

North Carolina Association of Educators

Discretionary and “Other” Budget Cuts Don’t Support Real Education Reform



In a recent Gallop poll (September 2012), 43 percent of public school parents cite the lack of funding as the single biggest challenge facing K-12 education. NCAE agrees with this finding and will endeavor, through legislation in 2013, to fully eliminate “ALL” discretionary cuts imposed on local school districts, thereby alleviating additional staff loss, along with other vital educational resources. When discretionary cuts were first imposed in 2009-10, local school districts were mandated to return \$225 million, increasing to \$293 million in 2010-11, and growing to an all-time high of \$428 million this past school year (2011-12). Although Local Education Agencies (LEAs) received federal stimulus dollars, which offset some discretionary cuts, it did not save all educators from job cuts, nor prevent positions from elimination or being left unfilled through attrition. Almost 24,000 jobs have been lost; the vast majorities through attrition, but nearly a third were RIFs. All stimulus funds have ceased; therefore, the \$360 million in discretionary cuts required for return to the state by LEAs this year (2012-13) will mean additional cuts in staffing as critical educational resources continue a fourth year of downward spiraling.

“Other” additional budget cuts to K-12 education will only exacerbate the problems of overcrowded classroom and fewer staff to educate and provide critical services to students. The drastic cuts in funding for textbooks, transportation (including fewer buses), along with eliminating state instructional supply funds and critical services needed to support academic growth will be hindered. Discretionary cuts have also caused many local school districts to reduce or eliminate course offerings, especially foreign languages, advanced placement and many electives that enhance student achievement.

Other budget cuts eliminate mentor and staff development to do not only more, but be more accountable implementing the new common CORE standards for student achievement and success. Additionally, teachers will now be evaluated more rigorously through a new system designed and developed by the State Department of Public Instruction. NCAE and its members support accountability and higher standards of professional accountability and growth, but with funding cuts to mentoring and staff development opportunities, both will diminish. Research has proven how vital mentoring is to the success of new teachers, while staff development provides much needed assistance for improvements and professional growth and learning for all teachers. Quality teaching and life-long

learning is the goal of every educator. Therefore, during the 2013 session, NCAE will fight to restore mentor funding, instructional supplies, textbooks and staff development.

If true education reform and progress is to be made in North Carolina's public schools, restoration of all funding, along with the elimination of all discretionary cuts, must be the goal and our new reality. Real reform cannot be made without resources. Our teachers and other educational staff cannot continue to do more with less. Our children, our future demands we do more! NCAE will again work to make gains in K-12 educational funding that supports student learning, provides the resources of a quality staff (teachers and other educational personnel), so North Carolina can become the world class public education system we want for all of our children.