



## **Funding Public Education**

The Wake County Board of Education calls upon the North Carolina General Assembly to make important systemic reforms regarding the Funding of Public Education, to ensure that public schools, which are mandated to serve all enrolled children regardless of income, health, or ability, receive the educational funding they need to provide a sound basic education.

The Wake County Board of Education also calls upon the North Carolina General Assembly to prioritize public school dollars to fully fund public schools, not private school vouchers.

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### **Raising Teacher Compensation Towards the National Average**

North Carolina must make a significant public investment in its education system—one that is competitive with other states in our region and the economic markets with which we compete. This investment is essential to attract and retain quality educators and eliminate teacher shortages, particularly in fields requiring advanced training. Specifically, this includes funding competitive salaries for teachers, classroom staff, and support personnel that align with those in other states and professions requiring similar education levels. These essential workers are being lost not only to out-of-state school districts but also to better-paying private-sector jobs, especially in STEM subjects and career and technical education.

### **Modernizing the Special Education Funding Formula**

North Carolina must modernize the special education funding formula by amending funding caps and ensuring the state provides the necessary resources for every child requiring special education services—not just the first 13%. Funding for special education teachers and instructional assistants must be increased to address high turnover and staff shortages, which disrupt essential services for children with disabilities.

### **Addressing Student Hunger to Support Academics**

Due to inadequate federal funding and stagnant reimbursement rates that have not kept pace with inflation, North Carolina must supplement funding for student meal programs to combat student hunger and ensure students are ready to learn. Rising food costs, coupled with insufficient federal support, create significant challenges for school meal programs. Without adequate nutrition, students face various challenges that impact their well-being and ability to focus on learning. North Carolina should provide adequate funding for improved nutrition for grades k-5 with an estimated investment of approximately \$140 million.

### **Funding Based on Actual Enrollment**

To ensure that all children receive the funding they need, public school financing should be based on actual school enrollment rather than formulas relying solely on average daily membership (ADM). The current approach does not account for the total number of students each public school serves.

### **Reducing Barriers to Teacher Licensure**

To support teacher recruitment and retention, the North Carolina General Assembly should adjust teacher licensure requirements to accept out-of-state licensure tests, eliminate costly additional testing, and reduce testing and licensure fees. DPI should accept out-of-state tests for candidates who have completed an approved educator preparation program for elementary (K-6) or exceptional children (General Curriculum), regardless of years of experience. The additional edTPA/PPAT test requirements should be removed. Other high testing costs and licensure fees should also be removed or reduced.



## Local Flexibility Over Operational Issues

The Wake County Board of Education also calls upon the North Carolina General Assembly to grant greater local flexibility over operational issues, allowing the district to address local needs more effectively and efficiently.

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### **School Calendar Flexibility**

Wake County Public School System should have the discretion to modify school calendars to align with state community college schedules and make necessary adjustments in response to weather and emergency-related situations.

### **K-3 Class Size Flexibility**

Furthermore, the district should have greater flexibility in waiving K-3 class size requirements to optimize available facilities and classroom space cost-effectively. Expanding such waivers in Wake County could create the capacity equivalent to nine new elementary schools without increasing capital construction costs while also reducing transportation expenses and school reassignments. Waivers for non-low-performing elementary schools would provide facility relief with minimal impact on academic achievement in already high-performing schools.

### **Exploring Local Funding Options**

Wake County voters should also be given the opportunity to vote on additional funding options for school capital and operational needs through local revenue collection measures, such as a temporary sales tax earmarked for school renovations and heating and air conditioning system improvements.

### **Restart-like Flexibility**

Research has shown conclusively that Restart Schools, benefiting from their authorization to use flexibility to address specific needs and barriers to school improvement, have resulted in improved academic growth and achievement. The General Assembly should expand the use of Restart School flexibility to all public schools, strengthening systems and structures to lead to more positive student outcomes.

## Fair and Transparent Access to School Performance

The Wake County Board of Education urges the North Carolina General Assembly to ensure fair and transparent access to school performance data for families considering educational options and ensure accountability for the use of public dollars for education.

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### **Prioritize the Needs of Public School Students**

The Board believes that funding for public school needs should be prioritized and met before public funds are allocated to private schools. If the state continues to provide public dollars for private school vouchers, with \$616 million in state tax money appropriated last year alone, then all schools—public, private, or charter—accepting public dollars for K-12 education should be required to provide the same student achievement and budget accountability information. This transparency will empower parents to make informed decisions and ensure the responsible use of public tax dollars.

### **Improving School Performance Evaluation**

The state's grading and evaluation system for school performance should be revised to rebalance the achievement and growth ratios, aligning them with neighboring states. A broader range of factors should be considered to measure student readiness for life after graduation.