

**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.**

***Phase I Actions from West Ed***

- Revise the state’s school funding formula so that current and additional funding is distributed to students with the greatest need by the following actions: add weights to specific position allotments to account for higher-need student groups; increase the cap on exceptional children funding; revise the central office allocation calculation; and base funding for limited English proficient students on the number of identified students in the district.
- Increase the investment in overall spending for public education incrementally over the next eight years to provide a sound basic education.
- Increase flexibility by lifting restrictions on a number of critical allotments so that district leaders can make resource allocation decisions based on local needs.

***Initial Priorities from Commission***

- Determine an adequate level of funding in order to provide a sound, basic education to every student, accounting for individual student needs, the concentration of high-needs students in schools and LEAs, and the importance of high quality early childhood education.
- The state has the obligation to provide sufficient resources to districts to allow them to attract and retain principals, teachers, and staff who are able to deliver a sound, basic education to the students in the district. This requires a determination of the appropriate balance between state and local funding, and a consideration of the capability of the county, particularly low-wealth counties, to provide local funding.
- Adjust the allotment system with the goals of providing more funding to support high-needs students and of consolidating allotments to provide appropriate flexibility to LEAs so that they can effectively meet the needs of students.
- A safe, healthy, and secure learning environment is a critical and necessary part of a sound, basic education. Under current statutes, the state is responsible for fully funding the operational expenses of public schools, and

	<p>local governments have the responsibility to provide for capital and infrastructure needs to the extent they are capable. The decline in state funding support for our public schools has resulted in local governments having to cover the costs of more operational expenses, which has led to a strain on their ability to cover capital and infrastructure needs. The state must fully fund the operational expenses of public schools to ensure every student has access to a sound basic education as required by the Court. Since some local governments are not fully capable of providing for capital and infrastructure needs, the state should develop robust and dedicated sources of funding for recurring statewide support for capital, infrastructure, and technology needs, especially for school districts in low-wealth counties.</p>
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**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.**

***Phase I Actions from West Ed***

***Initial Priorities from Commission***

*Strategies to increase the quality, diversity, and adequacy of the incoming teacher supply*

- Expand the role of the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission to involve stakeholders in establishing high standards for North Carolina educators (e.g., responsive to 21st-century learning standards and supportive of a well-prepared, culturally competent workforce) and to make recommendations regarding all aspects of preparation, licensure, continuing education, and standards of conduct of public school educators.
- Review state teacher testing requirements to ensure that any testing barriers to entry that are unrelated to capacity to teach effectively are removed and that there are multiple ways to demonstrate competency.
- Improve and expand the Teaching Fellows program by increasing the overall funding to support additional awards; increasing the number of partner institutions to include different regions of the state and minority-serving institutions; developing recruitment strategies that inform and attract candidates of color; reinstating the additional leadership training that Teaching Fellows previously received, including training on topics such as culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices and teaching students with disabilities; providing a shorter

*Recruitment*

- Expand the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program
  - Over the next four years, increase the NC Teaching Fellows Program funding annually from the current 200 slots per year to 1,000 per year. If there are more applicants than available slots, priority should be given to students who agree to teach in content areas with the most severe shortages and students who agree to teach in low wealth school districts or high poverty schools for the payback period.
  - Provide scholarships to significantly more prospective teachers but keep the program prestigious.
  - Ensure that no Teaching Fellow has a payback period of more than 1 year for each year he/she receives the scholarship.
  - Expand the program beyond the current focus on science, mathematics, and special education to all areas of certification.
  - Expand the program beyond the five current institutions of higher education (IHEs), particularly to minority serving institutions, and to additional regions of the state. Maintain the program’s focus on the most effective, high quality teacher education programs in the state that, at a

payback period (four years) for those who teach in any high-poverty school.

- Set data-informed goals to increase the racial-ethnic diversity of the teacher workforce and annually report on progress.

minimum, should be fully accredited programs based at IHEs.

- Provide multi-year state planning and implementation grants to enable IHEs to improve their preparation programs. Interested IHEs would submit applications and improvement plans to the Teaching Fellows Commission.
- Provide resources for a statewide network to provide supplemental programming for Teaching Fellows at all participating IHEs.

- Create and fund a statewide entity to coordinate and enhance efforts to recruit, place, and retain teacher candidates and beginning teachers among IHEs and school districts.
  - Establish as a separate entity, as in South Carolina, or house it within an existing entity selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP).
  - Major tasks could include:
    - developing and implementing a plan to recruit competent college students and graduates into effective, high-quality, accredited teacher certification programs; and develop and place more teachers of color, teachers committed to rural areas of the state, and teachers committed to teaching in low wealth, low performing, and high poverty schools;
    - implementing evidence-based, credit-awarding programs that encourage high

school students to prepare for careers in teaching; and

- operating, maintaining, and expanding the TEACH NC website developed by DPI and BEST NC.

*Preparation*

- Adopt and follow a strategic, long-term plan for preparing highly qualified teachers that relies on available empirical evidence. The plan should prioritize direct investments in teacher education programs at IHEs across the state that are fully accredited, or to institutions that are partnering with those IHEs, and should hold those IHEs accountable for preparing teachers that are ready to teach a broad array of students. The state should move away from short-term, “put warm bodies in schools at any costs” approach. The State should:
  - Increase the percentage of the teacher workforce produced by public and private North Carolina IHEs to 70 percent within 6-8 years;
  - Provide adequate funding to IHEs to increase the number of NC prepared teachers committed to teaching in NC;
  - Work with IHEs to right-size their teacher education faculty to accommodate increased enrollments in teacher education programs following a decade of severe declines in enrollments, and provide resources needed to enable IHEs and their LEA partners to improve the quality of their teacher preparation programs;

*Strategies to support and retain new teachers*

- Improve the quality of the New Teacher Support Program by ensuring that all mentors are well trained, teach in the same field as mentees, and have release time to coach beginning teachers in their classrooms as well as support their instructional planning. Focus this effort on the needs of new teachers in high-poverty districts.
- Require and support greater levels of mentor support and training for teachers of record who are not yet fully licensed.

*Strategies to recruit and retain all teachers*

- Increase teacher salaries to make them competitive with teacher salaries in other states in the region and with other career options that require similar levels of preparation, certification, and levels of experience.

- Define the necessary characteristics and support for high quality programming delivered in cooperation between bachelor degree granting IHEs and community colleges.

- State-funded or approved preparation programs should prepare all their teacher-graduates to be able to effectively deliver differentiated, culturally relevant instruction within their certification areas to all students. Coordinate an effort to develop common guidelines for preparing teachers, especially at the elementary level, to be able to teach reading and mathematics effectively to a broad array of students.

*Induction*

- Expand the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program (NC NTSP). Provide full NC NTSP services to all beginning teachers in low wealth school districts and in all high poverty schools , for each teacher’s first three years, with state funding provided on a sliding scale depending on the resources of the school district, with the state paying between 50 percent and 100 percent of the cost .

*Teacher Compensation*

- Eliminate the “teaching penalty” across NC over the next five years. Commission an NC-specific wage comparability study to determine comparable pay for teachers in comparison to other professions which require similar

- Increase the funding for teacher allotments for low-wealth districts to enable them to offer teacher salary supplements that are competitive with those of other districts.

education, credentials, responsibilities, skills, etc. Given the results of similar studies, it is highly likely the study will find a significant gap in earnings of K-12 teachers in NC compared to workers with similar education and work experiences, who work in comparable careers.

- Pending the recommended study, the state should move teacher pay (including teachers who are paid by district funds) to the level of other college graduates in NC.
- Provide increased compensation for advanced credentials that are correlated with more effective teaching (e.g. National Board Certification, content-based master's degrees).
- Provide incentive pay for teachers with certification areas in which there are severe shortages, and for teachers in low wealth school districts or high poverty schools. This incentive pay should be on a sliding scale between 20% and 10%.

*Placement*

- Provide annual recruitment bonuses, totaling \$10,000 over four years, to new certified teachers who commit to teach in a low wealth school district or high poverty school for four years. This recruitment bonus should also be paid to a certified teacher who meets current established indicators of high quality, transfers from a school that does not have a high concentration of poverty to a high poverty school, and commits to staying there for four years. At district's election, bonuses may be paid in

*Strategies to develop and support all teachers*

- Expand the role of the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission to include developing recommendations to ensure that all educators have access to high-quality professional learning opportunities relevant to their needs.

*Strategies to extend the reach of effective teachers*

- Expand the Teacher Compensation Models and Advanced Teaching Roles pilot program to allow all districts to apply for onetime startup funds; create dedicated state funding; and encourage LEAs to blend/braid existing funds to help launch and sustain advanced teaching roles through this and other evidence-based models.
- Establish a Transition to Advanced Teaching Roles program that leads cohorts of districts and schools through a common design process.

even increments (\$1,250 per semester) or in graduated amounts after the teacher successfully completes each semester (ex. \$500 after each semester in year one, \$1,000 after each semester in year two, \$1,500 after each semester in year three, and \$2,000 after each semester in year four). The State should fund these bonuses on a sliding scale depending on the resources of the school district, with the State paying between 50 percent and 100 percent of the cost.

*Teacher Support and Retention*

- Provide adequate funds to school districts for relevant, integrated teacher professional development and enough paid teacher work days in the calendar for school districts to provide collaborative teacher and principal professional development without removing teachers from the classroom during instructional time.

*Career Pathways*

- Expand grant funding for school districts to develop, implement, and scale career pathways plans. The following actions should be taken to enable the successful development of career pathways programs:
  - Provide class size waivers and other flexibility as necessary for school districts to implement career pathways experiments or plans.
  - Continue to provide/expand funding for formative assessment and evaluation of career pathways programs and the dissemination of lessons learned.

- Plan ongoing evaluation and ongoing continuous improvement efforts to better understand the outcomes from advanced teaching roles.

- Provide ongoing funding to low wealth school districts for salary supplements or the support personnel necessary to sustain implementation of successful career pathways plans.
- Provide the resources for school districts that are experimenting with career pathways to collaborate with each other.
- Provide grant funding for LEAs that have successfully implemented career pathways programs to partner with smaller LEAs that do not have the resources to develop these programs.
- Provide funding for teacher and principal leadership development to increase the pool of teachers and principals who can successfully implement leadership roles in career pathways plans.

**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.**

***Phase I Actions from West Ed***

- Update the state’s principal preparation and principal licensure requirements to align to the National Education Leadership Preparation Standards and require principal preparation programs (PPPs) to demonstrate that they are preparing candidates to meet these standards.
- Expand the number of fellowships available through the Principal Fellows program and actively recruit diverse candidates to apply to be Principal Fellows.
- Expand the Transforming Principal Preparation Program while maintaining high standards for participating programs and the paid internship requirement; expand the TP3 focus on preparing transformation leaders of low-performing, high-poverty schools; set the goal of having each school district partner with at least one of the TP3-funded programs; recruit diverse candidates to the TP3 programs; and establish TP3-funded programs in minority-serving universities.
- Revise the principal salary structure and improve working conditions to make the principalship more attractive to qualified educators, especially those in high-need schools.
- Provide incentives for school leaders to work in high-need schools, such as a meaningful supplement for principals who take a position to turn around a persistently failing

***Initial Priorities from Commission***

- Align the state’s school administrator preparation standards with the National Education Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards from the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.
- Require full-time, year-long internships for students seeking a school administrator certification and provide stipends and/or salaries for these students.
- Ensure that school administrator training includes information on
  - Early brain development and appropriate practices for early childhood learning
  - Social-emotional needs of students
  - Role of specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) and how to effectively leverage SISP in supporting student health and wellness.
  - Teacher retention and support
  - Collaborative leadership and decision-making
  - Community engagement
  - Instructional leadership
  - School safety
- Under the recently consolidated NC Principal Fellows and Transforming Principal Preparation Program, scale preparation programs like the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA) and Transforming Principal Preparation

school and protection against principals having a salary reduction if they go to work in a low-performing school.

- Reward school leaders for their school's progress on indicators that go beyond student achievement on standardized assessments.

Program (TP3) pilot programs, such that every school district has a partnership with at least one principal preparation program. In scaling these programs, the state needs to ensure that the replicated programs are of the same quality as the pilot programs. These preparation programs should be focused on training potential school administrators selected by district leadership based on their leadership potential and ability to serve in high-needs schools. Programs should:

- be of high-quality and renewed based on the quality of their graduates;
- provide a full-time, full-year, paid internship and ensure that candidates will not be subject to a loss in pay during their internship year; and
- be strategically focused on recruiting, preparing, and supporting a geographically and demographically diverse group of school administrators to help ensure that our state's school administrators are more representative of the students they are serving.

- Create a formal statewide mentorship program for beginning assistant principals and principals. The program would provide opportunities for veteran principals on sabbatical or recently retired principals to coach beginning school administrators.
- Expand professional development opportunities for superintendents, district administrators, and school administrators by providing state and/or federal funding for existing professional development opportunities and

	<p>for the development of new professional development opportunities. Professional development for superintendents and district administrators should be focused on effective supports for school administrators and capacity-building around effectively utilizing resources to support schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revise the principal salary schedule with more of an emphasis on experience and to provide more incentives for principals to pursue school leadership opportunities that best meet their leadership strengths (such as remaining as an elementary school principal or leading a low-performing school).</li><li>• Revise the allotment formula for assistant principals to both increase the number of state-funded assistant principals and provide flexibility in the use of funds to build more school leadership capacity.</li></ul>
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**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.**

<i>Phase I Actions from West Ed</i>	<i>Initial Priorities from Commission</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a target for reaching universal full-day, full-year Pre-K delivery by 2026.</li> <li>• Expand the NC Pre-K program to provide high-quality, full-day, full-year services to all at-risk 4-year-olds by increasing reimbursement rates to cover higher-quality services and to account for expanded full-day, full-year programming.</li> <li>• Establish a data collection process to identify the children and families in need of services and use data collected to determine the number of early childhood teachers and staff necessary to provide high-quality early childhood education services to all eligible 4-year-olds.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Scale up the NC Pre-K Program to serve all eligible at-risk four-year-olds.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase state funding to serve all eligible at-risk four-year-olds.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implement strategies to ensure equity of access in communities of color and in communities whose first language is not English.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase state per child payment rates and local administrative rates to support the true cost of providing NC Pre-K.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The rates should factor in the cost of teacher salaries/benefits with parity to public school teachers, transportation, capacity building, program quality improvements, and child find.</li> <li>○ The allowable local administrative rate should be at least the federal allowable administrative rate.</li> <li>○ Continue to maximize the public-private mixed delivery system responsive to community needs.</li> <li>○ End the TANF transfer and the resulting match requirement on Smart Start.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure all children enrolled in NC Pre-K have access to full day and full year programs to meet family and community needs and prevent summer learning loss.</li> </ul>

- Fund Smart Start to enable communities to use the flexible funds to increase quality, access, and support for at-risk children and families.

- Increase state funding to expand the NC Pre-K day and year or to provide access to quality afterschool and summer care and learning programs.
- Children enrolled in NC Pre-K should also be enrolled in child care subsidy to support afterschool and summer care and learning through age twelve.

*Scale up Smart Start to provide early childhood system infrastructure and a continuum of services for children and families from birth to age five.*

- 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.
- Expand access to developmental screenings, including social-emotional screening, to ensure screening for all children birth to age 5.
- Support high-quality early education programs.
- 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.

- Increase the volume and quality of the early childhood educator pipeline to meet need by linking compensation packages to public school schedules; expanding the WAGE\$ Salary Supplement Program and the Infant Toddler Educator AWARDS Program to support salary schedule growth; using recruitment efforts such as scholarships, loan forgiveness, and residency programs; and implementing an accessible statewide system of professional development.

- Develop a salary and benefits scale for early childhood educators in programs for children birth to age five. The scale should support increasing qualifications, salaries, and benefits and provide salary parity with public school educators with comparable qualifications. Identify ways to incentivize and/or require the adoption of the salary and benefits scale in early childhood programs that receive state and federal funding.
- Increase state funding for early childhood programs birth to age five, including child care subsidy, and enhance payment rates to support increases in compensation and expanded access for children to early education programs staffed with a high-quality, stable workforce.
- Increase state funding for wage supplement programs for early childhood educators, including the Child Care WAGE\$ and Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$ programs.

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

<i>Phase I Actions from West Ed</i>	<i>Initial Priorities from Commission</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide resources, supports, and flexibilities to enable low-performing and high-poverty schools to address out-of-school barriers to learning, through community-schools and other evidence-based approaches that meet their specific needs.</li> <li>• Provide funding for voluntary after-school and summer programs to expand learning time and help students in high-poverty schools keep pace with more advantaged students.</li> <li>• Provide whole-child supports through positional funding that increases the number of specialized school support personnel to meet the national guidelines, initially prioritizing high-poverty schools.</li> <li>• Set and make public an ambitious five year goal of reducing to less than 5% the number of uncertified teachers and leaders in high-poverty schools and reducing to less than 10% the number of teachers and leaders in high-poverty schools with fewer than three years of experience.</li> <li>• Rebuild the state’s capacity to fully support the improvement of low-performing schools by defining the state’s overall approach to driving improvement in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet the academic, physical, and mental health needs of students and to ensure that our schools are safe and supportive learning environments, the state should provide sufficient funding to ensure that schools are staffed with specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) at the nationally recommended ratios. School districts should be given appropriate flexibility in SISP position allotments so that they may strategically hire SISP staff to best meet the needs of their students. Such allotments should not be used for other purposes.</li> <li>• Fund instructional assistants in the early grades, targeting first to high-need elementary schools. Include instructional assistants in schools’ professional learning for literacy.</li> <li>• Improve and increase student access, including students with disabilities and students enrolled in NC Pre-K, to Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) by funding school psychologist, school nurse, school counselor, and school social worker positions to a level that moves closer to or in alignment with nationally recommended ratios and include competitive salaries and benefits to fill positions.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide school systems with proportional staffing models in support of effective teaming of these</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

student outcomes; rebuilding the staff capacity within the NCDPI to lead district and school transformation; defining regional structures of support; and providing resources to build the capacity of regional collaboratives or teams, RESAs, and other vetted providers to support LEAs in their regions.

- Provide resources, opportunities, and supports for the state’s low-performing and high-poverty schools to address out-of-school barriers to learning by adopting a community-schools approach with a full-time community-schools coordinator or other evidence-based approach to providing social, academic, and health supports for students.
- Identify approved school improvement providers to assist LEAs and schools.
- Create a statewide repository of evidence-based school improvement practices.

specialized staff to meet the social and emotional, behavioral, mental health, physical health and safety of all students.

- Ensure sufficient elementary school staff, including Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP), in each elementary school to provide adequate, culturally inclusive contacts between the school and home so that families can access services and resources aligned with their child’s needs, including academic, health, mental health, and nutrition services and afterschool and summer learning opportunities.
- Ensure schools have the resources and capacity to implement strategies within a multi-tiered system of supports and with SISP teams to ensure regular school attendance, reduce suspension and expulsion, and promote continuous school improvement.
- Child nutrition is an integral aspect of a sound basic education and the state should ensure that adequate funding and effective delivery systems are available to provide access to free breakfast and lunch programs for all students with needs.
- Require low-performing school districts to include an early childhood improvement plan as a component of their required plans for improvement.

- The Department of Public Instruction should include an assessment of early childhood learning as part of its comprehensive needs assessment process for districts.
- Ensure that districts have sufficient funding, staff capacity, and access to professional development and technical assistance for district and school administrators to make evidence-based, informed decisions and to ensure they have the operational capacity to effectively utilize local, state and federal sources of funding.
- Ensure that the Department of Public Instruction has sufficient funding and staff capacity to enable the agency to support school districts in providing a sound, basic education to all students.
- Ensure that the Department of Public Instruction has sufficient staff and resources to provide multi-year, data-driven supports for turning around low-performing schools and districts that includes
  - A comprehensive needs assessment
  - School improvement planning with focus on continuous improvement
  - School leader and teacher professional development
  - School leader and teacher in-school coaching
  - Engagement of the school community, including families.

**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.**

<i>Phase I Actions from West Ed</i>	<i>Initial Priorities from Commission</i>
<p><i>Assessment System</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise the student assessment system to become more balanced and student-centered by expanding the use of the NC Check-Ins and providing guidance to LEAs to streamline the number of assessments at the local level, mitigating the use of multiple assessments for similar purposes.</li> <li>• Clarify alignment between the assessment system and the state’s theory of action.</li> <li>• Update state assessment to include items that measure a deeper and broader understanding of students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities.</li> </ul> <p><i>Accountability System</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise achievement levels to align with the court’s standard of a sound basic education, with a singular definition of proficiency that aligns with grade-level and college- and career-readiness expectations and that provides stakeholders with consistent and actionable measures of student progress and proficiency.</li> <li>• Adopt a framework for accountability with a comprehensive set of measures that would indicate progress toward meeting the <i>Leandro</i> requirements and is inclusive of the reporting requirements under ESSA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take advantage of the flexibility granted under the <i>Every Student Succeeds Act</i> to include multiple measures of school performance in the state’s accountability system to help provide a more balanced, data-informed, and student-focused look at how schools are performing. These measures could be focused on             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chronic absenteeism</li> <li>○ School climate</li> <li>○ Student discipline (i.e. suspensions and other discipline actions disaggregated by various demographics and offenses not as a punitive measure but as a way to identify successes and areas for improvement)</li> <li>○ Extended-year graduation rates (i.e. 6- and 7-year graduation rates)</li> <li>○ College- and career-readiness</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 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/or other formative assessments, as well as summative assessments for accountability. Assessments should be data-informed and student-focused.</li> <li>• Discontinue the School Performance Grades and create a new set of school and district accountability metrics that</li> </ul>

	<p>provide understandable and publicly available information on student performance and that includes information separately on the percent of students proficient and student growth on state assessments.</p>
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