



February 9, 2018

Greetings! I hope the New Year is finding you well.

The General Assembly continues their path with special sessions and interim committees, which is part of the normal process. These special sessions are continuations of work that was left undone during the long session last year. Typically, this work would not have been completed till May of 2018 when the short session convenes. When the General Assembly returns for the scheduled short session, they will make amendments to the budget, and finish work left undone from 2017. Whether these special sessions shorten the work of the short session is yet to be seen. Issues for consideration during the special sessions are very limited. The only major education issue on the table is the class size situation. The short session in May will provide an opportunity to take up other issues that are important to your organization.

Meeting of Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee met in January to discuss the following topics:

1. North Carolina Virtual Charter Schools
2. North Carolina teacher licensure program and process
3. Advanced curriculum high school programs

North Carolina Virtual Charter Schools

Mr. Joel Medley, Director of the North Carolina Virtual Academy (NCVA), addressed the committee and shared some positive results from a NCVA family satisfaction survey as well as parent testimonials. In addition, he reviewed Teacher Satisfaction survey results and presented an overview of NCVA student demographics. His presentation included the NCVA's plan for renewal of its charter as well as projections of student academic success moving forward. Members of the committee were interested in strategies to improve student performance and also were interested in the teacher pay plan for teachers employed by NCVA. Since NCVA teachers work from home and contract their services, the pay is lower than that of traditional teachers. However, incentive pay is available

North Carolina teacher licensure program and process

Deputy State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin addressed the committee on behalf of NCDPI regarding changes to teacher licensure, the timeline of the licensing process, and about the 2017 program audit. She began by offering lawmakers an overview of the teacher licensure process and how in-state, out of state, and lateral entry applicants are processed. There was concern from members about turnaround time to receive the license and some lawmakers were interested in background checks and assurances that all applicants were properly screened. In addition, Martin shared that there were problems within the current system and that miscommunication and misunderstanding by employees in the licensure department could impact the licensure process. These



problems slowed the turnaround time for issuance of teacher licenses and Dr. Martin acknowledged that the program's online interface was not user friendly.

Steve LaFemina of the New Teacher Project, a non-profit that conducted the audit, shared findings regarding applicant frustration with the online process. Dr. Pitre-Martin noted that the goals of the agency are to streamline the process and have a more efficient licensure program in the future.

Below is a recent article from the Raleigh News and Observer regarding the teacher licensure process in North Carolina.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article193764289.html>

Advanced curriculum high school programs

Sneha Shah-Coltrane, Director of the Division of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education at NCDPI, addressed the committee with an update on recent changes designed to broaden participation in advanced course offerings. Lawmakers have worked to increase student access to advanced courses of study through funding of the AP and IB programs and waiving exam fees for students. School districts have been given access to the NC AP Partnership with the College Board. A results report card is sent to schools and bonus pay is offered to teachers to reward student success. Overall, there has been a 15 percent increase in student enrollment in advanced courses. Data regarding subgroups shows minority participation in advanced programs is on the rise.

Shah-Coltrane reviewed the IB (International Baccalaureate) program and acknowledged an increase in participation in it. In addition, she noted that online advanced program offerings allowed students in underserved areas to have access to advanced courses.

Lawmakers asked questions regarding funding, overall student success rates, minority access, minority participation, and minority success rates.

Education Funding Formula Task Force, January 31st

The Joint Funding Formula Task Force continued their work in January by hearing from a number of superintendents around the state. The superintendents each verbalized many of the issues they currently face with funding. Common themes were issues with flexibility with dollars from the state and caps on allotments such as child nutrition implemented by the state. The committee has no immediate plans to make any recommendations since they realize this is a long term goal. They continue to focus on understanding the current funding model. I would not expect any recommendations any time soon.

Class Size Update:

We have been working very closely with members of the General Assembly to resolve the class size situation before superintendents have to make hiring decisions in April. Our lobbyist has secured verbal intentions of legislators to resolve the issue by late February or March. Our position is to keep districts whole and not lose any teaching positions. Legislators have communicated to me that this is their intention as well. We will keep you posted and send out communication as soon as this arrangement is finalized by legislators to resolve this issue.



Communicating With Legislators:

Your communication and interaction with legislators is key to our success in Raleigh. I encourage you to remember a few simple rules that will help our organization be successful:

1. Always be courteous when contacting legislators regardless of how you feel about the person or their politics. They are people just like us, and like us, they will respond better to respectful phone calls and emails. Remember, they can make or break our success in the current moment.
2. Face to face communication is best. If you are having an event, invite them. Be sure to recognize them and their office if they attend. If you do not know who your legislator is, you can look at www.ncleg.net and find them. There is a tool on that website that helps you find your legislator by the county in which you live. The website also has all of their contact information.
3. Phone Calls are the next best way to communicate with legislators. Again, their contact information is found on www.ncleg.net.

Emails are effective, but not as personal. Legislators are often good about returning emails. It really depends on the number of emails a legislator receives daily and how engaged their staff is with checking them. If you are inviting them to an event, do not just rely on the email; call as well.