

Early Childhood Education Leadership Academy

The NC Early Education Coalition created the Early Childhood Education Leadership Academy to help build and support a movement where families, early childhood teachers, and administrators could learn more about the early childhood system while understanding the importance of making their voices heard with policymakers. The Leadership Academy empowers educators by giving advocacy tips, tools, and strategies to help share their stories and advocate for the changes desired for themselves and their staff, young children and families, and their community.

The Leadership Academy is an interactive three-part training series that provides both resources and in-depth conversations focusing on the roots of the child care system in America and how it impacts early educators. Through a series of three two-hour trainings, participants and trainers work together to dissect the early childhood systems of power and decision-making in North Carolina.

The first training focuses on the history of power in the United States and in North Carolina and how that power relates to our daily experiences in the field of early childhood education. The second focuses on aspects of personal power and how each individual has power that they can use to influence the world around them. The third rounds out the content by discussing the role of advocacy in affecting change.

Upon completion of all three trainings, participants receive 6 trainings hours that can be used to meet professional development requirements held by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), a stipend of \$150, and professional memberships to the NC Early Education Coalition, the North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children, and the National Black Child Development Institute.

Participants

During its first two years, more than 150 early educators participated in the original version of the academy, which was designed for child care teachers and family child care home operators. In the second year, additional tracks were created with content tailored towards early childhood program administrators (24 participants), and parents of young children (24 participants). Through all iterations of the Academy, 211 individuals from more than half of all counties in North Carolina were trained, and a third year of sessions for early care and education teachers is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2023.

County Representation

Alamance, Anson, Beaufort, Brunswick, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Carteret, Caswell, Catawba, Chatham, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Currituck, Dare, Davidson, Duplin, Durham, Forsyth, Gaston, Granville, Guilford, Harnett, Henderson, Hertford, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, Lenoir, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Orange, Pender, Pitt, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Sampson, Stanly, Stokes, Transylvania, Union, Vance, Wake, Wayne, Wilson, Wilkes, Yadkin, York.

Participant testimonials

“I really enjoyed the academy. Honestly, my passion for the profession was slowly diminishing, but now I have been rejuvenated. Every session was thought provoking, and empowering. I now know that I can be instrumental in making a difference, and there is support within the Early Childhood community. I am forever grateful for the opportunity.” - Vallerie Jones

“Through this program, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of advocacy and its role in promoting positive change within the industry. Additionally, the program provided me with the opportunity to explore the various ways in which the current system is flawed and how systematic racism continues to persist in our society. Overall, the Leadership Academy was a truly enlightening experience that has helped me to become a more informed and thoughtful professional in my field.” - Shalicia “Shay” Jackson

“The academy was a great experience to see so many in solidarity to improve and advocate for Early Childhood Education. The academy also gave me the foundation and the tools, resources to know how to advocate. It was an empowering experience because I was able to learn the foundation and inner workings on why early childhood isn't adequately funded.” - Tracee Moore

“I benefited from the academy by learning that we need to be vocal advocates for ECE and teachers in the field, especially those who do not have access to financial support. I am also inspired to act on my concerns in other areas of life. Thank you for the vision and encouragement to act.” - Patricia Dilworth

“The Academy was a great introduction to what advocacy looks like in the Early Childhood field. I enjoyed the information I received during sessions and have utilized it when advocating for myself and the children in my learning environment. The Academy also inspired me to attend the Annual NAEYC Conference once I received my membership, and encouraged me to apply for the M.Ed. Leadership and Advocacy program at UNC-Wilmington in which I was recently accepted. I'm proud and thankful to say that the Advocacy Academy has broadened my horizons and has played a major role in deciding where to travel next in my professional journey.” - Jessica Bowman

“The Academy has helped me to realize the importance of advocacy from the classroom and staying aware of different bills/ policies and how it affects early childhood education. The Academy has enlightened me on how I can advocate to bring about change in our field and in my community.” - Tamika Stewart

“The early childhood field is in critical condition. We have people making rules, policies and procedures that have never worked in early childhood. We as early childhood providers have to stand up and advocate for our children. I have been in the early childhood field for 25 years I am going to continue to stand up and use my powerful voice to be heard. We are the voices for our young children and the children are our future.” - Carla Archie

“The Parent Caregiver Leadership Academy has given me a great insight on all the components that go into the legislature behind Early Childhood Education. It was composed of good hands-on learning and great conversations between other parents, caregivers, and myself. There were plenty of resources exchanged at our meetings, and everyone was very receptive and inclusive of all the ideas shared. The Academy has also given me tons of confidence to be able to advocate for my own children, as well as guide other families along the way.” - Trish Cordero

“This gave me the opportunity to really think about issues that are happening daily in our work environments. It was good to hear problems and solutions. As a child care provider, things are constantly changing and we need to be able to voice our opinions and not keep silent speak up and let our voices be heard.” - Cynthia Everette

“This academy has supported me by giving me the tools to be able to advocate for matters that I feel are important as a family child care professional. Learning about the history of the low wages of child care workers, the biases that exist and learning how to become a part of the solution by advocating was very empowering. This academy changed my thinking from being a victim of the decisions that are being made for ECE professionals by legislators to knowing that I have a voice and I matter.” - Wanda Chandler Tillman

“The academy allowed me to interact with people from the same profession from a variety of backgrounds. It has helped me realize that it is important to keep an open mind and look at things from a different perspective. I gained knowledge that I can use now as well as in my future endeavors. Upon completion I felt refreshed, renewed, and ready to tackle the many struggles that early childhood educators have to endure.” - Jamica Bass

“The academy helped me embrace the opportunity to make an impact on the local level in my community and beyond. Together, we can foster, practice, embrace, advocate and ultimately make a significant change for the betterment of our current and future generations to come. This is work in progress. Thank you so much for this vital professional training, guidance and leadership opportunity.” - Mattie Pellerin