

Investing in our children today paves the way for a better tomorrow for North Carolina.

Public Schools First NC supports an inclusive, fair, innovative and accountable public education system that nurtures and prepares each child for success in school and life.

Public schools are the heart of our community.

Education is essential to democracy, and public schools are the foundation of the American dream and the core of America's strength. Public schools must provide all children with an education, regardless of their race, their parents' income, or where they live. With adequate resources and excellent teachers, public schools are the best places to promote student growth and academic achievement. They also bring communities together and are one of the only remaining places where different kinds of people come together with a shared purpose.

Public schools benefit everyone—from the students they serve to the businesses that recruit well-educated graduates to the taxpayers who benefit when well-prepared students graduate and give back to the community. Education creates knowledgeable and engaged citizens, nourishing our civic life and fueling a vibrant economy.

Public Schools First NC is committed to the passage of child-centered legislation that supports these critical priorities:

Programs and compensation that encourage recruitment, preparation, support and retention of professional, experienced educators.

North Carolina boasts a long reputation as an educational leader, and the quality of our public schools has made our state attractive to new families and businesses. A successful public school education depends on quality public school teachers. Enrollment in the UNC system's teacher prep programs has dropped 30% since 2010. North Carolina must strive to:

- Pay *all* teachers and other education professionals at least at the national average by 2020.
- Provide funding for teacher mentoring and ongoing professional development.
- Restore funding for the NC Teaching Fellows program.
- Reward experience and restore Masters pay.
- Evaluate teachers fairly using a variety of tools, not just student test scores.

Adequate, equitable funding that reflects at least the national average by 2020.

North Carolina ranks 46th in the nation for per pupil funding. Adequate, equitable funding ensures the optimal classroom environment and learning resources so all children can succeed. Public Schools First NC supports legislation that fully funds:

- **Textbook** spending at 2008 levels (at least \$67.15 per student).
- **Smaller class sizes in grades K-5.**
- **Teacher assistants** in all K-3 classrooms.

Supporting public schools through information, education, and engagement.
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Access to high-quality pre-school, so each child comes to school “kindergarten ready.”

Research overwhelmingly supports high-quality pre-Kindergarten programs as a means of preparing the highest-risk children for success in grades K -12. Today, 40,000 eligible children are not attending a NC pre-K program.

Public Schools First NC believes that fully funding pre-Kindergarten programs for at-risk children reduces disparities in student achievement tied to socioeconomic status. Pre-K has been shown to provide lifelong, positive results for children and the communities in which they live.

Exclusive use of public funds for public education.

Public Schools First NC believes taxpayers’ education dollars belong in properly accountable and transparent public institutions not delivered by disparate mechanisms to private and for-profit entities that do not guarantee adequate educational outcomes for children. Therefore, NC should *not*:

- Fund vouchers that give taxpayer money directly to private schools.
- Create an Achievement School District, a state takeover plan that will give private entities control of local public schools.
- Establish Education Savings Accounts that take money directly from public schools and give it to parents who opt out of the system with no real control over how they spend the money or assurances of educational quality for students.

Flexibility that allows public school districts to open their own charter schools.

Charter school legislation should be amended to allow local school boards to approve and govern charter schools. This would allow local school districts the opportunity to try different educational strategies while serving all children and providing full fiscal accountability to the public.

Charter schools that maintain fidelity to the original 1996 legislation, including the sharing of best practices with traditional public schools.

Public Schools First NC believes that all NC charter schools should be held to the same careful oversight, accountability, and transparency regarding academic standards and financial review as traditional public schools. Charter schools should:

- *Not* be operated by private, for-profit entities.
- Offer a qualitatively different educational setting from what is available in traditional public schools.
- Follow all open meetings laws and report salaries, contracts and other expenditures.
- Hold themselves to the highest standards for accountability, annually share innovative best practices and relinquish their charter before students suffer academically.
- Work in partnership with local school districts including governance by local school boards, like public magnet schools.
- Offer free and reduced lunch, free transportation, and services for students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and academically gifted students.
- Protect *all* students against discrimination and represent the makeup of the entire community.