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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST NC URGES LEGISLATURE
TO REINSTATE FUNDS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION**

**Despite Promises of Job Growth, Teaching Positions
Cut Across North Carolina**

Raleigh, NC—September 3, 2013— As the General Assembly convenes for a special session, Public Schools First NC urges legislators to acknowledge the drastic budget impacts already affecting public education and to use this opportunity to restore funding. The predicted consequences of these cuts—the loss of teacher and teacher assistant positions, increases to class size, inadequate instructional supplies, and the trimming of special programs—comes on the heels of promises by elected officials to promote job growth.

“When an economy improves, it is typically viewed as a good time to invest in public education to help further spur prosperity,” said Yevonne Brannon, Chair, Public Schools First NC. “As the U.S. economy shows signs of recovery, it is surprising that our state legislature is not picking up on those cues and investing in our schools. Instead, tax cuts are being handed out to the wealthy while teachers and teacher assistants are struggling to make ends meet—with many either leaving the profession or going to neighboring states where they can earn a living wage.”

Losses due to budget cuts being felt statewide are compounded by the fact that student enrollment in public schools continues to increase. And in many cases, the full force of the cuts are masked by school districts that are dipping into local funds to compensate for some of the state shortfall.

A few examples of the impact of the budget cuts on local school districts include:

Teaching positions

- Iredell-Statesville Schools will eliminate 46 teacher positions
- Burke County will eliminate 43.5 teaching positions
- Cleveland County will eliminate 50-60 teaching positions

Teacher assistant positions

- Scotland County will eliminate 45 teacher assistant positions
- Nash-Rocky Mount Schools will eliminate 40 teacher assistant positions
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools will eliminate 220 teacher assistant positions

Instructional supplies and textbooks

- Rowan-Salisbury Schools received a \$600,000 cut to instructional supplies. The school district will use \$200,000 in local funds to make up one-third of the state cut.
- Stanly County will reduce their textbook budget by \$75,000.
- Cumberland County will reduce instructional supplies by \$230,000.

Other program cuts

- The Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Schools will cut \$4,000 in funds used for their English as a Second Language program in 2013-14. Of note is the fact that statewide, graduation rates improved in every category except among students with limited English proficiency.

“North Carolina refused to take any of the federal money to fund Medicaid,” said Mark Jewell, Vice President, North Carolina Association of Educators. “The legislators chose not to fund teacher salaries. They chose to divert money to a voucher program for private schools. They could have committed resources. If you want good, strong, quality schools, you have to invest in them. This sets the clock back 50 years.”

Many public education critics who claim that our schools are failing and need to be fixed are ignoring the fact that graduation rates are at an all-time high, and dropout rates at an all-time low. These accomplishments come despite the fact that North Carolina’s public schools have been chronically underfunded. In reality, it seems like these critics are willing public education to failure by draining funds for the educators and programs that are the key to student success and ultimately, to North Carolina’s prosperity.

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About Public Schools First NC:

Public Schools First NC (PSFNC) is a group of citizens, parents, teachers, businesses and organizations joining together to advocate for a first-rate public education system for all North Carolinians. To learn more or to join our organization, please visit:

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