

# NORTH CAROLINA'S COMPETITIVE EDGE

## THE CASE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

NC is ranked #1 for business, but 50<sup>th</sup> in education funding. We're falling significantly behind neighboring states.

North Carolina's economic success depends on a strong public education system and current levels are not keeping pace.

### LAST IN FUNDING

<b>#50</b>	According to Education Law Center (Making the Grade 2025), NC ranks last in the nation in funding effort, spending just 1.98% of GDP on K-12 education vs. the 3.10% national average. NC is <b>#50 in state and local education funding at \$12,193 per pupil</b> (Education Law Center, Making the Grade 2025).
<b>\$5,660</b>	NC is \$5660 below the national average per student. NC spends ~\$12,200 vs. ~\$17,800 nationally (ELC, 2025). Mississippi is 44 <sup>th</sup> at \$13,559, Virginia #37 at \$15,815, and South Carolina is #25 at \$17,698. (ELC, 2025)
<b>0%</b>	Where the corporate tax is headed to 0% by 2030 (down from 6.9% in 2010). Each 1% reduction in the corporate tax rate is estimated to reduce state revenue by roughly \$1B (NC Budget & Tax Center, 2026).

### THE TEACHER PIPELINE IS BREAKING

STATE	STARTING SALARY	PER PUPIL SPEND	\$ BEHIND NC	GDP/CAPITA
<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>\$41,000</b>	<b>\$12,193</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$58,639</b>
South Carolina	<b>\$47,000</b>	<b>\$17,698</b>	<b>+\$5,505</b>	<b>\$48,684</b>
Virginia	<b>~ \$46,250</b>	<b>\$15,815</b>	<b>+\$3,622</b>	<b>\$68,417</b>
Mississippi	<b>\$41,500</b>	<b>\$13,559</b>	<b>+\$1,366</b>	<b>\$40,619</b>
<b>National Average</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$17,853</b>	<b>+\$5,660</b>	<b>—</b>

**NC has among the lowest starting salaries in the South.** Salaries **freeze for a full decade** (years 15–24), top out at \$55,950, and offer no retiree medical benefit for teachers hired after 2021. NC has been thousands of teachers short for years. Meanwhile, enrollment in NC's colleges of education has dropped from 14,000 to 8,000, producing roughly 1,500 fewer teachers annually. (WRAL, 2025)

### THE WORKFORCE CONSEQUENCE

<b>328K</b> open jobs in NC (6.1% rate vs. 4.8% national)	<b>2/3</b> of NC jobs require postsecondary education	<b>69%</b> of students enter the workforce without a credential
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**The pipeline is broken.** Two-thirds of NC jobs need training beyond high school, but 69% of students never earn a degree or credential. On the 2024 NAEP, just 31% of NC 8th graders scored proficient in math, and reading scores fell to 27%, below the national average. NC needs 277,000 more credentialed workers by 2030 to meet statewide workforce goals, and we're not on track.

NC Commerce/BLS 2024; myFutureNC 2025; NAEP, The Nation's Report Card 2024.

### PROOF THAT TARGETED INVESTMENT WORKS

<b>Mississippi</b> , despite having one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, rejected a voucher expansion, invested in a \$5,000 teacher pay raise, and spends \$1,366 more per pupil than NC. The result? The highest NAEP score <b>gains</b> in the nation in reading and math between 2013 and 2024.
<b>Meanwhile in NC:</b> \$731M moved to private school vouchers (42% of recipients earn \$110K+; 87% of first time recipients of voucher money were never in public school the year that the income cap was removed).

**Your next hire is in a public school classroom right now.**