NC’s Path to Privatization

**Teaching Fellows program cut**
From 2011-2017, NC’s nationally acclaimed teacher education scholarships were eliminated. Strong public reaction led to a “new” smaller, less robust version in 2018.

**Private school vouchers begin**
Sold to the public as a way for low-income children to escape “failing schools,” NC begins its voucher program with $15M while the 2013 budget spent $500M less on public education than in 2008.

**Budget kept at recession level despite growth**
7,000 state-funded teacher assistants lost since 2008. Nearly 70% of teachers receive no salary increase, continuing to harm veteran teachers.

**Voucher funding increases 129%**
Increases by $6.8 million in 2015-16 and $14 million in 2016-17. Total taxpayer dollars for vouchers in 2015-16 is $17.6 million and $24.8 million for 2016-17.

**Class Size Chaos**
NC Lawmakers limit K-3 class sizes without providing funding for extra classrooms and teaching positions. Schools were forced to limit specials and overfill 4-5 classes. Public outcry forced some temporary relief in the 2018 budget.

**Increased funding for charters and vouchers**
Though traditional public schools perform as well or better than charters and private schools, by 2019 charter funding is at $5B and vouchers funding at $1.2B while traditional schools remain underfunded and understaffed.

**Virtual charter schools opened**
Despite evidence of failure in other states, NCGA awarded K-12 Inc. & Connections Academy contracts to enroll up to 1,500 students in K-12. Their for-profit structure rewards enrollment, not student success.

**NC starts giving schools A-F letter grades**
Due to a flawed formula of 80% test scores & 20% growth, grades significantly correlate with poverty rates and unduly affect the image of schools in the community. Bipartisan attempts to correct the formula have failed.

**Teacher pay ranking drops to 46th in U.S.**
Tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations prioritized over teacher pay — a dramatic shift from the early 2000s when NC was recognized for gains in education and ranked as high as 19th in teacher pay.

**Taxpayer dollars for vouchers triples in 3 yrs**
Increased from $15M in 2013 to $55M in 2018; projected to be at $145M by 2027. Over 90% of taxpayer dollars spent on school vouchers go to private religious schools-75% biblically-based curriculum.

**Municipal charter schools allowed**
Law passed allowing four majority white suburbs in Mecklenburg Co. to fund & run their own district schools with taxpayer money — setting a dangerous precedent of secession from a more integrated, county-wide system.

**Innovative School District created**
Low performing schools would have to close or let the state take over. Only one school was forced into the ISD program. Run by a for-profit, out of state charter company, it shut down in failure in 2021.
NC Supreme Court orders Leandro funding
After nearly three decades of court battles, the NC Supreme Court orders full funding for years two & three of the Leandro plan. November elections raise questions about whether the legislature will comply.

Teacher pipeline worsens
Between 2012-2021, enrollment in bachelor’s programs dropped 35% and master’s programs 9%. NC has 45th lowest starting teacher pay nationally and the lowest benefit contributions combined compared to surrounding states.

New teacher licensure plan
NCDPI’s Professional Educator Preparation Standards (PEPSC) Commission proposes an overhaul of current licensure and salary scale, causing confusion and concern among educators who want sufficient base pay and a career ladder that is not dependent on test scores and subjective “merit” variables.

Teacher salaries
Average teacher salary is about $10,000 less than the national average. Top salary on the pay schedule, including National Boards bonus, is $60,480 after 25 years. Between 15-24, the schedule is fixed – zero growth.

Mismanaged charter schools continue to close
Many charters close soon after opening or never open, even after receiving state tax dollars. From 1997-2022, 85 charters have been terminated. Most still lack sufficient oversight and accountability.

Voucher funding, eligibility expanded
Income eligibility cap raised, allowing families of four making $75,000/yr to access. Sold to the public in 2013 as a program for low-income households, the NCGA has expanded eligibility every subsequent budget cycle.

Charters rules change to speed growth
Allowed to expand one grade level each year without approval regardless of student outcomes. Fast-track application added and planning year eliminated. Continue to increase segregation by race and income.

Vouchers expanded again
Income eligibility cap raised to $85,793/yr for a family of four, almost medium income according to Census ($88K). Personal Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities increased to allocate from $9k to $17k.

New budget continues to underfund schools
Despite a $9B budget surplus, Leandro Plan still not fully funded; master’s pay not restored, Pre-K waiting lists continued. Cutting corporate tax rate to 0% by 2030 puts education funding at greater risk in future.

2020 NC Education Budget
2021 Teacher Pipeline
2022 Public Schools

Voucher funding & eligibility increase again
NGA adds $56M to the base allocation for vouchers, boosts the annual increase to $15M, and allows $500K/yr to recruit participants. Income requirements raised to 200% of Federal F/R Lunch eligibility (i.e. $103,000/yr for a family of 4). More than $3.5B will be spent over the next 15 years.

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Flawed A-F school grading system under review
Education leaders are proposing changes to the formula used to grade schools. Since school grading started, the 80% test scores/20% growth formula has been widely criticized. Bipartisan bills to improve the formula have failed numerous times.

Innovative School District (ISD) ends in failure
After 5 years and only one school takeover, NC’s ISD failed to improve outcomes for students. Lawmakers discontinued funding for it, as it was a waste of taxpayers money.

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NC’s National Rankings (FY 2021-22)
Avg. Teacher Starting Salary1 #45
Avg. Teacher Salary #34
Teacher Pay Gap2 76¢
Avg. ESP Earnings #30
Per Student Spending #41

1 As compared to minimum living wage of $48,346 for a family of one adult and one child
2 Compared to other college-educated professionals with similar experience

Source: NEA.ORG

Public Schools FIRST NC
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