

April 5, 2001

S 1076. HIGH PRIORITY SCHOOL ASSISTANCE & ACCOUNT. ACT. TO ENACT THE NORTH CAROLINA HIGH PRIORITY SCHOOL ASSISTANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2001.

Enacts act cited in title to address problems of lowest-performing schools. Appropriates \$12,246,878 for 2001-2002 and \$15,930,285 for 2002-2003 from General Fund to Dep't of Public Instruction, State Aid to Local School Admin. Units, to provide lowest-performing elementary schools with tools to improve student achievement. Funds are to be used for the 38 elementary schools at which, in 1999-2000 school year, over 80% of students qualified for free or reduced-lunch prices and no more than 55% of students performed at or above grade level. Allocates funds for (1) reducing class size in kindergarten through third grade to no more than 17 students, (2) extension of teachers' contracts at these schools by 18 days, (3) costs, other than cost of teacher salaries, of adding at least 10 instructional days each year, (4) recruiting and retention incentives, including signing bonuses and housing subsidies, for three teachers at each of the 38 schools, and (5) state-identified leadership teams for a period of no less than four years to the first five schools requesting leadership teams.

Also appropriates \$5,521,000 for 2001-2002 and \$5,371,000 for 2002-2003 from General Fund to Dep't of Public Instruction, State Aid to Local School Admin. Units, to expand the pool of qualified teachers and to provide recruitment and retention incentives to attract and retain high-quality teachers to low-performing schools and schools with shortages of teachers in certain areas of certification. Allocates funds to (1) recruitment and retention incentives, including signing bonuses and housing subsidies, to attract teachers to low-performing schools and schools with shortages in certain areas of certification (though not to 38 schools identified above), (2) provide full medical and proportional retirement benefits to up to 1000 certified teachers who are not currently teaching as an incentive for them to return to teaching one-half time, (3) pay the salary and educational expenses of up to 500 teacher assistants and noncertified school employees to enable them to complete coursework for certification as long as completion is possible in two years or less, and (4) to establish a legislative study commission to study wage comparability for teachers.

Appropriates \$4,573,196 for 2002-2003 from General Fund to State Board of Education to implement specified strategies at continually low-performing schools, if strategy has not been implemented previously with state funds. Strategies are: (1) reducing class size to no more than 17 students in grade kindergarten through three and no more than 20 in grade four through twelve, (2) extending teachers' contracts to 11 months, (4) costs of extending the instructional year to 190 days, and (4) signing bonuses of no more than \$10,000 for principals who commit to work for three years in continually low-performing schools.

Amends GS 115C-105.25(b) to allow local boards of education, in accordance with a school improvement plan, to transfer up to 15% of state funds allocated for teacher assistants for use for personnel to staff day care centers for teachers' children.

Adds new sections to GS Ch. 115C to provide assistance to "continually low-performing schools." Defines school as one that has received state-mandated assistance and has been designated by State Board of Education as low performing for at least two consecutive years or for at least two of three consecutive years. Requires state board to provide a series of progressive assistance and intervention strategies to school to continually low-performing schools. If school has been designated by state board as low performing for three or more consecutive years or for at least three out of four years and has received state-mandated assistance, state board must implement a series of actions for assistance and intervention. Such actions must be "least intrusive" consistent with need to improve student achievement and must be adapted to unique characteristics of each school. Amends GS 115C-105.37(a1) to provide that preliminary plan submitted for addressing needs of low-performing school must include how the superintendent and other central office administrators will work with school and monitor its progress. Authorizes state board to adopt policies providing for larger incentive awards for employees in continually low-performing schools than in other schools. Awards may be up to \$3,000 for teachers and certified personnel if continually low-performing school achieves higher than expected improvements and up to \$1,500 if school meets expected improvements.

All appropriations are effective July 1, 2001.

Intro. by Lee.

Ref. to Appropriations	GS 115C, APPROP
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