

# Leandro Action Plan: Early Childhood Education

*Update for Governor Cooper's Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education*

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January 23, 2020 • Susan Mundry, WestEd

# Strengthen the Early Childhood Educator Pipeline.

## Alignment

Implement a salary and benefits scale for early childhood educators in programs that receive public funding that is comparable to that for public school teachers.

Expand early childhood educator preparation programs to meet projected workforce targets for high-quality early childhood education services for all eligible four-year-old children.

Provide induction programs and mentoring to support new early childhood educators.

Provide high-quality professional development to support PreK teachers and teacher assistants in meeting the standards of NAEYC endorsed programs and in developing their expertise in early learning standards, child development, culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed care, social-emotional development, and early literacy, and to work successfully with the full range of at-risk children and their families.

## Differences

*WestEd:* The Action Plan has additional specific strategies for increasing the early childhood educator pipeline, such as service scholarships, student loan forgiveness programs, residency programs, grow-your-own programs for paraprofessionals, and career academies for high school students.

# Scale up the Smart Start Program.

## Alignment

Increase the overall investment in Smart Start to meet the defined needs of at-risk children and families eligible for this program.

Adjust funding sources that support Smart Start to ensure the most effective use of dollars to better enable communities to meet the local support needs of children and families.

Augment current funding and infrastructure for programs to expand evidence-based family/parent engagement, home visiting and other family support programs, identifying the most at-risk children and prioritizing services for them as young as possible where impact is greatest.

## Differences

*Commission:* Expand access to developmental screenings, including social-emotional screening, to ensure screening for all children birth to age five.

Provide community-level flexibility to target Smart Start funding to the greatest community needs by removing the 70/30 mandate and the TANF match requirement.

# Expand the NC Pre-K Program.

## Alignment

Increase the State per child payment rates and local administrative rates to support the true cost of providing high-quality services.

Increase the reimbursement rate to account for expanded full-day, full-year programming.

Provide additional funds and capacity for transportation for families to get to NC Pre-K sites in both public and private settings.

Continue to maximize the public-private mixed delivery system responses to community needs. The Action Plan elaborates that the state should provide financial incentives for four- and five-star private centers that are already providing Pre-K for 4-year-olds in high-poverty communities so they can meet the higher-quality standards to become NC Pre-K sites, thereby allowing them to receive state funding

## Differences

*Commission:* State funding should fully cover transportation, capacity building, program quality improvements, and the costs of identifying eligible students and providing their families with information.

Change the use of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) federal funds.

Implement strategies to ensure equity of access in communities of color and in communities whose first language is not English.

Provide families of children enrolled in NC Pre-K with a child care subsidy to support afterschool and summer care and learning through age twelve.

*WestEd:* Establish a data-collection process to identify children and families in need of early childhood education services in order to accurately inform the state's planning efforts.

Build and upgrade facilities to ensure enough high-quality spaces for NC Pre-K sites, either in public schools or venues of community-based programs.

# Improve Supports for Successful Transition to Kindergarten.

## Alignment

Ensure that preschool providers effectively work with families to support transitions from one setting to another and that early-grade K–12 settings have the appropriate knowledge and tools to intake and serve such children and families.

Expand effective professional development in early childhood education for school principals.

Fully fund instructional assistants in the early grades (K–3) to ensure adequate student-to-staff ratios.

Improve student access to specialized instructional support personnel (nurses, social workers, counselors, and psychologists) in alignment with nationally recommended ratios and offer competitive salaries to fill positions.

Implement developmentally appropriate formative assessments across systems to guide aligned instructional practices for early childhood education.

## Differences

*Commission:*

Provide strategies and invest in the recruitment, training and retention of high-quality elementary principals.

Review and revise accountability measures in the early grades to ensure a culture of continuous quality improvement. Ensure that the way effectiveness is measured is culturally relevant and meaningful to educators, families, students, and other stakeholders.

Ensure districts and schools have the resources and capacity to implement a multi-tiered system of supports.

Support aligned, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate early learning curricula.

Require low-performing school districts to include an early childhood improvement plan as a component of their required plans for improvement.

Include an assessment of early childhood learning as part of the state's comprehensive needs assessment process for districts.

Require districts to incorporate early learning strategies into their district-level plans for state and federal funding (ESSA) and collaborate with other early learning leaders in the district, including Smart Start and Head Start, in developing and implementing strategies, including effective transitions for children from early learning settings into public schools. Require districts to obtain Smart Start sign-off on the early learning components of their ESSA plans to support a collaborative approach to early learning for children birth through third grade.



# Additional Recommendations in the Commission Report

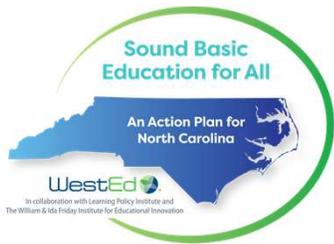
The Commission endorses:

- *Early Childhood Action Plan* and
- *Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Action Framework*.

The Commission includes recommendations to improve cross-sector early childhood data quality, collection, analysis and use across the state and build a culture of continuous quality improvement (CQI) to support data-based decision making.

The Commission calls for the inclusion of at-risk children in North Carolina's definition of eligibility for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C Early Intervention Program, which provides supports and services for families and their children, birth to age three. Expanding eligibility would serve a broader population of infants and toddlers not meeting current criteria in order to prevent further developmental delays. Expanding eligibility would require significantly more capacity and resources for the state's early intervention system.

The Commission calls for the expansion of infant/early childhood mental health services in the community for young children not served by the Early Intervention Program to meet the needs of those most at risk, as early as possible where impact is greatest.



# Leandro Action Plan: Student Assessment & Student Accountability Systems

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Basic Education*

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January 23, 2020 • Susan Mundy, WestEd, and Glenn Kleiman, NCSU Friday Institute

# Revise Assessment and Accountability Systems.

## Alignment

The systems should provide the information needed by educators, parents, policymakers and others about the educational effectiveness of each school and about the learning and progress of individual children and of subgroups of children. The system should also produce data to inform the evaluation and continuous improvement of educational programs and to enable the Court to track progress, identify areas of concern, and monitor compliance with the *Leandro* requirements (Action Plan, p. 107)

Commission: Include multiple measures of school performance in the state's accountability system to provide more balanced, data-informed, and student-focused system.

Create a plan for a more balanced statewide assessment system that can provide standards-aligned assessments to inform classroom learning and assist teachers in differentiating instruction, like NC Check-Ins and other formative assessments, as well as summative assessments for accountability.

Discontinue the School Performance Grades and create a new set of school and district accountability metrics that provide understandable and publicly available information on student performance and that includes information on the percent of students proficient and student growth on state assessments.

Endorse the state's focus on improving 3rd grade reading proficiency and the NC Early Childhood Foundation's Pathways to Grade Level Reading measures of success and action plan for ensuring that all 3rd graders are proficient in reading. Ensure that the state-supported K-2 literacy assessments remain formative assessments and are not used for accountability purposes.

WestEd: Provides in-depth set of recommended actions (see next slide).



# Revise Student Assessment System.

**Establish a more balanced and student-centered assessment system. (Commission recommendation #4).**

**Clarify alignment between the assessment system and the state's theory of action--so that it aligns with the state goal of supporting personalized learning. (Commission recommendation #2).**

**Include assessment item types that provide a better understanding of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities.**

**Improve coherence among curriculum, instruction, and assessment.**

**Revise achievement levels to align with the Court's standard of a sound basic education.**



# Revise Accountability System.

Amend the accountability system, including the information provided by the North Carolina Dashboard, to include measures of progress toward providing all students with access to a sound basic education with both measures of student opportunities to learn and measure of student outcomes, which include the metrics in Commission recommendation #1 above.

Include in the North Carolina Dashboard state, district, and school performance and growth (both overall and by subgroup) on a comprehensive set of measures that would indicate progress toward meeting the *Leandro standard*. This recommendation is aligned with Commission recommendation #3 above.

North Carolina's accountability system should be structured to reward growth in school performance on an indicator, in addition to status on select indicators. This recommendation is aligned with Commission recommendation #3 above.

Use a process for identifying schools for support and improvement that includes a set of decision rules to meet the requirements under ESSA and Leandro.

Use data from the accountability system at the state, district, and school levels to guide planning and budget decisions and to assess school progress and improvement efforts.

Use the data provided in the North Carolina Dashboard to identify the appropriate evidence-based interventions and supports needed for school improvement.



# Next Steps

What supports and leverage points do you see for moving recommendations forward?

What barriers need to be addressed?