

# North Carolina Private, Religious Schools Garner Millions in State Dollars as Rural Communities Subsidize Urban Schools

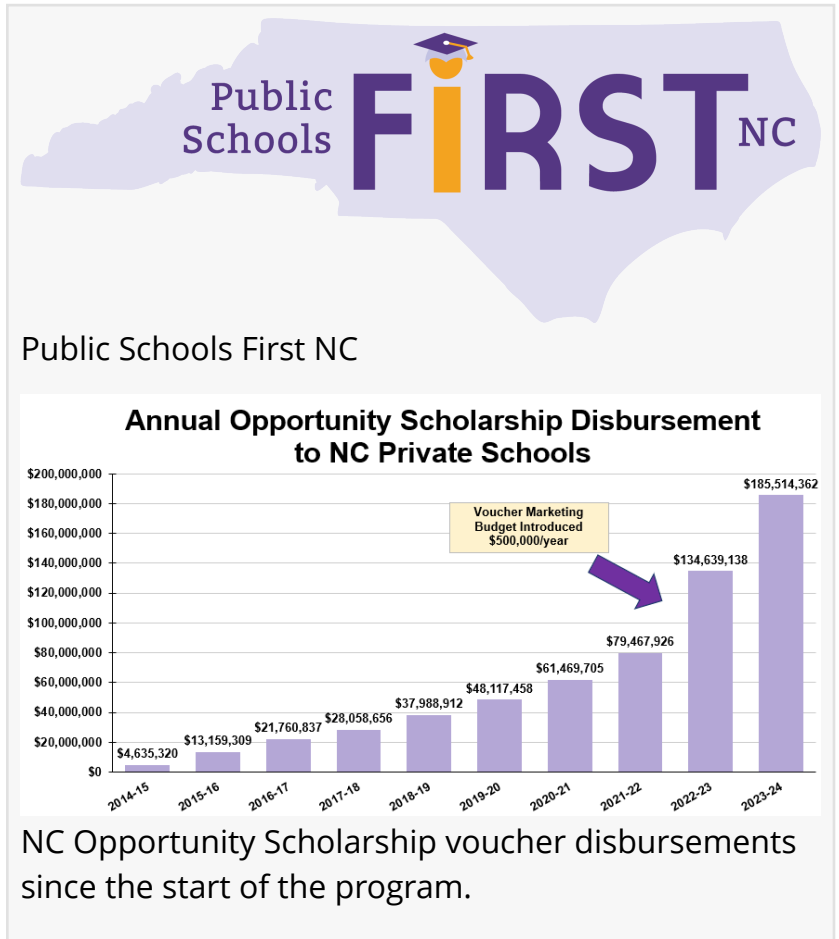
*The state voucher program sends millions in public funds to private schools in urban communities while rural schools cope with skimpy public school funding.*

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, August 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- North Carolina's largest school voucher program pays some or all of the private school tuition for qualifying families. The tuition goes directly to private schools after the student's enrollment at the private school is certified by the school. Since 2014 when the voucher program launched, North Carolina's private schools have received a total of [\\$614,811,625](#) million dollars in public funds.

As the chart shows, since the voucher program's inception, annual disbursements increased steadily until the sharp increase in 2022-23, which corresponded to the addition of a \$500,000 marketing budget. The 2021 budget allowed for up to \$500,000 annually for a contract with a non-profit to promote vouchers and provide application assistance. In the 2023 budget, the annual marketing budget was doubled to \$1,000,000. The additional disbursements also corresponded with increases in the income level that qualified families for vouchers.

In the upcoming school year, nearly \$300 million more is allocated for vouchers, with possible increases in the pipeline.

So where is the money going? The vast majority is going to private, religious schools in urban counties even though all counties, even our poorest rural counties, pay into the state coffers that



fund these private school vouchers (1). Many NC rural counties lack sufficient funds to pay local supplements to attract and keep teachers in their districts (2).

The private schools in four North Carolina counties (3) have received between \$40 and \$70.7 million each since the program began in 2014-15. 1) Cumberland County: \$70,771,751; 2) Wake County: \$50,766,011; 3) Guilford County: \$42,918,635; 4) Mecklenburg: \$40,051,986

Every year, between 88% and 92% (1) of all voucher dollars go to religious schools; the top four recipients of total dollars are all religious private schools (4):

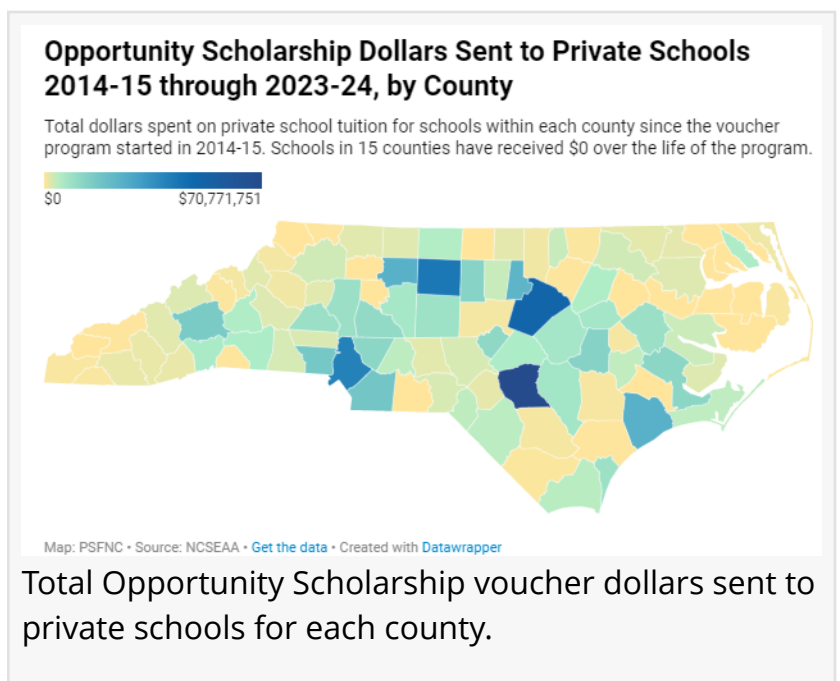
- 1) Trinity Christian School, Cumberland County: \$12,290,179
- 2) Berean Baptist Academy, Cumberland County: \$8,898,033
- 3) Grace Christian School, Lee County: \$8,049,010
- 4) Liberty Christian Academy, Onslow County: \$7,573,604

In 2023-24, Grace Christian School was the top beneficiary of state dollars, garnering more than \$3 million (4).

Many of these religious schools have [discriminatory admissions policies](#), admitting only those students who do not have academic challenges and adhere to religious guidelines established by the school. For example,

Berean Baptist Academy's (5) general policy (p. 14) states that, "BBA does not offer SLD (Specific Learning Disability, EH (Emotionally Handicapped), ADHD(attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), or ADD (attention deficit disorder) special needs programs and therefore, acceptance would be determined on a case by-case basis."

Liberty Christian Academy's (6) student handbook (p. 8) states that, "The school reserves the right, within its sole discretion, to refuse admission of an applicant or to discontinue enrollment of a student if the atmosphere or conduct within a particular home or the activities of the student are counter to or in opposition to the biblical lifestyle the school teaches. This includes, but is not limited to participating in, supporting, or condoning sexual immorality, homosexual activity, or bisexual activity; promoting such activities; or being unable to support the moral principles of the school."



Rural counties have received the fewest voucher dollars, highlighting how the voucher program shifts funds away from rural counties to urban and suburban counties. Fifteen counties have received \$0 voucher dollars over the life of the voucher program, yet taxpayers in these counties are taxing their communities to help subsidize private schools for wealthy families in the wealthiest urban counties.

The total voucher dollars spent in each county are shown in the map and in this [interactive map](#) where you can scroll over each county to see its total amount. Every dollar that is paid to these private school vouchers is a dollar that could have been used to support public schools.

(1) NC Private and Religious School Percentages by Year: [https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/OS\\_Private-School-Religious\\_NonReligious\\_PR.xlsx](https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/OS_Private-School-Religious_NonReligious_PR.xlsx)

(2) State of the Teaching Profession Dashboard: [https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/StateoftheTeachingProfession/SoTPDashboard?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=card\\_share\\_link](https://bi.nc.gov/t/DPI-EducatorRecruitmentandSupport/views/StateoftheTeachingProfession/SoTPDashboard?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=card_share_link)

(3) NC Opportunity Scholarship Expenditures by County: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XxL5AiapSDjvA4yl6wDLzH997XBxltSb/edit?gid=1209282436#gid=1209282436>

(4) NC Opportunity Scholarship Expenditures by School: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iuBB2AzBvONGKmf\\_9nghGaHTbAnROlj6/edit?gid=637972362#gid=637972362](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iuBB2AzBvONGKmf_9nghGaHTbAnROlj6/edit?gid=637972362#gid=637972362)

(5) Berean Baptist Academy General Policy Handbook: [https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Berean-Baptist-Academy\\_General\\_Policy\\_Handbook.pdf](https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Berean-Baptist-Academy_General_Policy_Handbook.pdf)

(6) Liberty Christian Academy Handbook page 8: [https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Liberty-Christian\\_Student-Handbook-page-8.png](https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Liberty-Christian_Student-Handbook-page-8.png)

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