

Superintendent June Atkinson's Response To N.C. Senate Budget Proposal

By Administrator

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RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - Following the North Carolina Senate's release of its proposed General Fund operating budget for Fiscal Year 2014-15, Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson issued the following statement.

----- The Senate budget presented today would provide teachers with a pay increase (average of 11 percent) that is long overdue. This is vital for North Carolina to be competitive with other states that increasingly recruit North Carolina teachers with higher pay and better support. But this increase comes at a significant cost.

Teachers who accept the new pay structure will forfeit their due process rights, sometimes called tenure or career status.

At the same time, School Building Administration salary schedules have been separated from the teacher salary schedules and have no change from the 2013-14 schedules. Personnel on these schedules would be treated in the same manner as proposed by the Governor (a step increase, average of 2 percent).

All other school level and central office employees will receive a \$500 annual raise (compared to the state employee raises of \$809).

Apart from pay, this budget continues to undercut support for teachers and for learning.

In this budget, teacher assistant positions will be cut in half. Textbook funding, at less than \$15 per child, will stay at that ineffective level. No improvements are in sight for instructional supplies or technology funding. State funding for local school district central offices – the funds that go to ensure local teachers and principals are paid and have the resources they need – will be cut by 5 percent.

The school transportation general fund appropriation has been reduced by \$28.6 million, and those funds have been replaced by the highway fund receipts that supported driver training. This adjustment will require either the elimination of driver training or a significant reduction to school bus operations, or both. The Department of Public Instruction is slated for a 30 percent cut. Grades 2 and 3 teacher allotments will remain at 1 teacher per 18 students rather than be reduced to 1:17 as funded last year.

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These cuts will eliminate essential services for teachers and schools and leave teachers with more duties and less support. At elementary schools, the loss of teacher assistants means less time for teachers to teach and more time on bathroom duty, lunch duty and bus duty, not to mention the loss of an extra instructional assistant in the classroom.

The dismal state of textbook, technology and instructional supplies funding means that teachers will have fewer resources to work with as they develop lessons and assignments. More teachers will reach into their own pockets for classroom supplies. There will be less professional development, less support to help them understand what they are supposed to be teaching, less help with innovative ideas, fewer services for schools that are low performing, and fewer people to seek and secure grants and other opportunities for school improvements.

Teachers need raises to keep them in classrooms, but we should not burden them with more responsibilities that are now done by NCDPI and other local support personnel. We cannot continue to ask students to do without textbooks and instructional supplies.

North Carolina deserves better than this. We can improve teacher pay and strengthen important support for our teachers, students and schools. The key to teacher recruitment and retention is pay plus working conditions. Student success requires both.