

Achieving Educational Excellence: **Initial Working Draft of the 2025-2030** **Strategic Plan for North Carolina** **Public Schools**

Geoff Coltrane

Senior Director of Government Affairs and Strategy, NCDPI

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NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Initial Draft

This is an initial working draft of the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and State Board of Education (SBE) 2025-2030 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan or the Plan). NCDPI staff will further refine and revise this initial working draft based on feedback from the SBE and other key partners. The goal is to have the SBE approve the Plan during its August 2025 Board meeting.



North Carolina State Board of Education Mission

The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is to use its constitutional authority to guard and maintain the right of a sound, basic education for every child in North Carolina Public Schools.

Draft North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is to use its constitutional and statutory authority to guard and maintain the right to a public education for every student in North Carolina and to support Public School Units in providing every child in North Carolina an excellent education that prepares them for success in their next phase of life.



Strategic Plan Vision

Achieving Educational Excellence is the vision for this strategic plan. This vision has three main components: high academic achievement; character development; and making North Carolina public schools the best statewide public school system in the United States of America.

Process

- Feedback from "Mo Wants to Know" listening and learning series.
 - 8 regional convenings.
 - 16 school visits.
 - 34 sessions with stakeholders including students, educators, parents, charter school leaders, nonprofits, foundations, businesses, and legislators.
 - 500 website submissions.
 - Over 5,000 North Carolinians heard, including more than 1,000 educators.
- [Video and executive summary are available on the website.](#)



Process

- Feedback from NCDPI leaders:
 1. *What actions are currently underway at NCDPI that we need to consider as part of the Strategic Plan?*
 2. *What actions do we need to initiate that would help us to achieve each pillar?*
 3. *What measures should we include in the Strategic Plan to help us measure our outcomes?*
 4. *What partners/stakeholders do we need to engage as we move forward with developing and implementing the Strategic Plan?*

Implementation

- Plan is designed to evolve through a continuous improvement process that strengthens and refines efforts over time.
- NCDPI will establish an **Office of Strategic Planning** tasked with overseeing the execution and evolution of the plan.
- NCDPI will convene a **Strategic Plan Monitoring and Accountability Committee** composed of senior leaders from across the agency.



Implementation

- The Committee will be responsible for several implementation actions, including:
 - Identifying implementation and network leads for each pillar;
 - Establishing working groups composed of NCDPI staff and strategic partners to carry out assigned actions;
 - Developing an Excellence Report Card that relates to the pillars of the NCDPI/SBE strategic plan;
 - Monitoring progress toward strategic goals; and
 - Reporting quarterly on plan implementation to the Superintendent and the State Board of Education.
- Committee's quarterly reports will serve as a transparent mechanism for tracking progress and ensuring accountability.

Strategic Pillars and Focus Areas



Pillar 1:

Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life

We will be committed to ensure that every student is inspired, supported and prepared to succeed beyond high school — academically, socially and professionally.

- Ignite early learning
- Elevate teaching and learning
- Promote excellence for all
- Reimagine the student experience
- Launch life-ready graduates

Highlights: Pillar 1

- Expand high-quality Pre-K and bolster kindergarten readiness by partnering with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) to align standards, streamline systems and improve transition supports.
- Build on the success of North Carolina's Science of Reading implementation to expand high-impact literacy practices and launch a parallel focus on foundational mathematics to support early learning.
- Design a PreK–12 Instructional Excellence Framework with PSUs to set shared expectations for standards-aligned instruction, integrated supports and access to high-quality learning for all students.
- Champion the use of high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials and digital tools by supporting PSUs with curated resources, embedded professional learning and strategic implementation guidance.

Highlights: Pillar 1

- Every student will take and pass a college level course (AP with a score of 3+/International Baccalaureate with a score of 4+ or an actual college course); a Career and Technical Education (CTE) or a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) course; and earn a service-learning award by graduation.
- Promote awareness of NC College Connect and NextNC to provide direct admissions to and financial support for NC colleges and universities.
- Increase the number of students engaging in high-quality character education and service learning experiences.
- Create and award service learning recognitions.

Pillar 2: Revere Public School Educators

We will elevate the profession by improving working conditions, expanding career pathways, increasing compensation and restoring the pride and prestige of being an educator in North Carolina.

- Improve educator recruitment and retention
- Expand career pathways for education professionals
- Increase educator compensation
- Elevate and restore pride in the education profession

Highlights: Pillar 2

- Expand student recruitment programs starting no later than middle school, including career academy programs, the NC Teacher Cadet Program and CTE pathways for teaching as a profession, to encourage more students to engage in the education profession.
- Advocate for NC Promise to be expanded to all aspiring teachers at all University of North Carolina campuses.
- Establish an SBE task force to develop:
 - a licensure model that is simpler, more transparent and includes multiple pathways into the profession;
 - apprenticeship models;
 - pathways for professional advancement; and
 - valid and reliable measures of teacher impact and effectiveness.

Highlights: Pillar 2

- Increase North Carolina's average teacher pay so that it is the highest in the Southeast.
- Increase North Carolina's starting teacher pay so that it is the highest in the Southeast.
- Advocate to the NC General Assembly, in partnership with educators, business and community leaders, for competitive teacher, principal, and other school staff compensation.
- Explore models for reducing burden on teachers, including eliminating or significantly reducing unpaid teacher duties, streamlining compliance processes, increasing teacher planning time and increasing flexible scheduling.

Pillar 3:

Enhance Parent, Caregiver, and Community Support

We will aim to build deep, trusting relationships between schools, parents and community organizations, because families and communities are essential partners in student success.

- Engage and empower families
- Strengthen community partnerships

Highlights: Pillar 3

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of parent and community resources at NCDPI (personnel, funds, training, instruments, current activities, etc.).
- Create a virtual NCDPI Family Academy that could be linked to PSU websites that will offer accessible, webinar-style learning sessions for families.
- Advocate for and support the allocation of resources and support to “community schools” models or other evidence-based models that school districts can adopt to address out-of-school barriers to learning.



Pillar 4:

Ensure Healthy, Safe and Secure Learning Environments

We will support holistic well-being and emotional and physical safety, because every student and educator deserves to learn and work in a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment.

- Ensure safe school environments
- Improve student and staff health and well-being
- Strengthen school climate and belonging

Highlights: Pillar 4

- Increase the percentage of schools reporting none to a limited number of incidents of violence annually.
- Provide Public School Units with technical assistance to implement school models that prioritize student voice, belonging, and health and well-being.
- Decrease disparities in out-of-school suspensions between various subgroups of students for the same offenses.

Pillar 5: Optimize Operational Excellence

We will modernize systems, strengthen service delivery, and streamline internal and external operations to better serve PSUs and remove barriers to student success.

- Improve NCDPI's services to stakeholders
- Improve collaboration and communication across NCDPI offices
- Modernize NCDPI and Public School Unit operations

Highlights: Pillar 5

- Provide PSU “customers” with supports such as regular office hour sessions with NCDPI staff as identified based on identified “customers.”
- Develop and administer a survey to central office staff to assess customer service strengths and needs.
- Create NCDPI guidance focused on capacity building for PSUs, including best practices for strategic purchasing decisions and aligning budget decisions with instructional priorities.
- Meet or exceed key performance indicators for all offices within NCDPI.
- Implement Infinite Campus, the student information system, with limited challenges.

Pillar 6: Lead Transformative Change

We will create and scale bold innovations across districts, schools, and classrooms to better meet student needs and system-wide goals — driving meaningful change at every level.

- Transform schools through research and development
- Connect NC public schools through education networks
- Promote integrated support systems
- Explore funding reform
- Ensure accountability

Highlights: Pillar 6

- Create a cross-sector Innovation Leadership Council (charter + public school district leaders + lab school leaders + NCDPI staff) to guide knowledge transfer and scale-up.
- Establish NCDPI networks, PSU networks and partner networks that will facilitate the implementation of key actions within the plan to achieve educational excellence.
- Expand SBE and NCDPI efforts to support districts designated low-performing and districts experiencing financial challenges.
- Develop a new school level accountability system that will:
 - Consider the variability among high schools with respect to available opportunities and funding, such as Advanced Placement, CTE courses, etc., when determining a new school accountability system.
 - Reliably assess multiple measures of student performance and that includes measures of progress towards ensuring all students graduate prepared for their next phase of life with a focus on Grades 3-12 metrics.

Pillar 7:

Celebrate Why Public Education is the Best Choice

We will celebrate the success stories of public education and share the value it brings to families, communities, and the state. Public schools are — and will continue to be — the best choice for North Carolina families.

- Engage education partners
- Build capacity within NCDPI and Public School Unit communications
- Develop comprehensive public education messaging
- Share “best choice” messaging and stories

Highlights: Pillar 7

- Engage and connect education partners (North Carolina organizations and nonprofits) focused solely on education to align communication campaigns and calendars for this campaign.
- Engage and align PIOs and other PSU communicators/influencers for this campaign.
- Create accessible and engaging materials on how public education works and is managed in North Carolina.
- Increase the quantity and reach of coordinated messaging campaigns developed collaboratively with education partners that celebrate public education successes and positive narratives across multiple platforms and channels.
- Increase the percentage of students who are enrolled in North Carolina public schools.

Pillar 8: Galvanize Champions to Fully Invest In and Support Public Education

We will build a statewide movement of champions who advocate for and invest in public schools — transforming support into action and driving lasting impact.

- Align non-education partners
- Build community voices
- Engage local and statewide partners/families
- Move champions to action and advocacy

Highlights: Pillar 8

- Develop and share state and local Engagement Initiatives for PSUs. The Engagement Initiatives will include the following:
 - Students will collectively read 10 million books annually (partnering with bookstores, libraries and campaign chairs).
 - Local schools will create engagement opportunities through gardens and beautifying schools and school grounds.
 - Local chambers, businesses and community organizations will work with 8th graders on their career development plans and 12th graders on their post-secondary plans.
- Increase the per pupil spending for PSUs to the highest in the Southeast.



Highlights: Pillar 8

- Work with partners to create an endowment that will allow all public high school graduates, regardless of income, to attend at least two years of college completely tuition-free (something that goes beyond what currently exists).
- Create a statewide foundation to fund various initiatives in this and future strategic plans.
- Highlight the narrative changes on public education in North Carolina and how it is part of the state's identity.

Next Steps

June – July:

- Seek feedback on Plan from State Board of Education members.
- Gather input and feedback from other Strategic Plan stakeholders, including NCDPI staff, superintendents and charter school leaders.
- Further refine the Strategic Plan based on feedback.

August 6-7:

- Present final draft Plan to SBE for approval.

Mid- to Late August:

- Official release of the Strategic Plan.

Questions and Discussion





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