

# North Carolina Voucher Funding Increases Nearly Outpace K-12 Funding Increases for 2024-25

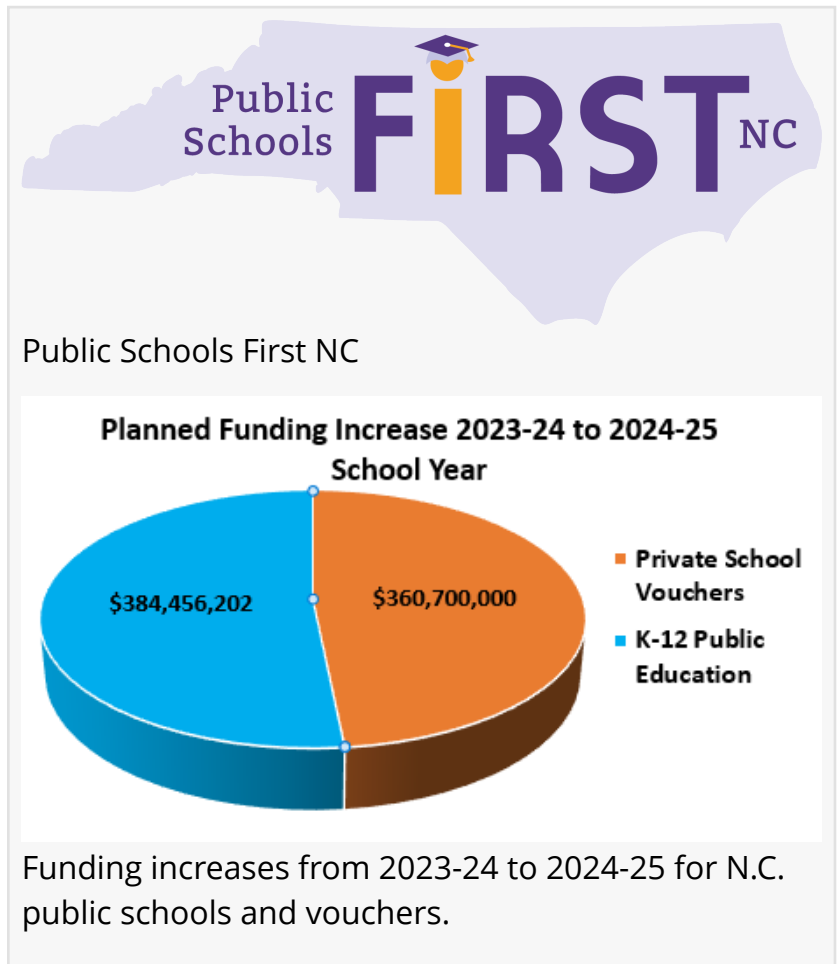
*The funding increases proposed for North Carolina public schools compared to voucher increases highlight lack of commitment to public school students.*

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, June 18, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- North Carolina's fiscal year begins on July 1, but anticipated budget adjustments as the result of this year's legislative short session haven't yet materialized.

If the new fiscal year begins without budget adjustments, the [2024-25 budget](#) will go into effect as set out in the two-year Appropriations Act of 2023. Funding for K-12 public schools—which served more than [1.5 million students](#) in 2022-23—will increase by \$384.4 million. That's a 3% increase over the 2023-24 budget.

In sharp contrast, North Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship voucher program—which served [32,547 students](#) in 2023-24—will get \$112.7 million more in 2024-25. That's a 62% increase from the current year. If the funding increase in HB 823 (1) (passed by the Senate in May) is included in the budget, vouchers will see an additional \$248 million in 2024-25 bringing the total increase from 2023-24 to \$360.7 million. That's a whopping 199% increase.

The amount of additional funding going to a program that serves a very small proportion of the overall student population in North Carolina is striking given the chronic underfunding of public education in the state. In February, the North Carolina Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a 30-year-old school funding case—Leandro v. The State of North Carolina (2). Legislative leaders

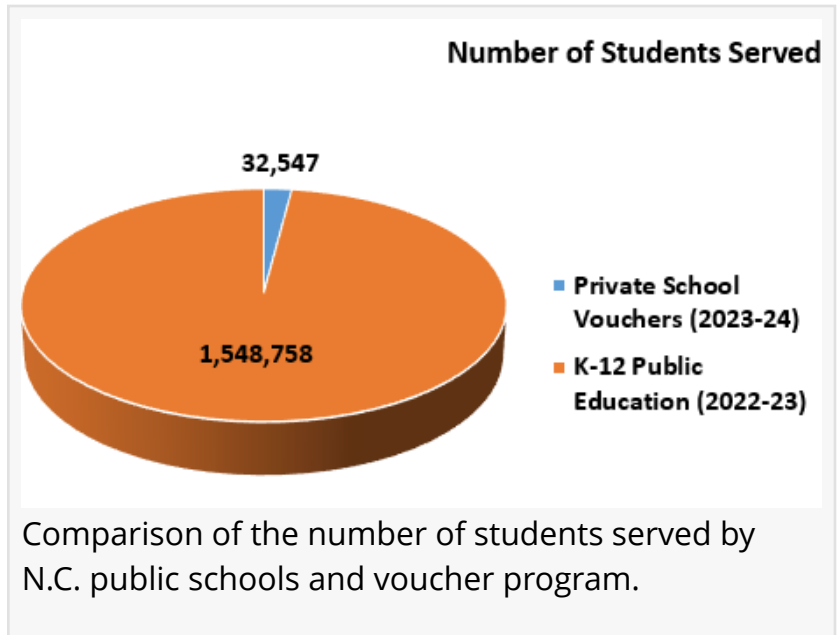


appealed a 2022 N.C. Supreme Court ruling that required public school funding increases in alignment with a comprehensive funding plan developed by the state. While legislative leaders are adamant in their resistance to public school funding increases, they are extremely generous with voucher funding increases.

Unless there are adjustments made, North Carolina's beginning teachers will see an increase of \$2,000 per year on the state salary schedule, bringing their starting rate up to \$41,000/year, a 5.13% increase. But even at \$41,000, North Carolina's beginning teachers will still have a lower minimum state salary rate than all other southern region states (3).

Teachers with seven or more years of experience will see state base salary increases ranging from 1.54% to 1.99%. Although most local counties add to the state base rate, the amount varies widely across the state, from \$0 to \$10,650 (4).

As the fiscal year nears an end for 2023-24, the majority of legislators seem willing to give the school voucher program a budget increase that is almost as large as the increase for K-12 public education despite vouchers serving a tiny fraction of the student population. Yet there are no accountability measures in place for the voucher program as there are for the public schools, leaving the program virtually unregulated and open to the type of fraud seen in other states (e.g. Arizona) (5) and have started to emerge in North Carolina (6).



Comparison of the number of students served by N.C. public schools and voucher program.

(1) HB 823 <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2023/Bills/House/PDF/H823v5.pdf>

(2) Leandro v. The State of North Carolina: <https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-on-leandro-2/>

(3) Teacher Pay in North Carolina: <https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-facts-on-teacher-pay/>

(4) Salary Supplements by N.C. County: [https://www.datawrapper.de/\\_mmyIP/?v=3](https://www.datawrapper.de/_mmyIP/?v=3)

(5) Ripe for Abuse: <https://www.12news.com/article/news/education/arizona-attorney-general-give-update-empowerment-scholarship-account-program-investigation/75-3f3af38a-d011-473f-a114-2a4736dcde93>

(6) Triangle Private School Faces Investigation: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article276765516.html>

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