

Summary of the *Leandro* Comprehensive Remedial Plan
Prepared for the Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education

The Supreme Court of North Carolina’s landmark decision in *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* (1997) affirmed the fundamental right of every child to have the opportunity to receive a sound basic education. Despite significant efforts since this decision, and the subsequent ruling in *Hoke County Board of Education v. State of North Carolina* (2004), this constitutional right has been and continues to be denied to many North Carolina children.

On January 21, 2020, with the benefit of the findings, research, and recommendations of WestEd’s report, *Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina*, and the Governor’s Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education, Judge W. David Lee signed a Consent Order negotiated by the parties in the case. Acknowledging WestEd’s research, Judge Lee noted:

*North Carolina's PreK-12 public education system leaves too many students behind, especially students of color and economically disadvantaged students. As a result, thousands of students are not being prepared for full participation in the global, interconnected economy and the society in which they will live, work, and engage as citizens.*¹

In September 2020, following the submission to the court of the initial actions the State would take in the 2020-21 fiscal year, the Judge ordered that the State, in consultation with the Plaintiffs, develop and submit to the Court “a *Leandro* Comprehensive Remedial Plan to be fully implemented by the end of 2028 with the objective of fully satisfying the Defendants’ *Leandro* obligations by the end of 2030.”

The Comprehensive Remedial Plan, which draws upon WestEd’s research and the Commission’s recommendations, was submitted to the Court in March 2021. Below is a summary of the key actions included in the Comprehensive Remedial Plan (see the full plan and appendix for the detailed action steps and cost projections). These actions are aligned with the seven key areas outlined in Judge Lee’s January 2020 order.

1. A system of teacher development and recruitment that ensures each classroom is staffed with a high-quality teacher who is supported with early and ongoing professional learning and provided competitive pay.

- Increase the pipeline of diverse, well-prepared teachers who enter through high-retention pathways by providing the resources and structures necessary to allow educator preparation programs in the State's institutions of higher education to increase their recruitment, graduation, and retention of teachers and instructional support personnel, especially educators of color, in order to prepare 5,000 new teachers each year.
- Provide support for the expansion of student recruitment programs, including high school-based career academy programs, the North Carolina Teacher Cadet Program, and Teaching as a Profession, that encourage students to engage in the teaching profession and enable them to take college courses in education and areas relevant to their interests in education.

¹ Hoke Cty. Bd. Educ. v. State, No. 95 CVS 1158 (January 21, 2020)

- Expand the NC Teaching Fellows Program to support 1,500 Teaching Fellows annually; to include additional eligible teacher preparation programs, including minority-serving universities; to include eligible certification areas beyond STEM and special education; and by implementing targeted recruitment strategies that inform and attract candidates of color.
- Support high quality teacher residency programs in high need rural and urban districts through a State matching grant program that leverages federal Title II funding.
- Increase access to high quality teacher recruitment and development programs, such as TAs to Teachers, Troops to Teachers, and Pathway to Practice.
- Expand Partnership TEACH hub sites, staffing, fellowship support, mentoring, and the recruitment capacity of Partnership TEACH, and provide support for similarly successful, research-based Grow-Your-Own and 2+2 programs in all regions of the State.
- Significantly increase the racial and ethnic diversity of North Carolina’s qualified and well-prepared teacher workforce and ensure all teachers employ culturally-responsive practices.
- In partnership with school districts, provide comprehensive induction services through the NC New Teacher Support Program to additional beginning teachers in low performing, high poverty schools.
- Create a permanent Advanced Teaching Roles program that will allow all interested districts to apply for one-time startup funds and provide class size waivers and other flexibility, as necessary, to successfully implement career pathways through an advanced teaching roles and differentiated staffing initiative.
- Increase capacity for schools and districts to provide personalized, job-embedded, collaborative professional learning opportunities.
- Increase teacher compensation based on a North Carolina-specific wage comparability study and enable low wealth districts to offer salaries and other compensation to make them competitive with more advantaged districts.
- Establish a district-level grant program focused on the implementation of multi-year recruitment bonuses for certified teachers who commit to teach in a low wealth or high needs district or school for multiple years.

2. A system of principal development and recruitment that ensures each school is led by a high-quality principal who is supported with early and ongoing professional learning and provided competitive pay.

- Update the State’s administrator preparation standards and principal licensure requirements to align program approval standards with national standards of effective practices.
- Expand access to high quality principal preparation by expanding the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3) to three additional postsecondary institutions and by ensuring that every school district has a partnership with at least one school administrator preparation program that meets national standards and provides full-time, year-long internships.
- Provide resources for the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program to prepare 300 new principals annually.

- Ensure school administrator preparation programs recruit and prepare candidates that better match the diversity of NC’s student population.
 - Develop a School Leadership Academy to provide initial and ongoing support to the State’s district and school leaders, including equity training for all district and school leaders; mentorship and individualized coaching for novice principals and for experienced principals in high needs schools; peer support networks; and aligned, ongoing, research driven professional learning.
 - Expand professional learning opportunities for current principals and assistant principals.
 - Revise the principal and assistant principal salary structures and improve working conditions to make positions in high need schools and districts more attractive to well-qualified administrators.
 - Provide school administrators with greater autonomy to make resource decisions to address the needs of their schools.
- 3. A finance system that provides adequate, equitable, and predictable funding to school districts and, importantly, adequate resources to address the needs of all North Carolina schools and students, especially at-risk students as defined by the *Leandro* decisions.**
- Increase Local Education Agency (LEA) budgetary flexibility by lifting restrictions on several critical allotments through the ABC transfer system.
 - Revise the State’s school funding formula and incrementally increase supplemental funding so that current and additional funding is distributed to students with the greatest need, including students with disabilities, disadvantaged and at-risk students, and students with limited English proficiency.
 - Incrementally increase low wealth funding to provide eligible counties supplemental funding equal to 110 percent of the statewide local revenue per student.
 - Fund a study to determine how to phase-in a weighted student funding formula that retains position allotments.
 - Increase the investment in overall spending for public education incrementally over the next eight years to provide a sound basic education for all students, including increases in funding for professional development, teacher assistants, non-instructional support, classroom supplies, textbooks, classroom teachers, assistant principals, and central office staff.
 - Increase flexible funding for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP), such as school nurses, psychologists, counselors, and social workers, to meet the academic, physical, and mental health needs of students and to ensure that schools are safe and supportive learning environments.
 - Modify the school finance system to ensure future stability in funding for public education, including predictable, anticipated funding levels that acknowledge external cost factors such as inflation, enrollment growth, and charter school funding.
- 4. An assessment and accountability system that reliably assesses multiple measures of student performance against the *Leandro* standard and provides accountability consistent with the *Leandro* standard.**
- Establish a more instructionally focused and student-centered assessment system by expanding the use of NC Check-Ins in grades 3-8 and aligning the NC Early Learning

Inventory (formerly the Kindergarten Entry Assessment) within birth through third grade standards.

- Launch the Innovative Assessment Demonstration pilot approved by the US Department of Education beginning in 16 districts and charters to improve and personalize formative assessment and to evaluate the feasibility of utilizing through-grade results to provide summative assessment results.
- Improve coherence among curriculum, instruction, and assessment by evaluating the curricular materials selected by school districts and report on the degree of alignment with State-adopted content standards.
- Amend the current accountability system by revising the NC General Statutes and the State's *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) plan to adjust the weighting between student proficiency and student growth in the State's School Performance Grades and by including additional measures of progress toward meeting the *Leandro* tenets, including indicators that provide information on students' opportunity to access a sound basic education, in addition to student performance on State standardized assessments.
- Implement a system for evaluating instructional quality, rigor, and equity at the school level to provide feedback and support to schools and districts.
- Develop and implement a plan for including on annual school report cards school-level information on the race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other demographic information on all students, staff, students identified for exceptional children services, students participating in advanced learning opportunities, and other pertinent information.
- Amend the NC Dashboard to provide data on state, district, and school performance and growth on a comprehensive set of measures that indicate progress toward meeting the *Leandro* requirements and is inclusive of the reporting requirements under ESSA.

5. An assistance and turnaround function that provides necessary support to low performing schools and districts.

- Implement the NC State Board of Education's (NC SBE) district and regional support model to provide direct and comprehensive assistance for the improvement of low performing and high poverty schools and districts by aligning systems, processes, and procedures in a unified system of support that results in every child having equitable access to a meaningful, sound basic education.
- Provide statewide and/or regional support to help schools and districts select high quality standards-aligned, culturally responsive core curriculum resources and to prepare teachers to use those resources effectively.
- Provide resources, opportunities, and supports for low performing and high poverty schools to address out of school barriers to learning, using a community schools or other evidence-based approach.
- Extend the supports already available to schools to help them further implement a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework, a school improvement plan, and NC Check-In approaches.

6. A system of early education that provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities to ensure that all students at risk of educational failure, regardless of where they live in the State, enter kindergarten on track for school success.

- Expand the NC Pre-K program to provide high-quality, full year services to at least 75 percent of eligible four-year-old children in each county. Increase state funding to provide the full cost per slot. Ensure NC Pre-K teachers are licensed and paid according to public school teacher salary scale. Provide transportation for NC Pre-K students.
- Increase high-quality early learning opportunities for children from birth through the development and piloting of a high-quality program comparable to the state model for NC Pre-K that is appropriately designed for younger ages and targeted for eligible children in high-poverty districts.
- Implement improvements to the child care subsidy rate system based on a study and increase state funding for subsidy to support high-quality child care, including higher compensation for early childhood educators.
- Implement a pilot of the *Family Connects* universal home visiting model for families with newborns, which provides nurse home visits to address infant and maternal health and to link families to community services, including early learning opportunities. Scale up statewide following the pilot.
- Expand and improve access to individualized early intervention services and supports to families with children birth to age three and include at-risk children in North Carolina's definition of eligibility for the Part C Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (NC Infant Toddler Program).
- Incrementally scale up the Smart Start program to fully fund the program (defined as meeting 25 percent of the statewide need for children from birth to age 5) in order to increase quality, access, and support for all children and families, especially those in under resourced communities, and to provide a cohesive continuum of services responsive to local needs.
- Increase the volume and quality of the early childhood educator pipeline by increasing funding for and expanding participation in the Child Care WAGES and Infant Toddler Educator AWARDS Programs that provide education-based salary supplements; promoting the NC Model Salary Scale for Early Education Teachers; implementing recruitment strategies and professional development; and developing an early childhood teacher preparation program (modeled on the NC Teaching Fellows program) that provides students with full tuition to obtain an associate degree in early childhood education at a North Carolina community college.
- Implement and scale to all school districts a Pre-K to K Transitions program and professional development that ensures prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers work together with families to implement child-centered transition plans. Expand the use of the NC Early Learning Inventory for observation-based formative assessment in the early grades.
- Develop targeted professional development plans for districts and schools identified for support in order to strengthen learning in the early grades. Increase funding for whole child supports through increased number of SISP, as well as increase the number of teacher assistants in the early grades.

- Facilitate reliable access to high-quality data supporting early childhood education by developing a real-time early childhood workforce data system and expanding and improving the NC Early Childhood Integrated Data System and the NC Early Childhood Action Plan data dashboards.

7. An alignment of high school to postsecondary and career expectations, as well as the provision of early postsecondary and workforce learning opportunities, to ensure student readiness to all students in the State.

- Develop model career pathways that align high school Career Technical Education (CTE) courses with workforce demands and clearly articulate expectations for students.
- Provide funding for an independent alignment study of all NC dual credit courses that satisfies basic graduation requirements and, in accordance with the study, develop NC SBE policy and guidance to implement a course review and approval process for all dual enrollment courses.
- Ensure students graduate prepared for college-level coursework at the NC Community Colleges by providing funding for the NROC subscription to support the Career and College Ready Graduate (CCRG) program; professional development for high school educators; and a staff member at the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to support the CCRG program in collaboration with the NC Community College System.
- Provide funds for NCDPI, in collaboration with the Office of State Budget Management, to examine barriers and supports impacting all students' ability to complete high school courses leading to college credit, an associate degree, or a career-ready credential, including an examination of access, equity, resources, fees, and personnel. In accordance with the study, expand funds to remove barriers to economically disadvantaged students' participation in the Career and College Promise program, dual enrollment, and advanced coursework, including course fees, textbooks, and transportation costs.
- Revise the funding approach for the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS) to remove barriers that prevent students in low-wealth districts from participating.
- Expand funds for credentials and certifications for CTE students.
- Adopt the necessary policies to allow school calendar flexibility to ensure that local schools can align with community college and university schedules.
- Provide recurring funding for Cooperative Innovative High Schools approved to open from 2018-2021 and provide recurring funding for up to three additional Cooperative Innovative High Schools annually if approved by the NC SBE.
- Strengthen college and career advising for high school students by providing support to expand the NC Community College System (NCCCS) Career Coaches program and the College Advising Corps, and by providing funds for one Career Development Coordinator for every 1,000 students in grades 6-8 and one Career Development Coordinator for every 500 students in grades 9-12 across the State.

**Total Estimated Costs by Fiscal Year 2028 for
Implementation of the Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan
(from the Plan Appendix)**

	Total Estimated Costs by FY2028	
	Recurring	Non-Recurring
A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Teacher in Every Classroom	\$161,700,000	\$300,000
A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Principal in Every School-	\$14,700,000	\$0
A Finance System that Provides Adequate, Equitable, and Efficient Resources	\$3,680,240,687	\$0
An Assessment and Accountability System that Reliably Assesses Multiple Measures of Student Performance	\$0	\$0
An Assistance and Turnaround Function that Provides Necessary Support to Low Performing Schools and Districts	\$88,413,621	\$0
A System of Early Education that Provides Access to High Quality Prekindergarten and Other Early Childhood Learning Opportunities	\$1,449,170,000	\$3,200,000
Alignment of High School to Postsecondary and Career Expectations for All Students	\$150,026,500	\$100,000
Total Estimated Costs**	\$5,544,250,808	\$3,600,000

**Total estimated costs do not include inflation adjustments or any additional cost estimates based on studies or plans conducted as part of the Comprehensive Remedial Action Plan, including costs for additional educator salary increases and increases in subsidies for child care.