BEST NC (Business for Educational Success and Transformation) is a nonprofit organization created by business leaders who believe the future of our state’s economy is inseparable from the quality of our education. North Carolina’s education system must keep pace with the rapidly changing economic landscape of the 21st century. BEST NC supports the creation of the boldest education success story in America, one that nurtures the talents of every student, from early learning to post-graduate, by investing in students, teachers, school leaders, innovation, and establishing high standards of success for all.

www.BESTNC.org  info@BESTNC.org  @BESTNC.org

www.NCEdFacts.org  BESTNorthCarolina  @BESTNC_org
Navigating Facts & Figures: Education in North Carolina

Children & Students Pages 4-16
Who goes to school in North Carolina? Where do they go to school? How has this changed over time?

Educators Pages 17-32
Who is teaching in North Carolina, pre-k through postsecondary? How do teachers enter the profession? How are educators compensated?

Schools & Programs Pages 33-39
How many schools are in North Carolina? Where do students go to school from pre-k to postsecondary? What schooling options do students have?

Finance Pages 40-54
How is education paid for in North Carolina? How is funding distributed? Are there funding inequities?

Achievement Pages 55-75
How are students performing on state and national assessments? At what rate do North Carolina students graduate from high school and postsecondary programs? How are students performing in higher education?

NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading
The Pathways icon indicates whole-child Measures of Success that put children on a pathway to grade-level reading. For more information visit: buildthefoundation.org/initiative/pathways-to-grade-level-reading

myFutureNC
The myFutureNC icon indicates key education performance measures directly tied to North Carolina’s education-to-workforce continuum and the state goal of increasing educational attainment to 2 million by 2030. For more information visit: myfuturenc.org

NOTE: Many key education metrics were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures. Areas particularly affected include student enrollment and attendance, as well as student achievement. Because we do not know the full impact of the pandemic or the degree to which pandemic-related shifts will persist, we encourage the use of caution when interpreting data in longitudinal trends and have included the icon to the left to indicate data that may be impacted by the pandemic.
Children & Students


![Chart showing population distribution by age and race/ethnicity in North Carolina and nationally.](chart)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-year estimates, Table S0201

Children Ages Three and Four Not in School (2019)

![Chart showing school attendance rates for children ages three and four in North Carolina and nationally.](chart)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-year estimates, Table B14003

67% In 2019, 67% of children in North Carolina lived in households where all parents were in the labor force, compared with 68% of children nationally.

Source: US Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201
North Carolina Preschool Enrollment and 0 to 4 Population, by Race/Ethnicity (2019)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-year estimates, Table S0201

Enrollment in State Pre-K of Children Age Four (2019-20)

Source: NIEER 2020 State of Preschool Report

North Carolina Pre-K Seats (2011 to 2021)

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (Data Request)
North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K)
Since it was initiated in 2001, the North Carolina Pre-K program (formerly More at Four) has served more than 350,000 children. Students enrolled in NC Pre-K attend school for 6.5 hours per day, 180 days per year.

Children from families at or below 75% of the state median income are eligible to enroll in NC Pre-K, along with English language learners, children with developmental disabilities or chronic health conditions, and children of active duty military members.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) encourages states to enroll 75% of eligible children in state pre-k programs. Approximately 25% of North Carolina’s counties met NIEER’s enrollment targets in 2019.

North Carolina Subsidized Child Care
The Subsidized Child Care Program is a statewide child-care assistance program for low-income and other eligible families. This program helps families afford child care by sharing the cost. Most parents must pay a fee, depending on the size of their family and their income.

The Subsidized Child Care Program helps families that earn at or below 200% of the federal poverty level to pay for child-care while they work or attend school.

In January 2022, there were 58,019 children participating in the Subsidized Child Care Program, while another 13,902 eligible children were on the waiting list.

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services - NC Pre-K Program; National Institute for Early Education Research - Barriers to Expansion of NC Pre-K: Problems and Potential Solutions

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (Data Request)
SECTION 1: Children & Students

School-Age Population as a Percentage of State Population, 2000 and 2019

Source: 2000 Census Profile of General Demographic Characteristics; 2019 Census American Community Survey

Children Living in Households with Food Insecurity (2013 to 2021)

*2017 - 2021 Data Retrieved from Feeding America

Source: N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Early Childhood Data Dashboard; Feeding America, 2017-19 Data; Feeding America, 2020-21 Data (Data Request)

Children Under 18 Living At or Below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (2020)


Children Ages Nine to 35 Months Receiving Developmental Screening (2019-20)

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration
K-12 Enrollment, by School Type (2010-11 to 2020-21)

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile; 2021 North Carolina Private School Statistics; 2021 North Carolina HOME SCHOOL Statistical Summary

10-Year Percentage Change in K-12 Enrollment, by School Type (2010-11 to 2020-21)

In 2012, the 100-school cap on the number of charter schools in North Carolina was lifted.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile; 2021 North Carolina Private School Statistics; 2021 North Carolina HOME SCHOOL Statistical Summary

2.8% From 2010 to 2019, the population of children in North Carolina aged 5 to 17 grew by 2.8%, from 1,643,947 to 1,690,503.

Source: US Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201
K-12 Traditional Public School Enrollment, by District (2021-22)

In 2020-21, enrollment in traditional public schools decreased by 4.6% (64,428 students), but rebounded somewhat in 2021-22, with an increase of 1.7% (23,225 students).

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 1

Five-Year Percentage Change in K-12 Traditional Public School Enrollment, by District (2016-17 to 2021-22)

In 2021-22, enrollment in K-12 traditional public school districts ranged from 471 in Hyde County Schools to 158,654 in Wake County Public School System, with a median of 5,379 students.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 10
Public Charter School Enrollment as a Percentage of K-12 Traditional Public School Enrollment, by District (2021-22)

Source: DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 10 and 37

Homeschool Enrollment as a Percentage of K-12 Traditional Public School Enrollment, by County (2020-21)

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile; 2021 North Carolina HOME SCHOOL Statistical Summary

Between 2015-16 and 2020-21, the number of public charter school students increased by 54% and the number of homeschool students increased by 52%. Charter and homeschool students now represent 7% and 10% of the total K-12 student population, respectively.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 1 and 3; NC Division of Non-Public Education
From 2012 to 2022, the number of Hispanic and Asian students in public schools has increased by 48% and 54%, respectively, while at the same time, the number of Black and White students has decreased by 1% and 8%, respectively.

*Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 10, 11, and 37*
35% of K-12 traditional public schools had greater than 50% economically disadvantaged students (EDS) in 2020-21, while 23% of public charter schools had greater than 50% EDS.

Source: NC DPI School Report Card Data
SECTION 1: Children & Students

Short-Term Suspension Rates in K-12 Public Schools, by Race/Ethnicity (2019-20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th># of Suspensions per 10 Students Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two+ Races</td>
<td>0.54</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** NC DPI 2019-20 Consolidated Discipline Report

Chronic Absenteeism* in K-12 Traditional Public Schools, by District (2019-20)

*Chronic absenteeism is defined as students who are enrolled in a school for at least 10 days and absent for 10% or more of those days.

**Source:** NC DPI School Report Card Data

In 2019-20, 9.5% of North Carolina public school students were chronically absent. Chronic absenteeism ranged from 5% to 22% across school districts, with 12 school districts having 15% or more of students chronically absent.

**Source:** NC DPI School Report Card Data
The percentage of North Carolina’s school-aged children attending traditional public schools has declined over the last 15 years, from 88% in 2005-06 to 79% in 2019-20. Meanwhile the number of students attending public charter schools and homeschools have increased substantially.

During the 2020-21 school year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, school enrollment trends experienced an accelerated shift, with homeschooling seeing a sharp uptick, and significant but less dramatic increases in private and charter school enrollment. The net result was a substantial decline in traditional public school enrollment, which rebounded somewhat in 2021-22 but has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Attendance became more difficult to track during the pandemic because of the variety of instructional delivery methods used, intermittent school closures, and quarantine requirements. As a result, the percentage of students reported as chronically absent in public schools fluctuated relative to pre-pandemic levels - from 15-16% in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years to 10% in 2019-20 and 26% in 2020-21.

In addition to being substantially higher than pre-pandemic years, documented chronic absenteeism among traditional public school students varied across student subgroups, as in other years.

*Chronic absenteeism is defined as students who are enrolled in a school for at least 10 days and absent for 10% or more of those days.

North Carolina Community College System Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment (Fall 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Curriculum Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career and Technical Education</td>
<td>75,095</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer and General Education</td>
<td>91,801</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Credit</td>
<td>8,658</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Curriculum Unduplicated Enrollment</strong></td>
<td><strong>175,554</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Continuing Education Enrollment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Skills</td>
<td>7,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
<td>31,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Continuing Education Unduplicated Enrollment</strong></td>
<td><strong>38,931</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Many Community College students enroll part-time, so the number of enrolled students is substantially higher than the unduplicated full-time equivalent count of enrollment.*

*Source: North Carolina Community College System Data Dashboard*

UNC System and North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Enrollment (1991-2021)

*Source: UNC System (Data Request); North Carolina Community College System (Data Request)*
In 2021-22, 55% of UNC System students were White, while only 45% of K-12 public school students were White. In contrast, Hispanic students accounted for 20% of the K-12 student population, but only 8% of the UNC System enrollment.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 10 and 37; UNC InfoCenter
SECTION 2: Educators

**Early Childhood Educators, by Occupation (2019 and 2020)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-Care Workers</td>
<td>16,600</td>
<td>19,780</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool/Child-Care Center Directors</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>1,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Teachers*</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>3,890</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Teachers*</td>
<td>3,740</td>
<td>3,890</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Excludes special education.</td>
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**INFANT AND TODDLER TEACHERS are required to complete 1 COURSE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.**

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services - NC Pre-K Program

**NC Pre-K requires ALL LEAD TEACHERS to hold a BACHELOR’S DEGREE in Early Childhood Education.**

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services - NC Pre-K Program

**Early Childhood Education Enrollment at North Carolina Community Colleges, by Program Type (2010 to 2019)**

Source: NC TOWER
**Section 2: Educators**

### Median Early Childhood Education Wages, by Occupation (May 2020)

*Excludes special education.*

**Note:** Preschool Teacher data includes both public and private centers.

**Source:** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

### Average Wages for North Carolina Community College System Graduates, by Program Area and Over Time (2013-14 Graduating Class)

*Source: NC TOWER*
of 2020 educator preparation program completers were employed in North Carolina public schools during the 2020-21 school year.

*Source: NC DPI (Data Request)*
**Distribution of Preparation Routes for Newly Hired K-12 Public School Teachers (2015 to 2021*)**

*Beginning in 2019-20, the route for alternate certification changed from lateral entry to residency licenses. New candidates pursuing alternate certification could begin teaching with a residency license, or as a first step toward residency, the candidate could teach under an emergency license. Among those teaching with an emergency license, the data do not distinguish those on the way to residency from others. In the chart above, for the purpose of comparison with prior years, we add emergency licenses to residency licenses beginning in 2019-20.*

**Source:** NC DPI (Data Request)

**Distribution of EVAAS Scores for First Year Teachers, by Preparation Route (2018-2021*)**

*Teacher EVAAS scores are from the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2020-21 school years.*

**Source:** NC DPI (Data Request)
**Trends in Classroom Teacher Allotment Ratios* for North Carolina Public Schools (2004-05 to 2021-22)**

*Expressed as teachers per students in average daily membership.

**Maximum average class size, as required by state law.

Source: NC DPI

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### Class Size Changes

- **No Change**
- **Class Size Decrease**
- **Class Size Increase**

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<td>1:19</td>
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<td>1:18</td>
<td>1:17</td>
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<td>1:16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1:24.5</td>
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<td>1:26.5</td>
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<td>10-12</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>1:29</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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K-12 Traditional Public School Teachers and Teacher Assistants, by Funding Source (2010-11 and 2020-21)

Beginning in 2009-10 and ending in 2013-14, school districts were required to comply with budget reversions triggered by the economic recession. Districts were given flexibility in determining how to make the budget reversions, which in 2013-14 resulted in a ‘truing up’ of the ratios to reflect average actual practice from previous years.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 16
Distribution of K-12 Public School Students, Teachers, and Principals, by Race/Ethnicity (2021-22)

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 10, 16, 16.1, and 37; NC DPI (Data Request)

K-12 Traditional Public School Principals and Teachers, by Gender (2021-22)

Source: DPI Statistical Profile, Table 16

Average Years Principals Have Led Their Current K-12 Traditional Public School, by Poverty Quartile (2020-21)

Source: NC DPI (Data Request)

In 2021-22, 76% of K-12 teachers are White, while 45% of K-12 public school students are White.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 10, 16, 16.1, and 37
Ratio of K-12 Public School Guidance Counselors, Nurses*, and Psychologists to Students (2014-15 to 2020-21)

School Guidance Counselor:Student Ratio
School Psychologist:Student Ratio
School Nurse:Student Ratio

Note: Data on school nurses is not available for the 2020-21 school year.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 1 and 16; NC Annual School Health Services Report

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1:500
The National Association of School Nurses recommends a ratio of 1:School
The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 1:250

Sources: American School Counselor Association - School Counselors Matter; National Association of School Nurses - School Nurse Workload: Staffing for Safe Care; National Association of School Psychologists - Shortage of School Psychologists
Percentage of Teachers Not Fully Licensed, By District (2020-21)

Note: Fully licensed is defined as having a Continuing Professional License (CPL) and does not include teachers with an Initial Professional Licensed (IPL) teachers, who are generally beginning teachers, or those with other license types such as residency, Visiting International Faculty, Emergency, or Permit to Teach.

Source: NC DPI (Data Request)

National Board-Certified Teachers in K-12 Traditional Public Schools, by District Poverty Quartile* (2020-21)

*Districts were sorted by the percentage of their economically disadvantaged students (EDS) and grouped into poverty quartiles. The lowest poverty quartile includes districts with 18-38% EDS, while the highest poverty quartile includes districts with 51-70% EDS. The number of NBCTs was divided by the total number of teachers in each quartile to calculate the percentage of NBCTs in each quartile.

Source: NC DPI National Board Certification Annual Report; NC DPI School Report Card Data

10% of North Carolina educators and other certified personnel in traditional public schools are National Board-Certified. North Carolina has more National Board-Certified Teachers than any other state in the nation.

Source: NC DPI National Board Certification Data
Average EVAAS Scores* of K-12 Teachers Who Remained In and Departed From Traditional Public Schools, by Years of Experience (2018-19)

*Teachers with EVAAS scores of zero are considered to be as effective as the hypothetical “average” North Carolina teacher.

Source: NC DPI 2018-19 State of the Teaching Profession Report

Teacher Attrition Rates in K-12 Traditional Public Schools, by Teacher Category (2020-21)

Source: NC DPI 2020-21 State of the Teaching Profession Report
Teacher Attrition Rates in K-12 Traditional Public Schools, by District (2020-21)

Source: NC DPI 2020-21 State of the Teaching Profession Report

Top Reasons for K-12 Traditional Public School Teacher Attrition (2020-21)

Source: NC DPI 2020-21 State of the Teaching Profession Report
Average Compensation (including Benefits) for K-12 Public School Teachers, by Years of Experience (2021-22)

In addition to state base salary and local salary supplements, there are several state and local opportunities for higher salaries. For example, National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCT) earn 12% more, and Advanced Teaching Roles can pay as much as $20,000 more. The following demonstrates some of the career and salary options in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) during the 2021-22 academic year for teachers with 10 years of experience:

*Advanced Teaching Roles supplements are paid along a range. Supplements included in the chart reflect work in a Title I school.

**Source:** 2021-22 Teacher Salary Schedule; Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021 (pg. 530); NC Treasurer’s Office (Data Request); DPI Statistical Profile, Table 20; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Teacher Leadership Handbook (pg. 5)
Average K-12 Teacher Salaries, Inflation-Adjusted to 2021 Dollars (2011-12 to 2021-22)


Average Local Salary Supplement for K-12 Teachers in Traditional Public Schools, by District (2021-22)

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile

In 2020-21, the average K-12 teacher salary was below the national average in 36 states.

Source: 2022 NEA Rankings and Estimates Report
Compensation Distribution for K-12 Traditional Public School Teachers (2020-21)

28% Salary
72% Benefits

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 27

Compensation Distribution for the Private Sector in the U.S. South Atlantic Region (2021)

17% Salary
83% Benefits

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

State Retirement Contributions for K-12 Traditional Public School Teachers and District Personnel, as a Percentage of Employee Salary (2011-12 to 2021-22)

Source: Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021

State Health Coverage Contributions for K-12 Traditional Public School Teachers and District Personnel, Inflation-Adjusted to 2021 Dollars (2011-12 to 2021-22)

Source: NC Treasurer’s Office (Data Request)
The Principal Fellows/Transforming Principal Preparation Program (PF/TP3) is a state-funded principal preparation program that was designed around best practices for principal recruitment, development, and support. Established by state statute in 2015 as a competitive grant program, TP3 (now merged with the Principal Fellows program) provides funds for candidates to attend rigorous, researched-based principal preparation programs across the state and complete a full-time, paid residency that prepares school leaders to work in our state’s highest need schools.

There are eight principal preparation program grantees, each awarded a grant through a competitive process that prioritizes the measurable effectiveness of each program’s graduates.

2021-22 Principal Fellows/TP3 Program Grantees:

- East Carolina University’s PIRATE Leadership Academy
- High Point University Leadership Academy
- NC Central University’s Central Carolina Principal Preparation Program
- NC State University’s North Carolina Leadership Academy and Northeast Leadership Academy
- The Sandhills Regional Education Consortium Leadership Academy
- UNC Charlotte’s TP3 Fellows Program
- UNC Greensboro’s Principal Preparation for Excellence and Equity in Rural Schools
- Western Carolina University’s North Carolina School Executive Leadership Program

One vital component of the PF/TP3 program is the rigorous recruitment and vetting of principal candidates made possible by partnerships between school districts and the PF/TP3 grantees. Through these partnerships, districts recommend candidates for consideration by the PF/TP3 program, host them during their required year-long, school-based internship, and often hire the graduates as school leaders upon completion of the program. All 115 school districts in North Carolina have a partnership with at least one PF/TP3 Program Grantee.

As of 2024, the PF/TP3 Program will produce 40-50% of the principals needed statewide each year. Of those in school leadership positions in June 2020, 83% work in high-needs schools* across North Carolina.

*High needs schools meet criteria defined in the state statute for the Principal Fellows Program.

Source: NC Principal Fellows Program (Data Request)
Average Local Salary Supplement for K-12 Principals in Traditional Public Schools, by District (2021-22)

Note: Four districts do not offer local salary supplements for principals: Carteret County Schools, Dare County Schools, Rutherford County Schools, and Swain County Schools.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 20

Average K-12 Principal Salaries in Traditional Public Schools (2010-11 to 2020-21)

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile Table 20; NC DPI Annual Highlights Reports (2010-2020); National Center for Education Statistics National Teacher and Principal Survey

In 2020-21, the average principal salary supplement in North Carolina was $14,369. Average principal salary supplements ranged from $0 in four school districts to $33,159 in Catawba County Schools.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 20
### Public Four-Year Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>$86,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>$78,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>$78,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>$75,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>$72,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>$69,231</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>$68,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>$67,291</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>$66,128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>$65,828</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$64,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>$62,989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Public Two-Year Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average Salary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>$60,636</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>$59,826</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$59,701</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>South Carolina</td>
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<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>$49,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>$48,419</td>
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<td>West Virginia</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>$41,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>$41,485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Salaries represent the average salary within each state for full time instructional staff, equated to a 9-month contract total.

Source: NCES IPEDS, Table SAL2018_IS
Licensed Child-Care Programs, by Star Rating (2021)

*An additional 22,767 children are enrolled in child-care programs that are exempt from the star-rated license system. For instance, religious-sponsored child-care programs do not receive a star rating unless they choose to apply.

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education Statistical Summary Report, December 2021

In 2021, 190,538 North Carolina children attended one of 5,605 licensed child-care programs: 4,387 (78%) were child care centers and 1,218 (22%) were family child-care homes.

Source: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education Statistical Summary Report, December 2021

K-12 Schools, by Type (2020-21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Public</td>
<td>2,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Charter</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional and Lab Schools</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide: Deaf &amp; Blind</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation School District</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,450</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There are also over 112,000 individual homeschools across North Carolina.

Source: Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, February 2021; 2021 North Carolina Private School Statistics; 2021 North Carolina HOME SCHOOL Statistical Summary; NC DPI Education Services for the Deaf and Blind
**Public School Units (2021-22)**

There are **329 PSUs** in North Carolina as of February 2022.

**Public School Units (PSUs)** include local education agencies (districts), charter schools, lab schools, regional schools, public residential schools, and the Innovative School District.

**Source:** NC DPI Financial and Business Services

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**K-12 Traditional Public School District Enrollment (2021-22)**

North Carolina has **116** school districts (otherwise known as Local Education Agencies or LEAs).

11,817 Students
Average District Size

5,473 Students
Median District Size

**Source:** NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 10

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**Wake County** and **Charlotte-Mecklenburg** school districts each enroll more students than the **51 smallest districts combined**.

45% of K-12 traditional public school students attend the largest 10 school districts.

**Source:** NC DPI Statistical Profile

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In the 2020-21 academic year, North Carolina had **179,900** home-schooled students. If homeschooling were a district, it would be the largest district in North Carolina.

**Source:** 2021 North Carolina HOME SCHOOL Statistical Summary; NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 10
Over 176,000 students were enrolled in gifted education programming in 2019-20. White students were enrolled at nearly 3x the rate of Black and Hispanic students.

Source: NC DPI Division of Advanced Learning & Gifted Education
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees students with disabilities a free and appropriate public education, guided by an individualized education program developed by educators in partnership with the student’s parent/guardian.

Federal funding for students with disabilities exceeds $350 annually. The state of North Carolina allocates $4,550 per special education student, regardless of the child’s disability, for an additional $965 million. Funding can be allocated for up to 13% of the public school unit’s average daily membership. In 2020-21, the percentage of students receiving special education services ranged from 7.6% in Clinton City Schools to 19.8% in Haywood County Schools and Watauga County Schools.

Figure 1: Learning Environment of K-12 Public School Students Receiving Special Education Services (December 2020)

The percentage of North Carolina students in K-12 traditional public schools receiving special education services has remained consistent at around 14% from 2005 to 2020; however, the percentage of students within each disability category has shifted significantly. To see the percentage of students who receive special education services, by race/ethnicity, see page 35.

Figure 2: Disability Identification Among Students Requiring Special Education Services in Traditional Public Schools (2009-10 and 2019-20)

Note: Percentage change in disability identification shown at top of graph.

Source: DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 1 and 9; NC DPI Federal Child Count Reporting
Career and Technical Education (CTE) in North Carolina public schools provides students with academic, technical, and employability skills along with industry-recognized certifications and licenses that have value in local, regional, state, and global economies.

**CTE Credentials Earned in K-12 Traditional Public Schools (2010-11 to 2020-21)**

Youth Apprenticeship programs prepare participants for entry into Registered Apprenticeships. Many of these programs feature partnerships between industry, K-12 school districts, local community colleges, and other community partners. Youth apprenticeships are designed to connect K-12 CTE programs to adult apprenticeship opportunities through certified career pathways.

**K-12 Student Participation in Youth Apprenticeship Program (FY2013 to FY2022)**
School Systems as Employers

Traditional K-12 public school districts are the single-largest employer in 49 North Carolina counties, a top-3 employer in 92 counties, and a top-5 employer in all 100 counties. Institutes of Higher education are the single-largest employer in 3 North Carolina counties, with all three being part of the UNC System.

Largest Employer Industry, by County (2021)

Source: NC Department of Commerce
Higher Education Institutions (2022)

North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS)

58 Community Colleges

Source: NCCCS Main Campuses

UNC System

17 Public Campuses

Source: UNC System Campuses Map

Independent Colleges and Universities

36 Institutions

Source: NCICU Colleges and Universities

Note: Orange markers indicate the location of Historically Black Colleges or Universities (North Carolina African American Heritage Commission) and Historically American Indian Universities (UNC System Student Affairs).

The North Carolina Community College System is the 3rd largest in the nation, based on the number of colleges.

Source: North Carolina Community College System
### North Carolina General Fund Appropriations (2021-22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount (in USD)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12 Schools</td>
<td>$10,602,750,770</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC Community College System</td>
<td>$1,316,207,412</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC System</td>
<td>$3,528,247,180</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Human Services</td>
<td>$5,769,608,993</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHS: Division of Child Development &amp; Early Education</td>
<td>$242,665,827</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice &amp; Public Safety</td>
<td>$3,342,604,705</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Government</td>
<td>$517,803,580</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural, Natural &amp; Economic Resources</td>
<td>$754,769,482</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>$89,434,160</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25,921,426,282</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** North Carolina General Assembly Joint Conference Committee Report on the Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021

60% of the North Carolina General Fund appropriations support K-12 public and higher education.

**Source:** North Carolina General Assembly Joint Conference Committee Report on the Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021
Total Spending per Child Enrolled in State Pre-K Programs, by Funding Source (2020)

$10,000
$12,000
$8,000
$6,000
$4,000
$2,000
$0

North Carolina
$5,355
$4,767
$10,122

National
$830
$5,499
$6,329

State Funds
Federal and Local Funds*

*Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure. To learn more, check out the NC Early Childhood Foundation Cost of NC Pre-K Fact Sheet.


State Spending per Child Enrolled in NC Pre-K, Inflation-Adjusted to 2020 Dollars (2005 to 2020*)

$6,086
$5,355

*Selective years as reported National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

K-12 Public Education per Pupil Revenue, by Source (FY2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North Carolina</th>
<th>National Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue Per Pupil</strong></td>
<td>$10,553</td>
<td>$15,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State %</strong></td>
<td>$6,514 (62%)</td>
<td>$7,309 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal %</strong></td>
<td>$1,098 (10%)</td>
<td>$1,205 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local %</strong></td>
<td>$2,941 (28%)</td>
<td>$7,142 (46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: US Census, 2019 Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data, Summary Table #1 and #19*

Distribution of K-12 Public Education Expenditures, by Function (FY2019)

- **Salaries & Wages**
  - Instructional Personnel: North Carolina 43%, National Average 37%
  - Support Service Personnel: North Carolina 16%, National Average 17%
  - All Other Expenditures: North Carolina 18%, National Average 23%

82% of funding is personnel costs

*Source: US Census, 2019 Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data*

In North Carolina, **58%** of K-12 expenditures fund the salary and benefits of instructional personnel, compared to **53%** nationally.

*Source: US Census, 2019 Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data*
State Education Funding in North Carolina

North Carolina provides a base level of state funding to all districts, determined, in part, by the number of students enrolled, and provides additional state funding to districts based on student needs and district characteristics. In 2020-21, state spending on education was $10.6 billion, which included the following supplemental funding:

- Funding for Children with Disabilities: $965 Million
- Funding for English Language Learners: $101 Million
- Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Funding: $101 Million
- Small County Supplemental Funding: $49 Million (for 28 counties)
- Low Wealth District Supplemental Funding: $245 Million (for 68 counties)

Source: NC DPI 2021 Highlights of the Public School Budget

In 2020, North Carolina ranked 42nd in total per pupil funding.*

In 2020, North Carolina ranked 13th for the percentage of education funding provided by the state.

*This ranking is not adjusted for cost of living amongst states and does not include federal COVID funding.

Source: NEA Rankings of the States 2020

In 2020-21, total per pupil expenditures ranged from $8,886 in Idaho to $30,065 in New York. The percent of education funding provided by the state (as opposed to local or federal sources) ranged from 31% in Missouri to 90% in Vermont.

Source: NEA Rankings of the States 2020
State Revenue Sources for K-12 Public Education (2021-22)

General Fund Appropriations
- Indian Gaming Fund
- Dept. of Revenue Sales Tax Refund
- Civil Penalties
- Lottery - School Construction
- Lottery - Operating

| Source: Office of State Budget and Management - 2021-23 Certified Budget |

North Carolina Education Lottery: Education-Directed Spending, by Category (FY11-FY22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY 22 (Budget)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$10,603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2021 North Carolina State Budget (page 15)

“The General Assembly shall provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of free public schools, which shall be maintained at least nine months in every year, and wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students.”

– Article IX, Section 2, North Carolina Constitution
Example Federal and State per Pupil K-12 Public Education Funding, by Student Characteristic (2020-21)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A: 1st Grade Student with Limited English Proficiency and Special Learning Issues, Economically Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Student B: 1st Grade Student with No Special Learning Needs, Non-Economically Disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$18,032</td>
<td>$6,171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data are based on student characteristics and exclude all local funding, as well as any low-wealth and small county supplemental funding from the state.

Source: NC DPI 2021 Highlights of the Public School Budget

Federal Education Funding in North Carolina

Roughly 10% of K-12 public education funding in North Carolina comes from the federal government. Federal funds mainly support child nutrition, students with disabilities, and students from low-income households.

Source: NC DPI 2021 Highlights of the Public School Budget

Distribution of Federal K-12 Public Education Funds (2020-21)

- **Child Nutrition**: 23%
- **Title I**: 34%
- **Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)**: 34%
- **Vocational Education**: 7%
- **Other**: 2%

Source: NC DPI 2021 Highlights of the Public School Budget
Federal COVID Relief Funding for North Carolina Schools

Since March 2020, the federal government has provided nearly $337 billion in pandemic-related aid to be used to support the education of students in preschool through higher education. North Carolina has allocated $9.4 billion in education funding through three separate federal laws.

Figure 1: Federal COVID-19 Relief Funding for Education in North Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Enacted</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>December 2020</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal Funding for Education in North Carolina</td>
<td>$1.6 Billion</td>
<td>$2.4 Billion</td>
<td>$5.4 Billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Education Funding Amounts</td>
<td>• Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF)</td>
<td>• ESSER II</td>
<td>• ESSER III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) I</td>
<td>• GEER II</td>
<td>• HEERF III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) I</td>
<td>• HEERF II</td>
<td>• EANS II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER)</td>
<td>• Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools (EANS)</td>
<td>• State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Education Funding Amounts</td>
<td>CRF: $587 Million*</td>
<td>ESSER II: $1.6 Billion</td>
<td>ESSER III: $3.6 Billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESSER I: $396 Million</td>
<td>GEER II: $42.1 Million</td>
<td>HEERF III: $1.3 Billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GEER I: $96 Million</td>
<td>HEERF II: $647 Million</td>
<td>EANS II: $82 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEERF I: $472 Million</td>
<td>EANS I: $85 Million</td>
<td>SFRF: $371 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline to Spend Funds</td>
<td>CRF: 12/31/2021</td>
<td>9/30/2023</td>
<td>ESSER III, HEERF III, EANS II:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESSER I, GEER I, HEERF I: 9/30/2022</td>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SFRF: 12/31/2024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Contains $89 Million in funding for early childhood programs.

Ninety percent of ESSER funds were delivered directly to public school units (PSUs) following the federal Title I funding formula, and PSUs have discretion over these funds.

**Districts in the highest-poverty quartile** received **79%** more COVID relief funding, per pupil, than districts in the lowest-poverty quartile.

**The 10 highest-poverty districts** received **163%** more COVID relief funding, per pupil, than the 10 lowest-poverty districts.

*By percentage of economically disadvantaged students.*
As of December 31, 2021, 27% of the $5.8 billion provided to PK-12 public schools for COVID-19 relief had been spent; however, schools have spent 90% of dollars allocated through funding streams that have expired or are expiring soon (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Federal COVID Relief Spending in North Carolina K-12 Public Schools (as of December 2021)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Stream</th>
<th>Total Allotment to K-12 Public School Units*</th>
<th>Percentage of Funds Spent</th>
<th>Deadline to Spend Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRF</td>
<td>$313 Million</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>12/31/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER I</td>
<td>$388 Million</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>9/30/2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEER</td>
<td>$60 Million</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9/30/2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER II</td>
<td>$1.5 Billion</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9/30/2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER III</td>
<td>$3.4 Billion</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9/30/2024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not include federal funding allocated to NC DPI.

Spending trends have shifted as school and student needs have become clearer (see Lost Instructional Time Spotlight, page 56). Money appropriated via CRF in early 2020 was used primarily to help schools transition to remote education at the outset of the pandemic. Funding was heavily invested in supplies and materials, including personal protective equipment, computers for remote learning, and materials to support the delivery of school meals. Subsequent funding streams have been increasingly utilized to support students’ academic needs, including hiring additional teachers and staff, as well as providing funds for tutoring and summer programming.

**Figure 3: Distribution of COVID-19 Relief Funds Spending by K-12 Public School Units (as of December 31, 2021)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supplies/Materials</th>
<th>Purchased Services</th>
<th>Salary/Benefits</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Capital Outlay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRF (Deadline = 12/31/2021)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>&gt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER I and GEER (Deadline = 9/30/2022)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER II (Deadline = 9/30/2023)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER III (Deadline = 9/30/2024)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** COVID Relief Spending is being reported in depth on NC DPI’s Allotment and Expenditure Data Dashboard. Scan QR code and follow link to learn more.

**Source:** NC DPI Financial and Business Services; NC Pandemic Recovery Office; NC DPI COVID Relief Funding Allotment and Expenditure Database; NC DPI Statistical Profile; NC DPI School Report Cards
Local Education Funding in North Carolina

In addition to state and federal funds, North Carolina counties provide local funding to supplement K-12 school “Operations,” such as teachers and other staff. Local fund are also used for “Capital Expenditures,” which help build, furnish, and maintain K-12 school buildings.

In 2020-21, local funds for school operations ranged from $430 per pupil in Public Schools of Robeson County to $6,850 per pupil in Chapel-Hill/Carrboro City Schools, with a median of $1,850 per pupil. In 2021-22, local dollars funded 26,599 positions in K-12 public schools, including 6,534 service workers, 5,818 teachers, 1,948 teacher assistants, and 818 assistant principals across the state.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Tables 16 and 24

Top-10 Local K-12 Public Education Operating Expenditures (2020-21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Expenditure (in Millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>$815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Maintenance</td>
<td>$329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments to Other Governmental Units*</td>
<td>$324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Utilities &amp; Energy</td>
<td>$279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial Services</td>
<td>$121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Enhancement Teachers</td>
<td>$118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Support</td>
<td>$113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction for Children with Disabilities</td>
<td>$109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Assistant Principal</td>
<td>$108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>$102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These 10 categories constitute 68% of total local expenditures.

Note: This does not include capital expenditures. For capital expenditures, please see below.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 27


Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 28
K-12 Public Education Per Pupil Expenditures, Inflation-Adjusted to 2021 Dollars, by Source (2002 to 2021)

Between 2016 and 2021, average total per pupil expenditures in North Carolina increased by 21% - from $8,888 to $10,753. Federal, state, and local per pupil expenditures increased by 29%, 25%, and 7%, respectively, over the same period.

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile, Table 24
K-12 Traditional Public Schools per Pupil Expenditures, by School Growth Status (2018-19)

Source: NC DPI (Data Request); NC DPI Accountability and Reporting

K-12 Traditional Public School per Pupil Expenditures, by Source and Rural Status (2019-20)

Source: NC DPI (Data Request); NC DPI EDDIE Database

Median per Pupil Expenditures in Traditional K-12 Public Schools, by School Poverty Level (2019-20)

Source: NC DPI School Report Card Data

Traditional public schools with 75% to 100% of students in poverty receive 35% more per pupil funding than traditional public schools with 0% to 25% of students in poverty. Find more per pupil funding data by scanning the QR code to the left and following the link.

Source: NC DPI (Data Request)
North Carolina Community College System: State Spending per Full-Time Student, Inflation-Adjusted to 2021 Dollars (2015 to 2022)

Source: North Carolina Community College System: Annual State Aid Allocations and Budget Policies Summary

UNC System: State Spending per Full-Time Student, Inflation Adjusted to 2021 Dollars (2006-07 to 2020-21)

Source: North Carolina General Assembly - Fiscal Research Division (Data Request)
State and Local Funding for Higher Education per Full-Time Student (2019-20)

North Carolina: $9,360
National Average: $8,640

Source: College Board: Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021

Average In-State Tuition and Fees at Public Four-Year Higher Education Institutions (2021-22)

North Carolina: $7,390
National Average: $10,740

Source: College Board: Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021

In 2019-20, North Carolina ranked 14th nationally for public higher education funding per full-time student.

In 2021-22, average in-state tuition at North Carolina’s public four-year institutions was 4th-lowest nationally.

Source: College Board: Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be filled out by anyone seeking federal aid to help fund their higher education expenses. This is a key metric for educational matriculation and attainment.

FAFSA Completion Rates, by District (2021-22 Cycle, through December 2021)

Source: U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Federal Student Aid: FAFSA Completion by High School and Public School District

78% of public school districts had a 50% or higher estimated FAFSA completion rate in 2021-22.

Source: U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Federal Student Aid: FAFSA Completion by High School and Public School District
"The General Assembly shall provide that the benefits of The University of North Carolina and other public institutions of higher education, as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State free of expense."

– Article IX, Section 9, North Carolina Constitution

**Median College Debt and Percentage of Graduates with Debt, by Institution Type (Graduating Class of 2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NC Median Debt</th>
<th>NC Percentage with Debt</th>
<th>National Median Debt</th>
<th>National Percentage with Debt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public 2-Year</td>
<td>$14,438</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>$14,438</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-Year</td>
<td>$26,088</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>$25,547</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Nonprofit 4-Year</td>
<td>$28,331</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>$28,458</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private for Profit 4-Year</td>
<td>$31,439</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>$35,375</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCES Powerstats

**55%**

Percentage of 2020 North Carolina College Graduates with Debt

Source: Institute for College Access & Student Success - Student Debt and the Class of 2020

**$29,681**

Median Amount Owed by 2020 North Carolina College Graduates with Debt

Source: Institute for College Access & Student Success - Student Debt and the Class of 2020
Statewide Assessments for K-12 Public School Students

In addition to the statewide assessments below, local districts often require multiple additional assessments, such as interim or benchmark tests, that may provide educators with more information about student growth and achievement across the school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Federal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-3 Reading (Various Assessments)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade Beginning-of-Grade Reading</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd-8th Grade End-of-Grade Tests in Both Math and Reading, also in Science for 5th and 8th Grades</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-Course in Biology, Math I, and English II</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Testing Suite, Given in 8th, 10th, and 11th Grades</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Technical Education (CTE) Assessments in All CTE Courses</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Assessments above are given to the majority of students in North Carolina.*

*Source: NC DPI Testing and School Accountability*

Achievement Levels on North Carolina End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Exams

Performance on North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) exams is broken out into five achievement levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement Level*</th>
<th>Command of Grade-Level Knowledge and Skills</th>
<th>Indicates Grade-Level Proficiency</th>
<th>On Track for College and Career Readiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thorough</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3**</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Proficient</td>
<td>Inconsistent</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For NCEXTEND Alternate Assessments, student achievement levels are Level 4, Level 3, and Not Proficient.

**Students performing at this level have a sufficient command of grade-level knowledge and skills, but may need academic support to engage successfully in the next grade level.

*Source: NC DPI*
In March 2020, education in North Carolina changed dramatically as schools across the state were temporarily closed and then moved to remote learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some policies were determined by the state, most learning decisions were made by local districts.

Summative assessments were eliminated in 2019-20, but 2020-21 assessment data, compared with the pre-COVID 2018-19 data give us a glimpse into the impact of these significant learning disruptions. As expected, student proficiency rates fell for students in all grades and in almost every subject.

**Figure 1: Percent Proficient* on End-of-Grade Tests in Reading and Math, by Grade Level (2018-19 and 2020-21)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 60% 64%</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 45% 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 55% 57%</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 47% 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 59% 69%</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 45% 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 56% 53%</td>
<td>Proficiency Rate: 48% 53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Declines in student achievement varied across student subgroups and were greatest amongst the most at-risk students, including those who experienced homelessness and economically disadvantaged students.

**Figure 2: Percent Proficient* in 3rd Grade Reading, by Student Subgroup (2018-19 and 2020-21)**

![Graph showing declines in proficiency rates across student subgroups](image-url)

*Note: Percentage change in proficiency shown in red.*

*Proficiency means a student is performing on grade level.*

**Economically disadvantaged.**

*Note: Percentage change in proficiency shown in red.*
In March 2022, NC DPI’s Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration released the COVID-19 Impact Analysis of Lost Instructional Time report, which assesses the extent to which students’ learning trajectories were altered by factors related to teaching and learning during the pandemic.

In the charts below, a negative effective size indicates that students made less progress than expected in a typical year of schooling.

**Figure 3: Effect Size of COVID-19 Pandemic on Student Progress During the 2020-21 School Year, by Assessment Type**

The report also found that students who returned to the classroom for face-to-face learning earlier performed better than students who experienced higher numbers of remote learning days.

**Figure 4: Effect Size of COVID-19 Pandemic on Student Progress During the 2020-21 School Year, by Remote Instruction Quintile***

*Schools were placed into five equal quintiles based on the number of days spent in remote instruction.*
While the learning of all groups of students was diminished by the pandemic, some groups saw greater impacts than others, including American Indian students, Black students, and economically disadvantaged students.

**Figure 5: Effect Size of COVID-19 Pandemic on Student Progress in 7th Grade Math, by Student Subgroup (2020-21)**

![Chart showing effect sizes](chart.png)

Students attending high-poverty schools were also disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

**Figure 6: Effect Size of COVID-19 Pandemic on Student Progress During the 2020-21 School Year, by School Poverty Quintile**

![Chart showing effect sizes](chart.png)

*Schools were placed into five equal quintiles based on the percentage of students who were identified as economically disadvantaged.

**Note:** To access NC DPI’s COVID-19 Impact Analysis of Lost Instructional Time report, scan the QR code to the right and follow the link.

**Source:** NC DPI Accountability Data Sets and Reports; NC DPI COVID-19 Impact Analysis of Lost Instructional Time
Retention* (Non-Promotion) Rates in K-12 Traditional Public Schools, by Grade Level (2008-09 and 2018-19)

*Students were retained at the end of the academic year listed and remained in the same grade for the following school year.

Source: DPI Statistical Profile, Table 2

2018-19 retention decisions were the final ones made prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019-20, the statewide retention rate was 1.8%, and in 2020-21, it was 4.3%.

Source: DPI Statistical Profile, Table 2

College and Career Readiness* of K-12 Traditional Public School Students, by District (2020-21)

Note: College and career readiness is indicated by scores of 4 or 5 on all End-of-Grade or End-of-Course assessments.

Source: NC DPI Accountability and Reporting
K-12 Public School Students On Track for College and Career, by Selected Subject (2018-19 and 2020-21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade Reading</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade Science</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Math*</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math I**</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS English II</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Represents a composite of the scores of 8th grade students on the Grade 8 Math EOG and the Math 1 EOC.

**Does not include the scores of 8th grade students who took the Math 1 EOC.

Source: NC DPI Accountability and Reporting

66% of 3rd grade students in North Carolina public schools are not on track for college and career in reading in 2020-21.

Source: NC DPI Accountability and Reporting
College and Career Readiness (CCR) of K-12 Traditional Public School Students, by Student Subgroup (2018-19 and 2020-21)

Gap between White and Black students: 30 PERCENTAGE POINTS

Gap between White and Hispanic students: 23 PERCENTAGE POINTS

Gap between ED* and Non-ED students: 28 PERCENTAGE POINTS

Source: DPI Accountability and Reporting

Economically Disadvantaged

Non-Economically Disadvantaged

Academically or Intellectually Gifted

Homeless Students

Students with Disabilities

English Language Learners

Source: DPI Accountability and Reporting

*Economically disadvantaged
K-12 Public Schools Meeting or Exceeding Expected Student Growth, by School Type (2013-14 to 2018-19)

Source: NC DPI Accountability and Reporting

Distribution of Academic Growth for K-12 Public Schools, by Student Subgroup (2018-19)

Note: n = the number of schools with 30 or more students in the indicated subgroup

Source: NC DPI Accountability Data Sets and Reports; 2018–19 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools Executive Summary
K-12 Public School Performance Grades, by Student Academic Growth (2018-19)

Source: NC DPI Accountability Data Sets and Reports; 2018–19 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools Executive Summary


Source: NC DPI Accountability and Reporting
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (2019)

All states participate in NAEP, making it the most comprehensive measure of K-12 student achievement, trends, and state rankings across the nation. For more detailed data visit: www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile and www.NCEdFacts.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>% of Students At or Above Proficient</th>
<th>National Public Average</th>
<th>Highest Proficiency Rate</th>
<th>National Ranking Before Urban Institute Adjustment</th>
<th>Urban Institute (UI) National Ranking*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>45% (MA)</td>
<td>19th</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53% (MA)</td>
<td>18th</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>45% (MA)</td>
<td>30th</td>
<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50% (MA)</td>
<td>21st</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Urban Institute adjusts NAEP scores to account for demographic differences such as race, poverty, receipt of special education services, and status as an English language learner in each state, then ranks states based on those adjusted scores.

Source: The Nation’s Report Card – State Profiles; The Urban Institute – America’s Gradebook

64% of North Carolina 4th grade students did not meet proficiency standards on the 2019 NAEP reading assessment.

Source: The Nation’s Report Card – State Profiles
NAEP 4th Grade Math Proficiency, by Free & Reduced Price Meal Eligibility (2009 to 2019)

Source: The Nation’s Report Card – State Profiles

NAEP 4th Grade Math Proficiency, by Race/Ethnicity (2019)

Source: The Nation’s Report Card – State Profiles

63% of North Carolina 8th grade students did not meet proficiency standards on the 2019 NAEP math assessment.

Source: The Nation’s Report Card – State Profiles
American College Testing (ACT)

The ACT and ACT WorkKeys assessments are used to measure college and career preparedness among high school students in North Carolina public schools. All 11th-grade students are required to take the ACT. All 12th grade students with a Career and Technical Education (CTE) concentration also take the ACT WorkKeys career readiness assessment.

Average ACT Composite Score for States with 100% Participation (Graduating Class of 2020)

Source: ACT 2021 Condition of College & Career Readiness Report

In 2020-21, 45% of 11th grade students in North Carolina scored below 17 on the ACT – which is the minimum entry score required for admission into UNC System institutions.

Source: NC DPI Accountability Data Sets and Reports

63% of high school seniors with a CTE concentration earned at least a Silver Career Readiness Certificate on the ACT WorkKeys assessment in 2020-21.

Source: NC DPI Accountability Data Sets and Reports
In 2020-21, only 34% of economically disadvantaged students had a composite score of 17 or higher on the ACT, compared to 63% of non-economically disadvantaged students.

Source: NC DPI Accountability Data Sets and Reports
Advanced Placement (AP) Exam Participation and Pass Rates in K-12 Public Schools (2013-14 to 2020-21)

*AP Exams were taken at home in 2019-20.

Source: NC DPI SAT and AP Reports

AP Exam Participation and Pass Rates in K-12 Public Schools, by Student Subgroup (2019-20)

Source: NC DPI SAT and AP Reports

58% North Carolina AP Exam Pass Rate in 2019-20

63% National AP Exam Pass Rate in 2019-20

Source: NC DPI SAT and AP Reports
K-12 Public High School Graduation Rates (Class of 2010 to Class of 2021)

*National averages are not available for these years.

**Source:** NC DPI 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate; NC DPI Testing and School Accountability; NCES Digest of Education Statistics, Table 219.46

K-12 Public High School Graduation Rates, by Student Subgroup (Class of 2021)

**Source:** NC DPI Testing and School Accountability
High School Diploma Integrity

The four-year cohort graduation rate in North Carolina public schools increased from **74%** in 2010 to **87%** in 2021. The integrity of North Carolina’s high school diploma is called into question when high school graduation rates are compared with ACT scores and End-of-Course exam proficiency. The majority of economically disadvantaged students graduate without achieving college and career ready standards in math, English, and biology, and without meeting the minimum ACT score required for admission into UNC System universities.

*Source: NC DPI Testing and School Accountability*

Public High School Graduation Rates vs. Postsecondary Readiness, by Student Subgroup (Graduating Class of 2021)

**All Students**

- Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: **87%**
- End-of-Course Exams: Met College & Career Readiness Benchmark: **28%**
- ACT Exam: Met UNC System Minimum Entry Requirement: **55%**

**Non-Economically Disadvantaged Students**

- Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: **90%**
- End-of-Course Exams: Met College & Career Readiness Benchmark: **34%**
- ACT Exam: Met UNC System Minimum Entry Requirement: **63%**

**Economically Disadvantaged Students**

- Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: **80%**
- End-of-Course Exams: Met College & Career Readiness Benchmark: **14%**
- ACT Exam: Met UNC System Minimum Entry Requirement: **34%**

*Source: NC DPI Testing and School Accountability*
First Year Progression Rate* in the North Carolina Community College System, by Race/Ethnicity (Fall 2019)

*Percentage of first-time credential-seeking students who graduate prior to or are enrolled in postsecondary education during the subsequent fall term.

**Source:** North Carolina Community College System Analytics and Reporting

Six-Year Higher Education Graduation Rates (Fall 2015 Cohort)

**Source:** National Student Clearinghouse Research Center - Completing College National and State Reports 2022
### UNC System Acceptance Rates, by Incoming High School Type (Fall 2021)

- Traditional Public Schools: 76%
- Public Charter Schools: 75%
- Private Schools: 84%
- Cooperative Innovative High Schools: 72%

**Source:** UNC System Stats, Data, and Reports

### UNC System First Year GPA, by Incoming High School Type (Fall 2020)

- Traditional Public Schools: 2.80
- Public Charter Schools: 2.74
- Private Schools: 2.94
- Cooperative Innovative High Schools: 2.63

**Source:** UNC System Stats, Data, and Reports

### UNC System Six-Year Graduation Rates, by Incoming High School Type (2015 Cohort)

- Traditional Public Schools: 66%
- Public Charter Schools: 73%
- Private Schools: 77%
- Cooperative Innovative High Schools: 68%

**Source:** UNC System Stats, Data, and Reports
### UNC System Enrollment and Six-Year Graduation Rates of First-Time Students Attending Full-Time (2015 Cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian State University</td>
<td>3,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Carolina University</td>
<td>4,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth City State University</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayetteville State University</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC A&amp;T State University</td>
<td>1,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC Central University</td>
<td>1,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC State University</td>
<td>4,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Asheville</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Chapel Hill</td>
<td>4,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Charlotte</td>
<td>3,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Greensboro</td>
<td>2,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Pembroke</td>
<td>1,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC School of the Arts</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Wilmington</td>
<td>2,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Carolina University</td>
<td>1,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston-Salem State University</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNC System Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32,193</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: UNC System Stats, Data, and Reports*

**At 91%, UNC Chapel Hill has the highest six-year graduation rate within the UNC system for full-time students attending for the first time.**

*Source: UNC System Stats, Data, and Reports*
Educational Attainment of Adults Ages 25 and Older, by Race/Ethnicity (2019)

- American Indian/Alaskan:
  - Less than High School: 22%
  - Some College or Associate Degree: 33%
  - High School Graduate or GED: 31%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 9%
  - Graduate or Professional Degree: 5%

- Asian:
  - Less than High School: 13%
  - Some College or Associate Degree: 16%
  - High School Graduate or GED: 29%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 30%

- Black:
  - Less than High School: 14%
  - Some College or Associate Degree: 31%
  - High School Graduate or GED: 34%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 15%

- Hispanic:
  - Less than High School: 37%
  - Some College or Associate Degree: 25%
  - High School Graduate or GED: 21%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 11%

- Two+ Races:
  - Less than High School: 9%
  - Some College or Associate Degree: 21%
  - High School Graduate or GED: 36%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 20%

- White:
  - Less than High School: 8%
  - Some College or Associate Degree: 25%
  - High School Graduate or GED: 32%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 23%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201

Adults Ages 25 and Older with Any Postsecondary Education, by Race/Ethnicity (2019)

- American Indian/Alaskan:
  - North Carolina: 45%
  - National: 52%

- Asian:
  - North Carolina: 56%
  - National: 55%

- Black:
  - North Carolina: 38%
  - National: 42%

- Hispanic:
  - North Carolina: 70%
  - National: 71%

- Two+ Races:
  - North Carolina: 68%
  - National: 67%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201

37% of Hispanic adults and 14% of Black adults over the age of 25 have less than a high school diploma, compared to 8% of White adults over the age of 25.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201
In 2019, 32% of North Carolina residents age 25 and older held a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 63% had some post-secondary education.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019), American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201
Our Vision
At BEST NC, we envision a North Carolina in which every student graduates with the knowledge, skills and behaviors to succeed in a competitive global economy.

BEST NC’s mission is to unite an engaged and informed business perspective to build consensus toward dramatically transforming and improving education in North Carolina.

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