

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

2019-2020 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 nation. NCSBA provides advocacy, leadership, and services that enable school boards to govern at the highest level. For the general improvement and betterment of public education in North Carolina, NCSBA will advocate for the following items during the 2019-20 biennium legislative session.

Ensuring Student Success

School Calendar: Given North Carolina's recent experiences with Hurricanes Florence, Michael and Matthew, along with numerous annual snowstorms, locally elected officials could better plan and prepare for weather related school closings if they had more control to set local school calendars.

Additionally, calendar flexibility is currently granted to public charter schools and low-performing (Restart) schools because it can positively impact student achievement. By allowing similar flexibility to ALL public schools, local school boards can choose to:

- Schedule first semester exams before winter break
- Align K-12 calendars with Community College and University calendars

School Technology: Dating back to a 2008 court judgment of \$748 million, the State still owes public schools \$730 million in technology funding. An arrangement to settle the debt has not yet been established. The ongoing transition among NC's public schools into the digital age is a widely supported investment. NCSBA is committed to working with the General Assembly to reach a mutually beneficial resolution.

K-3 Class Size: The State Board of Education should be granted authority to provide waivers to school districts for K-3 class size requirements if the local board of education can demonstrate that space is not available in the school district and/or demonstrate that the necessary certified teachers are not available for employment.

Low-Performing Schools: Revise the definition of a low-performing school because a school that "meets expected growth" should not be labeled as such.

Additionally, a grant program should be established to implement new innovative programs in low-performing schools.

Providing a Safe Learning Environment

Student Support Personnel (School Psychologists, Social Workers, Counselors, and Nurses): It is critical to properly staff public schools with the necessary support structure for the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students. The General Assembly should provide sufficient allotments to meet the nationally recommended staff to student ratios for these positions.

School Resource Officers: The General Assembly should provide the appropriate funding to have a full-time resource officer in each school. Additional pay, training, and education should be provided for this unique law enforcement position.

Ensuring Efficient Operations

School Construction/Capital: Allow North Carolinians to vote on a significant statewide school bond and establish more local option sales taxes to help LEAs address the multi-billion-dollar backlog of school construction needs.

LEA/Charter School Relations: Authorize county commissioners to transfer the appropriate per pupil tax dollars directly to charter schools, just like city LEAs receive their local funds. Currently, the county transfers the entire allotment to the LEA, then the LEA “writes a check” to each charter school. Revising the local distribution process ensures charter schools receive their fair share of local tax dollars on the same day as LEAs.

Sales Tax Refund: Cities, counties, public universities, charter schools, and private schools currently receive a state sales tax refund. The State eliminated the ability for local boards of education to directly receive a state sales tax refund in 2005. The General Assembly should reinstate the state sales tax refund to bring local boards of education in-line with other government entities.

Recruiting and Retaining Top Talent

Teacher Pay: In addition to ensuring the average base salary continues an upward trajectory, lawmakers should reinstate supplements for teachers who earn advanced degrees. Veteran teachers, who have received only one permanent pay increase in recent years, should receive special consideration during the biennium.

Additionally, the General Assembly should consider a “team bonus.” For instance, K-2 teachers provide the foundation for 3rd grade reading teachers to receive a bonus, therefore, they too should get a piece of the pie. The same can be said for K-3 teachers when it comes to 4th grade math bonuses.

Principal Pay: Principal pay is now based solely on the size and performance of the school. Years of experience as a principal (was formerly based on years as an educator) should also be a factor in the salary formula. A tenth-year principal will be more effective than a first-year principal.

Additionally, the 2016-17 hold harmless clause for principals should be extended.

School Finance Officer: School finance officers should be provided the same opportunity for dismissal procedures as all other employees and the same contractual terms as assistant and associate superintendents. This would provide the necessary whistle-blower protections when the unusual need arises.

Accountability

School Grades: Principal salaries and teacher bonuses are determined by student growth scores. Therefore, it only makes sense to use a similar method to determine a school’s grade. Increasing the current weight of student growth from 20% will more accurately reflect the school’s impact on increasing student achievement.

Additionally, the General Assembly should make permanent the 15-point scale for A-F school grades. The system is scheduled to revert to a 10-point scale for the 2019-20 school year.

Ethics Training for School Administrators: School administrators involved in the making or administration of contracts should be required to have at least two hours of ethics training upon such employment and in odd-numbered years thereafter.

Fiscal Accountability: NCSBA supports local legislation when a local board of education desires to transfer fiscal accountability to school boards – including the ability to raise revenue - so that they can be held accountable for all aspects of public education in that service area. This would allow NC school boards to operate similarly to over 90% of the school boards in the country.

Virtual Charter Schools: The State Board of Education should be granted the authority to close a school participating in the virtual charter school pilot program for academic reasons.

Opportunity Scholarships & Education Savings Accounts: Measures should be in place that allow parents to compare private schools receiving public taxpayer dollars with public schools. Among the options, require a nationally normed test approved by the State Board of Education for all eligible students in grades 3 and higher whose tuition and fees are paid in whole or in part with a scholarship grant.

Guiding Principles

During each legislative session there are always unanticipated bills introduced that affect public schools. The following are guiding principles 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 also 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.