

North Carolina Accountability Working Group Summary

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SREB

School
Improvement

Accountability Working Group Overview

The State Board of Education has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to conduct a study of North Carolina's Accountability System. This Working Group Meeting will engage state shareholders in discussions to address the following components:

1. Recommendations on possible changes to (i) the **weighting** of the school achievement score and the school growth score in calculation of the overall school performance score to best reflect performance and progress for each school and (ii) the **reporting methods** used to meaningfully differentiate schools on the State's Annual Report Card(s).
2. Feasibility of including end-of-grade and end-of-course **retest** scores in both the achievement and growth calculations for schools and districts.
3. **Alignment** of the State's Accountability System and School Report Cards with the North Carolina State Board of Education's **Strategic Plan**.
4. **Alignment** of the State's Accountability System and School Report Cards with the 1997 N.C. Supreme Court decision related to the constitutional guarantee of a "**sound, basic education.**"

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A STUDY OF NORTH CAROLINA'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Background

In the 2019 WestED report titled, *Sound Basic Education for All – An Action Plan for North Carolina*, it identifies a critical need to review the school accountability system. The report states, “The system should 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.”

Based on recommendations of the WestED report and numerous requests by school and community leaders, the North Carolina Board of Education, in Fall 2019, asked the Southern Regional Education Board to conduct a study of the state’s accountability system. Tenets of the study were to review the current approach to accountability as part of the state’s School Performance Grades, the state’s plan for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, and the measures reported on the state’s annual school report cards. This special report offers the state board a brief discussion of the findings of other state accountability models and feedback from the North Carolina Accountability Working Group.

Context

Measuring and reporting on education outcomes related to schools and students have been fundamental to SREB in helping states make continuous progress and meet their education goals. Since 1988, SREB has focused on the role state accountability systems serve in ensuring that all schools measure up to the needs of the students they serve. That focus has helped SREB identify key accountability tenets that support efforts to increase college and career readiness among the SREB region’s future high school graduates.

Policymakers and education leaders in SREB states have long understood that setting expectations for public schools, districts and states and measuring performance over time lead to sustained improvement. For decades, SREB states have led the nation in developing education accountability systems that have supported strong reform and continuous improvement.

So, it’s no surprise that every SREB state implemented policies in the 1990s to hold public schools accountable for reporting results by 2000 — before the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required them to do so. The most recent reauthorization (2015) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 — Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) — provides states with the flexibility and responsibility to redesign their state education accountability systems to meet current challenges. ESSA establishes minimum requirements for state accountability systems, but state leaders should expect more of their schools than these minimum thresholds.

The most important responsibility of state accountability systems should be to ensure that schools and districts are accountable for increasing the percentage of high school students who graduate with the academic knowledge, critical thinking and career, and technical skills they need to be successful after they graduate.

North Carolina has long been a leader in setting high expectations for its schools and districts. The legislature has supported these high expectations and played a key role in determining the weights and reporting components of school performance. In 2013, the General Assembly created school performance grades that assign schools a single letter grade, A-F. School letter grades are based on a combination of achievement and growth scores. Currently, the overall grade assigned to a school represents the growth score weighted at 20% and the achievement score weighted at 80% to render a score out of 100. The numerical score corresponds to a letter grade using the following cut-offs: 0-39 = F, 40-54 = D, 55-69 = C, 70-84 = B, and 85 – higher = A.

To ensure North Carolina continues to meet the requirements of ESSA, provides a sound basic education for all, and ensures transparency of a school's strengths and weaknesses, there is a need to review the current model and determine needed revisions.

State Reviews

The first step in SREB's study was the review of weights for student achievement and the accountability rating types in all fifty states (See Appendix). The review indicates that North Carolina and Vermont are the only two states that have set student achievement weights of 80%. This is the highest weighting of student achievement in the nation. Many states weigh student achievement in the overall performance rating at 40%.

ESSA requires student achievement to be the larger weight of all measures, but it allows the state to determine the measures that make up the school performance rating. Most states include multiple measures in the overall rating.

The feedback received from the working group is to include multiple measures in a new accountability model. In the interim, the working group recommends keeping achievement and growth measures separate. It would prefer providing schools with both an achievement grade and a growth grade so each measure would have an equal level of importance and visibility.

The review of accountability reporting types found the following:

- 12 states use A-F grades;
- 12 states use an index;
- 11 states use a descriptive format;
- 5 states use 1-5 stars;
- 4 states use summative ratings; and
- 6 states use tiers of support

After reviewing the data, the working group expressed concern with the use of A-F designations, and it indicated a preference for a stars rating or dashboard visual display of current progress on growth and achievement. The group was interested in receiving additional information about the descriptive format used by 11 states. Several times the discussion identified the need for a descriptive means of communicating innovative practices within schools.

Retest Scores

During a meeting of the working group, the current system for retesting students was discussed. The timeline related to state assessments and end of school create challenges for providing interventions to students not meeting proficiency and administering the retest. The current testing window is too short to provide adequate supports to students between the first test administration

and the date in June to complete retesting. The current limitations cause districts to provide support students within a two-week window (10 days).

Research has shown that retesting students has little impact unless one of two conditions exists: students are within one to two questions of reaching proficiency on the test, or there is a substantial remediation session – the equivalent of 20 days of support.

In some states or districts, retests are important because of the high stakes associated with the assessment. For example, there are some places where a student must meet proficiency on an end-of-course assessment in order to graduate from high school, or a student in the elementary or middle grades must meet proficiency to avoid retention.

Based on the challenges and research findings, the working group did not express an interest in revising the current retest policy and practices.

Alignment of Accountability to State Plans

The WestEd report found there is a lack of alignment between the state assessment system and the state's theory of action as articulated in its ESSA plan. The SREB study found the same to be true for the alignment between the state accountability system, state ESSA plan, and state board's strategic plan.

The working group reviewed the board's strategic plan, and the group identified data related to each goal and related objectives. The working group came to a consensus on data that should be used to generate a school's overall performance rating and data that should be reported only.

Include in Accountability Measures

Goal 1 – Eliminate Opportunity Gaps

- The objective related to increasing average composite score on college entrance exams.
- The objective related to increasing access, readiness and attainment of early postsecondary opportunities.

Goal 2 – Improve School and District Performance

- The objective related to growth measures by subgroup
- The objective related to percent of students meeting ESSA yearly measures of interim progress (ELA and Math) for all grade levels.

Goal 3 – Increase Educator Preparedness to Meet the Needs of Every Student

- No objectives related to this goal were identified as a measure for accountability.

Report for Each School/District

Goal 1 – Eliminate Opportunity Gaps

- Percentage of 4-year olds in Pre-K
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Measures to community school climate
- Number of educators of color

Goal 2 – Improve School and District Performance

- Science Proficiency
- Summary of students' access to technology
- Financial data dashboard

Goal 3 – Increase Educator Preparedness to Meet the Needs of Every Student

- Measures to communicate Advanced Teaching Roles
- Measures to communicate continued learning for educators

Overall, the workgroup indicated its preference for reporting multiple measures separately would allow schools to identify progress and prioritize next steps. Some of the multiple measures may include:

- Use of the existing Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and related assessment to show growth to grade 3.
- Multiple measures of college and career readiness.
- Growth achieved by the lowest quintile of students.
- Qualitative descriptors of innovation in a school

SREB recommends the state shareholders come to an agreement on a vision and goals. Once the vision and goals are identified, the state should consider multiple measures of school performance including achievement, growth, K-3 readiness, Gap, College and Career Readiness, and school quality. It is then the state will be able to determine a weighting for each measure that provides a more holistic view.

North Carolina Summary of Goals and Indicators (by Statute/Initiative)

Goals

ESSA	PERKINS V	WIOA	Other State Entities
<p>Attainment year: 2027</p> <p>Academic achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 66% of students in 3-8 will be proficient on state ELA assessment, and 74% will be proficient on the math assessment 71% of students in high school will be proficient on the ELA assessment, and 73% will be proficient on the math assessment <p>English language proficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% of English learners will meet annual growth targets on the state English language proficiency assessment, or reach proficiency within four years <p>High school graduation rate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will go from 86% to 95% of all students – and each student subgroup – graduating in four years Includes expectation to close gaps and increase each year for the All Students group 	<p>Attainment year: not clearly stated</p> <p>To establish the required goals, CTE programs will work towards the various goals of the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12 state board of education Community college system UNC system NCWorks commission <p>Perkins V plan also cites Governor Cooper’s goal: By 2025, North Carolina will be a “Top 10 Educated State,” by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the percent of 4-year-olds enrolled in high-quality pre-K Raising the high school graduation rate Increasing the percent of individuals with post-secondary degrees and credentials 	<p>Attainment year: not clearly stated</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create an integrated, seamless, and customer-centered workforce system Create a workforce system responsive to changing economic needs Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy and continuously improve their skills Use data to drive strategies and ensure accountability <p>WIOA plan also cites Governor Cooper’s goal: By 2025, North Carolina will be a “Top 10 Educated State”</p>	<p>MyFutureNC Attainment year: 2030</p> <p>Goal: Two million North Carolinians have a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential Focus areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing gaps in postsecondary attainment Aligning educational programming and business/industry needs Improving the quality of educational opportunities for all North Carolinians <p>State Board of Education Attainment year: 2025</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate opportunity gaps Improve school and district performance Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student <p>BEST NC Attainment year: not clearly stated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting student readiness to learn Elevating excellent teachers and leaders Providing globally competitive education Setting high standards and promote meaningful accountability Uplifting underperforming schools and students Personalizing teaching and learning
<p><i>All three statutes empower states to set additional goals beyond those required by statute, to address state priorities and align efforts across the statutes.</i></p>			

Accountability indicators

ESSA	Perkins V	WIOA	Other State Entities
<p>All Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic achievement: Schools must meet the 95% participation rate for all students and subgroups English language proficiency: Progress on state English language proficiency assessment <p>Elementary and Middle Grades Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic achievement: Proficiency on state EOG ELA and math assessments Other academic indicator: Proficiency on state EOG science assessments School quality or student success: Student growth on state EOG ELA, math and science assessments <p>High Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic achievement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proficiency on state ELA and math EOC assessments Student growth on state ELA and math EOC assessments Graduation rate: 4-year adjusted cohort rate School quality or student success: Students meeting each college- and career-readiness benchmark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT composite score of 17 or higher WorkKeys silver or higher State EOC science assessment proficient score Math 3 course passing grade 	<p>Secondary CTE concentrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation rate: 4-year cohort graduation rate, as measured under ESSA Proficiency in the challenging academic standards for ELA, math and science adopted under ESSA Percentage who, in the 2nd quarter after exiting from secondary education, are in postsecondary education or advanced training, military service or other service program or Peace Corps, or are employed Indicators of program quality: students graduating from high school having <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attained a recognized postsecondary credential met proficiency on CTE course proof of learning assessment, in courses that have such assessments (<i>optional</i> indicator) Percentage in programs and programs of study that lead to non-traditional fields <p>Postsecondary CTE concentrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage who, during the 2nd quarter after program completion, remain enrolled in postsecondary education, are in advanced training, military service, other service program or Peace Corps, or are placed or retained in employment Percentage who receive a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in the program or within one year of completion Percentage in CTE programs and programs of study that lead to non-traditional fields 	<p>Adult programs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Employment rate during the 2nd quarter after program exit Employment rate during the 4th quarter after program exit Median earnings during the 2nd quarter after program exit Attainment rate of postsecondary credential or secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent, during program participation or within one year after exit Participation rate during a program year in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and rate of achievement of measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment Effectiveness in serving employers; and reporting on employers' and participants' satisfaction with services <p>Youth programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the 2nd quarter after program exit Participation in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the 4th quarter after program exit Indicators #3-6 for adult programs 	<p>MyFutureNC indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-K enrollment 4th and 8th grade NAEP proficiency ACT composite score of 17 or higher P-12 student chronic absenteeism rate Graduation rate: 5-year adjusted cohort rate Share of qualified high school seniors completing the FAFSA Postsecondary enrollment rate, ages 18-24 Postsecondary persistence rate Postsecondary completion rate, ages 25-44, for 2- and 4-year institutions Share of 16- to 24-year-olds in the school-to-workforce continuum Labor force participation rate, 25- to 64-year-olds Share of 35- to-44-year-olds with family income at/above a living wage Workforce demand – current <i>and</i> forecasted – compared to supply of graduates by market sector <p>State Board of Education indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lists 19 different ones
<p><i>Each statute empowers the state to align the indicators with those established under the other two statutes.</i></p>			

State	Academic Achievement				Additional Detail
	K-12	Elementary/ Middle	Middle	High School	
Alabama		40%		20%	
Alaska		30%		60%	
Arizona		30%		30%	
Arkansas		35%		35%	High School 35% Achievement is weighted
Delaware		30%		40%	
Florida		200/800 points	180/1000 points	600/1100 points	Or Elementary-25% / Middle -18% / High School -54.5%
Georgia		30%		47%	
Hawaii		40 points		30 points	
Idaho		36%		45%	
Illinois		15%		15%	
Indiana		43%		15%	
Iowa		14%		50%	
Kansas	Kansas does not assign weights for the indicators being used for annual meaningful differentiation. Instead, each indicator is assessed every year relative to the interim goals the state has set to meet its long-term goals. Based on this assessment, each school is assigned an annual determination: Below Expectations, Meets Expectations, or Exceeds Expectations.				
Louisiana		50%	46.67%	20.83%	
Maine		42%		40%	
Maryland		20%		30%	
Massachusetts		60%		40%	
Michigan		32.22%		29%	Michigan's index-based identification system designates a single index value (0-100 points) based on school performance in up to seven areas: Proficiency, Growth, Graduation Rate, English Learner Progress, School Quality/Student Success, General Participation, and English Learner Participation. Each indicator is on a scale of 0-100 points for percent of target index met.
Minnesota	Minnesota uses stage-based decision process to meaningfully differentiate between all public schools. This stage-based decision process includes all indicators and evaluates each student group against each indicator.				

State	Academic Achievement				Additional Detail
	K-12	Elementary/ Middle	Middle	High School	
Mississippi		190/700 points	190/700 points	570/1000 points	For high schools, the 570 points include 190 points for Academic Achievement, 190 points for Reading Growth and 190 points for Math Growth.
Missouri		40%		40%	
Montana		25/100 points		30/100 points	
Nebraska		25%		25%	
Nevada		25%		25%	
New Hampshire					
New Jersey		30%		30%	
New Mexico		33%		25%	
New York	New York does not weight indicators. Instead it uses a rule-based methodology to differentiate between schools.				
North Carolina	80%				
North Dakota		30%		25%	
Ohio		27.5% in grades K-3	21.88% in grades 4-8	17.25%	For high schools 17.25% = 5.75% for ELA + 11.5% for Math
Oklahoma		30%		30%	
Oregon		2 of 9 (22%)		2 of 9 (22%)	Oregon's accountability index is based on a 9 point scale
Pennsylvania	The state will categorize schools as eligible for identification based on performance in two domains - academic achievement and academic growth. To establish the lowest-performing 5% of all schools, Pennsylvania will examine the performance of low achievement and low growth schools on the remaining accountability indicators: chronic absenteeism; other possible indicators, depending on school configuration and subgroup size, include career readiness and progress in moving ELs to proficiency.				
Rhode Island	Rhode Island is using a rule-based methodology which emphasizes the Academic Proficiency and Growth Indexes. Each star rating of the classification system requires schools to meet all the criteria associated with the star rating. This methodology does not assign specific weights or allow performance on one indicator to compensate for lower performance on another. Each star rating indicates minimum requirements for all indicators. If a school misses any one rule, they are not eligible for that star rating.				
South Carolina		35%		25%	
Tennessee		25%		23%	
Texas		40%		50%	
Utah		25%		55%	33% Student Achievement (includes Student Growth) + 22% Science Achievement/Growth

State	Academic Achievement				Additional Detail
	K-12	Elementary/ Middle	Middle	High School	
Vermont		80%		40%	70% Student Achievement + 10% Science Achievement/Growth
Virginia	Virginia indicators are based on a three-step methodology that includes achievement and growth (greatest weight), EL progress (less weight), and indicators of school quality or student success (get the least weight).				
Washington		40%		30%	
West Virginia		28%		25%	
Wisconsin		37.5%		37.5%	
Wyoming		25%		20%	

State	Accountability Rating Type
Alabama	Tiers of Support
Alaska	Index
Arizona	A-F
Arkansas	Index
California	No summative rating (Performance levels for indicators: red, orange, yellow, green, blue)
Colorado	Tiers of Support
Connecticut	Index
Delaware	Descriptive
District of Columbia	1-5 Stars
Florida	A-F
Georgia	Index
Hawaii	Index
Idaho	No summative rating
Illinois	Descriptive
Indiana	A-F
Iowa	Index
Kansas	Descriptive
Kentucky	1-5 Stars
Louisiana	A-F
Maine	Descriptive
Maryland	1-5 Stars
Massachusetts	Descriptive
Michigan	Index
Minnesota	Descriptive
Mississippi	A-F
Missouri	Index
Montana	Other
Nebraska	Descriptive
Nevada	1-5 Stars
New Hampshire	Tiers of Support
New Jersey	Descriptive
New Mexico	A-F
New York	Tiers of Support
North Carolina	A-F
North Dakota	No summative rating
Ohio	A-F
Oklahoma	A-F
Oregon	No summative rating

Pennsylvania	No summative rating (Tiers of Support for Title I Schools, including charter schools)
Rhode Island	1-5 Stars
South Carolina	Descriptive
South Dakota	Index
Tennessee	A-F
Texas	A-F
Utah	A-F
Vermont	Descriptive
Virginia	Tiers of Support
Washington	Index (1-10)
West Virginia	Descriptive
Wisconsin	Index
Wyoming	Index

12 States use A-F Grades
12 states use Index
11 states use Descriptive
5 use 1-5 Stars
4 use Summative ratings
6 use Tiers of Support

7 of 12 are SREB States
2 of 12 are SREB States
3 of 12 are SREB States
2 of 5 are SREB States



School Grade

Cleveland PreK-6 School

Districts and schools report information for the Ohio School Report Cards on specific marks of performance, called measures, within broad categories called components. They receive grades for up to ten measures and six components.

Achievement

The Achievement Component represents whether student performance on state tests met established thresholds and how well students performed on tests overall. A new indicator measures chronic absenteeism.

Performance Index

52.9%

Indicators Met

10.0%



Component Grade

Progress

The Progress component looks closely at the growth that all students are making based on their past performances.

Value-Added

Overall Gifted
Lowest 20% in Achievement
Students with Disabilities



Component Grade

Gap Closing

The Gap Closing component shows how well schools are meeting the performance expectations for our most vulnerable students in English language arts, math, graduation and English language proficiency.

Annual Measurable Objectives
66.7%



Component Grade

D

F

C
NR
C
C

D

Graduation Rate

The Graduation Rate component looks at the percent of students who are successfully finishing high school with a diploma in four or five years.

Graduation Rates

This school is not evaluated for graduation rate because there are not enough students in the graduating class.



Component Grade

Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers

This component looks at how successful the school is at improving at-risk K-3 readers.

Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers
18.6%



Component Grade

Prepared for Success

Whether training in a technical field or preparing for work or college, the Prepared for Success component looks at how well prepared Ohio's students are for all future opportunities.



Component Grade

D



School Grade

Cleveland Heights High School

Districts and schools report information for the Ohio School Report Cards on specific marks of performance, called measures, within broad categories called components. They receive grades for up to ten measures and six components.

Achievement

The Achievement Component represents whether student performance on state tests met established thresholds and how well students performed on tests overall. A new indicator measures chronic absenteeism.

Performance Index

57.3%

Indicators Met

10.0%



Component Grade

Progress

The Progress component looks closely at the growth that all students are making based on their past performances.

Value-Added

Overall Gifted
Lowest 20% in Achievement
Students with Disabilities



Component Grade

Gap Closing

The Gap Closing component shows how well schools are meeting the performance expectations for our most vulnerable students in English language arts, math, graduation and English language proficiency.

Annual Measurable Objectives
48.6%



Component Grade

D

F

F
B
C
F

F

Graduation Rate

The Graduation Rate component looks at the percent of students who are successfully finishing high school with a diploma in four or five years.

Graduation Rates

86.6% of students graduated in 4 years

90.6% of students graduated in 5 years



Component Grade

Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers

This component looks at how successful the school is at improving at-risk K-3 readers.

Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers
NC



Component Grade

NR

C

B

Prepared for Success

Whether training in a technical field or preparing for work or college, the Prepared for Success component looks at how well prepared Ohio's students are for all future opportunities.



Component Grade

Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina
Findings and Recommendations

Focus area	Adequate, Equitable, and Aligned Finance and Resource Allocation	A Qualified and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom	A Qualified and Well-Prepared Principal in Every School	High-Quality Early Childhood Education
Findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding in North Carolina has declined over the last decade. 2. The current distribution of education funding is inequitable. 3. Specific student populations need higher levels of funding. 4. Greater concentrations of higher-needs students increases funding needs. 5. Regional variations in costs impact funding needs. 6. The scale of district operations impacts costs. 7. Local funding and the Classroom Teacher allotments create additional funding inequities. 8. New constraints on local flexibility hinder district ability to align resources with student needs. 9. Restrictions on Classroom Teacher allotments reduce flexibility and funding levels. 10. Frequent changes in funding regulations hamper budget planning. 11. The state budget timeline and adjustments create instability. 12. There is inadequate funding to meet student needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher supply is shrinking, and shortages are widespread. 2. The average quality of teachers entering the workforce has declined. 3. Experienced, licensed teachers have the lowest annual attrition rates. 4. Teacher demand is growing, and attrition increases the need for hiring. 5. Changes to the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program have decreased its ability to positively improve the quality and supply of the North Carolina teacher workforce. 6. Salaries and working conditions influence both retention and school effectiveness. 7. Although there has been an increase in the number of teachers of color in teacher enrollments, the overall current teacher workforce does not reflect the student population. 8. Disadvantaged students in North Carolina have less access to effective and experienced teachers. 9. Access to, and the quality of, professional learning opportunities vary across schools and districts, and state-level efforts that support teacher growth and development are inadequate and inequitable. 10. Changes to North Carolina’s New Teacher Support Program have limited its ability to effectively support North Carolina’s new teacher population. 11. Teachers are often not compensated for taking on advanced teacher-leader positions, though these positions have been shown to 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a strong evidence-based consensus about the elements needed for an effective principal preparation program, including one that prepares principals for high-need schools. 2. North Carolina principals are prepared through multiple pathways, which have different outcomes on the supply and retention of principals. 3. North Carolina has made significant progress in building innovative and effective principal preparation programs that incorporate recommended best practices. 4. The North Carolina Principal Fellows scholarship program successfully attracts strong candidates to principal preparation programs. 5. Although there are high-quality preparation programs in the state, they are training fewer and fewer principals. 6. Schools leaders need ongoing professional learning opportunities, and North Carolina has well-designed programs for current principals and assistant principals that need to be scaled up. 7. The current compensation system creates disincentives for principals to remain in the principalship and creates disincentives for effective principals to work in underperforming schools that often take more than one year to improve. 8. Working conditions influence principal retention. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High-quality early childhood education is available in North Carolina. 2. Participation in high-quality early childhood education varies in North Carolina, and lower-wealth communities often lack an adequate supply of early childhood programs. 3. Costs and other challenges for communities and families create barriers to accessing early childhood education. 4. Lack of ability to supply the necessary numbers of qualified teachers is an additional barrier to expansion and increased access to early childhood education. 5. The transition from early childhood education environments to K–12 environments is challenging for children and families.

<p>Recommendations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase cost effectiveness of the North Carolina funding system so that public education investment prioritizes higher-need students and provides appropriate flexibility to address local needs. 2. Modify the school finance system to ensure future stability in funding for public education, including predictable, anticipated funding levels that acknowledge external cost factors. 3. Increase the overall investment in North Carolina’s public schools first by identifying a small number of foundational, high-impact investments. Continued investment in these foundational areas are most critical to setting the system up for success in the future. 	<p>support their professional growth and help retain new teachers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the pipeline of diverse, well-prepared teachers who enter through high-retention pathways and meet the needs of the state’s public schools 2. Expand the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program. 3. Support high-quality teacher residency programs in high-need rural and urban districts through a state-matching grant program that leverages ESSA Title II funding. 4. Provide funding for Grow-Your-Own and 2+2 programs that help recruit teachers in high poverty communities. 5. Significantly increase the racial-ethnic diversity of the North Carolina teacher workforce and ensure all teachers employ culturally responsive practice. 6. Provide high-quality comprehensive mentoring and induction support for novice teachers in their first three years of teaching to increase both their effectiveness and their retention. 7. Implement differentiated staffing models that include advanced teaching roles and additional compensation to retain and extend the reach of high-performing teachers. 8. Develop a system to ensure that all North Carolina teachers have the opportunities they need for continued professional learning to improve and update their knowledge and practices. 9. Increase teacher compensation and enable low-wealth districts to offer salaries and other compensation to make them competitive with more advantaged districts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the state’s principal preparation and principal licensure requirements. 2. Continue to expand access to high-quality principal preparation programs. 3. Expand the professional learning opportunities for current principals and assistant principals. 4. Revise the principal and assistant principal salary structures and improve working conditions to make these positions more attractive to qualified educators, especially those in high-need schools. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the volume and quality of the early childhood educator pipeline. 2. Scale up the Smart Start program to increase quality, access, and support for at-risk children and families. 3. Expand the NC Pre-K program to provide high-quality full-day, full-year services to all at-risk 4-year-old children. 4. Align and improve early-grade K–12 settings to support successful transitions to K–3 and promote early-grade success.
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Focus area	Support for High-Poverty Schools	State Assessment System and School Accountability System	Regional/Statewide Supports for School Improvement	Monitoring the State's Compliance
Findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Carolina has large numbers of high-poverty schools and students attending high-poverty schools. 2. Students attending high-poverty schools are far less likely to receive a sound basic education. 3. The opportunity for a sound basic education is compromised at high-poverty schools, in large part due to less access to the Leandro tenets of qualified teachers, qualified principals, and sufficient educational resources. 4. High-poverty schools often lack resources and opportunities that promote positive student outcomes and that are especially important for economically disadvantaged students. 5. Students' equal opportunity for a sound basic education is limited in high-poverty schools by a lack of supports and services to help mitigate barriers to learning associated with adverse out-of-school conditions in communities of concentrated poverty. 6. Current policies need to be revised in order to provide adequate funding and resources to high-poverty schools. 	<p><u>Assessment</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The state summative assessments meet federal requirements and are aligned to North Carolina academic standards, but lack some elements of rigor and depth that are articulated in the academic standards. 2. The state's achievement levels do not clearly indicate whether students are ready for college and careers or what is necessary for a sound basic education. 3. There are opportunities to increase coherence between curriculum, instruction, and assessment in North Carolina. 4. Supporting assessment for learning, including interim assessments, can enable a more balanced and student-centered assessment system. 5. There is a lack of alignment between the state assessment system and the state's theory of action as articulated in its ESSA plan. <p><u>Accountability</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Carolina's accountability system is primarily based on measures of student performance on summative assessments and does not include, or uses only in limited ways, a number of opportunity-to-learn indicators that can provide information to help ensure that all students have the opportunity for a sound basic education. 2. The accountability system emphasizes students' proficiency status over growth, which results in a strong bias against schools that largely serve economically disadvantaged students and fails to credit these schools with successful efforts that are foundational to their students' receiving a sound basic education. 3. The accountability system does not take critical factors into account when determining which schools are identified as being among the lowest-performing schools in need of state-provided interventions and supports. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Carolina's low-wealth districts with small student populations have very limited staff and resources to provide critical services, including those that are essential for school improvement. 2. Some North Carolina schools are showing strong growth in student achievement for economically disadvantaged and other at-risk students, through the work of teams of talented and dedicated educators. 3. Research has shown that integrated, whole-child approaches to learning, such as a community-schools approach, can help improve struggling schools. 4. Low-wealth districts generally have poorer academic performance and face greater challenges than other districts, and they also lack the supports and resources they require for improving their schools. 5. The state's system of support for improving low-performing schools is insufficient to ensure all students obtain a sound basic education. 6. Regional collaboratives can be beneficial to districts, particularly small, low-wealth districts. 7. Evidence-based practices for school improvement that are already in place and are highly valued by North Carolina educators offer promise to the state's struggling schools. 	N/A

<p>Recommendations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attract, prepare, and retain a highly qualified, diverse, and stable K–12 teacher and leader workforce in high-poverty schools. 2. Provide additional time, resources, and access to the programs and supports that meet the educational needs of all students in high-poverty schools, including at-risk students. 3. Revise the school accountability system so that it credits successful efforts in high-poverty schools and supports further success. 4. Provide comprehensive whole-child supports, including professional staff such as nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers. 5. Provide resources, opportunities, and supports to address out-of-school barriers to learning that constrain schools’ ability to meet the educational needs of all students in high-poverty schools. 	<p><u>Assessment</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a more balanced and student-centered assessment system. 2. Clarify alignment between the assessment system and the state’s theory of action. 3. Include additional item types that provide a broader understanding of students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities. 4. Improve coherence among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. 5. Revise achievement levels to align with the Court’s standard of a sound basic education. <p><u>Accountability</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amend the current 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, a number of which North Carolina currently uses. 2. Include in the North Carolina Dashboard state, district, and school performance and growth (both overall and by student subgroup) on a comprehensive set of measures that would indicate progress toward meeting the Leandro tenets and is inclusive of the reporting requirements under ESSA. 3. To measure progress toward meeting the requirements of Leandro, North Carolina’s accountability system should be structured to reward growth in school performance on an indicator, in addition to status on select indicators. 4. 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. 5. 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. 6. Use the data provided in the North Carolina Dashboard to identify the appropriate evidence-based interventions and supports. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rebuild the state’s capacity to fully support the improvement of its lowest-performing schools. 2. 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. 3. 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. 4. Extend the supports already available to schools to help them further implement the MTSS, the SW-PBIS, and NC Check-In approaches. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Court should appoint a panel of education experts to help the Court monitor the state’s plans, initiatives, and progress in meeting the Leandro requirements. 2. The Court should require annual reports of plans and progress on meeting the Leandro requirements from the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.
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