



# The Leandro Plan

North Carolina's legislative roadmap for meeting the educational needs of EVERY CHILD.



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The Leandro Plan outlines what's needed to ensure ALL children receive the constitutional standard of education.

## WHY IS THE PLAN NEEDED?

- ◆ Children throughout the state lack access to essential educational services and opportunities.
- ◆ Many graduates lack fundamental skills needed for today's jobs.

## WHERE DID THE PLAN COME FROM?

The decision for the *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* case calls for the state to meet the constitutional standard for education quality.

- The Leandro Plan:**
- ◆ shows the state how to provide every child with a sound basic education.
  - ◆ was based on extensive analysis of the North Carolina school system by the country's top nonpartisan education experts.



### *Leandro v. State of North Carolina*

The North Carolina Supreme Court decision affirms:

**A sound, basic education is the constitutional right of every child.**

## WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

The **Leandro Plan** addresses the **inequity** and **funding inadequacy** that prevents access to services and programs including:

- early education (birth to age 5) including pre-K
- qualified educators & principals
- safe facilities with modern technology
- support staff (school nurses, psychologists etc.)
- academic and language specialists
- enrichment programs and career training



**The Leandro Plan corrects the course of public education in North Carolina so schools in every corner of the state can meet student needs.**



The North Carolina legislature has refused to support the Leandro Plan, despite its affordability **AND** its critical value to our children and the future of our state.

### **WE MUST ACT NOW.**

It's up to us to demand a school system that can provide for our students - before **ANOTHER** generation of children gets left behind.



# LEANDRO on the BALLOT

How voting can ensure the education rights of North Carolina children.



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The *Leandro v. State* court decision demands all schools deliver the education standard guaranteed by the state constitution.



The **Leandro Plan** shows **HOW** to meet the education standard by addressing the public school system's critical needs.

## ELECTIONS MATTER for the school improvements promised by the Leandro Plan:

- ◆ Elected officials are the ones responsible for creating and carrying out much of the policy that governs public school operations.
- ◆ The Leandro Plan's funding and equity guidelines can only help students if office holders are committed to serving North Carolina children.

## The following offices are critical for Leandro compliance:



### GOVERNOR

Appoints several members of the State Board of Education.



### LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Sits on the State Board of Education, President of the NC Senate, so may cast tiebreaking votes.



### SUPERINTENDENT of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Leads the Department of Public Instruction, the executive branch body in charge of overseeing the day-to-day operation of public schools.



### NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY - House & Senate

Sets state tax policy, determines how much revenue the state will have, then creates a budget that includes how much is spent on public education.

The NCGA also determines how much school funding comes from local (county) government, and it sets policy to specify how education money is spent.

STATE



### JUDGES

Ensure that the other branches of state government live up to their constitutional responsibilities; the court also provides guidance for protection of individual rights.



### COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Set county tax rates to collect then appropriate funds for school construction and maintenance, and, at their discretion, provide additional operating funds to supplement state funding.



### SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Carry out the educational program and set local policy according to the parameters determined by the Department of Public Instruction.

LOCAL



# How to Spot a Candidate That Supports Public Education for Every Child

Any candidate for public office could say they "support" education, so it can be tricky to know whether they're a true advocate for public school students with the greatest need.

Below is a list of points to consider when analyzing candidates that will be decision makers for public education – from the state legislature to the school board in your local district.

## ◆ KNOWLEDGE of OFFICE

Proposing changes outside the purview of the office shows either that the candidate's not clear on the job itself ... or that promises are being made that can't be kept

EXAMPLES:

- a state legislative candidate vowing to end a process controlled by local school boards
- a school board candidate promising to install specific educational materials regardless of state rules.

## ◆ PUBLIC SERVICE RECORD

Incumbent candidates, or those who have held a different public office, have a track record you can research, such as their vote on key education issues.

## ◆ QUALIFICATIONS

While it's admirable for any person to help their child's school, serving on the PTA doesn't necessarily mean they support public education in a way that promotes better support for underserved children.

## ◆ ISSUE SPOTLIGHT

A candidate that doesn't mention education on their campaign website either hasn't put any thought into it, or they don't want voters to know their position.

THE BASICS

## ◆ KNOWLEDGE of EQUITY

Candidates may have limited understanding of the core roots of inequity in public schools. Look at their positions on some of the issues listed below, or ask them questions at an open house, town hall, or candidate forum.

EXAMPLES:

- "Will you support compliance of the *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* decision?"
- "What's your stance on private school vouchers and charter school expansion?"
- "How can you fix opportunity gaps?"

## ◆ COURSE of ACTION

Candidates that are more committed to improving public education will have specific policy actions in mind.

EXAMPLES:

- "We need to provide more professional development opportunities for teachers."
- "We need to remove the funding cap for students with disabilities."

## ◆ RHETORIC & "CODE WORDS"

If a candidate's solution to inequity in public schools is to send children to private schools instead, that's not compatible with providing a general and uniform system of public schools for the children of North Carolina.

Also, words like "choice" are used to convey the idea that parents should be able to choose what's best for their child ... but the real world consequence is that "choice" drives inequity.

THE ISSUES

## Candidate Commitment to Leandro



Elected officials and candidates can show their commitment to compliance with *Leandro* ruling. Signatories of **Every Child NC's statement** are signaling they're aware of their responsibility to remedy the state's constitutional violation, and are willing to be held accountable.

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## ENDORSEMENTS

Some professional organizations and education-related advocacy groups have a formal endorsement process, thereby conveying the opinion of those knowledgeable about the needs of children.

# OVERVIEW of FUNDING & POLICY for PUBLIC EDUCATION

SHARE of funding for school operations (percentage of total)



**FEDERAL**

**U.S. Congress** \$

Sets certain school policies, most notably around testing, but plays a limited role overall. Funding that is supplied supports students with disabilities, high-poverty schools, and child nutrition.

**11%**

**STATE**

**Governor**

Has the power of the bully pulpit, but limited influence beyond having the power to veto state budgets and appoint State Board of Education members

**North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA)** \$

Senate & House of Representatives

- ◆ Body most directly responsible for school funding and policies
- ◆ Provides the majority of school funding by setting tax policy, determining how funds are distributed across districts, and establishing school spending rules
- ◆ Sets majority of policies including learning standards and teacher pay scales
- ◆ Has constitutional responsibility for providing a system of public education that adequately serves every child

**State Board of Education (SBE)**

Supervises use of federal and state funds for public schools

**Department of Public Instruction (DPI)**

Implements laws passed by NCGA and provides technical assistance to schools

**State Superintendent**

**65%**

**COUNTY**

\$ **Board of Commissioners**

sets local taxes and determines how to use revenue for school expenses not provided by the state

has authority to provide additional funds to district

historically, counties have been responsible for funding facility maintenance and new school construction

**School Board**

carries out educational program and sets local policy according to parameters determined by DPI

hires district superintendent

manages financial affairs and provides strategic planning

**24%**

\$ = denotes governing body that generates funds for public education

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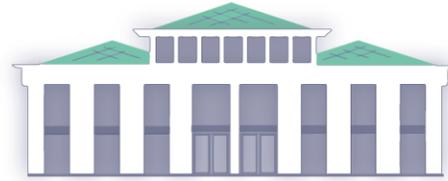
# PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICY: The North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA)



The NCGA decides on the level and distribution of public school funding as part of the state budget.

- NCGA members are elected in even-numbered years and serve a 2-year term.
- At the beginning of a new term, the NCGA creates a budget for the next funding period.

House of Representatives  
**120**  
members



Senate  
**50**  
members

North Carolina General Assembly  
(NCGA)

## LONG, SHORT, and SPECIAL SESSIONS

### ODD-NUMBERED YEARS

A "LONG" session is for drafting the bi-annual state budget and typically lasts 6 months or longer.

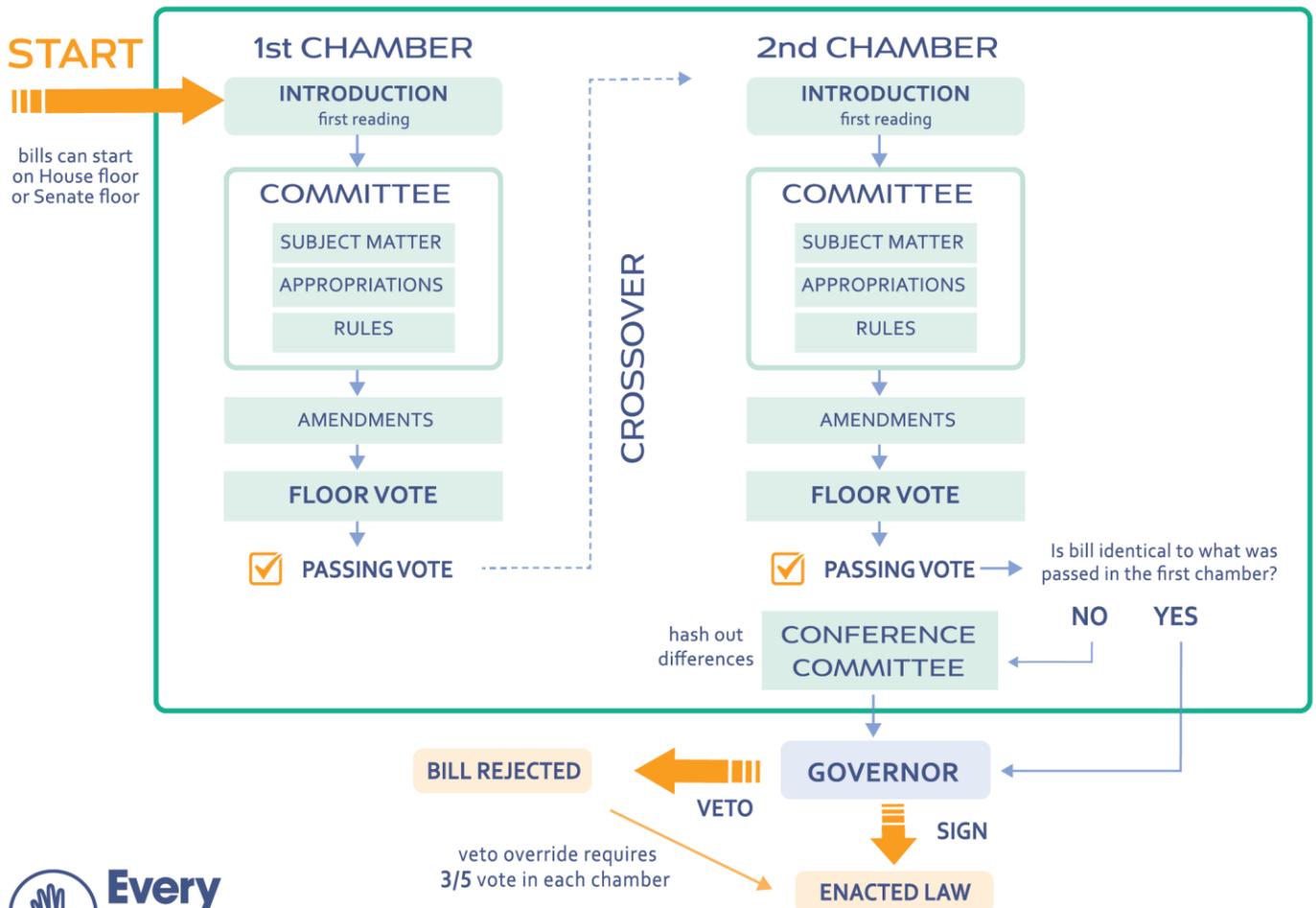
### EVEN-NUMBERED

A "SHORT" session only addresses issues (or new appropriations) that have arisen between budgets.

### AS NEEDED

A special session can be convened if a specific need arises; a special session can also be called by the Governor.

## The JOURNEY from BILL to LAW



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: The North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA)



Many of the policy changes needed to meet student needs are at the level of the state legislature — the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA).

**It's essential that constituents tell legislators about needs in their school district.**

*Some possible means of engagement:*

- ◆ writing a letter or postcard
- ◆ meeting one-on-one (in person or virtual)
- ◆ group actions (demonstrations, etc.)

## THE RIGHT ACTION at the RIGHT TIME

Voicing a concern to your representatives can be done anytime; however, if you want to share your opinion on legislation being considered, pay close attention to the NCGA calendar.

For groups, you might support the introduction of a new bill or protest a bill that's coming up for vote. A group event might need to come together at the last minute since it's not uncommon for the NCGA to call special sessions at unpredictable times.

## ADVOCACY TIMELINE for NCGA SESSIONS

January-February

### Pre-Session

*GOAL: Prepare, plan, and inform the public.*

- Marshal support by educating the public on the issue.
- Meet with legislators to share issues and experience.
- Monitor relevant Committee meetings.

February-March

### Beginning of Session

*GOAL: Find bill sponsors and get education issues drafted into legislation. Bill may be filed at this time.*

- Arrange a in-person or virtual meeting with legislators.
- Participate in rallies and other larger, public actions.

April-June

### During the Session

*GOAL: Follow up on a bill once it's filed and referred to a committee. There are typically multiple steps involving the subject matter committees and the Rules Committee.*

- Reach out to members of the relevant committee to encourage them to bring the bill forward.
- If a bill moves to the floor for a vote, reach out to your own legislator and urge them to support or oppose the bill as written.

July-August

### End of Session

*GOAL: Shine a spotlight on legislators trying to push through unpopular legislation via last-minute, behind the scenes gutting of bills that are already on the floor.*

- Hold legislators accountable for their actions or failures during the session by writing a letter to the editor.
- Ask legislators who are allies about plans for the next session to see how best to align advocacy.

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Legislators meet to discuss the contents of a bill and consider its consequences. Advocates can keep track of committee meetings to see what's going to be discussed.



**SIGN UP for  
EMAIL ALERTS**  
[www.ncleg.gov](http://www.ncleg.gov)

follow relevant House and Senate committees such as:  
Education Appropriations  
Education Oversight



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## WRITING a LETTER to your LEGISLATORS

**Always feel free to contact your own representatives to express concerns on any topic.**

### It's their job to listen.

When a particular bill is being considered in committee, you can write to members of the relevant committee (e.g. *the House Standing Committee on Education*).

It rarely pays off to blanket the entire NCGA with letters, since legislators often disregard input if it's not from their constituents.



**BE POLITE.** Personal attacks, accusations of dishonesty, malfeasance, or poor intentions aren't likely to foster consideration and cooperation. It's appropriate to express frustration at a legislator's words or actions, or to set the record straight if a legislator makes a false statement, but please do so calmly.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Introduce yourself and state why you are writing

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am your constituent from \_\_\_\_\_, North Carolina". or "I am writing to you because you are a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee and this issue is important to your work".

### State your issue or your "ASK"

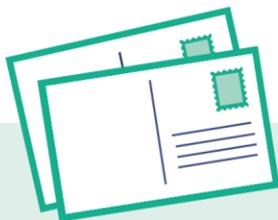
- Bring their attention to an issue and ask them to help. Concerns can range from a broad issue like the state education budget, down to the delivery of a specific service for your child.
- Ask a legislator to support/vote against a particular bill, with specific reference to the bill number.

### Tell your story

Explain briefly why this issue is important to you, and perhaps share a story of your experience related to schools. **Be authentic — your voice matters.**

## FOLLOW UP

- If you **DON'T** receive a response from your legislator within a week or so, follow up with a telephone call.
- If you **DO** receive a response, thank them for their reply and ask (if it's not clear already) if they will assist you. You may also push back on any claims/arguments the legislator may make against your position.



## Hosting a "POSTCARD PARTY"

- a fun way to socialize and expand the reach of your advocacy

### PLAN YOUR CAMPAIGN:

- Define the issue you want the elected official to know about
- Plan a script for what to write, or have people craft their own message.

**INVITATIONS:** take advantage of Facebook groups for your neighborhood, schools, PTA, or other education advocacy groups.

### DATE & TIME:

- determine whether day or evening is best
- a good format is a 1-hour event where people can drop in anytime to fill out cards.
- make it kid-friendly and have them join in!

**VENUE:** private homes, neighborhood clubhouses, or library conference rooms.

### LEGISLATOR ADDRESSES:

**Senate:** <https://ncleg.gov/Members/ContactInfo/S>

**House of Representatives:** <https://ncleg.gov/Members/ContactInfo/H>

### OPTIONS for CARDS:

purchase pre-metered post cards from the post-office	buy stamps ahead of time to place on 4 x 6 index cards	take finished cards to the post office and get postage
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- Print mailing address labels or have people address cards by hand.
- Provide a supply of pens, markers, or colored pencils.
- Some groups ask for donations to pay for stamps and cards.

If you're using index cards, provide an example of how to properly address a post card: [www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Postcard](http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Postcard)

# SCHEDULING a MEETING with your LEGISLATORS

- 1. Decide on a meeting location:**
  - NCGA offices, Raleigh
  - Your district
  - Virtual meeting online

- 2. Submit a request via email:**

Get addresses for your legislator(s):  
**www.ncleg.gov**



SAMPLE

Dear [Representative/Senator] [Last Name of Legislator],

I am a constituent who lives in [town/community]. I would like to schedule a meeting [name location: Raleigh, within the district, or online with a virtual meeting service].

[Your specific concern] is a critical issue for North Carolina's public schools. I would like to talk with [Representative/Senator] [Last Name of Legislator] about specific solutions, etc.

I will be following up on this request with a phone call to your office. Thank you for your consideration.

**FOLLOW UP:** If you don't receive a return message within two days, call the legislative staff.

- 3. After the meeting:**

Promptly send a thank you note via email or post, with a summary of the discussion and your request for support. You may share your meeting details with Every Child NC (email: [info@everychildnc.org](mailto:info@everychildnc.org)).



**Legislators have limited availability so make the most of the time.**

North Carolina's legislators only serve part-time and travel back to their home districts. They are genuinely busy, have limited time, and often have only one person on staff.

Note when the NCGA is in session, as members will be in Raleigh for much of the week. Further, Tues.-Thur. is the busiest time for staff during session, so look for the best days to reach them.

Session generally runs from February through early July in odd-numbered years, and from mid-April through early July in even-numbered years, though committee meetings and special sessions may happen throughout the year.

## Tips for hosting a virtual meeting

Many legislators began conducting virtual meetings with constituents due to COVID-19.

We predict that online meetings will continue due to their advantage in convenience and eliminating travel.



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- ◆ **Pick a Platform.** Zoom is a widely used video communication platform, but other options include Google Meet and Facebook Messenger. If you're new to video conference applications, download a version and familiarize yourself with it.
- ◆ **Request a meeting.** Send a meeting request to the legislator's office via email (see above) and ask if your proposed platform is acceptable.
- ◆ **Create a meeting link.** Once the platform is confirmed and a time is agreed upon, create the conference link and send it to the legislator's office. If necessary, follow up with a phone call to make sure they received the link.
- ◆ **Prepare.** Your argument will be more successful if you carefully plan ahead and have an outline of talking points. You may only be given only a limited amount of time (i.e. 10- 15 minutes).
- ◆ **Use video camera.** Leave your computer camera on to take advantage of the face-to-face opportunity that's been given to you.
- ◆ **Be respectful of time limitations.** Open the meeting at least ten minutes early so you will be online when the legislator joins.