

Week of May 10, 2015

Dear Members of the Guilford County Legislative Delegation and Other Legislators,

The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad has long been an advocate for high quality public education---made available to all children. To that end, members of the LWVPT Public Education Roundtable have done on-going examination of our local public schools—and have participated in related national League studies and resulting policies. We have included , for you, some of these background materials and a copy of our “White Paper” prepared in 2012, which continues to serve as a base of our operating principles and advocacy relative to public education.

During 2013 and 2014, Roundtable members have met with parents, teachers and administrators from: the Guilford Partnership for Children, Guilford County Schools, Communities –In-Schools, the Racial Equity Network, Guilford Education Alliance, UNCG School of Education and other education- related groups.

In selecting the issues/legislation of highest importance to our organization for the 2015-16 Session of the General Assembly, narrowing the issues to a manageable number for our concentration, we examined our background positions again and then requested and studied the full 2015-16 Legislative Agendas of the North Carolina School Boards Association; the Guilford County Schools and Guilford Education Alliance (which adopted the GCS Agenda.) We also followed the Public Schools First N C relay of Bill introductions, placement in Committees and outcomes weekly and had this information on our League website for members’ availability.

As a result of these efforts, the LWVPT Public Education Roundtable supports the following positions and sincerely asks your consideration and support of them:

- (1) Well prepared, inspiring teachers are indispensable to successful public school outcomes. We support raising pay at all Pre-K—12 teaching levels to the national average within four years. We also support increased funding to encourage strong teacher –training programs at North Carolina public colleges and Universities.
- (2) With increased early education requirements, growing numbers of very poor students and more necessary attention to reading proficiency, the roles of teaching assistants have become essential to elementary students’ progress. We support increased funding for teacher assistants and number allocations for K-3 made in the same manner as for classroom teachers.

- (3) Research and daily experience increasingly validate the long term merits of early childhood education. We support funding for increased subsidies for high quality childcare and additional slots for Pre-K for at-risk children.  
We also support placement of the Pre-K program in the Department of Public Education rather than in Health and Education.
- (4) We support continuation of state funding—whether via the Highway Trust Fund or other venues—for Drivers Training Education. This “safety precaution” is imperative to the future safety and well-being of North Carolinians and other travelers. Many students and families won’t pay the expense of private training. Effective Driver’s Training is a life-time bonus for the potential driver and others on the roads.
- (5.) We find the open “grading “ of public schools A to F to be unrealistic for all, and especially discouraging for students and families who work hard and honorably and do well---yet their school is shamed and degraded because other students who also may have tried, but have been unable to meet the specified level of required proficiency. If grades must be given to whole schools, growth and progress for each student should be the goal, rather than “across the board” unattainable, prescribed levels of proficiency. We support, at the least, a 50-50 split between growth and proficiency if A to F is to be the measure.
- (6.) Lastly, Thriving public schools—with the goal of effective, incremental progress for all students who attend them—gives the best promise of a strong North Carolina for now and the future; thus, sufficient funding for public schools should be a top priority for state and county budgets. It is in that vein that LWVPT, LWVNC and LWVUS oppose vouchers, tax credits and “opportunity scholarships” which shift public tax dollars to private entities. We also oppose the continued expansion of unlimited numbers of charter schools. Both such diversions of public tax dollars negatively impact the budgets of traditional public schools and their mission of accepting, welcoming and teaching ALL who come into their doors.