

# YOU CAN BE AN ADVOCATE!



*A Toolkit for Supporting Public Education*

## Dear Friend of Education,

We focus first and foremost on providing the most recent information about public education to North Carolinians. We hope that this toolkit will help you better understand current policy and give you ways to make your voice heard in communities across the state and in local government.

The information provided is a suggested guide to help you advocate for public education. You can find fast facts on teacher compensation and impacts of the state budget; helpful tips for communicating your views; and information on how to contact elected leaders. Please visit our website ([publicschoolsfirstnc.org](http://publicschoolsfirstnc.org)) for more research and fact sheets on key education issues.

Public Schools First NC is happy to work with you and help you connect with other individuals or groups in your area that are engaged in supporting our public schools. You can reach us using our contact information on the last slide of the presentation.

There are other good resources to help you start organizing locally:

- Wellstone's Organizer's Guide to the Galaxy ([www.wellstone.org](http://www.wellstone.org)) has a wealth of practical information on everything from how to build and sustain a local community group to using movement technology to engage others in the effort to support public education.
- The Rural Organizing Project ([www.rop.org](http://www.rop.org)) offers excellent advice on developing leaders and building an organization. You can effectively organize and get involved—even from your kitchen table!

Linking up with other individuals or groups who share your values can be an invigorating, uplifting, and effective way to advocate for policy changes that support strong public schools.

We hope that you'll use these resources and share them with other citizens concerned and invested in the future of public education.

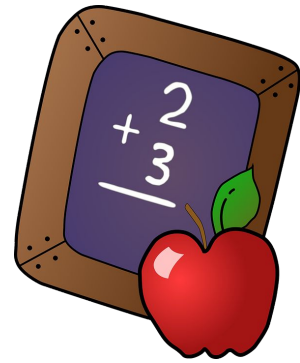
Sincerely,

**Yevonne Brannon, PhD**  
**Board of Directors**





# NORTH CAROLINA'S K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS



- **94,000+** Teachers in more than **2,500** public schools
- **10th largest** K-12 enrollment in the country
- **1.5million+** students in public schools
- Overall student enrollment is **majority-minority**

- Local school systems have enrollments from **573 to 153,000** students
- Over last decade, significant improvements in overall graduation rate (**85.6%** in 2015)
- Dropout rate decreased more than half over past decade (**1.5%** in 2015)



# LOSS OF EDUCATION FUNDING



Since 2008...

- Student population has **increased by 81,000**
- **7,884** teacher assistants cut
- **\$1 Billion** lost for classroom activities such as TAs, Teachers, Textbooks, etc.
- **\$0** in state funding for mentor teachers or professional development

According to **NCDPI's** 2016 report to the General Assembly:

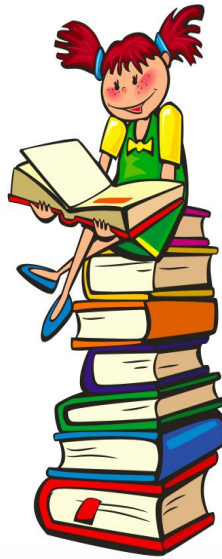
- Public schools' share of the General Fund **decreased by 13.7%** since 1970.
- If we maintained the 1970 level of funding, we would have **\$3 billion more** for our public school students.



# PER-PUPIL, TEXTBOOK, & CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Between 2008-09 and  
2016-17...

- Per-pupil funding went from **\$6,237** (inflation adjusted) to **\$5,616**
- Textbook funds reduced from **\$83** to **\$46** per pupil



In school year 2014-15...

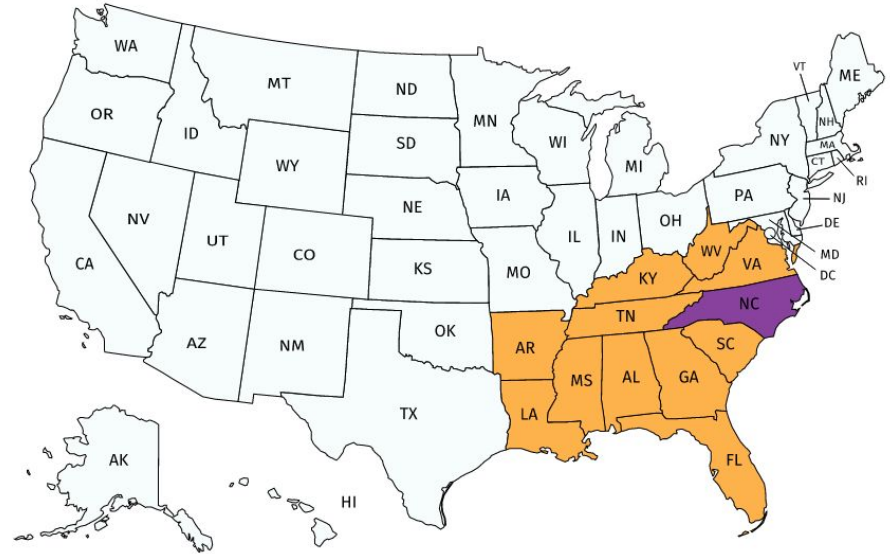
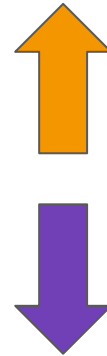
- Average cost per textbook: **\$65.89**
- Average total cost for math, reading, and social science textbooks per pupil: **\$197.67**

North Carolina ranks **43rd** in per-pupil funding



# AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY

	2007-2008	2015-2016
US	\$52,308	\$58,064
NC	\$48,454	\$47,985



North Carolina ranked **41st** in the U.S. in Teacher Pay in 2016.

Out of **12 states** in the Southeast Region, North Carolina ranked **8th** in Teacher Pay.



# HOW DO OUR TEACHERS STACK UP?

- Board certified teachers: **20,611**
- NC has **more** National Board Certified teachers than **any other state**.
- Teachers with Master's Degrees: **28.7%**





# DESTABILIZING THE TEACHING PROFESSION



## LAWMAKERS HAVE...

1. Eliminated the **NC Teaching Fellows** Program
2. Established **one-year contracts** for most teachers
3. Eliminated **career status protections** for teachers hired after 2013

The UNC system has had a **30% decline** in enrollment in teaching programs since 2010.

Teacher turnover rates went from **11.17%** in 2010-11 to **14.84%** in 2014-15.

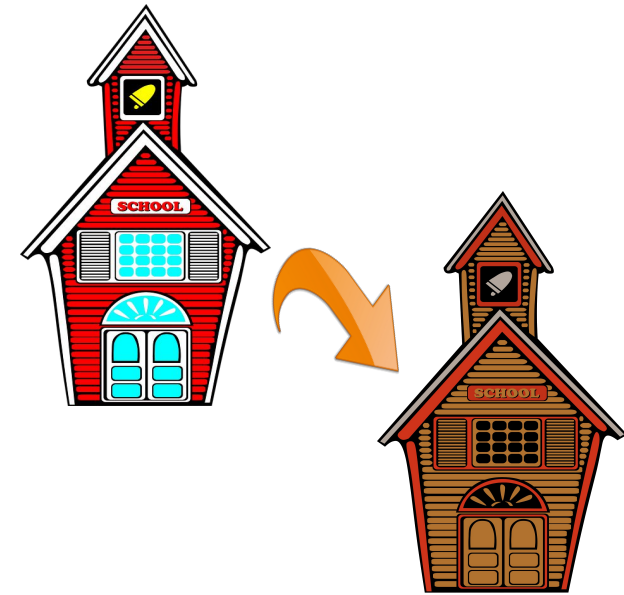




# SCHOOL VOUCHERS

- Voucher funding increased to **\$32.6 million** for 2016-17.
- More than **90%** of voucher monies in 2015-16 went to **religious schools**.
- Voucher budget adds **\$10 million** annually until 2027-2028 when funding will cost taxpayers **\$144 million** yearly.
- In July 2015, the NC Supreme Court **overruled** a lower court's decision and declared our voucher program **legal**.

**VOUCHERS:**  
**PUBLIC** \$\$\$ for  
**PRIVATE** schools



**61%** of  
North Carolinians  
oppose school  
vouchers.



# NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE BUDGET PROCESS



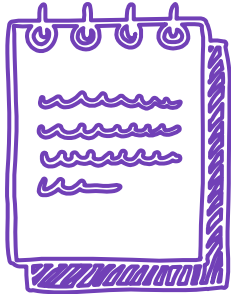
- **Constitution** requires balanced budget
- **Governor** presents a two-year biennial budget (odd-numbered years) around early March to start budgeting process
- **Senate & House** approve the final official state biennial budget

1. **Governor** proposes budget
2. **Senate** presents its budget
3. **House** accepts Senate budget or presents own
4. **Senate & House** work together to create conference budget
5. **Full Senate & House** vote on budget & send to **Governor**
6. **Governor** can sign, not sign, or veto



# ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN BE AN ADVOCATE!

Focus on a  
specific issue  
& learn the  
facts.



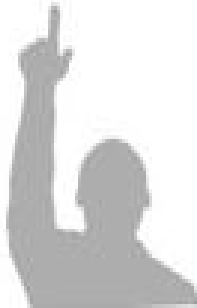
Find your  
legislators.



Set up an  
in-person  
meeting with  
your legislators.



Join others  
to lobby  
legislators!



Write a letter  
to the editor.



Call or write  
your legislators.





# MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS



## *Before the Meeting*

- Call to make an appointment either in your home district or Raleigh.
- If asked what you would like to discuss, give a short answer, like “school funding.”
- Know the issues! Visit our website for fact sheets on key education issues, but don’t get bogged down in details.

## *At the Meeting*

- Arrive a little early, be polite, and professional at all times.
- Clearly state your issue, why it is important, and what you want your legislator to do about it. Use personal stories!
- Don’t get into a debate and don’t make things up. It’s okay not to know an answer to a question!

## *After the Meeting*

- Follow up with a thank-you note summarizing what you discussed to remind them of commitments and deadlines for addressing your concerns!



# CALLING LEGISLATORS



## *Before the Call*

- Be sure that you know the details of the bill and the bill number.
- Write down one or two “talking points” about why you support or oppose a particular bill.
- Consider adding a brief personal story about how the bill would affect your family, school, or community.

## *Making the Call*

- When staff answers, be pleasant! They are on the firing line all day. You probably won't be able to speak to your legislator, so developing a positive relationship with staff is important.
- Keep it short: introduce yourself and identify yourself as a constituent and briefly go through your “talking points.”
- Leave your contact information! Ask for a follow-up response.

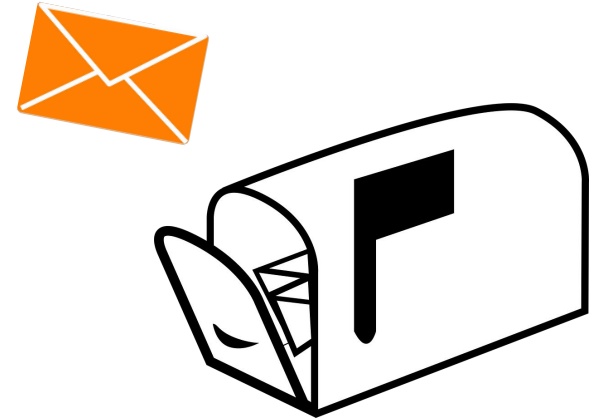
## *Example*

The person answering explains that Rep. XYZ is not available, but they would be glad to take information:

“Thank you, I appreciate your time. I’m calling because I strongly support HB 123, which restores funding for textbooks and instructional supplies. At my son’s school, the algebra teacher has only one set of books for three classes, and no one can take the books home. Textbooks are not a frill; they are essential for all students! I’m asking Rep. XYZ to support this bill.”



# WRITING LEGISLATORS



1. **Identify** yourself and **why** you are writing.
2. **Explain** your position and why you are **concerned**.
3. **Restate** what you're asking the legislator to do and **why**.
4. **Sign** the letter and **include** your address!



# SAMPLE LETTER



**Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_,**

I am the parent of two elementary school students in your district and I am deeply concerned about cuts to teacher assistants in grades K-3.

Last year, my older son was in first grade. He and another student were behind grade level in math and reading. However, my son's teacher was able to send my son and his classmate off for special help every day because there was a teacher assistant in their classroom. Thanks to the work of those dedicated educators, both students finished the school year with math and reading skills at grade level. Without that additional help, they would not have been able to progress to second grade.

Teacher assistants are educators who play a vital role in the classroom. I hope you actively champion restoring budget cuts that removed teacher assistants from classrooms in grades K-3.

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_**



# WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR



*Why write?*

Decisions made by state legislators have a direct **impact** on the quality of public education in your local community.

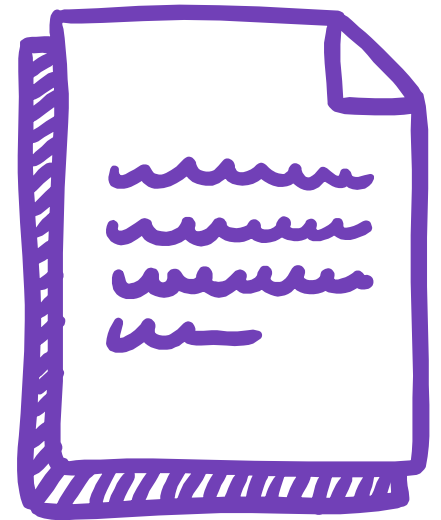
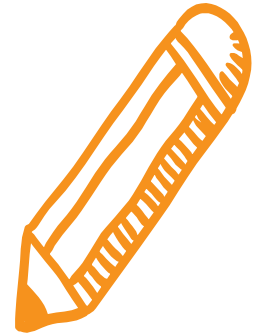
A great way to express your views is by writing a Letter to the Editor to your **local** newspaper.





# TIPS & TRICKS FOR YOUR LETTER

1. Make your opening and ending sentence **compelling**.
2. Use **facts** and talking points from our website to help make your case.
3. Focus on one issue and use a local example to **illustrate** your point.
4. Keep your letter **short** and to the point (most newspapers have word count limits).





# WRITE POSTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Social media can be an **effective** way to advocate for public education. Use facts and strong anecdotes to make short, but **powerful** posts on Facebook or Twitter.



**Public Schools First NC**

February 3 at 2:03pm · 🌐

Retired teacher speaks up.



### Fund NC private schools with private funds

Taxes earmarked for public education should remain in the public school system. A Private School Opportunity Scholarship Program funded by businesses and corporations fortunate enough to earn huge profits in North Carolina thanks to the...

NEWSOBSERVER.COM



**PublicSchoolsFirstNC** @PS1NC · 21 Dec 2016

Read the Shanker blog on 3 aspects of #publiced segregation we need to talk about when we talk about segregation

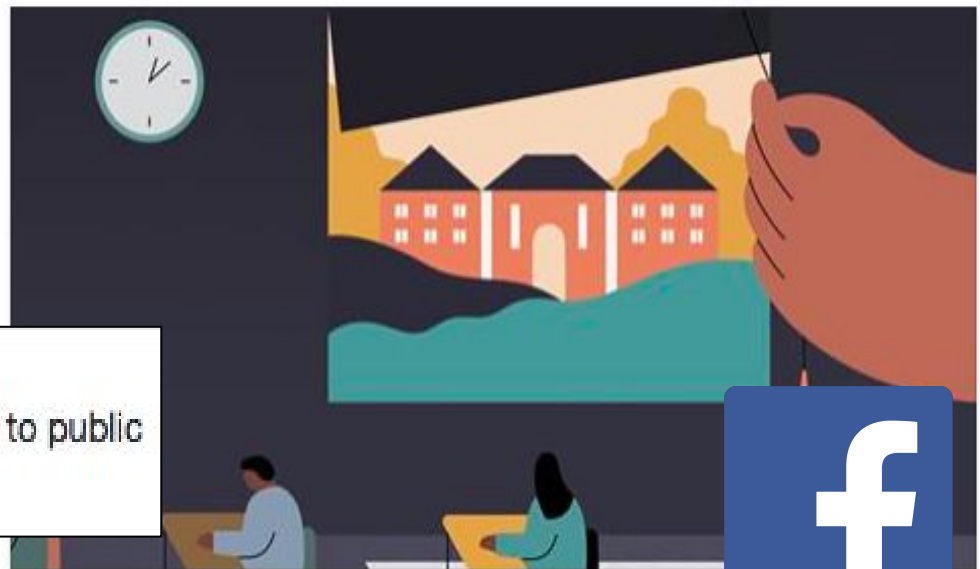
[ow.ly/paY5307iP1G](http://ow.ly/paY5307iP1G)



**Public Schools First NC**

January 14 at 1:24pm · 🌐

Great way to help students apply to college!



### Text Your Way to College

Too many students from poor families get accepted to college, but never show up. This is a low-cost solution.

NYTIMES.COM | BY DAVID L. KIRP



**PublicSchoolsFirstNC** @PS1NC · Jan 6

In MS, more than 25% of school voucher recipients return to public schools #voucherfail #publicEd





# RESOURCES



## OUR WEBSITE

[www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org](http://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org)

## NC LEGISLATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

<http://www.ncleg.net/representation/WhoRepresentsMe.aspx>

## NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES

<http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Committees/Committees.asp>

## NORTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPERS

<http://www.usnpl.com/ncnews.php>

## US CONGRESS CONTACT INFORMATION

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>  
<https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>



# CONTACT US!



## EMAIL

[info@publicschoolsfirstnc.org](mailto:info@publicschoolsfirstnc.org)

## CALL

919-576-0655

## MAIL

Public Schools First NC  
P.O. Box 37832  
Raleigh, NC 27627



[facebook.com/PublicSchoolsFirstNC](https://facebook.com/PublicSchoolsFirstNC)



[@PS1NC](https://twitter.com/PS1NC)



# REFERENCES



## **FACTS & FIGURES 2016-17**

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org>

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOL BUDGET FEBRUARY 2009**

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2009highlights.pdf>

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOL BUDGET FEBRUARY 2016**

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2016highlights.pdf>

## **NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE BUDGET**

<http://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BTC-Advocate-Training-Session-Feb-11-2017.pdf>

## **NEA RANKINGS & ESTIMATES LIST 2008**

<http://www.nea.org/home/29402.htm>

## **NEA RANKINGS & ESTIMATES 2015-2016**

[https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2016\\_NEA\\_Rankings\\_And\\_Estimates.pdf](https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2016_NEA_Rankings_And_Estimates.pdf)