

# Whole Child NC Updates

*Kella Hatcher, Whole Child NC Chair*

*Dr. Patrick Greene, Whole Child NC Vice Chair*

December 2025



**Kella Hatcher, JD**

**Committee Chair**

Whole Child NC Advisory Committee



**Patrick Greene, EdD**

**Committee Vice Chair**

Whole Child NC Advisory Committee

# Desired Outcomes

**Update** the State Board on the work of the Whole Child NC committee.

**Highlight** connections to the Achieving Excellence Strategic Plan.

**Present** a policy recommendation from the committee.



# Whole Child North Carolina Vision

**State agencies and partners will coordinate so that all children thrive in a nurturing environment and have the resources and supports they need, provided the way they need them, and when they need them.**



# Whole Child NC Advisory Committee

**Identifies and reviews the challenges of at-risk school-aged population such as poverty, safety, health, and other non-academic barriers.**

- Established September 2015
- 22 Members
- Currently, 2 Vacancies
- Diversity of Expertise and Organizations

**Makes recommendations to the State Board of Education, other state agencies, and education stakeholder groups on best practices and policies on how best to facilitate access for all public school children to receive the opportunity for a sound basic education.**



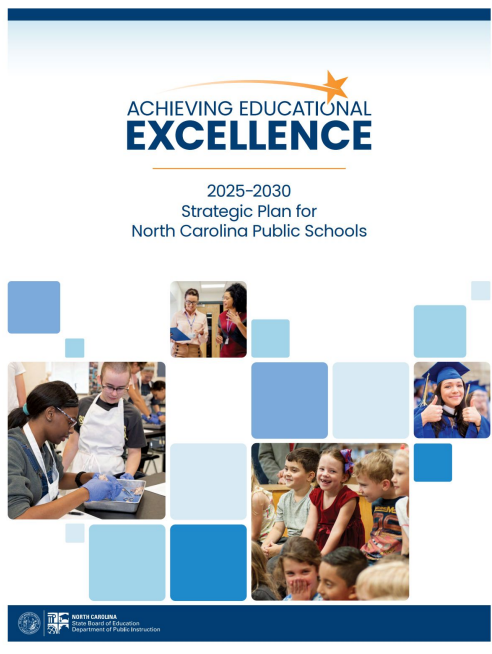
# Whole Child NC 2025 Recommendations

1. Continue to advocate for funding support for additional Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) while continuing to address the pipeline issues.
2. Support fully funding a State School Psychology position (FTE) at DPI to help with School Psychology Recruitment for the state.
3. Support Masters' level pay for School Social Workers (SSW).
4. Support collaboration with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to expand opportunities for School-Based Health Centers in non-served school districts.



# Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)

Continue to advocate for funding support for additional SISP, while continuing to address the pipeline issues.



**Revere  
Public School  
Educators**



**Ensure Healthy, Safe  
and Secure Learning  
Environments**

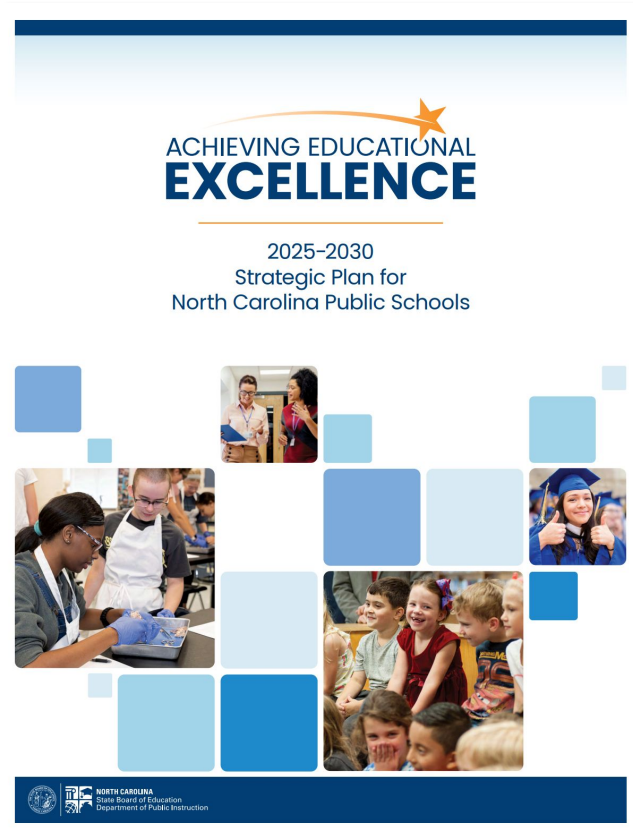


**Enhance Parent,  
Caregiver, and  
Community Support**



**Celebrate the  
Excellence in  
Public Education**

# Support Fully Funding a State School Psychology Position (Recruitment FTE)



**Enhance Parent,  
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Community Support**

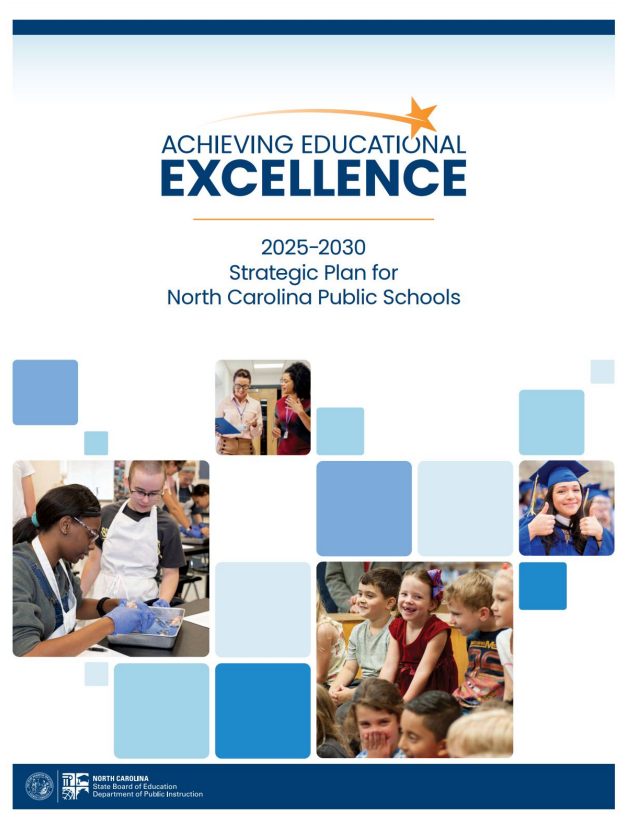


**Ensure Healthy, Safe  
and Secure Learning  
Environments**



**Galvanize Champions  
to Fully Invest in  
and Support  
Public Education**

# Support Master's level pay for School Social Workers



**Revere  
Public School  
Educators**



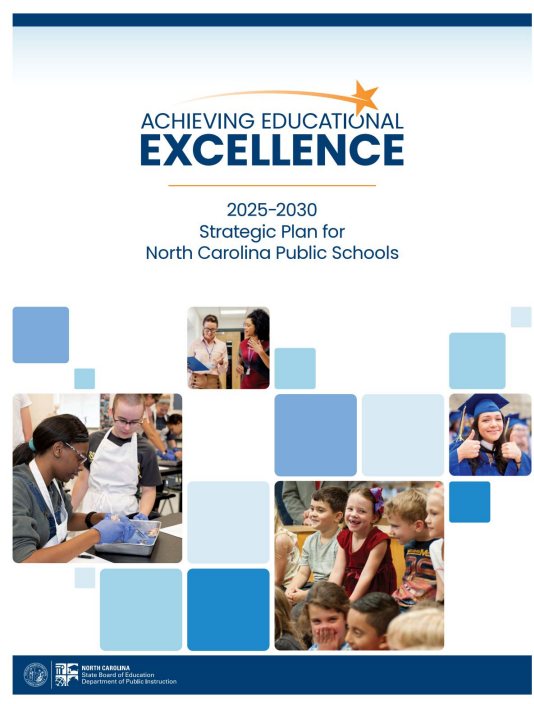
**Ensure Healthy, Safe  
and Secure Learning  
Environments**



**Galvanize Champions  
to Fully Invest in  
and Support  
Public Education**

# Expand Access to School-based Health Centers

Support collaboration with DHHS to expand opportunities for School-Based Health Centers in non-served school districts.



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# Delving Deeper on School Social Workers

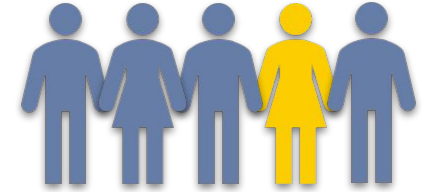
- **March 2025:** Committee took recommendation to support masters pay for school social workers to SBE
- **May 2025:** Committee further explored school social worker topic
- **August 2025:** Committee continued conversation on Masters in Social Work (MSW) vs. Bachelors school social workers  
**WCNC voted for recommendation:** Require a master's degree for all School Social Workers, contingent upon proper appropriation of funds by the General Assembly, allowing for a 5-year attainment period for current social workers with a bachelor's degree (BSW).



# **Rationale for Masters in Social Work Recommendation**



# Complex Needs of Students



- **One in five children** live in food insecure households.
- **One in five adolescents** have seriously considered attempting suicide.
- **One in ten children aged 3 – 17** has a diagnosis of anxiety or depression.
- **OVER 50% of children ages 3-17** have reported difficulties accessing mental health treatment they need.

*The U.S. is facing a “**child health crisis**,” according to the **KIDS COUNT** authors, who cite **high rates of chronic disease, mental illness, and deaths from firearms, drug overdoses, and suicides as driving forces of the crisis.***

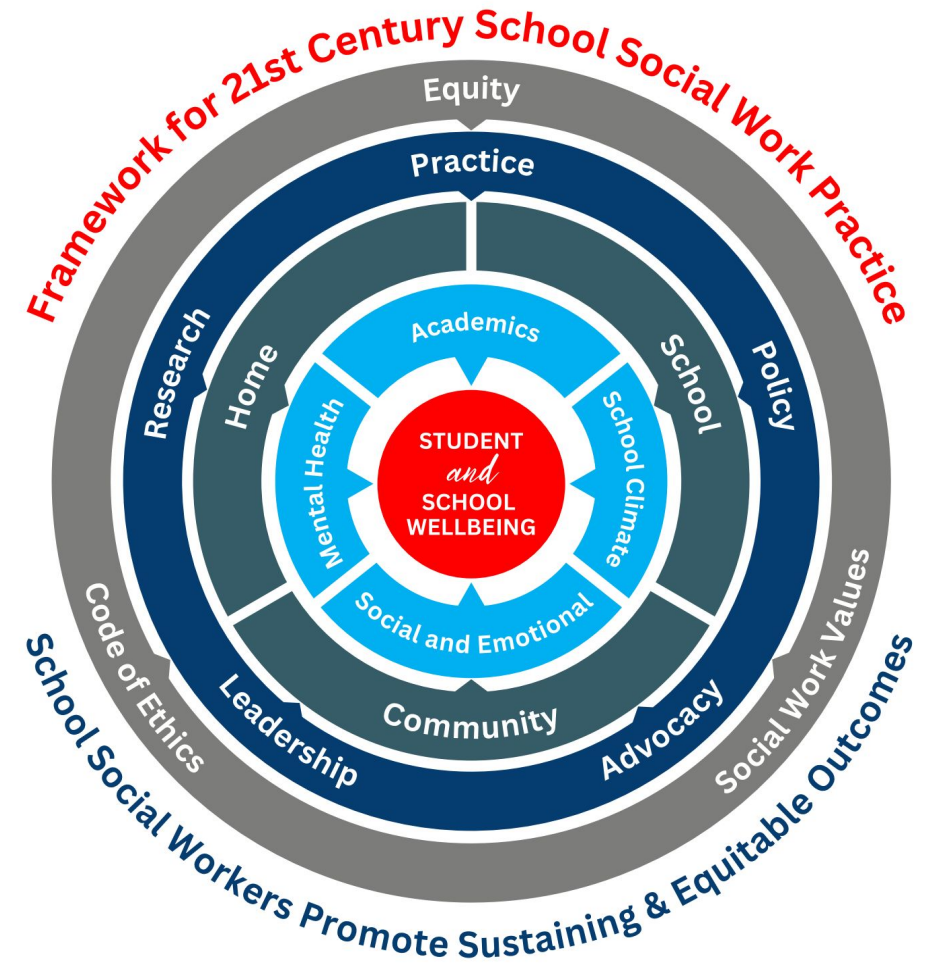
# Varied Skill Sets

Key differences in mental health, training, and complexity of cases.

| Ability             | Bachelor of Social Work                                                       | Master of Social Work                                                     |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assessment          | Conducts basic needs assessments and resource referrals.                      | Conducts psychosocial assessments and treatment planning.                 |
| Intervention Skills | Provides case management, advocacy, and resource navigation.                  | Offers short-term counseling, crisis intervention, and program oversight. |
| Crisis Management   | Assists with immediate crises by connecting clients to appropriate resources. | Provides direct crisis intervention and short-term stabilization.         |

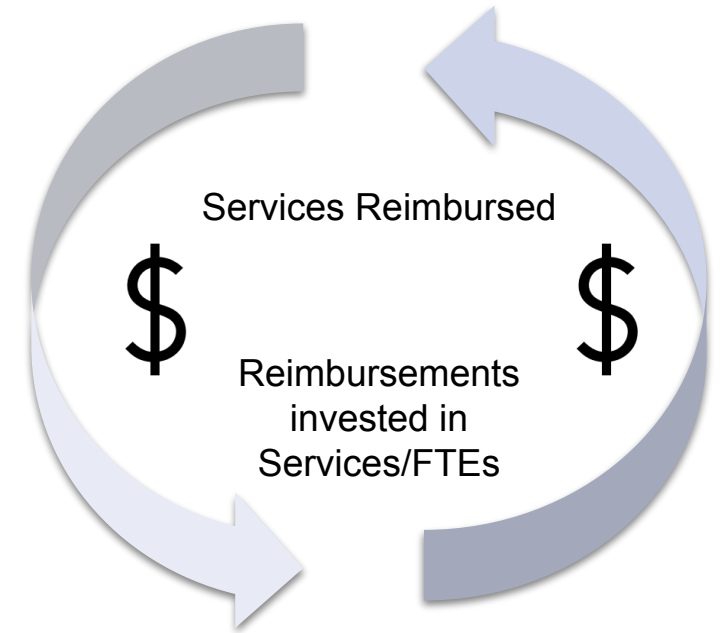
# Additional Considerations

- Alignment with National Association of Social Workers
- Recruitment and Retention
- Standardization with other SISP
- Over 60% of States Require an MSW to Practice in Schools
- Medicaid Billing Eligibility



# Medicaid Reimbursement Potential

- Nationally, **over half of all school-aged children and youth** are covered by Medicaid.
- Medicaid pays **\$4-6 billion to school districts** for providing school-based services each year and is a large source of funding for many LEAs.
- **Chicago Public Schools** receives **\$35-40 million annually** in Medicaid reimbursement.
  - The district expects **\$10 million more** as a result of the federal flexibilities offered in the 2023 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services claiming guide.
- **Colorado saw a 29% increase in reimbursements** from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 (\$17.3 million more).



# Challenges Considered by Committee

## Workforce

- Healthy Pipeline of School Social Workers with a Masters in NC
- Social Workers with a Bachelors can remain in place up to five years under provisional license
- Do not have to cease employing social workers with a bachelors (alternative job descriptions)



## Access to Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs)

- 11 approved Masters in Social Work programs in NC
- Grant with 3 Institutes of Higher Education through 2027 (online programs)



## Funding



# Estimated Cost

| What We Know                      | The Total to Pay at Masters Level for All | What We Don't Know                                                            |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 650 have Masters in Social Work   | \$4,341,563                               | # of them not reporting updated education                                     |
| 1,660 School Social Workers total | \$10,903,546                              | How many are currently being paid for Masters in Social Work (estimated ~350) |

**The estimated cost is an immediate 4.3M**

The gradual increase is estimated at 10.9M once every single School Social Worker is on Masters pay.

*\*Both figures actually LESS due to some already receiving Masters pay*

# Value of School Social Workers

- Suicide is the **third leading cause of death for youth ages 10-17**, falling right behind motor vehicle injuries and homicide.
- **1 in 5 high schools** students reported seriously considering attempting suicide in 2021 and 1 in 10 reported making a suicide attempt.
- **Between 2016 and 2023**, the number of children with anxiety or depression more than doubled.
- **Over 30,000 students** in NC experience homelessness.
- **About 1 in five children** face food insecurity.

**What is the cost  
of **NOT** meeting  
these needs?**

# Whole Child NC's Next Steps

**Continue** efforts regarding other priorities.

- Increase SISP
- Access to school-based health services.
- Support fully funding a State School Psychology position (FTE).

**Identify** future priorities.

**Communicate** with additional stakeholders and build support for Whole Child NC.



# Whole School Whole Community Whole Child

Healthy Children Learn Better



# Questions?