

DPI and SBE Provide Budget Priorities To Joint Legislative Education Committee

By Adam Pridemore for NCASA

The [Joint House and Senate Appropriations Committee on Education](#) met this week to hear from education state agencies on their top priorities for the 2016-2017 budget. The Committee heard from the State Board of Education and Department of Public (DPI) on Tuesday morning before hearing presentations from the [University of North Carolina system](#), the [North Carolina Community College system](#), and [North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities](#) on Wednesday morning

Tuesday morning's meeting began with Chairman of the State Board of Education, Bill Cobey, outlining the [Board's strategic plan](#), as well [Board's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model](#). Cobey concluded his presentation to the Committee with the [Board's budget priorities](#) for the upcoming year. Highlights of the Boards budget requests include:

- \$29.5 million for professional development and retention and recruitment
- \$61.8 million for more Teacher Assistants
- \$33.7 million for more Assistant Principals
- \$34.8 million for more instructional support personnel
- \$46.9 million for instructional supplies
- \$84.6 million for school building tech support
- \$48 million for textbooks/digital materials
- \$110 million for students with special needs

Following Cobey's presentation he fielded questions from members of the Committee. Some members, led by Sen. Chad Barefoot (R-Wake), took the opportunity to ask Cobey about the K-3 class size ratio issue, and specifically where funds appropriated to reduce K-3 class size may have been used within the districts. After expressing his support for [House Bill 13](#), legislation granting flexibility on the average and individual class sizes permitted under the statute establishing maximum class sizes for kindergarten through third grade, Cobey deferred these questions to Chief Financial Officer at DPT, Philip Price. Price emphasized to the Committee that the money is going to classroom teachers within the flexibility allowable under law. When pressed further by Sen. Barefoot on whether DPI or the Board had issued any guidance to school districts allowing funds earmarked for K-3 class size reduction to be transferred to other purposes, Price reiterated that DPI and Board regulations mirror the flexibility granted in the law.

Next, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mark Johnson, addressed the Committee, providing members with his background as a teacher at West Charlotte High School before serving on the Winston-Salem/Forsyth Board of Education. Johnson emphasized his goal of connecting K-12 education with the digital age of business, noting talent acquisition has been a theme in his discussions with business leaders across the state. Johnson promised the Committee he will be bringing innovative strategies to connect K-12 to community colleges in

order to get students in to in demand careers, and also expressed his excitement for technology in the classroom as a way to lessen burdens on teachers and as a way to address the achievement gap.

The Committee will continue meeting next week and is expected to begin to hear from the legislators on the committee on their top budget priorities as the Senate begins to craft their 2017 budget.