

# **2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

*The North Carolina Association of School Administrators asks the General Assembly, the Governor, the State Board of Education and other state leaders to work with our organization and the 7,000 school leaders in our membership on focused initiatives to attract and retain the highest quality personnel for public schools across the state and support enhanced achievement and future readiness of North Carolina students. The following are NCASA's recommendations for legislative actions that will assist with these goals.*

## **PRIORITY ONE | INVEST ADEQUATE RESOURCES IN NC PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

- Increase the state's per-student investment to ensure each district can provide the personnel and tools (including textbooks, classroom supplies, digital resources, career-technical education equipment, modern buses, and other resources) needed to give every student a high-quality education in preparation for college and a career.
- Restore the previous individual class size exceptions and districtwide average allowable for grades K-3 to prevent a negative impact on each district's ability to hire non-core teachers in art, physical education, technology, and other special subjects who enhance instruction in early grades. The new K-3 ratio adopted in the 2016 state budget also will require more classrooms without additional space or funding to support either building facilities or purchasing/leasing temporary solutions such as trailers.
- Invest in professional development to ensure students have teachers and administrators highly trained in the latest instructional methods and technology.
- Increase technology funding for school districts so all students, teachers and administrators have access to modern technology, equipment, software and digital access.
- Prevent additional cuts to school personnel in all aspects of school operations, including teacher assistants and central office staffing that faced reductions in recent years, to ensure students are receiving the high-quality educational experience they need and deserve.

## **PRIORITY TWO | INCREASED COMPENSATION FOR ALL EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

- Improve North Carolina principal pay from 50th lowest in the nation by overhauling the current school-based administrator salary schedules and reconnecting them to the teacher pay scales. The new system should mirror the approach the General Assembly used to improve teacher pay in recent years by providing all principals and assistant principals with an attractive base salary that helps with recruitment and retention as well as eligibility for one or more district-flexible incentives to be layered on top of their base pay.
- Provide salary increases to all school personnel in 2017 in recognition of their commitment to serving North Carolina students and to correct the lag between inflation rates and their pay in recent years.
- Move North Carolina teachers closer to the national average in teacher salaries by increasing the base pay for all teachers, including those with more than 15 years of service, before implementing differentiated-pay measures.
- Ensure that the benefits package that supplements the compensation of public school employees continues to help with recruitment and retention by maintaining the State's defined benefit retirement system as well as a fully paid health insurance option for both active employees and retirees.

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## PRIORITY THREE | CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY

- Provide local boards of education with the same flexibility granted to charter schools in adopting a school calendar that best meets the needs of their students and their individual local communities.
- Allow public school calendars to align with those of nearby community colleges and universities to facilitate dual enrollment of high school students in higher-level courses and completion of the first semester and related testing before the winter break.
- Enhance family time by ensuring that all first semester End-of-Course exams can be administered before the winter break so that students aren't studying for, or worried about, high-stakes testing during the holidays in December and early January.

## PRIORITY FOUR | SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES & ACCOUNTABILITY

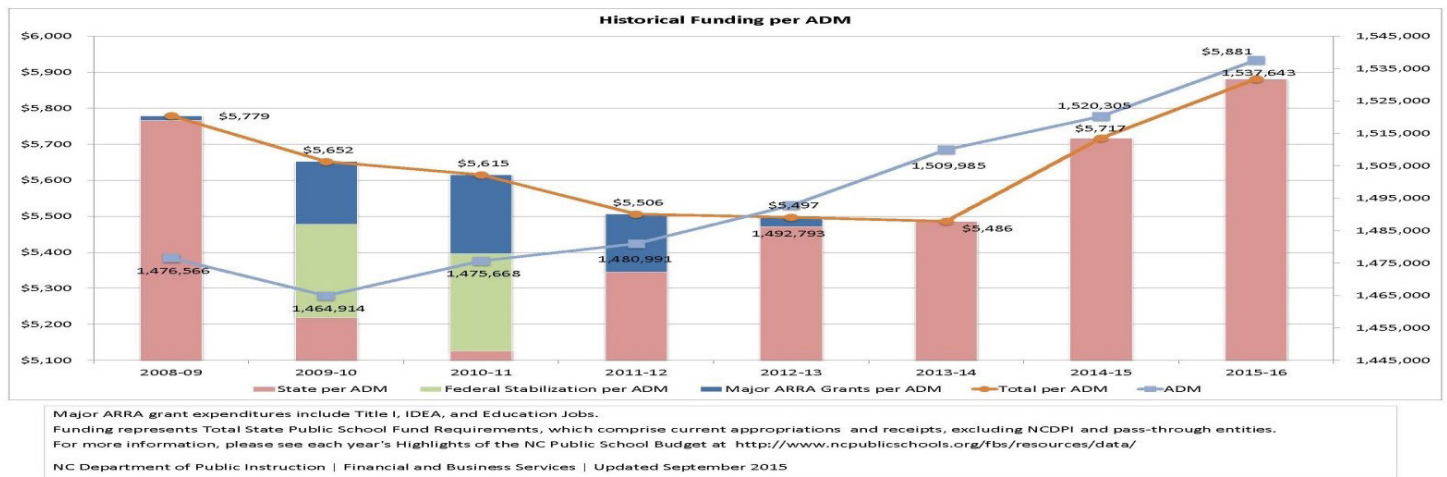
- Amend the state's A-F School Performance Grading System to meet the new requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provide school districts with one cohesive accountability system that meets both federal and state objectives.
- Increase the weighting of student growth from 20 percent to 50 percent in the calculation of the A-F School Performance Grades to reflect the true work and progress being made by public schools in increasing student achievement.
- Reward academic improvement and lift morale of the teachers and administrators working hard to ensure student success in struggling schools by removing all schools that "meet growth" standards from the definition of and penalties for low-performing schools.
- Provide a dedicated state funding stream and additional resources to those schools and districts designated as low-performing to help them improve their student achievement by implementing new approaches to overcome the unique issues of poverty and other challenging circumstances they face that make it more difficult for their students to excel in the classroom.

## PRIORITY FIVE | ACCOUNTABILITY IN SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS

- Maintain fair funding of traditional public schools and charter schools by preventing proposed changes that would require local school districts to share funds with charter schools for programs they do not offer and for district and school grants and reimbursements that charter schools may apply for themselves.
- Place a moratorium on state expansion of private school vouchers, the Achievement School District pilot program, virtual charter schools, and any other initiative sending public tax dollars to private, for-profit entities.
- Ensure a rigorous learning environment for all North Carolina's K-12 students by requiring every educational entity that receives state funding, either directly or indirectly, to be held accountable under the same high standards of accountability now governing traditional public schools.

# INVEST ADEQUATE RESOURCES IN NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

According to the United States Census Bureau’s 2014 Annual Survey of School System Finances, North Carolina ranks 45th of 51 in the nation in per pupil funding. A high-performing K-12 education system is crucial for North Carolina to attract and develop sustainable, well-paying jobs. Strong public schools ensure North Carolina’s students are competitive and prepared to become the local, state and federal leaders who will drive our future. To accomplish this, the state should invest significant resources to public schools and increase the per-student funding that stands near 2008 pre-recession levels and has not kept pace with inflation.



**GOAL 1 |** Increase the state’s per-student investment to ensure each district can provide the personnel and tools (including textbooks, classroom supplies, digital resources, career-technical education equipment, modern buses, and other resources) needed to give every student a high-quality education in preparation for college and a career.

**GOAL 2 |** Restore the previous individual class size exceptions and districtwide average allowable for grades K-3 to prevent a negative impact on each district’s ability to hire non-core teachers in art, physical education, technology, and other special subjects who enhance instruction in early grades. The new K-3 ratio adopted in the 2016 state budget also will require more classrooms without additional space or funding to support either building facilities or purchasing/leasing temporary solutions such as trailers.

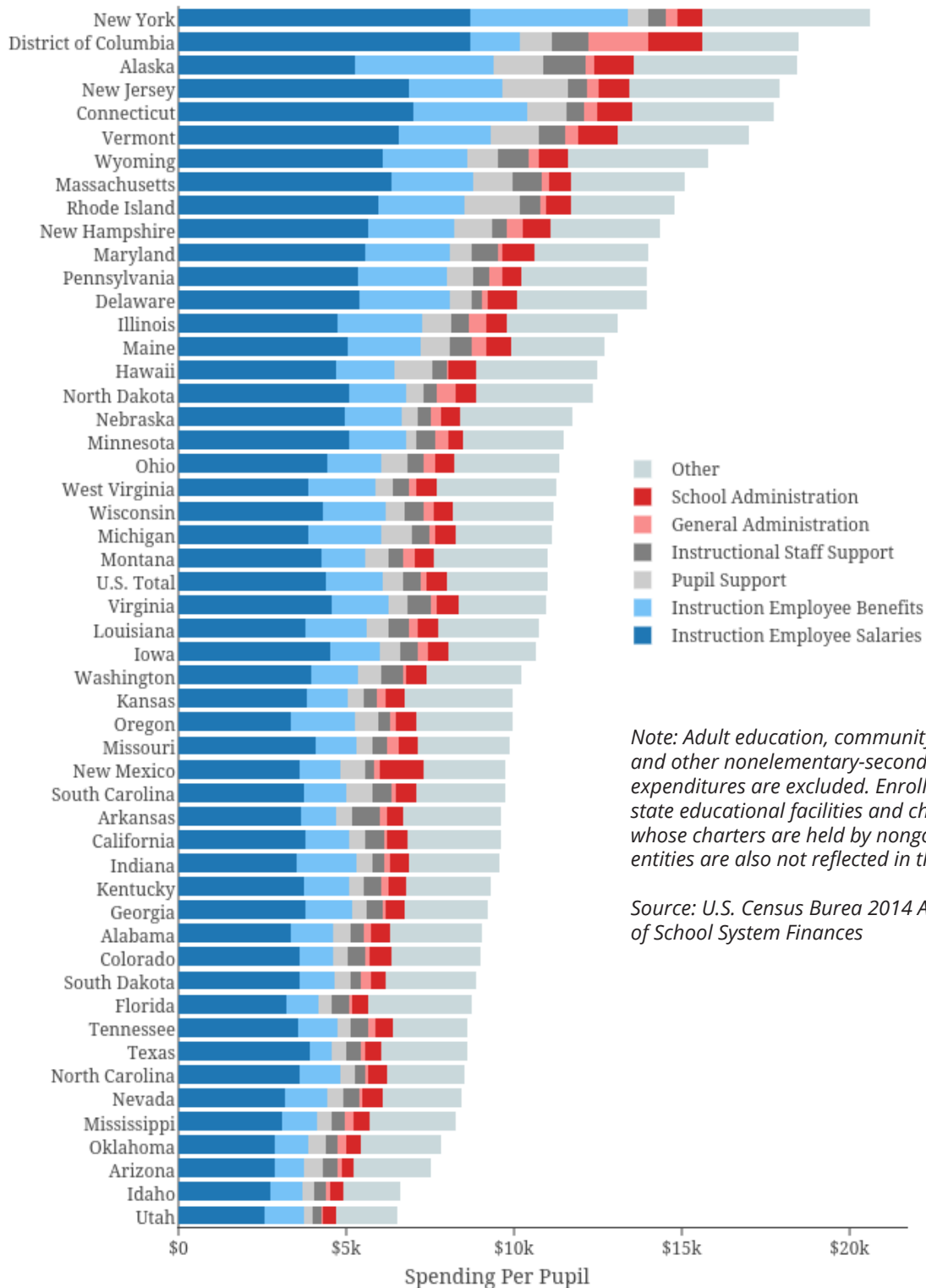
**GOAL 3 |** Invest in professional development to ensure students have teachers and administrators highly trained in the latest instructional methods and technology.

**GOAL 4 |** Increase technology funding for school districts so all students, teachers and administrators have access to modern technology, equipment, software and digital access.

**GOAL 5 |** Prevent additional cuts to school personnel in all aspects of school operations, including teacher assistants and central office staffing that faced reductions in recent years, to ensure students are receiving the high-quality educational experience they need and deserve.

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## NORTH CAROLINA'S PER PUPIL FUNDING RANKED 45<sup>th</sup> OF 51 IN 2014



*Note: Adult education, community services and other nonelementary-secondary program expenditures are excluded. Enrollments for state educational facilities and charter schools whose charters are held by nongovernmental entities are also not reflected in the totals.*

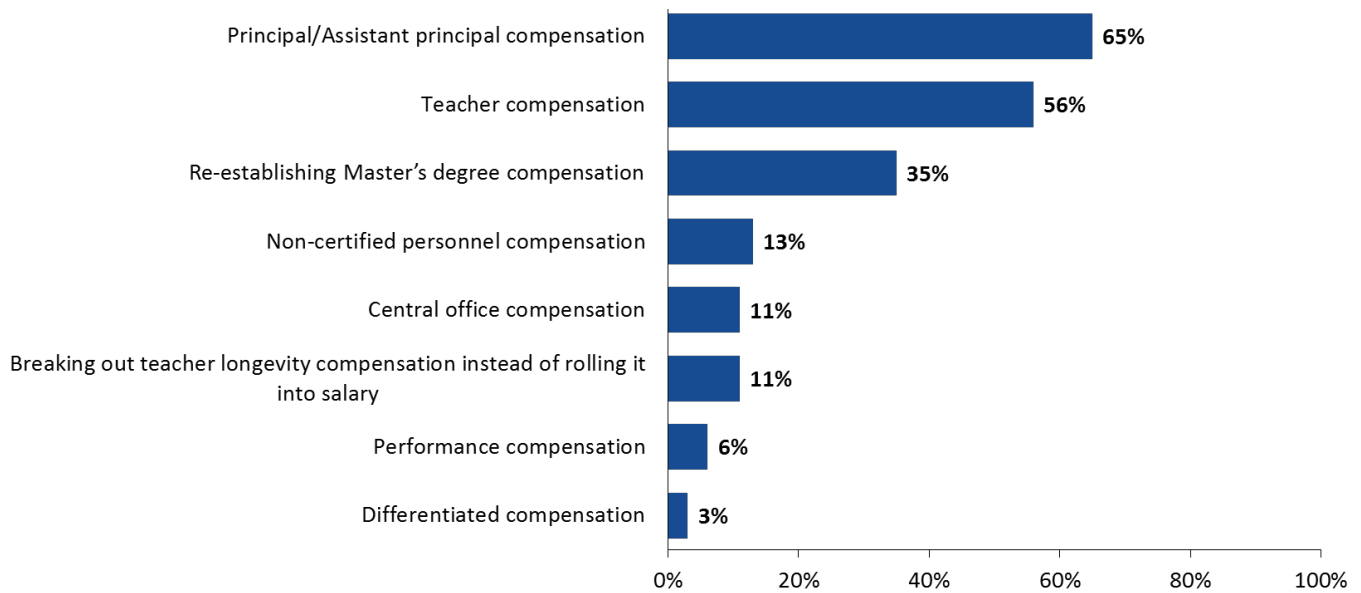
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 Annual Survey of School System Finances*

# INCREASED COMPENSATION FOR ALL EDUCATORS & SCHOOL PERSONNEL

The General Assembly has made a concerted effort to increase the wages of teachers over the last few years. While more work is needed to bring North Carolina teacher pay to the national average, a more focused effort must be made to address North Carolina's ranking of 50th lowest in the nation in school-based administrator pay. Additionally, North Carolina should provide pay increases to all public school employees this year and maintain a robust benefits package that helps recruit and retain the best and brightest to serve the state's 1.5 million K-12 students.

**GOAL 1 |** Improve North Carolina principal pay from 50th lowest in the nation by overhauling the current school-based administrator salary schedules and reconnecting them to the teacher pay scales. The new system should mirror the approach the General Assembly used to improve teacher pay in recent years by providing all principals and assistant principals with an attractive base salary that helps with recruitment and retention as well as eligibility for one or more district-flexible incentives to be layered on top of their base pay.

***NCASA members, including superintendents and personnel directors, placed school-based administrator compensation as their top priority regarding compensation increases.***

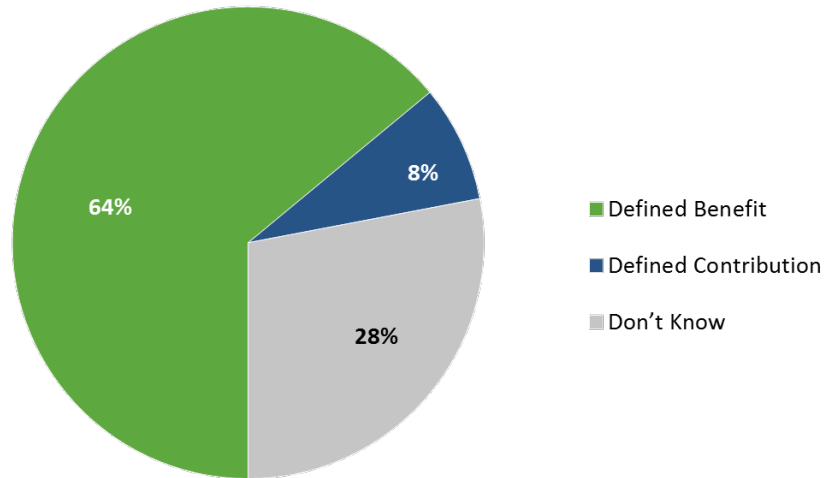


**GOAL 2 |** Provide salary increases to all school personnel in 2017 in recognition of their commitment to serving North Carolina students and to correct the lag between inflation rates and their pay in recent years.

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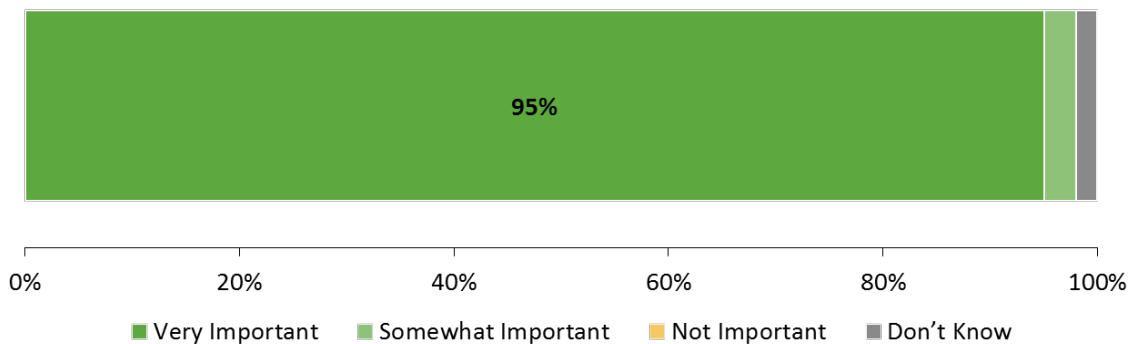
**GOAL 3 |** Move North Carolina teachers closer to the national average in teacher salaries by increasing the base pay for all teachers, including those with more than 15 years of service, before implementing differentiated-pay measures.

*When asked "Which retirement plan should the state provide its employees if it wants to be competitive and hire the best and most qualified applicants to work in North Carolina's public schools?", school administrators clearly prefer a defined benefit retirement system.*



**GOAL 4 |** Ensure that the benefits package that supplements the compensation of public school employees continues to help with recruitment and retention by maintaining the State's defined benefit retirement system as well as a fully paid health insurance option for both active employees and retirees.

*When asked "How important is maintaining health benefits for retirees to recruiting and retaining the best and most qualified employees to serve in North Carolina's public schools?", school administrators overwhelmingly feel it is critical to maintain these benefits.*



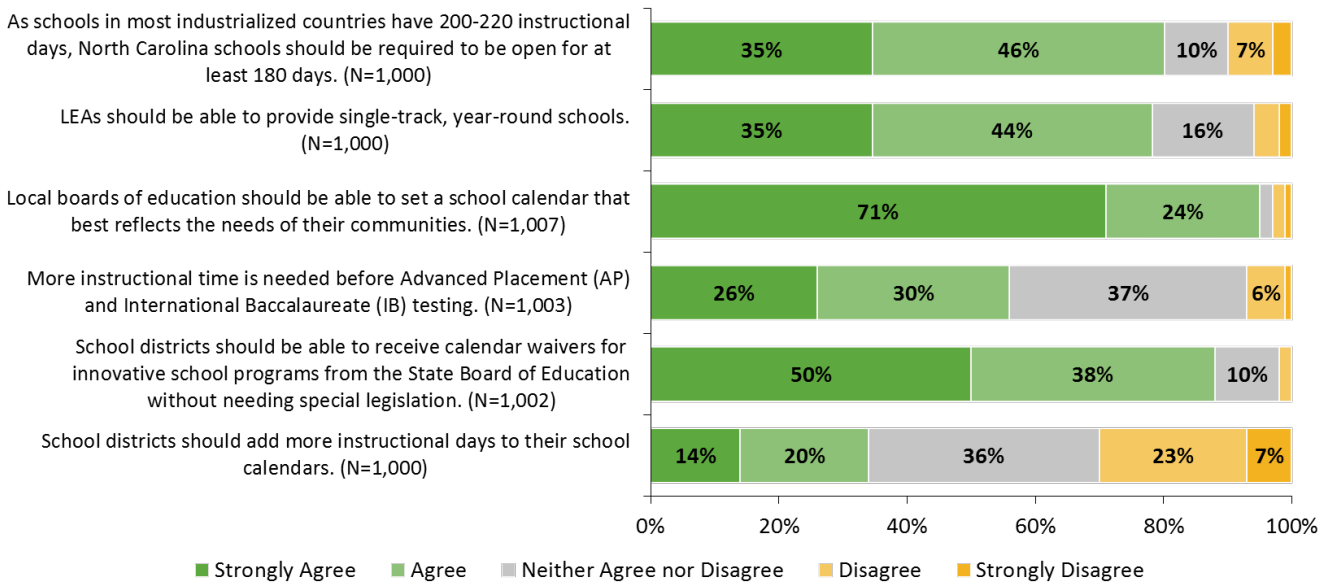
*The questions and graphs reflected here are the result of NCASA's 2017 Legislative Priorities Survey, conducted in October 2016 and distributed to all the state's public school administrators. The survey had 1,017 respondents, including at least one response from 113 of NC's 115 school districts.*

# SCHOOL CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY

In 2004 the North Carolina General Assembly took school calendar authority away from local boards of education and mandated when the instructional year could begin and end. All school districts were required to start their instructional years no earlier than August 25 and end no later than June 10. The 2012 state budget further squeezed the instructional calendar to start no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and end by the Friday closest to June 11. This requires a school start as late as August 29 in some years! A top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to public school calendar design has negatively impacted students, forcing high schoolers to take high-stakes testing after the winter break and causing second semester misalignment with community colleges and universities.

**GOAL 1** | Provide local boards of education with the same flexibility granted to charter schools in adopting a school calendar that best meets the needs of their students and their individual local communities.

*The General Assembly revoked local control of school calendars in 2004. School leaders provided the following feedback regarding issues pertaining to the school calendar.*

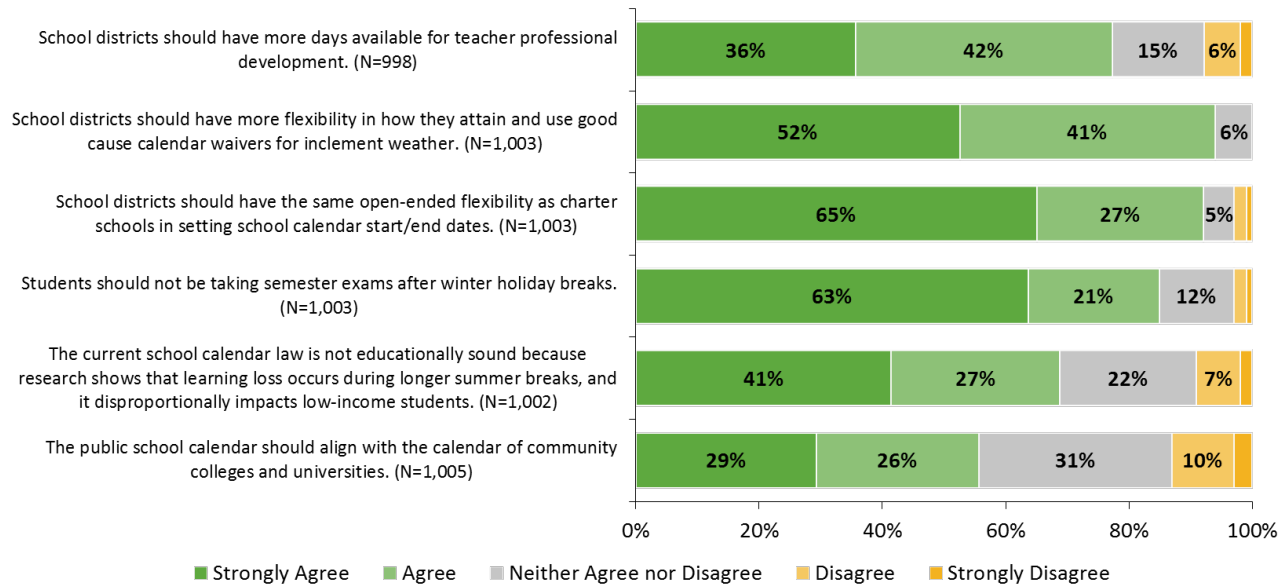


**GOAL 2** | Allow public school calendars to align with those of nearby community colleges and universities to facilitate dual enrollment of high school students in higher-level courses and completion of the first semester and related testing before the winter break.

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**GOAL 3 |** Enhance family time by ensuring that all first semester End-of-Course exams can be administered before the winter break so that students aren't studying for, or worried about, high-stakes testing during the holidays in December and early January.



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Katherine W. Joyce, Executive Director | [kjoyce@ncasa.net](mailto:kjoyce@ncasa.net)  
 Adam R. Pridemore, Government Affairs Specialist | [apridemore@ncasa.net](mailto:apridemore@ncasa.net)  
 107 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27603 | 919-828-1426 (phone) 919-828-6099 (fax)  
[ncasa.net](http://ncasa.net) | [@ncasatweets](https://twitter.com/ncasatweets) | [ncasalegislativelink.org](http://ncasalegislativelink.org)

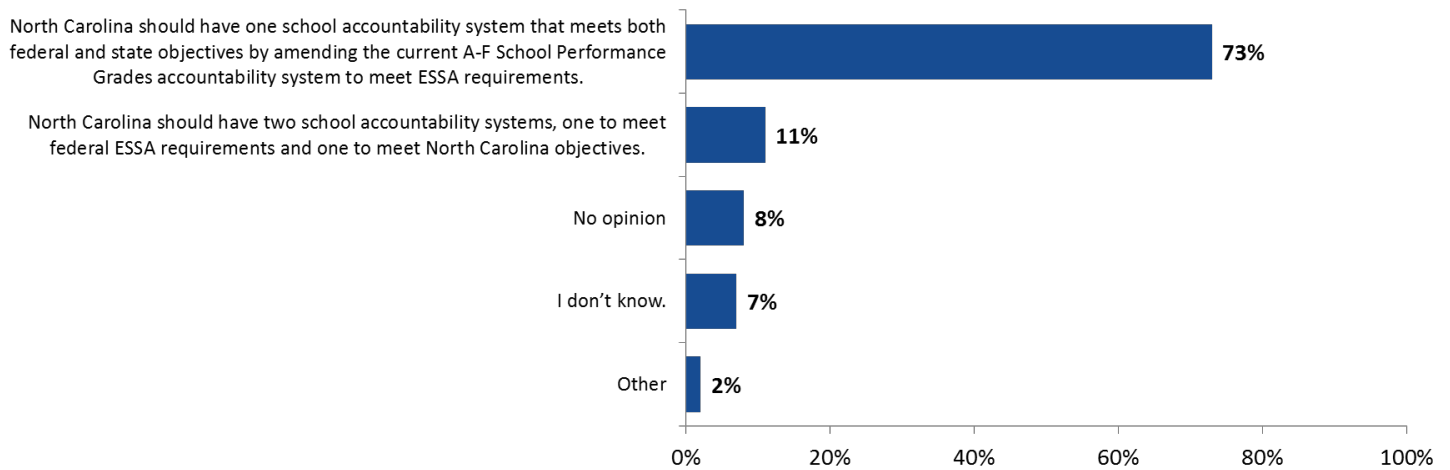


# SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The A-F School Performance Grades system – using a formula of 80% achievement and 20% student growth – has mislabeled too many of North Carolina’s schools as “low-performing,” while not placing enough emphasis on schools that are making difficult strides in meeting annual growth measures. Federal law taking effect in 2017 requires states to maintain an accountability system that meets specific requirements not currently included in the state system, making the 2017 legislative session the perfect opportunity to provide North Carolina with a more fairly balanced accountability system that meets both the state’s goals and federal requirements.

**GOAL 1** | Amend the state’s A-F School Performance Grading System to meet the new requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provide school districts with one cohesive accountability system that meets both federal and state objectives.

*School administrative leaders believe North Carolina should have one accountability system that incorporates the federal ESSA requirements and the current A-F School Performance Grades system.*

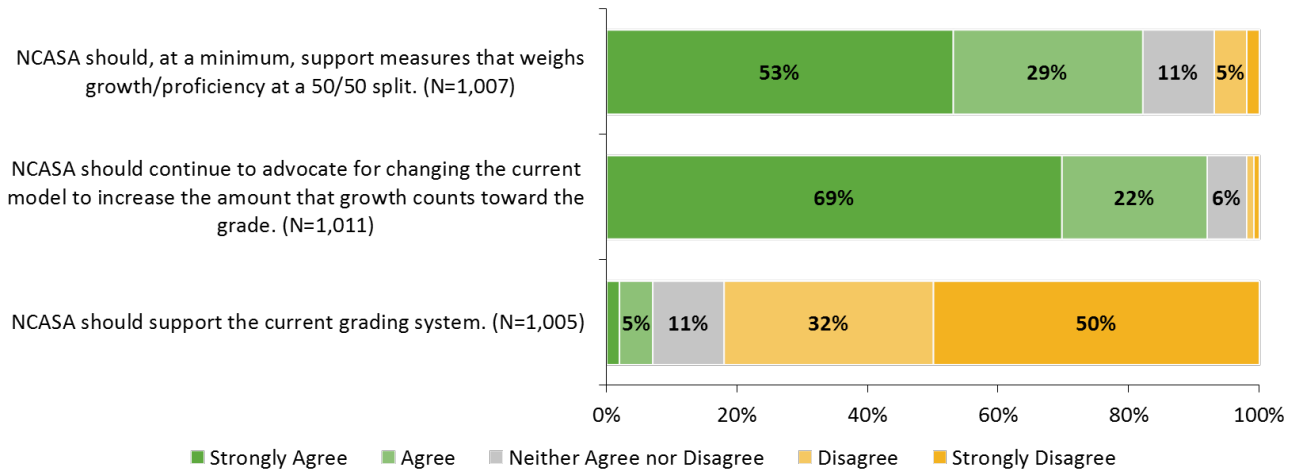


**GOAL 2** | Reward academic improvement and lift morale of the teachers and administrators working hard to ensure student success in struggling schools by removing all schools that “meet growth” standards from the definition of and penalties for low-performing schools.

**GOAL 3** | Increase the weighting of student growth from 20 percent to 50 percent in the calculation of the A-F School Performance Grades to reflect the true work and progress being made by public schools in increasing student achievement.

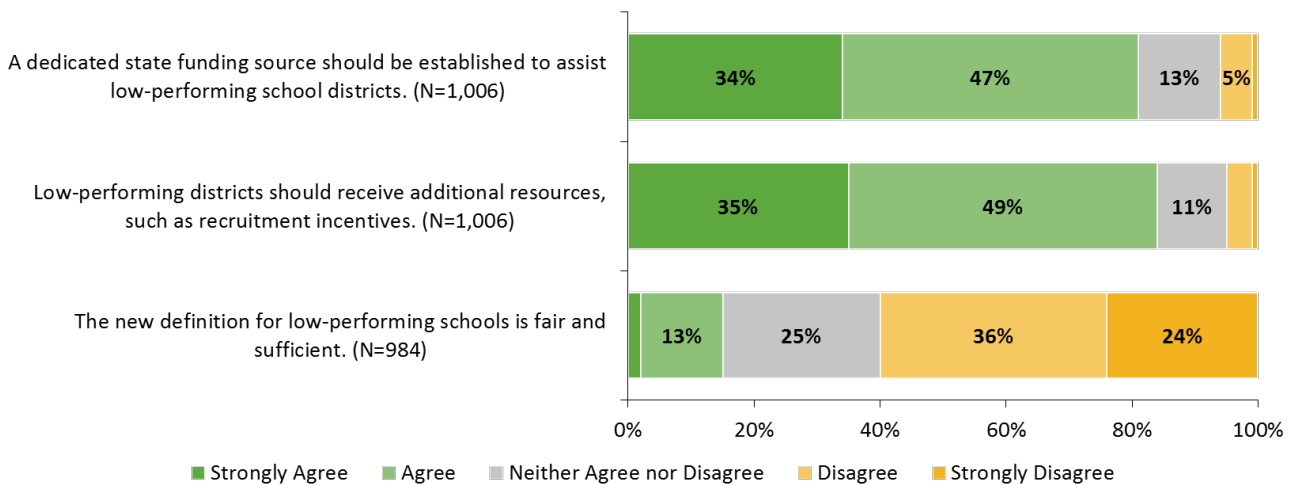
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**When asked about the weight growth should be given in the School Performance Grade calculations, school administrators responded:**



**GOAL 4 |** Provide a dedicated state funding stream and additional resources to those schools and districts designated as low-performing to help them improve their student achievement by implementing new approaches to overcome the unique issues of poverty and other challenging circumstances they face that make it more difficult for their students to excel in the classroom.

*School administrators do not believe the current definition of “low-performing” schools provides an accurate depiction of those schools that meet growth, and also believe more funds must be direct to those schools which are labeled “low-performing”.*



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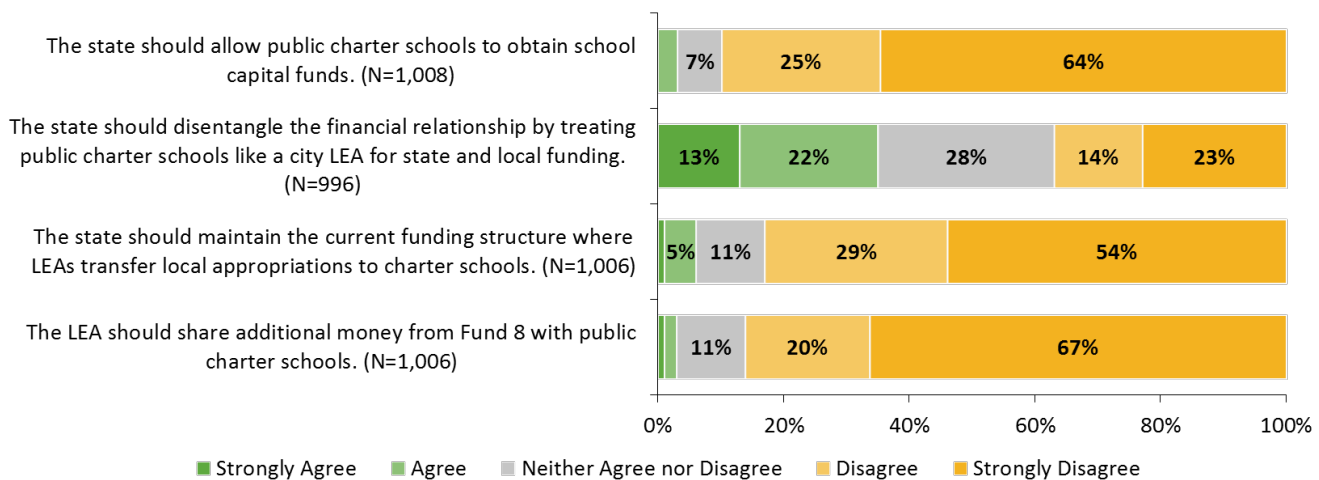
Katherine W. Joyce, Executive Director | [kjoyce@ncasa.net](mailto:kjoyce@ncasa.net)  
 Adam R. Pridemore, Government Affairs Specialist | [apridemore@ncasa.net](mailto:apridemore@ncasa.net)  
 107 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27603 | 919-828-1426 (phone) 919-828-6099 (fax)  
[ncasa.net](http://ncasa.net) | [@ncasatweets](https://twitter.com/ncasatweets) | [ncasalegislativelink.org](http://ncasalegislativelink.org)

# ACCOUNTABILITY IN SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS

As North Carolina continues to expand educational choices for parents and students, state leaders should take needed steps to ensure all educational entities are treated fairly and that all types of schools are held accountable for providing a high-quality education. Schools supported with state funds should be held accountable under the same measures for student success that now govern traditional public schools. Additionally, expansion of school choice initiatives should not occur through reductions of resources and support for students who are enrolled in the state’s 115 school districts.

**GOAL 1** | Maintain fair funding of traditional public schools and charter schools by preventing proposed changes that would require local school districts to share funds with charter schools for programs they do not offer and for district and school grants and reimbursements that charter schools may apply for themselves.

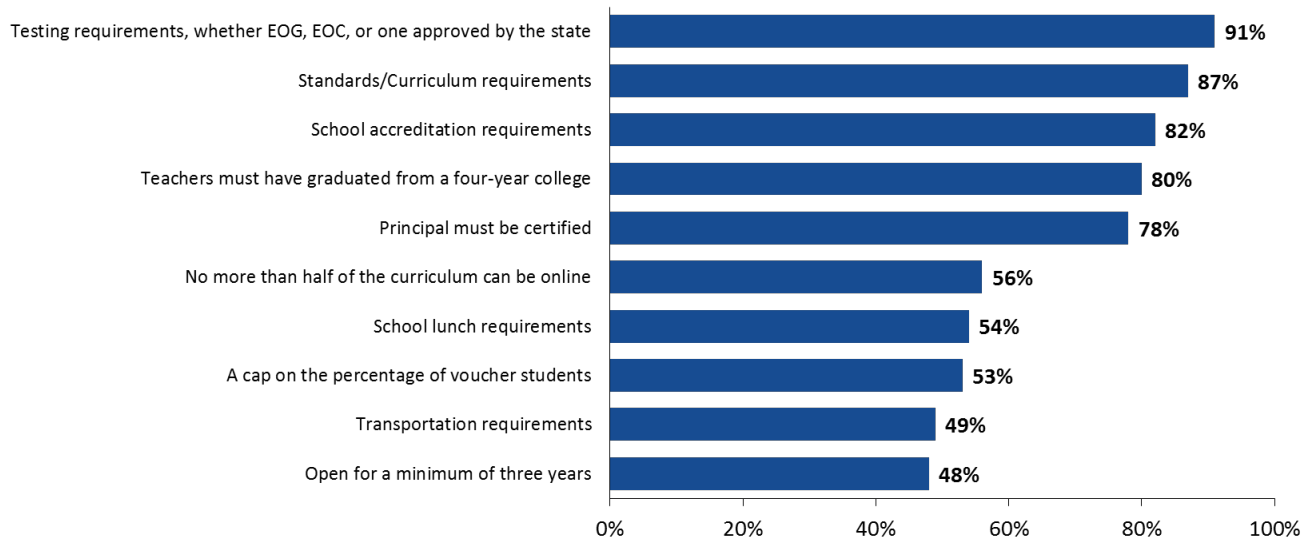
*School administrators oppose expanding charter school funding at the expense of students educated in school districts.*



**GOAL 2** | Place a moratorium on state expansion of private school vouchers, the Achievement School District pilot program, virtual charter schools, and any other initiative sending public tax dollars to private, for-profit entities.

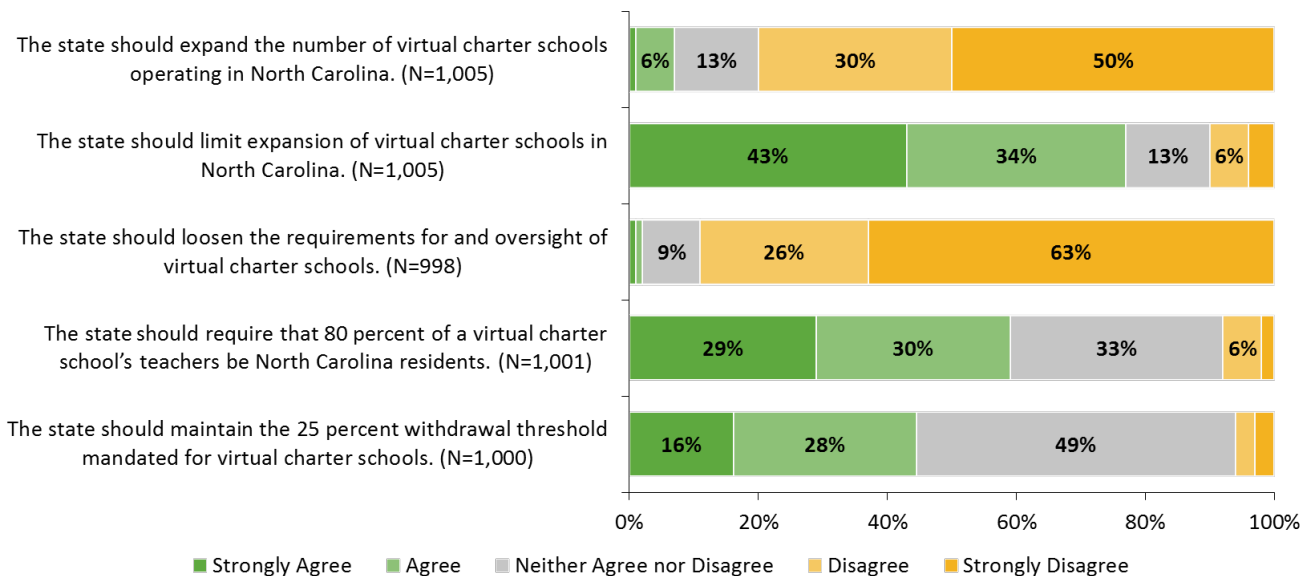
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**School administrators believe the following accountability measures should be imposed on any private school that receives State funds through the Opportunity Scholarship Program.**



**GOAL 3 |** Ensure a rigorous learning environment for all North Carolina’s K-12 students by requiring every educational entity that receives state funding, either directly or indirectly, to be held accountable under the same high standards of accountability now governing traditional public schools.

**The state’s school leaders provided the following opinions on virtual charter schools.**



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