



2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Information

Rod Powell

Running for NC Senate 44

Candidate Responses

Q1: *In your view, what is the purpose and value of public education for North Carolina?*

A1: Public education is supposed to give every child a fair chance, no matter where they live or how much money their family has. Strong public schools prepare students for college, work, military service, and citizenship.

I taught in North Carolina public schools for 30 years. I saw how much schools can change a child's life. Teachers do more than teach a subject. They encourage students, guide them, and sometimes provide the most stable part of that child's day.

Public schools are also important to the whole community. Businesses need educated workers. Families need good schools. North Carolina can't move forward if we leave children and rural communities behind.

Q2: *Do you believe that the state is adequately funding our public schools? What changes, if any, would you propose related to funding for education in order to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a sound basic education?*

A2: No. North Carolina isn't adequately funding its public schools. Too many districts are struggling to hire and keep teachers, support staff, bus drivers, counselors, and other workers. Rural schools often have an even harder time.

I would support better teacher and staff pay, restored pay for advanced degrees, strong National Board supplements, more classroom resources, better school buildings, and more career and technical education.

We also need to stop treating public school funding like an afterthought while more money is sent to private school vouchers. Our first duty is to make sure every public school can provide a sound basic education.



2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Q3: *As a member of the North Carolina General Assembly, what policies would you champion in order to ensure that all students have access to a qualified, diverse, dedicated educator workforce?*

A3: We have to make teaching a job people can afford to enter and stay in. That starts with better pay, but it also means respect, support, and decent working conditions.

I would support stronger beginning teacher mentoring, better pay for classified staff, affordable health coverage, and fewer unnecessary reports and paperwork. Teachers need more time to teach and less time dealing with rules written by people who haven't worked in a classroom.

We should also work with colleges and universities to recruit more teachers from the communities they will serve. Students benefit when they see educators from different backgrounds and when teachers understand the families and communities around the school.

Q4: *Do you support the recent expansion of North Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship voucher program? What accountability measures should private schools receiving public tax dollars be held to?*

A4: No. I don't support expanding private school vouchers while our public schools are still underfunded.

Public money should come with public accountability. Any private school receiving taxpayer dollars should be required to report how the money is spent, show student outcomes, follow basic nondiscrimination rules, and meet clear academic and financial standards.

Public schools have to answer to taxpayers, parents, school boards, and the state. Private schools taking public money should not get a free pass.

Q5: *What do you think the General Assembly should do to ensure schools are equipped to address student well-being and mental health needs?*



2026 Candidate Questionnaire

A5: Schools need more counselors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and partnerships with local mental health providers. Too many students are waiting too long for help.

I saw students come to school carrying problems that made it hard to learn. Hunger, family trouble, anxiety, grief, and unstable housing all show up in the classroom.

Supporting student mental health is part of education. It means smaller workloads for counselors, better access to care, safer schools, and enough staff to notice when a child is struggling before the situation becomes a crisis.
