STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF WAKE

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
95-CVS-1158

HOKE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION, et al.,	)
Plaintiffs,	)
and	)
ASHEVILLE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION, et al.,	)
Plaintiff-Intervenors,	)
v.	)
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA; STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION,	)
Defendants.	)

NOTICE OF FILING OF PLAN

NOW COMES DEFENDANT, the State Board of Education ("Board"), through counsel, and hereby submits, in response to the Superior Court's Order dated April 24, 2015, the attached, approved Plan document titled, "The Mandate To Provide An Opportunity For A Sound Basic Education, An Update and Recommendation."

Respectfully submitted, this the 1st day of July, 2015.

ROY COOPER
Attorney General

Lauren M. Clemmons
Special Deputy Attorney General
NC Bar No. 15987
lclemmons@ncdoj.gov
N.C. Department of Justice
Post Office Box 629
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602-0629
Tel: (919) 716-6900; Fax: (919) 716-6763
Attorneys for Defendants

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the foregoing Notice of Filing with the attached Plan in the above-captioned matter upon all parties by the manner and addressed as follows:

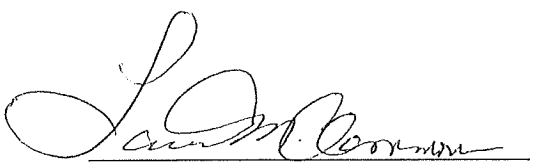
Email and Hand-delivery:
Melanie Black Dubis and Scott E. Bayzle
Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein L.L.P.
301 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1400
Post Office Box 389
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602-0389
E-mail: melaniedubis@parkerpoe.com
E-mail: scottbayzle@parkerpoe.com
Counsel for Plaintiffs

Email and U.S. Mail, postage prepaid:
H. Lawrence Armstrong, Jr.
Armstrong Law, PLLC
119 Whitfield Street
Post Office Box 187
Enfield, North Carolina 27823
E-mail: hla@hlalaw.net
Counsel for Plaintiffs

Email and Hand-delivery:
Deborah R. Stagner
Tharrington, Smith, L.L.P.
150 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1800 (27601)
Post Office Box 1151
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602-1151
E-mail:dstagner@tharringtonsmith.com
Counsel Plaintiff-Intervenor

Email and U.S. Mail, postage prepaid:
Mark Dorosin and Taiyyaba Qureshi
The University of North Carolina School of Law Center for Civil Rights
CB 3382
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3382
E-mail: dorosin@email.unc.edu
Counsel for Penn Intervenors

This the 1st day of July, 2015.



Lauren M. Clemmons

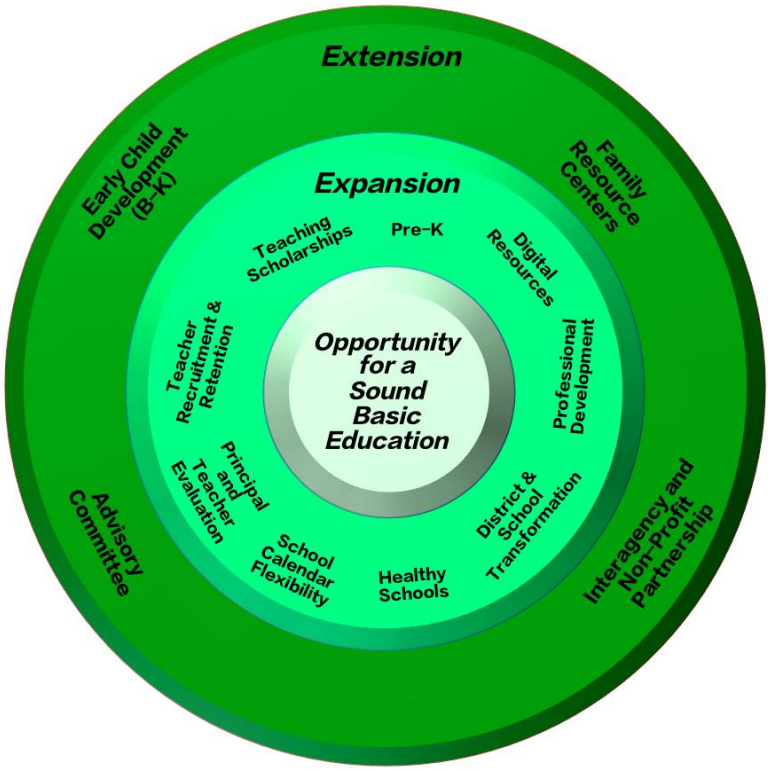
ATTACHMENT:

"The Mandate To Provide An Opportunity For A Sound Basic Education, An Update and Recommendation."

The Public Schools of North Carolina
North Carolina State Board of Education
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

The Constitutional Mandate to Provide an Opportunity for a Sound Basic Education

An update and recommendation



Introduction

The State Board of Education ("Board") has in place a comprehensive system for providing students in the public schools with the "opportunity for a sound basic education." The Board believes that the foundation for the opportunity for a sound basic education in today's society rests at a minimum on rigorous and relevant content standards, measured when appropriate by valid and reliable assessments, with schools and school systems held accountable for content delivery and for success on this delivery. The Board also believes that providing the opportunity for a sound basic education means having the highest caliber of teachers and principals, and includes training, professional development and continued evaluation. The Board believes that resources are increasingly important, especially with respect to low-wealth, at-risk, and low-performing schools. In that regard, the Board has always supported supplemental funding in various areas, including small schools and low-wealth and special education funds. In addition to these elements, the Board and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction ("NCDPI") employ staff who are dedicated to supplementing the core education functions of the Department with assistance in areas basic to supporting children in their efforts to obtain a sound basic education, including child nutrition and basic health programs, and professional support for school-based staff such as social workers and school resource officers ("SROs").

This Plan is submitted pursuant to the Order of the Superior Court dated April 24, 2015. This Plan is organized into three primary sections. The first section includes a review of the key components and initiatives already in place across the State that, combined, deliver the opportunity for a sound basic education. These components have been developed and executed by past and current Governors of North Carolina, past and present legislation enacted by the General Assembly, and past and present policies and rules of the State Board of Education. This section is referred to as Level 1.

The next section, Level 2, is focused on expanding current programs. Here, in Level 2, the priority is on expanding implementation so that programs in place today are available and accessible to more children.

The last section, Level 3, focuses on extending certain types of services to enhance access to the opportunity for a sound basic education. The Board has focused on this issue based on its understanding of the Court's concerns. The "failure to obtain such an education may be due to any number of reasons beyond the State's control, not the least of which may be the student's lack of individual effort and a failure on the part of parents or other caregivers to meet their responsibilities." *Leandro v. State*, 358 N.C. 605, 625 n. 11, 599 S.E.2d 365, 383 n. 11 (2004). Admittedly, this Plan cannot solve all the social or economic problems that students face outside of the school setting, nor can it cure a student's lack of motivation or the lack of parental involvement. The *Leandro* decision did not find that Article IX of the North Carolina Constitution required the public school system to provide social or general welfare in support of a healthy family system. To the extent, however, that a model may be designed to bring stakeholders to the table to discuss issues in public education, including the non-academic

barriers or hurdles facing at-risk students, then such discussions may allow stakeholders to coordinate general resources and tools that better enable at-risk children to avail themselves of the opportunity for a sound basic education presently being provided in this State.

Table of Contents

An Opportunity for a Sound Basic Education: Level 1 Pages 5-44

Level 1 outlines the initiatives and programs that the Board currently provides for students to have an opportunity for a sound basic education. This Section includes the following:

I. Competent, Well-trained Teachers and Principals

- A. Teacher Training and Recruitment
- B. Educator Evaluation
- C. Competent, Well-Trained Principals

II. Curriculum

- A. Standard Course of Study
- B. Career & Technical Education
- C. Students with Disabilities
- D. Academically and Intellectually Gifted
- E. Early Childhood Education

III. Testing and Accountability

IV. Enhancing Student Achievement

- A. Read to Achieve
- B. Digital Resources, Tools and Courses
- C. Career and College Promise
- D. NC Advanced Placement Partnership
- E. District & School Transformation

V. Federal Programs

VI. Healthy Schools – Children Ready to Learn

- A. Health Curriculum
- B. School Support Personnel
- C. Professional Development
- D. Nutrition: Hunger, Health and Academics

VII. School Funding in North Carolina

Program Expansion: Level 2

Pages 45-51

Level 2 outlines the initiatives recommended for expansion by the State Board of Education. Each one builds on the implementation and success of programs already in place, with a focus on reaching more children. This Section includes the following:

I. The Opportunity for Pre-Kindergarten for At-Risk Children
II. School Calendar Flexibility
III. Teacher Recruitment and Retention
IV. Teacher Evaluation Process
V. Professional Development
VI. Support to Schools – District and School Transformation
VII. Implement Effective Models for Improving Low Performing Schools and District
VIII. Access to Digital Tools, Resources, and Courses
IX. Expand Healthy School Initiatives

Extension: Level 3

Pages 52-53

Level 3 outlines additional initiatives intended to more fully address the non-academic needs of children who need assistance in taking advantage and better accessing the opportunity for a sound basic education provided in the public school system. Programs and recommendations for consideration include the following:

I. Family Resource and Youth Service Centers
II. Providing Birth to Kindergarten Services for at-risk children
III. Statewide Interagency Cooperation to Optimize Services to Children
IV. Interagency Advisory Committee on Public Education

Conclusion

Page 54

An Opportunity for a Sound Basic Education: Level I

I. Competent, Well-Trained Teachers and Principals

A. Teacher Training and Recruitment

1. Traditional Teacher Education Programs

(a) The College or University (Institutions of High Education or "IHE")

The Board has "entire control of licensing all applicants for teaching positions in all public schools of North Carolina." G.S. 115C-296. The Board is also the lead agency in coordination with institutions of higher education (IHE) in determining standards for approval of educator preparation programs. G.S. 115C-296. The approval process requires potential educator preparation programs to submit "blueprints" of proposed programs for approval by the Board in alignment with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards using the Teacher Candidate Evaluation Rubric adopted by the Board. The blueprints must also specify how educator preparation programs will ensure that educator candidates will achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to teach the content standards in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These blueprints are reviewed by a committee of trained college and university experts and other educators. The committee reviewers look for high quality and rigor in each program based on a set of six requirements that address content knowledge, pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills and dispositions, positive impact on student learning, and leadership and collaboration. Blueprints that lack the necessary quality components are returned with recommendations for improvement prior to Board approval.

An approved teacher education program must provide core instruction and training necessary for a teacher to meet the minimum licensing standards in North Carolina. In addition, teacher education programs must also include required courses focused on student diversity, which address children in poverty and strategies for differentiating instruction. Research on tracking in schools (based on class and race), disproportionate placement of students in poverty in special education programs and disproportionality in discipline is examined. Teacher candidates develop strategies for effectively serving children and families living in poverty with emphasis on supporting the academic achievement of African American males.

Students seeking to complete teacher education programs are required to complete a minimum of 10 weeks of student teaching, or internships. The IHEs generally provide for students to work with at-risk and/or low-wealth schools and to gain experience working with diverse populations. Some teacher education programs provide support to new teachers in the classroom to help prevent early attrition, beginning teacher support, instructional coaching and a summer institute.

(b) The Teacher Candidate

In order to be admitted to a teacher education program at the undergraduate level, a student must satisfactorily complete Praxis I Core Academic Skills for Education. Candidates may also satisfy admission requirements into educator preparation programs by achieving an 1100 score or higher through a combined verbal and mathematics score on the SAT. The minimum composite score for the ACT is 24 or greater.

(c) The Applicant for Teaching License

In addition to satisfying all program/course requirements, to be recommended for a Standard Professional 1 License upon program completion, prospective teachers must:

- Achieve at least a 2.5 GPA
- Receive a recommendation from the LEA in which student teaching was completed
- Receive the recommendation of the college/university
- Satisfy testing requirements

Effective for teacher candidates October 1, 2014, the State Board of Education increased the rigor in assessments required for licensure. This is now required by statute in G.S. 115C-296.

For teachers of elementary education and special education general curriculum, the new requirements ensure that teachers in these disciplines demonstrate conceptual knowledge in the teaching of reading and conceptual content knowledge in mathematics. The required tests are:

- **Elementary Education:** K-6 candidates must pass

    1) Foundations of Reading Test
    2) General Curriculum Test for North Carolina (Pearson Tests, including a minimum score on the Mathematics subtest)

- **Special Education**: General Curriculum (K-12) Licensure candidates must pass

    1) Foundations of Reading Test
    2) Pearson General Curriculum Test for North Carolina
    3) ETS Praxis II Test 0543/5543
        - Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications

Also effective in 2014 -2015, State statute requires all candidates for an initial bachelor's degree license or graduate degree license "to achieve a minimum score on a standard examination appropriate and adequate for that purpose" (G.S. 115C-296(a)). The

testing requirement had previously been suspended for some disciplines if the teachers attended preparation programs in North Carolina.

(d) Continuing Education and License Renewal

Teachers must renew their licenses every five years and, during those five years, must have completed a required number of continuing education credit hours.

(e) The IHE Report Card

The NC IHE Educator Preparation Program Report Card offers a snapshot of information about college/university teacher and principal preparation programs. This report card includes information about teacher candidates and program data including:

- Mean GPA of admitted students
- Percentage of program completers licensed within one year of program completion
- Percentage of formally admitted students to program completers within 3 years
- Evaluation data for past three years of program graduates

Individual IHE data provided in the report cards is reported annually in the IHE Performance Reports in accordance with G.S. 115C 296(b) and are available at http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ihe/reports/ . The actual IHE report card snapshots are located at http://apps.schools.nc.gov/pls/apex/f?p=141:1:0

2. Challenges

UNC's fifteen teacher education programs prepare approximately 4,500 teachers. Approximately 65% are prepared through undergraduate traditional preparation programs. About one third are prepared in high-need licensure areas – mathematics, science, middle grades, and special education. Teachers from UNC's education programs account for approximately 38% of the new classroom teachers each year. The private teacher preparation programs in North Carolina account for close to 12% of the new teachers each year. The remaining 50% of classroom teachers come from out-of-state or some form of alternative licensing program.

Enrollment in teacher education programs is decreasing statewide. North Carolina needs approximately 11,000 new teachers each year in order to satisfy demand, but this demand is not being met through the public and private educator preparation programs, lateral entry, or the importation of teachers from other states and countries. Nearly 50% of teachers leave the classroom by year five of the teacher's career.

3. Alternative Routes to Teacher Licensure

(a) Lateral Entry

A college graduate may, in some circumstances, be eligible to enter the teaching profession without having completed a formal teacher education program at a college or university. This route requires a certain grade point average plus successful scores on a professional examination or a certain amount of relevant work experience. This route also requires the individual to complete the required teachers education curriculum while employed and within three years.

(b) Reciprocity

There are routes to licensure in North Carolina that recognize accredited teacher education programs from other states as well as valid licenses issued by other states.

(c) Teach For America

Since 1990, Teach for America (TFA) has collaborated with North Carolina school districts to recruit, train and place teachers in 14 rural eastern North Carolina counties that have shortages of highly qualified teachers. TFA-Eastern North Carolina has grown its corps due to Race to the Top funding. During the 2008-09 school year, there were 167 TFA teachers employed in NC school districts. This yearly number has increased to 320 during the 2014-15 school year. TFA corps members have a two-year commitment to the program. TFA has expanded its statewide presence by opening a new outreach region in the Piedmont Triad area that will serve additional school districts. In addition, through NC General Assembly legislation, TFA has assumed responsibility for the continued operation of the North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC). Currently there are 320 TFA teachers employed in NC schools, and 2014 follow-up data indicates there are 950 TFA alumni in North Carolina, 68% of whom who are working in the education field.

(d) VIF International Education

VIF International Education builds global education programs through professional development, curriculum development, language acquisition and cultural (teacher) exchange programs that create engaging learning environments for students. VIF recruits international teachers who want to gain first-hand knowledge of the U.S. while helping to prepare students to be thoughtful global citizens. Currently, there are 705 teachers licensed to teach in North Carolina schools through the VIF program. The primary recruitment areas for VIF teachers are World Languages, English as a Second Language, Elementary Education and Dual Language (Spanish/English and Mandarin Chinese/English). The minimum teaching commitment for VIF teachers is three years. Exchange teachers are only permitted to stay in the United States five years without returning home because their J-1 visas for cultural exchange are only good for five years.

B. *Educator Evaluation*

The Board has invested in a robust evaluation system designed to identify teachers who are meeting acceptable standards of practice, those who are excelling in their impact on students, and those who may require additional support and development in order to meet proficiency. The North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) has two major elements designed to determine a teacher's effectiveness – classroom observations and student growth. The NCEES online evaluation system is required for all educators and is available to teachers and school administrators through federal and state appropriations.

In order to achieve fidelity, NCDPI has worked extensively with principals across the state to establish a common understanding of how teacher practice is demonstrated at each rating category of the observational standards. The NCDPI has developed a series of regionally delivered face to-face trainings, called Principal READY, designed to help principals administer the evaluation process in a reliable, rigorous, and valid manner. These trainings also include state-level data on how well we are evaluating our teachers on the NCEES instrument. These trainings assist principals with using NCEES as a tool for increasing teacher effectiveness, rather than merely as a tool for making high-stakes employment decisions.

The NCDPI recognizes that, regardless of the amount of training principals receive, an observational evaluation process contains subjectivity and/or bias. To minimize the effects of bias on the evaluation process, the NCDPI uses student growth to provide an objective measure of a teacher's effectiveness. The state's student growth measure, the Educator Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) that is provided to all schools by state appropriation, gives teachers a measure of their impact on student learning relative to their peers in the same subject and grade (where applicable). The EVAAS measure uses sophisticated statistical methodologies to determine how much a student should grow in a given year if he or she were instructed by an "average" North Carolina teacher. Student testing performance that varies substantially from the expectation is attributed to the teacher as his or her impact on student learning. All the individual differences in student performance on the assessment are aggregated at the teacher level. A determination is made as to whether the teacher met, exceeded, or did not meet the state's expectation of growth with his or her students.

While teacher and principal understanding of the observational component of NCEES is solid, educators are less confident in their understanding of how EVAAS is calculated and how it can be used as a tool for promoting teacher effectiveness. The NCDPI has developed a series of trainings on how EVAAS can be used to help teachers grow and improve their practice in order to maximize student achievement. Some of these EVAAS-specific trainings have been held in conjunction with the Principal READY trainings, while others have been developed for superintendents and other central office administrators. Consultants from the NCDPI work with these school- and district-level administrators to identify trends in the student-growth data that can reveal differences in how different student populations are being served (e.g., minority vs. non-minority students, students of low socioeconomic status vs. students of high socioeconomic status).

The NCDPI also works with educators in the field on how the student-growth data can be used to explore teacher practice more deeply to reveal problems with instructional practice that are not readily apparent from the observational process. There are cases in the State where teachers have exceptionally high ratings on the observational components of NCEES, but do not meet expected growth with their students. While these teachers may have mastered the technical aspects of teaching, there may be cases where the instructional delivery does not have a positive impact on student learning. In other words, the teaching strategies employed by the teacher may not match the instructional needs of the students being taught. Consultants from the NCDPI work with principals to look deeper into these teachers' classrooms and help diagnose issues of instructional practice and student interaction that might be a hindrance to improved student growth. This iterative process of examining student growth, observing instructional practice, and providing substantive feedback is critical to ensuring that even our most experienced educators continue to grow and improve their instructional practice.

Although the combination of observation and student-growth data is powerful, the NCDPI works diligently to improve the evaluation process for North Carolina's educators. The agency is currently working to incorporate student perceptions of their teachers' practice into NCEES. Recent research (e.g., the *Measures of Effective Teaching Project* and *The New Teacher Project's Irreplaceables*) has demonstrated that students are accurate and reliable arbiters of teachers' effectiveness. Students are asked to provide feedback on various aspects of their teachers' practice such as how well they explain the content, how willing they are to provide additional assistance, and how engaging and relevant they make the content, among other things. By providing teachers anonymous student feedback on their performance, the NCDPI is better able to identify teachers' instructional practices that may be an impediment to student achievement.

The mission of the NCDPI is to leverage the robust evaluation system to drive better instructional practice and student achievement. This is a long-term strategy. With respect to students' immediate needs for a highly-effective teacher, the NCDPI works with the districts' Human Resources departments to monitor which students have access to our most highly-effective teachers. By providing districts and schools with data on their teachers' effectiveness, we can help districts pair students who have the most critical needs with those teachers who have demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom. In other words, the best way to help students who are below grade level is to expose them to teachers who provide greater than one year's worth of academic impact.

Evaluation of our teachers and principals continues to be a critical element of maintaining and ensuring a competent educator in every classroom and a competent leader in every school. The State agency is committed to constant monitoring and improvement as more information, studies and data become available.

C. *Competent, Well-Trained Principals*

Principal Preparation

The Board, NCDPI and IHE deans and faculty work closely to align educator preparation programs with the NC Professional Teaching Standards and the NC School Executive Standards. Both sets of standards (teachers and school leaders) equip new teachers and principals with the skillset to address the needs of diverse student populations, especially students from poverty.

The Board reviews, and ultimately approves, IHE teacher and principal preparation programs using candidate's developed artifacts and electronic evidences. These evidences must demonstrate a candidate's proficiencies in all the standards, with emphasis on successful teaching of diverse learners including English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and low-achieving students prior to recommendation for licensure.

Principal standards related to supporting diverse student populations include:

- School Culture and Identity
- School Resources and Budget
- Systematic Communication
- Parent and Community Involvement and Outreach
- Federal, State and District Mandates, and
- School Executive Micro-political Leadership

Principal Support for Effective Supervision

Principal READY sessions provide principals with targeted statewide support and professional development. These sessions, facilitated by NCDPI Educator Effectiveness staff, provide principals with resources and specific examination of the NC Professional Teaching Standards and the NC Teacher Evaluation Rubric. During these interactive sessions, principals focus on instructional improvement by sharing best coaching protocols and creating evidence tools describing effective instructional practices to support their observation practices. Principals are given time to collaborate and they create coaching questions and observation evidences for each observation standard to support the growth of teachers. A total of 44 principal sessions were offered across the state from spring 2013 – present, with 3,923 participants in attendance. These statewide sessions were held in all 8 regions of North Carolina.

II. Curriculum

A. Standard Course of Study

The NCDPI Curriculum and Instruction Division (C&I) is the core of the academic program for the North Carolina Public Schools. The consultants in C&I are responsible for developing content standards, professional development specific to content and, if appropriate, reviewing assessment items for each of the disciplines covered by the NC Standard Course of Study.

North Carolina's Standard Course of Study defines the appropriate content standards for each grade level and each high school course to provide a uniform set of learning standards for every public school in North Carolina.

Based on a philosophy of teaching and learning that is consistent with current research, exemplary practices, and national standards, the Standard Course of Study is designed to support North Carolina educators in providing the most challenging education possible for the state's students. The goal of these standards is to prepare all students to become career and college ready.

With these standards in mind, local school leaders make decisions about the comprehensive curriculum that they choose to deliver to students so that they can teach the content standards for every grade and subject. In addition, local schools and districts may offer electives and coursework that are above and beyond the Standard Course of Study's content standards. Classroom instruction is a partnership between the state, which sets content standards in the Standard Course of Study, and local educators who determine which curriculum materials they will use to deliver instruction to reach the standards.

The Standard Course of Study was completely overhauled in the past few years, and the new standards were implemented for the first time in 2012-13. This initiative is part of a long-term trend to update and improve the standards as expectations change and as new research and information become available. Currently, North Carolina's Standard Course of Study consists of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics (under review) and the North Carolina Essential Standards in all other subjects, including social studies, the arts, healthful living, career and technical education, and world languages. Following are the standards areas:

- Arts Education
- Driver Education Program
- English as a Second Language
- English Language Arts
- Guidance
- Healthful Living
- Information and Technology Skills
- Mathematics

- World Languages
- Science
- Social Studies
- Career Technical Education

B. Career and Technical Education (CTE)

The mission of CTE is to prepare all students for careers, post secondary education and citizenship. To accomplish our goal, we provide curriculum and resources for over 150 state approved courses.

The CTE courses are distributed among these program areas: agriculture; business, finance, and information technology; career development; family and consumer sciences; health science; marketing; technology; and trade and industrial education. A brief description of each course and program area can be found at the following link: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/cte/curriculum/essential-standards.pdf .

The state resources include differentiated lesson plans and resource materials. Since nearly half of our total enrollment is classified as a special population, we work to include model strategies for special populations for all teachers. State standards for CTE courses have become better aligned with industry standards and third-party credentials in recent years. This shift is an advantage for at-risk students because it prepares them for credentials that identify them as work-ready for employers. DPI has several statewide agreements that greatly reduce or eliminate the cost of credential testing for students removing the economic barrier for students to gain access.

Major qualifiers for special populations services include academic performance, economic status, disabilities, limited English proficiency, and students of nontraditional genders in specific courses. A special populations coordinator serves these students at the school level, providing additional interventions to ensure success. If no special populations coordinator is employed at the school, CTE teachers are tasked with the additional interventions.

CTE special populations generally perform well on Perkins indicators. CTE has graduation rates of 94% and a placement rate of over 90%. Local Education Agencies provide strategies in their local application for federal funds each year that address the needs of special populations students. Support for these students continues to be a major focus at the state and local levels.

C. Services for Students with Disabilities

The NCDPI provides supports and funding to school districts through federal and state appropriations to serve students who are disabled. Article 9 under Public School law G.S. 115C governs programs for students with disabilities. The Exceptional Children Division uses current research to impact programming for students at risk of identification and for students once identified as exceptional.

Multi-Tiered System of Support and Exceptional Children

The following are direct programmatic strategies aimed at improving outcomes for students at risk. They combine Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which is a general education approach to school improvement, with other strategies primarily found within the Exceptional Children (EC) domain. Merging MTSS with EC programming is important. EC strategies and supports need to be generalized within the regular education context and considered viable constructs to be used within inclusion classrooms or by general education teachers. MTSS uses problem-solving frameworks, which allow schools to think about all students, and is inclusive of EC interventions and strategies as well as those used by general education teachers.

Multi-Tiered System of Support-Academics

MTSS is a framework designed to assist schools and school districts with creating a seamless system of support. This support system addresses the academic and behavior needs of all students Pre-K through 12th grade. MTSS statewide implementation is beginning in the Fall of 2015. School districts, charter schools and state-operated programs will be invited to participate in one of four cohorts over the next four years.

The MTSS framework is built on six critical components: leadership, building capacity for infrastructure/implementation, communication and collaboration, data-based problem-solving, three-tiered instruction/intervention model, and data evaluation. MTSS focuses efforts that provide structures to analyze and define appropriate:

- Core, Supplemental and Intensive instructional supports
- Core: Differentiated instruction in the general classroom
- Supplemental: Instruction delivered to groups of students in need of additional practice/intervention to close an identified academic and/or behavior gap
- Intensive: Instruction delivered to small groups of students in need of intensive academic and behavior instruction to close an identified significant gap

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

The language for Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) comes directly from the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). PBIS is based on principles of applied behavior analysis and the prevention approach and values of positive behavior support.

PBIS is a framework or approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing tiered, evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.

PBIS is a prevention-oriented way for school personnel to (a) organize tiered, evidence-based practices, (b) improve their implementation of those practices, and (c) maximize academic

and social behavior outcomes for students. PBIS supports the success of ALL students.

Occupational Course of Study

The Occupational Course of Study (OCS) is for students who are identified as Intellectually Disabled both Mild and Moderate. It is a combined program with both academic and job preparation as equally important parts of the program structure. Also under consideration is formally expanding the OCS program to offer both a 4-year option as well as a 5-year option. The rigor of the academic components has been increased and has cut into the job preparation time. The 5-year component will build on the elements already completed and will be more like a structured internship, leading to more long-term employment opportunities.

The Occupational Preparation courses are designed to provide opportunities for students to develop self-determination skills, independent living skills and job skills, and to aid in the transition of these skills into community settings. The objectives contained in these courses specifically target skills identified by research from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) as those associated with predictors of postsecondary success. These courses are often taught with district created lab courses to allow for additional instruction of concepts and application of skills through the related pathway work hours.

State Improvement Project (NC SIP)

The purpose of the NC SIP, a federally funded State Personnel Development Grant, is to improve the quality of instruction for students with disabilities through research supported personnel development and on-site technical assistance for the public schools and teacher preparation programs through reading and math instruction.

Goals:

1. Improve basic skills performance of students with disabilities (SWD)
2. Increase the percentage of qualified teachers of SWD
3. Increase the graduation rates and decrease dropout rates of SWD
4. Improve parent satisfaction and involvement with, and support of, school services for SWD
5. Improve the quality of teachers' instructional competencies

Math Foundations Course

The Math Foundations professional development 30-hour course has shown to increase regular and special education teachers' mathematical knowledge for teaching (Faulkner & Cain, 2013).

Reading Foundations

Reading Foundations is a rigorous 30-hour course that was developed to address teacher knowledge related to the instructional needs of students with persistent reading difficulties.

Targeting Adolescent Literacy

The EC Division has joined with the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KUCRL), which brings a 35-year proven track record in helping adolescents attain literacy skills.

D. Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Programs

Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) programs in North Carolina are governed by Article 9B, G.S. 115C-150.5-.8, and the NC AIG Program Standards, Board policy GCS-U-000. Within both of these guiding documents, as well as practices of school districts and NCDPI, there are many aspects of AIG programming that support children at risk/of poverty, both directly and indirectly.

- Article 9B provides a state definition for AIG students, which clearly indicates the strong commitment of NC to AIG students from all economic backgrounds. This statement ensures that LEAs focus efforts on all students, including those students from poverty.
- Article 9B requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop their own Local AIG Plan with specific components, to be approved by local boards of education and sent to NCDPI for comments. This local AIG plan outlines how students are identified and served in local school districts. By legislating that LEAs must develop their own Local AIG Plan, versus having one statewide plan of identification and services, North Carolina supports local flexibility to develop the most effective program and services for each LEA's student population and school context. This flexibility is a critical element in supporting children of poverty in local communities.
- The NC AIG Program Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide for LEAs to develop, coordinate, and implement AIG programs. Throughout the AIG Program Standards, there are standards that show a clear expectation to develop practices in support of children from poverty ranging from developing student identification procedures that address under-served populations to specific programming to cultivate potential in young students prior to AIG identification to support access and opportunity.

E. Early Childhood Education

The research demonstrates the overall effects associated with a strong academic pre-kindergarten program which include:

- Higher achievement test scores (reading/math)
- Reduced special education identification and grade repetition
- Increased high school graduation

- Reduced behavior problems, delinquency, and crime
- Increased employment with higher earnings and reduced welfare dependency

With respect to North Carolina specifically, research into the state-funded pre-kindergarten program, More at Four (MAF, now NC Pre-K) shows:

- Children at greatest risk exhibit greater growth over time in language and literacy skills, math skills, and general knowledge.
- Children gain a foundational knowledge, which prepares them to develop more advanced reading and math skills in elementary school.
- MAF helps to lessen the achievement gap for poor children in both math and reading performance, and such early Pre-K experiences can have a lasting effect into the elementary school years.
- MAF significantly reduces the likelihood that children will be placed in special education in the third grade, academically benefiting students and resulting in considerable cost savings to school districts.

Research on the science of early childhood development has shown that children's experiences and the conditions of their lives are pivotal to school readiness, third-grade reading proficiency, and high school graduation. Pre-kindergarten mitigates early learning disparities for children from low-income families. A robust state-funded pre-kindergarten effort continues to be a sound strategy for preparing North Carolina's population of at-risk perspective enrollees for school success at kindergarten entry.

In order to maximize the effects from pre-kindergarten, it should not operate in isolation from K-12 education. Based on research, the following is needed to leverage the gains associated with an effective pre-kindergarten program:

- Aligned focus with clear goals across the early education continuum (P – Grade 3)
- Effective, well-trained teachers and administrators
- Seamless transitions
- Effective professional development and support opportunities designed to improve the quality of teachers' emotional, instructional, and organizational interactions with young children

To that end, multiple projects are underway that are designed to strengthen the connection between pre-kindergarten and K-12 in our state.

FirstSchool Collaboration

In an effort to sustain program effects in the early elementary grades, NCDPI is working collaboratively with UNC System's Frank Porter Graham's FirstSchool to support the development of practices and systems for using data to promote effective instruction in Pre-K – Grade 3. Through professional development, technical assistance, and coaching, FirstSchool is

currently supporting two school districts, Bertie County Schools and Martin County Schools, to strengthen the use of data to improve instruction.

Key goals of the project are as follows:

- Administrators and teachers will demonstrate an improved ability to articulate the value, purposes, and use of assessment and how it informs their instructional practices and knowledge of student learning.
- Administrators and teachers will learn how to use data that support school and classroom efforts to improve the school experience of under-represented children, including broader use of data such as attendance, retention, and discipline. This includes formative, benchmark, and summative approaches that inform teaching and learning.
- Administrators and teachers will explore the principles and use of collaborative inquiry to inform instructional practice and knowledge of student learning and progress, with a focus on improving learning of African American, Latino and low-income students.
- Administrators and teachers will broaden their ability to view instructional practices and student engagement. Using research observation measures, Snapshot and CLASS, teachers and administrators will explore constructs of quality.
- Administrators and teachers will learn to use the NC teacher evaluation system to promote the use of data, evidence-based practice, and collaborative inquiry in order to improve the school experiences of African American, Latino and low-income children.

K-3 Formative Assessment Process

The NCDPI is designing a developmentally appropriate individualized formative assessment for K-3 children. The purpose of the K-3 Formative Assessment will be to inform instruction of students. Therefore, it will be formative in nature and used in an ongoing manner by teachers and students to guide teaching and learning. It will include multiple sources of data, such as: observations, conversations, work samples, and tasks gathered by teachers, support staff, and families. The K-3 Formative Assessment will be aligned with both North Carolina's Early Learning and Development Standards and the Standard Course of Study. It will be constructed using principles of universal design so that it will be accessible to the greatest number of children possible. It will broaden areas currently being assessed to incorporate the five domains of development: approaches to learning, cognitive development, emotional-social development, health and physical development, and language development and communication.

The K-3 Formative Assessment will also include a **Kindergarten Entry Assessment** that addresses five domains of development and will be administered within the first sixty days of enrollment. The data from this initial administration will generate a Child Profile that provides a more complete picture of the whole child and makes information available that will be used to inform teaching and learning.

NC Early Childhood Integrated Data System (NC ECIDS)

The mission of NC ECIDS is to develop and sustain a high quality integrated early childhood data system in North Carolina to inform policies and practices that ultimately support better outcomes for children and families. The goals of NC ECIDS are to:

- provide state agencies, policymakers, and the general public with unduplicated counts of where children are being served;
- provide information about current programs and services to better address areas of need and effective practice within systems; and
- integrate with the P-20W system, allowing for the examination of longitudinal effects of early childhood programs and services.

In summary, maximizing the success of North Carolina's most vulnerable population in its public schools will require a robust and coherent system of early education. The Board can provide a critical role in that effort by:

- ensuring alignment of standards, curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments across the early learning continuum (P-3)
- supporting/developing Pre-K as a critical platform for at-risk students to successfully transition into the K-12 system of education
- strengthening transitions across Pre-K to Grade 3 learning continuum

III. Testing and Accountability

Since the early 1990s, NCDPI Accountability Services has developed and administered end-of-grade and end-of-course tests in partnership with NC State University. Those tests measure student proficiency and growth on the NC Standard Course of Study in subject areas and grades required for federal, state, and judicial reporting.

The data derived from the analyses of student performance provide information regarding which students and subgroups of students need additional supports in order to be successful. The data also provide transparency to the public about how North Carolina schools are performing and which schools are in need of additional assistance. In recent years the data from state assessments are used in conjunction with EVAAS to provide feedback to teachers on their effect on student learning.

As this work has progressed in recent years, the accountability model and the assessment system have been modified to ensure students are college and career ready. The accountability model now includes a college admissions assessment, the ACT, and a workplace readiness assessment, ACT WorkKeys. The end-of-grade tests and the end-of-course tests, which are aligned to college and career ready content standards, have rigorous academic achievement standards that have been determined to be closely aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress's (NAEP) expectations. This increased expectation for student achievement aligns with preparing all students for successful completion of K-12 education.

In October 2014, the Board convened a Summative Assessment Task Force to review assessment options. Based on the discussion thus far, the Task Force is recommending a study to determine if interim tests administered throughout the school year would be feasible. This model would allow for interim feedback for the classroom teacher on a student's progress so that instruction could be modified to increase achievement. Pending State Board action, this model may be studied in the 2015-16 school year.

In addition to these efforts, Accountability Services is preparing new student-level reports for 2015-16 that will provide more granular information for teachers to have a sense of a student's strengths and weaknesses. These reports, which will also be provided to parents, will assist all students, but particularly those who are not having academic success.

IV. Enhancing Student Achievement

Over the last several administrations, programs have been initiated to enhance student learning. These programs provide additional supports to all children, particularly at risk children in order for them to graduate ready for college and careers.

A. Read to Achieve

Third grade reading proficiency is considered a leading indicator in predicting high school graduation. Struggling readers are at a much greater risk of dropping out than proficient students, and this risk is higher among non-proficient poor students living in areas of concentrated poverty. In 2012, the North Carolina General Assembly adopted Read to Achieve (RTA) to effect systemic change in reading instruction and student outcomes. The appropriation included resources for supports and interventions.

Current Practices with Positive Impacts

Read to Achieve legislation funds nine regionally based (eight regions plus one charter) K-3 literacy consultants who work directly with districts and schools to improve literacy instruction. To build capacity and collaboration in the field, the K-3 Literacy Division has trained over 260 Master Literacy Trainers (MLTs) to assist with the delivery of professional development, analyze district trends, and provide feedback to NCDPI. Professional development that is sustained and ongoing is fundamental to the systemic change needed to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed. Professional development offered by the K-3 Literacy division and MLTs focuses on solid core literacy instruction that is adjusted according to the needs of the children in the class. The instructional trainings are based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS) using the gradual release of responsibility model. Teachers learn to model and scaffold learning for whole groups of children and to individualize and intervene for children with deficit gaps in literacy skill development. The analysis of trend data across the state helps the K-3 Literacy division identify needs and create professional development for teachers and administrators.

In the school year 2013-14, all K-3 reading teachers in NC began using the mClass:Reading 3D formative, diagnostic assessment system provided by state appropriation. This is the first time that this grade span has used a consistent assessment system statewide. There are over 150 certified master 3D trainers in the state. These trainers help the regional consultants with refresher trainings for new hires and offer direct support for the implementation of the assessment system in their schools and districts. When used appropriately, the Reading 3D system is another component that is fundamental to systemic change. The three benchmarks (Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year) administered through direct interaction between the teacher and the student indicate risks for individual students in their reading development. Teachers use this information to create, adjust, plan, and target instruction that meets the needs of each child. This focused instruction is progress monitored frequently to ensure that children are receiving the interventions needed to minimize risks and advance achievement. Principals and district leadership have access to fidelity reports that document the

frequency of progress monitoring for each child. Statewide results show that children who are progress monitored make more movement toward the benchmark goals for the grade level. Overall proficiency for schools using the system for the last three years has increased by six percentage points. Also, the Reading 3D system correctly predicts whether third-grade students will pass or fail the EOG 81.7% of the time. In compliance with State statutes, representatives from Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) were trained in the 3D assessment system two years ago. As a result, students graduating from education programs should have the foundational training before they complete their student teaching experiences and should be prepared to use the assessments when they enter the classroom.

The K-3 Literacy division provides many key resources for the field. The Comprehensive Reading Plan and the Literacy Strategies documents are foundational in the overall Read to Achieve implementation. Adjustments, improvements, and changes are continuously made to assist teachers and administrators. The division also currently maintains five livebinders (an online binder) for the public, including the overarching Read to Achieve binder with separate resource links to a parent, reading camp, written comprehension and big ideas in reading binder. A leadership and administrative livebinder is currently being developed. These livebinders are filled with resources that can be used by parents, teachers and administrators across the state.

Expansion in the Future

The K-3 Literacy Division, in collaboration with other divisions in the Department of Public Instruction, will specifically focus on the 134 elementary schools on the list of 348 schools identified in the April 2015 *Leandro* hearing. Regional consultants are analyzing data from the schools within their regions to determine literacy needs. The consultants will work with the district and school administrators and the district MLTs to provide more targeted assistance and monitoring of these schools throughout the 2015-2016 school year. The division plans to expand collaborative work with all district MLTs to help facilitate and customize professional development in all regions across the state. A continued emphasis on progress monitoring, classroom management and adjusting instruction to meet student needs are critical areas to address.

The division continues to look for better ways to ensure that communication reaches down to the teacher and parent level. Several informational brochures have been produced, and more are needed. Online videos, webinars, and narrated online presentations will be created offering general information and resources. Plans are being developed for a chat feature that goes directly to the consultants.

Early intervention is the key for Read to Achieve to succeed and for all children to be proficient by third grade. Using a consistent formative, diagnostic assessment system with fidelity, teaching the standards, and customizing instruction for children are fundamental practices that will lead to systemic change. When children enter school in kindergarten, teachers can immediately identify risks and provide instruction to begin to fill the missing gaps. This continuous process should remain in place through the elementary grades. Struggling students

may need extra support throughout their school careers. Instruction for students should always be focused on their needs and not be a "one size fits all" curriculum. Teaching the standards in ways that model and scaffold learning and making concrete connections benefit all levels of students. Each school would benefit from a dedicated reading/literacy coach who would work with all teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), analyze data and trends, conduct professional development, model teaching strategies, and use coaching techniques to improve literacy instruction in the school. School-level literacy coaches would help build capacity in schools and guide the systemic change process needed in every elementary school for all students to meet the demands of rigorous reading.

B. Digital Resources, Tools and Courses

Students and districts across North Carolina have access to digital tools, resources, and courses through Home Base and the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS). Home Base and the NCVPS together set NC apart from the rest of the nation as a model of how an intuitive, robust technology enables educators to make more meaningful teaching decisions and allows students access to a variety of courses and resources, which greatly impacts the success of North Carolina students.

Home Base

Home Base is North Carolina's suite of digital tools, and includes a Student Information System, Instructional Improvement System (IIS) and an Educator Effectiveness System. The IIS tools are intended to provide additional opportunities for students to gain access to resources that will help them take charge of their learning. Students have quick access to assignments, grades, activities and resources for instructional purposes and the ability to use the assessment tools to take online assessments (which allow for immediate feedback).

For students, Home Base provides an opportunity to gain valuable skills that set them apart by interacting with such an advanced technology tool. Home Base also empowers students to take charge of their learning and opportunities for improvement. Not only do students have access to their schedules, class agendas, assignments, grades and test scores, but Home Base also is the hub that allows students to store work and turn in assignments. Students collaborate and share helpful insights with other classmates and have access to textbooks and other digital resources all in one place and all available statewide.

The primary use for the IIS portion of Home Base in the first two years of implementation has been in the areas of classroom and benchmark assessments. Assessment is a key part of the cycle of instructional improvement, because it allows teachers to get an indication of how well students are learning after a particular lesson or series of lessons has been taught. The reporting options within the IIS are very valuable because the information is used to help personalize learning for students and improve instruction from the educator's perspective. This could involve assigning specific supplemental resources to an individual student or group of students to help get them on track with a set of standards on which they could use more practice.

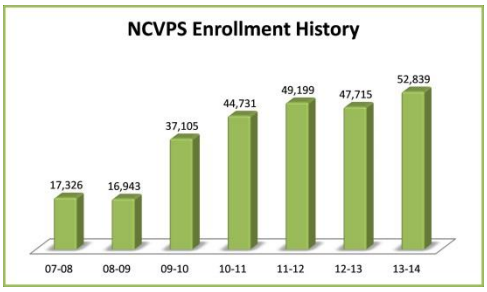
Or the system can challenge students who may have already mastered a standard to take their learning to the next level.

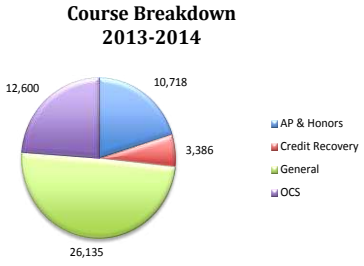
Currently, teachers have access to over 100,000 instructional materials, aligned to the NC Standard Course of Study, in Home Base (including unit plans, lesson plans, resources and assessments items) that can be used to improve instruction and directly impact student learning. In only the second year of implementation, usage of IIS has almost tripled, specifically in the use of the classroom and benchmark assessment tools. For the 2014-2015 school year, about 2.4 million classroom assessments have been successfully administered statewide (up from 800K last year) and 3.8 million benchmark assessments have been administered statewide (up from 1.3 million last year).

NC Virtual Public School

Since 2007, the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) has served learners with high quality online courses and expanded options in education. NCVPS is the great equalizer: it provides quality learning opportunities to every North Carolina student regardless of zip code. NCVPS is nationally recognized and the second largest state-led virtual school, second only to Florida Virtual School, with over 55,000 full-credit enrollments from all 115 NC school districts, 61 charter schools, two state residential schools, four special schools, and the non-public sector. NCVPS offers over 150 different courses as a supplement to the local high school course catalog and includes Advanced Placement (AP), Occupational Course of Study (OCS), electives, traditional, honors and credit recovery courses. All courses are taught by highly qualified, North Carolina certified teachers who provide strategies for active student engagement through a variety of technology tools.

NCVPS offers fall, spring, summer, and year-long courses. Students enroll through their school of record. NCVPS reports grades to the school of record, which will award the course credit and the final diploma. The NCVPS courses use learning management and collaborative software to maximize student interaction in each class, and NCVPS teachers use the latest technologies to engage students as well as prepare them to be career and college ready. NCVPS has served over 265,000 middle and high school students since its initial launch in the summer of 2007.





A highly qualified, North Carolina certified teacher teaches every NCVPS course, and class sizes range from 21-28 students. Teachers are required to contact students every week and to provide feedback on assignments within twenty-four hours. NCVPS staff monitors these requirements through monthly observations. Teachers are able to differentiate the courses if students need more challenge or more time to understand an objective.

C. Career and College Promise

Career and College Promise (CCP) is a state-legislated program (S.L.2011-145) for qualified high school students in NC that allows students to have the opportunity to pursue certificates, diplomas and degrees with Institutions of Higher Education tuition-free, while they are in high school, allowing them to accelerate their preparation for work and college. There are three components of CCP: College Transfer Pathway, Career and Technical Education Pathway, and Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS). All three of these programs support preparing North Carolina's students for career and college. In particular, CIHS programs target students from the following groups: high school students who are at risk of dropping out of school before attaining a high school diploma; high school students with parents who did not continue education beyond high school; and high school students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction. The focus of Cooperative Innovative High Schools directly impacts students from poverty and continues to be a growing program among our LEAs across the state.

To further improve access and opportunities to dual enrollment programs for children of poverty, the Career and College Promise program must be maintained and expanded. In addition, more technical assistance and local support needs to provide for development of rigorous programming K-12 to better prepare students for dual enrollment programs.

D. NC Advanced Placement Partnership (NCAPP)

NC Advanced Placement Partnership and its corresponding legislation, Broaden Successful Participation in Advanced Courses (SL2013-360), encourage North Carolina LEAs to improve access and opportunities for advanced and rigorous coursework, both AP and IB programming. This legislation focuses on two critical components: (1) increased professional development and technical assistance in our low-performing schools and (2) state coverage for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams for all North Carolina public high school students who are enrolled in corresponding course work. Both of these components directly impact children of poverty. The technical assistance through the NCAPP directly focuses on 23 of North Carolina's low-performing school districts, in addition to other statewide efforts, to build capacity and understanding for advanced programming. The payment of state fees for all students for AP and IB exams ensures that every student is able to access potential college-bearing course work in high school without the barrier of finances. This legislation is timely for the State's public schools and builds on remarkable gains in 2013-14 with AP programming. For example, AP participation and performance for Black/African-American students in North Carolina's public schools continues to outpace the participation and performance for Black/African-American students seen nationwide. The number of Black/African-American AP Exam-Takers in North Carolina's public schools increased 26.8%

from 2013 to 2014, as compared to an 8.2% increase in Black/African-American AP Exam-Takers in public schools nationwide.

E. District and School Transformation

In 2010, North Carolina earned one of twelve Race to the Top (RttT) grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. In part, these funds have been made available to stimulate and strengthen the states' efforts to turn around their lowest-achieving schools. North Carolina detailed a plan to further support the lowest-achieving schools by leveraging Race to the Top funds to significantly expand work already underway across the state by the Department of Public Instruction's District and School Transformation Division (DST). The previous work under North Carolina Turnaround yielded remarkable success through a comprehensive program targeting low-achieving schools and responding to legislative requirements, including North Carolina's judicial and executive direction.

The data below details the continued success with turning around low-achieving schools. Highlights from DST work include:

- Of the 44 Original Low-Performing High Schools identified by Judge Manning in 2004, only 5 remain Low Performing; all of them have increased their graduation rates based on the 2013-14 accountability data.
- On average, between 2009-10 and 2011-12, the schools supported by NCDPI's Turnaround service improved by 7.9 percentage points (as compared to State average improvement of 1.1 percentage points).
- Of the 118 lowest-achieving schools receiving intensive support, 88 have improved their overall performance and are no longer in the bottom 5%; 52 are no longer in the bottom 10%.
- Of the 102 schools receiving service in 2013-14, 46 met and 25 exceeded student growth expectations – a healthy indicator that these schools are on the right path.
- The goal of having no conventional school in NC with a graduation rate below 60% has been accomplished.
    - Nine schools were identified in 2010-11 with a graduation rate below 60%. Seven remain open, and all have graduation rates exceeding 70% with two of the schools above the state graduation rate of 83.9%.
    - Of all high schools identified under Race to the Top in 2009-10, graduation rates have increased an average of 17.2%. During the 2013-14 school year, approximately 50% of the RttT high schools were above the state graduation rate of 83.9%.
- All 12 school districts identified in 2010 as the lowest 10% of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in North Carolina have increased their graduation rates over the last four years. The overall average of graduation rate increase is 8.3%. Two school districts exceeded the state average of 83.9%.
- 70% of the 118 Race to the Top schools Met or Exceeded growth. Grade level proficiency targets are met by continuously meeting and exceeding growth.

- Halifax County Schools has reduced its number of low-performing schools from 7 (64%) to 2 (18%).
- All of the Halifax County middle schools and high schools Met or Exceeded growth, one elementary school Exceeded growth, and three elementary schools Met growth according to the EVAAS School Accountability Growth model for 2013-14.

Understanding the Demographics of the Schools DST Serves

Building on the framework established under the successful North Carolina Turnaround initiative, DST provides support to the lowest-achieving 5% of elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as 12 of the lowest-achieving school districts in North Carolina based on data from the 2009-10 school year using the ABC Accountability Model.

Data show that, when compared to the highest-achieving schools in North Carolina, the schools targeted by DST face unique challenges that require significant support (Table 1.1). Students in the lowest-achieving schools need to grow academically at a rate that exceeds expectations – in other words, the teachers and principals must create a learning environment that supports higher than average annual growth. Because these schools are struggling and may have a history of poor achievement, they require a great deal of customized support and assistance to improve their performance. This dramatic change resulting in improved leadership and teaching practices is North Carolina's definition of "turnaround."

Table 1.1 Demographic Comparisons Between Highest- and Lowest-Achieving Schools

	% Minority Students	% Economically Disadvantaged Students	% Students With Disabilities	% Limited English Proficient Students
Top 5%	25%	21%	9%	3%
Bottom 5%	85%	89%	15%	5%

North Carolina Race to the Top Application; based on 2008-09 data

Services for low-performing schools in the 2015-16 school year may include:

1. A Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) to identify areas to target support
2. An "Unpacking" of the report to take a deeper dive into the CNA findings and begin the process with staff to develop a school improvement plan or course of action targeting areas of need
3. Coaches assigned to schools to target specific needs working with teachers, principals, and central office staff, including school boards as appropriate; with fewer staff to serve in schools the coaching will be different and may be provided through a tiered system of intense (daily), direct (weekly), or consultative (monthly, bi-monthly), etc.
4. School improvement planning utilizing a multi-tiered system of support framework

5. Professional development around specific topics that addresses needs in the school and aligns with the local and state initiatives that can be delivered in large groups with job embedded follow-up
6. Deep data analysis system to target specific areas of need by subject, grade, subgroup, student growth, teacher effectiveness, impact of professional growth, educator (teacher and school executive) standards
7. Regional support for low performing schools and NCDPI cross-division collaboration to provide resources as needed/requested.

V. Federal Programs

The Division of Federal Program Monitoring and Support provides oversight for a number of federal programs authorized under the United States Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The goal of the Division's work is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to access a high-quality education. Division staff strives to communicate that federal programs are not merely a funding source but an opportunity to think about teaching and learning in a different way.

Title I, Part A

Local education agencies target the Title I funds they receive to public schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. In addition to using Title I funds for comprehensive school improvement, over 50% of all LEAs use Title I funds to provide early interventions to at-risk preschool students. Well-designed preschool education programs produce long-term improvements in school success, including higher achievement test scores, lower rates of grade repetition and special education, and higher educational attainment. In a policy report published by the National Institute for Early Education Research in February 25, 2013, the return on the investment of preschool programs for at-risk children is on average $7 for every dollar invested in a well-designed program. There have been other similar studies in this space, with average return of at least $7, and often higher. In the 2014-15 school year, over $48,000,000 in Title I funds are being invested to provide preschool programs for over 7,600 students who otherwise would likely not have access to a quality preschool experience.

School Improvement Grant (SIG)

The School Improvement Grants offer supplemental federal funds to the bottom 5% of the state's persistently lowest-achieving schools which includes charter schools, alternative and special schools. Since 2010-11, 60 schools in 32 counties have received funds to implement a rigorous turnaround model. NCDPI has supported SIG schools by providing professional development, on-site monitoring and technical assistance, and through continued coaching to front-line principals and teachers coordinated through the statewide system of support. It is estimated that more than 30,000 children have benefited from school turnaround efforts through expanded learning interventions that focus on effective building leadership and classroom instruction.

Migrant Education

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) provides supplemental educational and supportive services to children and youth (ages 0-21) whose families are migratory farmworkers or are farmworkers themselves. Given that farmworkers earn an annual income between $10,000 and $12,499, migratory families are among the poorest families in the United States. According to the US Department of Education Office of Migrant Education, migratory children face challenges in seven key areas: School Disruption, Educational Continuity, School Engagement, English Language Development, Access to Services, Health Care Access, and

Family Involvement. NC MEP has developed a Service Delivery Plan that addresses all of these areas for our students. Some examples include: tutoring, mentoring, and summer programs for newly arrived children to lessen the effects of disruptive moves; enrollment services to facilitate timely transition to new schools, including collaboration with Child Nutrition programs to ensure that categorically eligible migratory children receive meals during the school year and summer; college access support and clubs to increase secondary school engagement; supplementary English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tutoring to supplement regular offerings; advocacy with local agencies; assistance with obtaining immunizations and primary health care; and family literacy and parent advisory councils (in all of our LEA sub-grantees and at the State level). In 2013-14, there were 5,655 migrant children and youth identified in North Carolina.

Homeless Education

The NC Homeless Education Program (NCHEP) ensures that nearly 27,000 children and youth experiencing homelessness in NC have access to a quality public education to which they are entitled under the federal McKinney-Vento Act. NCHEP's work as the technical assistance center for homeless liaisons ensures that each school district can successfully identify qualifying homeless children and youth, facilitate immediate enrollment in school, and offer supplemental services to ensure full participation in school. Tutoring services, school supplies, clothing, and other academic needs are provided to homeless students through the McKinney-Vento subgrant funds and/or by utilizing Title I set-aside funds for homeless children and youth. Families are informed of their rights within the law by liaisons, and unaccompanied homeless youth are provided an advocate not only for enrollment purposes but also for academic guidance and success. Ensuring school stability, transportation services and access to free meals is another critical part of the work for homeless liaisons as well as for NCHEP.

After-School Programs

Programs offered when students are not in school can be a crucial asset to families in rural areas and urban areas where resources to support children's learning and development are often insufficient to meet the community's needs. For example, a body of research demonstrates that low-income students suffer large learning setbacks over summer vacation. Currently two programs offer funds to local education agencies, charter schools, and other community-based organizations to provide students with before- and after-school, weekend, and summer school academic enrichment opportunities: 1) the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, and 2) the state-funded After-School Quality Improvement Grant Program.

The 21st CCLC provides competitive grants ranging from $50,000 to $400,000 each year for a four-year period of time. Grant funds are used to operate out-of-school time programs for children attending low-performing and high-poverty schools to help them meet local and state academic standards in subjects such as reading, mathematics, and science. The 21st CCLC programs also provide activities for youth development, drug and violence prevention, art, music, technology, character education, counseling, and recreation to enhance the program's

academic components. There are currently 117 organizations operating after-school programs in 54 LEAs across the state.

Session Law 2014-100 authorized $5,000,000 in state funds to pilot high quality after-school programs through the After-School Quality Improvement Grant Program. At least 70% of students served by the program must qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Organizations are eligible to receive two-year grants of up to $500,000 a year through a competitive process, based on the proposed number of students served, with an option for a third year of funding. For 2014-15, seventeen (17) programs serving over 3,300 students are in the first year of implementation.

VI. Healthy Schools - Children Ready to Learn

There is a wealth of literature to support the connection between healthy students and student achievement. Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (1943) suggests that for humans to reach their potential, first their physiological and safety needs must be met. The ways in which children remain healthy and satisfy their basic human needs are influenced by a variety of circumstances, not the least of which is poverty.

The NCDPI provides an infrastructure to support children and increase the likelihood that students can be successful in school. Those programs are found primarily in the Healthy Schools Section under Curriculum and Instruction, an area that works primarily with teachers in the classroom, and the Safe and Healthy Schools Support Division that works primarily with support services. NCDPI supports children through a focus on child nutrition, K-12 sequential comprehensive health and physical education, comprehensive physical activity programs, access to health services (including both mental and physical health services), and safe and supportive environments for all students.

A. *Health Curriculum*

The NC Standard Course of Study for Healthful Living focuses on grades K-12. Elementary classroom teachers often forgo health while placing an emphasis on other subjects. NC Healthy Schools has created a resource that provides lesson plans for every health objective while integrating a language arts or mathematics objective into each lesson. Support for the professional development of elementary classroom teachers on this resource would be beneficial as the standards address such health issues as recognizing asthma triggers, healthy food choices, stress and anger management, personal safety and puberty education, among others.

Both childhood obesity and poor academic performance tend to be clustered in schools with a high percentage of lower-income students creating a student health issue that is especially problematic in those communities. (Source: activelivingresearch.org) There is a growing body of evidence indicating that physical activity may help school-aged children maximize academic performance. The Healthy Active Children Policy requires that all students in grades K-8 receive, at a minimum, 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Currently the Healthy Schools Section, in collaboration with the Division of Public Health, provides training to select LEAs on how to create a Comprehensive Physical Activity program. Additional resources and school commitment would make this training available to more schools, including those with high need.

While many poor health outcomes are associated with poverty, there is a causal relationship between teen pregnancy and poverty, and vice versa. Preventing teen pregnancy offers an opportunity to intervene in the generational cycle of poverty. Teen parents are more likely to drop out of school. Daughters of teen mothers are three times more likely to become teen mothers themselves. Sons of teen mothers are two times more likely to end up in prison. (Source: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy)

While families with lower income may qualify for Medicaid services, issues related to poverty may preclude access to health services. For example, even when the services are available, many lack adequate transportation to and from appointments and/or are unable to get release time from work to take students to appointments. Students from lower-to-middle income families may not be able to afford private health insurance, presenting another barrier to health care access. Access to supportive services facilitates readiness-to-learn. Counselors routinely report that many "discipline problems" are actually untreated mental health issues. The availability of school-based/school-linked health clinics, or at a minimum school health nurses with optimal student-to-nurse ratios, supports all students.

The Healthy Schools Section currently receives funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for HIV Prevention to work with 15 LEAs to specifically address HIV Prevention in the school setting. This work involves a three-tiered, concentrated 5-year approach to address the high rates of HIV (and teen pregnancy). This three-tiered approach has allowed NC Healthy Schools to work intensively with these LEAs.

Lastly, the Healthy Schools Section frames all of its work in the "Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model." This model provides a coordinated approach to student health, wellbeing, and academic success.

B. School Support Personnel

North Carolina has approximately 1.6 million K-12 public school students, 180,000 school personnel, including over 95,000 teachers, and 115 school systems.

Students from K-12 enter our classrooms with a variety of issues reflecting the society in which they live. The national poverty rate in 2012 for children under the age of 18 was 21.8%. North Carolina's poverty rate for K-12 students was 26%. The national rate for K-12 students with mental or emotional issues was 22%, while North Carolina's rate for K-12 students with mental health or emotional health issues was 24.1%. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of North Carolina's K-12 students lived in single-parent families.

Following are two charts with data specific to North Carolina's student mental health and suicide information:

Students with Mental Health Issues

The chart below shows the number of students with a known diagnosis as reported by school nurses from the N.C. Annual Report of School Health Services.

	Elementary	Middle	High	Total
2011-2012 Mental Health Issues	5,111	3,530	4,038	12,679
2012-2013 Mental Health Issues	6,582	5,988	8,259	20,829

Public Schools of North Carolina | State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

NC Students with known suicide attempts and deaths 2011 – 2013

	Suicide attempts by grade level	Deaths from suicide	Deaths from homicide
High 11-12	264	15	8
High 12-13	318	32	5
Middle 11-12	99	3	3
Middle 12-13	127	4	2
Elem 11-12	29	1	1
Elem 12-13	37	1	4

Public Schools of North Carolina | State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

There has been a concerted effort by the NC Department of Public Instruction during the past five years to provide more support for our various school support personnel, including School Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Nurses and School Counselors. In

addition, in 2013 the Governor established the Center for Safer Schools, of which school mental health and school climate are primary focuses.

A major milestone has been the development of five on-line professional development modules educating our teachers to issues pertinent to mental and emotional student health. Over 14,000 of our teachers have completed these courses.

All of these efforts have resulted in a steady increase in our graduation rates to an all-time high. A synopsis of our school support personnel follows along with a summary of the on-line professional development modules.

School Nurses

The Department of Public Health School Nurse Consultants serve all school districts in North Carolina through the provision of consultation and technical assistance related to clinical school health, students with special needs, continuing education, professional development for school nurses, and monitoring for various program requirements. They know available county, state, and other agency resources well and assist high needs districts with addressing their student health issues. Student health impacts a student's ability to access the education program. Although the consultant team assists all counties, those with fewer local resources often benefit from more frequent interaction based on assessment of need and engagement by staff from the local district. Common forms of intervention include

- standardization of screening programs so that students can see and hear,
- care planning and procedure set ups for students with chronic health conditions so that they may be in school and ready to learn more often,
- acute injury and illness assessment and treatment that keeps students with minor problems in school,
- health care accommodations for special education and Section 504 plans
- referral for complex problems through assistance with access to provider care, and
- health and emergency care instruction for school staff.

North Carolina has 1,212 School Nurses with a statewide nurse/student ratio of 1:1,177. The recommended national ratio is 1:750. It is questionable whether this recommended national ratio will accommodate the need for nurses now that students with very complex health issues are mainstreamed into our classrooms. North Carolina School Nurses are licensed by the NC Board of Nurses.

School Psychologists

School psychologists promote a healthy, safe and supportive learning environment for all students. With specialized training in both education and psychology, school psychologists have a unique skill set in working to improve the academic and mental health of students in our schools. Children, especially refugees, from other countries come to school with different life experiences that may impact their behavioral adjustment, academic performance, English

language acquisition and other facets of their daily life. School psychologists help by being aware of their cultural identities, working with teachers and school staff to understand their students, as well as account for cultural and linguistic differences when working with children from other countries.

North Carolina has 770 school psychologists with a statewide psychologist/student ratio of 1:1,875. The recommended national ratio is 1:750. School psychologists are licensed by DPI. There are 23 LEAs that do not employ a school psychologist.

School Social Workers

Some students have difficulty achieving academic success due to social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Such difficulties include family economics, homelessness, family substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, nutritional and health related issues including mental health concerns as well as other related problems.

The social worker may link and engage the student and family with appropriate community resources to address concerns with mental health issues, housing, clothing, financial and medical care. The social worker also serves as a liaison between community service providers and the school system. School social workers help students through early identification, prevention, crisis intervention, counseling, referrals and support. School social workers assist students to become more resilient, gain personal and social competencies, and obtain support for academic, social and emotional wellness and success.

North Carolina has 945 school social workers with a statewide social worker/student ratio of 1:1623. The national recommended ratio is 1:250. North Carolina school social workers are licensed by DPI.

There are 17 LEAs that do not employ a school social worker.

School Counselors

School counselors deliver a comprehensive school counseling program for all students and provide developmentally-appropriate services and activities based on student needs. School counselors listen to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues and barriers that impede student success. They identify these needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information to implement strategies to eliminate barriers to academic achievement. School counselors collaborate with others to create customized plans of action that provide follow-up services to meet students' varied needs and provide appropriate services to meet individual student, small group, classroom and school-wide needs. School counselors advocate for equity for all students and staff members regardless of learning style, cultural background, or individual learning needs and promote awareness of and responsiveness to learning styles, cultural diversity, and individual learning needs. School counselors incorporate into their programs the life skills that students need to be successful in the twenty-first century.

North Carolina has 3,800 school counselors with a statewide counselor/student ratio of 1:395. The recommended national ratio is 1:250. North Carolina school counselors are licensed by DPI.

C. Professional Development

North Carolina is the first state to develop on-line professional development modules for teachers pertinent to mental and emotional health. Over 14,000 North Carolina teachers have completed these 5-hour courses described below.

- **Understanding the Role of School Resource Officers in Schools**

  The single greatest benefit for our K-12 students is to create collaborations among our educators, school resource officers, school nurses, school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists. This module is designed to help school personnel develop an awareness of the role and effective utilization of School Resource Officers in order to create a caring and safe educational environment that benefits learning and community.

- **Understanding the Schools' Role in Suicide Prevention**

  Suicide attempts have increased among North Carolina's student population of elementary, middle and high school students. Suicide attempts and deaths are devastating events for students, families, friends, and staff; with crucial emotional consequences. This module is designed to serve as a tool to assist educators as teachers and peers are often among the first to identify when a student displays warning signs of contemplating suicide. This module provides an evidenced tool, increasing knowledge for prevention and intervention. Included are resources for assistance and recovery supports for the students, school staff and families.

- **Understanding Student Behavior**

  This module is for middle and high school teachers and school staff. The module is designed to help teachers and staff develop an enhanced awareness of behavioral health issues in the classroom, which may foster academic achievement for all students, decrease dropout rates, and increase North Carolina's graduation rates.

- **Understanding Young Student Behavior**

  This module is for preschool through grade 5 teachers. The module is designed as a tool to assist teachers to develop an enhanced awareness of behavioral health issues in young students and extend that knowledge to foster long-term connectivity and academic achievement for all students, decrease the dropout rates, and ultimately increase North Carolina's graduation rates.

- **Prevention and Intervention of Underage Drinking and Substance Abuse Among our K-12 Student Population**

  The Governor has established a Taskforce for Underage Drinking, and the Attorney General has established a taskforce for Substance Abuse. The Safe and Healthy Schools Support Division was requested to develop an additional on-line professional development module pertinent to these issues. A statewide team has been established, and the module will be released and available in July 2015.

D. *Nutrition*: *Hunger, Health and Academic*

Research indicates that having a healthy balanced diet improves brain capacity, maximizes cognitive capabilities, and improves academic performance in school-age children. Research also indicates that having too many non-nutritious foods and an unhealthy diet decreases academic performance by limiting the amount of information to the brain. In a longitudinal study, children from persistently food insufficient households showed a smaller increase in both reading and mathematics performance than their more food-secure counterparts, as well as a greater increase in Body Mass Index over the course of three years.

Food insufficiency has been documented to present a multitude of consequences for school-age children, including: poorer health, which may lead to an increase in illness, infection, and iron deficiency; and poorer academic performance, which may lead to grade repetition, an increase in psychological issues, and potential obesity issues. Inadequate nutrition leads to poor academic performance. For example:

- Kids who skip meals or do not eat proper meals are irritable and exhibit behavior problems.
- They have difficulty concentrating and performing complex tasks.
- They have less energy.
- These children also have more illness, and therefore, they miss more school.
- In addition, these students have reduced cognition or brain function and lower standardized test scores.

Approximately 16.6 million children lived in food insecure households in 2011. That was 22.4% of the nation's children. Nearly 60% of students enrolled in North Carolina's public schools in 2011 were from economically disadvantaged households. These students qualified for free or reduced price meals at school and also lived in food-insecure households. More than one in four (27.6%) children in North Carolina struggled with hunger.

Hunger has long lasting, devastating effects on the health and development of children. Children experiencing hunger are more likely to:

- Have lower math scores
- Be hyperactive
- Have behavioral and attention problems

- Be absent and tardy, and
- Have to repeat a grade.

Measures of poverty and food insecurity are closely related. Both provide an assessment of inadequate income. Food insecure households are those that have difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for active, healthy living for all their members due to a lack of money and other resources. Data from 2012 indicate that in NC the rate of food insecurity for households with incomes near or below the federal poverty line was substantially higher than the national average.

School Nutrition Programs, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and administered in the State by the NCDPI, play an important role in ensuring food security for low income, food-insecure children in North Carolina's public schools. The goal of these programs is to improve children's overall diets and create healthier eating habits to impact their present and future health. These programs are intended to be an effective, logical means of promoting healthful diets and contributing to a reversal of the current childhood obesity epidemic, especially given their reach in schools and communities across the country and among particularly vulnerable low income and food insecure children.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provide free meals to children from families with incomes at or below 130% of poverty, and reduced price meals to those with family incomes at or below 185% of poverty. (Children from families with incomes over 185% of poverty pay full price, although their meals are still subsidized to a small extent.). Free meals accounted for 62% of all lunches served in the National School Lunch Program and 77% of all breakfasts served in the School Breakfast Program in fiscal year 2013. The After School Snack Program (ASSP) is also available to students who participate in regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities. This program provides a light, nutritious snack for students participating in a supervised program after school ends for the day. In some high poverty communities, the At-Risk Supper Meals program may be selected in lieu of the ASSP. The At-Risk Supper Meals program provides a nutritious dinner meal that is similar to the school lunch. For students from food insecure households, who may not have access to food at home, the dinner meal is often the last meal students receive before returning to school the next morning. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program provides funds to elementary schools with the highest percentages of students that qualify for free or reduced price meals to enable them to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables to be used as "free nutritious snacks" throughout the school day. Ideally, through daily exposure to a variety of fruits and vegetables, students will learn to prefer fresh fruits and vegetables over less nutritious snacks.

National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry S. Truman on June 4, 1946, to "safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other foods." The legislation came in response to claims that many American men had been rejected for World War II military service because of diet-related health

problems. The NSLP has grown to become the second largest U.S. food and nutrition assistance program.

Meals served under the National School Lunch Program must meet nutrition regulations based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide key nutrients that children need for growth and development. School meals feature whole grains, vegetables, fruit or 100% juice, and low fat or fat free milk making each meal balanced and nutritious. Items offered as part of the National School Lunch Program are low in fat, sugar and sodium and are offered in portion sizes that are appropriate for children.

Research shows that students who eat school lunch: (1) eat more fruits, vegetables and drink more milk; (2) consume more vitamin B_6 and B_{12}, thiamin, riboflavin, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc; (3) are less likely to drink soda and fruit drinks; and (4) consume less added sugars.

USDA regulations for the National School Lunch Program require that schools "ensure that participating children gain a full understanding of the relationship between proper eating and good health."

School Breakfast Program

On October 11, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The Act established the School Breakfast Program (SBP). President Johnson remarked during the signing of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 that "good nutrition is essential to good learning." The School Breakfast Program is a federally funded program available to all schools. All students can participate. School breakfast is a critical support to struggling families trying to stretch limited resources. Breakfast provides children a significant portion of the nutrition their bodies need each day, which reduces families' food costs.

Meals served under the School Breakfast Program must meet nutrition regulations based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide key nutrients that children need for growth and development. School breakfasts feature whole grains, fruit or 100% juice, and low fat or fat free milk making each meal balanced and nutritious. Items offered as part of the School Breakfast Program are low in fat, sugar and sodium and are offered in portion sizes that are appropriate for children. SBP participation is associated with higher intakes of calcium, phosphorus, thiamin and vitamins B_{12} and C.

Studies show that students who eat breakfast:

- Have improved attendance and less tardiness
- Are able to pay attention longer
- Demonstrate better behavior in the classroom
- Have fewer disciplinary referrals
- Perform better on tests
- Make fewer trips to the school nurse

- Have a better overall diet, and
- Are more likely to be at a healthy weight.

Students who eat school breakfast miss 1.5 fewer days of school and have an average 17.5% higher math scores. Students who attend class more regularly are 20% more likely to graduate from high school. High school graduates have a 4% higher employment rate and on average earn $10,000 more annually.

In August 2011, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted a *Resolution to Promote School Breakfast* that encourages all LEAs to seek multiple and innovative ways of increasing school breakfast participation in their schools as an additional means of caring for and nurturing our public school children. School breakfast must be integrated into the school day and become an established routine for students and staff. Having students that are well fed and ready to learn should be a mutual goal for everyone.

School meals may be the only source of nutrition some students receive each day; therefore, barriers that may be preventing these students and others from taking advantage of the School Breakfast Program should be examined. Schools, families and communities can work together to overcome barriers. Support from school administrators, principals and staff is key to successful implementation of the School Breakfast Program. School and bus schedules, if a barrier, could be adjusted to allow students adequate time to eat breakfast. Changes in service methods and locations could lessen such barriers and improve accessibility of school breakfast.

Summer Nutrition Programs

When school is not in session, low-income children in North Carolina lose access to school breakfast, lunch and afterschool meals that are available during the regular school year.

The NCDPI administers the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). The SFSP provides funds and resources to public and non-public, non-profit entities to enable them to provide nutritious meals to students throughout the summer months. The SSO allows public schools that participate in the NSLP to provide similar breakfast and lunch meals to students during the summer months.

Currently, the Summer Nutrition Programs are underutilized. Nationally, only one out of seven children who receives free or reduced price meals during the school year continues to receive meals during the summer months. In North Carolina, one out of seventeen children who received free or reduced price meals during the school year continued to receive meals during the summer months. Nationally, 2.96 million children participated in the Summer Food Service Program on an average day in July 2013. In North Carolina, 140,603 children participated in the Summer Nutrition Programs during the summer months.

Summer Nutrition Programs contribute to the healthy growth and development of low-income children by providing them with nutritious snacks and meals, often alongside recreational activities, to help address growing evidence of the risk of children gaining weight

over the summer months. Reimbursable summer meals must meet federal nutrition standards and can provide an opportunity for children to access fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to support a healthy diet.

Many Summer Nutrition Program sites also provide educational and enrichment activities in addition to meals, which enables children to learn and stay safe when school is out, mitigating the harmful effects of summer learning loss and ensuring that children are better able to learn when they return to school.

Conclusion

Learning to make healthy food choices contributes to student success. School meals can make a difference in the lives of students.

Gaining and maintaining commitment and support from all levels is critical to the success of the school meal programs. Administrators at the district and school level, teachers, other school staff, nurses, School Nutrition professionals, students, families and communities are all stakeholders.

Schools can help communities fulfill perhaps the most vital of social responsibilities: ensuring that all students, no matter their backgrounds or socioeconomic status, have the same opportunities for health and education.

VII. School Funding

In North Carolina, unlike some states, the State provides the majority of funding for public schools. This funding comes primarily from tax revenues which become part of the State Public School Fund. For the 2014-15 fiscal year the State Public School Fund and all other support for public schools consisted of $8,691,703,947. The revenues from the Fund are allotted to the LEAs and charter schools according to a formula based largely on two main drivers - "Average Daily Membership" or "ADM" and the average salary of personnel. The "Allotted ADM" for a given fiscal year is the higher of the projected ADM for that year and the actual ADM for the prior year. The average salary for personnel is based on the actual sixth pay period salary expenditures for the prior fiscal year. ADM- and salary-based funding formulas constitute the majority of the funding the State provides for public schools and covers base personnel and material costs for all schools.

North Carolina has historically approached state funding for public schools in two key ways:

- Foundation funding that will enable a comprehensive K-12 instructional program for all students
- Categorical/supplemental funding that targets additional funding for certain student populations or county/city variances

In FY 2014-15, the General Assembly appropriated $8,691,703,947 from various state collected revenues for public schools.

Foundation funding accounted for approximately 67% of the state funding for K-12 education. Most of this funding is distributed based on the student populations that are expected to be in public schools (referred to as average daily membership or ADM). North Carolina is unique in that they guarantee the salaries and benefits for a large portion of the public school classroom teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, principals, and assistant principals. The State allocates positions to school districts which allows the schools districts to hire qualified teachers/personnel and not be concerned with the amount those individuals will cost the school district. The salaries and benefits are guaranteed. The State is able to manage this type of allotment (guaranteed) because the State collects the detailed expenditure data for every transaction incurred by a school district and charter school. That data enables the State to calculate a statewide average salary for each guaranteed position allotment. The State also collects data on student membership from every school and uses that information to project future ADM. With that knowledge, North Carolina can establish a statewide Budget to cover all the guaranteed positions. Examples of foundation funding are:

- Classroom teachers (salary guaranteed)
- Teacher assistants
- Instructional support (salary guaranteed)
- Principals and Assistant Principals (salary guaranteed)

- Textbooks
- Instructional supplies and materials
- School technology
- Substitute teachers, custodians, and clerical support
- Central office administration

Categorical/supplemental funding accounts for the remaining State funding for K-12 education. This funding is based on specific district/student demographics, economic conditions, and geography. This funding enables school district to develop programs that supplement or enhance the general instructional program of the school district. Examples of categorical/supplemental funding are:

- Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students (district/student demographics)
- At-Risk Student Services (district/student demographics)
- Children with Disabilities (district/student demographics)
- Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Funding (district/student demographics)
- Driver Training (county 8th and 9th grade population)
- Limited English Proficiency (district/student demographics)
- Low Wealth Supplemental Funding (economic conditions)
- Small County Supplemental Funding ((district/student demographics)
- Transportation (geography)
- Career and Technical Education Program Support (district/student demographics)

Annually, the federal government allocates over $1 billion to North Carolina's public schools through various supplemental programs. Examples of these programs are:

- ESEA Title I (provides support for supplemental educational opportunities for disadvantaged children who are most at risk of failing to meet the State's challenging content and performance standards)
- Child Nutrition (provides support for School Lunch, Special Milk, and School Breakfast)
- Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) Handicapped (provides support for special education programs for handicapped children ages 3 to 21)
- Vocational Education (provides support to expand, improve, and develop quality programs to enhance future workforce skills)

Program Expansion: Level 2

Upon review of the structures, programs, and supports of the foundational education plan, the Board is satisfied that the opportunity for a sound basic education is being provided to the children in North Carolina. However, the Board has determined that the following need to be in place to further support that a greater number of students at risk are able to access and receive a sound basic education.

The Opportunity for Pre-Kindergarten for At-Risk Children

North Carolina data shows that early intervention for disadvantaged students makes a difference in how students arrive at school ready to learn. The Board proposes that Pre-K offerings should have a strong educational component as well as highly trained teachers. The number of seats for disadvantaged students in Pre-K programs has been increased, and the Board proposes lowering the eligibility requirements. The Board feels strongly that this is a top priority for students to be able to take advantage of the opportunity for a sound basic education.

In addition, the Board proposes that the oversight of Pre-K be brought within the purview of the State Board of Education. This move will allow the Board to align the pre-kindergarten program with academic curricula and expectations in grades K-3. The Board also suggests a teacher allotment process in lieu of an individual child allotment formula. It is anticipated that this business plan would increase the number of children served for the same investment, and enhance the educational preparation for teachers of pre-kindergarten.

I. School Calendar Flexibility

The Board proposes giving school systems maximum flexibility in developing their own calendars. Studies show that some students, primarily disadvantaged students and students with disabilities, often require more instructional time for learning. The current calendar law prevents school systems from implementing innovative calendars that would allow for academic interventions along the way.

The Board also proposes that LEAs be allowed the flexibility to extend the number of instructional days for students. A program such as the Summer Camps currently funded through Read to Achieve for third grade would be very beneficial to all students in grades K-3 in the most at-risk schools. Such programs would allow students to develop strong foundational skills in both reading and mathematics. Learning that has occurred during the school year is threatened by the loss occurring during the summer months.

II. Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Studies show that fewer students are entering the teacher education programs in our colleges and universities. If public schools are to compete with other employment and career opportunities, the schools must offer comparable salaries and benefits to attract bright,

committed individuals to enter the profession. The State should consider a scholarship/loan forgiveness program to encourage top candidates to enter the teaching profession. This program should align with the needs of at-risk students and low-performing schools.

III. Teacher Evaluation Process

Findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project (2013) confirm that effective teachers can indeed be measured and that effective teaching can result in higher achievement of students. The MET data "show that we can identify groups of teachers who are more effective in helping students learn. Moreover, the magnitude of the achievement gains that teachers generated was consistent with expectations. In addition, the MET found that more effective teachers not only caused students to perform better on state tests, but they also caused students to score higher on other more cognitively challenging assessments in math and English."

In 2010 the Board began implementation of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system based on the MET project. That system includes teacher observation coupled with student growth measures to determine teacher effectiveness. The Board, either through state or federal funding, provides teachers and principals with the online tools and growth metric for the system.

The MET findings suggest that the most robust system of teacher evaluation also includes data captured through student perception surveys. The Board has piloted student perception surveys on multiple occasions and has been impressed with the efficacy of these data for additional feedback for effective teaching. The Board has not been able to identify ongoing funding that would implement student perception surveys. The Board feels that such data would strengthen the teacher evaluation process.

IV. Professional Development

In 2010 using its RttT grant, the NCDPI instituted an ongoing comprehensive system of professional development, designed to support successful implementation of content standards and competencies for professional teaching. During each year of RttT, the Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation – North Carolina provided an outside evaluation of the professional development offerings. The following text is lifted from the 2014 report.

> *As in prior years, a substantial number of school and LEA leaders participated in the 2013 Summer Institutes (2,349) and the NCDPI-RESA sessions (5,105). Many educators received certificates of completion for at least one online module (20,413) and participated in webinars (approximately 3,000 officially registered, with many more participating as part of shared registrations via professional learning teams).*
>
> *Surveys asked participants whether they agreed with statements about the usefulness and quality of these sessions. The NCDPI-RESA sessions were rated most highly, with 94% of participants agreeing that their professional development needs were*

met. The Summer Institutes also were rated well, with 88% agreeing that their needs were met. When asked to rate specific outcomes, the NCDPI-RESA session were very highly rated, with at least 90% of participants agreeing that these sessions led to positive learning and impacted their professional practices for most outcomes. Comparable data was generally in the 80%-89% range for the Summer Institutes, though a few outcomes (e.g., understanding of teacher evaluation and school accountability) were much lower (in the 60%-65% range). For the online resources, 91% of webinar participants and 78% of module participants agreed that their professional development needs were met. The ratings of online modules may reflect whether they were completed as recommended—that is, as part of professional learning teams that discussed the content—or by individual educators on their own. Observational, interview, and content review data were consistent with these findings

At the conclusion of RttT, the NCDPI no longer has a state appropriation to continue professional development for the teachers and principals of the state. Evidence from the RttT program suggests that professional development is an ongoing and important element in teacher effectiveness. It is imperative that professional development continue to be provided.

Professional development is a critical component of the State Board's ongoing efforts to ensure effective teachers and principals in our schools. In addition to general professional training in all content areas, there is continuing need for professional development in Exceptional Children's Services, AIG programs, Advanced Courses, CTE, and Healthy Living Courses.

V. Support to Schools – District and School Transformation

With the new A-F Accountability Model, more schools are being identified as low performing. DST has been successful in improving most districts and schools where DST has intervened. DST needs to be expanded and supported moving forward in order to most effectively serve all low performing schools.

VI. Implement Effective Models for Improving Low Performing Schools and Districts

The Board has been intervening in low-performing schools and systems since the ABCs of Public Education was implemented in 1995 and as a result of School Turnaround, which was implemented as a remedy to *Leandro*. Over the course of those years, the Board has determined that student achievement and school success are often impacted by ineffective superintendents and local boards of education. The Board believes effective models for intervention and/or takeover may exist and recommends a study of models in other states in order to develop a workable model here. Such models could include methods to intervene in local governance, a method for fully taking over the function of the local board, and a procedure for merging or consolidating local school systems.

VII. Access to Digital Tools, Resources, and Courses

The Board strongly supports the NC Digital Learning Plan submitted by the Friday Institute in January 2015. Digital learning is an effective strategy, together with a qualified teacher, to provide equitable resources and opportunities to all children in order to close the achievement gap.

For Home Base and NCVPS to be fully effective for students across the state, access must be guaranteed. Expanding broadband access to the underserved areas of the State will necessarily support digital learning. Additionally, NCVPS courses are free to students, for example, but do have costs for the district. The same is true for sections of Home Base and some professional development, which have different costs to the districts for access. Below are more details of how efforts could be expanded.

(a) Home Base

For the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) to be fully effective it must provide all school districts with equal access to rich instructional resources and a complete collection of information needed to improve instructional practices, make learner-centered decisions, enhance staff productivity, and assess overall effectiveness over time.

- All teachers and all students need continued access to the IIS (the first two years of implementation were free; however to provide uniform access the system should be available at no cost or very low cost to all LEAs/Schools). For low-wealth LEAs that serve students of poverty, Home Base and the IIS should always be made available at no additional cost.
- NCDPI needs outreach to the teacher level to facilitate professional learning on the tools as well as general professional development on the cycle of instructional improvement and using student-level data to improve instruction.
- The District and School Transformation staff supporting teachers that serve students of poverty need to be "power-users" of the IIS and available to provide professional development of the tools and resources in the system.
- The system needs additional resources to ensure coverage of all subject areas in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study to include instructional materials (lesson plans, resources, assessment items, etc.).
- More data should be available at the student level to empower student learners and help them connect with ways to use data to improve their own learning experience
- Each LEA should have access to a common Learning Management System to facilitate more collaboration across the state.

(b) NC Virtual Public School

- Students in low-wealth districts should have access to NCVPS courses at no cost to the district. This change would provide students with opportunities to take courses taught by certified North Carolina teachers that are not offered in their home district.

Students who need more academic challenge, for example, would have access to twelve different Advanced Placement courses and a diverse catalog of honors courses.

- NCVPS can unlock the full potential of low-wealth districts and impact students in poverty by providing flexible and accessible solutions to complex scheduling problems that often arise when resources are few and students are in need. NCVPS can provide outside-the-box solutions for teacher shortages, alternative learning environments, homebound students, etc., to name a few.
- Many students need access to their courses outside of the school day in order to be successful. Solutions need to be established for access points, which may include community "hot spots" in churches, school buildings or community centers. The NCVPS teachers establish office hours outside of the school day in order to be available to students. In addition, NCVPS has a Peer Tutoring Center for students to get answers to questions or additional instruction on challenging objectives.
- NCVPS is piloting a Mastery Learning for First-Time Credit program. This pilot is targeted for students at risk of dropping out of high school and offers a competency based, personalized learning approach to instructional delivery and student outcomes. This program should be expanded to ensure more participation by low wealth districts.

(c) Additional Partnerships/Programs Needed

Our state is committed to helping better prepare students for the world they will live in. The skills needed today and tomorrow are much different than the ones needed yesterday. Together we must embrace this change to elevate North Carolina's students. Home Base and NCVPS are major initiatives in making sure North Carolina students will succeed.

- It takes many people working together to educate the whole child, so additional and increased partnerships with parents, faith-based organizations and community groups are essential for developing an understanding for the power of digital resources and opportunities.
- Parental engagement in their children's learning is essential. With the PowerSchool App, even though many homes may not have access to internet, many parents and students have access to a smartphone and can stay connected with their child's grades.
- Home access to broadband or high speed Internet is a huge equity issue that needs to be addressed comprehensively by a cross sector of public and private partners.
- Partnerships with districts and schools to add instructional materials to the system that can be shared statewide is going to be instrumental in continuing to grow the system and locally created resources
- Connecting with institutions of higher education, especially Educator Preparation programs to ensure exposure to the Home Base tools and resources for pre-service teachers planning to enter the classroom is under discussion and is also essential for success. In addition, opportunities for pre-service teachers to teach online will increase the candidate pool for high quality teachers willing to work for NCVPS.

- Provide more technical assistance and local support for development of rigorous programming K-12 to better prepare students for rigorous educational demands.

VIII. Expand Healthy Schools Initiatives

(a) Provide professional development for elementary classroom teachers on The NC Essential Standards for Healthful Living

The NC Essential Standards for Healthful Living focus on grades K-12 and are a valuable resource that provides lesson plans for every health objective and also integrates a language arts or mathematics objective into each lesson. The standards address health issues such as: recognizing asthma triggers, making healthy food choices, managing stress and anger, encouraging personal safety, and puberty education. However, elementary classroom teachers often forgo health while placing an emphasis on other subjects. Increased professional development for elementary classroom teachers on this resource would be beneficial.

(b) Increased training for LEAs on how to create a Comprehensive Physical Activity Program

Both childhood obesity and poor academic performance tend to be clustered in schools with a high percentage of lower-income students, creating a student health issue that is particularly problematic in those communities. (Source: activelivingresearch.org) There is a growing body of evidence indicating that physical activity may help school aged children maximize academic performance. The Healthy Active Children Policy requires that all students in grades K-8 receive, at a minimum, 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Currently, the Healthy Schools Section in collaboration with the Division of Public Health provides training to select LEAs on how to create a Comprehensive Physical Activity program. With additional resources and school commitment, this training could be focused more purposefully on schools with the highest need.

(c) Increase access to critical health services

Access to critical health services should be expanded in the areas of teen pregnancy prevention, access to health services (both mental and physical), expanding delivery of HIV prevention programs, and increasing interagency partnerships in the area of student health and disease prevention.

(d) Increase school support personnel to align with recommended staffing levels

i. Nurses

North Carolina has 1,212 School Nurses with a statewide ratio of 1:1,177. The recommended national ratio is 1:750. At a minimum, we should be striving to

achieve the recommended ratio for school nurses. School nurses are knowledgeable about available county, state, and other agency resources and assist high needs districts with addressing their student health issues. Student health has been proven to affect a student's ability to access the education program. Although the consultant team assists all counties, those with fewer local resources often benefit from more frequent interaction based on assessment of need and engagement by staff from the local district. Common forms of intervention include: standardization of screening programs so that students can see and hear, care planning and procedure set ups for students with chronic health conditions so that they may be in school and ready to learn more often, acute injury and illness assessment and treatment that keeps students with minor problems in school, health care accommodations for special education and Section 504 plans, referral for complex problems through assistance with access to provider care, and health and emergency care instruction for school staff. Increased attention on these school districts would be very beneficial.

ii. School Psychologists

School psychologists are licensed by DPI. North Carolina has 770 school psychologists with a statewide ratio of 1:1,875. The recommended national ratio is 1:750. There are 23 LEAs that do not employ a school psychologist. Expanded delivery of school psychology would be advantageous.

iii. Social Workers

North Carolina school social workers are licensed by DPI. NC has 945 school social workers with a statewide ratio of 1:1623. The national recommended ratio is 1:250. There are 17 LEAs who do not employ a school social worker. Expanded delivery of school social work services would be advantageous.

iv. School Counselors

North Carolina has 3,800 school counselors with a statewide ratio of 1:395. The recommended national ratio is 1:250. Expanded delivery of school counseling services would be advantageous.

Extension: Level 3

Removal of Non-Academic Barriers

The Board continues to provide the opportunity for a sound basic education. However, the additional needs, beyond the schoolhouse doors, of at-risk students often prevent the individual student from seizing his or her opportunity in learning and life. North Carolina's education community should engage in frequent public dialogue in addressing the at-risk components our children encounter daily. From a robust discussion, recommendations that help connect students to resources are desirable and compelling. In an effort to remove non-academic barriers, consideration should be given to the following initiatives.

I. Family Resource and Youth Service Centers

So much of a child's life exists beyond the schoolhouse and the school day. Children rely upon multiple forms of support in order to properly develop emotionally, socially and intellectually. Other states have utilized the concept of Family Resource and Youth Service Centers as one method of serving families in need. When food, clothing, shelter and medical services are not readily available for a family, Family Resource and Youth Service Centers can assist to provide some of life's basic needs. Allowing students and families to access basic health and dental services, donated supplies, and counseling to families in crisis supports the whole child who can then begin to access education.

As part of comprehensive school reform efforts in the early 1990s, a number of states developed Family Resource Centers (FRC) Programs that were designed to provide wraparound services for students in low-income schools, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. FRCs have been designed to be interagency collaborations combining the resources of social services and the public school system in an effort to address non-academic barriers to educational success.

Services in these resource centers generally include: (1) preschool child care; (2) after-school child care; (3) families in training (birth to 3); (4) family literacy; (5) support and training for day care providers; and (6) health services or referrals to health services. Services for older children and their families include services such as (1) referrals to health and social services; (2) drug and alcohol abuse counseling; (3) summer and part-time job development; (4) employment counseling, training, and placement; and (5) family crisis and mental health counseling. Additionally, locally, these resource centers have developed programs to meet the needs of each particular community through programs such as, food pantries, clothes closets, or adult education programs.

In removing non-academic barriers to student achievement, these centers reach not only students but also families in need. In early evaluations, teachers noted improved classroom behavior and improved ability to complete class work in schools where FRCs were operating. While implementations differ across states, the benefits are clear. For example, in one study of community schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma, it was found that students attending community

schools outperformed students in noncommunity schools by 32 points in math and 19 points in reading. Research has shown that, properly implemented, these types of resources centers provide key family supports to meet the unmet needs of children.

II. Providing Birth –Kindergarten Services to Children At-Risk

Research repeatedly supports that a strong beginning in a child's life equates to better school preparedness and greatly increases a student's opportunity to a sound basic education. Key components of B-K include a quality curriculum taught by skilled teachers in a stable environment.

III. Statewide Interagency Cooperation to Optimize Services to Children

Many programs exist at the state level, beyond those provided by the State Board of Education, to assist students to be healthy, safe, and stable. A consolidated, child-focused conversation must occur among state agencies to best utilize state programs for the needs of children. A conversation of this nature is essential to making sure local agencies, who are operating as extensions of state government, are delivering children-focused services.

IV. Interagency Advisory Committee on Public Education

A vast universe of stakeholders and policy-makers help to shape a vision for improving education. Knowing what children need requires a meaningful dialogue regarding the ongoing challenges facing students today. In an era of instant information, there is a premium placed on critical analysis and problem-solving as a society. Therefore, it is recommended that these challenges be regularly discussed through the State Board of Education's appointment of an Interagency Advisory Committee on Public Education. A successful Committee would consist of representatives from key child-focused entities, such as: state agencies (DPI, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Safety – Juvenile Justice, etc.); local boards of education; local mental health organizations; private non-profits, including representatives from the charter school community; community colleges, universities and others. The mission of the Committee would be to review challenges of our at-risk school-aged population such as poverty, safety, and health. The Committee would provide recommendations to the Board and other state agencies to best facilitate access for all children to receive the opportunity for a sound basic education.

Conclusion

A significant portion of the foregoing Plan describes and underscores the vast efforts and resources already in place to fulfill the constitutional duty to provide the opportunity for a sound basic education.

The obligation to provide the opportunity for a sound basic education belongs to every agency of the State, every local government, every local school board, and to the public at large.

Critical in this Plan is the creation by the Board of an Interagency Advisory Committee on Public Education consisting of various public and private stakeholders appointed by the State Board of Education, to meet regularly to discuss issues in public education, including the hurdles facing at-risk students. The Committee would make recommendations to the State Board of Education on initiatives, interagency partnerships, and other measures designed to address the barriers to students' ability to access and realize the opportunity for a sound basic education.