

Education: History repeats

Letter to the editor, [State Port Pilot](#), 10.04.23

Sixty-five years ago, North Carolina was still pretending to support two “separate but equal” school systems. Unfortunately, that meant that my “new” high school books always had names in them, and I never spent a single day in a high school laboratory.

Recently, the N.C. General Assembly approved a budget that would expand the private school voucher program so that any child can receive a voucher regardless of family income. Approximately \$600 million will be diverted from public schools over the next two years — \$3.6 billion to vouchers over the next nine years. According to a study by a statewide teacher support group, a reduction in tax rates (primarily corporate) accounts for \$781.2 million in lost revenue over the next two years — putting North Carolina on a dangerous path to a deficit. That is enough money to double the raises for every public school employee over the same time.

Teachers will receive on average a 7% raise over the next two years — well below the 16% increase proposed by the Governor. The larger increase would have addressed some sobering data in the 2022 Making the Grade Report from the Education Law Center (ELC) published Jan. 2023. Out of all 50 states and D.C., North Carolina was ranked 48th for funding level — how much schools receive from state and local revenues. ELC defines “funding effort” as the amount of funding that goes toward public K-12 schools as a percentage of the state’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). North Carolina dedicated 2.32% of its GDP to support the public K-12 schools, which was the lowest percentage in the country.

Unfortunately, history is repeating itself in that thousands of children are being victimized by “two separate and unequal” (private vs. public) school systems. I survived the inequity, but many others will not.

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