

# *Leandro v. State of NC:* Ensuring a Sound, Basic Education for All Students

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## *Leandro v. State of NC*

- Lawsuit filed in 1994 by five low-wealth school districts (Hoke, Halifax, Robeson, Vance and Cumberland)
- Suit claimed that districts did not have enough money to provide an equal education to their students
- NC Supreme Court ruled in 1997 that state's students have a constitutional right to a "sound, basic education"



## *Leandro v. State of NC – “Sound Basic Education”*

“We conclude that Article I, Section 15 and Article IX, Section 2 of the North Carolina Constitution combine to guarantee every child of this state an opportunity to receive a sound basic education in our public schools. For purposes of our Constitution, a ‘sound basic education’ is one that will provide the student with at least:

- (1) sufficient ability to read, write, and speak the English language and a sufficient knowledge of fundamental mathematics and physical science to enable the student to function in a complex and rapidly changing society;
- (2) sufficient fundamental knowledge of geography, history, and basic economic and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices with regard to issues that affect the student personally or affect the student's community, state, and nation;
- (3) sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable the student to successfully engage in post-secondary education or vocational training; and
- (4) sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable the student to compete on an equal basis with others in further formal education or gainful employment in contemporary society.”

*Leandro v. State, 346 N.C. 336, 488 S.E.2d 249 (1997)*



## *Leandro v. State of NC*

- In 2004, Judge Howard Manning ruled in the plaintiff's favor that the state was not meeting its constitutional obligation
- To provide all students an opportunity to meet its constitutional duty, Judge Manning found that the state must
  - Staff each classroom with a competent, well-trained teacher
  - Staff each school with a competent, well-trained principal
  - Identify the resources necessary to ensure that all children, including those at-risk, have an equal opportunity to obtain a sound, basic education



## Current Context

- In 2017, Governor Cooper joined with the Leandro plaintiffs to work together on a plan for meeting the state's constitutional obligation which would become a consent judgment in the case
- Governor Cooper created the Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education in July 2017 to advise him in the process
- Judge David Lee appointed an independent consultant to the court (WestEd) in March 2018



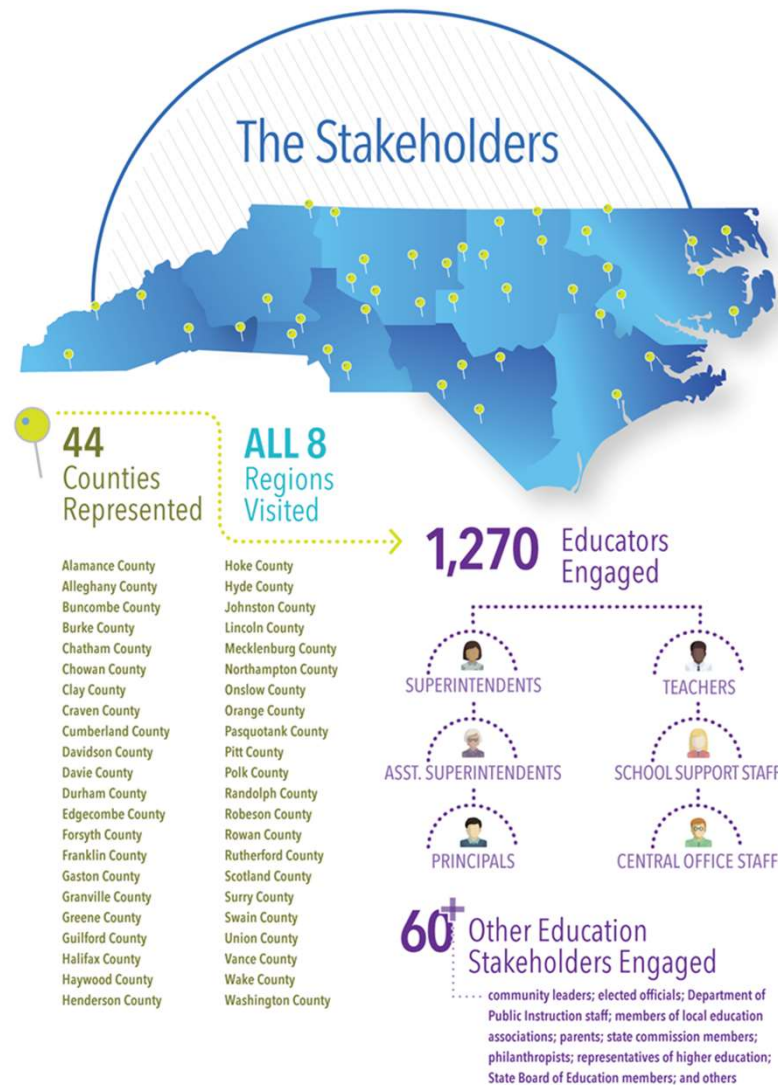
## *Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina*

As part of its research, WestEd conducted 13 separate studies or policy analyses on the public education system in NC:

- Access to Effective Educators (5 studies)
- Access to Effective School Leaders (1 study)
- Adequate & Equitable School Funding, Early Learning, and other Resources (5 studies)
- Adequate Accountability & Assessment Systems (2 studies)



# Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina



Source: WestEd, page 5



## *Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina*







## Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education

- Governor Cooper created the Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education to advise him in the process
- Work groups from the Commission have crafted draft priorities for action around five key areas:
  - Finance and resources
  - Teachers
  - Principals
  - Early childhood / “whole child”
  - Assessments and accountability



## January 2020 Initial Consent Order

“[H]istoric and current data before the Court show that considerable, systemic work is necessary to deliver fully the *Leandro* right to all children in the State. In short, 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. The costs to those students, individually, and to the State are considerable and if left unattended will result in a North Carolina that does not meet its vast potential.”

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



## January 2020 Initial Consent Order - Seven Focus Areas

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;
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;
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;
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;



## January 2020 Initial Consent Order - Seven Focus Areas

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



## Fiscal Year 2021 Plan – Cost Summary

	FY 2021 COST
A Qualified and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom	\$237,700,000
A Qualified and Well-Prepared Principal in Every School	\$0
A Finance System that Provides Adequate, Equitable, and Efficient Resources	\$144,876,975
An Assessment and Accountability System that Reliably Assesses Multiple Measures of Student Performance	\$0
An Assistance and Turnaround Function that Provides Necessary Support to Low-Performing Schools and Districts	\$4,375,000
A System of Early Education that Provides Access to High-Quality Prekindergarten and Other Early Childhood Learning Opportunities	\$35,650,000
Alignment of High School to Postsecondary and Career Expectations for All Students	\$4,388,635
<b>Total Additional Costs (above current FY 2021 funding)</b>	<b>\$426,990,610</b>



## Next Steps

- In September, Judge Lee signed consent order directing the state to implement the actions in the June joint report
- Per the order, the parties are to submit the full eight-year plan to the court by December 31, 2020
- Parties continuing to develop full eight-year plan



## Additional Information

- WestEd report- <https://bit.ly/31tuQGF>
- Commission website - <https://bit.ly/2UzUEPM>
- January 2020 consent order - <https://bit.ly/2JoWwYF>
- June 2020 joint report - <https://bit.ly/3fZej4r>