

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

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

Now more than ever, it is imperative to remember that 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 or gender, their gender/sexual identity, their parents' income or zip code.

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 those graduates 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-centric legislation based on these critical priorities.

**Adequate, equitable education funding that reflects the national average by 2020*

North Carolina ranks 39th in the nation for per pupil funding according the NEA, putting NC in approximately the bottom 30% in the Southeast. Education Week ranks NC 40th with a C- letter grade, earning 70.6 out of 100 possible points.

NC is spending \$9,528 per student compared to the national average of \$11,934.

This does not help us create the schools our students deserve. Adequate, equitable funding ensures the optimal classroom environment and learning resources so all children can succeed.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Increases teacher pay for all teachers** to at least the national average; especially offering veteran teachers an increase to recognize their skills and experience.
- **Reinstates supplements** for teachers who earn advanced degrees.
- **Restores full-time teacher assistants** in each classroom for grades K-3.
- **Boosts professional pay and benefits to support staff** (child nutrition & transportation staff etc.)
- **Increases per pupil funding to national averages with** adequate funding for textbooks & technology.
- **Fully funds class size mandates for grades K-3** including additional personnel and capital funding.
- **Increases funding for school construction** (endorse a statewide school construction bond in 2020).
- **Provides additional funding** to restore class size caps for grades 4-5.

****Trauma-Informed curricula with a focus on Social and Emotional Learning***

Children across North Carolina suffer Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in various forms of abuse and neglect. The trauma of ACEs can cause children to develop toxic stress, affecting them not just emotionally but psychologically and biologically. Toxic stress is associated with everything from misbehavior at school to heart disease; it can shorten the lives of the kids who suffer from it. However, adults can help children with toxic stress, not by erasing their trauma but by helping children develop resilience. Resilience is the capacity that allows kids to cope with their imperfect situations and to move on with confidence and optimism. Teaching children resilience requires trained and attentive school personnel. This learned skill set can act within a child as a buffer for the ACEs they have endured.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Increases funding to hire more helping** professionals (school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, and school nurses) to meet nationally recommended ratios. Schools need these staff to meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of students and provide staff development and training for educators.
- **Provides trauma-informed training** for all school staff (including SROs) with an emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning and implement trauma-informed district-wide policies and programs.

****Provide safe, secure learning environments for our students and teachers***

Every child, every teacher, every school personnel member is entitled to a safe environment at school. No one should live with the fear that sending their kids to school may be placing them in harm's way. No school staff should feel their lives are in jeopardy for simply showing up at work.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Keeps guns off school grounds** and out of classrooms including not arming teachers in our schools (does not include trained and licensed resource officers).
- **Implements required** violence prevention and threat-reporting programs at all schools.
- **Increases** funding for school security as determined by local school districts.
- **Strengthens** background checks governing gun ownerships and registration.
- **Educates children** and their parents on gun safety/safe storage.

****Universal access to high-quality pre-school, let children start 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. These advantages from attending Pre-K last throughout elementary school, holding steady or growing at each grade level, for both high- and low-income students. Yet, approximately 7,000 children annually are on the Pre-K waiting list. Universal Pre-K will provide lifelong, positive results for children, their communities, and our state.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Implements universal Pre-K for all eligible children by 2020.**

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

North Carolina's long reputation as an educational leader and the quality of our public schools has made it 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 should consider issues below to help restore its teacher pipeline.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Recruits teachers of color.** Research shows students of color perform better on academic benchmarks when they have at least one teacher of color.
- **Evaluates teachers fairly** using a variety of tools not just student test scores.
- **Eliminates the A-F grading system** or improve it to count student growth 50%.
- **Keeps the 15-point scale** for A-F school grades.
- **Invests in teacher training programs** to address teacher shortages. Provide incentives for college students to choose education as a major and encourage diverse applicants to enroll.
- **Increases mentoring support** and professional development, especially for new teachers.

**Integration and Equitable Distribution of Resources*

A focus on school integration and equitable distribution of education resources is especially important now, when [schools across the country are re-segregating](#) at an alarming rate. Levels of segregation in our nation's schools are now at levels not seen since the 1960s.

According to [a recent report](#), school segregation is associated with increasing racial achievement gaps, dropout rates, and incarceration rates. Integration has benefits for all students, including improved test scores, a decrease in drop-out rates, an increase in capacity for working with others, decreased levels of prejudice and much more.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Moves away from traditional punitive discipline** that contributes to the school-prison pipeline by removing students from the classroom and educational opportunities
- **Works to provide equitable and adequate distribution** of highly qualified teachers who can provide quality instruction, equitable access to educational resources, advanced courses, and a focus on [restorative justice](#) to ensure that all students graduate high school ready for career or college.
- **Produces integrated, equitable schools** by investing in traditional public schools that serve all children and stopping the diversion of public funding for privatization.

**Exclusive use of public funds for public education, protect and restore local school board control over their public schools.*

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. Local schools boards are elected and accountable to the voters. Duly elected school boards should have local control over how to organize their schools including the school calendar and class sizes.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

- **Allows local school boards the same flexibility** as charter schools including calendar flexibility and class size decisions.
- **Places a moratorium on funding vouchers** that give taxpayer money directly to private schools without appropriately ensuring student safety and educational achievement while documenting that these tax dollars are used appropriately.
- **Discontinues the Innovative School District** and allow local school boards to work directly with NCDPI when schools are persistently low-performing.
- **Requires private schools** receiving vouchers to use a nationally-normed test for students receiving vouchers to demonstrate student performance, similar to public school accountability.
- **Increases charter school accountability and transparency** and stop allowing them to expand without showing academic success in current grades.
- **Holds virtual charter schools more accountable** and allow State Board of Education to close them when students are not succeeding academically.
- **Monitors the implementation/results of Personal Education Savings Accounts** and report semi-annually to the public expenditures.

We report all legislative actions taken at the NC General Assembly each week on our web site: www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/legislative-updates/. Please check there regularly during the legislative session.

Connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) - we report legislative actions as they happen!