



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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CTE, Teacher & Political News

Apprenticeship Programs Needed: The problem of closing the “skills gap” in North Carolina isn’t going away. The NC Chamber, in an email article last week, noted that employers are having trouble finding the talent needed to fill jobs. The situation is partly the result of when students leave high school, or even college, many are more keyed in to memorization – not the ability to solve problems by thinking conceptually.

“One of the many ways employers can get engaged to help close our skills gap is by supporting apprenticeship programs that give today’s students first-hand workforce experience,” the article said, adding that NC chamber representatives this month participated in the graduation ceremony for the Charlotte-based [Apprenticeship 2000](#) program at Central Piedmont Community College, where they spoke about the importance of employer-driven apprenticeship programs for shrinking the skills gap. That event came a day after NC Chamber team members attended the signing ceremony for a Triangle-based apprenticeship initiative, [NCTAP](#), which is built on the same model as Apprenticeship 2000.

“These programs were formed to increase the number of young people across our state trained for high-tech manufacturing positions, and they have achieved a great deal of success toward that end. Participating sponsors in the Apprenticeship 2000 program, for instance, cover apprentices’ education expenses at Central Piedmont Community College, where they can earn a two-year associate degree in Mechatronics Engineering Technology and a Journeyman’s Certificate from the NC Department of Commerce which is valid in all 50 states. Participants in the program can earn in excess of \$10 an hour and, upon graduation, begin careers with a salary of \$36,400 per year as well as full benefits and 401Ks,” the article noted. .

In addition, the NC Chamber Foundation is working to address a number of other issues directly related to the skills gap, including building greater alignment between education and workforce development initiatives in local communities with the [NCWorks Certified Work Ready](#)

[Communities](#) program, and mapping the impacts of changing technology on our state's future workforce. For more info, contact NC Chamber Policy Development Manager Cassi Zumbiel at czumbiel@ncchamber.net.

Teacher Vacancies: The Salisbury Post reported last week those only days before school began today, the Rowan-Salisbury School System had more than 70 vacancies for certified teachers. The Rowan-Salisbury Board of Education spent some time at its business meeting this month discussing the issue. The board previously voted to hire a teacher recruiter, as well as to hire 15 teachers through the visiting international faculty program to fill hard-to-recruit-for positions. As of Aug. 16, the system reportedly had vacancies for nine science teachers and seven math teachers. According to the school system's advertised openings, there were at the time 87 vacancies for certified staff, total -- including central office staff positions, assistant principals and principals.

Senate Appointment: The owner of seven McDonald's franchises, Chuck Edwards, has been named to fill the Senate seat for Buncombe, Henderson and Transylvania counties vacated last month by retiring Sen. Tom Apodaca, R-Henderson. Edwards will face Democratic challenger Norman Bossert in the Nov. 8 general election, in what the NC Free Enterprise Foundation considers a strong Republican district. In March's primary, Bossert ran unopposed, while Edwards staved off two challengers.

Public Schools Trends, Other News

More Looking at Traditional Public Schools Options: Home schools, charter schools and private schools have cut into the growth of the Wake County school system, where planners have reduced growth projections because of the increased competition, The News & Observer reports. Now planners project Wake will grow by about 2,000 students a year. That compares with 3,000 or more children as in past years.

When Republicans took control of the legislature in 2011, they lifted the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in the state and began in 2013 a program that provides taxpayer voucher funding to help some families attend private schools. Charter schools statewide have added more new students since 2011 than traditional public schools. The voucher program helped reverse a statewide decline in enrollment in private schools. Home-schooling has also become more popular, adding more new students since 2011 than the traditional public schools.

Wake County: Wake, the largest school system in the state, has been directly affected by education policies put in place by North Carolina's General Assembly that have slowed the growth in traditional public-school enrollment, according to the newspaper.

"There is no doomsday by any means, but I do think that the new reality is upon us," said Darrell Allison, president of Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina, a school choice group. "There is real power now and there are legs now that follow parent demand, and that has to be appreciated." Click [here](#) for more info.

State Seal: Repair work on the large state seal outside the Legislative Building in Raleigh was sidetracked recently when workers determined that all 53 brass letters embedded in an outer ring must be remade. The seal work, being done by Cornell Edwards of Kinston, should be finished by the end of September at a cost of about \$43,000, said Charles Weathersby, General Assembly facility manager.

It's the first major work on the seal since 2011, when the outermost ring, which includes a rope design, was replaced after weather took and time took their toll. The seal was embedded in the walkway in front of the Legislative Building on Jones Street shortly after the building opened in 1963. The ring being replaced includes the words, "The Great Seal of the State of North Carolina" and "Esse Quam Videri," the state motto, along with two stars. Mother Nature caused water infiltration that led to cracking and chunks breaking off near the bottom of the seal.

Passing: Former state Sen. Aaron Plyler, a lawmaker who wielded power over the state budget and was a strong advocate of higher education and CTE, died last week at age 89. Plyler was elected to the House in 1974 and Senate in 1982.

The Charlotte Observer reports that Plyler rose to become chair of a budget committee and a member of a super subcommittee, a handful of lawmakers who wrote the state budget behind closed doors. Reporters and legislative Republicans, then in the minority, called them "the Gang of Eight." Despite their often adversarial role, Republican Gov. Jim Martin respected Plyler. "He was always trustworthy," Martin said. "He was a straight shooter."

Quote of the Week

"First, the doctor told me the good news: I was going to have a disease named after me."

- Comedian Steve Martin

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