North Carolina Guide to Strengthening Our Public Schools



PreK-12 Public Education Strategic Plan

North Carolina School Superintendents Association

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Creating North Carolina's future through a stronger system of public education.

Executive Summary

The North Carolina School Superintendents Association (NCSSA) is a professional organization dedicated to the mission of providing leadership and advocacy for public school education throughout North Carolina. The members of NCSSA are compelled by a common mission and a sense of urgency to educate each young person in North Carolina so that our communities, state, and nation will continue to thrive.

North Carolina's North Carolina's ability to compete for jobs, develop a stronger economy, and promote greater economic prosperity for all of its citizens is dependent on the quality of its public schools.

Transportation, health and human services, safety, and a pro-business climate are also important, but our state's greatest asset is its people. Our future depends on today's public school graduates who must be prepared for success in a highly skilled workforce, committed to continuous learning, and able to participate as productive citizens. We need graduates who are effective communicators, critical thinkers, collaborative workers, and whose creativity will drive entrepreneurship and innovation.

As Superintendents of North Carolina's Public Schools, we believe it is imperative that North Carolina develops and commits to a shared vision for public education. This vision includes outlining the knowledge and skills that students must know and be able to demonstrate upon graduation in order to be successful learners, employees, and citizens in the 21st century. It also includes the instructional delivery and learning support systems, human capital, and funding needed to provide our students with a world class education.

This *North Carolina Guide to Strengthening Our Public Schools* is a proactive education reform plan developed by NCSSA to:



Create a public education system that better prepares North Carolina's students for success in globally competitive jobs and in higher education;



Frame the debate on education issues and the funding necessary to both sustain and increase the accomplishments that have been made;



Focus the attention of policymakers on what will make a difference in student achievement;



Establish and maintain a strategic direction for public education; and



Galvanize support of stakeholders who will enable continuous forward momentum for improvement in the quality of public education.

The *North Carolina Guide to Strengthening Our Public Schools* contains six key goals and areas of strategic focus:

Prepared Graduates | All North Carolina students will graduate prepared for college, careers, and citizenship.

Assessment | School districts will use multiple, balanced, and appropriate assessments to measure student growth and achievement.

Instructional Delivery | All North Carolina public school students will receive high quality instruction delivered by the nation's best teachers.

Digital Learning | North Carolina will embrace digital learning to transform our public schools and communities.

Human Capital | Develop North Carolina's human capital for the provision of high-quality public education.

Funding Public Education | North Carolina will rank 25th nationwide in public school funding by 2025.

Key strategies have been identified to achieve each of the six major goals:

PREPARED GRADUATES

Goal 1: All North Carolina students will graduate prepared for college, careers, and citizenship.

Key Strategies

- Ensure an aligned system of content standards, instruction, and assessments.
- Incorporate rigorous content that aligns with internationally benchmarked performance competencies.
- Ensure all students have grade-appropriate career development experiences.
- Use multiple measures to assess students' performance on college and career readiness standards.



ASSESSMENT
Goal 2: School districts will use multiple, balanced, and appropriate assessments to measure student growth and achievement.

Key Strategies

- Use high quality, evidence-based formative assessments to monitor student learning.
- Use authentic assessments such as problem-based projects, collaborative presentations, and community review of student work.
- Provide a web-based portal for sharing assessments, rubrics, and curriculum materials.
- Provide state-supported access to statistical analysis and reporting tools that can provide relevant and timely information to manage improvement of student learning, instructional delivery, and school performance.
- Limit the number of summative assessments needed for accountability, national or international comparisons, and to validate the ongoing formative assessment process.
- Adopt and implement a robust assessment model that provides meaningful information for decision-making about college and career readiness.

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY
Goal 3: All North Carolina public school students will receive high quality instruction delivered by the nation's best teachers.

Key Strategies

- Provide funding and access to rich content and instructional resources.
- Provide funding and access to digital tools to support teaching, learning and operational needs.
- Establish a stable timeline for implementation of revised curriculum standards.
- Assure curriculum is aligned to state standards and provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking and life skills that lead to success at the next level.
- Develop and implement benchmark assessments aligned with state standards.
- Provide funding for a continuous program of professional learning before, during and after the implementation of revised standards.



DIGITAL LEARNING

Goal 4: North Carolina will embrace digital learning to transform our public schools and communities.

Key Strategies

- Include digital learning as a core component of all educational plans for innovation and personalized learning.
- Provide reliable and effective infrastructure for all stakeholders at school and at home.
- Provide state funding to support infrastructure for each district.
- Provide technical support that will be available rapidly enough that instructional and business operations are minimally impacted by technology problems.
- Provide a mobile device and access to rich digital resources for every educator and student at home and school.
- Provide a state funding stream for employing a technology facilitator at each school and professional development to support digital learning.
- Develop and implement standards for digital citizenship at every grade level.



HUMAN CAPITAL

Goal 5: Develop North Carolina's human capital for the provision of high-quality public education.

Key Strategies

- Increase salaries and benefits of all teachers, principals, administrators, superintendents and classified staff so that North Carolina will be in the top of its competitive market and in the top 10% in the nation.
- Maintain a strong NC State Retirement System.
- Provide programs/incentives to encourage high school students to become teachers.
- Provide strong mentoring and induction programs for new teachers and principals.
- Provide flexibility and open reciprocity for teachers from other states to meet North Carolina state licensure requirements.
- Reform the state licensure system to streamline the process for becoming licensed to teach in NC.
- Implement a fair and uniform evaluation system that provides for timely reporting of student achievement data and other performance indicators to be considered in teacher and principal evaluations. The data and indicators should be derived from a balanced system of assessments that are valid and reliable.
- Pass legislation providing for two-year or four-year contracts for teachers.
- Provide funding and resources for professional development for teachers, principals, administrators, and classified staff.

FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION
Goal 6: North Carolina will rank 25th nationwide in public school funding by 2025.

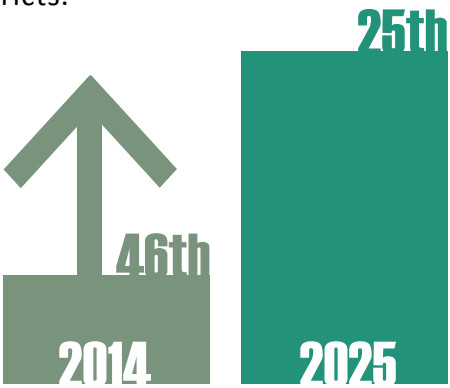
Key Strategies

- Restore funding reductions and appropriate additional funding to assure that schools have adequate resources needed to deliver a world class instructional program, close the achievement gap, and ensure that all students are prepared for college, careers, and citizenship.

- Expand pre-kindergarten programs by broadening eligibility requirements to serve more 3- and 4-year-olds.

- Assure that all new mandates are funded fully to include personnel required for implementation, materials and resources, professional development, monitoring and support, and evaluation.

- Provide additional flexibility to school districts to allocate state resources to meet statewide accountability measures and student performance goals. All flexibility granted to charter schools should also apply to school districts.



Closing

This *North Carolina Guide to Strengthening Our Public Schools* was developed by NCSSA as a proactive education reform plan to better prepare North Carolina's students for a global job market, continued education, and productive citizenship.

Our intent was to frame the debate and focus attention on the education issues that we believe will make a difference in student achievement, and ultimately, in economic development and quality of life in North Carolina.

We invite policymakers, elected officials, business and industry leaders, educators, parents, students, and all stakeholders to join this conversation, embrace a shared vision and strategic direction for public education, and provide the economic investment and funding needed to continue our forward momentum to improve our public schools and achieve success for our students.

NCSSA members stand ready to work collaboratively with other entities across our state to achieve the goals, objectives, and strategies contained herein and **create North Carolina's future through a stronger system of public education**. ■

For more information

Detailed information is provided in each of the six areas of strategic focus, including the primary goal, rationale, objectives, and key strategies. This expanded version of the North Carolina Guide to Strengthening Our Public Schools can be accessed on the website of the North Carolina Association of School Administrators at www.ncasa.net.

This guide is supported by the superintendents of North Carolina's 115 public school districts and was created through their collaboration, with leadership from the following Co-Chairs:

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