

Dear Superintendents,

Yesterday's actions in the NC House take our public school budgets further toward the bottom of the nation, and put our schools and districts in jeopardy of not having the resources and people in place to educate students properly. Our staff are working on summaries of the amendments to give you more information, but there are a few key points that we hope you will consider as you discuss the impact of this year's budget on your schools and services to students.

The focus of some in the popular news media and other circles is on the number of jobs that may be lost and on whether or not these will be "real lay-offs" or losses through attrition. This is, in our view, the wrong perspective unless school districts' primary function is to be an employment agency. We believe, and we are sure you agree, that the primary function of schools is to educate students. In that light, the conversation needs to focus on whether or not you will be able to meet your students' educational needs. If you have to lose positions - even through retirements and attrition - you may wind up unable to meet the needs of your students with what is left.

Remember that today, in this current fiscal year, we are funded at the same level as we were four years ago. Public schools received less from the state's General Fund in 2009-10 than in 2006-07, even though approximately 30,000 more students are enrolled. That's why you see bigger classes, fewer course offerings, less resources and other impacts right now. We question how long this trend can go on before our students begin to suffer in very significant ways.

The positions that are currently allotted to local school districts have been established over time to provide a basic structure for your schools. Losing this basic structure hurts our ability to serve students in fundamental ways. We hope that you can describe these losses so that your community understands what is at stake.

Please thoughtfully consider how you frame the conversation in your community. As much as we would like to save individuals' jobs, our greatest concern is having public schools that educate students up to standards for the 21st century. That is the long-term challenge that will be important long after we make it through this recession and into a period of time when additional resources may be possible.

Regards,

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