

# **Listening to Those on the Front Lines:**

## **North Carolina Teachers and Administrators Respond to State Legislative Changes**

**Results of a survey of over 600 practicing  
teachers and administrators in North Carolina**

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## Message from the Researchers

If one believes that North Carolina's teachers and administrators are effective barometers of what is occurring in our schools, this report should serve as a wakeup call. Those who educate our state's most valuable resource, our children, have significant reservations about the implications of recent legislative changes and the overall direction of public education in NC.

In the summer of 2013, the North Carolina legislature passed broad educational reforms. Among these were the abolishment of tenure, the end of additional compensation for teachers who earn a graduate degree, removal of class size caps, and implementation of a voucher program. As professors who interact daily with current K-12 educators, we heard numerous anecdotes this fall about declining support for public education, increased teacher attrition, deteriorating morale, and concerns about pursuing advanced degrees. While the anecdotes were fairly consistent, there was not, to our knowledge, available data that captured the immediate and potential long-term effects of the policy changes.

This report presents the findings from a study of approximately 630 North Carolina teachers and administrators. Participating educators were surveyed about the effects of the legislative changes on the quality of education in their schools, their morale, their plans to pursue graduate education, and their intentions to stay in the profession.

The responses outlined in this report indicate that we are at a crucial point for public education in NC. By large percentages, respondents think the state is on the wrong track in terms of education policy, and they believe the quality of teaching and learning in their own buildings has been damaged. Survey responses show that low morale is widespread and a significant percentage of teachers are looking to leave the profession or move to another state. These findings indicate we may well be at a tipping point with regard to the quality of education in NC. What follows is a summary of key findings, quantitative results, and participant commentary.

## Key Findings

- Over 96% of the educators who participated think public education in North Carolina is headed in the wrong direction.
- Two-thirds of teachers and administrators indicated that recent legislative changes have negatively impacted the quality of teaching and learning in their own school.
- Over 74% of respondents indicated that, as a result of the legislative changes, they were less likely to continue working as a teacher/administrator in NC.
- 97% of respondents think the legislative changes have had a negative effect on teacher morale.
- 98% of teachers and administrators surveyed believe that the removal of financial incentives for pursuing advanced degrees will have a negative effect on the quality of teaching and learning in North Carolina's schools.
- Nearly all respondents indicated that the failure to give teachers a raise in pay will have a negative impact on the quality of public education.
- Ninety percent of teachers and administrators indicated that the removal of tenure, with all teachers placed on 1-, 2-, or 4-year contracts by 2018, will have a negative effect on the quality of public education in NC.
- In regard to the legislature's plan to eliminate tenure and identify the top 25% of teachers for annual pay raises, approximately 7% of teachers indicated they would give up tenure in exchange for the supplement (64% would not give up tenure and 28% are uncertain).
- 38% of respondents believe the Read to Achieve Program will have a positive impact on the quality of education in the state. Among elementary teachers, this figure is just 20%.
- A significant portion of teacher and administrator comments described working harder to protect students from the perceived effects of the recent legislative changes.
- Nearly 87% of respondents think the voucher plan, providing eligible families with a \$4,200 annual voucher to allow a child to go to a private school, will have a negative impact on the state's public schools.

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"I now have half a Masters in Education and that is all I'll ever have . . . there is no reason to spend my own money to earn a degree which will not be valued by my employers. I am now looking into changing professions."

"It makes no logical sense to try and further my own education if I teach in NC."

"I am currently working on my Masters degree. Right after I started my first class I heard about the legislation that ended Master teacher pay. If this is not cleared up by the end of next school year I will be leaving NC so I can be compensated appropriately based on my educational background."

"I plan to get a Masters in something other than public education."

"Currently enrolled and will continue my Masters Degree in hopes legislature may reverse. Despite negative attacks I will continue to support my desire to teach within my community."

## Advanced Education

Teachers who successfully complete a master's degree in education before June of 2014 will continue to receive a 10% increase in their annual salary. However, beginning in the summer of 2015, North Carolina will become one of the first states to completely eliminate a salary supplement for earning advanced degrees (masters or doctoral). Teachers and administrators were asked how they felt about this decision and its impact on their own intentions to pursue graduate degrees.

### Findings:

- Nearly all teachers and administrators surveyed indicated they believe the removal of financial incentives for pursuing advanced degrees will have a negative effect on the quality of teaching and learning in North Carolina's schools.
- Nearly three-fourths of all respondents are now less likely to pursue an advanced degree. This percentage is even higher among teachers who currently hold just a bachelor's degree.

**Table 1.** Please indicate to what extent you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in North Carolina.

Teachers in North Carolina will no longer receive additional pay for earning a master's degree in education	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=634)	82%	16.2%	1.4%	0.0%	0.3%

**Table 2.** How have the legislative changes affected your intentions to:

Pursue an advanced degree in education	Much Less Likely	Less Likely	No Change	More Likely	Much More Likely
All Respondents (N=622)	59.2%	14.6%	22.3%	2.1%	1.8%
Teachers who currently hold a bachelor's degree (N=289)	68.9%	12.1%	12.8%	3.8%	2.4%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"I will be less likely to look into pursuing National Board certification should incentives for National Boards also be removed."

"I am scared to pursue my National Board certification because of the uncertainty of NC recognizing it and continuing the 12% supplement. I cannot afford to invest \$2500 and my time when there is a risk of the NCGA renegeing on a promise once again. I live near Virginia. I am already looking into openings there."

"As long as the state holds on to the stipend for NB- I am more likely to go that route-- but then again, I have to have the money to pay for it."

"I have already made the decision to leave this profession, unfortunately."

"I am applying for a doctoral program in 2015 in order to get out of the classroom. I cannot raise a family in a career with no support, no funding, and all of this stress."

"Because of my family situation, I will stay in education. If my situation were different, I would most likely be looking for other employment or moving to another state."

## Professional Intentions

Participants were asked about how the legislative changes affected their intentions with regard to three areas: continue working as a teacher/administrator in NC, continue working as a teacher/administrator but in another state, and pursue National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification.

### Findings:

- Over 74% of respondents indicated that as a result of the legislative changes they were less likely to continue working as a teacher/administrator in NC.
- Fifty-seven percent of respondents indicated that as a result of the legislative change they were more likely to continue working as a teacher/administrator but in another state.
- Sixty-four percent of respondents indicated that as a result of the legislative changes they were much less likely to pursue National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.

**Table 3.** How have the legislative changes affected your intentions to:

Continue working as a teacher / administrator in North Carolina	Much Less Likely	Less likely	No change	More likely	Much more likely
All respondents (N=630)	36.5%	38.1%	21.4%	1.91%	2.1%

**Table 4.** How have the legislative changes affected your intentions to:

Continue working as a teacher / administrator but in another state	Much Less Likely	Less likely	No change	More likely	Much more likely
All respondents (N=626)	8.6%	8.5%	33.2%	35.1%	14.5%

**Table 5.** How have the legislative changes affected your intentions to:

Pursue National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification	Much Less Likely	Less likely	No change	More likely	Much more likely
All respondents (N=626)	52.7%	12.6%	29.6%	3.2%	1.9%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"The 25% incentive will do nothing but put teacher against teacher."

"Morale is TERRIBLE - the response is visceral. I will accept the bonus if listed as a top 25% teacher, because I'm going to lose it anyways, so why not get something out of it. I disagree with it in principle, by all accounts, but if I am going to lose it anyways, I don't want to be empty handed."

"Education in North Carolina is broken. What incentive are we providing our teachers to continue to learn and then what message does that send our students? How do you attract young college graduates to enter the field with no pay raise in years and no chance to advance your salary unless you leave the profession? What happens to a school when only 25% are rewarded for a job that requires an entire school faculty to do?"

"School districts should refuse to identify the top 25% of teachers for supplements. It will further cause worsening morale problems and friction among teachers. Everyone cannot be in the top 25%, and how on earth do you measure this? Every teacher deserves pay increases annually just for having one of the toughest jobs on earth. So will some teachers who aren't the best, but aren't the worst, stay at starting salaries for their whole career."

"I am a young teacher; this is my second year. I have done very well so far in my career. I love teaching and being in the classroom, but I am very discouraged about the changes being made in the teaching profession. Teaching used to be a career of distinction; teachers were respected. That is not the case anymore. It seems like no matter how hard you work it is not good enough. With the term contracts there is far less job security. This creates more stress in a profession that is already very stressful."

## Teacher Tenure/Top 25% and \$500 Annual Bonus

Administrators are required to identify the top 25% of teachers in their schools beginning this spring. These teachers will be offered a four-year contract and a \$500 annual salary supplement in exchange for giving up tenure. Teachers were asked whether they give up tenure in exchange for the supplement and contract if they were identified as being among the top 25%.

### Findings:

- If identified as being among the top 25%, only 7% of teachers indicated they would give up tenure in exchange for the supplement. In contrast, 63% of teachers said they would not give up tenure in exchange for the supplement.
- Ninety percent of teachers and administrators indicated that the removal of tenure with all teachers placed on 1-, 2-, or 4-year contracts by 2018 will have a negative effect on the quality of public education in NC.
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated that selecting the top 25% of teachers for a \$500 supplement will have a negative effect on the quality of public education in NC.

**Table 6.** If you are identified as being among the 25%, will you give up tenure in exchange for the supplement and contract?

	Yes	No	I'm not sure
Teacher respondents (N=506)	7.3%	64.4%	28.3%

**Table 7.** Please indicate to what extent you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in North Carolina

Teacher tenure has been eliminated with all teachers placed on 1-, 2- or 4-year contracts by 2018	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All respondents (N=633)	67%	23.1%	5.2%	3.9%	0.8%

**Table 8.** Please indicate to what extent you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in North Carolina

The top 25% of teachers in a school district will receive performance bonuses of \$500 a year. Criteria for identifying the top 25% of teachers have not been determined	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All respondents (N=635)	69.9%	20%	6.5%	3.1%	0.5%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"No matter what circumstances we are given, teachers (good teachers) will always strive their best to make learning the priority for their students."

"It has negatively impacted my students because I am stretched to the max and simply can't (and honestly won't) do any more. I am a human and to keep asking more and more while giving me less support and continually insulting me has just pretty much brought me to a point of diminishing returns."

"The teachers at my school still teach their butts off and work harder than any other person in another profession. Legislation may change and the government might say they don't care about education but the students are still there and still expect an education."

"I will continue to serve my students and my school but I have never felt so unappreciated by my government and my local board of Ed."

"Do not let the "no impact" responses sway the results. Our goal is that there will be no negative impact to students because we will do whatever it takes to help all students succeed, despite funding and related issues."

"Good and passionate teachers will not allow politicians to negatively impact the learning in their individual classrooms. It is not the students' fault that we, as teachers, are being penalized. However, the fact that good teachers are leaving the profession and many potential good teachers are choosing other majors in college will have a long term devastatingly negative effect on our students and our state."

## Quality of Teaching and Learning

Classroom teachers and school administrators are on the front lines in terms of implementing and observing the effects of North Carolina's recent legislative changes. Participants were asked how these changes are affecting the quality of teaching and learning in their classroom and their school.

### Findings:

- Nearly half of classroom teachers indicate that recent legislative changes have negatively impacted the quality of teaching and learning in their own classrooms. This is in contrast to just 1.4% of teachers who believe the changes have yielded improvement.
- 63.3% of teachers and administrators indicate that recent legislative changes have negatively impacted the quality of teaching and learning in their own school.
- A significant portion of teacher and administrator comments centered on working harder to protect students from the perceived effects of recent education changes.

**Table 9.** To what extent have these legislative changes affected the:

Quality of teaching and learning in your classroom	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
Teacher Respondents (N=511)	15.1%	35.4%	48.1%	1.0%	0.4%

**Table 10.** To what extent have these legislative changes affected the:

Quality of teaching and learning in your school	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=629)	20.8%	44.8%	33.2%	0.6%	0.5%

**PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

“The legislation will cause parents and children to be worked up and when the numbers show that half our kids in 3rd grade have to be retained, then what? Where will the money come from for remediation? Where will the teachers come from for summer school? Where will the extra classroom come from when they have to be retained? No one has thought this through from start to finish.”

“The Read to Achieve is a good idea but some of the principals won't hold students back in kindergarten that don't know their letters or in first grade when they don't know how to read because “they'll just get held back in 3rd grade.” To me, this is setting them up for failure in third grade...Nobody in our county can even tell us how that is going to work and which teacher is going to do it.”

**Read to Achieve**

The Read to Achieve Program is intended to ensure that every student reads at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Students who do not reach this benchmark are remediated during the summer months following third grade or are retained in third grade.

**Findings:**

- 38% of all respondents indicated they believe the Read to Achieve Program will have a positive impact on our state's public schools. Of note, just 20% of elementary school teachers (those whose students are most impacted by the Read to Achieve Program) believe the program will have a beneficial impact on the state's education system.

**Table 11.** To what extent do you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in NC:

Implemented Read to Achieve Program, to ensure every student reads at or above grade level by the end of third grade or they are remediated or retained	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=630)	17.6%	24.4%	19.8%	32.9%	5.2%
Elementary School Teachers (N=167)	31.1%	32.9%	16.2%	18.6%	1.2%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"No class cap on sizes will dramatically change how I am able to teach the sciences. According to OSHA standards it is only safe to do labs with a class size of 24. It is unfortunate, but I am not willing to risk the safety of myself or other students to perform labs that can not be properly supervised. The size of classes will also decrease the amount of individual attention that students get."

"It is unfair that in the public schools children are in classes of 30- 40 children and still expect teachers to work miracles. I am sure they do great, but really who we are doing a disservice to is our own state. We cram children into classrooms and expect them to get a "quality education," and read by the time they get to 3rd grade, and then are shocked when so many don't make the cut. You can't have quality education with 28-30 kids in a class. Please take a walk in our shoes. The legislation will come at a price where teachers will walk out and leave - they already have."

"Because of cuts in money, our class sizes are crazy!!! Over 24 in 3rd grade."

## Class Size Caps

With the passage of NC Senate Bill 402, class size caps in NC were removed.

### Findings:

- Nearly 100% of respondents think that this legislative change will have a negative impact on the quality of education in NC

**Table 12.** To what extent do you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in NC:

Removed class size caps	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=635)	87.7%	9.8%	1.4%	0.6%	0.5%

**PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

"I will be leaving the state because I cannot live on the teaching salary in North Carolina."

"My husband and I are concerned about providing for our growing family... I contemplate a career change every single day. I am an awesome teacher. Kids love my class, but I feel my salary (or lack thereof) is disrespectful and does not reward my hard work."

"GOOD companies don't run their businesses this way. Google doesn't do this. GE doesn't do this. You know what they DO? They hire good people and they try to keep them--they give them a real salary and ask what their employees need to do their jobs effectively-resources, support, etc... You know what would make me a better teacher? \$10,000 a year extra so I wouldn't have to have 2-3 jobs."

"If I am going to be under appreciated, robbed of a reasonable salary, and scapegoated for low performance because the state does not want to look at the real problem, poverty, I will moving to another state to teach. I'm tired of being told if I leave my job or complain that I do not care about my students or that I should just be happy I have a job. Teachers deserve respect and professionalism from the state."

**Teacher Salaries**

In the past five years, educators in North Carolina have seen a single raise of 1.2%. In dollars, this means a first-year teacher who began working in 2009 for \$30,400 is making \$30,880 – an increase of \$480 in five years. According to the National Education Association (2013), over the past decade teacher salaries in North Carolina have seen the smallest change of all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

**Findings:**

- Nearly all 600+ respondents indicated that the failure to give teachers a raise in pay has a negative impact.

**Table 13.** To what extent do you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in NC:

Teacher salaries were not increased making this the 4th time in 5 years that teachers have received no raise in pay	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=634)	87.2%	12.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"I have never heard of another profession that is so devalued in society but remains the basis for which all other careers begin. Just as we are told that we have to believe in our students and let them know they are valued, the state and powers that be should do the same for teachers...I have to buy my own paper, ink, supplies for my classroom which is at least 1 paycheck per year. After I pay for copy paper out of my allotment, I have \$60 for classroom supplies for 20+ children for the whole school year. I will not let children go without, so I have to purchase things. This state should be ashamed. I moved here 20 years ago thinking it was the best place to be, now I know that anywhere else would be better."

"I now spend a lot less money on my classroom. I don't have it to give."

"I feel that the reduction in the rate of per pupil funding and the removal of the class cap and/or the increase of the amount of students per class will greatly affect the classroom negatively. Research has shown that students learn better in smaller group sizes and we are increasing the amount of students in the groups, not lowering it. We also need more funding for the supplies/textbooks that our students need."

"I will spend the money I need to get the job done and continue to do without at home as I have always done."

"We all find it strange that the quality of how teachers and students are treated by the state has decreased since the education lottery has become available in our state. What are they doing with the money? We all feel undervalued and betrayed by the very system that we have worked so hard to defend and preserve."

## Per Pupil Funding

Per pupil funding in North Carolina ranks near the bottom of all states. In fact, North Carolina spends less per pupil today than it did in 2008. Of note: North Carolina is one of a handful of states with a funding formula in which the majority of funds come from the state government. In most states, local governments pay the majority of education funding.

### Findings:

- Nearly all respondents indicated that they believe this reduction in funding would have a negative impact on the quality of public education.
- Many teacher comments addressed the need to tap into their personal funds to offset reductions in class material funding.

**Table 14.** To what extent do you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in NC:

Per pupil funding was reduced - North Carolina ranks among the bottom few states in per pupil funding	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=630)	86.8%	10.2%	2.2%	0.6%	0.5%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"Teacher morale is low at my high school. We had the highest turnover record since I've been here with 35 positions changing. The best teachers I know are leaving. I am leaving."

"These decisions are causing teachers to be extremely frustrated and taking away the passion that is necessary in our field. Morale is at an all time low. I am currently a 7th year teacher making year 1 pay. This will DIRECTLY affect students, communities and the well-being of our state as a whole."

"Morale is low, college students wanting to pursue education are discouraged."

"The legislative changes will create competitiveness among teachers further reducing morale. I feel in my heart that most educators are teaching because they love children and truly enjoy seeing them grow and learn. The decisions being made have made a career that in times past was respected and valued feel minuscule and worthless."

"Teachers in NC are discouraged...I feel like we are being sabotaged. We love our students and parents, and our profession. I would leave teaching at this point of my career because of legislative decisions. I would discourage up and coming teachers from teaching in this state. Sad thing is, I love being a teacher."

"Just as many of my colleagues are, I, too, am deflated by the condescension towards and lack of respect for teachers exhibited by lawmakers -- most of whom have visited public schools only for a photo op. Yet, they profess to know how to improve education."

## Morale of Teachers

In both the public and the private sector, employee morale is vital to the success of an organization. Educators were asked how recent NC legislative changes have affected the morale of teachers in their own schools.

### Findings:

- More than 97% of respondents indicated that the recent legislative changes have had a negative effect on teacher morale. Of those, nearly 85% think the changes have had a strong negative impact.

**Table 15.** To what extent have these legislative changes affected the:

Morale of teachers in your building	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=630)	84.4%	12.9%	1.4%	1.0%	0.3%

**PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

“Students are not receiving a well-rounded education with cuts to arts, foreign language, and support programs”

“Guidance counselor just resigned because of lack of support for counseling services in the county. Because of funding cuts, the head role for counselors is now split between 3 people at central office.”

“Budget cuts have increased class sizes and created a situation in which resources and support services are limited. It is more difficult to give the quality time to students that they need.”

“I do not think the impact of these changes has changed the quality of educational and support services offered in our building. However, the teachers are fed up! Eventually, all the good educators will leave North Carolina and will also leave the rest of us here in the building disgruntled and overwhelmed with the massive job we have to educate the leaders of tomorrow.”

“We need a full time nurse in every public school AND a full time Social Worker to adequately address the needs of our population.”

**Quality of Support Services**

While many see public education as comprised of classroom teachers and building level principals, most schools have many other professionals who support the academic, social, and emotional needs of our state’s students. The survey asked how recent legislative changes have impacted the quality of these services.

**Findings:**

- More than 60% of respondents indicated the quality of support services in their own schools have been negatively impacted by the legislative changes. This is in contrast to 1.6% of respondents who see the changes as having a positive impact.
- Multiple respondents highlighted the lack of support or supplemental services in their comments.

**Table 16.** To what extent have these legislative changes affected the:

Quality of Support Services (social work, counseling, etc.) offered in your school	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=626)	23.6%	36.9%	37.9%	1.3%	0.3%

**PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

“Current legislation is an indicator that the state is willing to pay people who have little training to do my job.”

“Teach for America is not a good program to invest in. College students looking for a job after graduation sign up with no background in education, get minimal training, and are placed in some of the most difficult teaching situations. Whereas, a program such as North Carolina Teaching Fellows provided four years of QUALITY preservice training for teachers in exchange for four years teaching in a North Carolina public school. Most teachers who graduate from the Teaching Fellows program continue to teach or work in education. It was a quality program and it’s a shame that it was cut.”

“I learned so much in my master’s program! If the economy was better Teach for America would have no applicants because all these kids do is apply for their resumes. In the meantime just try to find a good math or science teacher who wants to teach here.”

“Clearly, if the GA is funding Teach for America, they realize what a strong impact their changes are having on teacher retention. If teachers are leaving, something is wrong. We are unlike other professions and truly will stay for our students.”

“I’m tired of being bullied and threatened as poverty tourists from Teach for America come in to praise and with no training.”

**Teach for America**

Teach for America (TFA) is a program that provides recent college graduates with six weeks of intensive education training and places them in many of our nation’s most difficult classrooms to staff. This year, the NC legislature allocated \$6 million to expand TFA in North Carolina.

**Findings:**

- More than 60% of respondents indicated that they believe allocating state funds for Teach for America will have a negative impact on public education in the state.

**Table 17.** To what extent do you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in NC:

Teach for America, a program that recruits college graduates and trains them for six weeks was provided an additional \$6 million to place teachers in North Carolina schools	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=629)	38.3%	23.2%	27.2%	10.2%	1.1%

**PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

“These people have no understanding of what public education is or what teachers and administrators do for children. Poor and lower middle class children will be unable to afford private schools in North Carolina with the pittance disguised as a school voucher and will be stuck attending poorly funded public schools with no continuity in staff or programs.”

“We are not adequately preparing students for their future careers and this will continue without investing in education. Vouchers will decrease the quality of the schools, quality teachers will leave the state, and ultimately it will be the students who suffer.”

**Vouchers**

Included in the North Carolina 2013-2015 budget was \$10 million set aside for school vouchers, deemed “Opportunity Scholarships.” Qualifying families will receive \$4,200 annually to send their child to a private school of their choice. North Carolina teachers and administrators were asked about this use of public education dollars.

**Findings:**

- Nearly 87% of respondents indicated they think the voucher plan will have a negative impact on the state’s public schools.

**Table 18.** To what extent do you believe these changes will impact the quality of public education in NC:

The state will provide low-income families with \$4,200 vouchers to attend private school, with \$50 million to be allocated in 2015 alone	Strong Negative Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
All Respondents (N=635)	67.2%	19.7%	10.4%	2.2%	0.5%

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

"We've turned a 180 in the legislature towards public education. We used to serve as the national standard, being mentioned in presidential speeches; now we're the pun of late night jokes."

"At the rate that this state is going, it will have a massive teacher shortage within the next 3 years and as a result classroom sizes will be too large for there to be any real instruction to occur."

"I believe education is headed for segregation based on the financial ability to pay for private choices. I also believe with no regulations on charter schools, that instruction to meet the diversity of our students will be a thing of the past."

"Teachers are already poorly paid. Schools have little money. Funding private schools will only cripple public schools further. Increased class sizes will have a negative effect on student learning."

## Direction of Public Education in North Carolina

A frequently used research question to gauge public opinion regarding politics and the economy is known as "right track, wrong track." Teachers and administrators in North Carolina were asked if they believe the state's system of public education is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction.

### Findings:

- Over 96% of the educators who completed this survey indicated that they believe public education in North Carolina is headed in the wrong direction.

**Table 19.** In which direction do you believe public education in North Carolina is heading?

	The Right Direction	The Wrong Direction	Not Sure
All Respondents (N=631)	0.6%	96.4%	3%

## Methods

The purpose of this study was to gather opinion data from teachers and administrators on recent education policy passed by the NC legislature. This document offers findings from a quantitative survey of teachers and administrators in North Carolina. Participants completed the survey online. A link to this survey was sent to K-12 principals in multiple counties in southeastern North Carolina on November 12, 2013. The principals were invited to share this link with their school faculty members. In addition to our direct email to principals, individual participants who completed this survey posted the survey link on Facebook and Twitter. The survey was closed on November 28, 2013.

## Participants

- 700 teachers and administrators in 40 school systems in North Carolina participated in the survey. A total of 620 (88.6%) participants responded to every question on the survey. For each question reported, the number of respondents is also listed.
- 561 participants identified themselves as classroom teachers. The remaining participants identified as administrators, support personnel (i.e. counselor, social worker), or classroom assistants.
- Among all participants, 2.7% identified as working at the pre-K level, 37.0% elementary, 26.5% middle school, and 33.9% high school.
- 9.8% of respondents had between 1-3 years of experience, 46.6% between 4-14 years, and 43.6% more than 14 years of teaching/administrative experience.
- 187 participants indicated a willingness to participate in the follow-up interviews/focus groups related to this study.

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