



Dudley Flood Center for
Educational Equity and
Opportunity

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL FORUM OF NORTH CAROLINA



2023 Equity Forward Report



"The great motivator is *possibility*... we're not there yet. We will get there, but we will only do that if we keep the faith and *believe* that there is a *destination*,"

Dr. Dudley Flood

A NOTE FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR AND NAMESAKE

The Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity exists to **eradicate educational inequities** using a framework of care by supporting students, educators, and communities. We understand that by **empowering** educators and students, **strengthening** advocacy efforts, **building** individual capacity, and **centering** historical context for present-day impact, we **promote equitable and sustainable systems change**. For far too long, educational inequities have persisted in education. We must continue to respond to the need and support students through our continued support of districts, schools, and those serving to educate the young minds of tomorrow.

The Dudley Flood Center responds with specific programming and initiatives as a trusted resource, providing consistent statewide support. This report highlights the work of the Center since its inception to directly address the growing needs due to continued breaches by the state to fully fund and implement the Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan. The Center aims to be the beacon of hope to continue to provide support to help eradicate inequities. We fully believe and embrace that the **greatest motivator is possibility**....we are not there yet. We will get there, but we will only do that if we **keep the faith and believe there is a destination**. We look forward to being a constant support for our state as we work together to eradicate inequities. Together, we can and will co-create the change we need to see.

Dr. Dudley E. Flood

Dr. Deanna Townsend-Smith

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Study Group XVI Report: Expanding Educational Opportunity in North Carolina asked the question, “*What would it take to give every child in North Carolina the opportunity to receive a sound basic education?*” Today, this question drives our work at the Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity (Flood Center), as our mission prioritizes making this a reality for every student. Although all students in North Carolina are entitled to a sound basic education as a part of the state’s constitutional obligation, the systemic inequities that are deeply ingrained in the state’s educational infrastructure have historically made this constitutionally protected right a reality for only those privileged enough to access it. These inequities, many of which were explored in the Study Group Report, including inadequate school funding, the resegregation of schools, and the overrepresentation of white teachers despite the diversification of the state’s student body, existed prior to the report’s publication and still exist today.

Birthered in 2019 from the work of Study Group, the Flood Center moves equity forward through the following organizational Strategic Priorities:

- Policy, Research, & Advocacy
- Partnerships
- Capacity Building and Convening of Stakeholders
- Outreach, Communications, & Dissemination

We aim to continuously expand access and opportunity for every student to experience a “sound basic education” by equipping stakeholders to center equity in every aspect of their work, increasing their capacity to make data-driven decisions, and advocating for accountability towards sustainable progress across all 115 public school units in North Carolina. In order to provide a sound basic education to every student, we must first both understand and celebrate who our students are. Next, we must understand how students’ identities contribute to their unique social, emotional, and academic needs and what resources are necessary to meet those needs.

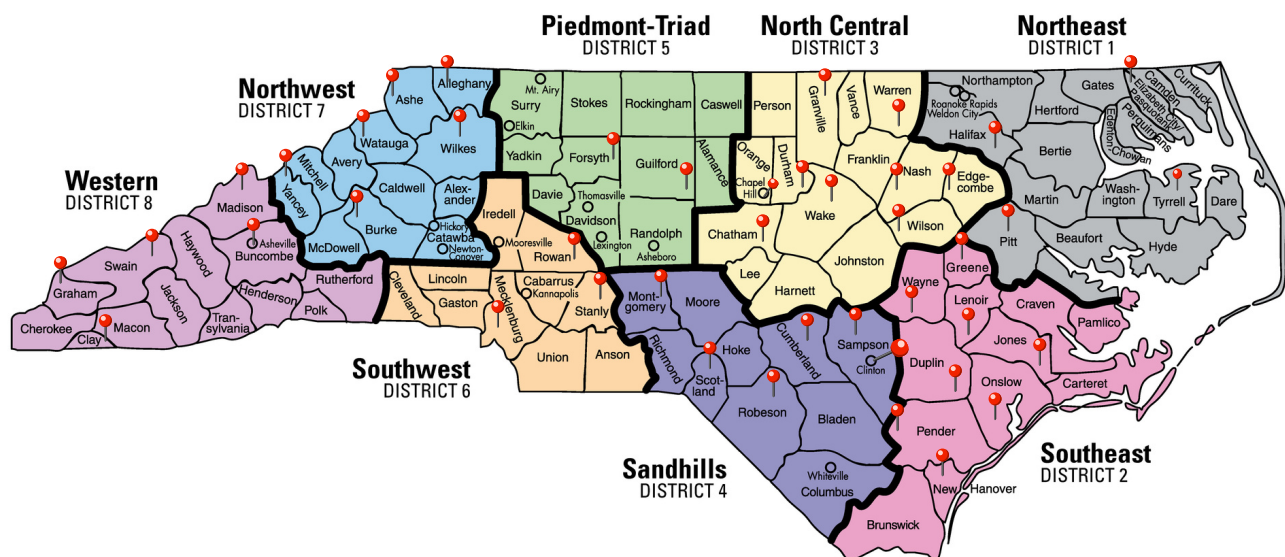


MOVING FORWARD

At the Flood Center, core to moving equity forward is our [Framework for Change](#), which is foundational to our programming and technical support across the state. Nearly 60 years after the [Brown v. Board of Education \(1\)](#), the United States has become [more diverse](#); however, the persistent systemic oppression has led to lasting disparities in educational outcomes and opportunities not just among racial and ethnic groups, but among socioeconomic groups as well. Research shows that students from certain racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds experience barriers to receiving a sound basic education at higher rates than others. For example, schools with larger proportions of non-Asian students of color and from low-income backgrounds often have [higher rates of novice teachers](#) and [lower access to advanced courses](#). Consequently, many of these same schools and students experience similar disparities in access to and preparation for [postsecondary and career pathways](#). With our commitment to pursuing educational equity and opportunity, we deploy our framework across our programming, initiatives, and technical support using three broad portfolio categories - **Equity Core Network** - **Equity Incubator** - **Equity Education**.

- **Equity Core Network** - allows the Center to identify and connect leaders, educators, and community stakeholders to help address systemic issues related to equity, access, and opportunity across North Carolina.
- **Equity Incubator** - allows the Center to address recruitment and retention efforts in North Carolina to address systemic teacher pipeline and diversity issues.
- **Equity Education** - allows the Center to educate about practices to eradicate systemic and persistent inequities at state and national levels.

Since 2020, we have expanded our programming initiatives from our signature event, Color of Education, to 19 programs that support NC educators, students, and administrators from 42 geographically diverse school districts across the state, supporting each of our portfolio categories. Outlined below are highlights and testimonials demonstrating our impact across North Carolina.



WE BELIEVE IN *ELEVATING STUDENT VOICE*

Student stories are more complex than what is captured by numbers alone, which is why elevating student voice is one of the ways we move our strategic priorities forward. In order to adequately understand these stories and address their needs, **student voices must be elevated**. This means we must intentionally create spaces for the students, as well as educators and leaders who are at the center of the ongoing inequities shown in statewide data, to share their experiences and then center these experiences in research, policy, and practice.

For example, following the Supreme Court ruling to ban the use of Affirmative Action in higher education admissions, the **Dudley Flood Center's Interns** each authored a blog exploring the potential access barriers it could potentially present for prospective students while also elevating the importance of access to a high quality P-12 education for college access through the lens of their own identities and lived experiences.

We also elevate student voice through **Student Voices**, one of our Equity Core Network Programs. In 2021, we hosted a webinar series elevating the value of a culturally responsive curriculum for the educational experiences and personal development of students. Our goal is to model how student voice can be used to fight against educational inequities at the school, district, and state level. We encourage educators and leaders to center student voice, as it allows students to be directly involved in their educational experiences and can be a strategy for increasing student engagement and academic performance. In addition to using programming to elevate student voices, we use it to strengthen relationships with and among stakeholders, increasing our collective capacity to move equity forward throughout the state.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



Student perspectives on Affirmative Action in higher education admissions

I fear for those graduating from my alma mater high school, where a large portion of the student population come from low-income and immigrant households. Many of us don't have access to the financial and social capital of our peers from higher-income families, yet we're still expected to compete against them in the college admissions process. This wouldn't be a problem if equal access to educational resources existed across the board.

Evelin Ortiz-Munoz

Race remains the underlying social construct upon which America was built and operated. It permeates every conversation and cannot not be muted. I feel immense sadness for the future students who will not be fully appreciated for who they are unless they choose to share their experiences as Black individuals in America.

Selena Collins

WE BELIEVE IN *RECRUITING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE*

One of the Flood Center's priorities is the **recruitment and retention of a diverse educator workforce**. During each of the last three academic school years, more than three-quarters of North Carolina public school teachers were White, while less than half of students enrolled in North Carolina Public Schools were during those same three academic years (DRIVE Task Force Report). While we acknowledge the potential barriers COVID-19 presented in sustaining this diversity, the state's inadequate representation of its continuously diversifying student body among its educators has persisted for decades and caught the attention of Governor Cooper even before the pandemic, as seen in the establishment of the Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education (DRIVE) Task Force in late 2019 through his issuing of Executive Order 113.

The Flood Center uses our Equity Incubator Programs to actualize the DRIVE Task Force recommendations, Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan, and NC State Board of Education Statewide Strategic Plan through programs such as our Jeanes Fellows Program. Beginning in 2023, the first cohort of Jeanes Fellows consists of educators and leaders representing eight public school units across the state who are participating in collaborative equity-centered professional learning opportunities to create sustainable progress in diversifying the educator workforce.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
DRIVE AND ACCESS THE
FINAL REPORT VISIT:**

<https://floodcenter.org/resources/>

DRIVE



Additionally, we began facilitating the **Rural Teacher Leader Network (RTLN)** to propel educators from rural districts to lead with equity together with four pillars: global learning, trauma-informed strategies, policy and advocacy, and teacher leadership. Offering a series of virtual and in-person collaborative learning sessions throughout the school year, we expanded from a cohort of educators representing 18 districts from both eastern and western North Carolina in 2021 across the state.

Given that a diverse educator workforce benefits all students, we are honored that two of our very own were represented among the 34 stakeholders appointed by Governor Roy Cooper who collectively explored best practices and submitted recommendations to the Office of the Governor for making education more inclusive and equitable for all students through diversifying the educator workforce. In October 2023, the Task Force unanimously voted in favor of the Flood Center as the entity to continue the next phase of the Task Force's work.

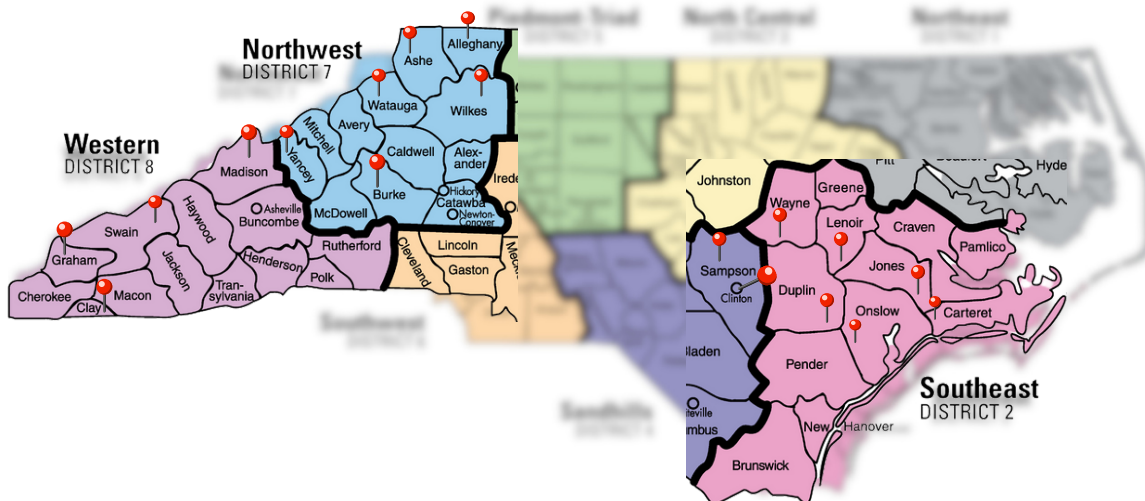


RURAL TEACHER LEADERSHIP NETWORK

3
COHORTS

OVER 100
EDUCATORS SERVED

ACROSS 18
COUNTIES



WE BELIEVE IN *ADVOCATING FOR EQUITABLE POLICY & PRACTICES*

As advocates, we intentionally use our platform to [support progress toward equity](#), and we also believe in speaking out to push leaders toward further action when there is more work to be done. In 2021, we made a [statement](#) of support of the state’s proposed Social Studies Standards, elevating the benefits of a curriculum that “accurately and inclusively” reflects historical facts and the state’s increasingly diverse student population for all students. While the State Board of Education’s approved changes may have appeared to be an indication of progress towards a more inclusive curriculum, just a few months later, developments to House Bill 324 placed restrictions on the discussions educators can facilitate in their classrooms around the history of racism in the United States. The same racism plagues North Carolina Public schools today. With our schools serving a population of students that is continuously diversifying, it is more urgent now than ever for students to see their culture and identity accurately reflected throughout their curriculum. This cultural responsiveness, or lack thereof, sends [implicit messages](#) to students about who belongs in and who is valued in these spaces.

In the summer of 2022, we released a [statement](#) advocating for the continuation of school nutrition waivers for the next 2-5 years. While statewide data provides [evidence](#) of improvements in the academic learning loss experienced by students due to COVID-19, many of the learning barriers that were either caused or exacerbated by the pandemic have persisted, such as access to quality nutrition. Access to nutrition plays a vital role in a student's emotional and academic success. Given North Carolina’s constitutional duty to ensure every child has access to a sound basic education, we believe this continuation will move equity forward.

WE BELIEVE IN CONVENING DIVERSE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Before the Flood Center was created, a partnership that continues to thrive between the Public School Forum of NC, Samuel Dubois Cook Center on Social Equity, and Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy created two programs which provide opportunities to convene, network, and action plan around shared priorities. Those programs, **Color of Education** and **Mapping the Movement**, are signature to our Equity Education programming category.

Color of Education brings together hundreds of participants each year to build deeper connections across the fields of research, policy, and practice and bring together communities, educators, policymakers, experts, and other key stakeholders focused on developing action-oriented approaches for achieving racial equity in education across the state of North Carolina. Our keynote speakers over the years include:

- Nikole Hannah-Jones
- Ta-Nehisi Coates
- Dr. Jelani Cobb
- Dr. Vanessa Siddle-Walker
- Jerry Craft
- Dr. Lisa Delpit
- Dr. Dudley E. Flood
- Dr. Keisha Bentley-Edwards
- Dr. William A. "Sandy" Darity Jr.

In October 2023, the Flood Center, in collaboration with the aforementioned partners hosted the 6th Color of Education Summit with over 800 participants.

COLOR OF EDUCATION

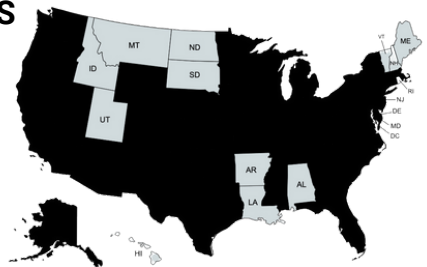


4.3K 
ATTENDEES

**ATTENDEES
ACROSS**

37

STATES





We continue conversations and action planning through **Mapping the Movement**. Originally started as a visual map to connect work around racial equity in NC, spanning nonprofits, research centers, community-based organizations, parent and student groups, advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, political organizations, and schools and districts. Our current work includes intentional convening through roundtables to connect these organizations and maximize their collective expertise, addressing systemic issues and barriers to success. In 2023, we hosted three opportunities, gathering at least 80 - 100 participants to stay in line with our mission to be the hub to connect organizations.

MAPPING THE MOVEMENT



NEARLY 
100
MAPPING THE MOVEMENT
ORGANIZING PARTNERS

WE BELIEVE IN *USING DATA & EQUITABLE RESOURCE ALLOCATION*

Driving the Flood Center's work is our belief in the NC Constitution, which guarantees every child the right to an education. We know that fully funding the Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan is the first step of many the state can take to ensure every student has access to a sound basic education and is a necessary step in completely eradicating inequities.

The Key Areas of The Leandro Action Plan are:

1. A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Teacher in Every Classroom
2. A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Principal in Every School-
3. A Finance System that Provides Adequate, Equitable, and Efficient Resources
4. An Assessment and Accountability System that Reliably Assesses Multiple Measures of Student Performance
5. An Assistance and Turnaround Function that Provides Necessary Support to Low performing Schools and Districts
6. A System of Early Education that Provides Access to High-Quality Prekindergarten and Other Early Childhood Learning Opportunities
7. Alignment of High School to Postsecondary and Career Expectations for All Students

Data must be at the foundation of moving equity forward, which is why we created **Equity Profiles**. These profiles are composed of metrics we have identified as Equity Indicators, for each of North Carolina's 115 public school units. These Equity Indicators include Student Demographics, Teacher Demographics, Resegregation Data, Per-Pupil Spending, 4-Year Graduation Rates, Access to Rigorous Courses, Disciplinary Disparities, and Special Education Data. Derived from publicly available data and influenced by the seven domains created by the Committee on Racial Equity from the Study Group XVI Report, we recognize these categories are not the only indicators of inequities in the state's public education system, as you see in the Leandro recommendations, however, these categories have historically been among the most consistent barriers to opportunity, access, and educational outcomes. **The profiles serve as a starting point for discussion, advocacy, and technical support, leading to a thorough examination of educational inequity in North Carolina Public Schools.**

EQUITY PROFILES



County Profile Dashboard: Educational Equity and Opportunity

This dashboard is a visual interactive display of the Dudley Flood Center’s Educational Equity Profiles. The Equity Profiles use publicly available data to provide a snapshot of equity indicators for each Public School Unit across North Carolina. The purpose of this dashboard is to increase the accessibility of equity-focused data used at the center of research policy, practice, and advocacy as we collectively examine and address inequities in North Carolina Public Schools.

“The greatest motivator is possibility... we’re not there yet. We will get there, but we will only do that if we keep the faith and believe that there is a destination.”

- Dr. Dudley Flood

**TO ACCESS THE EQUITY
PROFILES AND ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES VISIT:**
<https://floodcenter.org/resources/>



WE BELIEVE IN *THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION & IMPACT*

While we are thankful for the opportunities we have had so far to use our platform to move equity forward; we believe these are the initial steps on a continuous journey to **eradicate inequities** in North Carolina Public schools.

We as a state have an urgent **collective responsibility** to address issues of systemic inequity by advocating for **structural changes in policy and practice** to build an equitable education system that meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of the state's diverse student population and growing workforce needs. Most importantly; however, our collective responsibility to sustain these structural changes are a mandate of North Carolina's constitution. As stated in the majority opinion in the November 4, 2022, case in which the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled to uphold every student's right to a sound basic education,

“

If this Court is to fulfill its own constitutional obligations, it can no longer patiently wait for the day, year, or decade when the State gets around to acting on its constitutional duty 'to guard and maintain' the constitutional rights of North Carolina school children.

”

WE BELIEVE IN *THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION & IMPACT*

Regardless of what state level accountability looks like, **we will continue to advocate for the full funding of the Leandro Action Plan**, in order to **ensure every student has access to a sound basic education**. While we will continue to advocating for the eradication of academic barriers, truly ensuring that every child has a sound basic education means understanding and addressing the needs of the whole student ranging from their academic and curriculum needs, to their emotional needs. Given the increase in attention needed to student mental health since the start of the pandemic, the Flood Center urges leaders to prioritize students' mental health and safety needs as well. Our focus on addressing the needs of the needs of the whole child aligns with the guiding principles of North Carolina State Board of Education's 2027 Strategic Plan. These guiding principles, which are the foundation of the State's plan for educating the whole child are listed below:

- Every student enters school healthy and learns to practice a healthy lifestyle.
- Every student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe.
- Every student actively learns, connects with their school, and engages in their broader community.
- Every student has access to personalized learning and support from qualified, caring adults.
- Every student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further and for employment and participation in a global environment.

Our recently released Equity Profiles are **focused on increasing the quality and accessibility of statewide equity-centered data available for various stakeholders**. The Equity Profiles are a visual interactive dashboard that allows users to engage in a customizable data experience, engaging with data for all North Carolina Public School Units in one centralized location. This data will also be downloadable, allowing stakeholders to further manipulate it and perform their own equity-centered analyses.

We look forward to continuing to collectively move equity forward through data, research, advocacy, and policy to ensure every student in North Carolina public schools accesses their constitutional right to a sound and basic education.

THANK YOU TO OUR PAST AND PRESENT SPONSORS



ANONYMOUS TRUST

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