

# Cumberland County Board of Education

## 2024 Legislative Short Session Priorities

### 1. Recruiting and Retaining the Best Public-School Employees

- **Support, for all public-school personnel, the most significant state-supported pay increases and benefits deemed affordable** to help reduce staff turnover and counteract inflation and rising costs of living.
- **Make North Carolina an educational leader by raising state-funded principal and teacher pay to the highest in the Southeast by 2026.**
- **Reform the principal pay plan** to increase stability in base salary by: reducing the portion dependent on the school growth formula; adding school complexity factors; and honoring experienced leadership by recognizing years of service.
- **Restore respect for the teaching profession in North Carolina** by restoring master’s pay by subject area, restoring the Teaching Fellows program to the scale and scope existing prior to 2011, providing additional K-3 teacher assistants to improve teaching working conditions (and support Read to Achieve) and provide incentive pay for mentor teachers (who increasingly provide training formerly provided by ed prep programs).
- **Continue to support teacher licensure reform** by removing the three (3) year service requirement for limited licenses and instead allow any teacher who has completed their residency program to qualify for one, and provide NCDPI with additional staffing and technology resources to speed processing of licensure requests and remove the current bottleneck.

### 2. K-12 Accountability School Reform

- **Modify the state’s calculation of school performance grades by 2026** to include additional factors, such as the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, graduation rates, career credentials, and additional emphasis on student growth, rather than disproportionate focus on overall proficiency.
- **Modify the new Early Graduate Program** to facilitate the opt-in process proposed by NCDPI and allow local boards of education to maintain additional requirements for students graduating from high school in four years.

### 3. Adequate and Equitable Resources for Schools and Districts

- **Revise and enhance state funding for children with disabilities** above the current 13% state funding cap and implement the new “weighted” funding formula developed by NCDPI, reflecting differentiated costs of supporting students with special needs.
- **Revise state funding for assistant principals (APs) to provide at least one per school by 2026**, with an additional AP provided for schools with more than 500 students.

- **Increase accountability and transparency of the recently expanded Opportunity Scholarship Program** to ensure all private schools receiving funds through this program are improving outcomes for students.
- **Provide all Public-School Units needed flexibility like that of “Restart Schools” and Charter Schools** to include increased authority over their calendar, budget, and personnel.

#### **4. Sustained Commitment to School Safety**

- **Transition away from year-to-year school safety grants in favor of a dedicated stream of continuation budget funding** sufficient to ensure there is an SRO in every school.
- **Additional funding for school mental health support personnel** to provide at least one-half of the nationally recommended staff/student ratios, in order to address student mental issues and associated threats of violence, suicide, and mental illness.

#### **5. Continued Commitment to Child Nutrition**

- Maintain state funding to cover the cost of meals for students who qualify for reduced-price meals (included in 2023 State Budget).
- Collaborate with Federal legislators and USDA to make school meals available to public-school virtual school students.

#### **6. State School Capital Construction Bond**

- **Enact the first statewide construction bond since 1996** in order to address a statewide backlog of over \$12 billion needed to replace aging, outdated schools, Low Wealth, Tier One counties like Cumberland should not have to rely solely upon local real estate taxes or lottery-funded grants in order to replace obsolete school buildings.

#### **7. Grays Creek Water Supply**

- Support the efforts of the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners to remediate the effects of PFAS and other “forever” chemicals, and extend safe water service to the entire Grays Creek area, including the two elementary schools currently utilizing bottled water.

#### **8. Constitutional Compliance**

- Fully fund the Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan without supplanting other education funds.