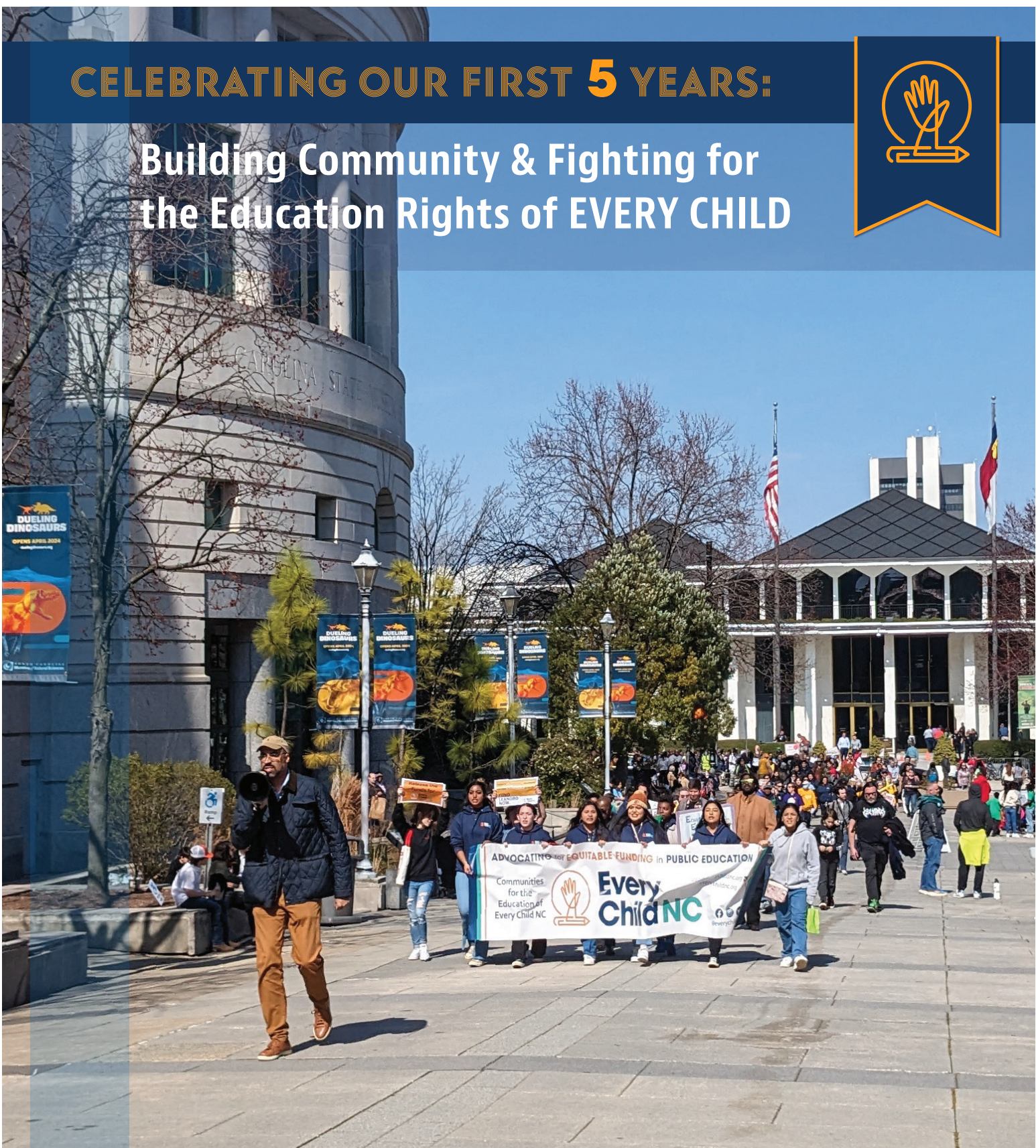


CELEBRATING OUR FIRST **5** YEARS:



Building Community & Fighting for the Education Rights of EVERY CHILD



**Every
Child NC**

everychildnc.org

@everychildnc



Communities for the Education of Every Child North Carolina



REFLECTIONS from our coalition leadership

Coming together to address the urgent unmet needs of North Carolina children.

This coalition unites grassroots advocates, organizational leaders, members of faith communities, attorneys, families, students, and educators.

We chose the name “**COMMUNITIES**” for the Education of Every Child because actively participating in a community is a radical act – an act of resistance against those seeking to diminish our potential or erase our identity.

North Carolina lawmakers have intentionally gutted our public schools and funneled tax dollars to subsidize private school education for the few. These actions have deprived generations of children the education they're owed, leaving them unprepared and unable to fully realize their potential.

We fight to free our children from the life sentences of low expectations, the real and present danger of police violence in the halls of learning, the policing of books and curriculum, and the constant reminder that the people in charge don't think public school students are worth the investment.

- We draw from the civil rights struggle that saw families risk their lives so their children could learn without barriers or limitations.
- We draw from our diverse experiences, perspectives, and skills to advocate in the best interest of all children.
- We draw from the community we have created to nourish us on this long, hard, journey – so we may remind ourselves great joy can be realized in lightening the burden of those around us.

To each of you who has contributed your time and energy over these years, we are deeply grateful to be in community with you. In the years to come, we will continue to work together to realize our shared vision and celebrate all that is possible when we invest in **EVERY CHILD**.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Education Justice Alliance (Co-Anchor)



North Carolina Justice Center (Co-Anchor)



Action4Equity



Advance Carolina



Building Equity in Early Childhood Systems (BEECS)



Pastors for North Carolina Children



Seeds of Hope of Robeson County

▶ Charting the growth of our coalition.

Given Every Child NC's child-focused advocacy efforts, we couldn't help but think of our progress in the first 5 years in terms of child development milestones.

In 2020, as a brand new coalition, we came to understand the perspective and unique needs of each partner, and we learned how to collaborate and leverage each other's expertise.

By 2025, we had become a powerful and committed network of families, students, educators, and organizations ready to continue our service to North Carolina children.



2020

Planning

Convened coalition partners and established advocacy goals. Later pivoted to organizing online due to COVID, focusing on how student experience varies throughout the state.



2021

Listening

Partner feedback and community input informed our campaigns to raise awareness of LEANDRO and the state's responsibility to provide all children access to supports and educational opportunities.



2022

Learning

Further aligned goals to prioritize the most vulnerable children and to account for in-school and out-of-school factors that determine academic outcome.



2023

Building

Engaged new coalition members and created outreach programs and tools to guide and support community-level advocacy efforts.



2024

Responding

Expanded our actions to cover student and community issues at:

- individual school districts
- the state legislature
- the court system

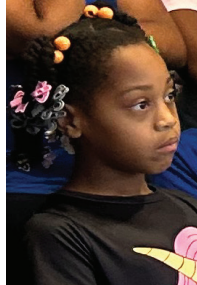
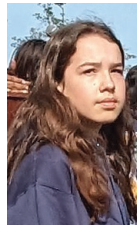
2025
and beyond



Keep fighting for children & communities until they get what they're owed.



5 YEARS OF CELEBRATING CHILDREN



The Every Child NC coalition exists to ensure all children have access to K-12 and early childhood (birth to age 5) programs and opportunities.

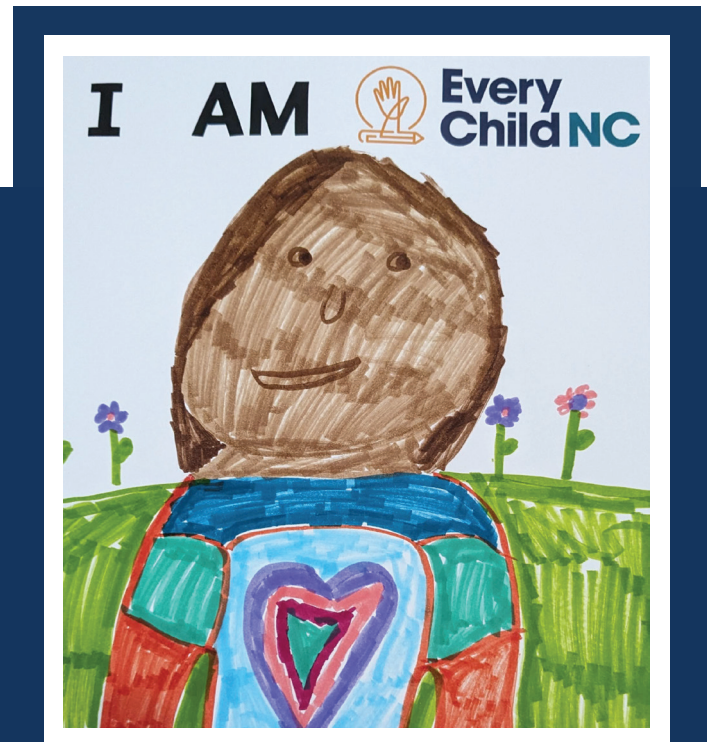
EVERY CHILD has the right to a quality public education — no matter where they live or the extent of their need.



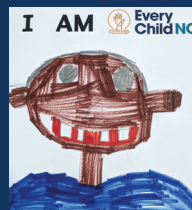
“I AM EVERY CHILD”

This coalition project gives children the chance to be represented as a unique individual among North Carolina’s 1.5 million public school students.

Children attending certain coalition events contribute their own hand-drawn self-portrait.



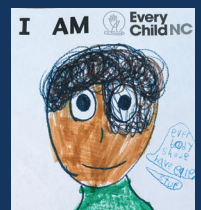
Annabel, age 7



Preston, age 9



Elanor, age 6



Oliver, age 8

5 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP & LEADERSHIP



Every Child NC's leadership roles are carried out by the Coordinating Committee, a subgroup of coalition partners responsible for strategic planning, steering our action teams, and approving Partner Support Funding.

Coalition activities, programs, and events are carried out by individual action teams dedicated to communications and organizing.



LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



Kellie Easton
Rev. Paul Robeson Ford

Action4Equity



Marcus Bass
Kay Brown

Advance Carolina



Susan Book
Every Child NC
Organizing Team Leader



This collaboration reminds us in powerful ways that we can do more together than we ever can apart.

The Every Child NC coalition has connected us to statewide partners who share our passion and dedication to create a thriving community for all of our children.

These connections have both informed and inspired our work here in Forsyth County."



Our partners not only understand the challenges, but are just as committed to finding solutions rooted in justice, care, and community.

Every Child NC's research, data, and connections have given our team the insight and access we need to move this work forward with clarity and confidence.

We have connected to others across the state and beyond — that kind of collaboration changes what's possible and creates a pathway to win on our collective issues."



Our goal and commitment to taking action make this coalition different.

I was there in the very beginning as we crafted an education coalition that truly focused on equitable funding across the state.

We've made it our mission to make Leandro, a complicated, long-standing legal battle, tangible to everyday people.

In this coalition, I feel I am heard, and I have enjoyed the privilege of hearing different voices."



LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



**Frenchy Davis
Nancy Rogers**

Building Equity in Early Childhood Systems (BE ECS)



**The Reverend
Suzanne Parker Miller**

Pastors for North Carolina Children



**Shalonda Regan
Adrienne Kennedy
Vanessa Abernathy
Angus Thompson**

Seeds of Hope of Robeson County



The coalition gives us a platform for our advocacy work and provides communities with the tools to take action.

At BE ECS, we work to create awareness of the inequities that exist across the early childhood education sector, particularly in underprivileged and marginalized communities.

Through the partnership with Every Child NC, we have been given a voice to advocate for early education and the implementation of Leandro."



It's amazing to have so much trust and connection with my coalition colleagues.

The relationships I've made through Every Child NC have helped sustain me and my own work through their encouragement and support, both personally and professionally.

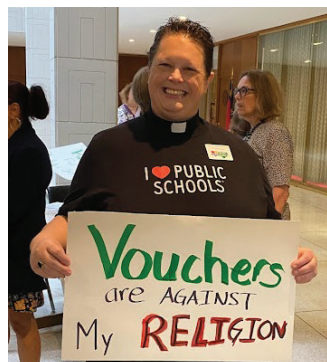
Working together as a coalition has allowed us to see the strengths and specializations of each organization, so we know who to call on for particular gifts and skills, which makes the work more efficient."



The coalition helps us promote quality education in our district, through local and state-level actions.

Seeds of Hope has participated in coalition-led advocacy days, protests, legislative visits and workshops, as well as our own local actions including marches and school supply drives.

We stand with Leandro advocates across the state and will not stop until every child has access to the public education they deserve and are entitled to."



Helping our partners get the resources they need.

Our **“Partner Support Funding”** awards give groups seed money to advance their advocacy initiatives.

As of 2025, we expanded that support as well as provided specific financial support to ensure our partners can fully participate in advocacy actions in Raleigh.



Every Child NC Partner Support Funding recipients :

Village of Wisdom
 Durham Partnership
 for Children
 Casa Azul de Wilson
 ISLA
 Save our Schools NC
 Hoke County NAACP

Action4Equity
 Harvesting Humanity
 League of Women Voters
 Charlotte Mecklenburg
 Hate Free Schools
 Coalition
 Sembrando Raices

Building Equity in Early
 Childhood Systems (BEECS)
 Seeds of H.O.P.E CDC
 Asheboro Latinx
 Service
 Love Our Children NC
 Pastors for North Carolina
 Children

HOLLA! Community
 Development Corporation
 Teaching Ourselves
 Understanding & Resolution
 (TOUR)
 Parents for Public Schools
 of Pitt County
 South Lumberton
 Development Association



A new leadership model, starting in 2025

In early 2025, we transitioned to a shared, co-anchor leadership model, led by the North Carolina Justice Center and Education Justice Alliance.

Both co-anchor organizations draw from decades of experience and deep expertise on the most pressing issues and our key policy priorities.

The co-anchors will ensure financial stability and staff support, along with continuing to serve on the Coordinating Committee.



Messaging powered by our principles and our mission.

Since the very beginning, Every Child NC has been committed to structures and practices that reflect our guiding principles and core values.

- Make decisions by consensus.
- Share work among diverse stakeholders and broad regional representation.
- Unite our advocacy specialities under a common, inclusive framework.
- Value the contribution of each partner.

We take great care to apply these principles to our outreach strategies. We strive to equip our partners with the tools needed to communicate effectively, and in ways that will resonate in different communities.

Key projects:

Collaboration with the OpEd Project

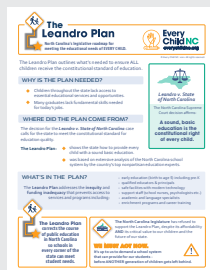
Held intensive writing workshops to encourage advocates to submit opinion articles aligned with coalition messaging.

Storytelling workshops

Offered partner-led workshops to collect personal experiences that inform advocacy goals.

Advocacy Toolkit

Created a comprehensive set of documents to help advocates navigate public education policy and to encourage them to contact their elected officials.



Leandro district funding calculator tool

Developed a web-based interactive tool that shows an estimate of how state funding will change in each school district upon implementation of the Leandro Plan.

#LeadwithLeandro campaign

Developed a video series with local nonprofit Narrative Arts featuring student and advocate leaders in our network as well as Grammy-nominated hip-hop artist Phonte Coleman.



“All Together” mini-documentary series

Created an informational series to communicate the state’s constitutional obligation to deliver a well-resourced education and to highlight partners leading the fight for Leandro.

5 YEARS OF BUILDING COMMUNITY



Our network is growing with every new partner organization — and every new individual engaged in our outreach.

When we began, Every Child NC sought to bring existing child advocacy organizations under a single banner.

Five years later, in addition to our 30+ coalition partners, we have established an extended community of organizations, community groups, and countless individual advocates.

To keep expanding our reach, we create new advocacy themes each year to inform on education policy and catch the interest of advocacy experts, families, students, educators, and the general public alike.



Lead with Leandro

Teaching people about Leandro and directing them to contact lawmakers.

Countdown to Compliance

Increasing awareness of Leandro ahead of one of the court hearings.

Unpack the Plan

Explaining the Leandro Plan's funding and policy framework.

NO to Vouchers- YES to Opportunity for Every Child

Informing people that public dollars are paying for private school tuition.

Action for Education Rights

Reflecting on civil rights and our progress toward equity.

Youth-led Advocacy

Promoting student voices in education decision making.



2020

Planning



2021

Listening



2022

Learning



2023

Building



2024

Responding



2025

Preparing for the future of the movement.



LEANDRO's LEGACY: A benchmark for constitutional rights.



Every Child NC's work toward equity in public education is rooted in the landmark education rights case **Leandro v. State of North Carolina**.

The original Leandro plaintiffs, who brought this fight to the forefront over 30 years ago, represented communities unable to meet student needs with the available state resources.

In scoring wins at the North Carolina Supreme Court, Leandro:

- Established the education standards that must be met for constitutional compliance.
- Provides a legal basis for advocates in holding lawmakers accountable.

No matter who's on the bench, the court is clear on the constitutional mandate for quality education.

In deciding the Leandro case, the North Carolina Supreme Court stated that:

- Every child has the right to a "sound, basic education".
- The state is failing to live up to this constitutional obligation.

This finding is notable in that the court consistently agreed on these points over a period of decades, despite changing membership and ideology.





LEANDRO'S LEGACY: A guiding light for education advocacy.

Our role in the ongoing fight for Leandro is only possible due to the dedication and sacrifice of those who came before us.

We are honored to have had the opportunity to learn from two original Leandro plaintiffs: **Angus Thompson** of Robeson County and **Jackie McLean** of Hoke County.

These education rights pioneers have generously given us their insight, steady support, and encouragement.

We are thankful for their contributions, both then and now, and they inspire us to keep pushing for equity in public education.



Angus Thompson, at the Every Child NC "Month of Action for Leandro" event, held August 2022 at Halifax Mall, Raleigh.



Jackie McLean appearing on screen in the documentary video "Resolution: Hoke County Speaks Out", which details her district's efforts toward equity.



Jackie McLean (left), and Angus Thompson (far right) are pictured on stage with Dr. Dudley Flood (center) at the 2024 Black History Month "Teach-In", held by Every Child NC in Raleigh.



Who Supports Leandro?

- **The North Carolina Supreme Court**

Decision in favor of public education investments, November 2022.

- **Law School Faculty**

Legal & constitutional experts from each of our state's law schools.

- **Amicus Brief ("Friend of the Court") Signatories**

Over 140 organizations supported full funding of the Leandro Plan in a document sent to the North Carolina Supreme Court in 2022, representing the largest sign on for any Amicus Brief.

- **North Carolina Lawmakers**

68 members of the North Carolina General Assembly signed a letter supporting Leandro ahead of the 2024 NC Supreme Court rehearing.

- **School Boards & County Commissions**

Urged the state to invest in schools and pledged their commitment to equity.

- **Business Leaders**

Investing in our future workforce will ensure prosperity for the entire state.

- **Faith Communities**

Faith leaders and congregations from every background cite the moral obligation to care for all children.

- **Educators & Public Education Advocates**

Education and child development specialists know Leandro will provide the resources children need.



LEANDRO's LEGACY: A lesson in vigilance and persistence.

Leandro has become the ultimate long game in forcing government accountability, as, for decades, **the state has been refusing to give our schools the bare minimum.**

With our coalition's focused Leandro messaging, we have expanded public awareness of inequity in public education and are poised and ready to respond to whatever comes next.



A "Day of Action for Education Rights" prompted by yet another challenge to the Leandro ruling.

February 2024

Hundreds of advocates from across the state converged in Raleigh to **denounce the rehearing of the Leandro case by the North Carolina Supreme Court.**

Rev. Barber of the Poor People's Campaign and a host of other speakers kicked off the press conference in front of the NC Supreme Court building.

Later, students led a march to the legislative building and all were invited to attend a Black History Month celebration.



Responding to threats against civil rights and other community needs.

We help protect children's rights in the classroom and beyond and provide timely responses to rapidly changing policy and community conditions.

Private school voucher program expansion tied to anti-immigration law (HB10).

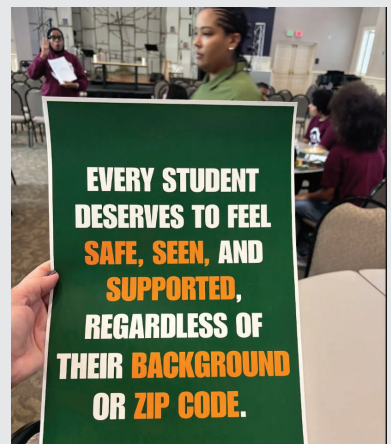
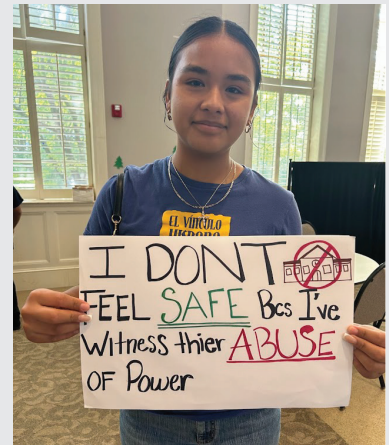
In fall 2024, the state legislature aggressively forced passage of an expanded universal voucher program by including it via an amendment to existing anti-immigrant legislation (HB10). Every Child NC worked closely with trusted partners leading the state's immigrant rights movement to mobilize communities and protest the legislation.

Rapid response to help protect civil liberties in schools and surrounding communities.

Throughout 2025, Every Child NC's partners responded to far-right, extreme legislative attacks against civil rights, including protections for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and for LGBTQ individuals. In addition, there have been moves to ban books in public schools and limit the power and authority of the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction. We led in-person and on-line community engagement events to help communicate what's happening, offer context, and share resources and strategies for resisting and fighting back.

Getting schools in western North Carolina back on track after Hurricane Helene.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Every Child NC brought survivors from previous storms that impacted eastern North Carolina together with immigrant rights advocates working directly with Helene survivors. Given the racial demographics of these two regions (the state's Appalachian region being predominantly white), it was important to foster solidarity and resource sharing while advocating for equitable recovery efforts to guide school reopenings and address longstanding infrastructure needs.





Helping students get a seat at the education policy table.

We provide new opportunities for young people to share their experience with public education decision makers.



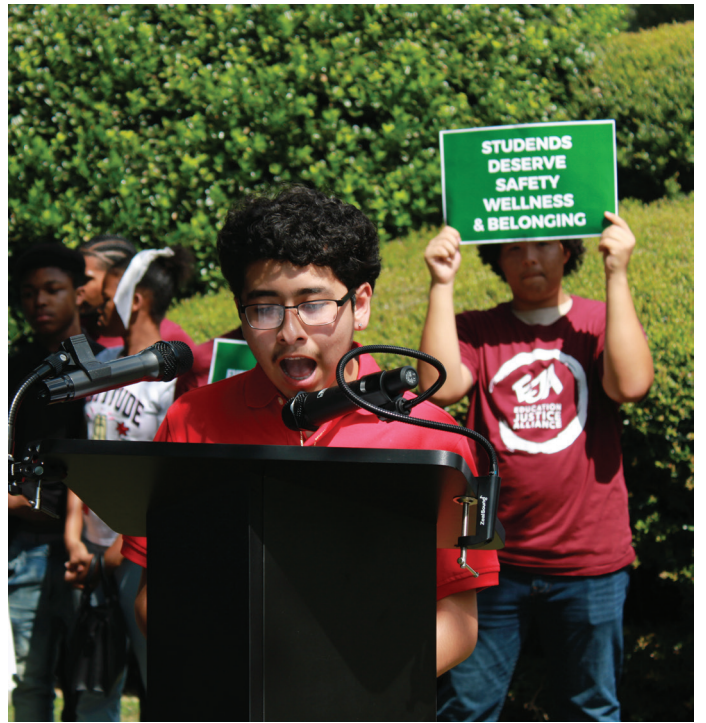
Youth Legislative Round Table

In 2024, over 50 youth leaders from across North Carolina (representing over a dozen counties) came to the capitol building in Raleigh to meet directly with lawmakers.

Students were eager to relay their concerns regarding the reality of underfunded schools, including crumbling buildings with broken air conditioning, outdated textbooks and technology, and limited access to support services and enrichment activities.



“ Giving my speech ... was a **POWERFUL MOMENT** because I was able to speak for what’s important to me — and other (students) around me.”

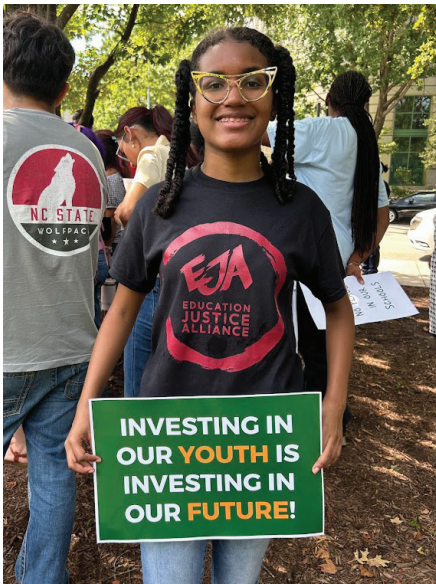


Youth Advocacy Day 2025

Students from different school communities shared their perspectives at a press conference in front of the North Carolina General Assembly building in Raleigh.

Speakers commented on their school environment along with topics like immigration, safety, equity, and mental health.

Participants later met with lawmakers and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.



Youth leaders in rural communities help “Get Out the Vote.”

Working together with advocate leaders in eastern North Carolina, Every Child NC helped produce a series of short videos to encourage voter registration and voter turnout among rural, first-time voters.

Partner organizations for this project: T.O.U.R. (Teach Ourselves Understanding & Resolution), Scotland County; HOLLA! (Helping Our Loved Ones Learn & Achieve), Anson County; Seeds of Hope of Robeson County; support by Every Child NC.



Connecting and Contributing



Message from Susana Benites Every Child NC Statewide Coalition Coordinator

As the new Coalition Coordinator, I feel honored to step into a space built by so many passionate partners, families, and advocates.

Over the past five years, Every Child NC has shown what's possible when communities come together with love, courage, and persistence.

Looking ahead, we'll continue to grow this movement—celebrating our wins, learning from our challenges, and centering the voices of those most impacted.

I invite you to join us as we strengthen the fight for equitable funding and the right of every child in North Carolina to a sound, high-quality education.

Every Child NC launches a platform for donations.

We're excited to announce that the North Carolina Justice Center and Education Justice Alliance, our statewide coalition co-anchors, are launching a new donation page to make it easier for individuals, organizations, and businesses to support our shared work for education justice.

This platform will help us sustain and grow the Every Child NC Coalition, ensuring that our partners and communities have the resources they need to keep advocating for fully-funded public schools and equitable opportunities for every child.

How the funds will be used:

All donations will go directly to support our **Partner Support Fund**, which provides mini-grants of up to \$5,000 for each partner organization. These grants help fund community-driven projects focused on school funding equity, the Leandro case, or other local efforts that center families and students.

Now, more than ever, nonprofit organizations and community partners — especially those working closest to students and families — need our collective support.

If you or your organization or business want to stand with us, this is a powerful way to help.

Support the Movement!

[DONATE NOW](#)





Acknowledgements & Gratitude

None of our work would have been possible without the dedication of our staff, interns, and countless volunteers.

Naomi Hodges and **Cristo Salazar** - our first Coalition Coordinators who helped formalize our practices, deepen our strategies, and grow our partnership network.

Laura Collins - completed a year-long fellowship supported by the A.J. Fletcher Foundation and was instrumental in securing over 144 signatures for the Leandro Amicus Brief.

Dr. Brittany Clark - served as our Coalition Coordinator from 2024-2025 and welcomed new partners and worked to deepen and expand our race equity practices.

Sunshine Adam - the current Communication Specialist at the North Carolina Justice Center has generously contributed their expertise with digital media and storytelling.

Susan Book - has served as our Community Organizing & Engagement team leader and has been the force behind our most memorable actions, rallies, and advocacy

Nan Fulcher - website coordinator and graphic designer, lending countless hours of volunteer time to ensure our messaging is clear and engaging.

Our coalition's work was supported by and strengthened through our partnerships with the **PEER (Partnership for Equity & Education Rights)** network of aligned state coalitions. We also received research support from the **National Education Policy Center**.

We are also forever appreciative to the organizations who previously served on our Coordinating Committee: **Disability Rights NC, ISLA, NC Early Education Coalition, and Save our Schools NC.**

Finally, we are deeply grateful for the support and guidance of our earliest champions- **Sandra Conway** and **Matt & Suzanne Case.**



Thank you to our donors for their generous and continued support!

**Resource Equity Funders Collaborative (REFC)
Partnership for Equity and Education Rights (PEER)
Z Smith Reynolds Foundation
MDC, Inc.**