



# NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION 2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The **North Carolina School Boards Association** (NCSBA) is a volunteer membership association representing all 115 local boards of education in North Carolina and the board of the Cherokee Central School. For the general improvement and betterment of public education in North Carolina, NCSBA will advocate for the following items during this legislative biennium.

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## SCHOOL CALENDAR

**Challenge:** Tripling in the last decade, roughly 20% of NC’s public school students now attend a school (incl. traditional & charter) that is authorized by law to set start and end dates.

**Recommendation:** Provide public school units which lack authority to determine school start and end dates with more local control to do so.

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## SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

**Challenge:** The current accountability models to grade public schools and incentivize educators are not aligned with what is in the best interest of students. North Carolina’s current formula to grade K-12 schools was proven by DPI and ExcelinEd – the founder of the A-F school grading system – to be significantly flawed.

**Recommendations:**

- 🍎 Revamp the current school grade formula of 80% proficiency/20% growth. Support an alternative model, similar to what was proposed by DPI and approved by the State Board of Education in Spring 2024.
- 🍎 Divide certain performance bonuses among more educators (staff) in a school.
- 🍎 Shorten End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) tests.

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## RETENTION & RECRUITMENT

**Challenge:** North Carolina’s average teacher pay is below 3 of its 4 neighboring states and 5th out of 12 southeastern states. Further, NC school districts began the 2024-25 school year with more than 8,000 vacancies statewide.

The goal is to provide the best teacher in every classroom and the best possible personnel throughout each school.

**Retention Recommendations:**

- 🍎 Implement step increases at every level, not just years 1-15 and 25.
- 🍎 Provide pay raises for every school employee, with an extra focus on STEM teachers, special education teachers, and bus drivers.
- 🍎 NC’s average teacher pay should be #1 in the Southeast (= top 20 in the nation).
- 🍎 Provide supplemental pay.

**Recruitment Recommendations:**

- 🍎 Expand recruitment programs to address the large number of vacancies and the lack of a teacher pipeline; provide signing bonuses.

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## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Challenge:** The current flat funding model of \$5,309 per student with a disability simply does not reflect the cost of each student’s unique mandated services and programs. Meanwhile, the State’s 13% funding cap for students with disabilities creates an unfunded mandate for many districts.

**Recommendations:**

- 🍎 Implement a weighted funding formula based on the cost of services – modeled after DPI’s proposal (approved by the State Board), following the General Assembly’s directive to study the issue and give a recommendation. NCSBA requests a temporary hold-harmless/phase out for districts facing a decrease in funding.
- 🍎 Increase/eliminate the 13% funding cap.

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## SCHOOL CAPITAL (New Construction, Additions, Repairs & Renovations)

**Challenge:** DPI's most recent five-year K-12 school construction report found that capital needs among North Carolina's school districts ballooned to more than \$13B, a 62% increase from the previous report. Over the past five years the State provided roughly 16% of the needed capital funds identified in the most recent report. The fact is that most counties are financially unable to fund a local school construction bond.

**Recommendation:** Continue to increase funding for new school construction and repairs and renovations.

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## PRE-K STUDENTS

**Challenge:** Pre-K students in public school classrooms are not counted toward a school's Average Daily Membership (ADM) funding. Beginning in January 2025, Pre-K will count when calculating principal pay, but still not when calculating ADM funding.

**ADM Funding Recommendation:** Accurately fund the total number of students attending a school, even our youngest learners.

**Challenge:** Evidence shows that Pre-K significantly improves readiness in kindergarten and beyond for all students. North Carolina ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation for Pre-K quality standards but 29<sup>th</sup> for access to Pre-K.

**Expansion Recommendation:** Expand state funded Pre-K with a goal of making it universal.

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## SCHOOL SAFETY

**Challenge:** There were more school shootings nationwide in the past 6 years than in the previous 50 years combined. Two of NC's four neighboring states have already experienced mass school shootings. Fortunately, North Carolina has not, however, reports of possession of a firearm or powerful explosive on K-12 campuses spiked 60% from 2018-19 to 2022-23 (the most recent data available).

Students should be able to focus on learning, teachers on educating, and parents on knowing their children will come home at the end of the school day unharmed.

### **Recommendations:**

- 🍎 Increase funding for School Safety Grants.
- 🍎 Increase funding for more School Health Personnel (school psychologists, nurses, counselors, social workers) to address mental health crises and meet nationally recommended ratios.
- 🍎 Continue providing School Resource Officer (SRO) Grants.

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## HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS

**Challenge:** Charter and private schools dominate 1A classification high school athletic state championships. For example, in women's soccer, LEAs have not won a 1A state title in 11 years, while in men's swimming, LEAs have won only 1 of the last 7. Charters and privates have a distinct advantage over LEAs, whether it be the lack of attendance zones, recruiting, or scholarships.

**Recommendation:** Prohibit private and charter schools from participating in the same 1A through 8A classification state tournaments as district schools.

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## OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS

**Challenge:** The General Assembly began to incorporate accountability standards for the Opportunity Scholarship Program during the 2023-24 biennium, but it lacks transparency and accessible information for parents to determine the quality of participating schools.

**Recommendation:** Continue to implement accountability and transparency for the taxpayer and for parents of students receiving Opportunity Scholarships to allow them to better evaluate and compare educational options.

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## HURRICANE HELENE RELIEF

Address emerging public school needs.

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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*During each legislative session there are always unanticipated bills introduced that affect public schools. The following are guiding principles that NCSBA will use to evaluate legislation that is introduced during the legislative session.*

- 🍎 NCSBA opposes any legislation that would violate federal laws or the state constitution.
- 🍎 NCSBA opposes any legislation that would require school systems to expend additional financial resources without the State providing those necessary resources. NCSBA will continue to advocate for funding for currently existing mandates.
- 🍎 NCSBA opposes any legislation that attempts to diminish or take away local control and supports legislation that provides additional local control and decision making.
- 🍎 NCSBA supports legislation that creates safe environments for students and staff as long as it is consistent with the aforementioned principles.
- 🍎 NCSBA supports providing school districts with funds sufficient to guarantee full funding of all funding formulas.
- 🍎 NCSBA supports an efficient hiring system for employees that will provide a competitive salary and benefits package for all school employees.
- 🍎 NCSBA supports legislation, policies, and initiatives that better prepare young children for success in the K-12 education system and in life.
- 🍎 NCSBA opposes directing tax dollars to K-12 private schools that are not accountable for the public funds.

***For questions and inquiries,  
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