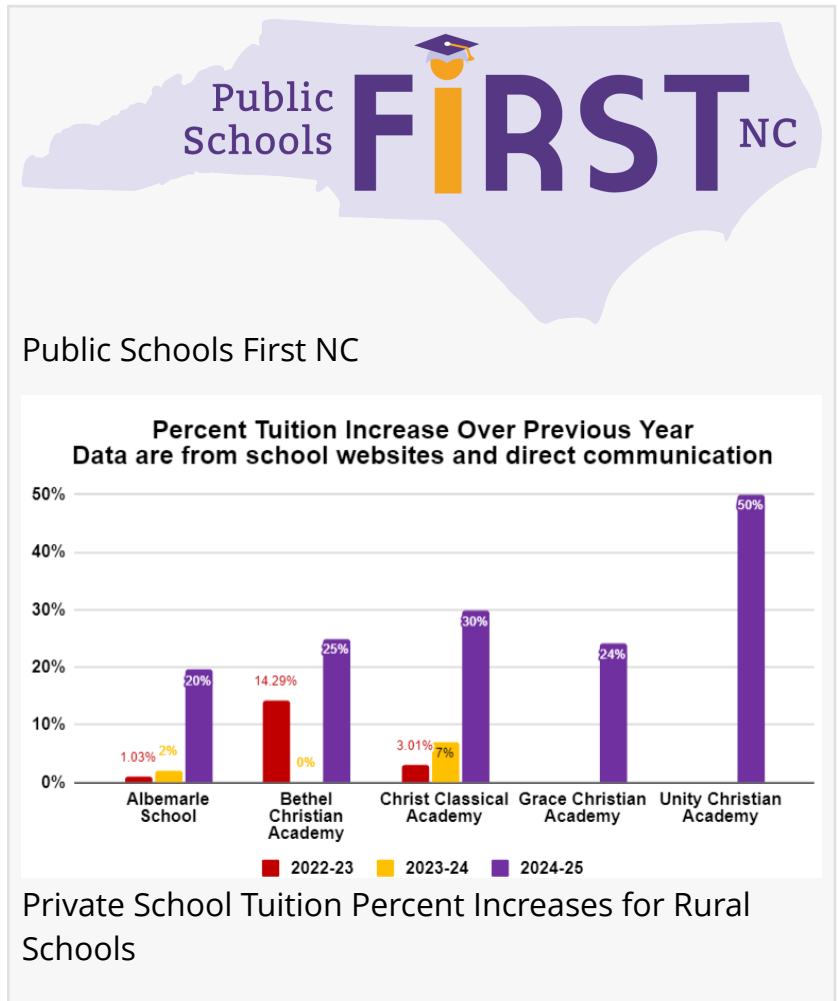


Private, Mostly Religious Schools in Rural NC Hike Tuition in Anticipation of Vouchers

Private schools in rural NC are raising tuition to align with tuition rates paid by the state under new universal voucher expansion

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, June 25, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- North Carolina's voucher program, which is now available to all families regardless of income starting in the 2024-25 school year, seems to be contributing to substantial tuition increases by private schools across the state. Previous reports on Iowa and Arizona provide evidence that schools are raising tuition in response to the availability of vouchers. Evidence from North Carolina is showing a similar trend and, because North Carolina has one of the [largest rural populations](#) in the United States, rural students and families may be the ones most affected by rising tuition rates, as rural counties are often the poorest and families are less able to absorb the increased cost.

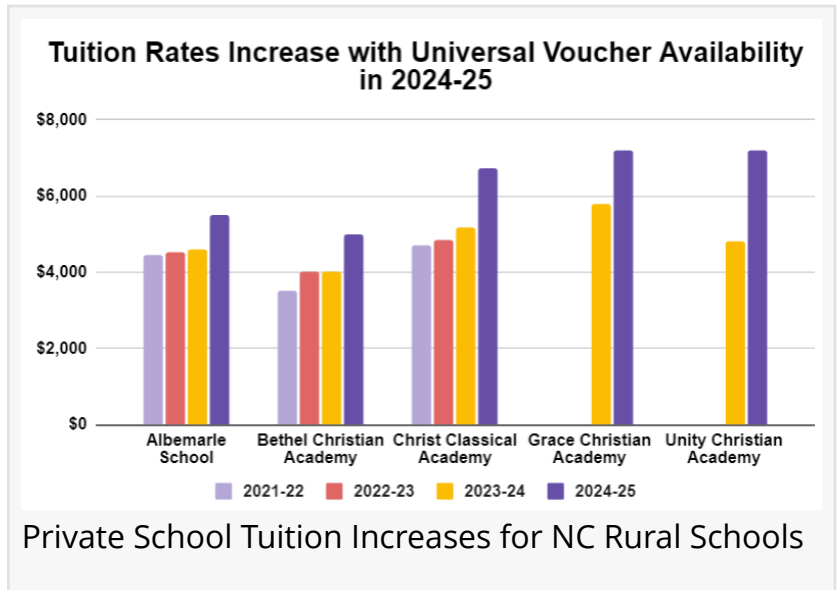


One might expect to see tuition increases that align with inflation rates as costs increase for schools. While it is reasonable to expect tuition increases to cover inflation, early research on private schools across NC shows that some rural schools (shown in the chart) have raised tuition at rates that far exceed those of inflation (1). Instead, the increases suggest that with universal voucher availability, schools raised their tuition to more closely align with the amount paid per voucher. Starting in 2024-25, the state will pay from \$3,360 to \$7,468 for tuition at a private school depending on family income. (The purple bars in the chart show the percent increase in tuition from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year, while the red and yellow bars

show the percent increases for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. No data label means that tuition rates were unavailable for the previous year, so increases could not be determined.)

For example, the average tuition rate at the Albemarle School in Pasquotank County, NC was \$4,462 for the 2021-22 school year. Over the next two years, the average rate increased annually from 1% to 2.5%. However, average tuition for the 2024-25 school year will

be \$5,500, a massive 20% increase from the 2023-24 school year. Similarly, at Christ Classical Academy in Burke County, NC, average tuition for the 2021-22 school year was \$4,709. Tuition increased by 3% to 7% across grade levels over the next two years. But for 2024-25, tuition went up a huge 29.90%, to an average of \$6,743. These increases cannot be accounted for by inflation (2), which reached an annual maximum of 7% in 2021 and had dropped to 3.4% by 2023.



Private School Tuition Increases for NC Rural Schools

These and the other rural schools shown in the chart have raised tuition to amounts that more closely align with the voucher amount given by the state (3). Some schools have raised their tuition knowing that that the cost will be partially—and in many cases fully—paid by the state. Unity Christian Academy raised tuition from \$4,800 in 2023-24 to \$7,200 in 2024-25 (50% increase). The maximum tuition voucher for 2024-25 is \$7,468.

The expanded voucher program is actively taking money out of public schools that could be used to raise teacher salaries, provide better special education and ESL services, and even contribute to better maintenance of school buildings. The [vast majority](#) of North Carolina students attend public schools, so shifting funds from public to private schools has the potential to have affect the majority of students in the state.

As documented in other states, North Carolina's voucher expansion is enabling private schools to implement significant tuition increases that exploit families of private school students while simultaneously draining public schools of much needed funds. NC's constitution requires that the state fund a free, open-to-all, public education for its K-12 students. This is the commitment to the state's children and the common good that taxpayers are asked to fund. Depriving rural public schools while private schools maximize tuition at the state's expense is well beyond what's mandated in the state constitution.

(1) Percent Tuition Increase Over Previous Year: [https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Private-school-percent-changes Rural F.png](https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Private-school-percent-changes-Rural-F.png)

(2) Inflation rates: <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/current-inflation-rates/>

(3) Tuition Rates Increase with Universal Voucher Availability in 2024-25:

https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Private-school-funding-changes_Rural_F.png

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