



# Red4EdNC

## NC Teachers: Are We Still Seeing (and Wearing) Red?

Angela Scioli, Wake County Public School Teacher

September 3, 2016

You know how your Facebook feed hits you with a photo you posted from years past, causing you to reflect on how long ago something actually was? Sometimes that helps you take stock of how far you have come from that day. *Or not.*



This picture came up: It is from the summer of 2013, when my teacher [friends](#) and I realized that state policies regarding education had gotten all out of whack, and we needed to take action to bring change. So I wrote [this](#) letter stating we should Wear Red 4 Ed on Wed(nesday) as a visual symbolic protest. And Red4EdNC was launched. Since then we have started a [website](#), written [articles](#) that circulated statewide, sold 500 t-shirts, attended protests, produced an occasional [podcast](#), lobbied our elected leaders, and joined networks that collect data to write reports to shape policy. I even had a documentary crew follow me around for a year, and that film is about to come out (titled [Teacher of the Year](#)).

As the movie will show, all this advocacy has taken quite a toll on us and our families, and unlike most organizations, we'd really like to quit, close up shop, and just go back to teaching. Based on current campaign commercials, you might assume we can do just that and all is well with education in NC. Maybe we could burn our accumulated red wardrobes in a celebratory pyre!

Not so fast.

This movement has never been about teacher pay raises, and even if it were, only 3 out of 10 NC teachers have truly received an increase in salary since 2013. We did not become teachers for the pay. We might get *out* of teaching because of inadequate pay, but pay is not what really makes us tick.

**We became teachers for the students. We want them to learn and grow.**

**Students are still suffering**, however, because of the misguided priorities that have shaped education policy since 2013:

- **About 3,000 teacher positions** and 9,000 teacher assistant positions in NC have vanished since 2011.
- North Carolina jumped to **46th in the country in per-pupil spending** from 47th in the country in 2013-14 per-pupil spending.
- North Carolina **spends 14.5% less per student** than it did before the recession. That's a bigger drop than all but six other states. (FY08 to FY15, inflation-adjusted).
- North Carolina **spends \$855 less per student** than it did before the recession. That's a bigger drop than all but five other states (FY08 to FY15, inflation-adjusted).
- In **2007-08, the state allocated just over \$83 million** for classroom materials, instructional supplies and equipment, according to numbers from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. **During the last school year, the state allocated around \$44.3 million . . .** AND the state has eliminated the school supply tax holiday weekend.

This whole situation is like that last class of the day that often drives you crazy. They test your patience, cause you to feel hopeless, and sometimes, make you want to just give up. But no, the stakes are just too high. These are not chess pieces on a board or widgets hitting the factory floor. These are human souls with a story and vast potential. And we cannot walk away from this larger fight any more than we can walk away from one our students.

So we must keep wearing Red on Wed., and we must keep writing, and speaking, and posting, AND VOTING - doing what we can, when we can, as much as we can.

Our students deserve more. And until they get more, if the flag drops, one of us will pick it up, and all of us will keep moving. I look forward to the day we can rest. That day is just not yet, but it is coming.

How will you know? When you see or smell a plume of red polyester rising up over Raleigh. A celebratory funeral pyre of red. I can't wait!