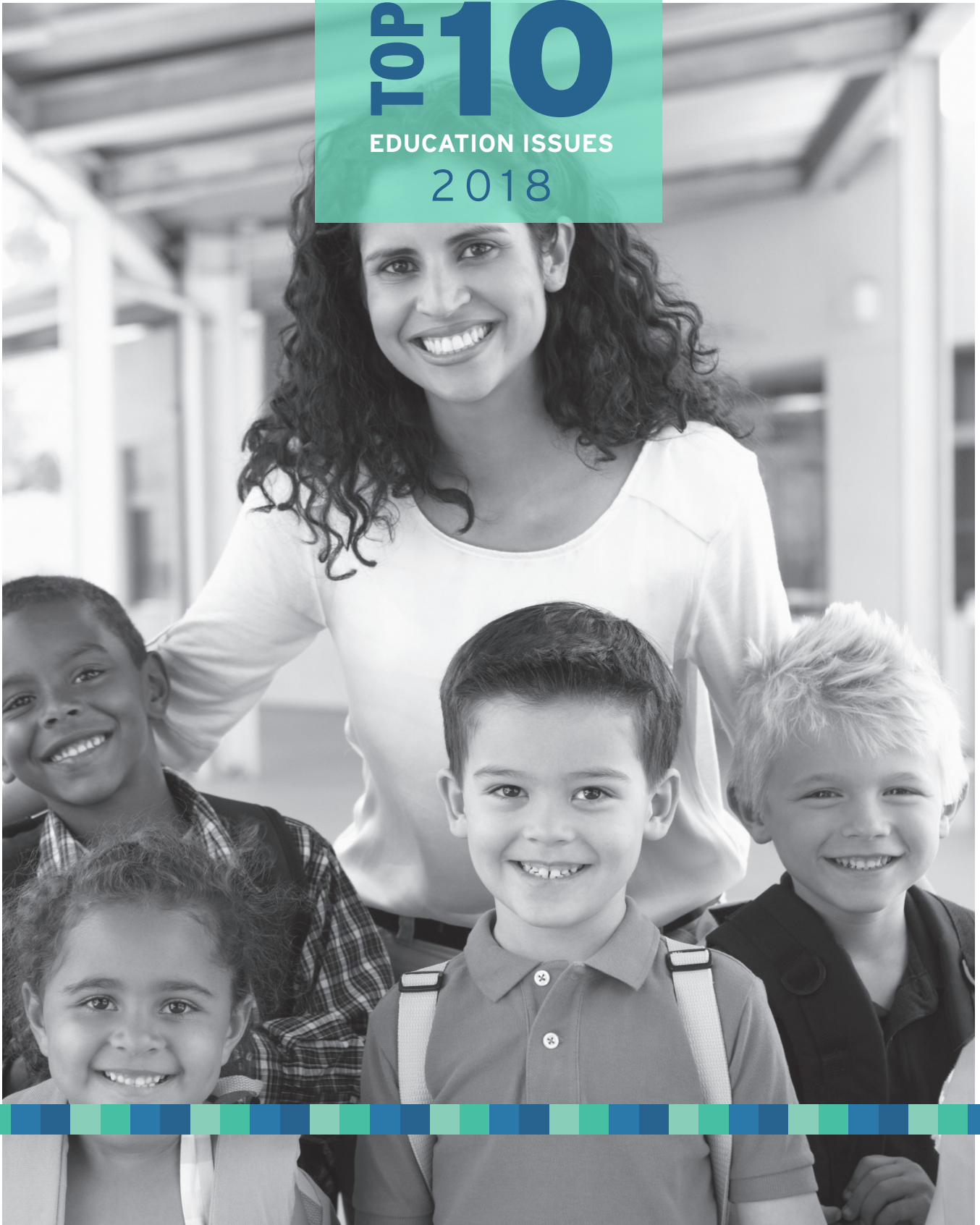


TOP 10

EDUCATION ISSUES
2018



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INTRODUCTION

Forecasting what will be the top education issues in any given year is a tricky business. One year ago we were drafting our 2017 Top Ten Education Issues and debating whether to include the K-3 class size mandate. As we were going to press, the General Assembly was coming back for a special session and it seemed all but certain they would address this major issue. Surely they wouldn't leave such a significant matter unresolved. Boy did we miss on that one.

By the close of 2017, the K-3 class size mandate was the single largest policy issue affecting North Carolina schools, students and families. While no one disputed smaller classes in early grades could be a sensible way to improve academic outcomes, lawmakers failed to provide appropriate funds for districts to hire the additional classroom teachers they would need, forcing districts to face the prospect of eliminating thousands of enhancement teachers to comply with the law. They also provided no funding or time to build out the extra classroom space needed to house these smaller classes.

So as the old adage goes, 'Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me.' The K-3 class size mandate tops our list of the Top Ten Education Issues for 2018. As we do each year, we have included issues we believe **will** be the top education issues for the year, as well as issues we believe **should** be on the education agenda.

Beyond the class size mandate, we continue to call on education leaders to implement real accountability and transparency in all the new school choice efforts. Our state's voucher program - Opportunity Scholarships - desperately needs real oversight, and in 2017 that became clearer than ever when the largest recipient of school vouchers became ensnared in an embezzlement scandal where, amazingly, the culprit continues to teach at that private Christian school in Fayetteville while completing a jail sentence on the weekends. Meanwhile, there seems to be little interest in the General Assembly to investigate, despite the fact that the school receives approximately two thirds of its revenues from North Carolina taxpayers. We need to do better.

Looking forward to 2018 we also note our system of school governance is faced with big questions about who is in charge of public education in North Carolina and how should we improve educational outcomes along the educational continuum. We have an unusually large number of new commissions, bodies and court cases created to provide solutions to these fundamental education issues, and we ask that our education leaders tasked with steering the governance of our public schools to please do it well - and together.

On the horizon for 2018 are a number of positive developments. The launch of a new Teaching Fellows program will help address a years-long decline in teacher education enrollment by targeting hard to staff STEM subjects, special education and low-performing schools. We continue to see an uptick in teacher pay and are optimistic the General Assembly will continue to bring North Carolina along a path toward earnings that are commensurate with the incredibly difficult job of being an educator. Our principals did receive a much needed boost in pay this year after dropping to 50th nationally. Unfortunately, the new principal pay plan creates winners and losers with an estimated 1 in 6 principals actually seeing a pay cut next year unless the plan is changed or a hold-harmless provision is extended. With already high turnover in North Carolina for school administrators, we can ill afford to push some of our most experienced school leaders out the door.

Finally, but perhaps most significantly, North Carolina is considering overhauling its school finance model. We believe this could be an opportunity for positive change as long as adequacy and equity are central tenets to address the growing divide between urban/rural, wealthy and poorer school systems and their related student achievement gaps. Done well, it could be a real game changer for North Carolina students. Done poorly, we should brace ourselves for the mother of all unintended consequences.



1

PROVIDE CERTAINTY FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND ALL EDUCATORS BY FIXING THE CLASS SIZE CRISIS

- › Fully fund the lower class size mandate and extend the timeline for implementation
- OR -
- › Restore class size flexibility

2

ADEQUATELY AND EQUITABLY INVEST IN OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION INCLUDING THEIR SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- › Prioritize adequacy and equity of funding
- › Do no harm in any funding reform
- › Address capital construction needs and pass the school bond bill
- › Address growing gaps between poor and wealthy school systems and their related student achievement gaps

3

INSIST ON TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

- › Enact measures that require accountability and transparency for taxpayer dollars spent on private Personal Education Savings Accounts and vouchers
- › Hold publicly-funded private education management operators to the same standards we hold our public schools
- › Analyze data from the full four-year pilot period for the two virtual charter schools before deciding to lift their pilot status

4

RECRUIT AND RETAIN THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

- › Improve the new principal pay plan
- › Restore retiree health benefits for future teachers and state employees
- › Continue critical investments in principal preparation

5

ONCE AGAIN, FIX THE FAULTY A-F SCHOOL GRADING SYSTEM

- › Recalibrate the formula for A-F school performance grades
- › Use the A-F letter grades to identify schools for state support
- › Consider other indicators of student and school success

TOP 10

EDUCATION ISSUES

2018 SUMMARY

6

SCALE UP SUCCESSES FOR OUR STATE'S STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

- › Expand charter-like flexibility to more public schools
- › Restore funds for DPI's successful Turning Around Lowest Achieving Schools intervention model
- › Create more incentives for talented educators to go to work in struggling schools

7

ADOPT A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH TO HEALTH AND LEARNING

- › Ensure that all North Carolina children have access to high-quality afterschool and out-of-school time programs that support their learning
- › Increase investments in afterschool and out-of-school time programs now to ensure long-term economic benefits
- › Invest in developing trauma-sensitive schools so that all children can learn and grow in safe and supportive environments

8

PURSUE OUTCOMES-FOCUSED STRATEGIES TOWARD RACIAL EQUITY

- › Diversify our teacher workforce
- › Increase minority enrollment in Advanced Placement and higher-level coursework
- › Move schools toward more equitable student discipline practices
- › Let's get comfortable with the uncomfortable

9

KEEP BUILDING UPON NORTH CAROLINA'S INVESTMENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- › Continue to advance and align birth-to-eight initiatives locally
- › Strengthen North Carolina's early childhood capacity
- › Continue to pursue collaborative approaches

10

FOR THOSE WHO GOVERN OUR STATE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DO IT WELL (AND TOGETHER)

- › Avoid negative, unintended consequences
- › Education leaders and stakeholders tasked with steering the governance of our public schools must work together

1

PROVIDE CERTAINTY FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND ALL EDUCATORS BY FIXING THE CLASS SIZE CRISIS

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted a proposal to require smaller class sizes in kindergarten through third grades. Fewer numbers of students in classrooms, lawmakers reasoned, would lead to improved academic outcomes.

But missing from the new law were two important provisions. Despite the stated intent enacted by lawmakers in 2017 under House Bill 528 (Session Law 2017-197) to “fund a new allotment for program enhancement teachers for local school administrative units beginning with the 2018-2019 fiscal year,” those funds have not yet been appropriated. Estimates of funding this new allotment are somewhere between \$200 and \$300 million for these program enhancement teachers (art, music, physical education, world languages, etc.). The lack of additional funding for a required increase in the number of classrooms and teachers in lower grades has resulted in local districts having to pull resources away from other areas in their school budgets in order to comply with the new measure.

And even though in early 2017 lawmakers did provide some additional time during the 2017-18 school year for districts to reduce class sizes under House Bill 13 (Session Law 2017-9), most district leaders have

K-3 AVERAGE CLASS SIZE

	ORIGINAL PLAN (2016-17)	HB 13 (2017-18)	HB 13 (2018-19)
Kindergarten	21	20	18
1 ST Grade	21	20	16
2 ND & 3 RD Grades	21	20	17

said it wasn’t enough. This temporary fix was just a one-year reprieve because now the severe class size reductions go into effect in the upcoming 2018-19 school year. In order to create the additional spaces necessary for an increased number of classrooms, school systems need more time to plan for, fund, and build out physical structures that will accommodate the smaller classes—and without it, some schools are having to put two classes and two teachers in the same room just to comply with the lower student-to-teacher ratios. And that’s not all: some schools are faced with putting classrooms in closets, classrooms on carts, and classrooms in locker rooms. There is zero additional money appropriated for the necessary school construction costs tied to the new class size mandate.

Children attend Pre-K at Warren County’s Mariam Boyd Elementary School in Warrenton. Photo Credit: Warren County Schools.





This crisis that is resulting from the 2018-19 class size mandate is having wide-ranging impacts on students, families and teachers:

> **Students in grades 4-12 are suffering at the hands of the class size mandate.** Classes in grades 4 and 5 in some schools are ballooning in size so that districts can accommodate the cap on class sizes in lower grades

And not only are classes in upper grades growing in some cases there could also be fewer AP classes, less diverse course offerings, and fewer counselors, librarians and school nurses.

> **In exchange for smaller classes, art, music, PE and other “enhancement” classes could be eliminated or placed on carts.** Currently, local districts fund enhancement classes like art, music and physical education with classroom teacher allotment funds because these classes are not specifically funded by the General Assembly. This funding practice coupled with the mandate to reduce class sizes has put these enhancement classes and teachers in jeopardy, as districts are reporting that they are looking to reduce the, eliminate them, or place them on roving carts in

order to free up space and resources for additional smaller classes in grades K-3.

> **We are running out of time.** It is now 2018 and hiring decisions for new teachers will be made this spring. Current teachers will be notifying their principals in these few months ahead whether they intend to stay or not for the 2018-19 school year. New classroom construction or even design plans for new trailers do not happen overnight. Given that the General Assembly has not acted on this issue during its January 2018 Session to date, we are on a crash-course collision with the clock. If lawmakers do not fund the class size mandate or otherwise abate it quickly, then their legislative short session that does not begin until May will be too late.

> **Reduction in critical pre-kindergarten services.** In order to comply with the class size mandate, some districts are considering either displacing or eliminating altogether pre-kindergarten programs from their school buildings. This comes at a time when the General Assembly expanded funding for pre-kindergarten children during their legislative session in 2017—but because the class size mandate requires additional classroom spaces, pre-kindergarten could get the boot to accommodate the law.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

> **Fully fund the lower class size mandate and extend the timeline for implementation.** If lawmakers want to realize their end goal of improved academic outcomes as a result of smaller class sizes in early grades, it’s critical they direct the necessary resources to accomplish this goal so that districts do not have to make troubling choices that hurt students in the long run. As they promised, lawmakers should appropriate the additional funds needed for teachers and establish a lengthier timeline for implementation so that local districts have the time necessary to establish the appropriate classroom spaces to meet the law’s mandate. A phased-in approach to reducing class size while fully funding the changes could work well.

- OR - > **Restore class size flexibility.** Many education policymakers would agree that a lower student-to-teacher ratio has the potential to improve students’ academic outcomes. But without appropriate resources funneled toward this policy goal, the benefits are quickly negated by an unfunded mandate’s consequences, such as large class sizes in grades 4-12, the absence of high quality pre-kindergarten opportunities, or the elimination or reduction of important enhancement classes like art, music, physical education or technology. If the General Assembly is unwilling to fund this policy goal, they should rescind it, restore class size flexibility and let the locals decide.

2

ADEQUATELY AND EQUITABLY INVEST IN OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

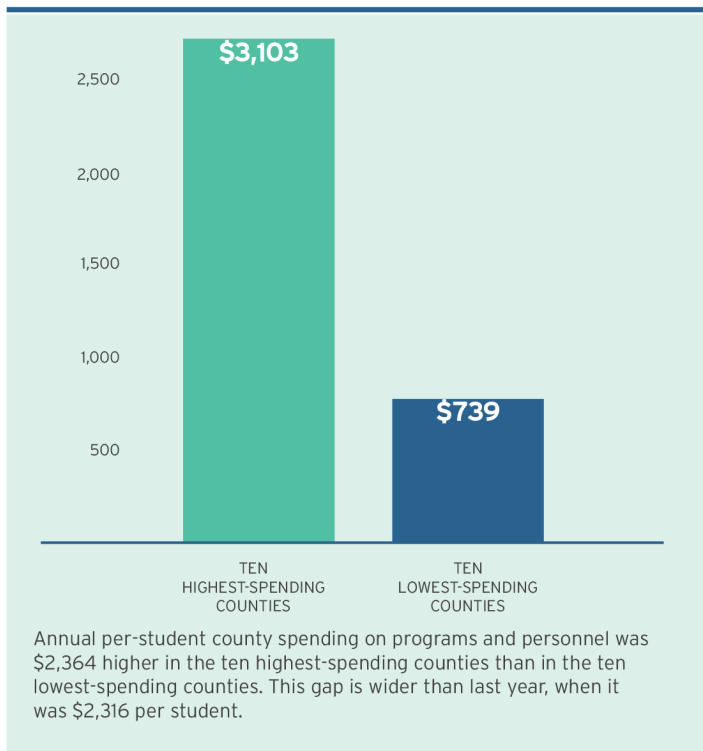
The beginning of 2018 is a time of intense focus on how public schools are funded in North Carolina with the emergence of a new General Assembly Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Finance Reform, the Governor's Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education, the My Future NC Commission and a pending court ruling in the 20+ year old *Leandro* case.

North Carolina is uniquely situated when it comes to school finance because it is one of the few states where schools are majority state-funded. Under the state constitution and the post-Depression School Machinery Acts, among other laws, it is the state's responsibility to adequately fund public schools. It is this unique North Carolina history and law that allows school finance reform at the state level to be a real game changer when it comes to each school child's opportunities, regardless of zip code.

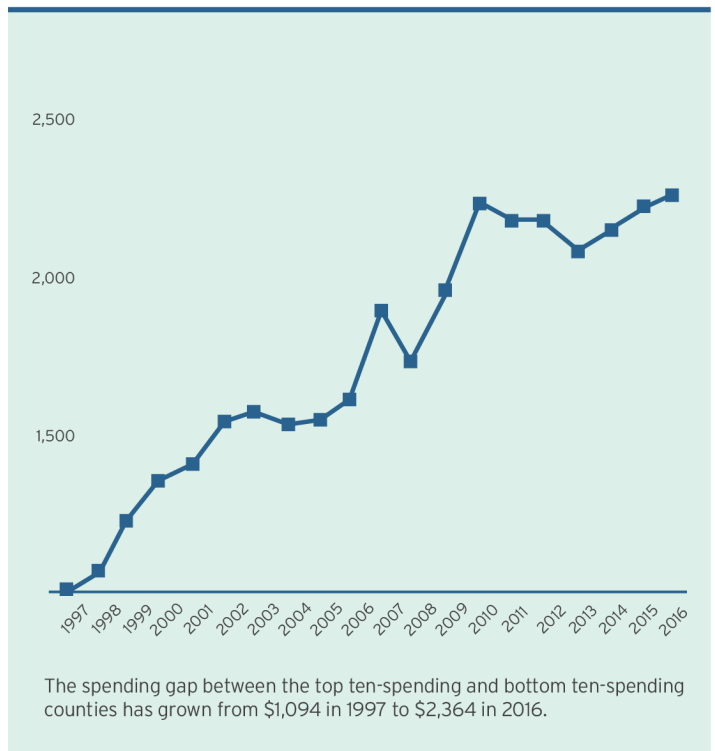
Our *2018 Local School Finance Study*¹ confirms a chronic and growing gap in public school funding between the highest and lowest-wealth counties in the state. The spending gap between the top ten-spending and bottom ten-spending counties has grown from \$1,094 in 1997 to the current gap of \$2,364 per student. Significantly, this gap has widened every year since 2011 and in 18 of the past 20 years.

The wide and growing gap is not because of a lack of effort by county governments. In 2015-2016, the ten poorest counties taxed themselves at nearly double the rate of the ten wealthiest counties - \$0.83 compared to \$0.43, a 40-cent difference. Because of the disparities in real estate wealth, however, the revenue that the poorest counties could generate—even at their higher tax rates—was substantially lower than what the wealthier counties could generate.

COUNTY-LEVEL SPENDING PER STUDENT



WIDENING SPENDING GAP





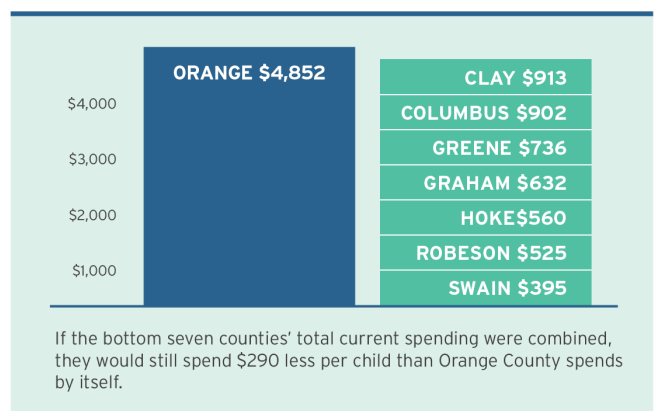
LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- > **Prioritize adequacy and equity of funding.** The reexamination of our state’s school funding model comes at a time when North Carolina’s per pupil spending ranking has tanked since the Great Recession and remains low—we are currently ranked 43rd in the nation. This is coupled with significant spending inequities between higher-wealth and lower-wealth districts that have steadily grown to the wide per student spending gap that we have today. A presentation² made last fall by the Education Commission of the States to the task force on education finance reform emphasized that any high-quality school funding formula must consider *adequacy and equity* in its distribution of resources.
- > **Do no harm.** At a minimum, state leaders should review the fundamentals for funding our state’s public school system and guarantee no harm. This can be accomplished through a pragmatic approach to studying our current system of funding public schools and recommending and testing improvements. A three-year hold harmless provision will aid any transition and create a safety net that prevents local districts from losing funds.
- > **Address capital construction needs.** Any discussion of support for public education must include infrastructure costs. Ninety-eight percent of capital expenses (school buildings and construction) are paid at the local level. However, consistent with the urban v. rural divide, a poorer county in today’s North Carolina cannot generate the revenue necessary for these capital expenses. Additionally, urban and suburban school districts are dealing with ever-increasing student populations, and the NC Department of Public Instruction estimates the current statewide need at \$8 billion for constructing new public school buildings over the next few years. Historically, the state has passed a bond referendum every ten years for school capital construction. The last such statewide bond was passed more than 20

years ago, back in 1996. Both the House and Senate introduced companion bills with bipartisan support to put a bond referendum on the 2018 ballot, HB 866/SB 542 *Public School Building Bond Act of 2017*. These identical bills are eligible in the General Assembly’s 2018 short session in May—and they should be passed. For more information, please see <https://www.ncschoolbond.com>

- > **Address growing gaps between poor and wealthy school systems and their related student achievement gaps.** North Carolina has a significant and growing gap in the availability of resources among school systems. In 2015-16, the state’s ten counties that spent the most per student averaged \$3,103 per student as compared with the ten that spent the least, which averaged \$739 per student. That represents a gap of \$2,364 – and 60 counties are below the state average of \$1,596. Orange County, the highest-spending county in North Carolina, spends more than twelve times per student the amount that bottom-ranked Swain County spends. A new school funding mechanism must address these significant gaps if we want to see improved academic outcomes—and, by consequence, economic growth—in our lower-wealth districts.

SPENDING DISPARITIES



¹ <http://www.ncforum.org/2018-local-school-finance-study/>

² https://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/BCCI-6685/Committee%20Meetings/11-15-17/North%20Carolina%202017_EP.pdf

3

INSIST ON TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

Last year, private school vouchers saw continued support by state lawmakers, moving them forward on a path to spend \$1 billion on the program over a ten-year period. But legislative efforts toward increasing transparency and accountability for the voucher program, which primarily benefits private religious schools, did not succeed despite news that the state's largest voucher school employed a basketball coach who pled guilty to embezzling hundreds of thousands of employee tax withholding dollars that were supposed to be remitted to North Carolina's tax coffers over an eight-year period.

Lawmakers also enacted last year a new voucher-like program, Personal Education Savings Accounts (PESAs). PESAs allow families with children who have disabilities to use up to \$9,000 in state taxpayer funds toward private schooling and related expenses. These funds will be pre-loaded onto debit cards and given to the families of eligible students. The law that establishes PESAs provides few safeguards to ensure these tax dollars are spent on high quality educational opportunities, despite the fact that other states that have PESAs already in place have track records of waste, fraud and abuse associated with these programs.

Charter schools and new charter-like hybrids continue to expand, yet the state has not moved toward promoting increased supports designed to boost transparency and accountability for these publicly-funded programs. During the 2017 legislative session, the General Assembly voted to allow current charter schools to expand their enrollments at higher rates than previously allowed without requiring a state vetting process to ensure the expansions are viable. House lawmakers also pushed two pieces of legislation that could have enacted corporate charter schools operated anywhere in the state, as well as municipal-run charter schools in two majority-white Charlotte suburbs. Those two legislative efforts failed, but they are emblematic of increased attempts to push charter schools further down the path of privatization and away from the original concept under the first charter school law of 1996 that high quality public charter schools should be accessible to all.

TOP TEN VOUCHER SCHOOLS, BY \$

VOUCHER SCHOOL	TOTAL PUBLIC DOLLARS RECEIVED, TO DATE
Trinity Christian School, Fayetteville	\$1,721,370
Greensboro Islamic Academy	\$1,380,330
Word of God Christian Academy, Raleigh	\$1,281,060
Fayetteville Christian School	\$1,154,075
Liberty Christian School, Richlands	\$963,402
Tabernacle Christian School, Monroe	\$903,358
Victory Christian Center School, Monroe	\$868,031
Raleigh Christian Academy	\$846,444
Mount Zion Christian Academy, Durham	\$791,700
Berean Baptist Academy, Fayetteville	\$753,996

The state's Achievement School District got a facelift last year when lawmakers renamed it the Innovative School District (ISD), a district of just one school. Designed to pull five of the state's lowest performing schools out of their local districts and place them in the hands of a separate state-run district that will employ a charter management organization to run those schools, the ISD has faced a contentious battle in the year-long effort to choose which schools will be pulled into it. Some of the schools that were on a preliminary eligibility list fought state takeover, leading the superintendent of the ISD to determine that it's best to start with one school for the ISD's inaugural year. In Robeson County, where Southside-Ashpole Elementary has been named the only school that will be chosen for the ISD, local leaders considered closing the school—but faced with the choice of closing the only elementary school in Rowland or surrendering to the state, they chose the latter. There are only



two charter operators that have submitted bids to run Southside-Ashpole, one of which is tied to the out-of-state billionaire donor who pushed the ISD legislation in the first place.

Finally, we're in the third year of a four-year pilot program through which we've diverted nearly \$35 million in taxpayer dollars to two for-profit companies that delivered classes online. Over that time these virtual charter schools have seen staggering student

withdrawal rates as high as 31 percent—only to have the legislature tweak the law to allow them to hide those churn rates. And their students' academic gains have been poor, with each school failing to meet growth and earning overall “D” school performance grades. Despite these poor outcomes, the two companies running these virtual charter schools have made formal pitches to the General Assembly to make them a permanent option in North Carolina.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- › **Enact measures that require accountability and transparency for taxpayer dollars spent on private PESAs and vouchers.** Only voucher schools that receive more than \$300,000 annually are required to submit to the state a financial review, which is different—and less transparent and robust—than a financial audit. Last year, only 10 out of the state's 358 voucher schools eclipsed the threshold that requires them to demonstrate this modicum of financial transparency. Children and taxpayers deserve more—all publicly-funded private voucher schools should be required to submit financial compliance forms to the state, just as we require of any other nonprofit organization receiving taxpayer dollars. Nonprofit organizations that receive state grant funds are required to submit a detailed accounting of expenditures that include, but are not limited to, salaries, wages, contracted services, supplies, materials, occupancy costs and more. And we should strengthen reporting requirements so that PESA expenses can be validated as eligible educational expenditures.
- › **Hold publicly-funded private education operators to the same standards we hold our public schools.** North Carolina has a laser focus on accountability requirements for charter and traditional public schools, requiring them to post A-F grades and other accountability data that demonstrate how well a school is doing. Without a doubt, the A-F

school grading formula needs improvements, as we know the model's flaws in generally issuing the lowest grades to the schools with the lowest-income families. Nonetheless, public schools are held to much higher accountability standards than publicly-funded private voucher schools, which don't have to be accredited, employ certified teachers, meet any curricular standards or administer standardized tests that can provide a baseline for comparison. Lawmakers owe it to North Carolina children and families—and all taxpayers—to do more to ensure public dollars flow to high quality educational outcomes for students.

- › **Analyze data from the full four-year pilot period for the two virtual charter schools before deciding to lift their pilot status.** The for-profit operators of the state's two experimental virtual charter schools—which have earned 'Ds' from the state for poor academic performance two years in a row—have asked state lawmakers to make them a permanent option here in North Carolina. But we are just past the midway point of a four-year pilot that lawmakers enacted for the virtual charters and the objective academic evidence we have so far is not positive. Thankfully, there are reporting requirements and oversight elements for this pilot program that will allow legislators and their constituents to make informed, data-driven decisions on this experiment's future.

³ <https://www.ncforum.org/out-of-bounds-embezzlement-and-basketball-at-north-carolinas-biggest-voucher-school/>

4

RECRUIT AND RETAIN THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

After a sustained period of time during which North Carolina allowed its teacher pay ranking to fall from the middle of the pack in 2008 to 46th in the nation in 2013, and principal pay to tumble from the national average in 2004 to ranking 50th in 2017, we have finally begun to see much needed investments in both salaries and recruitment options for teachers and principals that are bringing us along on a positive path forward—but much more work still must be done.

Significant investments in teacher salaries have brought us up to 35th in the nation in 2017, and the General Assembly has sought to address a 30 percent decline in UNC education degree enrollments between 2010-2015 by bringing back a new version of the state's renowned Teaching Fellows program. These are positive developments that we hope will receive further expansions and therefore go a long way toward improving student success in North Carolina.

But 2017 also saw our General Assembly eliminate retiree health benefits for future teachers and other state employees hired in 2021 and after. Retiree health benefits are a critical recruitment tool for teachers who look forward to this benefit in exchange for earning comparatively lower wages as public-sector employees over the course of their careers. And the difficulty of recruiting high quality teachers is compounded by the loss of other important benefits and supports teachers once had, such as career

status, master's and doctoral pay, longevity pay, a comprehensive array of professional development opportunities, and adequate classroom resources—all of which are critical tools in bringing children along toward a path of academic success.

Recognizing that principals in North Carolina were paid the lowest in the nation, the General Assembly also went to work on principal pay in 2017 and rolled out a new salary schedule that offered many principals a considerable bump in compensation. But the new plan shifts away from valuing years of experience and credentials to a model that is based, in part, on how students' test scores grow (or don't grow) over time—and it contains other elements that result in some veteran principals taking very large salary decreases next year, unless the General Assembly decides to extend a hold harmless provision that prevents them from losing pay or revamps the plan altogether. Using data from the Department of Public Instruction, the NC Association of Principals and Assistant Principals estimates that approximately 1 in 6 principals will lose money if the hold harmless provision is not extended. There is also a concern that with a performance pay plan of this kind, there could be unintended disincentives for great principals to move to low-performing schools that have chronically struggled to make progress on student test scores and growth. And there is considerable cause for concern that this new pay model for our schools' leaders doesn't work hard





enough to attract and retain high quality leadership talent. Veteran principals are already choosing to retire because of this new plan.

Approximately 60 percent of North Carolina's principals have less than five years of experience, so we know that investments in principal preparation and pipeline programs are critical. The General Assembly's recent enactment of a program to transform principal preparation has enabled six institutions of higher

education to partner with local school districts to hand pick the best and brightest from the teaching ranks and immerse them in a unique training program that prepares them for becoming school leaders. This effort has already shown great promise and is able to produce approximately 120 graduates annually that are on track to be North Carolina school principals.

In 2004, our principals were paid at the national average. Yet in 2017, North Carolina's average principal pay ranked **50 out of 51 states** and the District of Columbia.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- > **Improve the new principal pay plan.** Basing principal compensation largely on student growth on standardized tests overlooks other key elements that an education leader brings to the table when heading up a school. We believe it's important that a compensation model do more to factor in experience and advanced degrees and incentivize top talent to lead low-performing schools.
- > **Restore retiree health benefits for future educators and state employees.** Eliminating this benefit will only hurt recruitment and retention of teachers and principals who considered this a must-

have in exchange for careers in public service that are not as lucrative as private sector jobs. The General Assembly should reinstate this critical benefit.

- > **Continue significant investments in principal preparation.** The General Assembly should consider expanding its investment in its transformative principal preparation programs; as we know, North Carolina requires approximately 300 new principals each year and current levels of funding in this program produce 120 principal candidates.

<p>60%</p> <p>OF NORTH CAROLINA'S PRINCIPALS HAVE LESS THAN 5 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</p>	<p>10%</p> <p>DECREASE IN AVERAGE PRINCIPAL SALARY SINCE 2008-09</p>	<p>#1</p> <p>FACTOR CITED FOR TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION AND TEACHERS' DECISIONS TO STAY AT THEIR SCHOOL IS THE PRINCIPAL.</p>
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5

ONCE AGAIN, FIX THE FAULTY A-F SCHOOL GRADING SYSTEM

A-F school grades debuted in 2013 and during the past four years we've consistently seen that schools receiving Ds and Fs are by and large those serving students from high poverty households. Conversely, high performing schools receiving As and Bs tend to serve student populations that are wealthier than average.

Why is this the case? The A-F school grading system relies too heavily on a school's achievement score - that's 80 percent of the grade - and not enough on a school's growth score. This system inflates the importance of single point-in-time test results, over which schools have far less control than growth. As a result, our system of letter grades says little about how students work hard to grow their academic gains from year to year versus how they perform on one-year's end-of-grade tests. Instead, the system stigmatizes low-performing schools and offers them no resources to make improvements.

And with the enactment of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there is a new development when it comes to A-F grades. States must now take the same accountability model that they use for entire schools and apply that model to certain subgroups of students. What this means is that beginning in 2018, not only will a school receive a grade of A, B, C, D, or F - so too will subgroups of students who fit into as many as ten other categories. When a parent looks at a school's report card in the fall of 2018, he or she will see an overall grade for a school as well as a grade for Asian students, Black students, English language learners, students with special needs, etc. And the same formula to calculate a grade for these student subgroups will also be used, relying heavily on students' performance on a test at a single point in time (80%) versus the growth they achieve on those tests over longer periods of time (20%).

GRADES BY SCHOOL POVERTY PERCENTAGE



Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2017, September 7). 2016-17 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools Executive Summary.



LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- › **Recalibrate the formula for A-F school performance grades.** The General Assembly has seen numerous proposals over the years, consistently from House members, calling for the A-F school grading formula to be recalibrated so that it emphasizes “growth,” or a measure of year-over-year performance. We agree and believe the quality of a school is better measured by how well educators are able to help children who come from all parts of the educational achievement continuum improve their academic outcomes over time—not how they are doing when they arrive at the schoolhouse doors in a snapshot of time. At a minimum, lawmakers should change the formula so that 50 percent is weighted toward growth, and 50 percent toward achievement, or consider separate letter grades for growth and achievement.
- › **Use the A-F letter grades to identify schools for state support.** When a student receives a letter grade of a D or F, that signals to the teacher that he or she is in serious need of additional support in the classroom. If the state is going to use an A-F letter grade system to call out schools that are having a difficult time educating their students, what is the point of doing that without providing additional support and resources to bring that struggling school and its students up from the bottom? If the legislature takes seriously its constitutional obligation to guard and maintain the opportunity for every North Carolina child to receive a “sound basic education,” then schools that are clearly not meeting that mandate should receive more support from the state in the form of curricular and professional development from DPI and the necessary funding from state coffers to reach this obligation.
- › **Consider other indicators of student and school success.** Use proven schoolwide indicators of long-term academic success such as school attendance. For example, it is well-established that chronic absenteeism is one of the biggest predictors of academic failure. Another valid indicator of school success could include the use of student surveys, a piloted effort by the NC Department of Public Instruction.

6

SCALE UP SUCCESSES FOR OUR STATE'S STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

Beginning in 2011 and with the support of the federal Race to the Top grant, North Carolina embarked on an ambitious effort to turn around the state's lowest-performing schools—and the data show that it has been a successful effort. After four years of services provided by the state's District and School Transformation (DST) division, 83 percent of the 118 schools ranked in the bottom five percent of public schools improved their overall performance and no longer fall in the bottom five percent. And 70 percent of those schools met or exceeded growth.

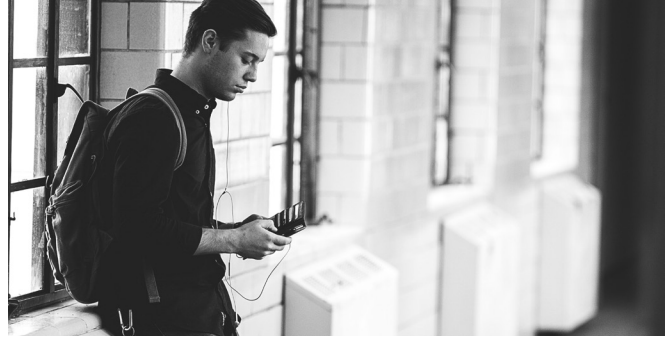
In 2017, DPI presented data detailing the return on investment of the state's efforts to assist and improve low performing schools. Their study found that low-performing high schools with the presence of DST in their buildings resulted in a 1.75 percent higher graduation rate than similar schools, or an additional 54 high school graduates per year. That's a return on investment of \$4.46 million to the state each year.

Despite compelling data that show interventions such as comprehensive needs assessments, planning support, coaching and professional development are all effective strategies to turn around low performing schools, state lawmakers have not chosen to shore up this support strategy, known as "Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools" (TALAS), that was largely funded with federal dollars through the Race to the Top grant. The Department of Public Instruction is now only able to serve less than half of the low-performing schools that they used to serve, and in a limited capacity, through TALAS.

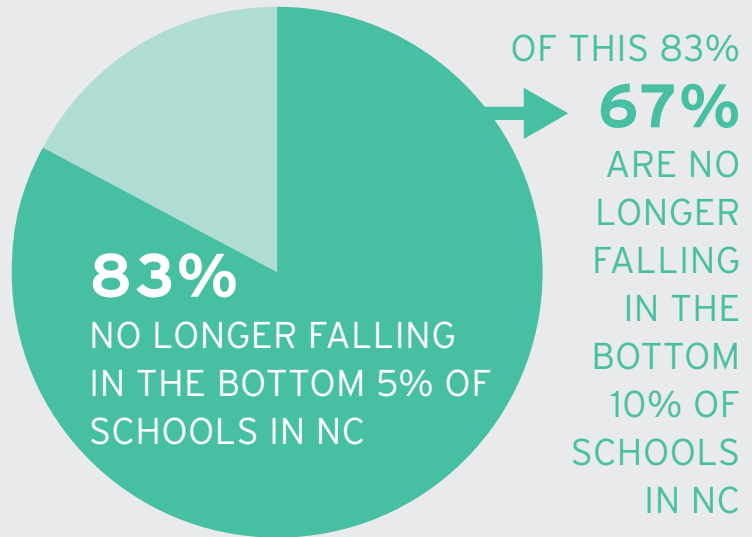
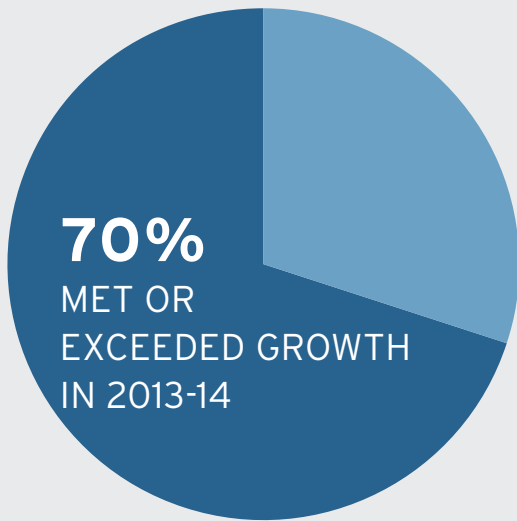
State lawmakers have chosen to invest, however, in a controversial reform effort known as the Innovative School District (formerly known as the Achievement School District). The intention of the ISD, as enacted by the General Assembly in 2016, was to place up to five of the state's lowest performing schools into a new school district run by charter management organization. Similar efforts have been met with intense controversy in Tennessee and other locales and have failed to demonstrate significant improvements for those struggling schools and students. Here in North Carolina, the ISD proposal has faced considerable local pushback, resulting in the state choosing to begin the experiment with just one elementary school (instead of five) in Robeson County, where education leaders there even considered closing the school to avoid placing it in the hands of a charter operator.

North Carolina did recognize a need to incentivize top talent to go to work in low-performing schools when the General Assembly enacted a salary supplement program for highly qualified new teachers who sign on to teach in a low-performing school for the first three years of employment after graduating from an accredited North Carolina educator preparation program. And lawmakers also recognized a need to get folks back into the teacher pipeline to begin with by reenacting the renowned Teaching Fellows program—albeit a scaled down version of the one that used to operate with high accolades in North Carolina for nearly thirty years. It's a welcome move in light of the fact that UNC's educator preparation programs saw a 30 percent enrollment decline between 2010 and 2015.





DST SCHOOL'S PROGRESS 2010-14



LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- > **Expand charter-like flexibility to more public schools.** Struggling schools have additional ways to improve beyond the controversial state takeover plan. They can also take advantage of improvement models the state has authorized, including a “restart” model that offers low-performing schools charter-like flexibility in how they staff schools and educate students. It’s been a popular option with more than 100 schools applying to the state for this status. Given the early successes of this charter-like flexibility in traditional public schools, why not also incentivize high-performing schools and offer comparable flexibility to them as well? Another option is to expand eligibility for the “restart” model to schools before they are deemed chronically low-performing and take a proactive approach to prevent chronic problems in the first place.
- > **Restore funds for the successful TALAS intervention model.** We have indisputable evidence that the Turning Around Low-Achieving Schools model employed by DPI’s District and

School Transformation division has a clear return on investment to North Carolinians. Our state’s education leaders should consider investing in this proven model.

- > **Create more incentives for talented educators to go to work in struggling schools.** As we mentioned earlier in the 2018 Top Ten Education Issues, we are encouraged that the General Assembly invested in increased salaries for principals last year, as we currently rank 50th in the nation in principal salaries. But we are concerned that the new performance plan contains disincentives for talented principals to go to work in low-performing schools that have historically struggled to make progress on student test scores. This plan doesn’t do enough to attract top leaders to our state’s neediest schools, and we must do better. North Carolina needs to invest in more incentives to have the best and brightest principals and assistant principals making gains in our lowest performing schools.

7

ADOPT A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH TO HEALTH AND LEARNING

There is a recognition that a child's academic achievements can't be separated from his or her mental health and social-emotional learning. Stemming from this recognition is a growing movement to encourage schools to refocus their educational efforts in a way that takes a "whole child approach." This approach shifts away from simply targeting a child's academic achievements and instead promotes the overall well-being of a child and considers ways to improve his or her physical and emotional health as well.

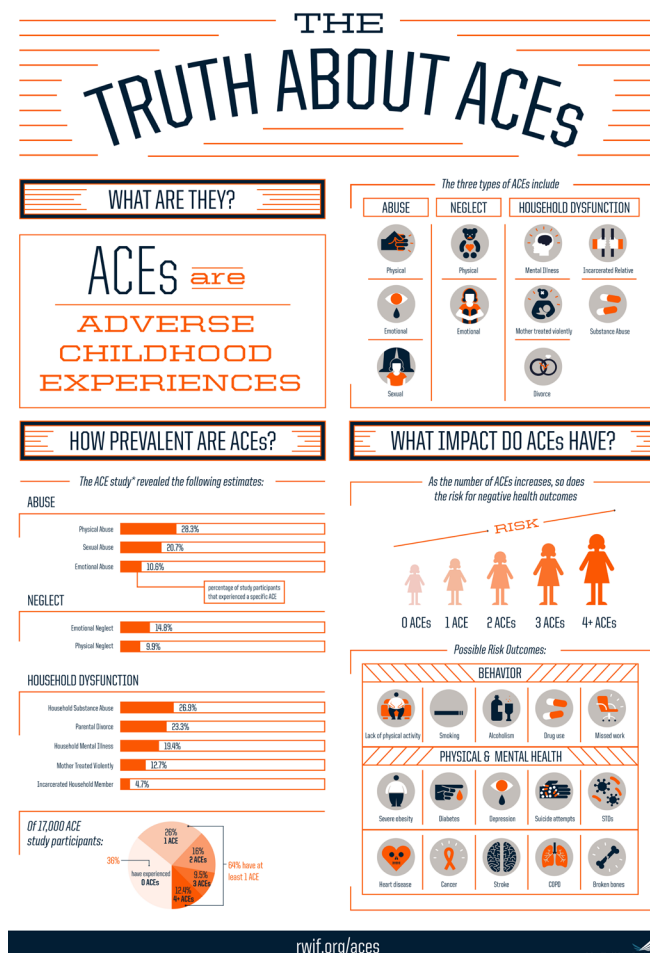
The *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* framework, as adopted by the State Board of Education in 2016, supports the health behaviors and

academic performance of students as inextricably linked to each other.

The Public School Forum promotes the "whole child approach" to health and learning with two of its own programs: **The NC Center for Afterschool Programs** and the **NC Resilience and Learning Project**.

Research suggests that how students spend time outside of school is a determining factor for both academic and lifelong success. High-quality out-of-school time opportunities can improve academic performance and developmental outcomes, reduce aggressive behaviors, improve self-efficacy, strengthen work habits, increase school-day attendance, nurture youth development, decrease juvenile crime and reduce alcohol and drug use, while meeting the needs of working families. **The NC Center for Afterschool Programs** is a comprehensive statewide afterschool and expanded learning network that supports locally-designed school and community solutions which help kids learn and grow, keep children and teenagers safe, and support families to balance work with home.

A growing body of research also indicates that in order for a child's brain to be able to successfully take in information and learn new things, that child must feel physically and emotionally safe and supported throughout the school day. By way of intensive professional development sessions and resilience-focused steering committees, the **NC Resilience and Learning Project** is a new initiative in its pilot year at the Forum that works with high poverty schools across the state where trauma is prevalent in their student populations. Our model is a whole school, whole child framework that aims to create trauma-sensitive schools that will improve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for students. The model emphasizes the importance of creating an enduring culture shift in how participating schools view and approach children who have adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).





LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

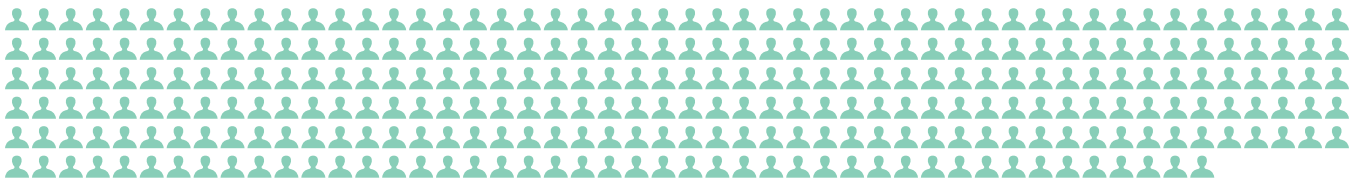
- > **Ensure that all North Carolina children have access to high-quality afterschool and out-of-school time (OST) programs that support their learning.** Nationally, more than 14 million school age children (25 percent) are on their own after school. The unmet demand for afterschool and OST programs continues to grow. Within the state of North Carolina, 2 in 3 children do not have access to an afterschool program but would be enrolled if one were available to them. It is imperative that the state provides resources and support for the development and sustainability of afterschool programs in rural communities where the need is substantial and the access gap is widening.
- > **Increase investment in afterschool and out-of-school time programs now to ensure long-term economic benefits.** Afterschool and out-of-school time programs provide a solid return on investment. Lawmakers have recognized this by dedicating \$6 million each year through 2018-19 to a competitive grant program for at-risk students through which

certain NC afterschool programs are eligible to apply. Research indicates that there is a \$9 return on every \$1 invested in afterschool programs because they improve students' academic performance, increase students' earning potential, and ultimately reduce crime and welfare costs. Failure to invest in our youth on the front end will result in costly expenditures on the back end.

- > **Invest in developing trauma-sensitive schools so that all children can learn and grow in safe and supportive environments.** During this 2017-18 pilot year, the Public School Forum has brought its NC Resilience and Learning Project to schools in Edgecombe and Rowan-Salisbury school districts and we've already seen very positive developments. All of North Carolina's children experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) need trauma-sensitive schools so that they can have the best shot at academic success, and we need your support to bring this model to more schools across the state.

MORE THAN 295,000 KIDS

IN NORTH CAROLINA ARE ALONE AND UNSUPERVISED FROM 3 TO 6 PM.



AFTERSCHOOL IS THE PEAK TIME FOR KIDS TO



COMMIT CRIMES OR BECOME VICTIMS OF CRIMES



EXPERIMENT WITH DRUGS, ALCOHOL, CIGARETTES & SEX

8

PURSUE OUTCOMES-FOCUSED STRATEGIES TOWARD RACIAL EQUITY

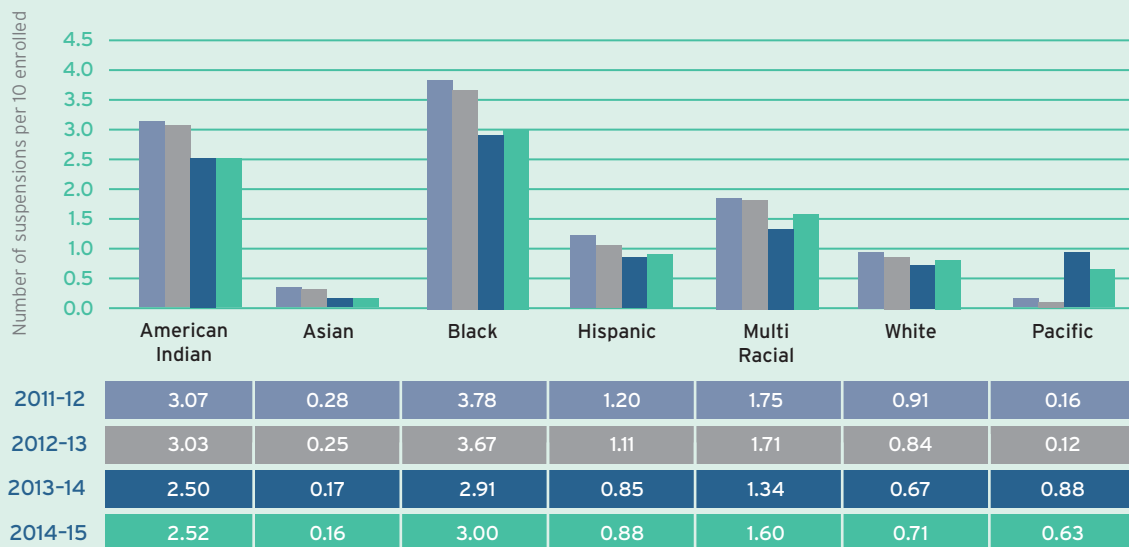
Race continues to have a tremendous influence over the educational outcomes of students in North Carolina, impacting everything from which school a student attends to course selections, how discipline is handled, graduation rates, and more.

Racial equity is a topic many education groups have been hesitant to tackle, for fear of stirring up controversy, or worse. But the dearth of robust discussions on race, coupled with the obvious and unrelenting space it occupies in many of the persistent inequities in our state’s education system, makes it clear that any exploration of educational opportunity that does not address issues of race head-on would be incomplete, if not grossly negligent.

The Forum has a proud history of tackling these difficult discussions when in 2015-2016 it convened a study group devoted to rigorous analysis of research and data on racial equity, using the best available evidence to guide its observations and recommendations. Core findings from the study group’s efforts included the following:

- > a clear **trend toward resegregation** in North Carolina’s public schools;
- > **disproportionate representation** of students of color in **disciplinary actions**;
- > a measurable relationship between **race and a host of other social factors that limit educational opportunity**;
- > an **overrepresentation** of students of color in **special education**;
- > an **underrepresentation** of students of color in the most **rigorous courses and programs** offered in North Carolina schools;
- > a **troubling lack of diversity in the teacher workforce**—troubling because we know that when students of color have teachers of color, it reduces the likelihood of suspension for those students and leads to increased achievement; and
- > a **lack of teaching strategies** that honor students’ cultural customs and traditions, which have been shown to increase achievement.

RATE OF SHORT TERM SUSPENSIONS BY RACE



Note: Race/ethnicity was not reported for 110 short-term suspensions in 2011-12, 264 in 2012-13, 756 in 2013-14 and 445 in 2014-15. Rates were calculated by dividing the number of suspensions in a race/ethnicity category by membership in that race/ethnicity category and multiplying by ten. Source: NC Department of Public Instruction



LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- › **Diversify our teacher workforce.** One way to do this is to develop a fellowship program that incentivizes people of color to become teachers and offers them support to stay in the profession long-term. As we mentioned before in this year's report, we're glad to see the reinstatement of a NC Teaching Fellows program, which offers this kind of opportunity—but we're troubled by the fact that the program initially will not be offered at any historically black colleges or universities. We hope lawmakers will devote the resources necessary to this program so that it can expand and serve prospective minority teachers.
- › **Increase minority enrollment in Advanced Placement and higher-level coursework.** North Carolina should move toward a universal screening process for academically gifted programs so referral systems are as objective and inclusive as feasible, and to reduce unnecessary variance in practice by district. Broward County Schools (FL) reduced racial gaps in identification of gifted programs by utilizing a universal screening process that assessed all second-graders. This replaced a system of parental or teacher referral. Paradise Valley (AZ) Unified School District has created a gifted identification system that responds to the needs of the community. The district uses a multifaceted identification process and embeds a gifted specialist in each of the district's elementary schools to train teachers and staff to recognize high potential. We recommend that North Carolina districts evaluate similar approaches to Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) identification processes in order to improve racial equity and improve access to AIG offerings. Making the assessments multidimensional (not relying exclusively on test scores), focusing on potential and not just performance, and looking at subjects beyond just reading and math could all prove beneficial.
- › **Move schools toward more equitable student discipline practices.** North Carolina is better than many other states in the level and depth of its consolidated discipline report, but schools and districts are not obligated to provide similarly nuanced information to their constituencies. If we require all schools and districts to publish annual discipline reports disaggregated by race with cross-tabulation, this could go a long way toward safeguarding student rights by shining a light on areas of disproportionality or disparity as well as laud successes gained. Guilford County Schools' annual accountability report is an excellent template to follow. Restorative Justice efforts should be highlighted not as an alternative for disciplinary action but rather an intervention prior to escalation. It provides whoever committed the wrong the chance to be held accountable by the community of students affected, and it allows those individuals to determine what must be done to reconcile. Finally, school personnel should all be trained on ACEs as referenced in #7 of our Top 10, and employing trauma-sensitive practices in disciplining students while keeping them in school would go a long way.
- › **Let's get comfortable with the uncomfortable.** The events of Charlottesville just prior to the beginning of the school year drove home the challenges that remain in our society. Our student population is more diverse than ever, becoming majority minority over the past five years. More than ever we need open and honest dialogue. Our leaders and our educators must understand the significant role race still plays in our society and schools—and be willing to talk about it.

9

KEEP BUILDING UPON NORTH CAROLINA'S INVESTMENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

By 2020, 67 percent of jobs will require some postsecondary education. To meet this challenge, we need to start very early. After years of research into how to most effectively and efficiently develop human capital, Nobel Laureate Professor James J. Heckman concluded, "The foundation for school, career and life success is largely determined through the development of cognitive and character skills beginning in children's earliest years."⁴

North Carolina has long been a leader in early childhood education—and we believe that there are several opportunities on the horizon that can continue North Carolina's leadership in ensuring children have a strong foundation for learning and life success.

We know that reading proficiency is the single greatest predictor of high school graduation and success later in life, and we are encouraged to see that the General Assembly has recognized the recommendations for early childhood policy and programs made by the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative and other key stakeholders. During their 2017 legislative session, lawmakers enacted a Birth to Third Grade Interagency Council that will be launched in 2018 and will be charged with developing and implementing an interagency plan for a coordinated system of early care, education, and child development services to meet the needs of all children from birth to eight years of age. The council will also implement a

statewide longitudinal evaluation of the educational progress of children from pre-kindergarten through third grade. This is a great example of how collective action coalescing around a shared goal can result in tremendous progress, and we hope the council will continue to be an opportunity for stakeholders to continue their shared work to the benefit of our young children.

Building on previous investments, last year the General Assembly also authorized another expansion of NC Pre-K, which is a nationally recognized, state-funded program that aims to enhance school readiness for at-risk four-year-olds from low-income families. Between 2017-2019, an additional 3,500 4-year-olds should be able to access pre-K; however, it's important to underscore that the pre-K system as a whole is fragile. Forty-four of North Carolina's 115 school districts rejected last year's new expansion funds for pre-K because they lacked appropriate classrooms, qualified pre-K teachers, or didn't have waitlists—lists that early childhood advocates say are not a good indicator of need because, for example, there are many eligible children who are not on a waitlist. In addition, we know that the General Assembly's unfunded class size mandate is also having a negative impact on already existing pre-K programs, as some districts are considering displacing or eliminating their pre-K programs altogether to comply with the class size law for kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade classrooms.





LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

- › **Continue to advance and align birth-to-eight initiatives locally.** The passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers a unique opportunity for advancing and aligning birth-to-third grade early learning programs. Last fall North Carolina submitted an ESSA plan to the federal government that included a statewide approach to early learning, and this year local districts will have the opportunity to submit their plans in consultation with local early childhood learning stakeholders. Local districts should take this opportunity to engage cross-sector with groups that all have a vested interest in seeing a streamlined and improved birth-to-third grade continuum and lean on the support of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation and the NC Department of Public Instruction for collaboration strategies by way of their regional meetings and webinars.
- › **Strengthen North Carolina's early childhood capacity.** While we welcome continued efforts on the part of the General Assembly to expand the state's pre-kindergarten offerings and implement their policy goal of increasing the number of proficient readers by third grade, it's important to underscore that the early childhood ecosystem as a whole is fragile. We must do more to attract and retain high quality early childhood educators by way of compensating them more for the intensive

work that they do. We must do more to build the capacity of teachers across the birth-to-third grade continuum and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to support children's optimal development. And we must do more to ensure that well-intended policies do not include unintended consequences that actually hurt efforts to expand high quality early childhood education.

- › **Continue to pursue collaborative approaches.** The efforts of NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading is a great example of collaboration between a diverse set of state and local leaders on these early childhood issues. The NC Early Childhood Foundation deserves a lot of credit for its leadership in this effort. The Pathways Design Teams have identified shared birth-through-eight, whole-child measures of success that put children on a pathway to grade-level reading and looked at data on how children are doing on those measures, with a special focus on where the biggest inequities lie. The teams are now developing strategies that focus on research- and evidence-based policies, practices and capacity to make progress on third grade reading outcomes, children's social-emotional health, high quality birth-through-age-eight early care and education, and regular school attendance. These recommendations will be finalized by the end of spring 2018.

⁴ http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2016/04/every_student_succeeds_act_exp.html

10

FOR THOSE WHO GOVERN OUR STATE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DO IT WELL (AND TOGETHER)

The best learning environment for all children is an excellent teacher in every classroom, a great principal leading every school, and adequate resources to help these masters of teaching and learning do what they do best for children every day. For such a simple recipe for success, however, there are a lot of cooks in the kitchen when it comes to North Carolina's governance of public schools.

The state is ringing in 2018 with an age-old question: Who is in charge of public education in North Carolina and how should we improve educational outcomes from varying points along the educational continuum? This is not the first year that these governance questions present themselves, but what is different this year is that there are some unique and threshold education issues on the table—and a preponderance of commissions and bodies created to provide solutions to these fundamental education issues.

Here are the key governance issues that will impact our schools in 2018:

1. **NC State Board of Education v. The State of North Carolina and State Superintendent Mark Johnson**

House Bill 17, passed by the General Assembly in late 2016, attempted to shift some constitutional school governance powers away from the State Board of Education to the new State Superintendent for Public Instruction, Mark Johnson. Those two parties are currently locked in a legal battle over who should retain these school governance powers and the State Supreme Court will likely hand down a landmark decision on this matter sometime in 2018.

2. **Leandro et al. v. State**

In this 20+ year old case, the NC Supreme Court has made it clear that it is the state that bears responsibility for fulfilling the constitutional obligation to guard and maintain the opportunity for every North Carolina child to receive a “sound

basic education.” Included in this ruling are these basic tenets: a well-trained, competent teacher must be in every classroom; a well-trained, competent principal must be in every school; and there must be enough resources so that every child has an equal opportunity for education. As this case continues, a Superior Court judge is considering a joint motion by most of the *Leandro* parties to appoint an outside independent consultant who will design a plan for North Carolina to meet its constitutional mandate. The parties expect a ruling on the 2017 joint motion sometime in 2018.

3. **Governor's Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education**

Governor Cooper created this commission last year and it met for the first time last fall. The Commission's 18 member-experts will help identify how to improve public schools so that all NC students receive the education they need to thrive, the underlying principle in *Leandro*. This Commission and any independent consultant appointed by the court in *Leandro* will seek to work together toward a common end.

4. **Joint Legislative Education Finance Reform Task Force**

The General Assembly appointed an 18-member task force of legislators to study and develop a new funding model for public schools statewide. Its final report is due by October 1, 2018—although task force members' initial wide-ranging questions about school finance point toward a likely extension of that final report deadline.

5. **My Future NC Commission**

This commission, which met for the first time in November 2017, seeks to break down those proverbial silos between early childhood, K-12, community colleges and the other post-secondary colleges and universities by developing a comprehensive statewide education plan from early childhood through postsecondary education. Notably, three



leaders on this commission—the President of the University of North Carolina, the President of the NC Community College System, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction—are also three of the same leaders that serve on the Governor’s Education Cabinet, which is authorized under state law to also develop statewide education goals.

6. B-3 Interagency Council

B-3, which stands for “birth through third grade,” is a new council created by the General Assembly in its 2017 budget to review and make recommendations on the implementation of a statewide vision for early childhood education and a program for transitioning children from preschool to kindergarten. It was referenced previously in the 2018 Top 10 Education Issues. The impetus for this council is to encourage stronger collaboration and outcomes between the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the NC Department of Public Instruction, as well as other early childhood stakeholders. The council is to submit its first report to the General Assembly by April 15, 2018.

7. Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission

This is yet another new commission created in 2017 that comprises 18 members appointed by the General Assembly. The commission is to develop and recommend to the State Board of Education rules related to educator preparation programs in higher education, professional standards for educators, and ways to ensure that the clinical practice requirements for student-teachers effectively prepare high-quality professional educators for North Carolina’s public schools. It has already issued its initial sets of recommendations to the SBE, and its timeline is aggressive.

As outlined above, North Carolina has a multitude of issues and bodies created to solve complex school governance questions, all with the end goal: finding a way to better educate our students. If North Carolina is to have an educated citizenry, a goal that all political parties ostensibly agree upon, then what is in order is a heavy dose of civil discourse, good government, and real problem-solving that all lead to solutions that stick for the long haul. It is the Forum’s hope that many of these education leaders not only do good work to this end, but also seek to break out of any unintended silos in which they find themselves and work together to accomplish a shared end goal.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2018

> **Avoid negative, unintended consequences.** Among the rank and file educators, “reform fatigue” is real and it runs the risk of trickling down to our school children, usually in less than positive ways. At a minimum, for those at the state level who govern our public schools in every branch of government, we hope that they communicate with each other on data, policy, funding and reform. Use the art of compromise if necessary, but at least make thoroughly informed decisions on the front end to avoid unintended consequences on the back end. That’s just good government.

> **Education leaders and stakeholders tasked with steering the governance of our public schools must work together.** Public education should be one of the functions of government that transcends partisan politics. With some siloed solutions anticipated at the highest levels of state government, it becomes even more critical for the boots-on-the-ground education leaders, parents, business stakeholders and community leaders to coalesce and ensure the opportunity for a sound basic education for every child in North Carolina.

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Our Vision

All North Carolina children shall have the opportunity to reach their full potential through equal and meaningful public education that nourishes our state's civic and economic vitality.

Mission of the Public School Forum of North Carolina

To provide trusted, nonpartisan, evidence-based research, policy analysis and innovative programs that empower an informed public to demand that education best practice becomes common practice throughout North Carolina.



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