

NC EDUCATION TOOLKIT



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit examines the issues with privatizing education, and the concurrent devaluation of teachers in our public school system, who serve 90% of our children. While there is room for parental choice in education, creating parallel systems where one operates at the expense of the other is not a good solution.

Since the establishment of the nation's first public school in 1635, [our country has provided for the education of our children as a public endeavor](#) to be shared by all citizens. That's why early [state constitutions](#), including North Carolina's, set up a public education system, and why the Land Ordinance of 1785 provided for public school financing in our country's new territories.

Early advocates for public schools such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and George Washington all agreed public education was essential for the wellbeing of our nation and the health of our democracy.

At the heart of this issue is the North Carolina [Leandro case](#), which started in 1994 when families from five low-wealth counties sued the state, claiming it wasn't providing their children with the same educational opportunities as students in better-off districts. In 1997, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the case that the state's children have a fundamental right to the "opportunity to receive a sound basic education" provided by the state.

However, the [education landscape is changing in NC](#) and across the country. There are those who believe that education should be a marketplace where each parent competes for "the best deal" for their own child, and where public schools, charter schools, voucher schools, private schools and online virtual schools all vvy for children and tax dollars, with little government oversight or regulation. Others believe that this approach will lead to more segregation, fraud, special interest influence and the decline in the quality of education in our state.

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SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Change starts with you. Being willing to talk to your friends, neighbors and family about these issues is the most important action step you can make. Share this toolkit and its message broadly!

We invite you to send us your thoughts, comments and perspectives on North Carolina's education system. Post a note or video to our [public Facebook page](#) or e-mail account: strongernorthcarolina@gmail.com

And follow us for more ways to engage:



PATH TO PRIVATIZATION

"In any policy discussion of education, the goal should be to provide the best possible system for all children, given the resources available. While alternatives to public schools may provide better options for some children, on the whole charter and voucher schools perform no better than the public school system, and often worse. At the same time, they have a negative fiscal impact on existing public schools and are creating a parallel school system that duplicates services and costs. The idea that funds should follow the child (portability) will seriously reduce public school services. [Let's stop draining our public schools and work together to strengthen them.](#)"

Network for Public Education

North Carolina is not alone in lawmaker attempts to defund public education. The same forces at play in NC are part of a [coordinated effort across the US](#) by organizations that seek a more corporate kind of control over education, advertised as school choice. [Hundreds of thousands](#) of families are participating in school choice programs across the country - at the expense of public school systems' critically-needed funds, and in some cases covering private school tuition for students whose parents are able and willing to pay.

The American Legislative Exchange Council ([ALEC](#)) is funded by an array of big-money interests such as the Koch Brothers, the DeVos family, and corporations like K12 Inc., a for-profit online private school founded by [Mike Milken](#). ALEC writes legislation that benefits these and other donors, while [undermining teacher's unions](#). ALEC then gives this legislation to state politicians to introduce in session.

From 2011 to the present, much of the education legislation introduced in NC's General Assembly has had ALEC's fingerprints all over it, despite [polls showing](#) Americans' continued support for public schools. August 2011 saw the NCGA lifting limits on charter schools, a pet project of [Art Pope](#), a big [moneeyed player](#) in North Carolina's political sphere.

Beginning in 2014, NC families could [use vouchers](#) for homeschooling programs or tuition at private schools. That same year, businessman Bob Luddy, founder of private school Thales Academy, [spent \\$315K](#) to elect lawmakers to the NC House and Senate who would favor his interests. When some representatives didn't comply with his wishes, he [threatened to withhold](#) \$25K from the House Republican Caucus. When Republican Rep. Nelson Dollar included money for teachers' assistants in the proposed 2016 budget, [Luddy spent \\$40K](#) to fund an organization to defeat Dollar. So even when there is bipartisan support for public schools, big money steps in to strong arm legislators into policy that benefits their private, corporate interests.

It is no surprise, then, given legislation to fund private schools and to increase numbers of charter schools, that attendance projections and funding for traditional public schools has decreased. [Enrollment in NC charter schools has doubled from 45,000 to 90,000 in the last 5 years](#). This is noteworthy when you consider the significant profits made by the companies managing these charter schools, and their motivations. Case in point is Baker Mitchell, a politically active North Carolina businessman who sees [millions of public education dollars](#) flow through his chain of four *non-profit* charter schools to *for-profit* companies he controls.

PRIVATIZATION PRIMER

“The rapid expansion of funding and lowering regulations for charter schools, virtual charter schools and school vouchers may leave few truly public schools. North Carolina has created multiple opportunities for families who can navigate private school admissions and charter lotteries to leave public schools. Children who are harder to serve, whose families are not capable of advocating for them, and who are the most expensive to educate may be the only students left in traditional public schools. [Enriching private interests at the expense of our neediest children is the natural outcome of the privatization movement, and it is undermining our democracy.](#)”

WHAT PRIVATIZERS BELIEVE

- Money should follow the child, also known as portability.
- Portability does not hurt public schools.
- Parents should have the choice to vote with their feet.
- School governance should be corporate.

WHAT PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATES BELIEVE

- Children should not have a price tag.
- Portability costs public school students services and programs.
- Parents should have a voice in schools that serve the whole community.
- Communities should govern schools by electing school boards.

What usually follows the “privatizing” of our schools is the withdrawal of tax dollars meant to support the public schools, leaving some of the most vulnerable students with even less resources they need to succeed. Rather than diverting tax dollars away from public schools, we should adequately fund our schools so they can have smaller class sizes, more specialized resources for student needs, and more educational opportunities to meet the high expectations of parents.

The trend evokes a clear set of priorities that should concern all taxpayers. Why? Because North Carolina is moving away from funding our system of public schools toward private operators who are profiteering at the expense of public schools. Taxpayer dollars are being funneled to programs that are shielded from accountability and transparency measures that taxpayer-funded programs should require.

When looking at the bigger picture it becomes easier to connect the dots. Big corporate donors support legislators who will pass bills enabling their profit source. In addition, legislators are able to control the lifeline of public schools through the budget choices they make, the board members that are elected and the structure of the educational system itself. By underfunding public schools, promoting choice options which lead to segregation and designating schools as failures through a weak proficiency grading scale, we could see the end of the public education system as we know it within the decade.

We’ve gone from spending 3% of our public school budget for initiatives allowing companies to profit to nearly 7% today.

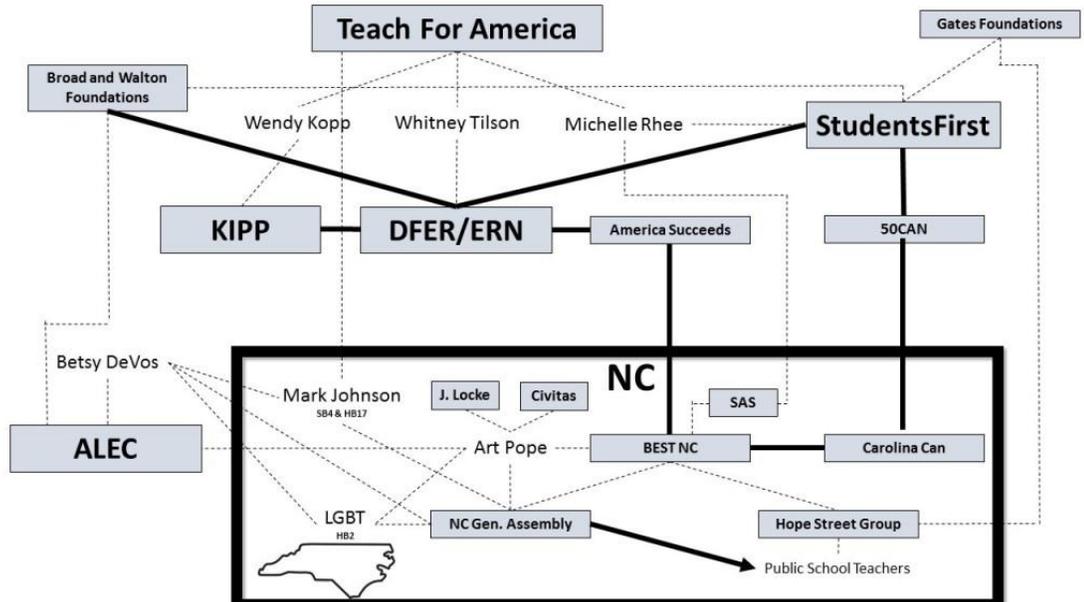
[Learn More About Vouchers, Education Savings Accounts, Innovative School Districts and Charters](#)

	Concerns	More Resources
<p>Vouchers</p> <p>Provide tuition and fee reimbursement up to \$4200 per year, per student, at participating nonpublic schools. As of 2016/17, 5,611 students are participating across 437 approved schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vouchers will drain funding from underfunded public schools. The 2017/18 NC state budget allotted \$44.8M for this program, with up to \$900M total over the next ten years, without any requirement for performance standards. • No evidence of improved performance over public schools. • The voucher amount does not cover the full cost of most private schools, leaving students to attend the lowest cost and lowest quality private schools. • Teachers and staff may be uncertified. • No mandates for state accreditation. • Participating schools may discriminate in their enrollment practices. • No criminal background checks required for staff, except the highest ranking member. • Minimum curriculum requirements. • No accountability or responsibility for student achievement. Only schools with >25 students need to release test scores. This accounts for just 10% of participating schools in 2015/16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismal Voucher Results Surprise Researchers • NC Justice Fact Sheet on the Voucher program • Myths & Facts About Vouchers • Duke Law Report on Vouchers • Democrats pair support of vouchers with calls for accountability • Republican voucher advocate now opposes program
<p>Personal Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)</p> <p>New for 2017, ESA's provide parents of children with disabilities a debit card account with \$9,000 to pay for educational expenses. Total fund amount for 2017/18 is \$3Million.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands opportunities for fraud beyond typical voucher programs, as funds are provided directly to parents with little oversight of spending. • Diverts funding from traditional public schools, with particularly negative impacts for public school programs for disabled students as they must continue to maintain their fixed costs for a smaller number of disabled students. • Creates an annual drain on the state education budget. • Lacks accountability measures which would allow parents to make informed educational choices for their children. • Allows families to “double dip”, receiving ESA funds as well as funds through the Disabilities Grant program which is not being fully utilized. If the existing program is not at capacity, the question remains as to why guaranteed funding of ESA's has been approved. • Opens up the opportunity to expand the program beyond students with disabilities, as has been seen in other states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Facts on Education Savings Accounts • Even Texas votes down ESA program • SB603 is a poorly introduced piece of legislation • Network For Public Education Toolkit on ESA's • Republican Talking Points for Supporting ESA's • The Jeb Bush group ExcelinEd, outlines goal of ESA's to cover every child as Nevada now does

<p>NC Innovative School District -</p> <p>In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly established in law an Achievement School District (HB1080).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This effort, now renamed in state statute (G.S. 115C-75.6) as the North Carolina Innovative School District (ISD), will seek low performing public elementary schools to be operated under the Innovative School District (ISD) by qualified charter or education management organizations (CMO/EMO). • At issue are the results other states have seen (or not) from their experience with this type of program. After seven years of failed results, Tennessee is now scaling back their efforts with Achievement School Districts, choosing to allow the districts and community to provide more input on turning around the at risk schools. • Legislators in NC have not provided valid reasons as to why a program which has failed in other states will work here, simply stating that we will just make it work in NC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Takeover of Struggling Elem Schools • The Facts on NC's Innovative School Districts
<p>Charter Schools</p> <p>Publicly Funded but Privately Operated Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be managed by for-profit firms which also own the buildings, contents and curriculum with the ability to source contracts with affiliated businesses. • Operate as nonprofits with the potential for compliance violations on how their funding is spent and who may be profiting, as well as being prone to mismanagement and closures due to fiscal irresponsibility. • They can accept students from other districts which may pay more per student than the district in which the charter is located, leading charters to seek out students from those wealthier districts, leading to more segregated schools. • Charters are free of most state regulations and curriculum requirements. • Only 50% of charter teachers have to be licensed. • With the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in NC now lifted, and an easier approval process to open charters, taxpayers have less and less control over their schools and how their tax dollars are spent. • The rules for evaluating charters were relaxed in 2016, making it harder for the State Board of Education to close underperforming charters. • If students leave a charter mid-year the school is not required to return any pro-rated funds to the district. In addition they are not required to fill the empty seat even if there is a waiting list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-branding Charter Schools as "Public Schools" • Concerns surrounding the fiscal responsibilities of charters • A list of NC Charter Schools which have closed since 1997 • White parents are using Charter Schools to Secede from the Education System • The Growing Segmentation of the Charter School Sector in North Carolina • NC Legislation facilitating the segregation of NC Public Schools • 2010 Report on Charter School Segregation • Online Charter Schools Fail to Meet Expectations • Quick Facts on Charter Schools • Charter School Population Doubles in North Carolina • Financial Transparency Different for Charters • Summary of the NAACP's call for Charter School Reform

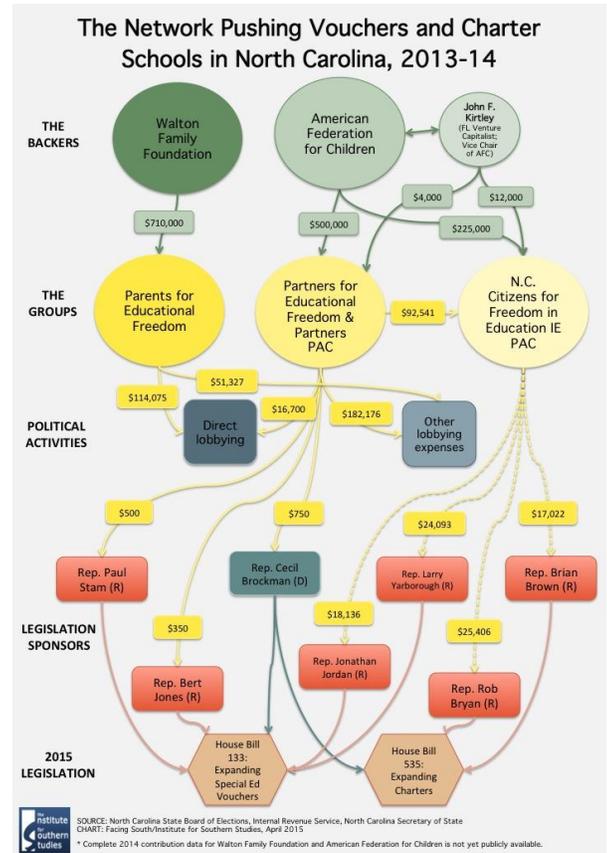
How Outside Money & Organizations Influence Our Elected Officials

Here is a diagram of the relationships between entities that many public school advocates deem as detrimental to our public school system. The box at the bottom represents the state of North Carolina. All of the other listed players are national. For an in-depth dive into these relationships [read here](#).



At the forefront of the push for “school choice” in N.C. is a constellation of tight-knit groups that together have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on state elections and lobbying in recent years. Many of the legislators who have benefited from the organizations’ political spending have sponsored bills that align closely with the groups’ agenda.

For additional information on how organizations influence our elected officials [click here](#) and read the full report by the Institute for Southern Studies to follow the money in NC politics.



EDUCATION FUNDING

EDUCATION FUNDING: LONG TERM ROI

In looking at the efforts to increase school choice and privatize our education system at the expense of public schools we must understand how public education is funded, as well as what legislation is being passed to affect this issue.

North Carolina's state support for education and other public investments, measured as a share of the state's economy, is [below its 40-year average](#) and this jeopardizes gains in student performance and the state's economic future. This abandonment of investment is a significant turnaround in a state that has long recognized the importance of education as a pathway to increased opportunity for individuals and a more competitive state economy.

[The relationship between education spending and student achievement takes time to develop.](#) Benefits from investments made in a particular period often are not realized until years later. For example, spending on early childhood education could be a contributing factor to increasing graduation rates, which would take more than a decade to become evident. The instructional skills of classroom teachers are likely to improve as a result of ongoing professional development training, but the benefits of such training – more effective classroom teaching – will likely accrue to students taught in the years ahead. Teacher assistants can help improve reading and math performance in later years. The same is true for investments in such resources as up-to-date textbooks, computers and other instructional supplies.

The lag time involved in assessing and confirming long-term benefits of education spending could help explain why North Carolina's student achievement in particular areas, such as the high school graduation rate, has actually improved at the same time schools have seen state funding cuts. The state is now reaping the benefits of investments in previous years – the [graduation rate has steadily improved](#), with the percentage of ninth graders who graduated on time increasing to 86.5% in 2016 from 73% in 2012 from 69.5% in 2007.

This lag time should also be considered when looking at the long term effects of education related legislation. Laws passed now which undermine public education and teacher availability will affect the capabilities of our state's children for decades to come.

North Carolina's teachers and students are working hard and making steady progress overall despite the underfunding and the impact of persistent poverty. Closing the gap between our academically successful students and those who fail to meet their academic expectations requires more than increasing school-based funding. Links between low performing schools and the % of low income families within is clear. It will take a systematic attack on racism and classism within our educational system and our society. Just like other issues mentioned above, it will take time to turn around the outcomes for many of our children and their families.

STATE AND DISTRICT FUNDING

While North Carolina constitutionally guarantees the right of every child to a public education, public policy and statutes assign the state and local districts different roles in making that constitutional right a reality. **The state pays for operational costs, such as teacher salaries, but it is the counties, rich and poor, large and small alike, who must fund facilities.** As a result, charter schools are often seen as a viable alternative in [places that experience rapid population growth](#) or in poorer counties, whose population growth is not tied to enough of an increase in tax revenue to make new construction possible. Parents losing patience or confidence or those seeking a segregated education often flee the public school system. This just burdens even further the public schools struggling to succeed with limited funds.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- North Carolina’s history of state responsibility for public schools dates back to the Great Depression.
- North Carolina ranks high in terms of the share of school funding coming from the state because the legal responsibility for funding school operating costs resides with the state.
- The share of total school funding coming from the state does not reflect the adequacy of school funding.

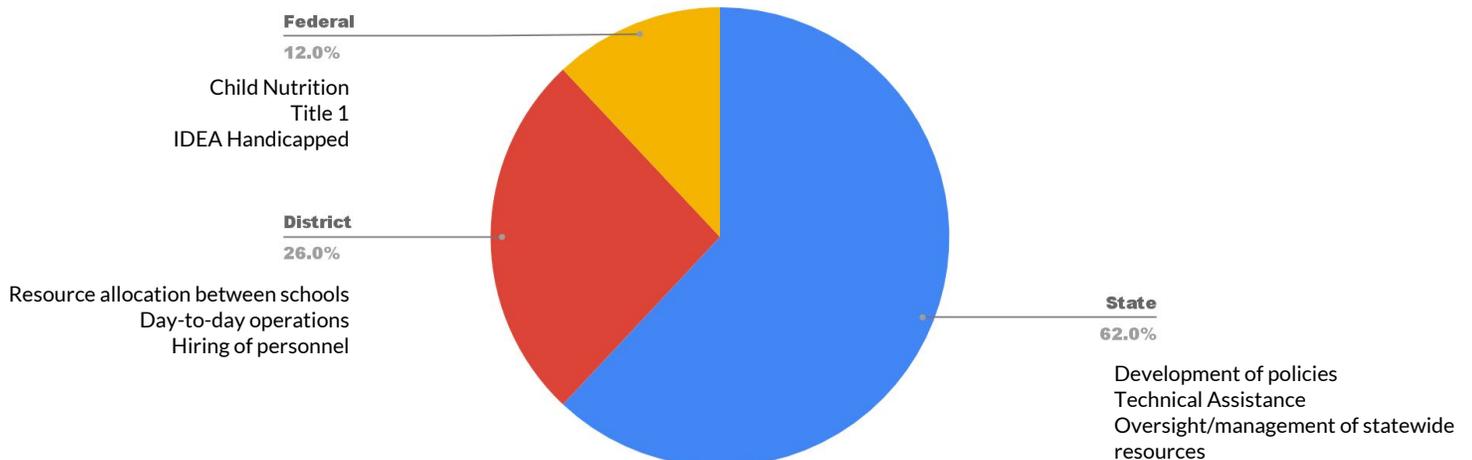
Counties and localities are increasingly required to [shoulder the burden](#) of education costs. From 1998 to 2015, local funding of education has increased to almost 4% of per-pupil expenditure, while state spending has decreased by over 5%. A slight increase in federal funding has helped to close the gap, but that resource cannot be relied upon given the current administration’s expressed intentions with respect to education funding.

Because of the [huge wealth disparities](#) among North Carolina’s counties, asking localities to contribute a larger percentage of the per-pupil expenditure means that schools in poorer counties do not have the resources that schools in richer counties can afford. So, students in poorer or rural counties do not get an education equal to what students in wealthier counties receive. This is the basis of the Leandro case mentioned earlier.

The NCGA recently passed a [bill](#) that, on its surface, addresses these disparities. But there still remain questions as to the adequacy of the funding provided, esp. in rural counties. One example of this pertains to the NC Education Lottery, which generated substantial debate, controversy and publicity when it was created, and [still does today \(pgs 10-12\)](#).

In addition, [large education cuts](#) made in the June 2017 budget package shrank the Department of Public Instruction, the agency responsible for intervention strategies in poorly performing schools. Despite shrinking DPI’s funding and forcing the elimination of several positions, the state budget increased their reporting requirements. DPI cannot effectively assess, assist, and improve local schools with less budget and more requirements.

FUNDING RESPONSIBILITIES



K-12 EDUCATION FUNDING IN NORTH CAROLINA

NC LEGISLATURE IS FAILING OUR STUDENTS

The 2017-19 biennium budget falls short on Public Education



•The total General Fund commitment to K-12 for 2017-18 is \$9B for 1,552,638 students. Adjusted for inflation it's more than \$300M lower than 2008-09. For 2018-19, it will be \$9.4B for 1,560,877 students.



•In 2008-09, North Carolina invested \$6,793 per student. But under the 2017-18 budget, per-pupil funding is only \$6,339, nearly \$500 less per student.



•In 2008-09, North Carolina's textbook funding per student was \$75.95, adjusted for inflation. Under the 2017-18 budget, it's only \$47.10, nearly 40% lower. It will be even lower in 2018-19, just \$40.87. The textbook budget should be both recurring and far more generous.



•In 2008-09, North Carolina spent \$65.98 per student on classroom materials. Under the 2017-18 budget, per-pupil funding for classroom materials is only \$30.55, less than half.



•In 2008-09, North Carolina public schools had 22,502 state-funded teacher assistants. Under the 2017-18 budget, that number is down to 15,720, nearly 7,000 fewer Teacher Assistants.



source

• <http://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/7-21-17-Impact-of-17-19-Budget.pdf?fref=gc&dti=1551372414877245>

Visit www.strongernc.org for information on how to contact your representative and tell them this is unacceptable. It's time to make public education a priority in North Carolina

Missed Budget Opportunities

Just a 1.2 percent spending increase above prior year spending when excluding additional funding for pay increases.

No additional funding for classroom materials and instructional supplies; one-time funding for textbooks and digital learning materials leaves state funding per student at nearly half peak 2010 spending when adjusted for inflation.

No additional state funding provided for school nurses to get the school nurse-to-students ratio closer to the national standard of one nurse per 750 students.

Additional \$30 million included in base budget for private vouchers and \$450,000 included in budget to establish education savings account (ESA) program.

[HB436](#) passed in 2017 [eliminating impact fees](#) developers pay to support public schools and other services.

Effects of HB13 Being Felt in Classrooms Now

IN 2016, the NCGA passed a law significantly reducing class sizes in grades K-3, without including funding for the [consequential effects](#). Parent outcry produced a one-year delay in parts of the law, but it will go into full effect for the 2018-19 school year, and legislators have still not provided resources for the extra teachers and class space required. [This is having a serious effect](#) on the ability of schools to provide adequate instructional space right now, causing families to consider other school choices if they have the option to do so.

[Interim plan for Wake County schools to adjust to class size mandates and funding issues.](#)

HOW DO WE MEASURE EDUCATION FUNDING?

A successful school finance system provides each district with sufficient resources according to each district’s level of need. A student’s chances for academic success should not depend on where a student is born or how much his or her parents earn. It is important to define, specifically, the elements of an ideal school finance system. Source: [NC Justice](#)

Equity	Adequacy	Transparency	Stability	Flexibility
Equity reflects that districts have varying levels of need, and that school funding should be distributed in relation to that need. For example, districts have varying levels of students with disabilities, who have limited-English proficiency, and who come from low-income families. Additionally, a district’s size or local tax base can affect its ability to provide services for its students.	Adequacy refers to whether enough funding is available “to allow every school to provide every student an equal opportunity to achieve to state proficiency standards.” Adequacy tells us what it costs to have a high-quality curriculum, taught by effective teachers, utilizing the necessary textbooks and supplies, in a supportive learning environment that would allow all students to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.	In addition to equity and adequacy, policymakers must also consider transparency. Transparency allows stakeholders to continually monitor whether a finance system is meeting standards of equity and adequacy.	Policymakers should also be mindful of funding stability. From an operational perspective, it is difficult to make major changes to school-level resources after the start of the school year . For example, re-assigning students mid-year can disrupt learning, and it is difficult to find high-quality educators after the beginning of a school year.	Finally, school finance systems differ in terms of their degree of flexibility. In addition to dictating how resources are distributed between districts, a school finance system may also dictate the allowable uses for how districts spend those funds. Flexibility is a benefit when districts are using it to direct resources to activities that improve student performance. However, flexibility can be counterproductive if a district spends its money inefficiently.
✓	✗	—	—	—

UNDERINVESTING IN NC TEACHERS

North Carolina continues to experience a shortage of existing and potential teachers. This is a direct result of actions taken by our legislature demonstrating a lack of commitment to [making teaching a valued, viable profession for families in NC](#). There has been a [30% decline in enrollments](#) in the UNC teaching programs since 2010. As a result this creates a domino effect, forcing many out of the public school system altogether which in turn leads to poor results in schools, leaving them ripe for takeover by for-profit organizations.

North Carolina's situation may be no different than what other states are experiencing, but [how our politicians have proceeded](#) in their attempt to dismantle public education is worth exploring.

Rather than passing bills such as [SB599](#) benefiting out of state, for-profit teaching preparedness programs which lower the standards needed to become a teacher in NC, legislators should focus on other [causes of the current teacher shortage](#), including:

- [Insufficient teacher pay](#), including no increases for graduate degrees. After inflation, NC teacher pay has dropped 13% in the past 15 years.
- Elimination of retirement benefits for those entering the profession after 2020.
- Cutting teacher assistants - [7,884 teacher assistants have been cut since 2008](#).
- Eliminating the Teaching Fellows program in 2011, only recently replacing it this year with a far less reaching program, reducing the recipients to 160 from 500.

The North Carolina Teacher of the Year for 2017 said while educators are doing all they can to help students learn, state legislators haven't provided the money needed to ensure all children succeed.

"We don't have the professional development because there's no money for professional development. I'm just urging the legislators to hear my cry from teachers across the state. [We need help so we can help our children](#)," said Lisa Godwin, who teaches kindergarten at Dixon Elementary School in Onslow County. "We want the best for our kids, but we need help with that."

Read former [Governor Jim Hunt's 2013 lecture](#) at UNC on how NC is underinvesting in education.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

It's well known that money plays a large role in politics today, and that is true in the case of school choice lobbyists in NC. One example is Charter Schools USA, out of Florida, run by Jonathan Hage. This is a screen shot from followthemoney.org which tracks campaign contributions to [political candidates](#). Here is a list of candidates who have received money from Hage in NC.

These outside lobbyists do not have the interests of the schoolchildren of NC at heart. National groups like ALEC have been busy for decades building this effort to profit from education legislation.

David Vitter
Thom Tillis
Jerry Tillman
Jason Saine
Robert Bryan
David Curtis
Dan Forest
Charles Jeter
David Lewis

Pat McCrory
Christopher Millis
Buck Newton
William Rabon
Scott Stone
John Torbett
Harry Warren

ALEC Legislation in NC:

- NC Parental Choice Scholarship Program [HB 944](#)
- NC Parental Rights Amendment [H 711](#)
- NC The 140 Credit Hour Act [HB 255](#)
- NC [The Innovation Schools and School Districts Act H 960](#)

Other legislation which subverts a strong public education system includes:

- NC [HB800: Change Charter School Laws](#) to allow businesses to claim up to 50% of enrollment spots [for employees](#) in return for financing a school.
- NC [SB253](#) & [HB265: Make School Boards Partisan](#)
- NC [HB514: The Permit Municipal Charter School / Certain Towns Bill.](#), enabling segregation in a Charlotte area school district.
- NC [HB704](#) to study the break-up of large school districts which could lead to more segregation
- NC [SB603](#) creating Educational Savings Accounts

If lawmakers in North Carolina wanted to “copy” good reforms, they don't really need to look that hard.

- [Virginia](#) just put a stop to charter growth.
- [Tennessee](#) voted down the use of vouchers.
- And [New York](#) is about to fund more pre-k programs for preschoolers to get them more prepared for success.
- [Policymakers: Apply These Three Business Principles to Education Policy](#)
 - Branding “works”
 - Choice is a paradox
 - Economies of Scale = Efficiency

In addition, on 9/7/17, the federal [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) rejected the Trump/DeVos spending bill by a vote of 29-2, which sought cuts of 14% to the Education Department budget while allocating \$400 million to expand charter schools and voucher programs to private and religious schools. Senate lawmakers made clear that using federal dollars for private school vouchers is not an idea they will support. **North Carolina lawmakers should do the same.**

CALLS TO ACTION

HOW CAN WE ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Armed with an understanding of North Carolina's education finance and legislative system, it is important to understand how citizens can take action to advocate for public schools.

- FIND OUT who your representatives and senators are. The [North Carolina General Assembly website](#) allows citizens to look up their members based on address. On the website, you can find contact information for each member. General Assembly members often respond and are amenable to meeting constituents. Contact them and let them know your concerns about the following:
 - HB13 funding for specialists, reduced class sizes and more space
 - Restore teacher assistant levels so all elementary classes are supported
 - Provide additional support staff, especially counselors
 - Restore extra pay to teachers who obtain their Master's Degree
 - Develop and fund a program for utilizing educational technology in schools, including connections, devices, training of teachers and adequate staff to maintain equipment.
 - Provide adequate school supplies funding
 - Fund professional development for teachers
 - Require public funds go to public schools only, with full accountability for non-traditional public charter schools
- MONITOR OR ATTEND committee meetings. Much of the budgeting process occurs through the [House Education Appropriations](#) and [Senate Appropriations on Education / Higher Education](#) committees. You can sign up for meeting notices on the North Carolina General Assembly website. Committee meetings infrequently allow public comment, but members are generally open to being approached before or after a meeting for informal conversations. The most important budget meetings generally take place between April and July of each year.
- ENGAGE with advocacy organizations. A number of these organizations monitor and explain major legislative developments, and frequently organize actions. These groups communicate frequently during session via mailing lists and social media.
 - [NC Justice Center](#)
 - [Public Schools First NC](#)
 - [NC Association of Educators](#)
 - [Public School Forum of North Carolina](#)
 - [NC Child](#)
 - [NCAE](#)
 - [NEA](#)
 - [Save Our Schools Facebook Group](#)

CALLS TO ACTION

HOW CAN WE ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

- FOLLOW media outlets. These all cover state politics and frequently report on state education developments.
 - [NC Policy Watch](#)
 - [Education NC](#)
 - [Raleigh News & Observer](#)
 - [WUNC](#)
 - [WRAL](#)
 - [Education Matters](#)

- READ through some of these books and blogs:
 - [Reign of Error](#) by Diane Ravitch
 - [A Chronicles of Echoes](#) by Mercedes Schneider
 - [The Educator and the Oligarch](#) by Anthony Cody
 - [A School District's Journey to Excellence: Lessons From Business and Education](#) by Tom Oxholm
 - [Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There are No Bad Schools in Raleigh](#) by Gerald Grant
 - [The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education](#) by Diane Ravitch
 - [Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis](#) by Robert Putnam
 - [Improbable Scholars: The Rebirth of a Great American School System and a Strategy for America's Schools](#) by David Kirp
 - [The End of Consensus: Diversity, Neighborhoods, and the Politics of Public School Assignments](#) by Toby Parcel and Andrew Taylor
 - [The Answer Sheet](#) blog run by Valerie Strauss
 - [Diane Ravitch's Blog](#)

- ATTEND local school board meetings. All North Carolina school boards have websites announcing meetings.

If you are interested in advocating for higher education issues, there has been a lot of news recently with [substantive changes](#) to the UNC system and a [recent ban](#) on the [UNC Center for Civil Rights](#) on filing legislation on behalf of low income and minority clients.

In addition, Gov. Cooper has proposed [NC Grow](#), a tuition free community college program for high school students in good standing. While the NCGOP did not include any funding for this program in the recent budget, it is worth pursuing in the future as we have seen [successful programs](#) in other states.