

# SHOW US THE MONEY

Funding schools fairly and adequately



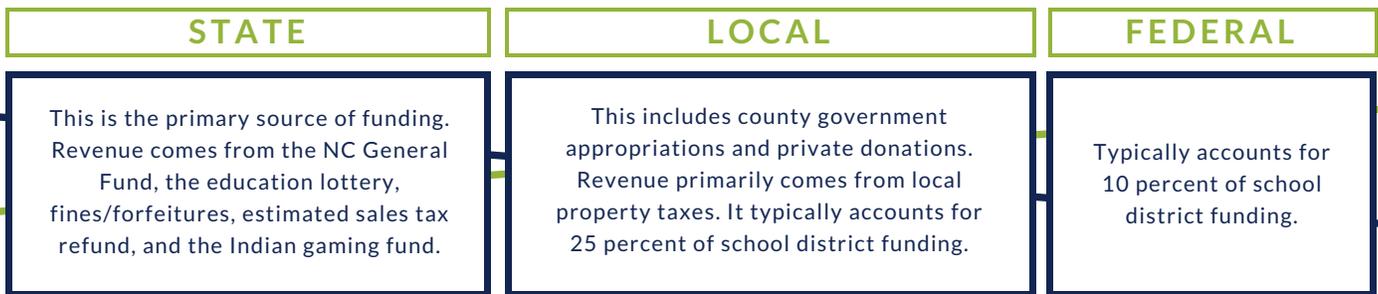
By Samone Oates-Bullock

While money alone is not enough to solve the issues of adequacy and equity in education, it still plays a critical role in moving the needle. Today, there remain huge gaps in public school funding between North Carolina's wealthiest and most vulnerable counties. As a result, children attending schools in wealthier counties often have access to better facilities and instructional materials, more experienced teachers, and a variety of other critical resources. Addressing funding disparities would be another big step in improving educational outcomes for all of North Carolina's students.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT SCHOOL FUNDING IN NORTH CAROLINA

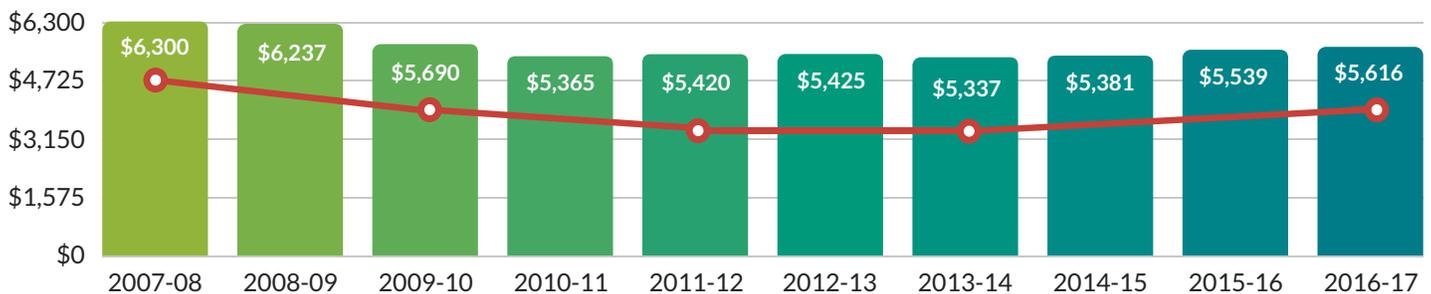
### Where do North Carolina schools get their funding?

Public schools in North Carolina receive funding from three sources:



### There has been a drastic drop in North Carolina's per pupil funding.

Inflation adjusted per pupil General Fund appropriations for North Carolina public schools



Source: [The truth about NC education spending](#)

### North Carolina lags behind the national average for K-12 funding

	STATE	LOCAL	FEDERAL	TOTAL PER PUPIL
NC (FY 2015)	\$5,579	\$2,310	\$1,085	\$8,974
NATIONAL (FY 2015)	\$6,238	\$5,910	\$1,099	\$13,246

Source: [Public Education Finances: 2015](#)

## POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

### ● Improve transparency and accountability in the current allotment system

North Carolina currently uses a [resource allocation model](#) under which the state allocates its aid using a variety of funding formulas. As is, the allotment system does little to address the disparities between larger and smaller districts. With property taxes being the driving force behind local school funding, it's easy to see how larger districts have the ability to raise more revenue in comparison to districts located in smaller, rural areas.

One option that's been discussed as a possible improvement to this system is something known as a "[weighted student funding model](#)." Under a weighted student model, districts would be provided with a base amount of funding for each student, with additional funds being provided to subgroups who need additional services, such as disabled students, English language learners, or low-income students. While some experts believe that the weighted student model could constitute a step forward, this would only be possible if law and policymakers: **a)** hold all district harmless by assuring that they receive no less funding than at present, **b)** maintain current position allotments for principals and assistant principals, classroom teachers, and instructional support personnel (i.e., nurses, librarians, counselors, etc.), and **c)** guarantee that every district has truly adequate funding to provide each student with the quality education to which they are entitled.

### ● Increase teacher pay and develop a career ladder program

Teachers have dedicated their lives to ensuring that children from all walks of life receive an excellent education, and for that they deserve quality compensation. North Carolina's average teacher salary was **\$49,837** for the 2016-17 school year, approximately **\$9,000** less than the national average of **\$58,950**<sup>1</sup>. Boosting teacher salaries is critical in recruiting and retaining our best and brightest teachers.

Not only should North Carolina invest more in teachers' base salaries as a whole, but it should also strive to create growth within the profession. Career ladder programs work by providing opportunities for greater responsibility and different types of roles for teachers, in exchange for additional pay. Career ladders are a promising way to increase mentorship, invest in teacher development, and improve teacher retention. Examples of responsibilities could include: co-teaching or modeling lessons for other teachers, participating in writing curriculum, or leading a mentorship program for new teachers.

In 2012, Charlotte-Mecklenburg County introduced [Project L.I.F.T](#) (Leadership and Investment for Transformation).

In January 2015, the district announced plans to scale the initiative—adding 17 schools implementing the new models in 2015.

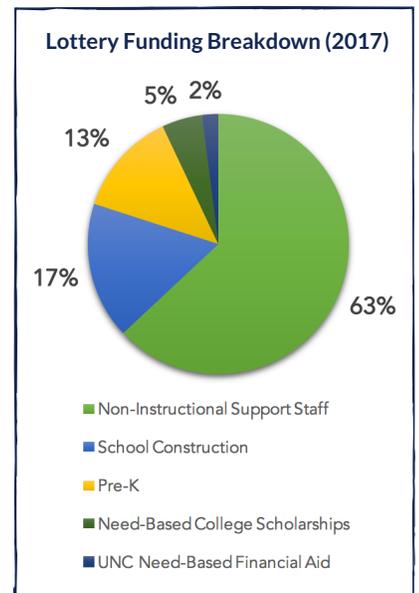
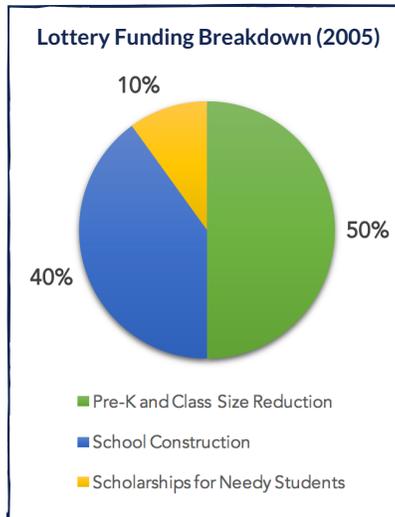
The program has resulted in an **85% retention** of top-performing teachers, and **92% percent** attendance rate in every L.I.F.T school.

● **Restore lottery funding to its original purpose**

The NC Education Lottery was signed into law in 2005 and called for at least **35 percent** of the proceeds to benefit North Carolina’s school children. Educational funds were originally designated for Pre-K for at-risk 4-year-olds, class size reduction, school construction, and college scholarships for low-income students. Over time, the amount of lottery funding designated for educational purposes has fluctuated and decreased.

In Fiscal Year 2016, only **26.5 percent** of net lottery revenue went toward education funding, down from **35 percent** in 2006.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the shifts in the way educational

funds are being distributed suggest that lottery funds are being used to replace other education funds, instead of supplementing money that is already there. Many observers believe the lottery is causing more harm than good by placing a burdensome tax on low-income communities without providing any additional educational benefits. North Carolina should, at a minimum, restore lottery funding to its original purpose and use it as a vehicle to boost state spending on education.



1. [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2017\\_Rankings\\_and\\_Estimates\\_Report-FINAL-SECURED.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2017_Rankings_and_Estimates_Report-FINAL-SECURED.pdf)
2. [https://www.ncleg.net/PED/Reports/documents/Lottery/Lottery\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ncleg.net/PED/Reports/documents/Lottery/Lottery_Report.pdf)

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