Resolution of the *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* case will have the greatest benefit for students that are currently underserved.

**STUDENTS**
- with economic disadvantages
- learning the English language
- with physical, emotional, or learning differences
- subject to racial discrimination
- living in rural districts
- without access to early childhood education (Pre-K)

With the state not even providing the bare minimum for public education, students with one or more of the academic risk factors listed above are more likely to have been adversely affected by the shortcomings.

The following section lists six traditionally underserved student populations and a summary of recommendations to improve access to educational opportunity. Recommendations are derived from the Leandro Report itself, or from education experts, policy analysts, and advocacy groups specializing in that student population.

### STUDENTS with economic disadvantages

As of the 2015-2016 school year, 57% of NC's K-12 students were economically disadvantaged, and over half of them attend high-poverty schools. High-poverty schools **A** have a higher proportion of less-experienced teachers, **B** have higher teacher turnover, and **C** lack access to challenging curriculum and extracurricular activities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Provide universal free breakfast and lunch.
2. Develop programs that attract, prepare, and retain highly qualified, diverse teachers and leaders in high-poverty schools.
3. Provide comprehensive supports, including academic specialists, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
4. Provide additional resources, programs, and supports specifically targeted to the needs of high-poverty schools.
5. Revise the school accountability system to credit successful efforts in high-poverty schools.
6. Provide equal access to gifted programs, honors courses, and Advanced Placement courses.
7. Increase funding for after-school programs, clubs, and other activities that make school fun while promoting enrichment and growth.
8. Tackle poverty-related barriers to success by integrating health and social services, youth development, and community engagement.

### STUDENTS learning English

English learners (ELs) are **A** the lowest performing student subgroup on standardized tests, **B** underrepresented in Advanced Placement and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) programs, and **C** have a lower graduation rate than their peers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. End restrictions to EL funding. In some districts, the percentage of ELs far exceeds the funding threshold, but no additional support is given. Conversely, districts are denied funding for EL students if their representation is below an arbitrary threshold.
2. Funding needs to reflect the linguistic diversity of the district, since resource needs are proportional to the number of languages served.
3. Allow districts to use funds for salary supplements to facilitate recruitment and retention of teachers with foreign language skills.
4. Provide funding for professional development and require training for principals and teachers to provide culturally relevant education for ELs.
5. Provide comprehensive supports including academic specialists, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
6. Provide funding for programs shown to improve outcomes for ELs, as well as language programs that benefit all children.
**STUDENTS with disabilities**

Students with disabilities **A)** need additional supports to achieve the same educational outcomes as other students, and **B)** are more likely to attend high-poverty schools.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Eliminate the cap on Special Education funding. The state only pays for 12.75% of students in a district; if the percentage of students with disabilities is higher, there’s no additional funding. This “cap” is unfair and creates inequity.
2. Provide funding to increase the number of support personnel, including academic specialists, school nurses, psychologists, counselors, and social workers.
3. Direct additional resources, opportunities, and initiatives to economically disadvantaged students and high-poverty schools.
4. Provide a qualified, well-prepared, and diverse teaching staff in every school and provide a qualified and well-prepared principal in every school.
5. Provide all 4-year-old children with academic risk factors, including children with disabilities, the opportunity to attend high-quality, full-day early childhood programs.

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**STUDENTS living in rural areas**

More than one-third of all North Carolina students reside in rural communities. These areas have limited taxing capacity to create revenue for public school, declining enrollment, and difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers and principals.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Adjust the funding model to compensate for the smaller tax base of lower-wealth counties as well as declining enrollment.
2. Give rural communities and low-wealth districts funding for salary benefits and other incentives to recruit and retain teachers and principals.
3. Provide comprehensive supports including academic specialists, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
4. Increase access to career and technical education programs that improve post-secondary employment opportunities, and expand programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school.
5. Expand the number of schools that integrate health and social services, youth development, and community engagement.
6. Increase access to early childhood education programs in all areas of the state, so that all 4-year-old children with academic risk factors can be served by high-quality programs.

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**STUDENTS subject to racial discrimination**

Black, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, and multi-racial students are **A)** underrepresented in gifted, honors, and Advanced Placement courses, **B)** more likely to have novice or less-qualified teachers, and **C)** more likely to be suspended than their white peers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Provide access to experienced, credentialed, and effective teachers by giving districts the resources to attract and retain high-quality teachers.
2. Fund programs to recruit and retain teachers of color.
3. Address racial discipline disparities and break the school-to-prison pipeline with professional training and peer-mediated conflict resolution.
4. Provide comprehensive supports including academic specialists, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
5. Provide equal access to gifted programs, honors courses, and Advanced Placement courses.
6. Increase funding for after-school programs, clubs, and other activities that make school fun while promoting enrichment and growth.
7. Expand the number of schools that integrate health and social services, youth development, and community engagement.
8. Implement culturally relevant criteria and teaching practices that will engage students and provide greater relevance.

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**STUDENTS without access to early childhood learning**

Our state-funded early childhood programs have been recognized nationally for their effectiveness in improving student outcomes and reducing achievement gaps. However, far too many families lack access to these programs, as they only serve about half of eligible children.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Expand programming to provide high-quality, full-day, full-year services to all four-year-old children with academic risk factors.
2. Develop high-quality preschools in underserved areas, fund facility improvements, and provide transportation.
3. Improve the early childhood educator pipeline by expanding salary supplement programs and implementing ongoing professional development.
4. Invest in nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers to meet the social-emotional, behavioral, and physical health needs of young children.
5. Support successful transitions to K-3 and promote early-grade success by supporting engagement with families before kindergarten and fully funding teaching assistants through third grade.