

*"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." - Benjamin Franklin*

### K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

- **Total funding:** The 2015-16 budget is \$8.878 billion for a student population of 1,537,643 (\$5,744 per pupil). In 2008-09, the budget was \$8.706 billion or \$5,779 per student and the student population 1,476,566 (61,077 more students are enrolled since 2008-09 school year).
- **Read to Achieve** - \$20 million allocated for 1st & 2nd grade students for summer reading camps.
- **Principal Preparation** – \$1.5 million funded to support & evaluate principal preparation.
- **NC DPI** budget was cut \$2.5 million for each of the two years.

### TEACHER FUNDING

- New teachers will be paid \$35,000, an increase from \$33,000. NC continues to rank below the national average in teacher pay and now ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in the nation. The budget continues to offer larger increases to less experienced teachers, who are newer to the profession.
- All state employees (school personnel, central office staff, and educational support professionals) will receive a one-time \$750 bonus.
- The salary steps (tiers) are the same as 2014-15 and will only be funded for teachers and principals/assistant principals.
- There is no change to Master's and other advanced degree pay. Teachers who had a master's or other advanced degree or had completed one class prior to August 1, 2013 are grandfathered under rules in place prior to that date. Master's and other advanced degree pay will be allowed if the job requires it.
- Nearly 70 percent of NC public school teachers will receive no salary increase in this budget. The budget continues to harm veteran teachers.
- The budget maintains the 12 percent pay differential for National Board Certified teachers.

### TEACHER ASSISTANTS

- Fully funds teacher assistants at the 2014-15 levels; but funds can only be used for teacher assistants. All LEA flexibility for the funds is eliminated effective this school year, so local education agencies will not be able to decide how to how the funds are used to support classroom instruction.
- About 15,300 teacher assistant positions are funded, a decrease of about 7,000 compared to 2008; the budget fails to restore teaching assistant numbers to pre-recession levels.
- Teacher support will now be funded from general funds (not lottery funds) and non-instructional support personnel will be funded from lottery funds (no longer from general funds).

### VOUCHERS

- Increases the school tax voucher program (Opportunity Scholarship Program) by \$6.8 million in 2015-16 and \$14 million in 2016-17, a total increase of 129% over the 2014-15 funding level. Total dollars available for 2015-16 is \$17.6 million and \$24.8 million for 2016-17.
- Senate Bill 456, *Charter School Modifications*, was defeated in the House Appropriations Committee by a narrow vote of 24-26. The bill would have required the state to award more tax-funded Opportunity Scholarships (vouchers) to kindergarteners and first graders.

### CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING

- Since cap allowing only 100 charters lifted in 2011, the number has grown to 160 charters in 2015-16. Another 16 charters approved to open in 2016 and 28 in 2017.
- House Bill 539, *Charter School Funding*, was withdrawn but it remains alive for the Legislature's short session in April 2016. If passed, it will force local school districts to share more revenue and federal funding with charter schools.
- Senate Bill 456, *Charter School Modifications*, was withdrawn but could come back next year. It would allow charter schools to receive more taxpayer dollars and grant funding for services they may not even provide, like school lunches.
- House Bill 334, *Charter School & Other Education Laws Changes*, was gutted by the Senate and substitute language included to establish the office of Charter Schools to be located under the State Board of Education, to modify the Charter School Advisory Board and to enhance the Charter School Application Process. This was passed and signed by Governor.

### ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Senate Bill 95, *Performance-Based RIF/School Policy*, was withdrawn and will likely reappear in the short session, which begins on April 25, 2016. The bill would create a charter-managed Achievement School District made up of some of the lowest performing schools. Achievement School Districts are independent public charter schools identified as low-performing, which are taken over by the state and administered by independent third parties empowered to RIF staff.

### DRIVER EDUCATION

- Funds Driver Education from 2015-2016 (general fund); 2016-2017 (civil penalty & forfeiture fund).
- School districts can charge up to \$65 per student to fund driver's education; school districts must reduce or eliminate the fee for students who prove economic hardship.
- A study committee is established to determine how to lower the cost of the program and seek alternate providers such as private companies and community colleges.

### CLASSROOM RESOURCES

- \$2 million this year for Wi-Fi networks to provide connectivity at the classroom level and another \$12 million next year.
- Funding for textbooks and digital resources is increased by \$21.8 million in 2015-16 and another \$31 million next year. This is about half of the amount spent on textbooks before the recession. This level is still substantially less than in 2009-10, when funding was at \$111 million.
- Since 2008, textbook funding has dropped from \$67 to \$34 per pupil.

### PRE-K FUNDING

- The Senate budget would have cut 520 pre-K slots. The final budget follows the House proposal, which provides \$2.3 million in state funding and an additional \$2.7 million from lottery funds to retain those slots.
- A decrease of 5,400 slots lost since 2008; waiting list remains.

### CLASS SIZES

- Class size for first grade is reduced to 1:16 for 2016-17; an additional \$27 million is allocated to hire additional teachers. All other class size limits remain the same.
- Class size requirements for kindergarten, second, and third grade remain unchanged.

### LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

- The State Board of Education must identify low-performing schools annually.
- Schools that are given a school performance grade of a D or F and have a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth" are considered "low performing" schools.
- If a local school administrative unit is identified as low performing, they must:
  - Within 30 days of identification, the superintendent must submit to the local board of education a preliminary plan for improving both the school performance grade and school growth score of each low-performing school in the unit.
  - Within 30 days of its receipt of the preliminary plan, the local board shall vote to approve, modify, or reject this plan. Before the local board votes on the plan, it shall make the plan available to the public, including the personnel assigned to each low-performing school and the parents and guardians of the students who are assigned to each low performing school, and shall allow for written comments.
  - The local board shall submit a final plan to the State Board within five days of the local board's approval of the plan.
  - The local board of education shall provide access to the final plan on the local school administrative unit's Web site. The State Board of Education shall also provide access to each low-performing local school administrative unit plan on the Department of Public Instruction's Web site.
  - Within 30 days of identification, each local school administration unit identified as low performing shall provide written notification to the parents and guardians of students.

### BUDGET RESOURCES

NC Child - <http://www.ncchild.org/insufficient-investments-in-children-families-persist-in-state-budget/>

NC General Assembly - House Bill 97

<http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/PDF/H97v9.pdf>

NC Justice Center – A Summary of the 2015-17 Budget

<http://www.ncjustice.org/?q=budget-and-tax/btc-reports-diminished-expectations-and-resulting-drag-ncs-economy-summary-2015-17>

Public Schools First NC - <http://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Quick-Facts-2015-17-Biennial-Budget1.pdf>