

**Public Schools First NC champions one unified, equitable, inclusive, fair, innovative, and accountable public education system that nurtures and prepares each child for success in school and life. We believe legislators should fulfill their constitutional obligation to provide every child with a sound, basic education. With this constitutional mandate in mind, and with the goal of ensuring high-quality educational opportunities for every child, we present our 2024 legislative priorities.**

**1. Prevent the harmful diversion of public tax dollars from traditional public schools to voucher and charter schools; apply the same policies & regulations to all schools that receive public funds.**

The 2023 Appropriations Act increased funding for voucher programs and expanded eligibility to include even the **wealthiest families** and those who have never attended public schools. Other legislation eased restrictions on charter school growth while minimizing review processes. These changes will further damage North Carolina's public schools and must be reversed before they cause irreparable harm.

- Use public tax dollars exclusively for public schools.
- Place a moratorium on funding school voucher programs.
- Restore a cap on the number of charter schools.
- Require private schools receiving voucher funds to administer the NC EOG and EOC tests and report student results following the same guidelines as public schools.
- Increase accountability and financial transparency for charter and voucher schools that receive public funds.
- Allow local school boards the same flexibility as charter schools (e.g., calendar flexibility).
- Support instructional integrity by requiring all schools receiving public funds to follow the NC Standard Course of Study.

**2. Fully fund public schools in accordance with all components of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan (Leandro Plan).**

The election of two new Supreme Court justices in 2022 created an opportunity for school funding opponents to appeal the 2022 Supreme Court ruling that directed the NC Legislature to fund years two and three of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan. Legislative leaders have resisted funding public schools at the levels required by Leandro, so continued advocacy is essential to ensure that all years of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan are fully funded. **Seven key areas are identified:**

- Teacher development and recruitment that ensures each classroom is staffed with a high-quality teacher.
- A system of principal development and recruitment that ensures each school is led by a high-quality principal.
- A finance system that provides adequate, equitable, and predictable funding to school districts and adequate resources to address the needs of all North Carolina schools and students.
- An assessment and accountability system that reliably assesses multiple measures of student performance.
- An assistance/turnaround function that provides beneficial support to low-performing schools and districts.
- A system of early education that provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities.
- An alignment of high school to postsecondary and career expectations as well as the provision of early postsecondary and workforce learning opportunities.

**3. Repair the teacher pipeline by increasing teacher base pay and restoring and bolstering essential classroom, teacher, and student supports. Increase pay for all other school personnel.**

- Increase teacher salaries to the national average; reinstate supplements for advanced degrees.
- Increase per-pupil funding to the national average.
- Significantly expand the Teaching Fellows Program and recruit more teachers of color.
- Increase supplements and/or pay for high-vacancy positions.
- Pay livable wages and full benefits to all school support personnel.
- Restore full-time teacher assistants for each K-3 classroom.
- Fully fund the class size mandates for grades K-3 and restore class size caps for grades 4-5.
- Respect curriculum integrity and teachers' professionalism and decision-making authority.
- Increase mentoring support and professional development, especially for new teachers.

- 4. Reverse policies that unfairly and inequitably target public schools.**
  - Revise the current A-F grading system and replace it with a more valid and reliable way to evaluate school effectiveness; apply the same system to voucher schools.
  - Reverse policies tying principal pay to school performance grades or apply the same policy to charter schools and private schools receiving voucher funds.
  
- 5. Increase the number of helping professionals in schools and adopt universal trauma-informed curricula/programs that focus on social and emotional learning.**
  - Increase funding to hire more professionals (e.g., school psychologists, social workers, counselors, and nurses to meet nationally recommended levels.
  - Provide better mental health services and access for all children and families.
  - Provide trauma-informed training for all school staff with an emphasis on social and emotional learning.
  
- 6. Provide universal access to high-quality Pre-K in every county and universal school meals for all students.**
  - Implement universal Pre-K for all eligible children; eliminate the backlog of children waiting for Pre-K services.
  - Invest in the early childhood educator pipeline by increasing state supplements for salaries.
  
- 7. Fund universal school meals for all students.**
  - Ensure that every child in North Carolina public schools has access to breakfast and lunch at school with no cost to their families.
  - Secure funding for school meals for all students to eliminate stigma and help every child succeed.
  
- 8. Increase funding for special education students.**
  - Remove the cap on special education funding to allow coverage of all eligible students.
  - Increase spending levels at the state level to fully fund special education services.
  
- 9. Create safe and supportive learning environments for all students and teachers.**
  - Support policies that ensure safe, secure, inviting, and respectful schools for all students and educators.
  - Implement positive approaches to discipline such as restorative justice programs.
  - Keep guns off school grounds.
  - Implement required violence prevention and threat-reporting programs at all schools.
  
- 10. Eliminate the digital divide.**
  - Support access for K-12 students and educators to high-speed broadband internet.
  - Provide devices for at-home use for students and educators.
  - Improve infrastructure for broadband in rural and low-income communities.
  - Provide free hotspots for WIFI for homeless school-age children and their families.

**We will monitor the NC General Assembly's 2024 legislative session** for actions that impact public education. To ensure that you receive up-to-date information about legislative actions, sign up for our [newsletter](#) and check our website where we post our legislative updates: [Week in Review](#). **As important legislative actions happen in the coming year**, we will alert the public via Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, newsletters, webinars, audiocasts and on our website.

**We invite you to join in advocating for our children.** By large margins, North Carolinians support fully and fairly funding our public schools. They support making sure students have the classroom resources and well-qualified teachers they need to develop critical thinking skills and become productive and contributing members of our society.

We are looking for public education advocates from **EVERY COUNTY** to join our statewide **public education network (NC PEN)**. Advocates will help us share information more effectively in their local communities and keep us informed about emerging **local** issues that impact public schools. **Please volunteer to join the network and be our PEN pal! Email us to sign up at [info@publicschoolsfirstnc.org](mailto:info@publicschoolsfirstnc.org).**