



FAITH COMMUNITY  
AFFIRMATION AND SUPPORT FOR  
**MAY 16**  
DAY OF ADVOCACY  
FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NORTH CAROLINA

*Support Plan*

#ITSPERSONAL #RED4ED #GETREADY

North Carolina Council of Churches  
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**WHAT IS HAPPENING?** Teachers, parents, community leaders, religious leaders, and advocates for public education will gather on May 16 in Raleigh to welcome our state legislators and to advocate on behalf of our public schools, the teachers and staff who serve in them, and the students whom they serve. The North Carolina Council of Churches asks churches across North Carolina make a special effort to affirm and support this day of advocacy. The following page contains the Council's statement on Public Educations.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

**AFFIRM TEACHERS' ADVOCACY:** [Page 4](#) has suggestions about how to affirm and encourage teachers who are considering spending the day in Raleigh rather than in their classrooms.

**IF SCHOOLS ARE STAYING OPEN:** [Page 6](#) has suggestions about how to support the May 16 Day of Advocacy in counties where the schools are not closing.

**IF SCHOOLS ARE CLOSING:** [Page 8](#) has suggestions about how to support the May 16 Day of Advocacy in counties where the schools will close or are likely to close. (Those decisions have not been finalized. We expect many of the Triangle school districts to close).

**SHOW UP:** [Page 12](#) has details about May 16. As we get closer to May 16 additional event details and information will be posted on the Council's website. Please go to [www.ncchurches.org](http://www.ncchurches.org) for the most up-to-date information.

**STAY IN TOUCH** – with us AND with your community: Please do these things to help us form a cohesive witness:

- Email us and tell us what you have done with these resources, and how it is working: [info@ncchurches.org](mailto:info@ncchurches.org)
- Post on our Facebook page as a comment to posts about the May 16 Day of Advocacy. Tell us what you have done with these resources and how it is working. And share and repost! If you are a hashtag kind of person, use [#itspersonal](#) [#may16](#) [#red4ed](#) [#dae](#) [#nae](#) [#ncteachersunited](#) [#getready](#) [#makeithappen](#) [#inthistogether](#)
- Retweet what we and our partner organizations are tweeting. Use the hashtags! And tell what your church is doing locally.

# Statement on the Public Schools

*Approved December 5, 2017 by the Governing Board of  
The North Carolina Council of Churches*

Because the past decade has brought a new era of school segregation in North Carolina rivaling pre Civil Rights Act (1964) segregation rates and because the North Carolina Council of Churches has a long history of support for racial justice, we are recommitting to supporting a public school system that is built on racial equity and excellence for all students.

The Council also has a long history of support for public education. In 1986, we reaffirmed “our support for the system of public education in North Carolina... Being a system of our government financed by public funds, responsive to the community as a whole, and open to all without distinctions as to race, creed, national origin or economic status. Public education serves as a major cohesive force in our pluralistic society; and we believe that by training for citizenship, education serves as a primary means of strengthening our constitutional democracy. We believe that freedom of thought and learning in our public schools is the necessary precondition to political and religious freedom.”

In 2006, the Council again reaffirmed our support “for the public schools as one of society’s primary vehicles for social, racial, and economic justice.” We request our member denominations and congregations to speak out for racial and economic justice for our public schools. We call on our elected leaders at the state and local levels to stop creating policies that promote re-segregation of schools and to provide adequate funding to the public schools, especially those affected by the Leandro decision which called on the NCGA to adequately fund public education regardless of zip code. We call on our individual members to assess personally the consequences of “school choice” on re-segregating the schools.

## **Recommendations:**

1. We call on our elected officials to stop diverting tax dollars intended for public education to schools that are not accountable to locally, democratically elected boards of education.
  - a. We stand against funding charter schools that are parent run, corporate-run, or some combination of the two.
  - b. We support the repeal of State Statute GS 115C-75.6 establishing Innovative School Districts (ISDs) which strip local control of low-performing schools giving management powers to a corporate entity.

2. We stand against public monies going to private schools whether they are religious or secular through the Opportunity Scholarship Program, also known as school vouchers.
3. We call on elected officials to stop grading schools districts on a single criteria of test scores.
4. We call on the North Carolina General Assembly to put the needs of all North Carolina children first.
  - a. Increase per pupil spending to the national average in all due haste.
  - b. Provide funding that supports development of the whole child by funding art, music, and physical education.
5. We call for the treatment of teachers as professionals including:
  - a. increased salaries,
  - b. promotion of teachers' organizations, and
  - c. leadership development opportunities.

**Conclusions:**

1. We commit to educating and advocating about these issues with our elected officials and throughout our member denominations and congregations.
2. We agree to partner with the NC Justice Center, the NAACP, Public Schools First NC, North Carolina Association of Educators, and other organizations which are addressing inequity in the public schools.



Teachers in your community need to hear that faith communities support their efforts to advocate on behalf of the children whom they serve.

**NOW!** We ask you to do these things in coming days:

- **WRITE to teachers whom you already know.** Consider emailing public school teachers who worship in your congregation, or who teach your own children or grandchildren and tell them: “There is a Day of Advocacy for Public Education in Raleigh on May 16. I want you to know that I support this. I hope you will feel free to be in Raleigh on that day, advocating for your students. Thank you for all that you do. Know that our church is going to be looking for ways to support this effort.”
- **ASK your congregation to write teachers whom they already know.** You may choose to communicate with parents in your congregation, or with a missions committee or a deacon group. But please help your congregation to begin affirming this opportunity for advocacy so that teachers feel empowered and supported. Ask the parents in your church to reach out to neighbors and friends in the PTA so that our teachers will hear affirmation from many encouraging parents.
- **WRITE AN OP-ED** affirming this day of advocacy. When you do, send a copy to the Council of Churches, [info@ncchurches.org](mailto:info@ncchurches.org).
- **SIGN-UP** to attend the Advocacy Day in support of Public Education. Sign up at <http://www.ncae.org/rally-for-respect/>
- **PRAY!** Spend time praying for this event individually and in community. Pray for all who are considering participating. Pray for the teachers and students who gather in classrooms every day. Pray for leaders who will be making decisions. Pray for efforts to support the advocacy of teachers in your own community. Pray for guidance and inspiration of the Spirit!

**LATER!** We ask you to do these things as May 16 draws near:

- **MAKE SIGNS:** Hold a sign-making event. Provide poster-board, markers, glue sticks, and suggested messages.
- **WRITE LETTERS:**
  - Hold a letter-writing event where individuals write letters to your legislators stating that your church affirms this Day of Advocacy for Public Education and supports efforts to fully fund our public schools. Provide talking points.
  - Ask your church and other churches in your community to send letters to your legislators from the Board of Deacons or Governing Board affirming this Day of Advocacy and affirming increases in funding for public schools.
  - Contact information for each of your legislators can be found at <http://www.ncae.org/contact-your-legislators/>



Most school districts in North Carolina are likely to remain open on May 16, even though many teachers will choose to spend the day at the Legislature to advocate on behalf of themselves and the students whom they serve.

In districts where the schools remain open, consider supporting teachers by:

- **FUNDING** the costs of substitute teachers. Otherwise teachers will be required to pay for their own substitute teachers.
- **ASKING** principals how volunteers can support the schools with reduced staff. Most volunteers are required to have a background check with the schools, so mobilizing those in the community who are already qualified is important.
  - You might also ask the PTA's in your schools district how your church might cooperate with them to support teachers and schools on May 16.
- **DESIGNATING** May 16 a Mission Day that begins with a breakfast or a prayer for the schools, and then sends those volunteers who are already authorized to be in the school to a day of intentional presence.
  - Remember, ask the principals in your schools what is needed. Rely on them for the best information.
- **INVITING** other faith communities to partner with you in this effort.
- **DRIVING** teachers to Raleigh in church busses so that they neither incur the expenses of driving and parking nor have to worry about the logistics of parking. Coordinate with your local NCAE representative. Their contact information can be found at: [http://www.ncae.org/wp-content/uploads/Local-Presidents-for-web\\_020218.pdf](http://www.ncae.org/wp-content/uploads/Local-Presidents-for-web_020218.pdf)

- **REMEMBERING** to make a special effort to speak affirmation of teachers who choose to spend the day in Raleigh as well as those who choose to stay in the classroom. Use Facebook, church bulletins, and op-eds to affirm this day of advocacy and the life of service which our teachers choose.
- **PRAYING!** Spend time praying for this individually and in community. Pray for this event and for all who are considering participating. Pray for the teachers and students who gather in classrooms every day. Pray for leaders who will be making decisions. Prayer for efforts to support the advocacy of teachers in your own community. Pray for guidance and inspiration of the Spirit!



School districts around the triangle may close on May 16. Perhaps you also know that the school district in your own county is likely to close. (This will happen if enough teachers sign up ahead to take personal leave that day, requesting a substitute teacher. At some point the number of substitutes available in the county cannot meet the need).

We invite faith communities in counties where the schools are likely to close to begin planning right now to support families in the community who are impacted by the school closure. Please consider organizing these efforts immediately.

### **TEAM FORMATION:**

- **CREATE A LEADERSHIP TEAM:** The magnitude of the work that can be done in each county is enormous. Please create a team that consists of leaders from several churches. Consider using this as an opportunity to build inter-faith relationships. Consider coordinating with churches across the region to ensure that teams are in place to cover each school; or perhaps one team will cover schools in one particular are of the county.
- **DESIGNATE 5 LEADERS:** Designate 5 leaders to fill these positions, probably from several congregations:
  - Project Co-Coordinator 1
  - Project Co-Coordinator 2
  - Teacher Support Coordinator - see tasks below
  - Childcare Support Coordinator - see tasks below
  - Nutrition Support Coordinator - see tasks below
- **DIVERSITY:** Strive for diversity on the leadership team as well as in those recruited to work with each coordinator. It will be important to draw wisdom from a diverse set of experiences and perceptions about what is needed. Consider the importance of creating a leadership team that is intentionally diverse in race, economic background, gender, and sexual orientation.

## WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:

- **PROJECT COORDINATION:** this work will hold together all of the contacts and details of the three teams, ensuring efficiency in communicating with community stakeholders and consistency in messaging. Tasks include:
  - Creating a database
  - Creating a project management plan (Click [HERE](#) for a sample)
  - Coordinating Op-Eds which affirm the Day of Advocacy.
- **TEACHER SUPPORT:** this team will support teachers who are traveling to Raleigh. Tasks include:
  - COORDINATING **church buses** to drive teachers to Raleigh
  - SENDING a team of church members to Raleigh to stand with teachers from your community.
  - SIGN MAKING: Holding a sign-making event where you provide poster-board, markers, glue sticks, and suggested messages.
  - LETTER WRITING: Holding a letter - writing event where individuals write letters to your representatives stating that your church affirms this Day of Advocacy for Public Education and supports efforts to fully fund our public schools.
  - COORDINATING LETTERS FROM CHURCHES: Asking churches to send letters from the Board of Deacons or Governing Board affirming this Day of Advocacy and increases in funding for public schools.
- **CHILDCARE SUPPORT:** this team will work to support the provision of childcare for children whose parents must work on May 16. Tasks include:
  - ASKING LOTS OF QUESTIONS
    - Find out who in your community is already positioned to offer childcare. Consider talking to the YMCA, camps who already provide intercession camp (for year round students), urban ministry programs that regularly provide summer camp, Boys and Girls Clubs, leaders in churches that already provide daytime care for school aged children at other times of the year.
    - Ask principals and ESL teachers and classroom teachers what ideas they have for supporting the specific children in their schools who may need a place to be on that day.

- PARTNERING with folks who already know what they are doing. Ask how your church can help. Consider offering:
  - Volunteers to support the programming
  - Volunteers to serve lunch
  - Your church bus for transportation
  - Funds for running a program that was not in the budget
- **NUTRITION SUPPORT:** this team will work to support children who qualify for free or reduced breakfast and lunch during the school day. Tasks include:
  - ASKING LOTS OF QUESTIONS
    - Begin by asking principals how to support the kids in their schools.
    - It will be important to refrain from making assumptions about what is needed or needs help.
    - Trust the principals or the specialists with whom they connect you.
  - PARTNERING with programs already in place. It is likely that the most important thing your church can do is support Backpack Buddy programs that are already in place in your schools. Therefore, it is likely that the most important work this team will do includes:
    - Collecting food specified by the schools as useful for filling backpacks. These usually include: oatmeal packets, applesauce packets, canned foods such as Spaghettios and soups, fresh fruits and vegetables such as apples or carrots, individual containers of dry cereal, high protein snack bars. You will often be encouraged to stay away from products that contain nuts.
    - Providing volunteers to sort food and stuff backpacks.
    - Collecting extra canvas bags or backpacks.

## FRAME OF MIND CHECK-IN:

Begin with a community meeting or a conference call where these guidelines are communicated:

- IDENTIFY NEEDS
  - Instead of assuming that you know what the needs are in the community:
    - Ask those who are in a position to know.
- BE A LEARNER
  - Instead of showing up full of ideas about how you can help fix everything -
    - Communicate support: we would really like to support this advocacy effort and we are ready to listen. How can we partner with you? What is already happening? How can we support what is already happening? Are there needs that no one is yet addressing?
  - Instead of telling people what needs to be done and how best to do it -
    - Talk with principals, school counselors, community coordinators with local shelters or advocacy agencies, and leaders with local groups such as the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club. You are in the best position to identify who, in your own community, knows what is happening.
- MAJOR IN ASKING AND LISTENING
  - Instead of making hasty conclusions -
    - Ask questions and listen to the answers.
    - Follow up by checking what you have heard: “I heard you say that this is the top priority. Did I understand that correctly? What is the best way for me to help with that need?”

## PRAY!

Spend time praying individually and corporately for this event and for all who are considering participating. Pray for the teachers and students who gather in classrooms every day. Pray for leaders who will be making decisions. Pray for efforts to support the advocacy of teachers in your own community. Pray for guidance and inspiration of the Spirit!



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**#MAY 16**  
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*Event Details*  
 #ITSPERSONAL #RED4ED #GETREADY

Watch for information from the NC Council of Churches and our partners.

This is what NCAE is doing and saying:



MAY 16, 2018  
**ADVOCACY DAY**  
 MARCH FOR STUDENTS AND RALLY FOR RESPECT

We're encouraging educators to take a personal leave day and join us in Raleigh to advocate for our profession and for our students!

To RSVP and for more information visit: [bit.ly/NCAE516](http://bit.ly/NCAE516)  
 If you have questions about taking leave you can visit: [bit.ly/UsingLeaveNCAE](http://bit.ly/UsingLeaveNCAE)



#GetReady educators, parents, public school supporters and advocates! We will be marching for students the morning of May 16th from NCAE Headquarters to the General Assembly to greet lawmakers on opening day.

We will meet no later than 10 a.m. at NCAE HQ, 700 S. Salisbury St. We will end the day at 3:30 p.m. with a Rally for Respect.