



Dear United Methodist Clergy:

The Annual Conferences of both the North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences in 2016 approved committees to advocate jointly to develop ways to improve the value of public education and how this can be promoted and communicated through our churches, districts, and Conferences to the leaders of North Carolina's government. **The UMAPS (United Methodist Advocates for Public Schools) Committee is working on ways to support students and honor teachers for the crucial work they do.** We also strongly advocate that every Methodist should voice their concerns about any restriction on resources that prevent our public schools delivering a world class education for our children. Thus, in the NC Conference we have the **Congregations for Children (C4C - Missions) ministry for direct support for children and engagement in classrooms**, and **UMAPS (Church and Society) for advocating in policy and increasing awareness of the importance of public education.**

We hope you and your congregants will celebrate teachers and students with **Back to School activities and recognition in August.** First day for most students is August 28 but check your local system. We have seen many powerful ideas for lifting up our teachers and students, and below are some you may want to adopt. 1,720,042 students were enrolled in Kindergarten through Grade 12 in 2016.

You may have many teachers in your congregation as well as others who actively support our children in their education. Remember our administrators, assistants, bus drivers and child nutrition workers, custodians, counselors, crossing guards and the many others who support all children. We can show our love and support for children and teachers on our 'Back to School' Sundays and we can further commit ourselves to advocating for improvements to all education delivery by ensuring that those who make the decisions about the quality and delivery of education, are committed to improving funding through all levels of education governance, to improving education curriculum and resources, and .

**Here are some suggestions for HOW you may want to celebrate teachers and students as they begin another year of learning and growing:**

- Write about Back to School activities in your newsletter, bulletin or outgoing emails.
- Hold a Back to School service, lighting a candle for each school in your area. Consider partnering with other churches for this service.
- Laying hand on teachers and school workers commissioning them for ministry in their work.
- Bless the Backpacks, asking students to come to church with their backpacks one Sunday.
- Invite a teacher or principal to speak briefly at a service or United Methodist Men or Women's gathering
- Ask everyone who works with children to stand to be recognized during a worship service
- Add a prayer or responsive reading for teachers and students to your worship service
- Send an email or note to your child's/grandchild's teacher showing your appreciation
- Ask children in Sunday School classes to make cards for their teachers
- Write an email or letter to your local or state representative expressing your support for strong, well-funded public education and its importance for all children.
- Focus the sermon on the importance of providing the financial and other resources for teachers and our learning institutions.

**Sample prayer**

Dear God,

Thank you for the amazing teachers who have given their lives to serve our children. As they prepare for the new school year, give them the strength to lead, grace to guide, and hope to thrive. Bless them beyond measure for their willingness to pour into the next generation through education. We also pray for our education leaders, school board representatives and state level elected representatives, that they might embrace the idea that no restrictions should be placed in the way of providing every child with the resources to receive the best education possible. This means providing adequate financial and other resources to enable those resources to be acquired and be adequately paid for. Help us to be more committed to the future of our children and their education by being engaged in the school governance process.

Amen

Thank you for joining us in this effort to celebrate and encourage. Tell us about your events and ideas by emailing: [bheyman@mindspring.com](mailto:bheyman@mindspring.com) and [charmans@nccumc.org](mailto:charmans@nccumc.org).