



## **A Passion for Education**

*The McCrory Plan for North Carolina Schools*

*“I have a passion for education – we will never be satisfied until we transform our public schools into centers of excellence. We cannot achieve excellence by simply spending more money on a broken system; we must make major reforms. Our primary goal must be to empower students to grasp control of their adult lives by providing them the necessary skill set to get a job ”*

*- Pat McCrory*

## **1.) Give Families and Students Educational Choices**

### **◇ Two Paths to Success**

North Carolina high schools are failing to graduate 22% of our students. Young people who drop out of high school have few if any marketable job skills and are often so deficient in basic verbal and math competency as to be unable to complete a routine job application. Instead of the present system of providing only one pathway to a high school diploma, we need to reform the system and provide two pathways. One diploma would certify a student *college ready*, with the necessary skills to succeed in college. The second diploma would certify a student *career ready*, with the necessary skills to get a job or attend a community college. With this reform our goal would be that college bound students would no longer have to take remedial courses to compete on a college level and students entering the work force would no longer lack vocational skills and core competency.

### **◇ Virtual Education Choice**

National studies show virtual learners make larger learning gains and have higher course completion rates. Twenty-first century technology makes it possible for high school students to choose from a wide range of on-line courses taught by the best public school teachers from across the state. I propose offering greater access and more flexibility to local school systems to our students—public, private, and home schooled—to a wide range of for-credit, on-line courses. We should also make expanding the use of hand held technology a priority for both teachers and students so both struggling and advanced students can learn at their own pace within specific disciplines. Teaching and education can no longer be limited to lectures, chalkboards, and brick buildings.

### **◇ Charter Schools Choice**

While lifting the cap on charter schools was a great first step, we must be careful that a slow moving process for approving new charter schools would act as a de facto cap. Therefore, we must address the thousands of families on waiting lists for charter schools in addition to the dozens of charter schools waiting to open. We must implement a process to ensure that parents and students are not left in limbo on their school options.

## **2.) *Set High Expectations***

### **◇ *End Third Grade Social Promotions***

My plan for North Carolina schools is based on the expectation that our students can achieve. The first step is to stop social promotions for third grade students and create a tough-love strategy to improve literacy. Third grade is a critical time when students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” in other subjects and in their life outside the classroom. In order to proceed to the fourth grade, students will be required to attain a minimally acceptable score on a state reading test. Students who fall short will be given additional test-based opportunities to demonstrate reading proficiency. Students who still cannot demonstrate reading skills will be retained and provided with aggressive remediation and the opportunity to learn fundamental skills necessary for future success.

### **◇ *High School Reading and Math Guarantee***

The state of North Carolina must be able to assure colleges and potential employers that a high school diploma means the student has successfully mastered a proficiency in reading and math. Too many employers today report high school graduates are unable to complete a job application or calculate change for money. Both four-year and community colleges complain that too many students advancing to higher education must be provided reading and math remediation before they are ready for college level courses. Therefore, every student entering the ninth grade will be tested for proficiency in basic reading and mathematics. Any student not able to pass the test will receive intense remedial courses to give them the tools to graduate and get a job or continue their education.

## **3.) *Reward Success***

### **◇ *Better Pay for Better Teachers***

Researchers identify teacher quality as the main in-school factor affecting students’ academic achievement. Therefore, the most important reform North Carolina could implement would be to keep the best teachers in the classroom. Some teachers are able to ignite a spark in a student that will have an impact on his or her learning from that point forward. North Carolina is blessed with many outstanding teachers who should be rewarded for the impact they have on the lives of our young people. Every student, every parent and every principal knows who the good teachers are. We will reform our pay

system to reward teachers for the job they do instead of just the number of years they teach.

#### **4.) *Hold Schools Accountable***

##### **◆ *Grading Our Schools***

The only way to measure success is to test student achievement in reading and mathematics in an unbiased and objective exam based on basic skills rather than curriculum. Each school's test results will be evaluated for both proficiency *and* learning gains of students. Half the grade a school receives will be based on students' achievement levels – the percentage of students scoring at or above grade level in reading and math. The remaining half will be based on individual student learning gains – the percentage of students who made progress in reading and math from his or her achievement level the prior year. By making *progress* as important as *proficiency*, we will provide a powerful incentive for schools to get even the most disadvantaged students moving in the right direction. Grading schools will establish transparent, objective, and easily understood data to parents, educators and the public, and will spur improvement among all schools.