
Highlights of Public School Education in North Carolina

- 1776** First State Constitution adopted establishing the public school system.
- 1825** Literary Fund established by General Assembly to subsidize schools.
- 1835** State Constitution revised.
- 1839** First common school law enacted, establishing the principle of combined state and local funds for school support, and providing for the election of superintendents in each county to establish districts and appoint committees.
- 1840** First North Carolina public school established in Rockingham
- 1852** Office of Superintendent of Common Schools created.
Calvin H. Wiley first to occupy position.
- 1868** New State Constitution adopted, authorizing the Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction to replace the earlier abolished Office of Superintendent of Common Schools, and creating a State Board of Education.
- 1869** General Assembly added general school tax, a prescribed four-month school term, and education of blacks.
- 1901** Governor Charles B. Aycock's influence increased the number of local tax districts, abolished 300 school districts by consolidation, and reorganized the old Literary Fund as a revolving loan fund for building schoolhouses.
- 1901-03** First direct state appropriation by the General Assembly of tax funds in support of public education.
- 1907** General Assembly authorized establishment of rural high schools
- 1913** Local bond issues for school construction authorized.
First Compulsory Attendance Law passed.
- 1914** Money for support of vocational education in public schools including agriculture, trade, home economics, and teacher education, provided by Smith-Lever Act.
- 1917** Responsibility of certification of all teachers given to central State Board of Examiners. Smith-Hughes Act expanded vocational education.
- 1919-20** State-supported school term extended to six months.
- 1931** School Machinery Act passed.
- 1933-34** State-supported school term extended to eight months.
- 1935-36** State textbook rental plan established.
- 1937-38** Free textbooks provided for grades one through seven.
- 1941** Teachers and state employees retirement system established.

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- 1942** Constitutional amendment provided for State Board of Education appointed by the Governor.
Twelfth grade added.
- 1943** State-supported school term extended to nine months.
School lunch program created.
- 1946–47** Compulsory attendance age extended from 14 to 16.
- 1947** General Assembly authorized State Board of Education to use public funds for special education programs.
- 1949** First state bond funds for public school construction.
State Board of Education establishes self-insurance program for school buildings.
- 1953** \$50 million statewide bond issue for school construction passed.
- 1954** U.S. Supreme Court ruled against separation of races in public schools in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*.
- 1955** Pearsall Plan presented to General Assembly, resulting in transfer from State Board of Education to county and city boards, complete authority over enrollment, assignment of children in public schools, and buses.
- 1963** Governor's School, a summer program for gifted students, founded.
\$100 million bond issue for school construction passed.
- 1964** National Civil Rights Act passed; discrimination in public education prohibited; Pearsall Plan declared unconstitutional
First state-funded experimental program, the Comprehensive School Improvement program (CSIP), implemented. Advancement School for students with learning difficulties established.
Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC) created to provide research in education.
- 1967** General Assembly funded textbooks in all high schools.
- 1968** Report of Gov. Dan Moore's Study Commission on the Public School System of North Carolina.
- 1971** North Carolina Constitution revision removes Superintendent of Public Instruction from membership on State Board of Education and makes him chief executive officer of the Board.
Legislation established State Department of Public Education, consisting of Department of Public Instruction, Office of the Controller, and Department of Community Colleges.
- 1973** \$300 million bond issue for school construction passed.
General Assembly provided funds for 10-month term for teachers, 12 months for principals.
Statewide experimental kindergarten approved by General Assembly.
- 1975** Primary Reading Program initiated.

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- 1976–77** Full-day kindergarten made available to all children in the state.
- 1977** Statewide Testing Program, consisting of Annual Testing and Competency Testing Programs, established.
Chapter 927 of the Session Laws of 1977 (Creech Bill) established a multifaceted, comprehensive program of special education based on federal requirements included in Public Law 94-142.
- 1979** Non-public school responsibility removed from State Board of Education.
- 1980** North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics admitted its first students.
- 1984** North Carolina Commission on Education for Economic Growth issued report and recommendations that influenced reform efforts.
Legislature adopts pilot project to lengthen school day and school year. Project later dropped because of community opposition.
- 1985** Basic Education Program enacted by General Assembly for implementation.
North Carolina Career Development Program started.
End-of-Course Testing Program began.
- 1986** Statewide promotion program implemented.
State funded summer school program initiated in grades three, six, and eight.
- 1989** School Improvement and Accountability Act approved by General Assembly, giving local school systems more flexibility and autonomy and making them more accountable for student achievement.
North Carolina's first year-round school opens in Wake County.
- 1991** Outcome-Based Education pilot program launched in nine North Carolina counties. Program dropped after three years.
Low-Wealth and Small School funds established.
- 1992** School Improvement and Accountability Act is revised. The new Performance-Based Accountability Program pushes decision-making to the school building site and requires parents and teachers to be involved in school improvement planning.
- 1993** The State's new end-of-grade testing program begins in grades three through eight. These tests include multiple-choice and open-ended test questions.
- 1995** General Assembly approves revisions to powers and duties of State Superintendent and requires the State Board of Education to develop a plan to reorganize public education.
- 1996** Legislation approved for the ABCs of Public Education.
- 1996** Charter schools legislation approved.
- 1997** Excellent Schools Act approved.
- 1999** Student Achievement and Promotion Accountability Standards approved by State Board of Education.