ASK THE CANDIDATES

What will you do to ensure all North Carolina children have access to educational opportunity?

- In the current iteration of the Leandro case, an expert study recommended North Carolina increase education investments by over $4 billion to provide resources—particularly to schools serving high concentrations of children of color and those from families with low incomes—that address the ongoing failure to provide a constitutionally-adequate education. Which investments would you prioritize to address stagnating academic outcomes and growing achievement gaps?
- A growing body of research shows Black students were 160 percent more likely to receive in-school suspension and 84 percent more likely to receive out-of-school suspension than white students. How would you address these problems?
- What is the best way to fund the state’s over $8 billion deficit for school construction and other capital improvements?
- The state’s A-F school grading system has been widely criticized for failing to give parents meaningful information about schools and unfairly stigmatizing schools with high concentrations of students from families with low incomes. What measures should we include in the school grading system that would most reflect whether all children are being given meaningful opportunities?

Twenty-five years after the Leandro case commenced, the state is farther from meeting its constitutional obligation to provide all children with the opportunity to receive a sound basic education

FACTS YOU CAN USE

- Per-student funding is down 5.3 percent from 2008-09, when adjusting for inflation and enrollment increases. When you adjust for the cost drivers faced by schools (enrollment, salaries, and benefits), actual resource levels are down more than 6.6 percent per student during the same period.
- In 2008-09, North Carolina’s average teacher salary was 12 percent below the U.S. average. Now, average teacher pay is 14 percent below the national average.
- In 2008-09 national average per-pupil spending was 17 percent higher than per-pupil spending in North Carolina; now it’s 30 percent. Even South Carolina outspends us by 22 percent per student, even though North Carolina is a wealthier state.
- North Carolina’s school funding (total education spending as a share of the state economy) has fallen from 42nd in 2008 to 48th in 2016.
- If North Carolina were to increase its funding effort to the national average, FY 2015-16 spending would have been $3.6 billion above actual levels. If the state had met South Carolina’s funding effort for the same period, spending would have increased by $5.5 billion.

DID YOU GET A REAL, MEANINGFUL ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION?

If not, here are some follow-up questions that might help you get a more specific answer:

- If you believe there is enough funding to provide resources that meet students’ needs, please tell us where that funding is located.
- Can you tell me about what principles or values will guide your decisions on this issue?
- What are the problems you see in the current approach?

VISIT WWW.NCJUSTICE.ORG/ELECTION2020 TO SHARE THE ANSWERS YOU RECEIVED.