



**NORTH CAROLINA**  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# **Report to the North Carolina General Assembly**

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Interim Report #1 (Transition Planning for  
Residential Schools: Eastern, North Carolina  
School for the Deaf, Governor Morehead School  
for the Blind, and North Carolina School for the  
Deaf)

**SESSION LAW 2023-10 (HOUSE BILL 11)**

**Date Due: May 15, 2023**  
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2022-2023

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## **Overview**

Pursuant to Session Law 2023-10 (House Bill 11), the state's residential schools for the deaf and blind will be governed by separate, independent boards of trustees, effective July 1, 2024. In preparation, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction must develop a transition plan for the change in administration and submit interim reports to the State Board of Education and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by May 15, 2023, December 15, 2023, and March 15, 2024. This first report provides a summary of updates on the work thus far.

## **Planning Groups**

The three residential school directors, along with the Interim Director for Agency Schools and Alternative Learning and the Deputy State Superintendent for the Educator and Student Advancement Division constitute a core/executive transition planning committee. They have met regularly for the past few weeks and will continue working to: (1) identify needs/challenges, (2) respond to questions, (3) solidify timelines, and (4) develop and execute communication plans. In addition, a larger team has been established to explore and proactively consider how best to ensure the smoothest transition possible. Because the work ahead will be multifaceted, representatives from the following units at the Department of Public Instruction will be included:

- Communications
- Exceptional Children
- Federal Programs
- Financial and Business Services
- Human Resources
- Legal
- Legislative Affairs
- Technology
- Chief of Staff/Strategic Planning
- Support Services (School Nutrition and School Planning in particular)

Note: The five individuals who comprise the core/executive transition planning committee will also be part of this larger group.

## **Appointments to the Boards of Trustees**

Section 6.(a) of S.L. 2023-1- requires the General Assembly and the State Board of Education (SBE) to make initial appointments to the boards of trustees no later 60 days after House Bill 11 became law. As such, the SBE plans to make its three appointments in June. Each advisory board is being asked to recommend candidates to the SBE for consideration.

## **Technology**

Domains (.k12.nc.us) have been claimed for the residential schools. Key decision-points (e.g., Google versus Outlook, websites, etc.) are being discussed, and work is already underway to determine critical next steps for establishing separate instances of PowerSchool. There are many, many, additional technology-related (and other) priorities that will claim our attention over the next 14+ months.

## **Initial Considerations**

While each residential school has a mix of employees (e.g., school director, principal, teachers, educational aides, a variety of auxiliary staff, etc.) the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has provided significant assistance in the following major areas: finance, legal, human resources, technology, school planning and support services. In addition, in 2021, a dedicated position was created to primarily supervise the school directors and liaise with DPI and the residential schools. The following list, while not exhaustive, offers insights into the functions that will need to be coordinated and administered by the leadership at each school once the administration of the schools shifts to the boards of trustees:

#### Human Resources

- Human Resources Information System/NeoGov
- NCVIP/LMS – Training and Performance Management System
- Payroll/time administration
- Employee relations/performance issues
- Classification and compensation
- Salary administration
- Benefits
- Workers' compensation
- Engagement with the Office of State Human Resources

#### Finance

- Budget, accounts payable, procurement and contract support
- Fixed assets/agency controller
- Fiscal consultant - 6b grant oversight
- Finance management
- Facilities and safety surplus
- Engagement with the Office of Budget Management and Office of State Controller

#### Legal

- Advisement on a variety of matters, including but not limited to, policy and statute analysis and threatened litigation
- Special education law support (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
- Mediation/dispute resolution/due process/litigation
- Review/drafting/approval of contracts, policies, letters, agreements, and other legal documents
- Employment issues (e.g., non-renewal of certified/115c employees)

There have been numerous discussions about the need for a full-time attorney to serve the three schools. The legal issues, especially special education matters, are complex and time-consuming. In addition to the time spent on the areas listed above, there are times when an attorney is needed for IEP and personnel meetings because student/parent or employee attorneys are involved. A full-time person would be rounded off to about 2,000 hours of work annually (all three schools combined).

Experienced law firms would charge in the neighborhood of \$225-\$250 per hour for work by partners, \$200-225 per hour for work by associates, and about \$100 per hour of work by paralegals. Most of the work would need to be done by attorneys. The State Board of

Education/Department of Public Instruction's legal team calculated the work to be about 900 hours per year for partner work, 900 hours per year for associate work and 200 hours for paralegal work. Working with that information and rounding it off, we would estimate the total legal cost to be between \$400,000 and \$450,000 per year.

#### School Planning

- Capital projects
- Repair and renovation projects
- Design reviews
- Oversight of routine maintenance and assessment of the property, especially with respect to Governor Morehead School for the Blind
- Pupil transportation, especially with respect Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf and the North Carolina School for the Deaf
- Vehicle replacements
- Engagement with the Office of State Construction

#### Technology

- IT contracts
- Software vetting
- Vendor architecture
- Vendor security
- Network operations design and oversight
- Hosting exception approvals
- Office 365 management, multi-factor authentication settings, NCID account issues/management, creation of email accounts
- Engagement with Department of Information Technology