

## **2021 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITY**

### **EQUITABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The basis of equality of opportunity is the belief that every American child deserves a fair start in life no matter the circumstances of their background. Public education can give even the most impoverished child a chance to excel through hard work, individual initiative, and excellent teachers' nurturing guidance. The Leandro case remains one of the biggest education policy issues in North Carolina. Per the NC Supreme Court ruling in the Leandro case in 1997 and 2004, NC has a constitutional obligation to ensure all children have access to a sound, basic education. This includes equitable access to resources and opportunities, well-trained teachers, and adequate per-pupil funding. The state continues to fall short of this mandate. The WestEd report included eight recommendations for how North Carolina can comply with the directive they have been given.

North Carolina PTA will support initiatives as well as encourage and advocate for legislation and policies that:

- Revise the state funding model to provide adequate, efficient, and equitable resources. These resources should be aligned to student needs in every school and district.
- Provide a qualified, well-prepared, and diverse teaching staff in every school. Working conditions and staffing structures should enable all staff members to do their job effectively and grow professionally while supporting all their students' academic, personal, and social growth.
- Provide a qualified and well-prepared principal in every school. Principals should be prepared and supported to effectively lead continuous school improvement, support the use of a well-designed curriculum aligned with state standards, and establish a culture in which all students feel welcome, safe, supported, and challenged as learners.
- Provide all at-risk students with the opportunity to attend high-quality early childhood programs. These programs should develop all students' personal, social, cognitive, and language skills in order to prepare them to begin kindergarten fully ready to learn.
- Direct resources, opportunities, and initiatives to economically disadvantaged students. A strong focus should be placed on addressing economically disadvantaged students' needs to address the greater challenges in those contexts.
- Revise the student assessment system and school accountability system.
- Build an effective regional and statewide system of support for the improvement of low-performing and high-poverty schools.
- Ensures that an expert panel is convened to assist the Court in monitoring state policies, plans, programs, and progress. This monitoring should ensure the state's ongoing compliance with the Leandro requirements.