# 2026 WCPSS NCGA Short Session Legislative Agenda

50 years 1976 - 2026 FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY Wake County Public School System

## Funding Public Education

The Wake County Board of Education calls upon the North Carolina General Assembly to make important systemic reforms regarding the Funding of Public Education, to ensure that public schools, which are mandated to serve all enrolled children regardless of income, health, or ability, receive the educational funding they need to provide a sound basic education.

## Raising Teacher Compensation Towards the National Average

North Carolina must make a significant public investment in its education system—one that is competitive with other states in our region and the economic markets with which we compete. North Carolina ranks 4th in economic outlook, 16th in quality of public education, but 51st in public school funding. This investment is essential to attract and retain quality educators and eliminate teacher shortages, particularly in fields requiring advanced training. Specifically, this includes funding competitive salaries for teachers, classroom staff, and support personnel that align with those in other states and professions requiring similar education levels. These essential workers are being lost not only to outof-state school districts but also to better-paying private-sector jobs, especially in STEM subjects and career and technical education. Aligning teacher compensation with regional salaries of other states allows greater retention of staff and continuous alignment with North Carolina's economic outlook and quality of public school education.

## Modernizing the Special Education Funding Formula

North Carolina must modernize the special education funding formula by ensuring the state provides the necessary resources for every child requiring special education services, specifically students with high service needs—not just the first 13%. Funding for special education teachers and instructional assistants must be increased to address high turnover and staff shortages, which disrupt essential services for children with disabilities. Additionally, a change to the funding formula would provide needed program support and personnel necessary to serve high needs students. The current funding does not provide the adequate support for districts that have a high concentration of these students. The General Assembly is encouraged to include a more equity based funding approach to ensure needed support is directed towards districts with higher needs as opposed to a general increase of the funding cap, which will not lead to an equitable distribution of funding.

## Addressing Student Hunger to Support Academics

Due to inadequate federal funding and stagnant reimbursement rates that have not kept pace with inflation, North Carolina must supplement funding for student meal programs to combat student hunger and ensure students are ready to learn. Rising food costs, coupled with changes in federal regulations that reduce access to food assistance programs, create significant challenges for school meal programs. Without adequate nutrition, students face various challenges that impact their well-being and ability to focus on learning. North Carolina should provide the additional funding necessary to close the gap to provide access to no cost meals beginning with kindergarten students. North Carolina must also implement legislation to remove barriers to enhance farm to table programs, allowing North Carolina farmers to fully participate and provide fresh fruits, vegetables and produce.

## Local Flexibility, Adequate Funding, Fair School Performance, and Elimination of Barriers

The Wake County Board of Education also calls upon the North Carolina General Assembly to grant greater local flexibility, allowing the district to address local needs more effectively and efficiently.

- **School Calendar Flexibility:** Provide the same flexibility as public charter schools and allow for calendar adjustments related to emergency situations.
- **K-3 Class Size Flexibility:** Provide additional flexibility waivers for high performing schools.
- **Restart-like Flexibility:** Expand the use of Restart School flexibility to all public schools.
- **Funding Based on Actual Enrollment:** School funding based on actual school enrollment to better reflect students each public school serves.
- **Improving School Performance Evaluation:** Revise the state's grading and evaluation system for school performance to rebalance the achievement and growth ratios, aligning them with neighboring states.
- **Reducing Barriers to Teacher Licensure:** Adjust teacher licensure requirements to accept out-of-state licensure tests, eliminate costly additional testing, and reduce testing and licensure fees.