

NCATA Legislative Report
June 16, 2009

Dear Members,

The NC House of Representatives passed their budget proposal last Saturday. The Governor, NC House of Representative, and the NC Senate must now work together to come up with a final budget. Governor Perdue would like the 2009-2011 budget in place by July 1. The Governor and the NC Senate both made their budget proposals before revenue reports showed the economy worse than previously thought. The House of Representatives plan includes increasing taxes to bring in an additional \$784 million dollars.

Where are teacher assistants figuring into the budget?

- **Senate Budget:** NONE - There were no *specifics* for teacher assistant cuts; however, the LEA Discretionary Reduction would leave open the possibility of LEAs *choosing* to reduce their teacher assistants through a discretionary reduction.

Local Education Agency Discretionary Reduction: The State Board of Education shall distribute this local education agency discretionary reduction on the basis of ADM. A related provision, Section 7.8, will provide additional flexibility to the LEAs to manage this reduction. 2009: \$9,432,140 Reduction; 2010: \$8,432,140 Reduction

- **House of Representatives:** The House's version of the budget cuts \$130,135,446 from teacher assistant funding in both 2009-2010 and again in 2010-2011 by basing the allotment funding on K-2 enrollment (ADM) instead of K-3 enrollment. They do not have an LEA Discretionary Reduction in their version.
- **Governor's Version:** NONE - The Governor had a line item of \$144,000,000 of LEA Flexibility Reductions in her budget version.

What do we need to do now? We need to contact our [legislators](#) and the [Governor](#) and we need to ask our friends, our family members, non-NCATA member teacher assistants to join in our efforts!

Yesterday I spoke to someone concerned about mental health cuts and how they will impact people she knows. A friend with the *More at Four* program is worried about the effect of cuts on the young children she works with. Teachers are worried about the larger class sizes. Obviously, teacher assistants are not the only people saying, "Don't cut us. What we do is too important." These cuts will affect many people. The loss of their jobs will hurt not only the employees themselves, but also the people they serve. *The bottom line is: **Children come first!*** The North Carolina General Assembly and our Governor need to keep children first by funding the people and the services that children need! To do otherwise will have serious consequences to their health, safety, and education.

As a reminder, here are some of the points you can make concerning teacher assistants and why what we do is essential to the successful education of our children:

1. Teacher assistants are no longer just clerical workers; rather, teacher assistants spend a majority of their time *instructing* children. They still find the time to create materials to be used in the classroom and perform the clerical skills to support the instructional goals of their teachers.

2. When a teacher assistant is in a classroom, the student-to-instructor ratio is cut in half. Teacher assistants work with small groups and provide individualized instruction and remediation. This focused attention helps our students succeed!
3. Teacher assistants are vital to the implementation of the teacher planning time and duty free lunch legislation. With a teacher assistant in charge of the class, a teacher has the necessary time to plan.
4. Teacher assistants are widely used to meet the guidelines of the North Carolina Healthy Active Children Policy with regard to recess and daily physical activity and helping younger students with food selection.
5. Teacher assistants drive buses, monitor student arrival and dismissal, escort students to the bathroom, to lunch, to enrichment activities, on field trips, etc. They help to make certain our students are safe while in our schools!
6. Raising class sizes and cutting teacher assistants could very likely increase teacher turnover. Teachers are already under a lot of stress due to testing requirements.

None of us know how this will end or if everything will be okay. As a teacher assistant, I feel the same worries and concerns as every other teacher assistant across this state. We need to continue on message and not give up! Some of you have already received notice that you will not be employed next year as a teacher assistant or that your hours have been cut back. I feel such sorrow over this, not only for you, but for the children you helped teach. Your school systems are now moving forward with their planning based on the House of Representative's budget version. Also, LEAs have their local budgets to consider. These are very difficult times, but know that NCATA continues to represent the interests of teacher assistants. We are working for you!

One more thing – Joanne Stevens, our lobbyist, is recovering from a very serious yet successful brain surgery. She is doing well but is still in ICU. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

Sincerely,
Melinda

Melinda K. Zarate
NCATA Legislative Chair