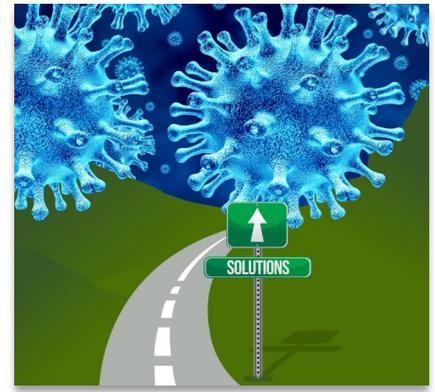




# Next Steps For COVID-19 Relief & Recovery



*As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate communities across the state and nation, student safety and ongoing success have remained top concerns for families, educators, and public school leaders. The pandemic not only highlighted the resiliency of our educators in immediately adjusting to new ways of teaching, but also shed light on the inequities seen across the state in critical areas such as Internet access and student mental health support.*

*School district leaders greatly appreciate the support provided in initial COVID response legislation in 2020 and now request additional action by legislators and policymakers to ensure our schools have the funds and flexibility needed to safely provide equitable learning opportunities for our students long-term, as our state moves toward recovery from the pandemic.*

- **Initiate a bipartisan COVID-19 Long-Term Recovery Task Force to develop legislative and policy solutions for addressing public schools' long-term recovery from COVID-19.**
  - Involve House and Senate education leaders; the State Board of Education; the Department of Public Instruction; and various stakeholder organizations, including the NC School Boards Association and the NC Association of School Administrators, to ensure recovery planning is cohesive and strategic.
  - Direct the Task Force to develop proposals focusing support in the following key areas: addressing student learning challenges experienced during the pandemic; supporting whole-child needs; enhancing educator and administrator professional development, with a focus on early grade reading interventions; and increasing educational attainment for successful transitions to college and careers.
- **Provide testing and accountability waivers in 2020-21 similar to those provided in 2019-20:**
  - Do not issue A-F school performance grades for the 2020-2021 school year and hold principals and teachers harmless from the economic impact of not issuing these grades;
  - Allow teachers and principals to conduct evaluative testing of students to determine their academic progress, remediation needs, and grade placement for the 2021-2022 school year;
  - Modify SBE Policy TEST-003 to remove the requirement that the results from EOC assessments must count towards 20% of a student's final grade; and
  - Allow students engaged in remote instruction to take EOGs and EOCs remotely in the spring semester and establish out-of-school testing platforms.
- **Create a Competency-Based Education Pilot Program that provides participating districts with the flexibility to place students in classrooms and grade levels based on concept mastery, rather than age.**
- **Provide a flexible funding stream allowing school districts to hire additional nurses, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists to best meet their local staffing needs in addressing increased student health concerns caused by COVID-19, and enhance the pipeline for creating additional personnel in each of these student support areas.**
- **Address student average daily membership (ADM) concerns for the 2021-2022 school year:**
  - Provide additional funding to the ADM Contingency Fund to address the significant expected surge in Kindergarten enrollment, while ensuring LEA funding remains stable and principal salaries are not negatively affected.
  - Allow the State Board of Education to approve waivers from K-3 class size requirements for virtual classes, as well as for schools that cannot hire enough teachers or provide adequate space to open additional classrooms as required.
- **Enhance statewide broadband internet access through increased investment in the G.R.E.A.T program and other technology initiatives focused on expanding internet access in rural and underserved communities.**
- **Increase technology funding to help students, teachers, and administrators have access to the modern technology, equipment, software, and IT support needed to provide equitable education opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.**
- **Provide school districts with increased flexibility to move funds within existing state allotments to address their specific local recovery needs.**
- **Provide school districts with funding to continue and expand innovative K-12 practices and solutions developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, including state funding for principals overseeing virtual instruction.**

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*NCASA is the non-profit umbrella uniting 12 school leader organizations, including our core affiliates, the NC School Superintendents' Association (NCSSA) and the NC Principals and Assistant Principals' Association (NCPAPA). NCASA provides advocacy and other critical services for more than 7,000 education leaders from across the state with the common mission of ensuring student success through visionary leadership.*