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# VOTER TOOLKIT

A resource intended to provide information on public education issues that negatively impact students & families in North Carolina public schools.



This is a resource intended to provide information on public education issues that impact students and families in North Carolina's public schools.

We hope you use the information to have discussions with family, friends, and community members issues facing our public schools and what influence political candidates have over the issues. While this list is not exhaustive, but it highlights key components for achieving the sound basic education our state constitution promises us as citizens. Each section includes key issues with suggested questions to guide your conversations and generate ideas for other questions to ask political candidates.



# Governance of NC Public Schools

## Declaration of Rights

The people have a right to the privilege of education,  
and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right.

NC Constitution - Article 1, Section 15

## Duties of Governor

The Governor shall prepare and recommend to the General Assembly a comprehensive budget of the anticipated revenue and proposed expenditures of the State for the ensuing fiscal period.

The budget as enacted by the General Assembly shall be administered by the Governor.

NC Constitution - Article 3, Section 5.

## General Assembly

The General Assembly shall provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of free public schools, which shall be maintained at least nine months in every year, and wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students.

NC Constitution - Article 9, Section 2, Part 1

The General Assembly may assign to units of local government such responsibility for the financial support of the free public schools as it may deem appropriate. The governing boards of units of local government with financial responsibility for public education may use local revenues to add to or supplement any public school or post-secondary school program.

NC Constitution - Article 9, Section 2, Part 2

## State Board of Education

The State Board of Education consist of the Lieutenant Governor, the Treasurer, and eleven members appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly in joint session

NC Constitution - Article 9, Section 4, Part 1

The State Board of Education shall supervise and administer the free public school system and the education funds provided for its support, except the funds mentioned in Section 7 of this Article, and shall make all needed rules and regulations in relation thereto, subject to laws enacted by the General Assembly.

NC Constitution - Article 9, Section 5



# Governance of NC Public Schools

## **Superintendent of Public Instruction**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be the secretary and chief administrative officer of the State Board of Education.

NC Constitution - Article 9, Section 4, Part 2

## **Local School District Superintendents**

Superintendents shall be ex officio secretary to their respective boards of education. As secretary to the board of education, the superintendent shall record all proceedings of the board, issue all notices and orders that may be made by the board, and otherwise be executive officer of the board of education.

General Statues - 115C-276 (b)

The superintendent shall participate in the school budget and finances[...]

General Statues - 115C-276 (c)

The superintendent shall maintain student discipline in accordance [...] and shall keep data on each student to whom corporal punishment was administered, who was suspended for more than 10 days, who was reassigned for disciplinary reasons, or who was expelled. This data shall include the race, gender, age, grade level, ethnicity, and disability status of each student, the duration of suspension for each student, whether alternative education services were provided for each student, and whether a student had multiple suspensions in that academic year.

General Statues - 115C-276 (r)



# Governance of NC Public Schools

## Local Boards of Education

The county board of education in each county shall consist of five members elected by the voters of the county at large for terms of four years

General Statues - 115C-35 (a)

All powers and duties conferred and imposed by law respecting public schools, which are not expressly conferred and imposed upon some other official, are conferred and imposed upon local boards of education. Said boards of education shall have general control and supervision of all matters pertaining to the public schools in their respective administrative units and they shall enforce the school law in their respective units.

General Statues - 115C-36

It shall be the duty of local boards of education to provide students with the opportunity to receive a sound basic education and to make all policy decisions with that objective in mind, including employment decisions, budget development, and other administrative actions, within their respective local school administrative units, as directed by law

General Statues - 115C-47, Section 1

## Duties of Sheriff

The sheriff may enter into an agreement with the local board of education to provide volunteer school safety resource officers [...] The sheriff shall be responsible for the assignment of any volunteer school safety resource officer assigned to a public school and for the supervision of the officer.

General Statues -162-26 (c)

A law enforcement officer who takes a juvenile into temporary custody should select the most appropriate course of action to the situation, the needs of the juvenile, and the protection of the public safety. The officer may: (1) Release the juvenile, with or without first counseling the juvenile; (2) Release the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; (3) Refer the juvenile to community resources; (4) Seek a petition; or (5) Seek a petition and request a custody order.

General Statues - 7B - Article 21



# Governance of NC Public Schools

## Duties of Police Chief

The chief of police may enter into an agreement with the local board of education to provide volunteer school safety resource officers [...] and training requirements set by the chief of police of the municipality or county in which the schools are located. The chief of police shall be responsible for the assignment of any volunteer school safety resource officer assigned to a public school and for the supervision of the officer.

General Statutes - 160A-288.4 (c)

A law enforcement officer who takes a juvenile into temporary custody should select the most appropriate course of action to the situation, the needs of the juvenile, and the protection of the public safety. The officer may:

- (1) Release the juvenile, with or without first counseling the juvenile;
- (2) Release the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (3) Refer the juvenile to community resources;
- (4) Seek a petition; or
- (5) Seek a petition and request a custody order.

General Statutes - 7B - Article 21

## DPS Juvenile Detention Center

[...] a juvenile may be temporarily detained in an approved detention facility. It shall be unlawful for a sheriff or any unit of government to operate a juvenile detention facility unless the facility meets the standards and rules adopted by the Department of Public Safety and has been approved by the Division of Juvenile Justice for operation as a juvenile detention facility.

General Statutes - 7B-1905



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**S**chool-to-prison  
pipeline

**S**chool-to-deportation  
pipeline





## **Definitions**

The way some schools approach school discipline often pushes young people out of school through unfair suspension, expulsions and even arrest for minor misbehavior.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline is a set of school policies and practices in which students are pushed out of schools into the juvenile and criminal justice system.

The School-to-Deportation Pipeline: is a set of school policies and practices in which students are pushed out of schools into the juvenile and criminal justice system and eventually into immigration procedures (or at risk of) that lead to the deportation process.





# Key Decision-Makers

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

General  
Assembly

Governor

Police Chiefs

Who in North Carolina has  
the most influence over the  
School-to-Prison & School-  
to-Deportation pipelines?

Sheriffs

DPS Juvenile  
Detention  
Center

Local Boards of  
Education

Local School  
District  
Superintendents

State Board  
of Education





# **Questions to Ask Decision-Makers**

- How will you address the disproportionate suspension rates given to Indigenous, Black, Latine & Students with disabilities?
- Will you support increasing or allocating more funding to hire more therapists, school counselors, nurses and psychologists, and other school support staff?
- How will you ensure that students and parents have a right to participate in any decision-making that impacts school policies?
- Will you commit to updating the school code of conduct to move away from zero-tolerance discipline practices and policies?



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A large, hand-drawn letter 'S' in a dark blue color, positioned on the left side of the page. A light blue diagonal bar runs from the top right to the bottom left, passing behind the 'S'.

Students with disabilities

A large, hand-drawn letter 'E' in a dark blue color, positioned on the right side of the page. A light blue diagonal bar runs from the top right to the bottom left, passing behind the 'E'.

Exceptional Children

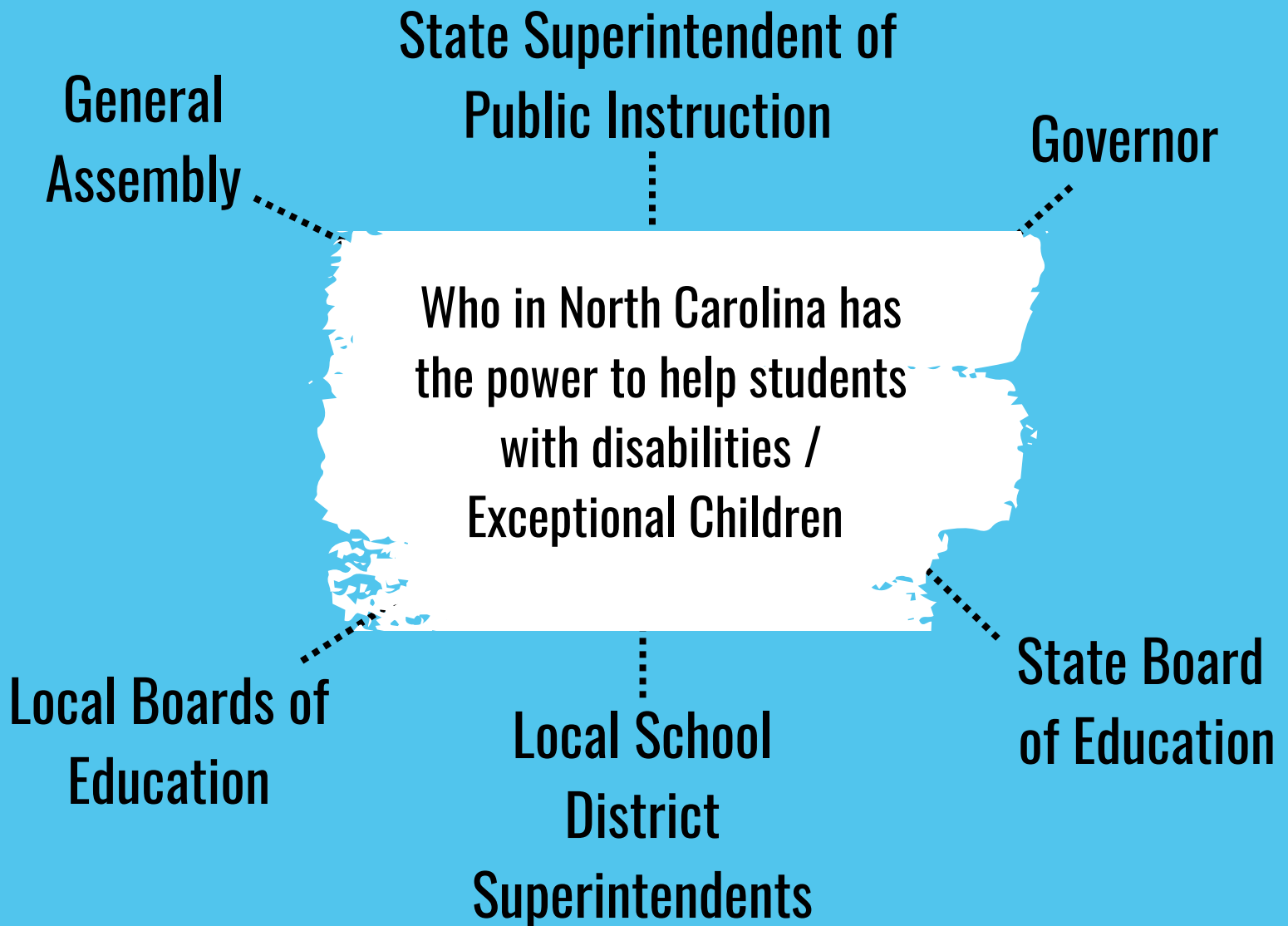


## **Definition**

Exceptional Children (EC) are those receiving special education and related services. EC students are covered under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates a free and appropriate public education for eligible students ages 3–21.



# Key Decision-Makers





# Questions to Ask Decision-Makers

- Will you support the elimination of the cap on Special Education funding?
- Will you support a new funding model to provide a more equitable way to fund public schools?
- Will you support legislation to provide funding to increase the number of support personnel in our public schools? Like school nurses, psychologists, counselors, and social workers.
- How will you address disproportionate suspensions of students with disabilities in our public schools?



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# Too Young To Suspend





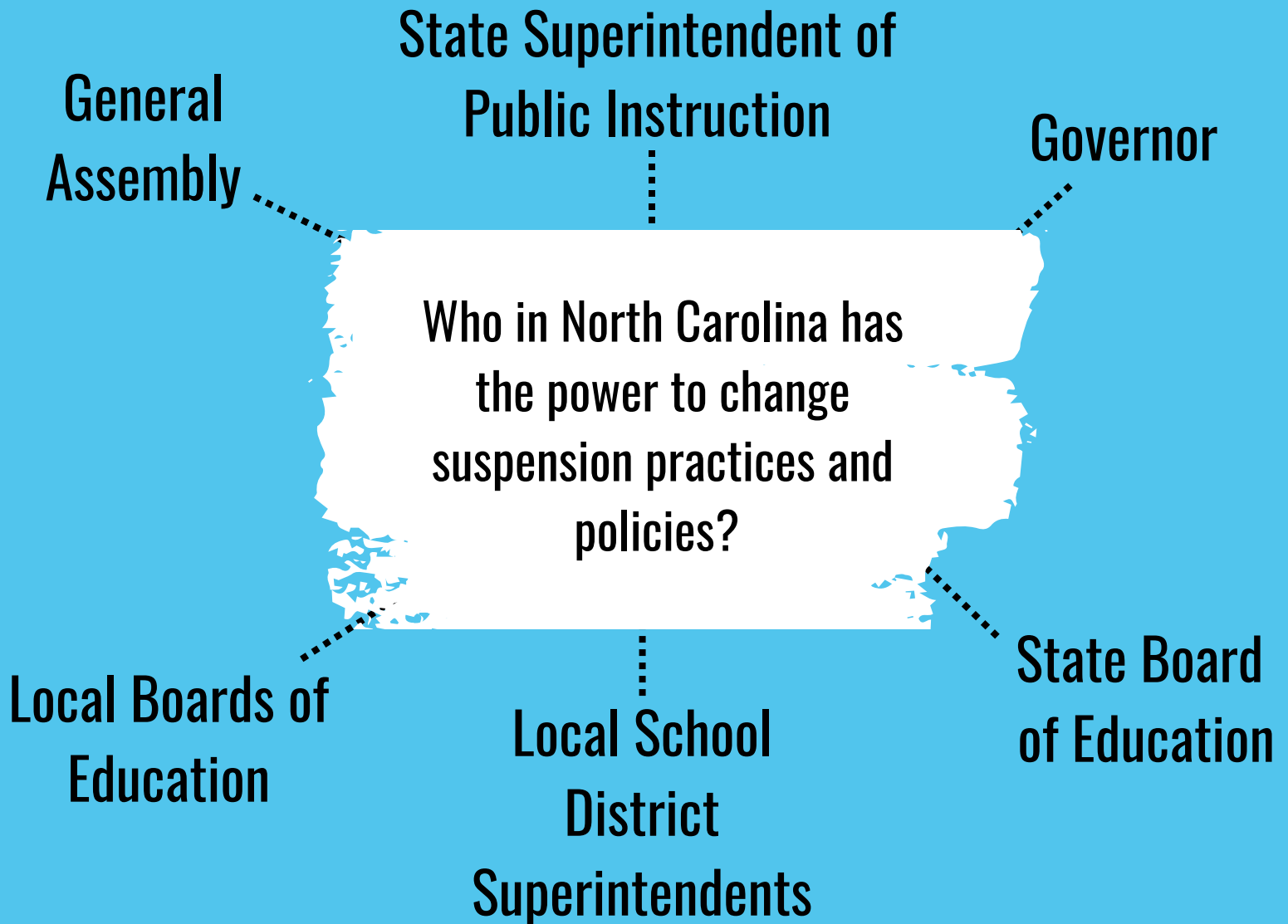
## **Definition**

North Carolina schools suspend thousands of students every year, many of them in elementary grades, pushing those students into the school-to-prison pipeline. Students in early grades should never be removed from the regular learning environment for age appropriate behaviors because they lose important instructional time. Young students should never be sent home for struggling with their social and emotional skills.





# Key Decision-Makers





# Questions to Ask Decision-Makers

- Will you work with school administrators to prevent suspensions of young students?
- How will you make sure teachers receive the support they need to deal with the behaviors rather than removing students from the learning environment?
- Will you support legislation or local school policies to place a moratorium on suspensions in pre-k through 5th grade?
- One size fit all does not work in school discipline, will you support age appropriate consequences in the student code of conduct?
- Will you support the removal or prohibit the new placement of any School Resource Officers (SRO) in elementary schools?



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# Culturally Responsive Curriculum





## **Definition**

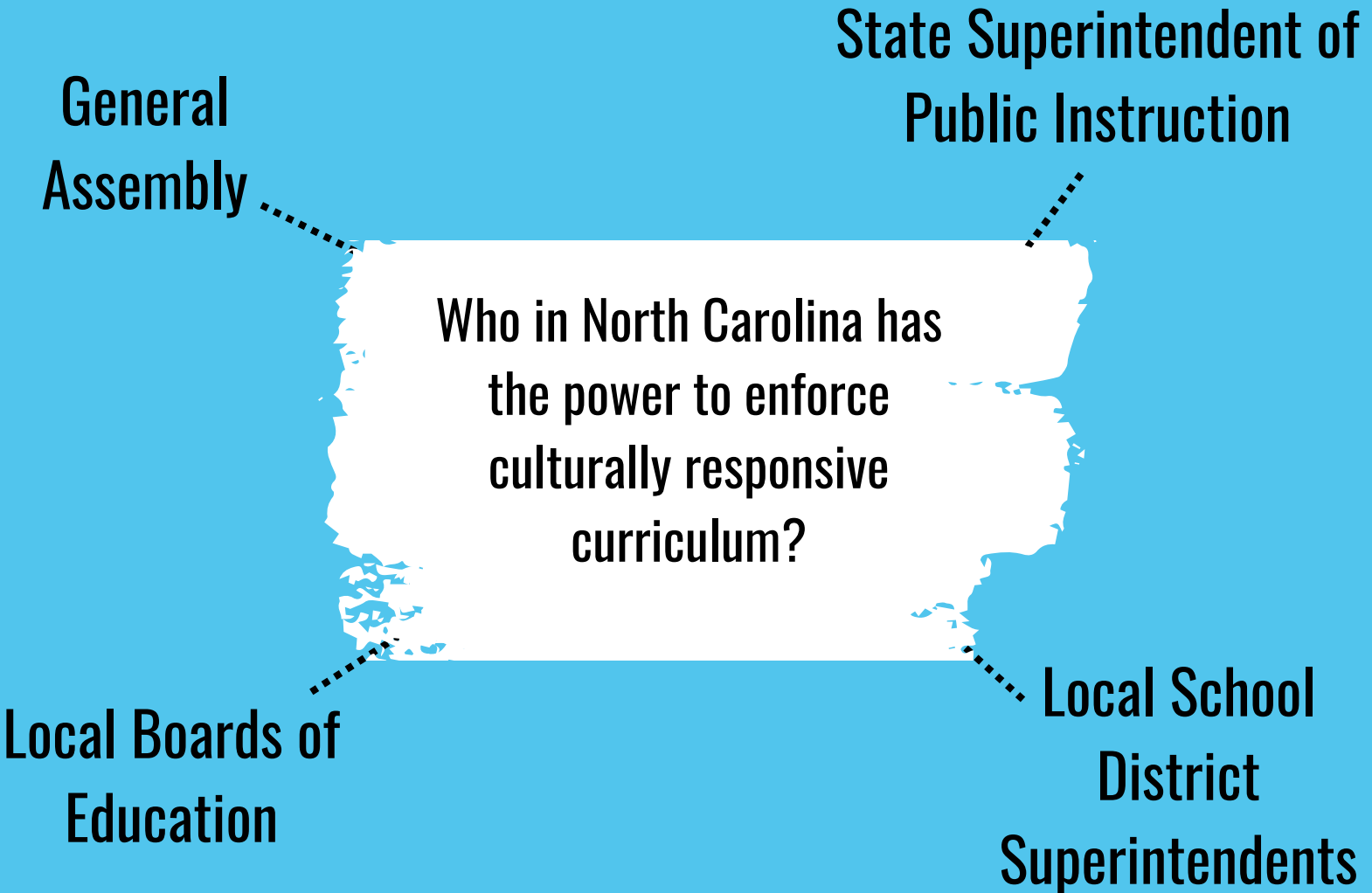
Culturally relevant teaching essentially means that teachers create a bridge between students' home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements.

Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes.





# **Key Decision-Makers**





# **Questions to Ask Decision-Makers**

- Will you commit to working on assuring a culturally relevant and appropriate curriculum that serves all students, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other students of color?
- What will you do to make sure teachers get the appropriate professional development they need to successfully implement culturally responsive curriculum?
- Will you make sure schools implement implicit bias training, restorative justice, and peace circles to be more culturally responsive to students?





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# chool Funding: Leandro





## **Definition**

For 30 years, North Carolina lawmakers from both parties have failed to meet their constitutional obligation to provide all children in the state with a sound basic education by fully funding Leandro. When public schools are not even providing the bare minimum, the burden of this failure is disproportionately borne by children from historically marginalized communities. Some of the most vulnerable children include those:

- Without access to early childhood education (Pre-K)
- Subject to racial discrimination
- With physical, emotional, or learning differences
- With economic disadvantages
- Living in rural districts
- English language learners





# Key Decision-Makers

General  
Assembly

Governor

Who in North Carolina has  
the power to allocate more  
public school funding?

State Board  
of Education





# Questions to Ask Decision-Makers

- Will you pass legislation to comply with the court recommendations in the Leandro case to fully fund public education?
- Will you commit to direct additional resources to underserved student populations, including economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and exceptional children?
- Will you work to modify the school finance system to ensure future stability in funding for public education, including predictable, anticipated funding levels that acknowledge external cost factors?



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chool vouchers





## Definition

School vouchers are education tax dollars funneled from public schools to pay for a portion of the tuition of private or religious schools.

Starting in 2014, the “Opportunity Scholarship” program was originally created to provide relief for low-income families in neighborhoods with struggling public schools.

However, leaders in the North Carolina General Assembly eliminated the income requirements in 2024 to allow all income braces, including millionaires, to qualify.

The voucher expansion will hurt families enrolled in NC public schools by slashing school budgets that are already underfunded.



# **Key Decision-Makers**

**General  
Assembly**

**State Board  
of Education**

**Who in North Carolina has  
the power to change the  
allocation of school  
vouchers?**





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