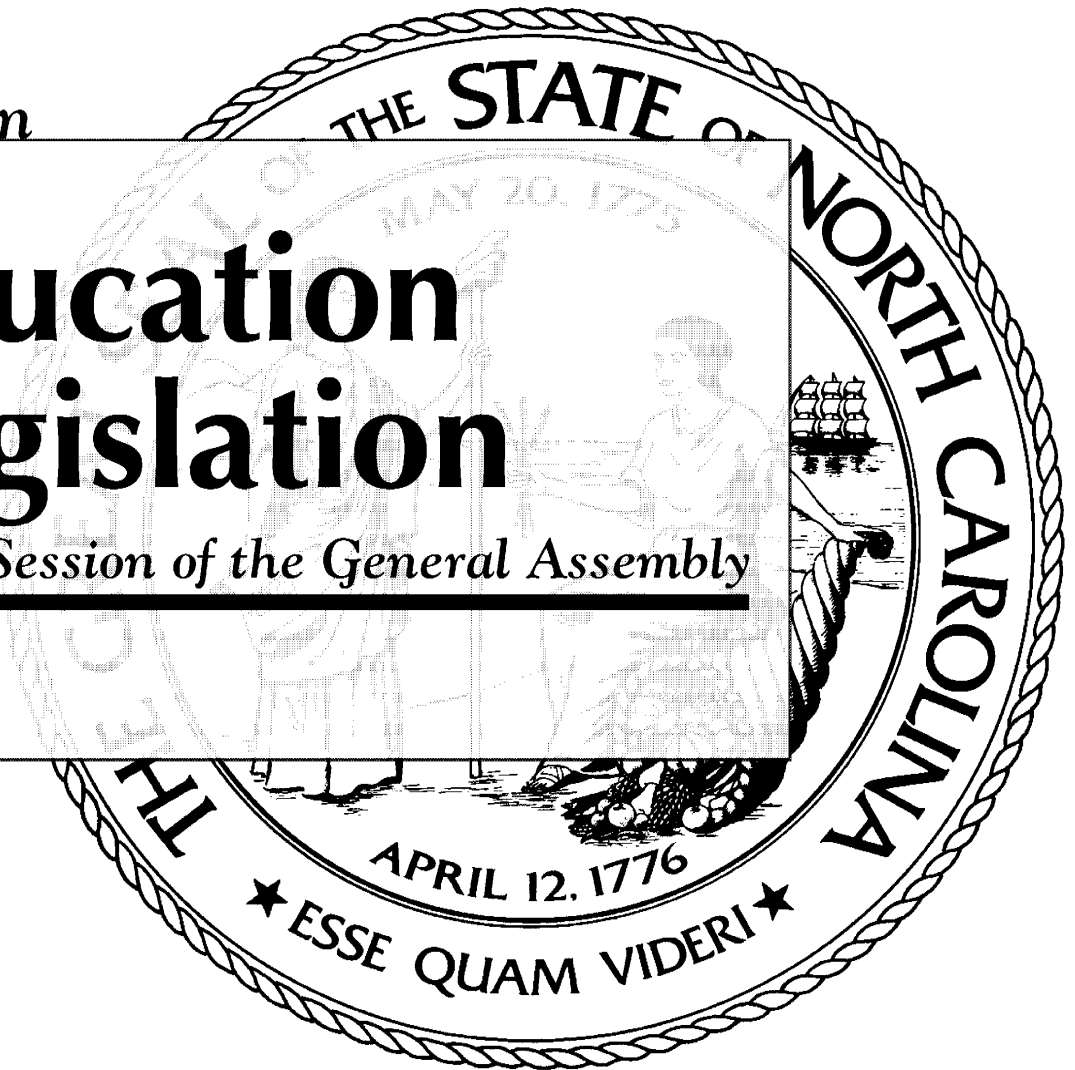


Report on

Education Legislation

2007 Session of the General Assembly



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Introduction

The 2007 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly convened on January 24, 2007, and adjourned on August 2, 2007. The House of Representatives elected Joe Hackney (D-Orange) as Speaker to replace Mecklenburg Democrat Jim Black who resigned prior to the beginning of the session amid mounting legal difficulties. Governor Easley appointed Tricia Cotham, an educator, to complete Black's term. The General Assembly lost one of its most endeared members Senator Jeanne Hopkins Lucas (D- Durham). A true friend of education, she became the first African American woman to serve as State Senator in the North Carolina General Assembly and the first African American elected as the Senate Majority Whip.

Major issues discussed this session included Medicaid relief for counties, sunset of both the quarter-cent sales tax and the tax on the state's highest income earners, a real estate transfer tax, stem cell research, the environment, and ethics reform. The Appropriations Act of 2007 dominated lawmakers' attention with public education receiving \$7.7 billion of the \$20.4 billion 2007-2008 funding. Prior to reaching a final budget compromise, legislators received Executive Order 120 issued by Governor Easley instructing the State Budget Office to fund the Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Fund, provide resources for class size reduction, and fund additional at-risk four-year olds through *More at Four*.

The 2007 public education budget provides an average 5% salary increase for teachers, an average 4.44% salary increase for school-based administrators, and 4% salary increase for central office personnel and non-certified personnel. Teachers paid on Step 0 will receive an additional \$250 one-time bonus at the end of the school year. School-based administrators at the top of their respective pay schedules will receive a one-time lump sum bonus of 2%. The legislature provided additional funding to bring all teacher assistants up to Pay Grade 56.

Lawmakers expanded funding to support 100 additional literacy coaches in schools with an eighth grade, Learn and Earn, Learn and Earn Online, and school connectivity. A \$7 million grant program for dropout prevention will provide school districts, schools, local agencies or nonprofit organizations the opportunity to implement innovative programs and initiatives aimed at reducing the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate. Funds for an education reform pilot, a school technology pilot, and critical foreign language pilots will address key issues identified by legislators similar to funds provided for regional military family counselors to assist families with deployment and relocation issues.

Several noteworthy policy changes include the following:

- SB 1086 – By August 1, 2008, local boards of education shall adopt, implement, and enforce a written policy prohibiting at all times the use of any tobacco product by any person in school buildings, in school facilities, on school campuses, and any other school property owned or operated by the local school administrative unit. This policy also applies to persons attending any offsite school-sponsored event.
- HB 150 – Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, students must reach the age of five on or before August 31 to enroll in public schools.
- HB 956 – Teachers retiring after October 1, 2007, must meet the following criteria to return to full time work after six months separation at full pay: 1) have 30 years of

service or, 2) be 60 years old with 25 years of creditable service or, 3) be 65 years old with 5 years of creditable service. The law will expire on October 1, 2009.

- HB 183 - Effective December 1, 2007, it is unlawful to use a mobile telephone or additional technology while operating a public or private school bus, public activity bus, or while transporting students for hire in any vehicle. Exceptions are provided for phone usage in a stationary bus or when communicating in an emergency situation. Violation shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor with a minimum \$100.00 fine, and violators will not be assessed drivers license points or insurance surcharge.
- SB 914 – Teachers may accumulate personal leave without any applicable maximum until June 30 of each year and carry forward up to five days personal leave. The remainder of personal leave shall be converted to sick leave on June 30. Upon retirement a teacher may convert accumulated personal leave to sick leave for service towards retirement. A teacher shall not take personal leave on the first day the teacher is required to report for the school year, on a required teacher workday, on days scheduled for State testing, or on the day before or after a holiday or scheduled vacation day, unless the request is approved by the principal. On all other days, if the request is made at least five days in advance, the request shall automatically be granted subject to the availability of a substitute teacher. Personal leave is earned by classroom teachers and school media specialists who require a substitute.

This *2007 Report on Education Legislation* includes legislation summaries and, in the appendix, the full text of all legislation affecting public schools from the 2007 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly. For additional information on the actions of the General Assembly, please visit the Department of Public Instruction webpage (www.ncpublicschools.org) or contact the State Board of Education Legislative Office, Education Building, 301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2825.

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About this Publication

Material included in the 2007 Report on Education Legislation was compiled by Rita L. Joyner, Legislative Liaison, State Board of Education, with assistance from Loretta Peace-Bunch, Executive Assistant. It was produced and printed by the Division of Communications and Information, Department of Public Instruction.

