



## NCASA Shares 9/2 Session Priorities With General Assembly's Education Leaders

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In preparation for next Wednesday's legislative session, the NC Association of School Administrators (NCASA) has compiled a list of [legislative requests for ongoing public school support during COVID-19](#), based on feedback received from our members across the State. The NCASA Advocacy team has been sharing these legislative requests with key education leaders in the General Assembly over the past few days and working with legislative staff to draft legislative proposals addressing these specific concerns. While the General Assembly is [currently limited](#) with the topics they may address on September 2, NCASA remains hopeful that legislative leadership will alter session rules, as they have done in the past, to address greatly-needed policy changes, such as holding districts harmless to their allotted average daily membership (ADM) for the 2020-2021 school year.

While the biggest concern for most districts seems to be holding LEA funding and principal salaries harmless from enrollment decreases caused by COVID-19, NCASA has also heard numerous concerns relating to technology, K-3 class sizes, additional funding for health and safety measures, as well as the need for greater state allotment flexibility. The following is an overview of NCASA's top priorities for the upcoming legislative session, along with information comparing NCASA's requests [to priorities submitted by the State Board of Education \(SBE\)](#) where pertinent:

- **ADM Hold Harmless for Funding** — Because most districts expect their enrollment to dip significantly early in 2020-21, thus triggering a funding reduction for them later this year that could result in layoffs of teachers and other staff supported through ADM-based allotments, legislative action is now needed so that schools may use their Allotted ADM figures to remain funded at their initial allotment level. *The SBE noted in a presentation to lawmakers that this is one of their top 5 priorities.*
- **ADM Hold Harmless for Principal Salaries** — Because many districts expect lower actual ADM this school year due to COVID-19, public school principals may face significant permanent salary reductions unless the legislature provides statutory relief. Principals are currently scheduled to have their salaries adjusted Jan. 1, 2021 to reflect their school's actual ADM, calculated on the higher of the 20th or 40th day of instruction. While the legislature has previously taken action due to COVID-19 to exclude school performance from principal pay calculations, it has not yet taken action to ensure principal salaries are not reduced due to decreased ADM. These salary reductions could negatively impact retirement calculations for these principals, resulting in reduced pensions when they ultimately retire. By using Allotted ADM figures, rather than 2020-21 Actual ADM for January 1 salary placement, lawmakers can prevent these school-based leaders from being the only public employees facing a salary cut directly related to COVID-19. *The SBE also urged legislators to consider principal salaries in its proposal for an ADM Hold Harmless.*

- **K-3 Virtual Class Size Waivers** — Despite initial requests from NCASA for a waiver from K-3 class size requirements this school year, the phase-in of smaller class sizes in Grades K-3 moved forward July 1, requiring schools to lower limits for individual classes, as well as the districtwide average for each of those grade spans. For school districts that have opened their school year with at least some in-person instruction, these lower limits have helped facilitate social distancing within classrooms that is essential for student and staff safety as COVID-19 continues to spread. Superintendents and principals, however, are finding these same limits applied to virtual K-3 classrooms is hindering their efforts to create smaller classes on campus. NCASA requests districts be allowed to place up to 9 additional students within a virtual K-3 classroom, where COVID-19 exposure is not a concern, thus allowing districts to maximize their limited pool of licensed elementary education teachers, as well as support their efforts for reducing student density for in-person instruction.
- **Internet and Technology Access** — NCASA requests the state legislature provide a significant investment in statewide Internet connectivity, as well as specific funding for schools to have access to modern technology, equipment, and software needed to facilitate newly-enacted requirements and respond to ongoing needs for remote instruction. NCASA requested the legislature to allocate at least \$18M in federal relief funds to help offset the \$18M transferred from the School Technology Fund to the School Business Modernization Fund earlier this summer. *The SBE has requested \$15M from the legislature for Internet Connectivity and Broadband Services.*
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** — Survey responses NCASA collected from 97 of the state's 116 LEAs in July indicated their anticipated total costs for PPE (masks, soap, hand sanitizer, and cleaning disinfectants) range from \$15,000 to \$9 million in each district for the 10-month school year. These estimates indicate the \$7 million in federal CARES Act funding the state has allocated for covering PPE will be insufficient, and the legislature will need to provide more funding to ensure the safety of students and staff. *The SBE requested \$44.5M in additional PPE funds to cover six months of the 2020-21 school year, and NCASA supports this request.*
- **Transportation** — Many districts have expressed concerns with greater transportation costs associated with social distancing, mobile hot spot runs, and student meal service delivery. Additional transportation funding is essential for helping LEAs address these unique transportation needs that are driven largely by COVID-19. *The SBE has requested \$18M for a special transportation allotment, which NCASA supports along with a request for greater flexibility in how transportation funding can be used during a statewide emergency, including the COVID-19 pandemic.*

- **Child Nutrition** — Because a significant portion of federal child nutrition funds remain available to LEAs, *neither NCASA nor the SBE requested additional funds for child nutrition programs at this time*; however, both have stressed to lawmakers the importance of aligning state and federal child nutrition requirements, as well as placing additional pressure on federal leadership to extend student income eligibility requirement waivers, which are currently due to expire August 31.
- **Greater Allotment Flexibility** -- To help districts manage the evolving and unique needs of their communities in responding to COVID-19, districts need increased flexibility to move funds between certain state allotments. Budget flexibility like that authorized under one of Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Orders that expired June 30 needs to be made effective for the entire 2020-21 school year, either through legislation or a new Executive Order.

**NCASA members are urged to contact your local representatives, particularly in the Senate, to voice support for these requests before legislators return on Wednesday, September 2.**

NCASA also requests that members share any feedback received from your local legislators, positive or negative, so that we can better advocate for your schools, students, and staff upon the legislature's return.

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