

Public Schools First NC champions one unified, equitable, inclusive, fair, innovative and accountable public education system that nurtures and prepares each child for success in school and life. We believe legislators should fulfill their constitutional obligation as stated in the Leandro decision and work to provide **every child** with a sound, basic education. With this constitutional mandate in mind, and with the goal of ensuring high-quality educational opportunities for every child, we present our 2023 legislative priorities.

## 1. Fully fund public schools in accordance with all components of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan (Leandro Plan).

In November 2022, the North Carolina Supreme Court issued a 5-4 ruling directing the NC Legislature to fund years two and three of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan. However, with the election of two new Supreme Court justices less than a week later, the court became more aligned with the four justices who dissented in the ruling. Because legislative leaders have resisted funding public schools at the levels required by Leandro, continued advocacy is essential to ensure that the remaining years (i.e., three through eight) of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan are also fully funded. Seven key areas of funding are identified:

- Teacher development and recruitment that ensures each classroom is staffed with a high-quality teacher.
- A system of principal development and recruitment that ensures each school is led by a high-quality principal.
- A finance system that provides adequate, equitable, and predictable funding to school districts and adequate resources to address the needs of all North Carolina schools and students.
- An assessment and accountability system that reliably assesses multiple measures of student performance.
- An assistance/turnaround function that provides beneficial support to low-performing schools and districts.
- A system of early education that provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities.
- An alignment of high school to postsecondary and career expectations as well as the provision of early postsecondary and workforce learning opportunities.

## 2. Prevent the negative impact to traditional public schools that results from funds being diverted to charter schools and voucher programs and restrictive policies that only apply to traditional public schools.

- Use public tax dollars exclusively for public schools.
- Place a moratorium on funding school voucher programs.
- Require private schools receiving voucher funds to report student performance metrics similar to public schools.
- Restore a cap on the number of charter schools allowed.
- Increase accountability and transparency in all charter schools and private schools receiving public funds.
- Allow local school boards the same flexibility as charter schools including calendar flexibility.
- Support instructional integrity based on following the NC Standard Course of Study in all schools receiving taxpayer dollars.

## 3. Repair the teacher pipeline by increasing teacher base pay and restoring and bolstering essential classroom, teacher, and student supports. Support teachers by increasing pay for other school personnel.

- Increase teacher salaries to the national average.
- Increase per-pupil funding to the national average.
- Significantly expand the Teaching Fellows Program and recruit more teachers of color.
- Reinstate supplements for teachers who earn advanced degrees.
- Increase supplements and/or pay for high-vacancy positions including school psychologists, school social workers and special education teachers.
- Pay livable wages and full benefits to all school support personnel.
- Restore full-time teacher assistants for each K-3 classroom.
- Fully fund the class size mandates for grades K-3 and restore class size caps for grades 4-5.
- Respect curriculum integrity and teachers' professionalism and decision-making authority.
- Increase mentoring support and professional development, especially for new teachers.

4. **Reverse policies that unfairly and inequitably target public schools and apply all accountability policies to schools receiving voucher funds.**
  - Revise the current A-F grading system and replace it with a more valid and reliable way to evaluate school effectiveness; apply the same system to voucher schools.
  - Reverse policies tying principal pay to school performance grades or apply the same policy to charter schools and private schools receiving voucher funds.
  
5. **Increase the number of helping professionals in schools and adopt universal trauma-informed curricula/programs that focus on social and emotional learning.**
  - Increase funding to hire more professionals such as school psychologists, social workers, counselors and nurses to meet nationally recommended levels.
  - Pass Medicaid expansion to facilitate access to needed healthcare services for low income families.
  - Provide better mental health services and access for all children and families.
  - Provide trauma-informed training for all school staff with an emphasis on social and emotional learning.
  
6. **Provide universal access to high-quality Pre-K in every county and universal school meals for all students.**
  - Implement universal Pre-K for all eligible children; eliminate the backlog of children waiting for Pre-K services.
  - Invest in the early childhood educator pipeline by increasing state supplements for salaries.
  - Secure funding for school meals for all students at no cost.
  
7. **Increase funding for special education students.**
  - Remove the cap on special education funding to allow coverage of all eligible students.
  - Increase spending levels at the state level to fully fund special education services.
  
8. **Create safe and supportive learning environments for all students and teachers.**
  - Support policies that ensure safe, secure, inviting, and respectful schools for all of our diverse students and educators.
  - Implement positive approaches to discipline such as restorative justice programs.
  - Keep guns off school grounds.
  - Implement required violence prevention and threat-reporting programs at all schools.
  
9. **Eliminate the digital divide.**
  - Support access for K-12 students and educators to high-speed broadband internet.
  - Provide devices for at-home use for students and educators.
  - Improve infrastructure for broadband in rural and low-income communities.
  - Provide free hotspots for WIFI for homeless school-age children and their families.

**We will monitor the NC General Assembly's 2023 legislative session** for actions that impact public education. To ensure that you receive up-to-date information about legislative actions, sign up for our [newsletter](#) and check our website where we post our legislative updates: [Week in Review](#).

**As important legislative actions happen in the coming year** we will alert the public via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, newsletters, webinars, audiocasts and on our website. Follow us on social media to make sure you know when critical public education issues are impacted by legislative actions.

**We invite you to join us in this advocacy work for our children.** By large margins, *North Carolinians support fully and fairly funding our public schools and making sure that students have the classroom resources and well-qualified teachers they need to develop critical thinking skills and be prepared to fulfill their role as productive and contributing members of our society.*