Cabarrus County Board of Education

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Constitution of the State of North Carolina, the General Assembly of North Carolina shall provide for a general and uniform system of free public schools wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students; and

WHEREAS, the General Statutes of the State of North Carolina give local boards of education powers of supervision and control of local school systems; and

WHEREAS, the Cabarrus County Board of Education believes it is imperative that the General Assembly of North Carolina address and remedy several significant policy concerns during the 2015-2016 legislative session;

NOW THEREFORE, the Cabarrus County Board of Education hereby adopts the following as its priorities and respectfully requests that the General Assembly of North Carolina take action on the items listed below during the 2015-2016 legislative session:

1. A-F Grading of Schools

The 2014 School Performance Grades are determined upon a split of 80% performance/20% growth and a 15-point scale. The scale is scheduled to become a more restrictive 10-point scale in 2015.

The Cabarrus County Board of Education believes that the current grading formula does not accurately reflect the learning in many of its schools, as set forth in the Board’s previously adopted Resolution Regarding the State’s Proposal to Assign Letter Grades to Each Public School dated October 31, 2014.

The current grading scale will lead to decreased economic activity, including home sales, in many communities.

The State should revamp the current grading system for schools to accurately reflect what is occurring in schools across the state. Several factors that should be considered in rewriting the grading structure are (1) a 50-50 split between performance and growth and (2) making permanent the 15-point grading scale being used in 2014.

2. Reduce Testing and Assessing

While it is important to know how much students have learned and identify areas of remediation, too much instructional time is being diverted to test and assess our students.

The State should conduct a complete overhaul of the current system of testing and assessing of students with a goal of maximizing instructional time, deriving the necessary information, and minimizing stress on students and teachers.
3. Sales Tax Refund/Exemption

From 1998 until 2005, local boards of education were able to provide additional educational opportunities with savings from a sales tax refund.

Currently, cities, counties, public universities, charter schools, private schools, and other entities receive a sales tax refund or are exempt from paying sales tax.

If some governmental and educational entities are entitled to receive a sales tax refund or exemption, then the State should also grant local boards of education a sales tax refund or exemption.

4. School Calendar

Students need an instructional calendar that optimizes retention, minimizes disruption, and allows concepts and ideas to be fully developed and absorbed.

The world is rapidly changing, and our students are being negatively impacted by already low seat time and summer learning loss as compared to students from other industrialized nations.

The Cabarrus County Board of Education is greatly concerned that North Carolina’s school calendar law is educationally unsound and places unnecessary burdens on school districts.

The Cabarrus County Board of Education requests that the General Assembly revisit and revise the current school calendar law to permit local calendar control.

5. School Technology – Fines and Forfeitures

North Carolina’s Constitution requires the clear proceeds of all civil penalties, fines, and forfeitures collected by State agencies to be distributed to the public schools.

In August 2008, a court found that the State has consistently failed to fulfill this constitutional obligation and owes public schools $747 million in school technology funding.

Cabarrus County Schools is entitled to approximately $15,687,000 of these funds.

An arrangement for settling the full debt has still not been established. The Cabarrus County Board of Education supports the North Carolina School Boards Association’s commitment to work with the General Assembly to find an incremental debt repayment method that allows for a fiscally responsible fulfillment of the State’s obligations.
6. **Teacher Assistant Funding**

   The role of a teacher assistant has greatly transformed in recent years, with increased education requirements, and has become an essential component of student learning in the early years.

   With increased focus on early grades and more attention to reading by the third grade, the assistance these individuals provide to classroom teachers has become an invaluable part of accomplishing these goals.

   The State must increase funding for teacher assistants and allocate teacher assistants by position ratios in K-3 in the same manner as classroom teachers. School districts should retain the flexibility to spend the money as they see fit.

7. **Teacher Pay**

   Although we commend the General Assembly for the meaningful pay increases to certain groups of teachers in 2014-15, all teachers should be at least at the level they would have been had they moved up the pay schedule since the freeze in 2008.

   North Carolina's teacher pay has continually slid in comparison with the region and country.

   The Cabarrus County Board of Education firmly believes that our teachers are above national average, and thus should be paid above national average as well.

   The new pay scale creates five-year plateaus that are a great disincentive for teachers to be attracted to and retained in the profession. Master's and Advanced Degree and National Board Certification supplements are of utmost importance and the State should continually fund these supplements.

ADOPTED this the 9th day of February 2015.

Barry Shoemaker  
Board Chair

Dr. Barry C. Shepherd  
Superintendent

Cabarrus County Board of Education  
Cabarrus County Schools