

Education ^[1]

North Carolina's [1776 constitution](#) ^[2] guaranteed the state's citizens a system of public education:

That a school or schools shall be established by the Legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth, with such salaries to the masters, paid by the public, as may enable them to instruct at low prices; and all useful learning shall be duly encouraged, and promoted, in one or more universities.

But although the legislature established the [University of North Carolina](#) ^[3] in 1789, the first public school for younger students didn't open until 1840. In the meantime, children were educated — if they were educated — in a patchwork of institutions. Paid tutors, community schools built by volunteers, private academies, boarding schools, and private colleges all played a role. In this chapter you'll explore what education was like for young students in early nineteenth-century North Carolina — boys and girls, black and white — and what their education, or lack thereof, said about the values of North Carolinians.

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Bostick Schoolhouse in Ellerbe, North Carolina, is a restored one-room schoolhouse from the nineteenth century.

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