



## All of NC has a stake in strong public schools

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*As PSFNC revives its blog to share the voices of educators and other supporters of public education, a review of our archived posts showed that some of the things people shared years ago are still relevant now. Over the next few months, we will include some "Flashback Posts" along with the new articles that we share.*

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Every North Carolinian should be an advocate for a high-quality publicly supported education system that prepares all students to be productive citizens in the 21st century.

For literally centuries, Americans have seen the close connection between healthy public schools and thriving communities. When families make decisions about where they will live and raise their children, one of the first questions they often ask is, "How good are the public schools?" Strong school systems anchor neighborhoods and knit communities together as they educate children for the society and workplaces of tomorrow. The better the schools, the higher the property values, the more potential revenue for the community to invest in even better schools and a higher quality of life for every resident – what a virtuous cycle.

Americans have also known, from at least the time of Thomas Jefferson, that a high-quality public education system available to all is crucial to constructing a vibrant democracy in which intelligent and engaged citizens constructively debate public policy decisions. Jefferson himself wrote to James Madison in 1787: “Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.”

Horace Mann, one of the pioneers of public education in 19th century America, also saw how public schools helped build a nation of equal opportunity for all. Mann wrote: “Education...is a great equalizer of the conditions of men –the balance wheel of the social machinery. If this education should be universal and complete, it would do more than all things else to obliterate factitious distinctions in society.”

Strong public schools are also the linchpin of prosperous economies. When companies look to invest in North Carolina, their first question is usually not about tax rates but about how good our schools and universities are and how ready our students and graduates are to take on the challenge of working in the 21st century economy.

Better schools produce better-educated students who get better-paying jobs that allow people to make a better life for their families and pay taxes for more investments in our schools and roads and parks – there is that virtuous cycle again.

This fall, we have elections for our state legislature. Most candidates will go to great lengths to tell you how they support public education. But we all need to look beyond the rhetoric to the decisions they made. Ask those running for office whether they supported budgets that froze teacher salaries and cut money for classroom assistants and textbooks and supplies. Ask whether they endorsed the nearly complete deregulation of charter schools and vouchers that give our tax dollars to private and religious schools that can discriminate against children. Ask them whether they have a long-term vision for protecting and enhancing public education in our state. Actions speak louder than words in supporting strong public schools for all children in North Carolina.

We all have a stake in making North Carolina’s public schools the best they can be. These schools are essential to building healthy communities, a vibrant democracy and a prosperous economy.

*The views and opinions expressed in guest blog posts are those of the guest bloggers and do not necessarily represent the views of Public Schools First NC, its affiliates, or staff.*



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