

## Watauga Schools Oppose New Salary Plan

Written by Watauga County Schools release  
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The Watauga County Board of Education has joined several other NC school districts in adopting a resolution opposing the state's plan to eliminate career status and modestly increase compensation for 25% of teachers in local school systems across the state. The resolution, which was adopted at the Board meeting of February 10<sup>th</sup>, requests that the Board be allowed to use funds allocated for the 25% plan "for alternative pay or for compensation for additional duties such as mentoring or leadership roles," and calls on the General Assembly to "repeal the 25% contract and develop a more effective long-term compensation plan for teachers tied to career paths with input from the education and business community."

As adopted by the General Assembly last year, the 25% plan requires local school systems to identify 25% of teachers to be offered a four year contract and raises for those four years. The offer can only be extended to 25% of the teachers who have been employed in the school system for at least three consecutive years and teachers who accept the offer must give up career status as part of their new contract. The legislation also phases out career status for all teachers over the next four years.

Educators across the state have objected to the plan for failing to offer increased compensation to the vast majority of teachers, for weakening protections against unfair dismissal, and as a potential threat to the teacher morale and collegial relationships essential to strong public schools. Concerns about the 25% plan have been compounded by longer term trends in the state's funding for public education.

Teachers in NC have received only one raise of 1.2% in the past five years. Teacher pay in the state now ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in the country and the increase in pay for NC teachers over the last decade ranks dead last. As noted in the Board of Education resolution, the state's public schools have also seen the loss of teacher and teacher assistant positions in recent years, as well as cuts in funding for textbooks, instructional supplies, and training and professional development for teachers. These cuts have occurred as enrollment has continued to rise and as schools have been charged with implementing a new curriculum in all grade levels and subject areas.

"We appreciate that our state's leadership faces difficult choices in crafting a state budget," said Superintendent Dr. David Fonseca. "There's never enough money to do all that everyone would like to do. Still, it's clear that as a state we are not meeting our responsibility to our teachers and students, and this resolution recognizes some of the ways in which we are falling short. I am grateful that our Board has gone on record to call for a plan to give our teachers the respect,

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the career opportunities, and the fair and appropriate compensation that they deserve.”