learning.” McKinsey and Company. Available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>
- ⁹⁵ Granados, A. & de Comarmond, N. “Test scores in: How did NC students do during COVID?” EdNC. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/2021-09-14-2020-21-test-scores-how-did-districts-fare/>
- ⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ⁹⁷ Office of Learning Recover and Acceleration. “Results: COVID-19 Impact Analysis of Lost Instructional Time.” Presentation to the State Board of Education. March 2022. Available at https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/NCSBE/2022/03/02/file_attachments/2091615/OLR%20HB196%20SBE%20March%202022.pdf
- ⁹⁸ NC DPI. “From the Board Room: April 2021.” Available at <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/NCSBE/bulletins/2cf17f7>
- ⁹⁹ NC DPI. “Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration.” Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/operation-polaris/office-learning-recovery-acceleration>
- ¹⁰⁰ Office of Learning Recover and Acceleration. “Results: COVID-19 Impact Analysis of Lost Instructional Time.” Presentation to the State Board of Education. March 2022. Available at https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/NCSBE/2022/03/02/file_attachments/2091615/OLR%20HB196%20SBE%20March%202022.pdf
- ¹⁰¹ Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.” Available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/elementary-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund/>
- ¹⁰² Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund.” Available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/governors-emergency-education-relief-fund/>
- ¹⁰³ Hunt Institute. “North Carolina Federal Relief Funding Landscape & Opportunities.” 2021. Available at <https://hunt-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/HI-NC-Federal-Relief-Landscape-042021.pdf>
- ¹⁰⁴ Surry County Schools. “Overview: Federal ESSER Grants.” Available at <https://www.surry.k12.nc.us/domain/3979>
- ¹⁰⁵ Murphey, Mary Kate. “School Board Reviews \$25M Relief Spending Plan.” The Pilot. Available at <https://archive.ph/FNEEx>

-
- ¹⁰⁶ WCPSS. "Pandemic Relief." Available at <https://www.wcpss.net/pandemicrelief>
- ¹⁰⁷ GEER-II Fact Sheet. Available at https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/210524-GEER-II-Fact-Sheet_final-1.pdf
- ¹⁰⁸ NC DIT. "The Digital Divide." Available at <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/digital-divide>
- ¹⁰⁹ Jennifer King Rice, Teacher Quality: Understanding the Effectiveness of Teacher Attributes (Economic Policy Institute, 2003).
- ¹¹⁰ 2020-2021 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina, Report to the North Carolina General Assembly. February 17th, 2022. Available at: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14558/download>
- ¹¹¹ Public School Forum. 2022 Local School Finance Study. Available at ncforum.org/lsfs
- ¹¹² Ibid.
- ¹¹³ Public School Full-Time Personnel, State Summary, School Year 2020-21. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:21::NO::>.
- ¹¹⁴ NC DPI 2020-21 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14558/download>
- ¹¹⁵ National Education Association. "Survey: Alarming Number of Educators May Soon Leave the Profession." February 2, 2022. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/survey-alarming-numbereducators-may-soon-leave-profession>.
- ¹¹⁶ North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2022 Results. Available at https://adinsurvey.azurewebsites.net/#/nctwcs/2022_NCTWCS
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁸ NC Educator Preparation Program Dashboard. Available at: https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/EPPDashboardHome/DashboardHome?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigi n=card_share_link
- ¹¹⁹ Darling-Hammond, L., Bastian, K. C., Berry, B., Carver-Thomas, D., Kini, T., Levin, S., & McDiarmid, G. W. (2022). Educator supply, demand, and quality in North Carolina: Current status and recommendations. Learning Policy Institute. Available at: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/leandro-educator-supply-demand-brief>
- ¹²⁰ Carlos Nevarez, Sarah Jouganatos, and J. Luke Wood, "Benefits of Teacher Diversity," Journal of School Administration Research and Development 4, no. 1 (2019): pp. 24-34, <https://doi.org/10.32674/jsard.v4i1.1940>.
- ¹²¹ 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>
- ¹²² Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education: Final Report and Recommendations. Available at: <https://www.belkfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/HI-DRIVE-Final-Report.pdf>
- ¹²³ Governor Cooper Establishes a Task Force to Improve Diversity and Inclusion in the Education Field. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/governor-cooper-establishes-task-force-to-improve-diversity-and-inclusion-in-education-field/>
- ¹²⁴ 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>.
- ¹²⁵ 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>.
- ¹²⁶ 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 2020-21. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_211.60.asp.
- ¹²⁷ A complete salary schedule can be viewed at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/13491/download?attachment>
- ¹²⁸ North Carolina House Bill 103, "Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2022." Available at: <https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewBillDocument/2021/55024/0/H103-PCCS20003-MLXR-9>
- ¹²⁹ Granados, A. "Average 5% pay raise for teachers, \$100 million for most counties for teacher supplements." EdNC. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/2021-11-15-average-5-pay-raise-for-teachers-100-million-for-low-wealth-county-teacher-supplements/>
- ¹³⁰ 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>
- ¹³¹ NC DPI, Alternative Preparation Pathways. Source: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educator-preparation/alternative-preparation-pathways>
- ¹³² NC DPI, Beginning the Process for Educator's License. Source: [https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educators-licensure/beginning-process-educators-license#initial-professional-license-\(ipl\)](https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educators-licensure/beginning-process-educators-license#initial-professional-license-(ipl))

- ¹³³ 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>
- ¹³⁴ Teach for America Eastern North Carolina. Available at <https://www.teachforamerica.org/where-we-work/eastern-north-carolina>
- ¹³⁵ Teach For America Charlotte-Piedmont Triad. Available at <https://www.teachforamerica.org/where-we-work/charlotte-piedmont-triad>
- ¹³⁶ Joint Legislative Oversight Committee Reports Received. Available at <http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/DocumentSites/browseDocSite.asp?nID=19&sFolderName=\Reports%20Received>.
- ¹³⁷ Joint Legislative Oversight Committee Reports Received. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Documents/19#Reports%20Received\2020%20Reports%20Received>
- ¹³⁸ NC Teaching Fellows Program Adds Three New Partner Institutions. UNC System Press Release, available at <https://www.northcarolina.edu/news/nc-teaching-fellows-program-adds-three-new-partner-institutions/#:~:text=CHAPEL%20HILL%2C%20N.C.%20%E2%80%93%20The%20North,North%20Carolina%20Teaching%20Fellows%20Program>.
- ¹³⁹ Advanced Teaching Roles in North Carolina. Available at: <http://best-nc.org/advancedroles/>
- ¹⁴⁰ NCPTS. Available at <https://www.nbpts.org/support/in-your-state/nc/>
- ¹⁴¹ NC DPI, National Board Certification. Available at https://www.nbpts.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Profiles_NC.pdf
- ¹⁴² NC DPI, National Board Certification. Source: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/national-board-certification/application-for-state-funding>
- ¹⁴³ Robert Joyce, “North Carolina Public School Teachers and the Status of Tenure,” Coates Canons NC Government Law, March 3rd, 2015. Available at <https://canons.sog.unc.edu/2015/03/north-carolina-public-school-teachers-and-the-status-of-tenure/>
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁵ NC DPI Statistical Profile. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:30::NO::>
- ¹⁴⁶ DPI. Average School Costs. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/6736/download>
- ¹⁴⁷ Richard Bostic & Johanna Reese, “Presentation to the North Carolina House Appropriations Committee on Capital: Public Schools Facility Needs,” Available at <https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/39462>
- ¹⁴⁸ NC DPI 2020-21 Facilities Needs Survey. Available at https://www.ednc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2109_BSOP-8_FNS-2020-Report-FINAL-2021-08-25_275569m3mz5fkgkdn0bgbxaj0rawln.pdf
- ¹⁴⁹ HigherEdWorks, “Bonds the Best Way to Address School Construction,” 2019. Available at <https://www.higheredworks.org/2019/03/bonds-school-construction/>
- ¹⁵⁰ Jeff Michael, “State Bonds Reflect N.C. History as Well as Today’s Outlook,” UNC Charlotte Urban Institute (UNC Charlotte, March 9, 2016), <https://ui.charlotte.edu/story/state-bonds-reflect-nc-history-well-today%E2%80%99s-outlook>.
- ¹⁵¹ NCSBA Legislative Update. Available at <https://www.ncsba.org/2019/02/ncsba-legislative-update-february-1-2019/>
- ¹⁵² DPI. “Annual Report for FY 2020-21.” Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/12941/download?attachment>
- ¹⁵³ NCSBA. “School Construction Capital Brief.” Available at <https://www.ncsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/School-Construction-Capital-Issue-Brief.pdf>
- ¹⁵⁴ DPI. “Annual Report for FY 2020-21.” Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/12941/download?attachment>
- ¹⁵⁵ 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>.
- ¹⁵⁶ Memo: Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund. Available at: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/NCSBE/bulletins/3013719>
- ¹⁵⁷ Nearly \$400 Million Awarded in Needs-Based School Construction Grants. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2022/05/03/nearly-400-million-awarded-needs-based-school-construction-grants#:~:text=The%20Needs%20Based%20Public%20School%20Capital%20Fund%20will%20create%20equitable,to%20college%20or%20the%20workplace.%E2%80%9D>
- ¹⁵⁸ Memo: Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund. Available at: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/NCSBE/bulletins/3013719>
- ¹⁵⁹ 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>.
- ¹⁶⁰ Session Law 2012, Senate Bill 187. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2011/Bills/Senate/PDF/S187v7.pdf>.
- ¹⁶¹ Minimum number of instructional days and hours in the school year, minimum number of hours per school day, and school start/finish dates, by state: 2020, National Center for Education Statistics. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab1_1-2020.asp
- ¹⁶² NC DPI. Legislation Summary for LEAs. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/accounting/calendar/>.

- ¹⁶³ Public School Forum of NC. (2022). Top Education Issues 2021-22: Measuring Progress. Available at <https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Top-Education-Issues-Final-21-22.pdf>.
- ¹⁶⁴ 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>
- ¹⁶⁵ Center for American Progress, Expanded Learning Time in Action. Available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2008/07/pdf/elt1.pdf>.
- ¹⁶⁶ Ramona K. Finnie et al., “Examining the Effectiveness of Year-Round School Calendars on Improving Educational Attainment Outcomes within the Context of Advancement of Health Equity: A Community Guide Systematic Review,” *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 25, no. 6 (2019): pp. 590-594, <https://doi.org/10.1097/phh.0000000000000860>.
- ¹⁶⁷ NC DPI, Block Scheduling in NC. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/researchandeval/survey>.
- ¹⁶⁸ 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.
- ¹⁶⁹ Background Brief: North Carolina 2021 Annual Testing Results. NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/12761/download?attachment>
- ¹⁷⁰ G.S. 115C-83.15.
- ¹⁷¹ “School Letter Grades and Achievement” National School Boards Association. Available at <https://www.nsba.org/ASBJ/2020/February/Grades-Achievement>.
- ¹⁷² Brian Stack, “Multibrief: The Debate over Grading and Ranking Public Schools,” *MultiBriefs*, March 27, 2017, <https://exclusive.multibriefs.com/content/the-debate-over-grading-and-ranking-public-schools/education>.
- ¹⁷³ Background Brief: North Carolina 2021 Annual Testing Results. NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/12761/download?attachment>
- ¹⁷⁴ Frequently Asked Questions: Impact of COVID-19 on 2021-22 Accountability Systems Required Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, United States Department of Education. Available at <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/DRAFT-Accountability-FAQ-12.15.pdf>
- ¹⁷⁵ WCNC. “North Carolina releases performance grades for the 2021-22 school year. Available at <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/education/north-carolina-school-test-results-covid-pandemic-learning-loss-charlotte-mecklenburg-education/275-01bfc066-ab17-4291-9032-0216f0eb4818>
- ¹⁷⁶ NCDPI “North Carolina School Performance Grades,” January, 2015. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/accountability/reporting/spgbckgrndpack15.pdf>
- ¹⁷⁷ Accountability Brief, NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/5706/open>
- ¹⁷⁸ Accountability Brief, NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/5706/open>
- ¹⁷⁹ Accountability Brief, NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/5706/open>.
- ¹⁸⁰ Mapping the 2018-19 school report cards. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/map/2019/10/mapping-the-2018-19-school-report-cards/>
- ¹⁸¹ 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
- ¹⁸² 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>
- ¹⁸³ 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/>.
- ¹⁸⁴ Mapping the 2018-19 school report cards. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/map/2019/10/mapping-the-2018-19-school-report-cards/>
- ¹⁸⁵ G.S. 115C-105.37(a).
- ¹⁸⁶ G.S. 115C-105.39A(a).
- ¹⁸⁷ Barbour, N. “Transforming Lowest Achieving Districts and Schools.” House Select Committee on Achievement School District presentation. January 27, 2016. Available at <https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/45138>
- ¹⁸⁸ Granados, A. “The War over the Innovative School District.” EdNC. November 7th, 2017. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/war-innovative-school-district/>
- ¹⁸⁹ Granados, A. “The End of an Experiment: The Innovative School District,” EdNC. January 13, 2022. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/2022-01-13-the-end-of-an-experiment-the-innovative-school-district/>

-
- ¹⁹⁰ NC DPI. “Restart Schools.” Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/district-and-regional-support/school-reform-models/restart-schools>
- ¹⁹¹ North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, 2018. NCDPI, Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bV9Fols2emglb7D1C1Dd2wNqLIMqroqZ/view>
- ¹⁹² Ibid.
- ¹⁹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁴ EVAAS Frequently Asked Questions, available at <https://static.battelleforkids.org/documents/hisd/EVAAS-Value-Added-FAQs-Final-2015-02-02.pdf>
- ¹⁹⁵ “Q&A: Teacher Legislated Performance Bonuses—LEAs and Other Public Schools,” Session Law 2017-57, 2018-5. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/7246/download>
- ¹⁹⁶ “Q&A: Advanced Course Teacher Legislated Bonuses,” Session Law 2021-18, SB 105, Section 7A.4. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/13879/download?attachment?attachment>
- ¹⁹⁷ Hammond, C. “‘Pay teachers based on experience’: NCAE speaks out against new pay proposal,” August 9th, 2022. News and Observer, Available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article264325106.html#storylink=cpy>
- ¹⁹⁸ Standard Course of Study. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/k-12-standards-curriculum-and-instruction/standard-course-study>
- ¹⁹⁹ Academic Standards. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards>
- ²⁰⁰ NC DPI. “North Carolina Standard Course of Study (SCOS).” Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/13948/open>
- ²⁰¹ Granados, A. “State Board finishes social studies standards process.” EdNC. July 2021. Available at [2021-07-12-state-board-finishes-social-studies-standards-process-but-changes-could-still-be-coming](https://www.ednc.org/2021-07-12-state-board-finishes-social-studies-standards-process-but-changes-could-still-be-coming)
- ²⁰² Brian Gordon, “NC Revises History Standards amid National Debate on Teaching America’s Past,” The Fayetteville Observer (The Fayetteville Observer, September 25, 2020), <https://www.fayobserver.com/story/news/2020/09/25/us-history-standards-revised-nc-schools-come-during-trump-criticism/3515732001/>.
- ²⁰³ T. Keung Hui, “Social Studies Standards Spark Fierce Debate in N.C.,” Education Week (Education Week, July 9, 2021), <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/proposed-social-studies-standards-spark-fierce-debate-in-n-c/2021/07>.
- ²⁰⁴ Jacey Fortin, “Critical Race Theory: A Brief History,” The New York Times (The New York Times, July 27, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-critical-race-theory.html>.
- ²⁰⁵ Alex Granados, “What Can N.C. Schools Say About America’s History with Racism?,” EducationNC, May 14, 2021, <https://www.ednc.org/2021-05-12-nc-house-bill-ensuring-dignity-and-nondiscrimination-racism/>.
- ²⁰⁶ North Carolina House Bill 324. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2021/H324>
- ²⁰⁷ T. Keung Hui, “NC Schoolboard Passes Strict Rules For Teachers About Race After Threat to Cut Funding,” News & Observer (News & Observer, October 4, 2021), <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article254657192.html>.
- ²⁰⁸ Anna Pogarcic, “NC Parents’ Bill of Rights Passes Senate,” EducationNC, June 2, 2022, <https://www.ednc.org/06012022-nc-parents-bill-of-rights-passes-senate/>.
- ²⁰⁹ Session Law 2021-8, Senate Bill 387. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/Senate/PDF/S387v4.pdf>
- ²¹⁰ Fofaria, R. “District Plans Impact How Teachers Feel About the LETRS Training,” EdNC. April 14, 2022. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/04-14-22-a-mixed-bag-for-letrs-district-plans-impact-how-teachers-feel-about-the-training/>
- ²¹¹ Report to the General Assembly—NC Read to Achieve Data, State Level Summary. NCDPI, Available at https://www.ednc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2020-2021-RTA-JLEOC-Report-_FINAL.pdf
- ²¹² T. Keung Hui, “NC Reading Scores Drop for Youngest Students amid Pandemic | Raleigh ...,” News & Observer (News & Observer, October 7, 2021), <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article254798937.html>.
- ²¹³ 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>
- ²¹⁴ The Carolina Journal. “Schools must post curriculum online in bill moving through legislature.” May 7, 2021. Available at <https://www.carolinajournal.com/schools-must-post-curriculum-online-in-bill-moving-through-legislature/>
- ²¹⁵ Granados, A. “Parents’ Bill of Rights passed Senate committee.” EdNC. June 2022. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/2022-05-25-senate-education-committee-passes-parents-bill-of-rights-legislation/>
- ²¹⁶ Ibid.
- ²¹⁷ Pogarcic, A. “NC Parents’ Bill of Rights passes Senate.” EdNC. June 1, 2022. Available at <https://www.ednc.org/06012022-nc-parents-bill-of-rights-passes-senate/>

-
- ²¹⁸ Ibid.
- ²¹⁹ 2021 North Carolina Private School Statistics. Available at <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/media/7796/download>
- ²²⁰ 2020-2021 Charter School Membership by Region. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/13053/download?attachment>
- ²²¹ 2021 North Carolina Home School Statistical Summary. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/20-21-Home-School-Annual-Report.pdf>
- ²²² LEA Final Pupils by Grade, NC DPI Statistical Profile. Available at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:11:::NO::>
- ²²³ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Available at <https://data.publiccharters.org/>.
- ²²⁴ Charlotte Observer, "NC education officials: Charter schools must disclose salaries." Available at <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article9113006.html>.
- ²²⁵ Session Law 2013, Senate Bill 337. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/Senate/PDF/S337v9.pdf>.
- ²²⁶ NC DPI. "Legislation/Policy." Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/alternative-choices/charter-schools/legislationpolicy>
- ²²⁷ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, National Charter School Facts. Available at <https://data.publiccharters.org/>
- ²²⁸ Session Law 1995-1996, House Bill 955. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/1995/Bills/House/PDF/H955v4.pdf>.
- ²²⁹ Session Law 2011, Senate Bill 8. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2011/Bills/Senate/PDF/S8v8.pdf>.
- ²³⁰ NC DPI: 2021 Annual Charter School Report. Available at <https://npr.brightspotcdn.com/31/d2/525dbb99457aa7b8e3a613c2ce42/charter-school-annual-report-2021.pdf>
- ²³¹ NC DPI: 2021 Annual Charter School Report. Available at <https://npr.brightspotcdn.com/31/d2/525dbb99457aa7b8e3a613c2ce42/charter-school-annual-report-2021.pdf>
- ²³² NC DPI, Charter School Application Resource Manual. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/charterschools/applications/2020-application-resource-manual-ocs.pdf>.
- ²³³ Session Law 2015, House Bill 334. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/PDF/H334v6.pdf>.
- ²³⁴ Session Law 2018-3, House Bill 514. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H514v7.pdf>.
- ²³⁵ Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) (2015). Online Charter School Study 2015.
- ²³⁶ 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/>
- ²³⁷ Session Law 2016-94, Section 11.6. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/sessions/2015/bills/house/html/h1030v8.html>.
- ²³⁸ Public Schools First, The Facts on Lab Schools. Available at <https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-on-lab-schools/>.
- ²³⁹ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School? Available at <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/2>.
- ²⁴⁰ National Center for Education Statistics. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_216.20.asp.
- ²⁴¹ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School? Available at <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/what-is-a-magnet-school>.
- ²⁴² Public School Review, What is a Magnet School?
- ²⁴³ U.S. Department of Education, Magnet School Assistance Program. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/magnet/index.html>.
- ²⁴⁴ Public School Review, North Carolina Magnet Public Schools. Available at http://www.publicschoolreview.com/state_magnets/stateid/NC.
- ²⁴⁵ Public School Review, North Carolina Magnet Public Schools.
- ²⁴⁶ Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, School Choice FAQs. Available at http://www.edchoice.org/school_choice_faqs/are-participating-private-schools-held-accountable/.
- ²⁴⁷ NC Department of Administration, 2021 North Carolina Private Schools Statistics. Available at <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/media/7796/download>
- ²⁴⁸ Average Cost of Private School, Education Data Initiative. Available at <https://educationdata.org/average-cost-of-private-school#north-carolina>
- ²⁴⁹ Session Law 2013, Senate Bill 402. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/Senate/PDF/S402v7.pdf>.

-
- ²⁵⁰ News & Observer, NC Supreme Court upholds school voucher program. Available at <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article28437271.html>.
- ²⁵¹ Ibid.
- ²⁵² EdNC. "At long last, a budget. What does it mean for K-12 and early childhood education?" Available at <https://www.ednc.org/12-13-2021-at-long-last-a-budget-what-does-it-mean-for-education/>
- ²⁵³ North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority. Opportunity Scholarship Summary of Data. Available at <https://www.ncseaa.edu/k12/opportunity/opportunity-srd/opportunity-scholarship-summary-of-data/>
- ²⁵⁴ "The Facts on School Vouchers," Public Schools First NC, December 10, 2021, <https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-about-school-vouchers/>.
- ²⁵⁵ Session Law 2016-94. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/sessions/2015/bills/house/html/h1030v8.html>.
- ²⁵⁶ 2021 NC Home School Statistical Summary. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/ncdoa/20-21-Home-School-Annual-Report.pdf>
- ²⁵⁷ 2021 NC Home School Statistical Summary.
- ²⁵⁸ North Carolina General Statutes, Article 39. Available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_115C/Article_39.html
- ²⁵⁹ Session Law 2013, Senate Bill 189. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/Senate/PDF/S189v3.pdf>.
- ²⁶⁰ North Carolinians for Home Educations (NCHE), 2019 Statistics. Available at <https://www.nche.com/stats/>.
- ²⁶¹ Ballotpedia. School responses in North Carolina to the coronavirus pandemic. Available at [https://ballotpedia.org/School_responses_in_North_Carolina_to_the_coronavirus_\(COVID-19\)_pandemic](https://ballotpedia.org/School_responses_in_North_Carolina_to_the_coronavirus_(COVID-19)_pandemic)
- ²⁶² Morrison, S. "These are the legal requirements for remote learning." WCNC. Jan. 2022. Available at <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/education/end-of-snow-days-virtual-remote-learning-school-weather/275-295702a0-4aad-49b6-880a-3c5a940dfb2d>
- ²⁶³ Session Law 2016-94, House Bill 1030 Section 8.23. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/sessionlaws/html/2015-2016/sl2016-94.html>.
- ²⁶⁴ The Homework Gap in North Carolina, A Pilot Study of K-12 Households, NCDIT and The Friday Institute. Available at <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/data-reports/homework-gap-north-carolina-report>
- ²⁶⁵ The Homework Gap in North Carolina, A Pilot Study of K-12 Households, NCDIT and The Friday Institute. Available at <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/data-reports/homework-gap-north-carolina-report>
- ²⁶⁶ Spotlight On: Rural Students in North Carolina (Updated for 2021), BestNC. Available at <https://www.bestnc.org/spotlightonrural2020/>
- ²⁶⁷ Digital Divide: An Overview, Public Schools First NC. Available at <https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-on-child-poverty/>
- ²⁶⁸ NCDIT. Governor Cooper Establishes Nation's First Office of Digital Equity and Literacy. July 2021. Available at <https://it.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2021/07/01/governor-cooper-establishes-nations-first-office-digital-equity-and-literacy>
- ²⁶⁹ 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>.
- ²⁷⁰ Federal Communications Commission, Summary of the Second E-Rate Modernization Order. Available at <https://www.fcc.gov/general/summary-second-e-rate-modernization-order>.
- ²⁷¹ Federal Communications Commission, Children's Internet Protection Act. Available at <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>.
- ²⁷² 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>.
- ²⁷³ Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Education Stabilization Fund Discretionary Grants. Available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/states-highest-coronavirus-burden/>
- ²⁷⁴ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>
- ²⁷⁵ 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
- ²⁷⁶ Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina Digital Learning Plan. Available at <https://ncdli.fi.ncsu.edu/dlplan/docs/dlplan.pdf>.
- ²⁷⁷ The Friday Institute, The North Carolina Digital Learning Plan: Policy Recommendations and Action Steps. Available at: <https://www-data.fi.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/15125436/FIEDBriefNCDLPreCs.pdf>
- ²⁷⁸ DTL Standards. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/digital-teaching-and-learning/dtl-standards>

- 279 North Carolina Virtual Public School 2020-21 Annual Report. Available at <https://ncvps.org/annual-report-2020-21/>
- 280 Learn and Earn Online: A National Model of Innovation in Prekindergarten-20 Education. Available at: <https://www.ncleg.net/documents/sites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/Archives/2009%20Reports%20Received/Learn%20and%20Earn%20Online%20Sites.pdf>.
- 281 North Carolina Virtual Public School 2020-21 Annual Report.
- 282 NC School of Science and Mathematics Online. Available at <http://www.ncssm.edu/online-program>.
- 283 NC School of Science and Math, Online Profile 2020-21. Available at <https://www.ncssm.edu/uploads/files/403006858653683631-online-profile-2021-final.pdf>
- 284 NC School Safety Update 2022. NC Center for Safer Schools. Available at <https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/8638>
- 285 Gun Violence in North Carolina. Everytown. Available at <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Gun-Violence-in-North-Carolina-2.9.2021.pdf>
- 286 NC DPI, Consolidated Data Report 2020-21. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14171/open>
- 287 Fisher, M. & Keller, J. "Why does the US have so many mass shootings? Research is clear: Guns." New York Times. 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/world/americas/mass-shootings-us-international.html>
- 288 Fisher, M. & Keller, J. "Why does the US have so many mass shootings? Research is clear: Guns." New York Times. 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/world/americas/mass-shootings-us-international.html>
- 289 Sandy Hook Promise. 16 Facts About Gun Violence. Available at <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/gun-violence/16-facts-about-gun-violence-and-school-shootings/>
- 290 BBC News. "March For Our Lives: Tens of thousands rally for stricter US gun laws." June 2022. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61772039>
- 291 Clyde, D. & Miranda, S. "Biden signs gun safety bill into law." NPR. June 25, 2022. Available at <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/25/1107626030/biden-signs-gun-safety-law>
- 292 Molla, R. "Polling is Clear: Americans Want Gun Control." June 2022. Available at <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23141651/gun-control-american-approval-polling>
- 293 Balingit, M. "Republicans, reluctant to pass gun regulations, push arming teachers." Washington Post. May 25, 2022. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/05/25/harden-schools-arm-teachers-ualde/>
- 294 King, D. "Why more states are arming teachers on campus." The Carolina Journal. June 8 2022. Available at <https://www.carolinajournal.com/why-more-states-are-arming-teachers-on-campus/>
- 295 King, D. "Why more states are arming teachers on campus." The Carolina Journal. June 8 2022. Available at <https://www.carolinajournal.com/why-more-states-are-arming-teachers-on-campus/>
- 296 School Resource Officers. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools/school-resource-officers>
- 297 Ellis, N. "Experts worry about a heavier police presence in schools." CNN. June 9, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/07/us/school-officers-impact-on-black-students/index.html>
- 298 Ellis, N. "Experts worry about a heavier police presence in schools." CNN. June 9, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/07/us/school-officers-impact-on-black-students/index.html>
- 299 Galvan, A. "Fight for police-free schools has been years in the making." AP News. July 25th, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/us-news-ap-top-news-wisconsin-az-state-wire-racial-injustice-bc5b750085a89e03e132d7d3dda09a99>
- 300 Galvan, A. "Fight for police-free schools has been years in the making." AP News. July 25th, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/us-news-ap-top-news-wisconsin-az-state-wire-racial-injustice-bc5b750085a89e03e132d7d3dda09a99>
- 301 Cox, J.W. and Rich, S. "Scarred by School Shootings." Washington Post. March 25th, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/us-school-shootings-history/>
- 302 2018 North Carolina School Resource Officer Survey. Available at <https://files.nc.gov/dpi/documents/cfss/law-enforcement/2018-srosurvey.pdf>
- 303 Morrison, S. Several Charlotte-area school districts qualify to get more state funding for school resource officers. WCNC. July 15, 2022. Available at <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/education/charlotte-area-school-districts-qualify-state-funding-school-resource-officers/275-11107563-59ae-4b60-a5d3-04e71affcbf8>
- 304 Session Law 1993, Senate Bill 429. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/1993/Bills/Senate/PDF/S429v1.pdf>.
- 305 Session Law 2009, Senate Bill 526. Available at <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/HTML/S526v5.html>.
- 306 Center for Safer Schools. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools>

³⁰⁷ N.C. Const. § 115C-47.

Available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115c/GS_115c-47.pdf

³⁰⁸ First Things First. "The First Five Years." Available at <https://files.firstthingsfirst.org/why-early-childhood-matters/the-first-five-years#:~:text=90%25%20of%20a%20Child's%20Brain%20Develops%20By%20Age%205&text=At%20birth%2C%20the%20average%20baby's,full%20grown%20E2%80%93%20by%20age%205.>

³⁰⁹ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. Available at <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>.

³¹⁰ 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>.

³¹¹ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child.

³¹² Perry Preschool Study, Heckman & Masterov.

³¹³ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child.

³¹⁴ NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, Monthly Statistical Detail Report - May 2022. Available at https://ncchildcare.ncdhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/S/statistical_detail_report_may_2022.pdf?ver=aMdsfkPCecw1NRxFRwwVUQ%3d%3d

³¹⁵ North Carolina Infant and Toddler Program Eligibility. Available at <https://beearly.nc.gov/index.php/families/eligible>

³¹⁶ NC Early Childhood Foundation. Available at <https://buildthefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Early-Learning-in-North-Carolina-Program-Descriptions.pdf>

³¹⁷ NC Early Childhood Foundation. Available at <https://buildthefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Early-Learning-in-North-Carolina-Program-Descriptions.pdf>

³¹⁸ NC DPI Exceptional Children Division. Available at <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/finance-grants/applications/developmental-day-center-program>.

³¹⁹ NC Division of Child Development and Early Education

³²⁰ UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. "Effects of the NC Pre-K Program." Available at <https://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/reports-and-policy-briefs/NC%20Pre-K%20Eval%202017-18%20Exec%20sum.pdf>

³²¹ 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>.

³²² myFutureNC. "NC Pre-K Enrollment." Available at <https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/academic-readiness/nc-pre-k-enrollment/>

³²³ Smart Start FAQs, Available at <https://www.smartstart.org/about-smart-start/faqs/>

³²⁴ North Carolina Early Learning Network. Available at <http://nceln.fpg.unc.edu/>.

³²⁵ 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>

³²⁶ Think Babies NC. Available at <https://buildthefoundation.org/initiative/think-babies-nc/>

³²⁷ The State of Preschool 2019 North Carolina State Profile. Available at http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/North_Carolina_YB2019.pdf

³²⁸ North Carolina Child Health Report Card 2021. Available at <https://ncchild.org/publications/2021-child-health-report-card/>

³²⁹ NC Department of Public Instruction School Mental Health Initiative. Available at <https://www.livebinders.com/b/2435283#anchor>

³³⁰ Childress, G. "State Board of Education hears sobering details of the pandemic's impact on youth mental health," NC Policy Watch, June 8th, 2022. Available at <https://ncpolicywatch.com/2022/06/08/state-board-of-education-hears-sobering-details-of-the-pandemics-impact-on-youth-mental-health/>

³³¹ North Carolina Child Health Report Card 2019. Available at https://ncchild.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-NCreportcard-FINAL_low.pdf

³³² CDC. "New CDC data illuminate youth mental health threats during the COVID-19 pandemic." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0331-youth-mental-health-covid-19.html>

³³³ Sciaraffa, Mary A., Paula D. Zeanah, and Charles H. Zeanah. "Understanding and promoting resilience in the context of adverse childhood experiences." Early childhood education journal 46. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11320-018-0014-0>

-
- ³³⁴ Hopeful Futures Campaign. “America’s School Mental Health Report Card. February 2022. https://hopefulfutures.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/FINAL-EDITS-Master_022322.pdf
- ³³⁵ Session Law 2020-7, Senate Bill 426. Available at <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/Senate/PDF/S476v6.pdf>
- ³³⁶ School Mental Health Policy. NCDPI. Available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/programs-and-initiatives/nc-healthy-schools/school-mental-health-policy>
- ³³⁷ Every Child NC. Leandro Plan. Available at <https://everychildnc.org/leandro-plan/>
- ³³⁸ Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Bremner, J. D., Walker, J. D., Whitfield, C., Perry, B. D., Dube, S. R., & Giles, W. H. (2006). The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood. A convergence of evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology. *European archives of psychiatry and clinical neuroscience*, 256(3), 174–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-005-0624-4>
- ³³⁹ De Bellis & Zisk, 2014
- ³⁴⁰ Bethell et al., 2014; Perfect et al., 2016; Porsche et al., 2016
- ³⁴¹ America’s Health Ranking, Adverse Childhood Experiences 2021. Available at https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/ACEs_8/state/NC.
- ³⁴² The NC Center for Resilience and Learning NC Resilience and Learning Project. Available at <https://resilienceandlearning.org/https://www.ncforum.org/resilience/>
- ³⁴³ Afterschool Alliance, 2022 NC Afterschool Fact Sheet. Available at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/challenge-2022/NC-Afterschool-Fact-Sheet-2022.pdf>
- ³⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁴⁵ Afterschool Alliance, America after 3PM. Available at <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2020/National-AA3PM-2020-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- ³⁴⁶ Afterschool Alliance, America after 3PM. Available at <http://graphicacy-aa3-dashboard.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/geo/North%20Carolina/overview>
- ³⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁴⁹ Afterschool Alliance, Afterschool in North Carolina Available at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=NC>
- ³⁵⁰ Afterschool Alliance, America after 3PM. Available at <http://graphicacy-aa3-dashboard.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/geo/North%20Carolina/overview>
- ³⁵¹ Ibid.
- ³⁵² 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.
- ³⁵³ 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.
- ³⁵⁴ Afterschool Alliance, Afterschool in North Carolina. Available at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=NC>.
- ³⁵⁵ North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs. Available at www.ncafterschool.org