ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL
EXCELLENCE

2025–2030
Strategic Plan for
North Carolina Public Schools

NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

State Board of Education Vision:
Every public school student in North Carolina will be empowered to accept academic challenges, prepared to pursue their chosen path after graduating high school, and encouraged to become lifelong learners with the capacity to engage in a globally-collaborative society.

State Board of Education Mission:
The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction is to use their constitutional 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 student an excellent education that prepares them for success in their next phase of life.

The above State Board of Education information is a record of the board members at the time of this document's approval for publication. For the current list of State Board Members, Vision and Mission Statements, go to www.dpi.nc.gov/about-dpi/state-board-education.

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Maurice "Mo" Green, State Superintendent / 301 N. Wilmington Street / Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825

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Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination issues should be directed to:
Thomas Tomberlin, Senior Director, Educator Preparation, Licensure, and Performance, NCDPI
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ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction is to use their constitutional 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 student an excellent education that prepares them for success in their next phase of life.

At the August 2025 State Board of Education meeting, we celebrated the 2025 Wells Fargo North Carolina and regional Principals of the Year. We are grateful to these champions of North Carolina public education and their contributions toward making our public schools the best in the nation.

NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

August 2025

To the People of North Carolina,

We are proud to share with you *Achieving Educational Excellence: 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan for North Carolina Public Schools*. The plan is a declaration: Public education is the foundation of North Carolina's future. The plan represents the shared vision of the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction – **to have our public schools be the best in the United States of America**.

To be clear – to be the best is the only option.

Grounded in eight transformative pillars that come from listening to North Carolinians expressing their hopes for our public schools, this plan is both a commitment and a call to action – to prepare each student for their next phase in life, to elevate and revere our educators, to strengthen family and community partnerships and to ensure that our schools are safe, healthy and inclusive spaces for all. Through focused efforts to modernize operations, scale innovation and celebrate the value of our public schools, we aim to ensure that public education remains an excellent choice for families.

Implementation of this plan will require coordinated effort and transparency, as well as the voices and leadership of educators; students; families; federal, state and local government officials; and partners across every region of North Carolina. That's why this plan was built not only by SBE and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) leaders, but in collaboration with our students, public school units (PSUs), parents and caregivers, members of the North Carolina General Assembly, community partners and state and national networks. This is a living, evolving framework – and it will only succeed through shared ownership and collective commitment.

We are excited about the path forward and grateful to walk it with you. Together, we will deliver on the promise of public education – for every child, in every community, across North Carolina.

ERIC C. DAVIS
Chair, North Carolina
State Board of Education

MAURICE "MO" GREEN
North Carolina Superintendent
of Public Instruction

North Carolina Public Schools
FACTS & FIGURES

About 1.5 Million Students

attend public schools in North Carolina, which accounts for 84% of school-aged children in our state.

Of those, 150,399 (10.5%) attend public charter schools.[1]

188,103 People

are employed full time by a public school or district.

128,896 certified employees

59,207 non-certified employees[1]

2,683 Public Schools

2,467 traditional public schools

208 public charter schools

8 regional and lab schools[1]

Special Populations

- Approximately 14.3% of North Carolina's public school students receive special education services.
- Approximately 11.7% of students are identified as English Language Learners.
- Approximately 62% of North Carolina public schools receive money through the federal Title I program based on the number of students enrolled from low-income families.

Annual Accountability Report Highlights

North Carolina students continue to see gains in most grades and subjects, according to the 2023-24 state test results.

- Approximately 72.5% of schools met or exceeded growth in 2023-24 (vs. 72.3% in 2022-23 and up from 69.6% in 2021-22).
- The four-year cohort graduation rate is 86.9% (an increase from 86.5% in 2022-23).
- Student performance increased in many reading testing areas, but declined in fourth and seventh grade reading.
- Student math performance increased in grades 3-8, plus NC Math I.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

North Carolina students are ahead of the national average in eighth grade math and tracking with their peers in other tested subjects.[6]

The 2024 data show that there has been no significant change in North Carolina students' scale scores in any area since 2022 and three of the four tested areas remain below pre-pandemic levels.

[1] NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/fbs/resources/25-highlights-finalpdf/download?attachment

[2] United States (US) Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/school-finances.html

[3] Education Law Center, Making the Grade 2024, https://edlawcenter.org/research/making-the-grade-2024

[4] National Education Association, Rankings of the States 2024 and Estimates of School Statistics 2025, https://www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank/teacher

[5] National Education Association, 2023-24 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report, https://www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank/starting-teacher

[6] National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?sfj=NP&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=&st=MN&year=2024R3

[7] National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, https://www.nbpts.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024_State_Rankings_Total_NBCTs.pdf

$12,492

is the amount that North Carolina spent per public school student in 2023.

This amount includes federal, state and local funding, placing North Carolina 41st nationally and 9th out of the 12 states in the Southeast for per-pupil spending according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.[2] The Education Law Center's annual Making the Grade[3] report places North Carolina's expenditures even lower and its effort to fund public schools (a measure of PreK–12 spending as a percentage of the state's economic activity or gross domestic product) at 49th nationally in 2022.

$60,323

is the average salary, including local supplements, for North Carolina public school teachers in the 2024-25 academic year.

For the 2023-24 school year (the most recent year for which nationally comparable data are available), North Carolina's average teacher pay including local supplements ($58,292)[4] was ranked 43rd nationally and 8th out of the 12 states in the Southeast. North Carolina's average starting teacher pay ($42,542)[5] was ranked 39th nationally and 10th out of the 12 states in the Southeast.

National and State Accomplishments

- North Carolina has 24,886 National Board Certified Teachers, which is the most of any state in the United States.[7]
- North Carolina is a national leader in early colleges, with more than 130 schools across the state that provide thousands of students with college courses for free.[8]
- The Early College at Guilford was ranked as the number one high school in the nation in 2023 by U.S. News and World Report.[9]
- Since 2014, the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Schools of Distinction program has recognized over 50 schools in North Carolina for meeting rigorous standards around STEM principles.[10]
- North Carolina has one of the top dual language immersion programs in the country.[11]
- North Carolina high school students in 2023-24 participated and performed in college-level Advanced Placement (AP) courses at record-setting levels – reaching the highest participation and final scores in the 10-year partnership between NCDPI and the College Board, which administers the AP program and exams.[12]

- North Carolina's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs had a record-breaking year in 2023-24. Students earned more than 358,000 individual credentials, the highest credential attainment since NCDPI started tracking 14 years ago.[13]
- In 2023-24, 78,811 public high school students were dually enrolled in at least one college course through Career and College Promise, which gives students the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school, and 36% of all 2023-24 graduates had earned credits through the program.[14]
- NCDPI was the fourth state education department in the nation to issue guidance to its schools on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology.[15]
- In 2018, North Carolina was the first state in the nation to pass a law (SL 2018-32) requiring automatic enrollment in advanced math courses for all students who score at the highest level on their math End-of-Grade tests.[16]

8 EdNC, https://www.ednc.org/perspective-the-power-of-early-colleges-stronger-together
9 Guilford College, https://www.guilford.edu/news/2023/08/early-college-guilford-nations-top-ranked-high-school
10 NCDPI, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/office-teaching-and-learning/programs-and-initiatives/stem-education-and-leadership/stem-schools-distinction#NCRecognizedSTEMSchoolsofDistinction-875
11 2021 Canvass of Dual Language and Immersion (DLI) Programs in US Public Schools, https://www.americancouncils.org/sites/default/files/documents/pages/2021-10/Canvass%20DLI%20-%20October%202021-2_ac.pdf
12 NCDPI, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2024/09/24/nc-students-set-record-high-completed-ap-exams-scores-outperform-national-average
13 NCDPI, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2023-2024-credential-report/open
14 NCDPI, https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/94893
15 NCDPI, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2024/01/16/ncdpi-releases-guidance-use-artificial-intelligence-schools
16 BEST NC, https://bestnc.org/spotlight_on_2023_advanced_math_access

VISION AND OVERARCHING GOALS

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 in the United States of America.

A Vision for North Carolina's Public Schools

Pick any zip code in North Carolina — across the Blue Ridge Mountains, in our vibrant Piedmont cities or along our coastal communities. A child arrives safely at school — on a bus or connecting virtually — and steps into a space that is vibrant, welcoming and built for learning. Educators are revered professionals. Families and communities are engaged. And every student is safe, loved and ready to learn.

Inside, expert teachers lead collaborative teams. Technology supports personalized instruction, not to replace human connection but to enhance it — giving educators the freedom to do what they do best: inspire, guide and mentor. Students learn in spaces that nurture creativity and curiosity, where their health and wellness needs are fully met. They are known, seen and supported.

Parents volunteer with pride. Local businesses sponsor clubs, arts programs, apprenticeships and innovation labs. Community members take evening classes in the same buildings, turning schools into centers of lifelong learning. Board meetings brim with support, not protest.

Classrooms are alive with possibility. Students debate history in virtual reality, solve local challenges with advanced math, compose symphonies with AI and build climate tech solutions. Character is not a lesson but a lived experience. By the time the final bell rings, schools shift — not shut down. After-school programs are full of music, robotics, chess, farming and mentorship while other students are competing in a wide variety of athletic endeavors.

This isn't one exceptional school in one fortunate district. From Murphy to Manteo, it's the reality for every child — rural, urban or suburban; in traditional, charter, lab or virtual schools. In the future, North Carolina hasn't just improved public education — we've redefined it. Every child receives an education that prepares them not just for a job, but for a life of purpose, joy and endless possibility.

How will we measure if North Carolina's public schools collectively are the best public schools in the nation? While acknowledging that our students are more than metrics, here are some of the measures that will be used and will be updated to include disaggregated goals to the extent possible.[17]

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[17] Various measures and actions in the plan may name specific vendors, such as ACT, College Board, and Cambridge International, among others. The inclusion of those vendors in a measure or an action is based on current relationships with those vendors. If in the future there is a change in a relationship with a vendor, the measure or action will be updated to reflect that change.

BEST IN NATION MEASUREMENTS

Four-Year Cohort High School Graduation Rate

Each state calculates and reports an adjusted four-year cohort high school graduation rate to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Based on data from the most recent year available (2021-22), North Carolina ranked 25th among all states and Washington, D.C., with an adjusted cohort high school graduation rate of 86.4%. West Virginia had the highest adjusted cohort high school graduation rate of 91.2%.[18]

To be best in the nation by 2030, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the adjusted four-year cohort high school graduation rate to
  - 88% by 2026,
  - 89% by 2027,
  - 90% by 2028,
  - 91% by 2029, and
  - 92% by 2030.

ACT Composite Score

As part of the state's school accountability model, every 11th grade student takes the ACT during the spring of their junior year. ACT annually reports the average composite score for all high school graduates for each state. Among the 17 states and Washington, D.C., where 75% or more of high school graduates take the ACT, North Carolina ranked 10th with an average ACT composite score of 18.5 in 2024. Utah had the highest average ACT composite score of 20.[19]

To be best in the nation by 2030, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the average ACT composite score to
  - 18.8 by 2026,
  - 19.2 by 2027,
  - 19.5 by 2028,
  - 19.8 by 2029, and
  - 20 by 2030.

Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) Exams

The College Board annually reports the percentage of 10th, 11th and 12th grade students in each state that took at least one AP exam. In 2024, 21.5% of North Carolina's 10th, 11th and 12th grade students took at least one AP exam, placing North Carolina 15th among all states and Washington, D.C. The highest AP participation rate was 29.2% for Washington, D.C.[20]

To be best in the nation by 2030, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the AP participation rate among 10th, 11th and 12th grade students to
  - 23% by 2026,
  - 25% by 2027,
  - 27% by 2028,
  - 29% by 2029, and
  - 30% by 2030.

Performance on Advanced Placement (AP) Exams

The College Board annually reports the percentage of 10th, 11th and 12th grade students in each state who pass the AP exam with a score of 3, 4, or 5. In 2024, 65.4% of North Carolina's 10th, 11th and 12th grade students passed the AP exams, placing North Carolina 31st among all states and Washington, D.C. The highest pass rate, referred to as the qualifying score percentage, was 74.3% for Montana.[21]

To be best in the nation by 2030, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the percentage of 10th, 11th and 12th grade students passing AP exams to
  - 67% by 2026,
  - 69% by 2027,
  - 71% by 2028,
  - 73% by 2029, and
  - 75% by 2030.

Participation in Dual Enrollment Courses

Every eligible North Carolina high school student has the opportunity to take advantage of several dual enrollment options, including through Cooperative Innovative High Schools, the Career and College Promise (CCP) program and the College Transfer pathway. During the 2023-24 school year, NCDPI reported that 36% of all high school graduates enrolled in at least one dual enrollment course. This represents 39,819 students. This is an increase of 2,002 students (1% increase) from the previous 2022-23 graduating class.[22]

- Increase the percentage of graduates that enroll in at least one dual enrollment course to
  - 37% by 2026,
  - 38% by 2027,
  - 39% by 2028,
  - 40% by 2029, and
  - 41% by 2030.

Performance in Dual Enrollment Courses

In 2023-24, 36% of all graduates earned high school credit through dual enrollment opportunities in their high school years. This represents 37,598 graduates, a 3% increase from the previous year.[22] While there are no national standard data to compare obtaining credit in dual enrollment courses, North Carolina should strive to continue increasing the percentage of high school graduates who have successfully passed and earned credit through such courses.

- Increase the percentage of all graduates who earn high school credit through dual enrollment courses to
  - 37% by 2026
  - 38% by 2027
  - 39% by 2028
  - 40% by 2029, and
  - 41% by 2030.

Participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Courses

Each year, state education agencies report to the U.S. Department of Education the number of K-12 students that participated in a CTE course during the previous school year. During the 2022-23 school year, 548,010 K-12 students in North Carolina participated in a CTE course, placing North Carolina 4th among all states and Washington, D.C. As a percentage of all K-12 students, North Carolina ranked 2nd among all states and Washington, D.C., with 36.1% of all K-12 students participating in a CTE course. Nebraska was the top state with 41.2% of all K-12 students participating in a CTE course.[23]

To be best in the nation, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the percentage of all K-12 students participating in a CTE course to
  - 37% in 2026,
  - 38% in 2027,
  - 40% in 2028,
  - 41% in 2029, and
  - 42% by 2030.

Performance in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Credentials

During the 2023-24 academic year, 363 different individual credentials measuring workplace readiness skills or proficiency in career-specific skills were available to students across North Carolina.[24] Credentials related to workplace readiness skills represent general job skills applicable to many different careers such as Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certifications in MOS Word, MOS Excel, MOS PowerPoint, and MOS Access. Career-specific examples of credentials include the North Carolina Nurse Aide certificate and the Certified Veterinary Assistant certificate, among others. During the 2023-24 school year, NC CTE students achieved an all-time high of 358,069 credentials earned and reported.

To maintain the momentum and ensure NC CTE students successfully earn a minimum of 10% more credentials each year, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the number of credentials earned yearly to
  - 400,000 by 2026,
  - 425,000 by 2027,
  - 450,000 by 2028,
  - 475,000 by 2029,
  - 500,000 by 2030.

Performance in 4th and 8th Grade Reading and Math

Every two years, the NCES administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and math to a representative sample of 4th and 8th grade students across the nation in all fifty states; Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico and Department of Defense schools. NAEP reports average scale scores for each of the 4th and 8th grade reading and math assessments. Massachusetts has the highest average scale scores among states and Washington, D.C., across all four NAEP assessments.[25]

To be best in the nation by 2030, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the average scale score on the 4th grade reading NAEP assessment (N.C. average scale score in 2024 was 213) to
  - 217 by 2026,
  - 221 by 2028, and
  - 225 by 2030.
- Increase the average scale score on the 8th grade reading NAEP assessment (N.C. average scale score in 2024 was 255) to
  - 259 by 2026,
  - 264 by 2028, and
  - 268 by 2030.
- Increase the average scale score on the 4th grade math NAEP assessment (N.C. average scale score in 2024 was 239) to
  - 241 by 2026,
  - 244 by 2028, and
  - 246 by 2030.
- Increase the average scale score on the 8th grade math NAEP assessment (N.C. average scale score in 2024 was 276) to
  - 278 by 2026,
  - 281 by 2028, and
  - 283 by 2030.

Participation in Character Education

A hallmark of this plan is to develop each student's character. States do not have a uniform way of measuring this effort and many do not do so at all. NCDPI and the SBE will develop a student-centered metric. In the meantime, NCDPI and the SBE will continue to recognize State Schools of Character. Those schools are then nominated to be recognized as National Schools of Character by Character.org (now CharacterPlus). Since 2017, 16 schools have been recognized as State Schools of Character and eight schools have been recognized as National Schools of Character.[26] North Carolina will strive to lead the nation in this area by significantly increasing the number of schools recognized as State Schools of Character and National Schools of Character, as well as developing other metrics that measure our schools' successes in developing strong students of character.

School-Aged Children Enrolled In Public Schools

During the 2023-24 school year, approximately 84% of all North Carolina school-aged children were enrolled in public schools (either a traditional public, public charter, lab or regional school). While this data is not consistently reported, either in North Carolina or nationally, the latest reliable data report that 89% of all school-aged children were enrolled in North Carolina public schools during the 2013-14 school year.[27]

To ensure that North Carolina public schools continue to be a great choice for all children, North Carolina public schools will:

- Increase the percentage of school-aged children enrolled in public schools to
  - 85% by 2026,
  - 86% by 2027,
  - 87% by 2028,
  - 88% by 2029, and
  - 89% by 2030.

18 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Digest of Education Statistics (Table 219.46), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_219.46.asp

19 ACT, https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/2024-Average-ACT-Scores-by-State-Percent-Meeting-Benchmarks.pdf

20 College Board, Advanced Placement Participation, https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/ap-data-research/national-state-data

21 College Board, Advanced Placement Performance, https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/ap-data-research/national-state-data

22 NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2025-ccpcihs-report-general-assembly/open

23 Perkins Collaborative Resource Network, https://cte.ed.gov/pcrn/explorer; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Total K-12 Enrollment, 2022-23, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/

24 NCDPI, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2023-2024-credential-report/open

25 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?sfj=NP&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=&st=MN&year=2024R3

26 NCDPI, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/office-teaching-and-learning/programs-and-initiatives/character-education/character-matters#Tab-2024-6783

27 BEST NC Facts and Figures 2025, https://bestnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025-Facts-Figures-June-2025_v2.pdf

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL
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Realization of these goals rests upon successful actions across eight pillars, outlined below:

1. Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life
2. Revere Public School Educators
3. Enhance Parent, Caregiver and Community Support
4. Ensure Healthy, Safe and Secure Learning Environments
5. Optimize Operational Excellence
6. Lead Transformative Change
7. Celebrate the Excellence in Public Education
8. Galvanize Champions to Fully Invest in and Support Public Education

Each pillar is necessary, and together they share the weight of preparing the future of our state with excellence.

PILLAR 1   **PILLAR 2**   **PILLAR 3**   **PILLAR 4**   **PILLAR 5**   **PILLAR 6**   **PILLAR 7**   **PILLAR 8**

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Strategic Plan is organized around eight key pillars with a series of focus areas, under which are measures and actions with launch dates. A numbering system is included to clearly identify and reference the measures and actions within the plan.

- **PILLARS** are thematic goals that guide the framing of the overall plan.

- **MEASURES** are the outcomes that are expected to be achieved as a result of the implementation of the actions in the plan. For any measures that do not have a target goal, the target for 2030 and interim benchmarks will be set by early 2026 based on baseline data from the 2024-25 school year. The measures will include student data disaggregated by demographics where appropriate.

- **ACTIONS** are the discrete activities that will be undertaken to accomplish each pillar. Actions under each pillar are grouped into **FOCUS AREAS**, which are intended to further organize the scope of work for that pillar. In the plan, each action has an associated month and year in parentheses, which is when the work on that action will launch ("launch date"). Launch dates are expected and planned launch dates, but as the plan progresses, they may be earlier or later.

- The **NUMBERING SYSTEM** is utilized to clearly identify and reference each measure or action by organizing them by pillars and focus areas. It is formatted as follows:

PillarNumber.MeasureNumber

and

PillarNumber.FocusNumber.ActionNumber

For example, the second measure under Pillar 1 would be P1.M2.
The fourth action under the second focus area of Pillar 2 would be P2.F2.A4.

Pillar 1

Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life

FOCUS AREAS

- Ignite early learning

- Elevate teaching and learning

- Promote excellence for all

- Reimagine the student experience

- Launch life-ready graduates

Public education unlocks the doors to the world and allows our democracy and economy to flourish. Children who have learned the skill of lifelong learning are prepared to chart their own path. Teaching and learning go beyond a focus on a single academic assessment. North Carolina public schools should be places where students build a strong foundation in early childhood, learn to think critically and develop good character.

Throughout their journey in public education, students will not only develop foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, the sciences and civic engagement, but will also be given ample opportunities to find inspiration and growth through world languages, arts, career and technical education (CTE) courses, physical education, health, financial literacy, college-level courses, and co-curricular and extracurricular activities, such as athletics. Students will also develop work-ready skills needed to succeed in college, career and their lives beyond pre-K–12 instruction.

Preparing our students for the next phase of their lives means giving them the tools that all people need to function in the 21st century. It also means ensuring access to opportunities after they graduate from high school. Because every student is different, the preparation they need must be flexible and responsive, tailored to their individual needs.

MEASURES

- Increase the adjusted four-year cohort high school graduation rate to 92% by 2030. [P1.M1]

- Increase the average ACT composite score to 20 by 2030. [P1.M2]

- Increase the Advanced Placement (AP) participation rate among 10th, 11th and 12th grade students to 29% by 2030. [P1.M3]

- Increase the percentage of 10th, 11th and 12th grade students who pass an AP exam with a score of 3, 4, or 5 to 75% by 2030. [P1.M4]

- Establish a baseline and increase the percentage of high school students enrolled in at least one AP course. [P1.M5]

- Increase the percentage of high school graduates that enroll in at least one dual enrollment course to 41% by 2030. [P1.M6]

- Increase the percentage of high school graduates who earn high school credit through dual enrollment courses to 41% by 2030. [P1.M7]

- Increase the percentage of all students participating in a CTE course to 41% by 2030. [P1.M8]

- Increase the number of CTE credentials earned by students yearly to 500,000 by 2030. [P1.M9]

- Increase the percentage of students scoring levels 3, 4 or 5 on the End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) tests. [P1.M10]

- Increase the average scale score on the 4th grade reading NAEP assessment to 225 by 2030. [P1.M11]

- Increase the average scale score on the 8th grade reading NAEP assessment to 268 by 2030. [P1.M12]

- Increase the average scale score on the 4th grade math NAEP assessment to 246 by 2030. [P1.M13]

- Increase the average scale score on the 8th grade math NAEP assessment to 283 by 2030. [P1.M14]

- Increase the number of North Carolina public schools recognized as National Schools of Character by Character.org (now CharacterPlus). [P1.M15]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of schools implementing high-quality character, service-learning and civic programs that reinforce durable skills. [P1.M16]

- Establish a baseline and decrease disproportionality in identification of students for Exceptional Children (EC) and Academically/Intellectually Gifted (AIG) programs. [P1.M17]

ACTIONS

Ignite early learning

- Expand high-quality pre-K and strengthen kindergarten readiness by partnering with North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and PSUs to align standards, coordinate inclusive early learning systems and enhance transition supports. (January 2026) [P1.F1.A1]

- Build on the implementation of North Carolina's Science of Reading initiative by continuing to expand high-impact literacy practices and launch a parallel focus on foundational mathematics to support early learning. (January 2027) [P1.F1.A2]

- Explore how to increase play-based learning in early childhood classrooms to better foster children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. (January 2028) [P1.F1.A3]

Elevate teaching and learning

- Implement the Golden LEAF Schools Initiative through cross-agency collaboration to transform educator practice and student outcomes in rural schools, focusing on high-quality mathematics instruction via the High Reliability Schools model. (July 2025) [P1.F2.A1]

- Strengthen digital learning and literacy pre-K–12 by developing high-quality, standards-aligned online content; formalizing NCDPI's approach to supporting PSUs with a data-driven framework for effective digital and personalized learning environments; and continuing to guide the responsible use of artificial intelligence. (February 2026) [P1.F2.A2]

- Design a Pre-K–12 Teaching and Learning Framework with PSUs to set shared expectations for standards-aligned instruction, integrated supports and access to high-quality learning for all students. (August 2026) [P1.F2.A3]

Promote excellence for all

- Support PSUs in expanding access to rigorous pathways, such as AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International, Career and College Promise (CCP), credentialed Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC), to ensure every student takes and passes a college level and career-connected course. (April 2026) [P1.F3.A1]

- Expand access to advanced learning opportunities K-12, including North Carolina Governor's School and K-8 talent development programming, aligned to student strengths, interests and career pathways. (August 2026) [P1.F3.A2]

- Promote appropriate screening, identification practices and policy shifts that reduce disproportionality in AIG and EC services and expand instructional support for multilingual learners across North Carolina schools. (December 2026) [P1.F3.A3]

- Explore opportunities to have high school students take an ACT preparation course prior to taking the ACT in the 11th grade. (January 2027) [P1.F3.A4]

Reimagine the student experience

- Promote awareness of NC College Connect, NextNC and the NC Need Based Scholarship to provide direct admission to North Carolina colleges and universities and financial aid to support the cost of attendance. (August 2025) [P1.F4.A1]

- Provide PSUs with technical assistance to implement Career Development Plans so students graduate with a purposeful plan for their future. (January 2026) [P1.F4.A2]

- Identify strategies for PSUs to strengthen grade-level transitions through coordinated planning, advising and personalized pathways between pre-K, elementary, middle and high school. (August 2026) [P1.F4.A3]

- Promote whole-child development and student engagement by expanding access to arts, athletics and student-led leadership opportunities that are aligned to academic standards and designed to cultivate students' strengths, interests and well-being. (August 2026) [P1.F4.A4]

- Establish scalable approaches to embed artificial intelligence safely, responsibly and ethically, and ensure collaborative problem-solving is included in the learning experience. (August 2026) [P1.F4.A5]

- Provide PSUs with technical assistance to monitor credits toward graduation to support PSUs with keeping students on track for graduation. (January 2027) [P1.F4.A6]

Launch life-ready graduates

- Develop a statewide toolkit to support schools in implementing high-quality character education that teaches students to be good citizens, as well as important values, such as respect, responsibility, integrity, perseverance, courage, justice and self-discipline. (January 2027) [P1.F5.A1]

- Explore ways to expand service learning programs for students to ensure every student has access to service learning opportunities. (January 2027) [P1.F5.A2]

- Develop a system for tracking students' postsecondary transitions, including to postsecondary education, employment or military service within 12 months of graduation. (August 2027) [P1.F5.A3]

- Create awards for student service learning projects at the school and district levels, as well as a state-level high school diploma endorsement from NCDPI. (January 2028) [P1.F5.A4]

- Create and award durable skills endorsements for graduating students who demonstrate mastery of critical competencies aligned to the Portrait of a Graduate. (August 2028) [P1.F5.A5]

Pillar 2

Revere Public School Educators

FOCUS AREAS

- Improve educator recruitment and retention

- Expand career pathways for education professionals

- Increase educator compensation

- Elevate and restore pride in the education profession

To fully prepare each student for their next phase of life, we must first honor and uplift those who make that preparation possible: the dedicated professionals who serve in our public schools. Every adult in a school building plays a vital role in shaping the student experience and contributing to student success.

North Carolina's public school professionals are the single most important in-school factor influencing student learning. Yet today, they are not compensated adequately, and too often, their working conditions fail to reflect the deep respect they deserve. Reversing this trend is not just a moral imperative — it is essential to the future of our students and our state.

To truly revere our educators and school staff, we must start by ensuring competitive pay for our educators – beginning and veterans, alike. We must go further to ensure supportive and respectful working environments and provide resources necessary for every professional to thrive throughout their career. We must also elevate all educational roles and recognize the profession as an aspirational career that attracts and retains talented individuals committed to public service. Education must be a profession of choice, pride and purpose.

MEASURES

- Establish a baseline and increase the proportion of students completing teaching recruitment programs including "Teaching as a Profession" CTE pathways and who pursue teacher preparation after graduation. [P2.M1]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of teacher candidates enrolling in and completing traditional educator-preparation programs (EPPs). [P2.M2]

- Establish a baseline and increase retention of beginning teachers and early-career administrators, especially in low-performing and high-poverty schools. [P2.M3]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of PSUs implementing Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR), as well as the number of teachers serving in advanced roles that support peer learning. [P2.M4]

- Increase North Carolina's starting teacher pay, including local supplements, so that it is the highest in the Southeast ($50,031 for 2023-24). [P2.M5]

- Increase North Carolina's average teacher pay, including local supplements, so that it is the highest in the Southeast ($67,641 for 2023-24). [P2.M6]

- Increase North Carolina principal pay to account for school complexity and to reward retention. [P2.M7]

- Increase North Carolina school support staff pay. [P2.M8]

To fully prepare each student for their next phase of life, we must first honor and uplift those who make that preparation possible.

ACTIONS

Improve educator recruitment and retention

- Expand student recruitment programs starting no later than middle school, such as career academy programs, "Teaching as a Profession" CTE pathways and other programs to encourage more students to engage in the education profession. (July 2026) [P2.F1.A1]

- Revise and strengthen Beginning Teacher (BT) policy and supports, including exploring a standard statewide definition of BTs and regionalized support approaches with partners. (July 2026) [P2.F1.A2]

- Develop, adopt and promote statewide standards for high-quality professional learning to serve as guidance for the design and evaluation of professional learning opportunities, including microcredentials. (August 2026) [P2.F1.A3]

- Advocate for expanding the teacher pipeline and lowering financial barriers to entering the profession, in partnership with EPPs. (January 2027) [P2.F1.A4]

### Expand career pathways for education professionals

- Advocate for continued expansion of the Advanced Teaching Roles program. (August 2025) [P2.F2.A1]

- Establish an SBE task force to develop:
  - a licensure model that is more transparent and includes multiple pathways into the profession;
  - an updated online licensure system that is user-friendly and guides applicants through the application process;
  - apprenticeship models;
  - pathways for professional advancement, such as exploring mentoring or coaching opportunities and additional local or state financial incentives for serving in advanced roles or high-need schools; and
  - valid and reliable measures of teacher impact and effectiveness. (February 2026) [P2.F2.A2]

- Develop a uniform NCDPI model for instructional coaching that integrates literacy, numeracy and supports for low-performing schools. (July 2026) [P2.F2.A3]

- Continue to expand leadership academies in collaboration with state and regional partners for aspiring principals and superintendents, particularly in high-poverty and low-performing schools and provide specialized professional learning for financial officers and charter leaders to strengthen strategic management. (July 2027) [P2.F2.A4]

Increase educator compensation

- Advocate to the North Carolina General Assembly, in partnership with educators, business leaders and community leaders, for competitive teacher, principal and other school staff compensation, including pay for advanced degrees. (November 2026) [P2.F3.A1]

- Develop and advocate for a revised principal compensation model with partners that includes increased base pay, factors for school complexity and retention incentives to better attract and keep leaders in the schools that need them most. (November 2026) [P2.F3.A2]

Elevate and restore pride in the education profession

- Engage with local boards of education to honor teachers and principals of the year, expand meaningful advisor roles for students, teachers and principals at the district and state levels and identify additional ways to publicly recognize educator excellence. (July 2026) [P2.F4.A1]

- Explore models that increase instructional capacity by reducing burden on teachers, including eliminating or significantly reducing unpaid teacher duties, streamlining compliance processes, increasing teacher planning time and increasing flexible scheduling. (August 2026) [P2.F4.A2]

- Launch a statewide teacher reverence initiative that highlights educator stories and contributions, trains educators to serve as recruiters of future teachers and partners with local chambers of commerce and community organizations to celebrate and support local public school educators. (January 2027) [P2.F4.A3]
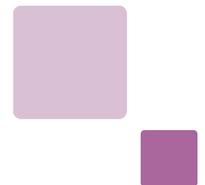
Pillar 3

Enhance Parent, Caregiver and Community Support

FOCUS AREAS

- Engage and empower families

- Strengthen community partnerships

While schools are a powerful force in a child's life, there are many important partners who support our state's students. Parents, guardians and other caregivers (collectively referred to here as "parents") are the most important people in a child's life and they are the most important partners for schools. Important, too, are community organizations, houses of worship, nonprofits, healthcare providers, philanthropies, mental health providers, social service providers, volunteers and community organizations that impact children. Study after study shows that students who have strong parent and/or community support do far better than students who do not. Parents and community also make a major difference in the life of the school itself, creating the type of environment where students learn and grow.

Educators must be empowered to establish strong relationships with families and view family and community stakeholders as true partners in decision-making processes. In turn, families will feel strongly connected to their students' schools. Communities should see their public schools as the anchor.

MEASURES

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of schools and districts that have developed and implemented comprehensive family engagement policies and activities. [P3.M1]

- Establish a baseline and increase access to NCDPI parent and community resources. [P3.M2]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of PSUs implementing integrated support models that remove non-academic barriers and improve student well-being and perceptions of school. [P3.M3]

While schools are a powerful force in a child's life, there are many important partners who support our state's students.

Parents   Guardians   Caregivers   Community Organizations   Houses of Worship   Nonprofits

ACTIONS

Engage and empower families

- Identify ways to develop translations of NCDPI resources based on student demographics. (January 2026) [P3.F1.A1]

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of parent and community resources at NCDPI (personnel, funds, training, instruments, current activities, etc.). (March 2026) [P3.F1.A2]

- Form an advisory group to play a role in needs identification, decision-making and plans to enhance parent, family and community engagement. (March 2026) [P3.F1.A3]

- Promote collaboration and partner with PSUs to share best practices on effective communication between schools and families. (June 2026) [P3.F1.A4]

- Create a virtual NCDPI Family Academy that could be linked to PSU websites that will offer accessible, webinar-style learning sessions for families. (May 2027) [P3.F1.A5]

Strengthen community partnerships

- Engage philanthropic and business communities to fund and support research and adoption of innovative school models. (June 2026) [P3.F2.A1]

- Promote partnerships between PSUs and local community organizations to provide support for families, especially in underserved areas. (January 2027) [P3.F2.A2]

- Increase NCDPI supports for the educators who serve as a bridge to the local community, such as nurses, counselors, social workers, school psychologists and parent liaisons. (January 2027) [P3.F2.A3]

- Advocate for evidence-based school models, such as "community schools," that reduce barriers by promoting community resources to support student and family well-being. (May 2027) [P3.F2.A4]

- Identify and share best practices around partnerships between PSUs and local health professionals for providing mental and physical health supports to students and staff. (December 2027) [P3.F2.A5]

Healthcare Providers   Philanthropies   Mental Health Providers   Social Service Providers   Volunteers

Pillar 4

Ensure Healthy, Safe and Secure Learning Environments

FOCUS AREAS

- Ensure safe school environments

- Improve student and staff health and well-being

Students and staff in our public schools are not able to achieve educational excellence unless we ensure their safety and well-being. Physical safety must balance effective security measures with maintaining welcoming, nurturing spaces. Through thoughtful design, staff training and appropriate protocols, we should create environments where students and staff can focus on teaching and learning. Within these environments, proven, research-based practices that foster emotional security and physical and mental well-being should be implemented. School counselors, social workers, nurses and psychologists work collaboratively with teachers to provide appropriate support tailored to individual student needs. Overall, schools must be places where students develop resilience, build relationships and prepare for their futures in safe, secure environments that nurture their full potential.

MEASURES

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of schools working with NCDPI to implement perimeter control, secured access points management and protected internal spaces across PSUs. [P4.M1]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of trained school resource officers (SROs) to support a safe school environment. [P4.M2]

- Establish a baseline and increase the proportion of school personnel certified in Youth Mental Health First Aid. [P4.M3]

- Establish a baseline and decrease chronic absenteeism rates across PSUs. [P4.M4]

- Establish a baseline and increase Medicaid revenue for eligible school-based services across PSUs while reducing the administrative processing time. [P4.M5]

- Based on Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data, establish a baseline and increase the percentage of high school students who a) most of the time or always feel safe and secure at school and b) strongly agree or agree that they feel like they belong at their school; and decrease the percentage of high school students who a) reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good and b) felt sad or hopeless. [P4.M6]

- Increase the percentage of schools reporting none to a limited number of incidents of violence annually. [P4.M7]

Overall, schools must be places where students develop resilience, build relationships and prepare for their futures in safe, secure environments that nurture their full potential.

ACTIONS

Ensure safe school environments

- Strengthen physical security measures in PSUs, such as perimeter control, secured access points and protected internal spaces, through school construction assistance provided by NCDPI. (September 2025) [P4.F1.A1]

- Support PSUs in creating safe and secure online learning environments by providing tools, best practices and advanced training for educators on virtual classrooms and secure online interactions. (January 2026) [P4.F1.A2]

- Encourage PSUs that utilize SROs to ensure all SROs receive training appropriate for working with school-aged children, in collaboration with the Governor's Advisory Council for Student Safety and Well-Being and local law enforcement agencies. (March 2027) [P4.F1.A3]

Improve student and staff health and well-being

- Guide PSUs to identify and apply best practices to limit distractions from wireless devices and promote responsible social media use to support safe and focused learning environments. (January 2026) [P4.F2.A1]

- Identify and share effective practices for reducing chronic absenteeism and strengthening student attendance. (January 2026) [P4.F2.A2]

- Promote student and staff well-being by supporting PSUs in implementing Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child models to foster positive school climates and elevate student voice and belonging. (March 2026) [P4.F2.A3]

- Develop a student behavior pilot to address behavior challenges and scale trauma-informed practices in PSUs identified with significant discipline referrals. (August 2026) [P4.F2.A4]

- Support PSUs in implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and share best practices for fostering supportive school environments and reducing behavioral challenges. (August 2026) [P4.F2.A5]

- Partner with PSUs for widespread implementation of physical activity recommendations in State Board Policy SHLT-000. (January 2027) [P4.F2.A6]

- Partner with community and health service organizations to identify and share strategies to expand school-based health services for students and staff, including telehealth. (December 2027) [P4.F2.A7]

- Increase educator capacity to address student mental health needs by expanding Youth and Teen Mental Health First Aid training. (December 2027) [P4.F2.A8]

- Enhance operational efficiency and maximize allowable Medicaid reimbursements for school-based services across PSUs. (August 2028) [P4.F2.A9]

Pillar 5

Optimize Operational Excellence

FOCUS AREAS

- Improve NCDPI's services to stakeholders

- Improve collaboration and communication across NCDPI offices

- Modernize NCDPI and PSU operations

NCDPI is committed to reimagining its operational infrastructure to better serve schools and districts through a focus on organizational excellence. At the core of this pillar is NCDPI's unwavering dedication to support PSUs in providing a high-quality education for every student. Through modernized operations at both the state and local levels, we aim to use cutting-edge technology, streamlined processes and data-informed decision-making to eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens. This operational focus extends beyond NCDPI itself, as the agency will actively partner with PSUs across the state to model operational efficiency and share best practices. Through this pillar, NCDPI will model that careful attention to processes, systems and service delivery creates the essential foundation upon which educational innovation can flourish, ultimately ensuring that North Carolina's public schools operate with maximum effectiveness to support the success of every student.

MEASURES

- Establish a baseline satisfaction index among PSU central office staff and increase satisfaction according to the DPI Customer Service Survey (as defined below), ensuring representativeness of survey responses and achieving a ≥70% response rate. [P5.M1]

- All PSUs are live on the North Carolina Student Information System powered by Infinite Campus (NCSIS) with minimal critical incident rate in the first year of full implementation. [P5.M2]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of PSUs that adopt modernized financial and human resources systems. [P5.M3]

- Establish a baseline and increase the percentage of PSUs using data analytic tools for student, finance and business data. [P5.M4]

- Establish a baseline and decrease total statewide technology contract expenditures by renegotiating or discontinuing contracts that fall below established return on investment benchmarks and redirect the savings to high-impact, evidence-based tools. [P5.M5]

At the core of this pillar is NCDPI's unwavering dedication to support PSUs in providing a high-quality education for every student.

ACTIONS

Improve NCDPI's services to stakeholders

- Implement an agency-wide language access plan and ensure communications and website materials meet accessibility standards to better serve diverse PSU needs. (January 2026) [P5.F1.A1]

- Improve ability of PSU staff to communicate with NCDPI by making contact information more accessible and transparent and by enhancing support protocols, such as regular NCDPI staff office hour sessions. (June 2026) [P5.F1.A2]

- Develop and administer a survey to central office staff (a "DPI Customer Service Survey") to assess customer service strengths and needs. (June 2026) [P5.F1.A3]

- Create and share NCDPI guidance focused on capacity building for PSUs, including best practices for strategic purchasing decisions and aligning budget decisions with instructional priorities. (June 2026) [P5.F1.A4]

- Evaluate the condition, functionality and safety of the NCDPI building and shared spaces to identify maintenance, modernization and accessibility needs that impact staff and visitor health, safety and productivity. (June 2026) [P5.F1.A5]

- Review, refine and standardize work order, maintenance and operational support request processes to ensure consistent, timely and transparent service delivery to all NCDPI offices and stakeholders. (August 2026) [P5.F1.A6]

Improve collaboration and communication across NCDPI offices

- Establish an intra-agency working group to identify and address barriers to operational consistency, collaboration and communication across NCDPI offices. (January 2026) [P5.F2.A1]

- Reestablish the NCDPI Agency Roundtable to better coordinate, differentiate and streamline identified supports to PSUs. (January 2026) [P5.F2.A2]

- Create key performance indicators for all NCDPI offices aligned to the strategic plan to monitor and drive agency effectiveness. (February 2026) [P5.F2.A3]

Modernize NCDPI and PSU operations

- Implement with limited challenges the NCSIS. (August 2025) [P5.F3.A1]

- Develop and implement a uniform framework for the handling of data, including collection, validation, management, security and reporting processes, across all NCDPI departments. (March 2026) [P5.F3.A2]

- Launch enhanced data analytic tools for use with the NCSIS. (August 2026) [P5.F3.A3]

- Audit agency contracts to identify opportunities for cost savings, increased efficiency and improved return on investment, with special focus on technology-related agreements. (September 2026) [P5.F3.A4]

- Identify and promote PSU best practices for operational efficiency, such as shared services models, as well as engage the business community to leverage expertise on operational effectiveness. (January 2027) [P5.F3.A5]

- Explore ways to leverage machine learning, artificial intelligence and advanced analytics to enhance NCDPI efficiency and extend value and insights essential to all statewide stakeholders. (January 2027) [P5.F3.A6]

- Modernize the financial, human resources and licensure systems across both NCDPI and PSUs. (January 2028) [P5.F3.A7]

- Design, deploy and operationalize a centralized and unified data visualization platform for NCDPI data. (August 2028) [P5.F3.A8]

Pillar 6

Lead Transformative Change

FOCUS AREAS

- Transform schools through research and development

- Connect North Carolina public schools through education networks

- Promote integrated support systems for schools and districts

- Explore accountability and funding reform

North Carolina stands ready to pioneer approaches that will position our state as a national leader in public education excellence. At the heart of this pillar is a commitment to research and development that sparks educational reimagining through thoughtful innovation. NCDPI will serve as both catalyst and facilitator, establishing networks that transcend boundaries between traditional public schools, charter schools and lab schools, sharing promising practices and scaling effective innovations. Through community-driven school designs and different approaches to testing and accountability, we will ensure innovation remains grounded in local needs while benefiting from statewide expertise. Our commitment also extends to funding reform that prioritizes transparency, flexibility, a focus on student needs and increased investments. This pillar represents our commitment to the thoughtful, deliberate work of innovation and elevating North Carolina's public schools to new heights by strategically using research, networks and integrated systems.

MEASURES

- Establish a baseline and decrease the number of identified low-performing schools and PSUs annually. [P6.M1]

- Establish a baseline and increase PSU use of assessment tools that provide timely, actionable information and multiple measures of learning. [P6.M2]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of active NCDPI, PSU and partner networks collaborating on the implementation of Strategic Plan actions. [P6.M3]

North Carolina stands ready to pioneer approaches that will position our state as a national leader in public education excellence.

ACTIONS

Transform schools through research and development

- Create a cross-sector Innovation Leadership Council (charter, district and lab school leaders, along with NCDPI staff) to guide knowledge transfer and scale-up. (January 2026) [P6.F1.A1]

- Establish a structured process to identify, pilot, evaluate and/or scale innovative school models and instructional practices across North Carolina. (March 2026) [P6.F1.A2]

- Publish and promote an annual collection of effective and innovative practices drawn from local, statewide and national research, to inform policy, NCDPI work and PSU improvement efforts. (June 2026) [P6.F1.A3]

Connect North Carolina public schools through education networks

- Establish statewide, regional and partner education networks to facilitate implementation of key strategic plan priorities, share scalable resources and support continuous improvement across PSUs. (September 2026) [P6.F2.A1]

- Create and maintain shared resources, assets and digital tools for use by education networks, enabling districts and schools to accelerate strategic initiatives and replicate effective practices. (September 2026) [P6.F2.A2]

- Convene an annual statewide and interstate networks conference to showcase innovative PreK–12 practices, host immersive site visits and expand access to research-driven models. (October 2027) [P6.F2.A3]


Promote integrated support systems for schools and districts

- Explore redesign of the statutory process for identifying low-performing schools to ensure it is supportive, research-informed and better aligned to improvement needs. (February 2026) [P6.F3.A1]

- Explore strategies, including how to creatively use currently available funding allotments, to recruit and retain highly effective teachers and principals to work in low-performing schools and districts. (June 2026) [P6.F3.A2]

- Adopt statewide protocols, including diagnostics, planning tools and fidelity monitoring to guide local improvement efforts for low-performing schools. (September 2026) [P6.F3.A3]

- Expand SBE and NCDPI efforts to support districts designated as low-performing and districts experiencing financial challenges. (March 2028) [P6.F3.A4]

Explore accountability and funding reform

- Establish an SBE Task Force to develop a new school-level accountability system that will:
  - Consider the variability among high schools with respect to available opportunities and funding, such as AP and CTE courses, etc.;
  - Reliably assess multiple measures of student performance in grades 3-12 that includes measures of progress towards ensuring all students graduate prepared for their next phase of life. (October 2025) [P6.F4.A1]

- Enhance interim assessments aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, promote multiple measures beyond standardized assessments and provide PSUs with the resources to increase progress monitoring using assessment data. (January 2026) [P6.F4.A2]

- Explore reforms to North Carolina's school funding model to ensure allocations are transparent, flexible and based on student needs. (November 2026) [P6.F4.A3]

- Publish new School Performance Profiles based on the redesigned accountability system to ensure public transparency and equip communities with clear data on local school success. (December 2026) [P6.F4.A4]
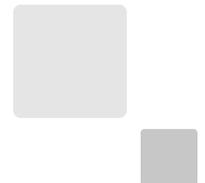
Pillar 7

Celebrate the Excellence in Public Education

FOCUS AREAS

- Develop comprehensive public education messaging

- Engage partners on education

- Share public education messaging and stories

Families all across North Carolina send their children to their local public school – in fact, the vast majority of them do choose public education. They entrust their children to the educators whose bright faces greet them each morning. They build community around high school football games and middle school band performances. Each year, thousands of students walk across stages to cheers and tears as they are prepared to go out and lead the life they choose. Our schools did not become bright beacons of hope all on their own. Generations of North Carolinians are proud of our public schools, share their support for schools and have made the choice to invest in them and make them strong, which is noteworthy. It is vitally important that these choices are celebrated and that more make similar choices.

MEASURES

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of public information officers (PIOs) and other PSU communicators engaged in this initiative. [P7.M1]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of professional development opportunities provided for PIOs and NCDPI partners to use shared messaging and materials. [P7.M2]

- Establish a baseline and increase family, student and community satisfaction, knowledge and perception of public schools. [P7.M3]

- Establish a baseline and increase the number of NCDPI staff and education partners working in collaboration on celebrating public education. [P7.M4]

Our schools did not become bright beacons of hope all on their own. Generations of North Carolinians are proud of our public schools, share their support for schools and have made the choice to invest in them and make them strong.

ACTIONS

Develop comprehensive public education messaging

- Use research and assessment of current NCDPI partners' initiatives and messaging for public education. (October 2025) [P7.F1.A1]

- Work with partners to develop and test comprehensive public education messaging. (January 2026) [P7.F1.A2]

- Create accessible and engaging materials about how public education works and is managed in North Carolina. (March 2026) [P7.F1.A3]

- Create supportive materials and training for PIOs and NCDPI partners to adopt and adapt and coordinate communications. (May 2026) [P7.F1.A4]

Engage partners on education

- Engage, align and support PSU communications staff to align communication efforts that celebrate public education. (December 2025) [P7.F2.A1]

- Engage, connect and support NCDPI staff and education partners' communication efforts for this initiative. (March 2026) [P7.F2.A2]

- Engage and align non-education partners' communication efforts for this initiative. (July 2026) [P7.F2.A3]

Share public education messaging and stories

- Work with education partners on statewide communication efforts that uplift success stories, testimonials and positive narratives about public schools. (December 2025) [P7.F3.A1]

- Coordinate and share messaging that celebrates public education successes. (March 2026) [P7.F3.A2]

- Encourage joint events and community engagement activities where NCDPI and education partners present unified messaging about public education. (May 2026) [P7.F3.A3]

- Evaluate the initiative's impact on public school satisfaction, knowledge and perception from families, students and North Carolina residents. (January 2027) [P7.F3.A4]

Pillar 8

Galvanize Champions to Fully Invest in and Support Public Education

FOCUS AREAS

- Build community voices

- Promote engagement initiatives

- Move champions to action

North Carolina's journey toward educational excellence requires more than vision and strategy — it demands the engagement, advocacy and investment of champions across our state who recognize public education as the cornerstone of our shared prosperity and collective future. This pillar builds upon efforts to transform the narrative around public schools by converting positive perception into concrete action by aligning partners behind a unified commitment to educational excellence. We envision a powerful network of non-education partners who bring fresh perspectives, resources and influence to advocacy efforts.

By developing a formal alliance of nonprofit, philanthropic and business champions, we can systematically advocate for increased public school investments, particularly for critical infrastructure needs and competitive educator compensation. By elevating authentic stories from local communities, we will showcase the remarkable achievements occurring daily in classrooms across North Carolina, creating connections that inspire deeper engagement while honestly acknowledging challenges and transparently communicating our strategies to address them.
By galvanizing champions across every sector of our state — from rural communities to urban centers, from small businesses to major corporations, from parents to retirees — we create a force for educational investment and improvement that propels North Carolina's public schools to be recognized as the very best in the nation, fulfilling our obligation to provide every child the world-class education they deserve.

MEASURES

- Increase state and local investments in public schools so that per pupil funding increases by 10% (over 2023 levels) by 2030. [P8.M1]

- Increase the percentage of school-aged children enrolled in public schools to 89% by 2030. [P8.M2]

North Carolina's journey toward educational excellence requires more than vision and strategy — it demands the engagement, advocacy and investment of champions across our state who recognize public education as the cornerstone of our shared prosperity and collective future.

ACTIONS

Build community voices

- Engage and train partners and communicators to advocate for public education. (May 2026) [P8.F1.A1]
- Connect and align NCDPI, education partners and allies to support local, regional and statewide efforts. (September 2026) [P8.F1.A2]
- Encourage and support aligned initiatives and outreach via social media, media and events. (September 2026) [P8.F1.A3]

Promote engagement initiatives

- Develop and launch a statewide reading campaign where students will collectively read 10 million books annually, in collaboration with state and local partners. (January 2026) [P8.F2.A1]
- Develop toolkits for PSUs to engage families and partners in their schools. (August 2026) [P8.F2.A2]
- Develop toolkits for local chambers, businesses and community organizations to work with eighth graders on their career development plans and 12th graders on their postsecondary plans. (January 2027) [P8.F2.A3]

Move champions to action

- Engage local and state policymakers to attend events, visit schools and participate in public education initiatives. (August 2026) [P8.F3.A1]
- Engage businesses, individuals and philanthropic organizations to invest in PSUs at the local, regional and state levels. (October 2026) [P8.F3.A2]
- Work with partners to advocate for investments in public schools, especially for initiatives for improving student achievement and school infrastructure. (November 2026) [P8.F3.A3]
- Create a statewide foundation to fund various initiatives in this and future strategic plans. (December 2026) [P8.F3.A4]
- Highlight the changing narrative on public education in North Carolina and how it is part of the state's identity. (November 2028) [P8.F3.A5]
- Work with partners to explore creating an endowment that will allow all public high school graduates, regardless of income, to attend at least two years of postsecondary education completely tuition-free inclusive of federal and state financial aid. (June 2030) [P8.F3.A6]
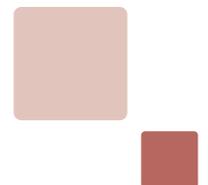
ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL
EXCELLENCE

PILLAR 1

PILLAR 2

PILLAR 3

PILLAR 4

PILLAR 5

PILLAR 6

PILLAR 7

PILLAR 8

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The goal of this strategic plan is ambitious and clear: to make North Carolina's public schools the best in the nation. As we ask our students to embrace growth and progress, we hold ourselves to the same standard. Excellence is not a fixed destination, but a continuous journey. Accordingly, this plan is designed to evolve through a continuous improvement process that strengthens and refines our efforts over time.

To ensure faithful and effective implementation, NCDPI will establish an **Office of Strategic Planning** tasked with overseeing the execution and evolution of the plan. In collaboration with NCDPI leadership and staff, the Office will assign business owners from among NCDPI staff to lead the implementation of each plan action. Business owners will lead project teams of NCDPI staff and other strategic partners in developing and executing a detailed project plan for the actions assigned to them. The project teams will execute each project plan by the launch date assigned to each action.

NCDPI will also convene a **Strategic Plan Monitoring and Accountability Committee (SPAC)** composed of senior leaders from across the agency to support this implementation work. The SPAC will be responsible for:

- Reviewing and approving project plans developed by business owners and project teams;
- Providing direction, support and resources to business owners and project teams;
- Managing timelines, milestones and deliverables;
- Identifying implementation challenges and addressing barriers;
- Developing an Excellence Report Card that relates to the pillars of the plan;
- Monitoring progress toward strategic goals; and
- Reporting quarterly on plan implementation to the state superintendent and the SBE.

The SPAC's quarterly reports will serve as a transparent mechanism for tracking progress and ensuring accountability as we collectively pursue a stronger, more effective public education system for all North Carolinians.

The plan is intended to be a dynamic document and will change as the SPAC annually reviews progress on each action in the plan and the timeline for launching upcoming plan actions. Based on that review, the SPAC will assess and make recommendations to the Superintendent and SBE on any changes that need to be made to plan actions or timelines.
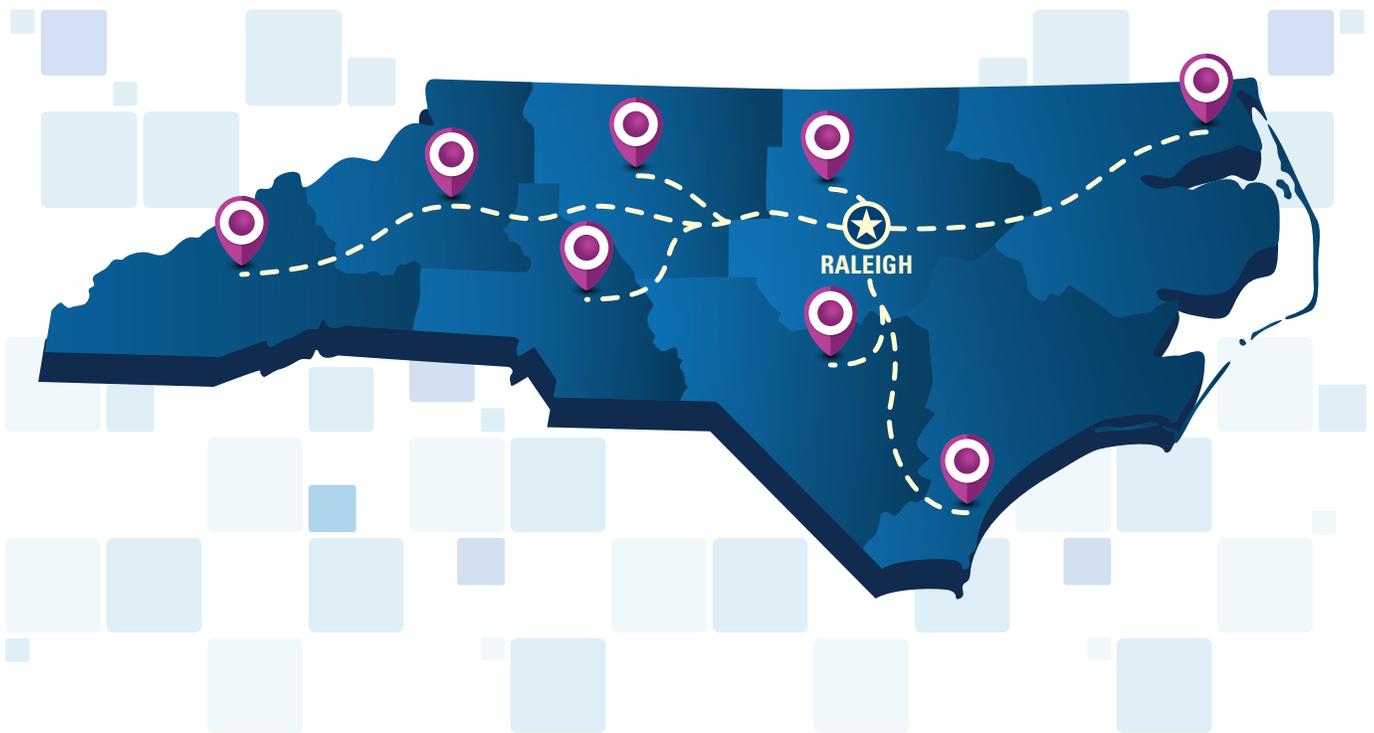
Northwest

Piedmont-Triad

North Central

Northeast

RALEIGH

Western

Southwest

Sandhills

Southeast

MO WANTS TO KNOW — LISTENING AND LEARNING TOUR SUMMARY

From February to May 2025, Superintendent Green embarked on the "Mo Wants to Know" (MWTK) listening and learning tour across North Carolina. This initiative included eight in-person regional sessions, over 30 virtual and in-person stakeholder meetings, more than a dozen school visits and an online feedback form accessible to all North Carolinians. The tour engaged thousands of educators, students, parents, business leaders and community members in meaningful conversations about the future of public education in our state.

The tour revealed both the deep pride North Carolinians have in their public schools and their aspirations for continued improvement. Common themes included calls for competitive educator compensation, modernized infrastructure, personalized learning pathways, mental health support and strengthened partnerships between schools and communities. While each region highlighted unique issues, there was remarkable consistency in the core values and priorities expressed across the state. A report that summarizes the key themes, regional perspectives and transformative ideas gathered during the MWTK tour is available on the website at: go.ncdpi.gov/mwtk. In partnership with research firm RTI International, using advanced analytical techniques, patterns in the community feedback that aligned with Superintendent Green's initial six pillars for Achieving Educational Excellence were identified. What emerged was a collective vision that emphasizes career readiness, teacher empowerment, increased and equitable funding, whole-child support and community partnerships.

The insights gathered through the MWTK tour directly informed the development of a comprehensive strategic plan for North Carolina's public schools. By listening to the collective wisdom of stakeholders from Murphy to Manteo, a foundation for educational excellence that truly reflects the needs, values and aspirations of North Carolinians will be built.

GLOSSARY

ACRONYM (IF APPLICABLE)	FULL TERM	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
—	Accessible	Making a tool broadly available by endeavoring to cater to as many needs as possible.
ACT	American College Test	College readiness exam taken by all North Carolina 11th-graders.
AI	Artificial Intelligence	Computer systems that perform tasks requiring human intelligence; focus on safe, instructional use.
AIG	Academically/Intellectually Gifted	North Carolina program for students performing or showing potential at high levels.
AP	Advanced Placement	College-level high-school courses with exams administered by the College Board.
—	Character Education	The mission of Character Education is to help schools teach students to be good citizens. It is a goal for schools, districts and states to teach students important values, including respect, responsibility, integrity, perseverance, courage, justice and self-discipline.
CIE	Cambridge International Education (Cambridge International)	Provider of international qualifications, offering examinations and qualifications to 10,000 schools in more than 160 countries. It is part of the University of Cambridge.
CTE	Career and Technical Education	Courses and credentials that prepare students for specific careers.
DE	Dual Enrollment	Students earn high-school and college credit simultaneously (e.g., Career & College Promise).
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills	Benchmark and progress monitoring tool for early reading.
—	Digital Safety	Refers to the practices and precautions individuals and organizations take to protect themselves from risks in the online environment.
EC	Exceptional Children	North Carolina's term for special education services.
EOG / EOC	End-of-Grade / End-of-Course	State summative assessments in grades 3-8 and select high school subjects.
Golden LEAF	Golden Long-term Economic Advancement Foundation (LEAF)	North Carolina foundation funding rural economic and education improvement grants.
IB	International Baccalaureate	Internationally recognized rigorous high school diploma and course program.

ACRONYM (IF APPLICABLE)	FULL TERM	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps	Leadership and citizenship program in high schools sponsored by the United States Armed Forces.
ML	Multilingual Learner	A student whose primary language is not English; sometimes referred to as an English Learner (EL) or English Language Learner (ELL).
NCDHHS	North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	State agency partnering on early-learning and health initiatives.
NCDPI	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	State education agency overseeing public schools in North Carolina (often "NCDPI").
—	NCDPI Agency Roundtable	A forum hosted by NCDPI to promote academic data analysis regionally.
NCSIS	North Carolina Student Information System	NCSIS, powered by Infinite Campus, is a new student information system with a parent portal for grades, attendance, and assignments, and a mobile application.
NextNC / NC College Connect	NC direct-admissions & financial-support programs	Offer automatic college admission and grants to eligible seniors.
—	Professional Learning	Structured learning, including professional development, for educators or staff.
PSU	Public School Unit	North Carolina term encompassing traditional public school districts, lab schools, regional schools, and charter schools.
SIS	Student Information System	Core database holding student information, including enrollment, grades, attendance.
SOR	Science of Reading	Evidence-based body of research guiding literacy instruction.
—	Trauma-Informed	An approach where schools recognize and respond to the impacts of traumatic stress on those within the school system.
WSCC	Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model	The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's framework for addressing health in schools. The WSCC model is student-centered and emphasizes the role of the community in supporting the school, the connections between health and academic achievement and the importance of evidence-based school policies and practices.

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Best in the Nation—Our 2030 Plan for North Carolina Public Schools

NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction