



Red4EdNC

Another Open Letter to Fellow NC Public School Teachers – We Are Strong in Numbers; Therefore, VOTE!

Stu Egan, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Public Schools Teacher

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The current General Assembly should be very scared of us public school teachers and our supporters. That's because what had originally looked like an election year to simply resupply the NCGA with more conservatively minded demagoguery has now morphed into a debate about how our state government should serve citizens and fully fund our public schools. This GOP-controlled General Assembly and its governor have unintentionally but successfully turned the focus of November's elections to the vitality of communities (HB3), the fair treatment of all our citizens (HB2), and the right to a quality public education (explicitly defined by Section 15, Article 1 of the NC Constitution).

North Carolina has 100 counties, each with a county public school system. According to the Labor and Economic Analysis Division of the NC Dept. of Commerce, the public schools are at least the second-largest employers in nearly 90 of them—and the largest employer, period, in 66. That means teachers represent a base for most communities, the public school system. And we are strong in numbers.

Those running for the General Assembly in November knew that two years ago; they just didn't seem to care. They knew it when they attempted to buy teachers' rights to due process for \$500 million after their attempt to eliminate it was declared unconstitutional. They knew it when they froze pay scales and then offered "average" raises to cloud the truth. They knew it when they abolished the Teaching Fellows Program. They knew it when they allowed unregulated charter schools to take money earmarked for public schools. They knew it when they created Opportunity Grants. They knew it when they allowed for an Achievement School District to come to our state. They know that we are losing more continuity and stability among our teaching staffs. If this trend continues at the current pace, the turnover rates in schools will be beyond detrimental to the foundation of public education, and continue to be a signal to aspiring teachers to not even enter the profession. And this is in a state that has highly regarded college educational programs.

Considering the amount of counterproductive measures placed on our public schools today, the fact that we teachers still educate our kids to a high degree of effectiveness tells me that North Carolina's teachers are still passionate and of merit. Teachers do not

define themselves through partisan, political definitions; they define themselves by a duty to educate students and as a team of professionals working together, not individual contractors whose service is dictated by a yearly indenture.

And no acronym or initiative (NCLB, EOG, EOC, AYP, PLAN, ABC, AP, PLAN, PSAT, RttT (Race To The Top), Common Core, ASW, AMO, EVAAS, NCCLAS, NCEES, IEP's, 504's, PD, PEP, PDP, PLC, PLT, READY, SCOS, SIT, SIP, STEM, Title I, Title III, and Title IX) can take away the most vital component of education: the student-teacher relationship. When that teacher is respected and valued, then that teacher is more likely to stay. But we have to help ourselves and vote. We have to educate others and get them to vote.

If public education matters to you at all, then please understand the damage this General Assembly has done to our public schools and communities. The number of teachers leaving the state or the profession is staggering. It has given rise to a now all too familiar state slogan: "North Carolina – First in Teacher Flight".

I strongly urge anyone in North Carolina who cares about public schools to vote this November. If you know anyone in North Carolina who is registered to vote, then please encourage them to do so. You are in a state where public education is under assault by the private sector posing as reformers. If our public school system is to recover and thrive, then this trend must stop.