

Governor-Elect Perdue
Transition Advisory Group Sessions
Session Summary 7

Education

November 25, 2008

Session Arranged by the
Governor-Elect Perdue Transition Team

Session Facilitated by the
Small Business and Technology
Development Center (SBTDC)

Report Prepared by the
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government

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Education

SECTION 1. **Executive Summary**

Representatives from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Community Colleges, and the University of North Carolina identified a myriad of challenges facing their systems both individually and collectively as they strive to educate the citizens of North Carolina.

Session participants then discussed several of these challenges, which were organized into seven broad areas. The participants identified issues and proposed possible means for addressing them in each of the following areas:

- Education cabinet: leadership and structure of education-related activities
- Address the role and needs of early childhood (0–5 years) education
- Address retention of students throughout their education experience (K–20)
- Identify ways to address school infrastructure
- Make the education system more responsive to the economic needs of the state
- Identify and implement best practices and financial innovation
- Hire, retain, and develop the best teachers and administrators

SECTION 2. **Process Used in Session**

The session began with three presentations by J.B. Buxton, deputy state superintendent of public instruction; Dr. R. Scott Ralls, president, North Carolina Community Colleges; and Dr. Alan Mabe, vice president for academic planning and university–school programs, University of North Carolina. The presentations addressed the current administration’s efforts in P–12, community college, and public university education, respectively, including issues, opportunities, and challenges. Electronic copies (or links to electronic copies) of the handouts distributed with each of the presentations are included in the electronic supplementary material. A question-and-answer period followed the presentations.

During the lunch break, the three facilitators, two School of Government staff members, and the transition team member assigned to this session identified seven broad topics for expanded discussion in the afternoon based on pressing issues identified in the presentations and the subsequent question-and-answer period. During the afternoon session, the participants worked in small groups to identify issues relating to each broad topic, with each group spending approximately ten minutes on each of the seven broad topics. In some cases, the participants offered proposed solutions. There was no consensus as to the relevant issues or solutions; rather, this was a brainstorming exercise in which all ideas were captured, even if an idea generated disagreement among the participants or was of interest to only one person. All of this work was recorded on flip charts. A transcription of the flip charts is included in the electronic supplementary material.

In order to prioritize the identified issues, the participants “voted” for the issues of greatest importance. Participants recorded their votes by placing adhesive dots on the flip charts by the issues they determined to be most important. Participants then worked in small groups to discuss the issue(s) that received the most votes in each area and proposed potential means to address the issue(s).

Finally, participants were invited to submit index cards and worksheets identifying other issues of importance to them. A copy of those submissions is included in the electronic supplementary material.

The facilitator agenda and details about the process devised and used by facilitators from the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) are included in electronic Appendix 1.

SECTION 3. Participant list

SBTDC facilitators: Marc King, Jim Howell, and Scott Rockafellow

UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government reporters: Kelley O’Brien and Kara Millonzi

UNC-Chapel Hill MPA student note taker: Carrie Cook

Perdue Transition Team representative: Caroline Howe

Attendees:

Margaret Arbuckle	John Atkins	Myra Best
Mathais Bishop	Daniel Briggs	Kennon Briggs
Hunter Buxton	Nancy Caggia	Jimmy Clark
Herb Crenshaw	Cynthia Daniels-Hall	Stephanie Fanjul
Angela Farthing	Gene Galin	Josepa Garcia
Rebecca Garland	Chris Greene	Susan Harrison
Bill Ingram	Kendal Jordan	Laura Killion
Janie Koxlowski	Van Langston	Julie Lapham
Marvin Lucas	Belinda Madujibeya	Caroline McCullen
Elizabeth McDuffie	Bill McNeal	JoAnn Norris
Khaki Parks	Titus Pollard	Scott Ralls
Karl Rectanus	Brenda Rogers	Ellen Russell
Valerie Schild	Linda Suggs	Stuart Wallace
Theresa Watson	Phillis West	Sarah West
Rochelle Williams	Saundra Williams	Hope Williams
Leanne Winner		

SECTION 4. Significant Issues, Opportunities, and Challenges Identified in Morning Sessions about Current Administration Efforts

The following provides a brief summary of the presentations made by J.B. Buxton, deputy state superintendent of public instruction; Dr. R. Scott Ralls, president, North Carolina Community Colleges; and Dr. Alan Mabe, vice president for academic planning and university–school programs, University of North Carolina.

Buxton identified the following challenges for P–12 education in North Carolina (listed without priority):

1. **Ensuring quality teachers and school leaders**—What happens in the classroom and what happens in the school are the crux of what happens in public education. There need to be strategies to place new teachers in classrooms across the state, not just in one geographic region, and to provide continuous professional development to teachers once they are in the classrooms. Alternative and innovative programs should be employed to prepare lateral-entry teachers and school administrators. (The State Board of Education has developed a policy for alternative principal preparation programs.)
2. **Assisting struggling schools and districts**—It remains difficult to assist these schools; NC DPI will need to rely on partnerships in order to support these schools.
3. **Increasing high school graduation rates and career and college readiness**—Rather than focusing on preventing students from dropping out, NC DPI is focusing on increasing the number of students who graduate.
4. **Overhauling standards, testing and accountability**—Schools need to move to performance- and outcome-based measures.
5. **School construction needs**—President-Elect Obama has noted this as a priority in a potential national stimulus package; North Carolina needs to be prepared to capitalize on any federal funding opportunities.
6. **Leading with innovations in technology**—Today’s classrooms are not cutting edge. School connectivity needs to be increased; one-to-one technology programs are one strategy to meet this need. Students need to have access to online courses.
7. **Creating Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and school-to-workforce pipeline**—Success in this area is linked to the quality of early childhood education students receive at ages 0–5. The preparation of infants and toddlers needs to be addressed.

Ralls identified the following challenges for community colleges in North Carolina (listed without priority):

1. **Addressing the problems associated with increased enrollment**—Enrollment in community colleges is counter-cyclical. Due to the current economic climate, the state’s community college system has experienced a 5 percent growth during the past year. Much higher growth is anticipated over the next couple of years. This rate of growth presents a challenge to community colleges at their current funding levels.
2. **Expanding programs in health care fields**—Community colleges likely can have the greatest impact in health care fields—training nurses and other allied health professionals and technicians. The average cost of training a health care professional is 50 percent greater than the amount of per student funding the community colleges receive. To compensate, programs in other areas need to be reduced or eliminated.
3. **Keeping technical education programs current with local industry needs**—There has been a net loss of community college programs in transportation, engineering, industrial, and construction areas. These areas are actually vital to supporting current and future industries in the state. Community colleges need to keep curricula and labs up to date. Community colleges also need to develop programs and collaborate with elementary

and secondary schools to encourage more males to attend colleges. This is particularly important because the technical programs are very gender-concentrated.

4. **Proactively developing and expanding programs**—Community colleges need to be responsive to the current workforce needs as well as proactive in anticipating future needs. Two areas in which programs need to be further developed and expanded are biotechnology and aviation technology.
5. **Focusing on program completion**—Community college statistics often are cited in terms of number of students enrolled. There is a need to develop accurate measures of graduation rates and to use these measures to evaluate programs.
6. **Preparing students for community colleges**—Many students who enroll in community colleges are not properly prepared. Fifty percent of students are placed in high school level classes; these students are much less likely to complete their programs of study. Math skills are of particular concern. Many students are “math-phobic.” For example, of the university transfer students, only about one-third take any math courses.
7. **Dealing with future workforce shortages**—Over the next five to ten years, the state is likely to experience a severe workforce shortage based on the current demographics. Community colleges need to be proactive in identifying and supporting more low-income students in order to encourage them to enter and complete college programs.
8. **Promoting seamless education**—There is a need to work with elementary and secondary schools to deal with dropouts on the front end instead of on the back end.
9. **Recruiting and retaining quality teachers**—Community college salaries are currently 79 percent of the national average. The state will not be able to sustain a high quality community college system unless it addresses this salary disparity.
10. **Funding infrastructure**—Current funding levels for technology support replacement of equipment and systems are about once every ten years. This schedule does not allow community colleges to keep up with current changes in industry technology, which negatively impacts workforce training.

Mabe identified the following challenges for the University System in North Carolina (listed without priority):

1. **Closing the gap of teacher needs in North Carolina**—The University needs to collaborate with K–12 and community colleges to produce more teachers and to better prepare the teachers for classroom instruction.
2. **Serving every region of North Carolina equally**—The University needs to be more engaged with all the regions of the state to identify and address unique needs. There needs to be more collaboration with K–12 and community colleges.
3. **Closing the gap of nursing needs in North Carolina**—The University is adding more programs to train nursing instructors to support community college programs. It currently has degree programs fully online.
4. **Addressing increased capacity demands**—Within the next ten years there will be a demand on the University System for about 80,000 additional students. The University needs to balance the need to keep colleges affordable and the need to provide a high quality education.

5. **Increasing online capacity**—Increasing courses and programs offered online will help with capacity issues, but the university must ensure the quality of these programs.
6. **Improving retention and graduation rates**—This is a problem at all levels of public education in the state. There needs to be more coordination and an increased focus at the transition points. The state should strive to be at or above the national average in the number of bachelor's degrees earned. There is a large pool of people who have started but not finished a degree program; these individuals should be enticed back to school. The state also needs to study the problem of the increasing rate of males not going to college.
7. **Addressing allied health areas**—In addition to nursing, there is a need to address dental and medical shortages across the state. The university is expanding medical and pharmacy schools to address this need.
8. **Striving to have seamless movement of students through the system (P-20)**—The three systems must work together to develop ways to track and share data. There also must be a new approach to how higher education is provided in order to reach people where they live. Examples include developing university centers on community college campuses and supporting other online learning initiatives.

SECTION 5. Key Issues and Solutions/Recommendations

Discussion in the afternoon focused on seven substantive areas of concern, with participants identifying and prioritizing issues and challenges within each area and suggesting potential means to address them. The following lists the seven areas of concern then summarizes the key issues and challenges identified by the participants, as well as related sub-issues, and the suggested means to address them. It then notes additional issues raised by the participants but not discussed in detail. This is not a comprehensive list of the topics raised by the participants; rather, it is a snapshot of the major points of discussion relating to each area. For a complete transcript of the participants' written responses to identifying the issues and potential solutions within each of the seven areas of concern, see the electronic supplementary material.

Area of Concern No. 1: Education Cabinet: Leadership and Structure of Education-Related Activities

Key Issue(s)

1. The roles and responsibilities of the North Carolina Education Cabinet and the superintendent of public instruction need to be clarified.
 - The North Carolina Education Cabinet does not meet and has not been implemented as intended.¹

1. The Cabinet was created by the General Assembly (G.S. 116C-1) in 1992 to ensure cooperation among all entities of the state's education system. The Cabinet includes the governor, who serves as the chair, the superintendent of public instruction, the chair of the State Board of Education, the president of the University of North Carolina, the president of the North Carolina Community College System, and the president of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

- The role of North Carolina’s elected superintendent of public instruction is unclear because of the bifurcated system of governance for K–12 education.

Recommendations

- The governor-elect should abide by the law and use the Education Cabinet as intended/laid out in the statute.
- The General Assembly should restore the duties/responsibilities to the state superintendent of public instruction.
- The state should employ the same system for selecting the state superintendent of public instruction as is used for selecting the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. In this model, the State Board of Education would select the state superintendent or the commissioner of education.

In addition to the key issue(s), participants identified a number of additional issues and challenges that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were (1) whether or not there should be an elected state superintendent of public instruction, (2) the need to embrace the “seamless” education concept, and (3) the need for North Carolina Education Cabinet members to have relevant experience.

Area of Concern No. 2: Address the Role and Needs of Early Childhood (0–5 Years) Education

Key Issue(s)

1. There are not sufficient funds to provide childcare subsidies to all North Carolina families who need them.
 - Parents are unable to work because they cannot secure a childcare subsidy.
 - The state does not provide adequate funding for a childcare subsidy.
 - Childcare providers cannot support high quality services at the current subsidy rate.
2. Components of early childhood programs are not continued in public school (K–12); by the third grade, gains that have been made as a result of early childhood programs have been lost.
 - Schools should ease students’ transition into kindergarten and between subsequent elementary grades (first grade to second grade, second grade to third grade, etc.).
 - Elementary schools need to be ready to accommodate young children.
3. North Carolina’s early childhood program does not serve all children; it needs to be expanded to serve all children.
 - Children need to be ready for kindergarten.
 - Families need to be ready to support their children’s education.
 - Communities need to be ready to support children’s educational success.

Recommendations

- Include a childcare subsidy in an economic stimulus package. This would take away one barrier for parents seeking employment, keep providers in business, and protect children.
- Increase the amount of money available for the childcare subsidy and reduce restrictions on the subsidy, allowing parents in school and families in crisis to access the subsidy.
- Provide additional support to help retain an educated, experienced workforce within the childcare profession. Pay childcare workers 100 percent of the market rate (determined at the county level).
- Provide developmentally appropriate pre-kindergarten and elementary curricula that are valued by all staff.
- Provide outreach and parenting education to parents; train teachers in parent outreach and cultural competence.
- Link preschools, childcare, and Head Start to elementary schools.
- Ensure quality pre-kindergarten education for all children (including infants and toddlers).
- Screen all children for developmental needs.
- Provide health insurance to all children (conduct a health assessment in kindergarten) and provide health services to families.
- Ensure appropriate physical accommodations for young children, including outdoor environments.
- Provide children with comprehensive health, mental health, and social services through the schools.
- Ensure enlightened, supportive leadership at the school level.
- Access and expand work already being done by the North Carolina Ready Schools Initiative.²
- Establish mechanisms to support families' economic security (for example, connections to needed services; assistance in receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit, or housing supports).
- Encourage community decision making to support children.
- Create a system of care.

In addition to the key issue(s), participants identified a number of additional issues and challenges that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were (1) lack of clear expected outcomes for childcare programs, (2) lack of accountability for early childhood education, and (3) lack of a permanent funding strategy for early childhood education.

2. More information on the Ready Schools Initiative can be found at www.ncreadyschools.org/.

Area of Concern No. 3: Address Retention of Students Throughout Their Education Experience (Kindergarten through Post-Secondary)

Key Issue(s)

1. The use of suspension and/or expulsions is not standardized across school districts.
 - Schools are not making the connection between suspensions and the dropout rate.
2. Teachers (P–20) need preparation in how to facilitate student retention and re-entry.
 - Schools are contributing to the prison pipeline.
3. The current high school model is obsolete.
 - Schools do not always provide knowledge that feels relevant to students.

Recommendations

- Create standardized suspension policies in school districts; ensure that students from various demographics are not held to different standards or subjected to different punishments.
- Train teachers, staff, and administrators in the cultural and health needs of the student population that they serve.
- Encourage schools to collaborate with parents and students in the creation and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Personalized Education Plans (PEPs).
- Ensure that schools use IEPs and PEPs to reduce the chances that students will become frustrated and eventual discipline problems.
- Increase the use of “Positive Behavior Support” statewide so that students will see what good behavior looks like.³
- Find ways for schools to continue to educate suspended or expelled students (for example, alternative programs or in-school suspensions).
- Ensure that school resource officers (SROs) focus on prevention and intervention before turning students over to police and the juvenile justice system.
- Conduct a deep analysis of the data so that teachers understand how they compare to other schools and districts.
- Increase the use of the virtual school, particularly for the over-aged and under-credited.
- Encourage teachers and schools to develop and adopt teaching models that accommodate the real-world needs of students.
- Ensure that more students are graduating with the credentials they need to go on to higher education, but not at the expense of vocational education and career training. It is important for students to have exposure to vocational training.

3. According to NC DPI, “Positive Behavioral Support Programs are a way to impact the learning environments in the schools in order to support high student performance and to reduce behavioral problems.” See www.ncpublicschools.org/positivebehavior/.

In addition to the key issue(s), participants identified a number of additional issues and challenges that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were: (1) students need to be fully prepared for success, (2) challenges and needs should be addressed before students complete the academic year, (3) the quality of instructors needs improvement, (4) the school day “time box,” (5) benefits and pay are not equal for retired teachers, and (6) parents lack the skills to assist their children.

Area of Concern No. 4: Identify Ways to Address School Infrastructure

Key Issue(s)

1. Classrooms and schools need technology and an internal infrastructure to take advantage of bandwidth and digital solutions.
 - There is not an infrastructure through which digital solutions can be delivered.
 - There are not enough opportunities for professional development in technology.
 - There is not sufficient technology support to manage a technology infrastructure or technology coaches to support the use of applications.
 - There needs to be an investment in research and development for technology planning.

Recommendations

- Use network collaborative via North Carolina Research and Education Network (NC REN) to deliver best-of-breed training on technology implementation to Local Education Agencies (LEAs).⁴
- Develop a human infrastructure that supports technology integration in schools and in LEAs.
- Replicate the Mebane Masters Program.⁵
- Integrate technology into instructional design of preparation programs.
- Provide professional development for practicing educators.
- Invest in the Learning Object Repository, a project of North Carolina Community Colleges.
- Leverage the federal e-rate reimbursement to establish a school connectivity fund.
- Encourage public/private technology innovation funds, in which the private sector or the state provides matching funds to create a sustained funding stream for multiple innovations.
- Pool the purchasing power between LEAs for applications/hardware, etc.

4. More information on the NC REN program can be found at www.ncren.net/.

5. The Mebane Masters Program, a partnership between Davie County Schools and Appalachian State University’s College of Education, helps teachers better use technology to help students learn. More information can be found at www2.journalnow.com/content/2008/apr/05/mebane-program-proposed-help-davie-teachers-school/.

- Explore leasing options for technology.
- Restore the State School Technology Fund.⁶

In addition to the key issue(s), participants identified a number of additional issues and challenges that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were (1) the need to share resources across LEAs, (2) a lack of space for pre-kindergarten classrooms in public schools and a lack of adequate facilities to meet More at Four standards, and (3) a lack of accessibility for disabled or special needs students and staff.

Area of Concern No. 5: Make the Education System More Responsive to the Economic Needs of the State

Key Issue(s)

1. There is currently a disconnect among K–12 curricula and business workforce development needs in the state.
 - Public school students do not have the skills and competencies demanded of the current workforce.
 - There is a need to support community decisions about K–12 standards as they relate and link to the global competitiveness of the state.
 - There is a need to recruit and retain good teachers, particularly teachers who focus on skills and competencies related to science, technology, engineering, and math.
2. There is a need for more collaboration among businesses and industries in any given region of the state as they compete for limited resources.
 - Businesses and industries need better advocates in the public school system.

Recommendations

- Use the “UNC Tomorrow” report as a model for a report on K–12 career readiness.
- Reconceptualize the role of public schools with respect to meeting the economic needs of the state—develop a pyramid with the twenty-first century workforce in the middle and K–12, community colleges, and public universities at each of the points of the pyramid.
- Host community forums to facilitate discussions among policy leaders, educators, and business leaders.
- Link K–12 teachers with university or corporate researchers in an effort to create partnerships that will help translate research into practice.
- Develop a central communication site that links workforce needs with education.
- Identify areas that will benefit the state as a whole, such as K–12 Internet connectivity.
- Identify ways to provide incentives to businesses to collaborate with one another rather than compete for limited resources.
- Perform a needs analysis of workforce skills and competencies across the state.
- Review current policies for relevancy to workforce development.

6. The statute establishing the fund can be found at www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/pdf/bysection/chapter_115c/gs_115c-102.6d.pdf.

In addition to the key issues and challenges, participants identified a number of additional issues that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were (1) a need to provide training for a “blue collar” workforce, (2) a lack of quality math and science instruction in elementary schools, (3) a need to link industries and businesses to students through internships and other collaborative programs, and (4) a need to tailor curricula to the needs of each community.

Area of Concern No. 6: Identifying and Implementing Best Practices and Financial Innovation

Key Issue(s)

1. There appears to be a lack of both good data to identify best practices and innovations in P–12 education and a lack of communication within and among local school administrative units about educational practices and local innovations.

Recommendations

- Establish a center (or centralized clearinghouse) that collects and analyzes data on national and local education practices and innovations, develops an evidence-based rubric for selecting standards of excellence, and communicates the standards to local school administrative units.
- Create incentives for educators and local school administrative units to use the center—both to submit data and participate in research studies and to implement the recommended best practices and innovations.
- Make the prevention of school violence one focus of the center, using the Center for the Prevention of School Violence in Washington State as a model.
- Create incentives for community college and university faculty to conduct research aimed at identifying best practices and innovations in K–12 education, and develop a method to translate the academic research into actual practices.

In addition to the key issues and challenges, participants identified a number of additional issues that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were (1) educators need additional time for professional development and training on best practices, (2) there needs to be statewide access to technology tools such as Blackboard, (3) the state needs to provide support to local school administrative units in implementing best practices, and (4) state and local education leaders and leaders of the business community need to collaborate to identify local needs and develop localized training programs.

Area of Concern No. 7: Hire, Retain, and Develop the Best Teachers and Administrators

Key Issue(s)

1. The pool of qualified applicants for both teacher and administrator positions is too shallow.
 - There is not adequate interest in teaching careers among high school graduates.
 - There is a lack of respect for teaching in our culture.

- Good teachers are not being retained, in part because student teaching and other early mentoring programs are not adequate to prepare teachers.
- Professional challenges and opportunities for classroom teachers' development are not adequate.
- The school environment is not conducive to retaining good teachers and administrators.
- The best teachers are not being tapped for administrator positions or are not seeking administrator positions because the salaries are too low.

Recommendations

- Expand the teacher cadet program.⁷
- Adopt a more competitive salary schedule for both teachers and administrators.
- Foster the development of quality teachers.
- Provide state support for national board certification for administrators and adopt a commensurate salary schedule.
- Restructure assistant principal positions to allow for part-time teaching.
- Provide a mentoring program for new administrators.
- Expand internship programs for students training to be teachers.
- Improve school facilities and provide teachers with appropriate equipment and supplies.
- Promote teaching as a career at all levels of education.
- Recognize individual talents and capitalize on those talents in a way that provides professional development and advancement for teachers, aside from becoming administrators.
- Increase the school year to 200 or more days.

In addition to the key issues and challenges, participants identified a number of additional issues that were not discussed in detail. Among the issues were (1) a need to recruit additional math, science, and special education teachers, (2) a need to create an expectation that principals take the lead instructional role in schools and do not just manage order, (3) a need to encourage teachers to treat position as a professional position, and (4) a need to create clear expectations for new teachers and make appropriate assignments.

Electronic Supplementary Material

- Appendix 1: Facilitator agenda provided by the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC)
- Agency transition reports and other documents provided for session

7. For a description of the teacher cadet program, see www.ncteachercadet.org/.