

PUBLIC SCHOOL FORUM OF NORTH CAROLINA 2025–2026 Impact Report

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Letter From Our President & CEO

As I reflect on the year captured in this report, I am deeply impressed by the depth, breadth, and impact of the work the Public School Forum of North Carolina and our partners have achieved together to strengthen public education across our state.

The accomplishments of this past year represent far more than a collection of programs, research, and policy initiatives. They reflect our unwavering commitment to a foundational core belief: North Carolina is at its strongest when our public schools are strong, and when every single student has the opportunity to thrive.

That conviction has long been the cornerstone of the Forum's mission. As I look ahead, I am committed to building upon that legacy with a bold, ambitious vision for the future—one grounded in the understanding that our schools do not operate in isolation. When we cultivate the conditions necessary for our students and schools to excel, we secure the future success and prosperity of our entire state.

Our North Star — thriving students, thriving schools, thriving communities, for a thriving North Carolina—demands that I challenge us all to think expansively about what is possible. It requires bringing stakeholders together around common goals, leveraging rigorous research to drive meaningful solutions, and fostering the strategic partnerships that are essential to turning vision into measurable progress.

The achievements detailed throughout this report provide a powerful foundation for that future. I am profoundly grateful to our board, partners, and community leaders whose leadership and collaboration made this work possible, and I extend my sincere appreciation to the Forum team for executing our mission with such extraordinary dedication.

I am energized by the work ahead. We have a compelling opportunity to honor North Carolina's rich legacy as an educational leader while actively shaping a modern vision for what public education must look like for the next generation.

While significant challenges remain, the possibilities are immense. I look forward to listening, learning, and partnering with each of you as we work tirelessly toward a North Carolina where every child receives a high-quality education that prepares them for life.

Great things are on the horizon, and I look forward to the journey ahead.

With gratitude,
Dr. Anthony D. Jackson
President & CEO

Mission Statement

To inspire meaningful action on North Carolina's most important public education issues.

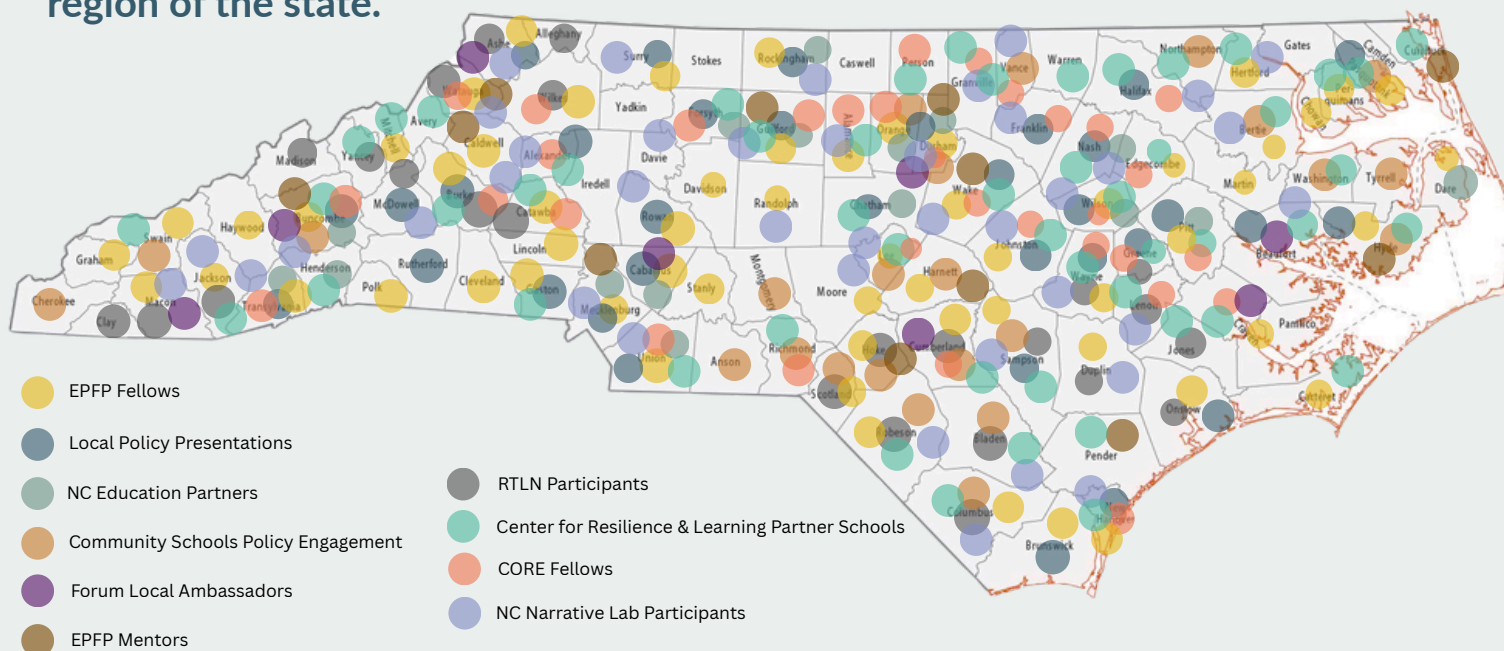
Vision Statement

All North Carolina children shall have the opportunity to reach their full potential through equitable and meaningful public education that nourishes our state's civic and economic vitality.

"One day we're insiders, sitting at the table where decisions are made; the next, whistle blowers, challenging the status quo. We're a think tank, studying the issues; an active participant, creating and running programs; a convener; bringing together all the parties to consider solutions, a player in the political arena, helping to turn the best ideas into action."

John Dornan
Founding Executive Director

Our programs reach every region of the state.



Top Education Issues 2025-26

Our [Top Education Issues](#) represent the Public School Forum's policy agenda for each biennium.

- 1** Ensure our school funding system is equitable, adequate, and flexible to meet students' unique needs
- 2** Make educator pay competitive in North Carolina
- 3** Address critical needs to support child well-being and success both in and outside of school
- 4** Adopt assessment and accountability policies that are fair and effective

Impact & Wins



Average 8% pay increase for teachers



\$3 million appropriation for sustaining and expanding the NC Community Schools model



Removal of barriers to entry into the teaching profession

Programming Snapshots

NC Education Policy Fellowship

The NC Education Policy Fellowship program, which has existed for over 40 years, has built a large and growing network of more than 1500 fellows and alumni who have worked to increase their knowledge of education policy and expand the capacity of advocates across the state.

Fellows who graduate from EPFP bring back what they learned to their local communities, and bring diverse perspectives to help shape policy discussions and decision-making to benefit our public schools and students.

This year, for the first time ever, all 18 NC Regional Principals and Teachers of the Year were sponsored to participate in EPFP together.

Education is Everyone's Business (EiEB)

North Carolina is the #1 state in the country for business, yet we rank 50th in per-pupil spending, investing about \$12,193 per student, roughly \$5,660 below the national average. The businesses that depend on strong public schools for their future workforce have largely been absent from the conversation about funding them.

EiEB gives business leaders the facts, language, peer network needed to leverage their credibility and influence with policymakers that traditional education advocates generally don't have.

In its first year, EiEB grew from a handful of founders to a network of more than 400 business leaders across North Carolina. Members participate in a monthly statewide call, and 27 participants have already hosted their own local meetings to recruit their peers into the network.

Forum Local Ambassadors Coalition (FLAC)

Our team of local ambassadors, all graduates of our EPFP program, are equipped with deep knowledge of NC education policy and advocacy strategies. They serve as trusted messengers in their communities, making connections between education policy and impact in classrooms.

Our ambassadors have helped the Forum to expand our reach and impact across the state as we work to build understanding of and engagement in education policy.

One ambassador in the Northeast Region has been invited into spaces we haven't previously had access to. She has spoken with multiple Rotary clubs, offered a series of presentations at a local school for educators and families, and has frequented events with business leaders

Trauma Informed Coaching

School environments can lack the specialized training to recognize trauma-driven behavior, causing educators to default to punitive and ineffective disciplinary measures. Trauma-informed coaching delivers a whole-child, whole-school framework that combines customized professional development with ongoing coaching and technical assistance for school teams.

The program equips staff with trauma-informed strategies, restorative practices, and practical resilience-building tools.

This year, The NC Center for Resilience & Learning provided 173 trainings for 6,372 educators. Center program managers facilitated 994 consultation meetings with partner schools and districts to implement trauma informed and resilience expanding practices.

Our Reach

Social Media

17,971

Audience across social media platforms: X, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram

(+11.8% growth from previous year)

1,082,799

Total impressions across social media platforms

(+51.9% growth from previous year)

73,856

Total engagements across social media platforms

(+49.5% growth from previous year)

Education Matters

18

episodes

5,116

YouTube views

(+6.6% growth from previous year)

1,862

Podcast downloads

Newsletter & Op-eds

4,854

Friday Report newsletter subscribers

(+26% growth from previous year)

25

op-eds published in local news outlets throughout North Carolina



Weighted Student Funding Study Group

Beginning in 2024, the Forum convened a statewide study group of over 100 education leaders, bipartisan elected officials, and school finance experts to evaluate the need and opportunities for strengthening North Carolina's school finance system. In August, we published [a report](#) detailing the work of the study group, extensive research and modeling on the potential impact of various weighted student funding models, and a set of policy recommendations. Our team has been invited to share our work with policymakers and education leaders across the state, and we will remain engaged as the NC General Assembly continues exploring possibilities for school finance reform.

Narrative Lab

This year, the Public School Forum served as an anchor organization in a statewide narrative change lab aimed at building and uplifting an affirmative vision for public schools in North Carolina. In August, representatives from over 50 North Carolina organizations and school districts convened in Little Switzerland to connect and lay the foundation for collaborative efforts to ensure positive messaging about the impact of local public schools reaches communities across the state. Throughout the next year, the group will collectively amplify the great things happening in our schools at several key points throughout the school year.

Mission Aligned Centers

The Forum houses several mission-aligned centers which focus on specific issue.

Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity

The Flood Center organizes policy proposals and programs focused on equity in all aspects of K-12 education and serves as a nexus for collaborative efforts in educational equity, access, and opportunity across the state. The Center informs discussions on policies impacting equity and social justice, supports and advances equity-focused educator programming, and promotes discussions around how schools are funded at the local and state levels, in hopes of achieving equity, access, and opportunity for each and every young person in North Carolina.



North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs

Founded in 2002, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) is a statewide afterschool and expanded learning network established to work in partnership with stakeholders across NC to increase access to high quality afterschool and expanded learning programs for all children and youth in our state. As the state affiliate of the National Afterschool Association and one of the 50 Statewide Afterschool Networks, NC CAP champions youth development, program quality, and public investment in afterschool and summer learning.



North Carolina Center for Resilience & Learning

The NC Center for Resilience and Learning works with high-poverty schools across the state where student trauma is prevalent. The model is a whole-school, whole-child framework to create trauma-sensitive schools that improve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for students. As of 2026, the Center provided training and/or coaching in 39 school districts across the state, with year-long partnerships with 53 individual schools for the full implementation model. The team also focuses on policy and research related to trauma-informed practices through policy briefs, partner-school case studies, an education preparation program task force, a Duke University partnership for data collection and evaluation, and statewide educator collaboration opportunities.



From One of Our Partners

“The Public School Forum of North Carolina is an essential partner of the Asheville City Schools Foundation. From coming to WNC to talk with our stakeholders about current research and NC educational policy to mentoring local leaders such as myself in the Education Policy Fellows Program, the Forum invests in our local public schools from the mountains to the coast. After Hurricane Helene, the Forum reached out to us immediately and gave me a chance to process and share our recovery experience in the monthly ED Partners convening with leaders across the state. By generously and consistently giving us both knowledge and support, the Forum has created a sense of visibility and connection for those of us in the western part of the state. We are deeply grateful.”

Copland Rudolph, Asheville City Schools Foundation

Thriving students. Thriving schools.
Thriving communities. Thriving North Carolina.



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