

Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education

Working Draft - July 2026

Part 1: Review the Recommendation Development Framework

Part 2: Review the Emerging Recommendation Topics and Descriptions

PART 1: REVIEW THE RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The following framework is intended to establish a common understanding of how the Commission will move from broad ideas to actionable recommendations.

Recommendation | *What should North Carolina do?*

A recommendation is a clear statement of what the Commission believes North Carolina should do to improve public education. It establishes a direction and intent, but it does not prescribe implementation details. A recommendation:

- Establishes a clear statewide direction
- Identifies the intended outcome
- Is broad enough to endure over time

Recommendations may take different forms:

- **Reinscribe** successful policies, programs, or investments that may be sustained or scaled.
- **Reform** existing systems, policies, or practices that require meaningful improvement.
- **Reimagine** areas where fundamentally new approaches are needed to serve students, educators, and schools.



Strategic Policy Action | *What policy changes would accomplish the recommendation?*

Strategic policy actions identify the major policy changes, investments, or structural improvements needed to achieve a recommendation. They describe what should change but not necessarily how it will be implemented. Policy actions may inform legislation, State Board of Education policy, administrative rulemaking, funding priorities, or statewide initiatives.



Implementation Strategies | *How would those policy actions be carried out?*

Implementation strategies describe the specific activities, programs, investments, partnerships, timelines, or operational changes needed to put policy into practice.

These strategies may evolve as conditions change and may require coordinated action or responsibility across multiple organizations or agencies.

PART 2: REVIEW EMERGING RECOMMENDATION TOPICS & DESCRIPTIONS

The following recommendation topics reflect the major themes that have consistently emerged through the Commission's learning and deliberations to date. They are intended to provide a starting point for member discussion, prioritization, and refinement as the Commission develops recommendations over the coming months. These materials should not be interpreted as final recommendations or endorsements of specific policy approaches.

Recommendation Topic 1 Strengthen Early Literacy as a Foundation for Student Success	
Why It Emerged	Literacy emerged as a strong area of consensus for the Commission. Members consistently viewed early literacy as the greatest opportunity to improve long-term student outcomes and as an example of how sustained focus, coherent implementation, and aligned systems can drive meaningful improvement.
Strategic Policy Action	• Strengthen statewide instructional coherence around literacy instruction, curriculum, evidence-based practices, screening and assessment. • Build implementation capacity through coaching, professional learning, and technical assistance. • Identify and support struggling readers through middle school using literacy data to inform instruction, intervention, and continuous improvement. • Align educator preparation and ongoing development with evidence-based literacy instruction. • Sustain long-term commitment and accountability for implementation and student outcomes.
Potential Implementation Strategies	1. <i>Acquire a literacy curriculum and supplements for use in kindergarten through eighth grade to adapt and align with the Science of Reading. The curriculum should be evidence-based and have demonstrated evidence of positive effects in other states. Produce training materials and curriculum resources and provide multi-year, sustained professional development and coaching to teachers on the implementation of the curriculum.</i> 2. <i>Provide schools with the flexibility to require attendance in a minimum of four-week summer reading program focused on evidence-based literacy instruction for students who are not reading proficient by the end of third grade.</i> 3. <i>Establish a statewide Science of Reading aligned high-dosage tutoring program for K-3 students who demonstrate reading difficulty on diagnostic screeners.</i> 4. <i>Continue statewide efforts to align pre-service literacy coursework in Educator Preparation Programs with the Science of Reading to ensure pre-service teachers are effectively prepared to teach Science of Reading and are appropriately trained to diagnose, teach, and assess students' diverse literacy needs including English language learners and students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia.</i> 5. <i>Create a literacy committee to serve as the state's oversight and accountability body for statewide implementation of Science of Reading to:</i> a. <i>review and recommend approved literacy curriculum and instructional materials;</i> b. <i>provide continuous monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of state-funded literacy interventions and professional learning; and</i> c. <i>report the extent LEAs have adopted and implemented Science of Reading-aligned literacy curriculum.</i>

Under the new state budget Senate Bill 257 (SL 2026-41) passed in July 2026 are relevant to this topic area:

Recommendation Topic 1 | Strengthen Early Literacy as a Foundation for Student Success

Early literacy (PreK-5)

- **Early literacy screenings extend to grades 4-5:** The state budget provides \$1.4 million to extend the use of diagnostic and formative reading assessments to grades 4 and 5. Public school units are now required to use DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) literacy screeners in grades K-5. As part of this expansion, Public school units are encouraged to partner with community organizations or other groups to provide volunteers, mentors or tutors to assist with literacy interventions that support reading development and proficiency. (Section 7.8a)
- **Individual Reading Plans required for grades 4-5:** Public school units are now required to create Individual Reading Plans (IRPs) for students in grades 4 and 5, expanding the requirement from grades K-3 to K-5. IRPs are developed for students who demonstrate difficulty with reading development based on results of diagnostic or formative assessments administered in the first or second semester. Public school units are also required to notify parents of students' reading difficulties in grades 4 and 5. (Section 7.8b-c)
- **PreK dyslexia screening and support:** Two components were added to the NCDPI's Early Literacy Program support for NC PreK programs: 1) Ensure every NC Pre-K program administers dyslexia screening to NC PreK students and the results are shared with the student's kindergarten teacher at the start of the next school year, and 2) Provide training to PreK educators and administrators to ensure appropriate instruction and interventions are used with students who exhibit potential indicators of dyslexia. (Section 7.27a-b)
- **Pilot study of early literacy curriculum:** DPI will establish a pilot program for low-performing schools in six counties to purchase literacy materials from Just Right Reader, a Science of Reading-aligned early literacy curriculum, for use in first-grade classrooms. (Section 7.40a)

Adolescent literacy (grades 6-12)

- **Adolescent literacy professional development:** The state budget provides \$13.8 million for all middle school teachers to receive professional development in the Science of Reading. (Section 7.60a)
- **Evaluation of secondary literacy professional development:** The UNC Collaboratory will receive funding to evaluate providers of literacy professional development for grades 9-12 teachers who teach students who are not reading at grade level. The Collaboratory will also study the effectiveness of Lexia Aspire Professional Learning on literacy outcomes for grades 6-8 students. (Section 8.16a-b)

Recommendation Topic 2 Strengthen the Teacher Pipeline	
Why It Emerged	Members repeatedly discussed educator recruitment, preparation, licensure, and retention as parts of a connected workforce strategy rather than isolated policy issues. Discussions focused on attracting talented teachers, reducing unnecessary barriers to entry, and strengthening and retaining a long-term educator workforce.
Strategic Policy Action	• Expand and diversify pathways into teaching. • Reduce unnecessary barriers to entering the profession. • Strengthen preparation through clinical practice and induction. • Increase educator recruitment and long-term retention. • Elevate teaching as a respected and sustainable profession.
Potential Implementation Strategies	1. Restore and revive the NC Teaching Fellows Program as a prestigious statewide teacher recruitment and development program by expanding early recruitment, scholarships, structured mentorships, leadership development, and a service commitment to NC public schools. Prioritize incentives for graduates who teach in high needs schools and Tier 1 counties. 2. Establish a statewide framework that enables districts and charter schools to provide compensated, classroom-based clinical preparation across traditional, residency, and apprenticeship pathways under the supervision of mentor teachers. 3. Evaluate licensure assessment requirements for cost, timing, and predictive validity. Reduce the financial and programmatic barriers for career-entry assessments (such as Praxis Subject tests and edTPA) and ensure they measure skills associated with effective teaching. 4. Expand statewide mentoring and coaching programs for beginning teachers with targeted, differentiated support aligned with documented areas of teacher growth to improve early-career teacher retention, effectiveness, and satisfaction. 5. Develop new measures of teacher effectiveness by leveraging multiple sources of evidence beyond test scores to provide a more comprehensive approach to evaluating teacher quality and identifying areas for teacher growth. 6. Expand Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR) grants leading to full statewide implementation by 2028 to extend the reach of highly effective teachers. 7. Study the feasibility of retaining experienced educators and creating more flexible pathways for effective retired teachers to return to the classroom by addressing policy, licensure, retirement, and financial barriers, particularly in high-need schools and subject areas.
Under the new state budget Senate Bill 257 (SL 2026-41) passed in July 2026 are relevant to this topic area:	
Recommendation Topic 2 Strengthen the Teacher Pipeline	
Teacher preparation • Apprenticeship-focused pathways to teaching: ○ The state budget provides \$1 million in recurring funds to establish TeachReadyNC, a new teacher apprenticeship competitive grant program in collaboration with ApprenticeshipNC. The program, which will be administered by NCDPI, provides public school units with a teacher apprenticeship position and EPP training for one year before entering the classroom. Public school units can apply this fall for a 2027-28 school year start. (Section 7.24a-l)	

- The state budget directs ApprenticeshipNC to develop a plan to facilitate one or more expedited pathways for apprenticeship candidates to enter the teaching profession by March 2027. The pathways could provide entries into teaching for high school students, community college students, and adults. (Section 6.5)
- Notable budget repeals include TeachNC, a state-funded recurring teacher recruitment program supporting EPP enrollment that will now end in July 2027, and the Future Teachers of North Carolina program, which hosted symposiums to introduce high schoolers to teaching as a profession.
- **EPP admissions:** Prospective teachers are no longer required to take and pass the Praxis Core test or have a minimum SAT or ACT score in order to be admitted to an EPP. (Section 7.10a)
- **EPP report cards:** The SBE will create an annual report card for each EPP that provides the public with a user-friendly access to annual reports of EPP performance data. (Section 7.7k)
- **Re-evaluation of Teaching Fellows program:** The NC Teaching Fellows Commission will develop a process to re-evaluate the effectiveness of participating EPPs' Teaching Fellows program, an evaluation that is required every six years. EPPs determined to be ineffective may be removed from the program. (Section 8.5a)

Teacher licensure

Several policy provisions originally part of the Teacher Licensure Modifications Action in Senate Bill 840 will help ease the process of licensing for prospective and current teachers.

- **Highly effective limited license teachers:** The state budget authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) to grant continuing professional licence (CPL) status to limited license holders whose students demonstrate positive growth scores as measured by EVAAS in two of the three most recent years. (Section 7.10b)
- **Removal of licensure exam attempt for new teachers:** Beginning Teachers are no longer required to attempt the edTPA and Praxis examinations in their first year of licensure. The policy changes now allow Initial, Residency, or Limited License holders to take and pass the assessments before or during the third year of licensure. (Section 7.9b)
- **State reciprocity for experienced teachers:** The state budget authorizes SBE to grant a CPL to teachers licensed or authorized to teach in another state or country provided the teachers are in good standing and have at least three years of teaching experience. (Section 7.10c)
- **Elementary licensure expands to middle grades.** SBE is directed to expand elementary licenses to include teachers of grades 7-8. The SBE is currently reviewing the impact of the change. (Section 7.35)

Teacher leadership

- **Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR) Expansion:** The budget significantly expands ATR salary supplements by \$30 million, providing a total of \$40.9 million for this purpose in FY2026-27. The legislation renames two ATR positions and creates a new one:
 - Collaborative Impact Leader: ATR teacher who leads a team of 4-8 teachers and provides instruction including co-teaching for at least 30% of the instructional day; does not serve as teacher of record for students. (\$10,000 supplement)
 - *Partial-release Collaborative Impact Leader (new):* ATR teacher who leads a team of 2-3 teachers and serves as the teacher of record for at least one class. (\$5,000 supplement)
 - *Teacher of Distinction:* An ATR teacher who is the teacher of record with at least 20% more students than average number on their ATR team. (\$3,000 supplement)

Separately, the state budget provides \$2 million in additional funding to expand ATR to new districts, for a total of \$7.5 million in FY 2026-27 for this purpose. The grant funding is provided to public school units for the design and implementation of ATR plans in initial awards that can be extended for a second term of up to three years. According to [EdNC](#), this funding is about half of what was proposed in [SB 1006](#); as such, only 16 of the 32 districts that are waiting to implement ATR will be admitted to the program. (Section 7.19a)

Recommendation Topic 3 Modernize Accountability for Continuous Improvement	
Why It Emerged	Members questioned whether the current accountability system accurately reflects school quality, student learning, and educator effectiveness. A recurring theme emphasized the importance of distinguishing schools based on their level of need to target support and intervention. Discussions emphasized using accountability to support improvement efforts while providing meaningful information to educators, families, and policymakers.
Strategic Policy Action	• Clarify the purpose of North Carolina's accountability system to align with continuous improvement and student success. • Expand accountability measures to reflect student success and school quality. • Differentiate accountability from school improvement. • Strengthen transparency and public understanding of school performance. • Connect accountability to meaningful supports and school improvement.
Potential Implementation Strategies	1. <i>Revise the use of student growth and proficiency in the school performance grading system by evaluating their weighting and considering alternatives to EVAAS for measuring student growth.</i> a. <i>Identify and pilot additional indicators of school quality beyond test scores (e.g., chronic absenteeism; access to advanced coursework; college and career readiness; school climate; and/or student engagement) to provide a more comprehensive picture of student success.</i> b. <i>Redesign public reporting of school performance (report cards) so families, educators, and policymakers have clearer, more transparent information about student growth, achievement, and other indicators of school quality.</i> 2. <i>Strengthen differentiated support and intervention pathways for low-performing schools by using accountability results to connect schools with evidence-based assistance, resources, and improvement strategies based on identified needs.</i> 3. <i>Align federal and state testing requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary testing.</i>
Under the new state budget Senate Bill 257 (SL 2026-41) passed in July 2026 are relevant to this topic area:	
Recommendation Topic 3 Modernize Accountability for Continuous Improvement	
Low-performing schools • Math requirements for low-performing schools. The Foundational Mathematics Instruction Act, supported by \$6 million in recurring state funding, requires low-performing schools to provide at least 60 minutes of daily on- or above-grade level mathematics instruction for all students in grades K-8, to administer a mathematics diagnostic screener for grades K-8 at least three times in the school year, and develop individualized Mathematics Success Plans (MSPs) for students identified as having significant difficulty in mathematics. Schools are required to notify parents and guardians of the students' difficulties and success plan. (Section 7.36a) They are also required to use high-quality instructional materials in MSPs, an NCDPI approved list that will be developed by the NC Collaboratory. (Section 7.36i) • Principal recruitment and retention supplements. The state budget provides principals in all low-performing schools with salary supplements if they remain in the low-performing school for up to three years. Principals who receive the recruitment supplement are eligible for a retention supplement if they remain in the low-performing school for up to three years. (Section 7A.9a)	