



NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Rep. Tim Moore
Speaker of the House

Sen. Phil Berger
President Pro Tempore

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday – February 8, 2018

Contact: [Shelly Carver](#) (Berger)
[Joseph Kyzer](#) (Moore)

Lawmakers Announce Plan to Phase In Smaller K-3 Class Sizes, Fund Special Subject Area Teachers, End Pre-K Waiting List

Raleigh, N.C. – Republican state lawmakers on Thursday unveiled an aggressive effort to improve student outcomes in the early grades by phasing in smaller class sizes and lower student-to-teacher ratios in kindergarten through third grade classrooms, providing millions of additional state dollars to fund special subject area teachers and eliminating the state's Pre-K waiting list. The co-chairs of the House and Senate education committees worked closely with school superintendents, while listening to parents and teachers, to develop a plan that doubles down on the legislature's years-long effort to improve academic outcomes for students by the end of third grade.

For years, Republican lawmakers have supported smaller class sizes in core academic subjects in the early grades – since [research](#) has shown this leads to improved academic outcomes for students – and have already given schools about \$222 million in additional tax dollars toward that purpose. Laws to reduce class sizes have been on the books for years and were slated to go into full effect next school year, but some local school administrators flagged what they said could be unintended consequences – including that they could no longer spend state dollars intended to reduce class sizes on enhancement teachers in non-core subject areas like art, music, drama and P.E.

The plan addresses those concerns by phasing in implementation of class size reductions over the next four school years – with no changes to the status quo in the first year – giving school administrators ample time to plan and take the necessary steps to meet those requirements. Under the proposal, school systems across the state will continue to receive about \$70 million each year to cover the expense of hiring additional K-3 teachers needed to meet the class size requirements. But schools will only be required to gradually lower their student-to-teacher ratios until the 2021-2022 school year, as follows:

	FY 2017-18		FY 2018-19		FY 2019-20		FY 2020-21		FY 2021-22	
	Teacher Allotment	Class Size Avg.								
K	1:18	1:20	1:18	1:20	1:18	1:19	1:18	1:18	1:18	1:18
1	1:16	1:20	1:16	1:20	1:16	1:19	1:16	1:18	1:16	1:16
2	1:17	1:20	1:17	1:20	1:17	1:19	1:17	1:18	1:17	1:17
3	1:17	1:20	1:17	1:20	1:17	1:19	1:17	1:18	1:17	1:17

The plan also fulfills lawmakers’ earlier promise to reinstate a dedicated funding stream for enhancement teachers that was eliminated by former state Sen. Roy Cooper and former Gov. Jim Hunt in the 1990s. It will immediately set aside more than \$60 million to be used for the 2018-19 school year, and will increase that amount each year based on what data shows is actually required to meet students’ needs. Based on current calculations and needs outlined in data provided by local school systems, schools across the state will receive nearly \$250 million in additional recurring state dollars to fund special subject area teachers by the 2021-2022 school year.

The bill will also eliminate the state’s Pre-K waiting list, adding close to 3,000 slots for low-income children to the program.

The proposal is supported by the N.C. Association of School Administrators.

“From parents to educators to lawmakers to [Gov. Cooper](#), nearly everyone agrees that lowering class sizes is an important priority that will have a real positive impact on academic outcomes for our students,” said Sen. Chad Barefoot (R-Wake.) **“After months of work reviewing the data and hearing from stakeholders, I believe we’ve arrived at a data-driven solution that will achieve the smaller classes that we all support and that taxpayers have paid for, with a timeline and framework that our local schools should be able to implement successfully.”**

“Lower class sizes are an important part of North Carolina’s innovative education reforms that provided teacher pay raises, hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funding and education options for low-income students,” said Rep. Craig Horn (R-Union.) **“These are the priorities of parents and families – improving performance and offering high-quality learning environments that create the best opportunity for student success.”**

“Our youngest students will benefit from smaller class sizes and Pre-K programs that we know lead to better outcomes, and our school districts will benefit from dedicated enhancement teacher funding and a longer implementation timeline,” said N.C. Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson. **“My hope is that we can now shelve the partisan wedges and put the focus back where it needs to be: on making sure every student can read proficiently by the end of third grade.”**

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