League of Women Voters of the Lower Cape Fear

Education Round Table Recommendations for Action

*Key Education Bills and Policy Issues Pending for the*

*Legislative Short Session, convening April 25, 2016:*

We encourage our members to write or call their local legislators, as well as other legislators pertinent to the issue at hand, about some or all of these education issues. If you wish to address more than one topic at length, we suggest sending separate emails on each topic. If you address several topics in an email, we suggest keeping it as succinct as possible.

Help us meet our goals! Email Bonnie Bechard to report the number of legislators you contacted and issues addressed. We can keep a chart of our progress. Let us know if you addressed the issues in one email, or addressed issues separately.

**Local Legislators (click on a name to send an email)**

*Senate:*

District 8 - Sen. Bill Rabon

District 9 – Sen. Michael V. Lee

*House:*

District 16 – Chris Millis

District 17 – Rep. Frank Iler

District 18 – Rep. Susi Hamilton

District 19 – Ted Davis, Jr.

District 20 – Rick Catlin

**Sending an email to the entire legislature, House or Senate:**

All legislators: NC General Assembly

House Members: NC House of Representatives

Senate Members: NC Senate

**SB95** **Achievement School Districts (ASD).** Now in committee. This bill would create an “Achievement School District ” comprised of 5 schools chosen from the bottom 25% of schools. The state would appoint a superintendent to run this “district” and select a private entity to run each school. These charters will get the school building, furnishings, equipment, etc. Teachers and administrators lose their jobs and the charter company rehires. Where these plans have been implemented in other states, such as Tennessee, they have been largely unsuccessful, while State Innovation Zones, where traditional public schools are operated with charter-like flexibility, showed much more progress.

The NC Department of Public Instruction has a detailed plan in place to improve schools. One part of this plan is called “North Carolina Turnaround”, which is a comprehensive program targeting low-achievement schools. (“The Constitutional Mandate to Provide an Opportunity for a Sound Basic Education: An update and recommendation”, NCDPI, July 2015) Some notable achievements after implementation of this plan:

* Of the 44 Original Low-performing High Schools identified by Judge Manning in 2004, only 5 remain as low performing, and all have increased their graduation rates based on the 2013-14 accountability data.
* On average, between 2009-10 and 2011-12, the schools supported by this Turnaround service improved by 7.9 percentage points (as compared to the state average improvement of 1.1 percentage points).
* Of the 102 schools receiving service in 2013-14, 46 met and 25 exceeded student growth expectations—a healthy indicator that these schools are on the right path.
* All 12 school districts, identified in 2010 as the lowest 10% of LEA’s in North Carolina have increased their graduation rates over the last 4 years. The overall graduation rate increased 8.3%. Two districts exceeded the state average of 83.9%.

*Legislators on the Achievement School Districts committee:*

Rep. Rob Bryan Rep. Jeffrey Elmore Rep. Bert Jones

Rep. Hugh Blackwell Rep. Edward Hanes Rep. Chris Malone

Rep. Cecil Brockman Rep. Jon Hardister Rep. Dennis Riddell

Rep. Tricia Cotham Rep. Craig Horn  Rep. Rena Turner**Raising the Per-Pupil Expenditure**

Cuts in K-12 funding have long term consequences for our children’s college and career readiness. It affects our business climate: businesses will go to states with better educational opportunities; our students won’t have the skills businesses need.

North Carolina is a state where most funding comes from the state level. As state funding decreases, counties are forced to pay a larger share. Our poorer counties are especially hard-hit.

* Between 2008 and 2014 state funding per student fell by 13.9%, making NC the 9th worst state.
* NC is 46th in per-pupil funding (in 2008 NC was 25th).
* We know that pre-K education works to improve outcomes for low-income students, and yet that funding has been cut from $7,679 per-pupil in 2002 to $4,690 in 2013. Every $1 invested in pre-K saves taxpayers up to $13 in future costs in incarceration, education, tax collection increases, and welfare.
* Effective teachers are the most important factors in learning and yet we rank 42nd in teacher salaries. We have the largest decline in the nation for the decade 2003-04 to 2013-14.

Factors that are draining resources from our public schools include Charter Schools, according to the NCDPI report released January 2016, and vouchers (see below).

*Legislators on Education Appropriation Committees:*

Sen. Tom Apodaca Sen. Chad Barefoot Sen. Dan Soucek

Sen. David Curtis Sen. Don Davis Sen. Fletcher Hartsell

Sen. Bob Rucho Sen. Erica Smith-Ingram Sen. Jerry Tillman

Sen. Joyce Waddell

Rep. Hugh Blackwell Rep. Rob Bryan Rep. Craig Horn

Rep. Rosa Gill  Rep. Paul Stam Rep. Chris Whitmire

Rep. Larry Bell Rep. Cecil Brockman Rep. Debra Conrad

Rep. Jeffrey Elmore Rep. John Fraley Rep. Kyle Hall

Rep. Marvin Lucas Rep. Mickey Michaux  Rep. William Richardson

**Vouchers**

Vouchers are diverting millions of taxpayer dollars from public schools to private schools with no required accountability. Vouchers for the school years 2015-16 and 2016-17 will drain a total of $42.4 million from public schools. These monies could be more effectively used to stop the flight of our best teachers to other states, fund pre-K, fund intervention programs for low-performing schools, and raise per-pupil expenditure. Some facts about vouchers:

* Research shows that overall student achievement does not improve, in fact where voucher programs have existed for a length of time, traditional public schools often outperform the schools receiving vouchers.
* The amount of the voucher is far less than the cost of tuition in a high quality private school, so the majority of participants are only able to attend the most inexpensive and lowest quality schools.
* Article IX, Section 6 of the NC Constitution provides that public funds for education “shall be …used exclusively for establishing and maintaining a uniform system of free public schools.” Article V Section 2(1) states “the power of taxation shall be exercised…for public purposes only.”
* Private schools that participate in the program are not required to take state proficiency exams, hire licensed teachers, or issue report cards.
* Schools participating in the voucher program are not obligated to admit or accommodate students with disabilities.
* Schools participating in the voucher program are permitted to discriminate in the admission of students on the basis of race, gender, family income or wealth, disability, and religion.
* These schools are not required to be accredited by the State Board of Education or any other state of national institution.
* Individuals, institutions, or companies that own or operate private schools do not need to have any experience of expertise in education. They are not subject to open meeting laws.
* These schools have no requirements regarding curriculum.
* These schools must administer a “nationally standardized test” of their choosing, with measures in the areas of English and mathematics, but they are not required to measure proficiency in science, history, social studies or any other studies. Also, they are not required to demonstrate any increase in student proficiency.

*Contact legislators on the Education Appropriations Committees, listed in section on “Raising Per-Pupil Expenditure”.*

**A-F School Performance Grades**

The current A-F grading system:

* Reflects the degree of poverty of the student population more than the potential and growth achievement of these students and the hard work of their teachers. It does not accurately assess the learning in our schools and undervalues student growth and other important measures of schools quality.
* Stigmatizes high poverty schools by labeling them failing schools. This could also have negative economic impacts on a community, such as lower home values and sales.
* Could result in more attention to borderline students while underserving the lowest and highest performing students
* Does not come with the resources/financial support to improve grades

We support the passage of House bill 803 that would take growth achievement more into account by changing the formula from 80% achievement and 20% growth to 50% achievement and 50% growth.

*Contact your local legislators.*