

Advocates for Children
of New York

RIGHT TO LEARN

A CAMPAIGN TO ADVANCE
EDUCATION EQUITY IN NYC



“I’ve been fighting so hard and alone for many years to get Aidan the help he so desperately needs. From day one you came in, you took your time to hear me. You fought this fight with me, and I am grateful for all your hard work, time, and patience. Thank you so much.”

-Stormy, mother of AFC client Aidan

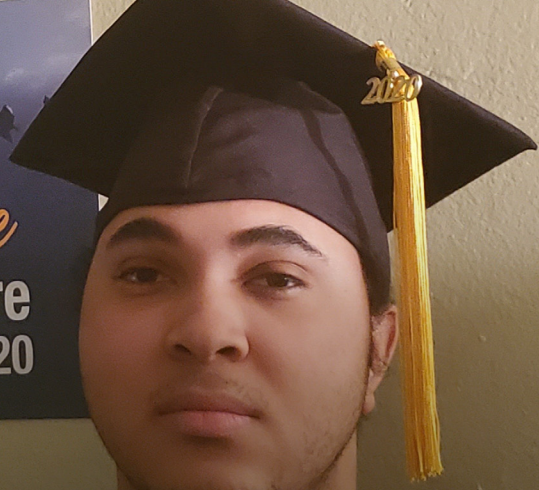
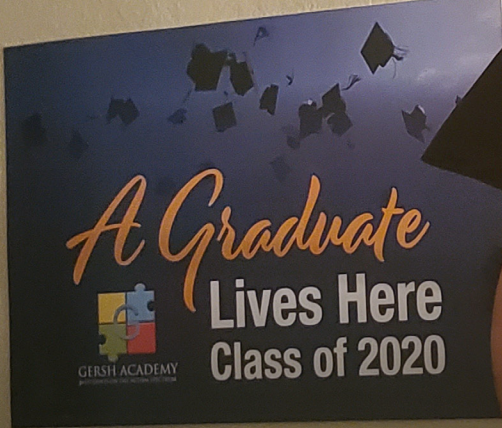
VISION FOR THE CAMPAIGN

New York City stands at a critical juncture.

In the 50 years that Advocates for Children of New York has been doing this work, we have never seen a greater need for education advocacy. That is why we are launching a campaign to raise \$5 million in private funding, to meet the increasing demand for our services now and in the future.

The pandemic disrupted the entire school system, making long-standing inequities even worse. The students hit hardest have been the students AFC serves — those who were already struggling or marginalized based on race, poverty, disability, immigration status, English proficiency, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system. Early data are confirming that the gaps in math and early literacy based on race and poverty have widened significantly during the past year.

The Right to Learn Campaign will enable AFC to advance education equity and respond innovatively and effectively to the needs of New York's students and their families in the wake of COVID-19, building upon AFC's strong record of effective service to extend our impact and ensuring a strong foundation for the years to come.



**Kairon, 21,
wanted to earn
his high school diploma,
but was floundering at his
public high school.**

He came to Advocates for Children of New York with his mother, who knew that he needed more support but kept hitting roadblocks in the public school system. AFC's advocates arranged for Kairon to receive a comprehensive evaluation, which revealed that he had autism, and then fought successfully for the NYC Department of Education to pay for him to attend a specialized school with a good track record of helping older students on the autism spectrum to catch up academically and graduate from high school.

Because Kairon had gone so long without appropriate services and was about to age out of school, AFC also obtained an additional year of services and tuition that enabled him to graduate, plus two years of transition support to prepare him for post-graduation employment.



Long before anyone had heard of COVID-19, students like Kairon were not receiving the education support they needed from New York City public schools.

As a student with a disability, Kairon was twice as likely to fail the state reading exam in eighth grade and 38% less likely to graduate from high school on time than his nondisabled peers. As a Black student with a disability, his odds were even more grim: according to the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 4% of Black eighth graders with disabilities in NYC were reading proficiently; roughly one in four Black students with disabilities in New York State drops out of high school.



**OF STUDENTS WITHOUT
DISABILITIES GRADUATE
IN FOUR YEARS**



**OF STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES GRADUATE
IN FOUR YEARS**



**OF BLACK STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES GRADUATE
IN FOUR YEARS**



The families who come to us for help are frustrated and scared; they see their children suffering or falling behind, and despite their repeated requests, they have not been able to get the support their children require. They need information and advocacy they can count on to make sure their children receive an education that prepares them to reach their potential.

50 YEARS OF PROTECTING EVERY CHILD'S RIGHT TO LEARN

AFC has a singular vision: an equitable & inclusive school system that provides an excellent education to all students.

For 50 years, we have pursued this vision through a unique and impactful combination of services, all focused on addressing the unmet educational needs of New York's most vulnerable students and building a school system where they can thrive. **In the last year alone:**



Direct Service

AFC staff provided assistance or legal representation in **4,820 individual cases**.

Our Helpline answered **3,895 calls**.

AFC successfully resolved more than **90%** of the education-related problems in the cases we handled.



Community Education

AFC taught **13,345 parents, students, and professionals** to advocate for themselves at **251 virtual workshops and trainings**.

AFC created and distributed more than **1.3 million** guides, tip sheets, and other educational resources.



Systems Change

AFC led 25 initiatives resulting in policy change adopted by New York City & State to help students during COVID-19.

AFC-led advocacy resulted in **\$300M** added to the City's education budget, including **\$22M** to improve preschool special education, and **\$26M** for a K-2 citywide literacy curriculum.



Cost Efficiency

86¢ of every dollar donated to AFC was spent directly on helping children.

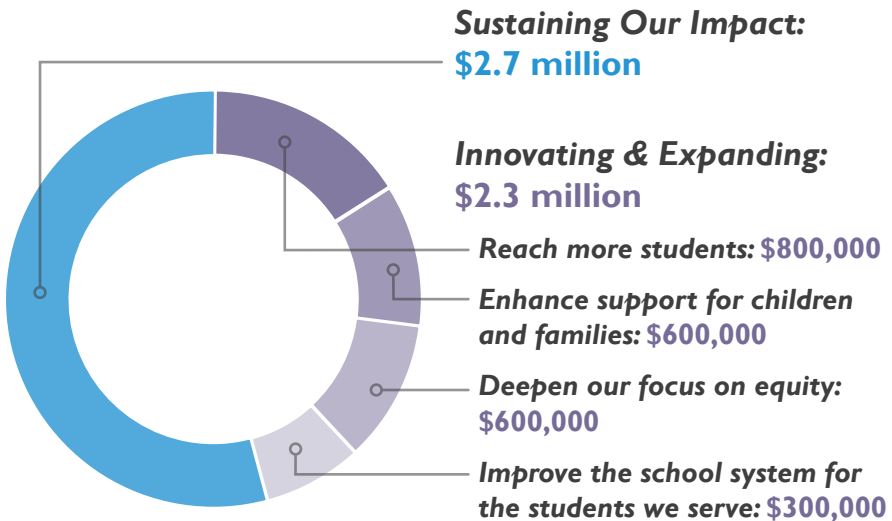
15 major law firms mobilized to help AFC serve even more families in need.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE TO SERVE NYC'S STUDENTS

The Right to Learn Campaign: \$5M over three years to innovate and expand while sustaining our strong record of effective service.

Through a data-driven planning process, we have identified a set of strategic priorities that maintain and build upon our existing strengths and incorporate the flexibility to adjust the pace of growth based on opportunity and need:

\$5 million





SUSTAINING OUR IMPACT

As we innovate, we must continue to provide our core services with the high level of compassion, creativity, and effectiveness that NYC families have relied upon for 50 years.

Our Goal: \$2.7_M





\$2.7_M

Ensuring a Strong Foundation for Years to Come

The pandemic highlighted the importance of AFC's approach to meeting the needs of students and their families in a way that is both flexible and reliable. We continued our services full-throttle despite COVID-19; yet we adapted each of our four major strategies – direct service, training, policy advocacy, and impact litigation – to the changing education landscape and evolving needs of children and families. This funding will allow us to continue to meet the current and future needs of NY's students and their families.

With this funding, over the next three years:



15,000 families will receive individualized advice, assistance, or legal representation helping them overcome barriers to a quality education.



35,000 parents, students, and professionals will receive training from experienced AFC staff, increasing their ability to resolve education-related challenges on their own.



A new NYC mayoral administration will roll out education policies that center equity and tailor support to the populations of students AFC serves that are often overlooked.



INNOVATING & EXPANDING

Leveraging our unparalleled expertise to benefit more students and families with four strategic priorities:

Reach more students

Enhance support for children and families

Deepen our focus on equity

Improve the school system for the students we serve

Our Goal: \$2.3_M





\$800K

Reaching More Students Through Our Unique Education Collaborative Model

NYC's low-income families are often involved with multiple service providers, depending on their needs. We developed a model for bringing together organizations with similar specialties, starting with 22 foster care agencies, to form a community of practitioners centered on building their capacity to do education advocacy for the families and students they serve. Through this Education Collaborative model, we leverage our expertise by training other providers in basic education advocacy, greatly expanding access to this service for students in need while funneling more complex individual cases to our experienced attorneys and advocates. The model also has created a powerful alliance for collective action to improve policies concerning the education of the students these organizations serve.

With funding from this campaign, we will:



Hire two new, mid-level attorneys to replicate this model with two other types of organizations, such as those focused on early childhood education, families living in homeless shelters, or students involved in the justice system.



Reach hundreds of additional students a year whose families are otherwise unlikely to contact us for assistance.



\$600K

Enhancing Support for Children and Families To Meet a Broader Range of Needs

Currently, AFC has nine projects; six of them include advocates who are not attorneys. These advocates provide additional support that complements the legal assistance families receive from their attorney. Advocates can, for example, attend school-related meetings with families, accompany families to enrollment offices, and help families access the services their lawyers obtain for them through litigation.

With funding from this campaign, we will:



Hire a social worker and one other non-legal advocate, resulting in a broader range of support for children and families, increased legal capacity (by allowing attorneys to focus more on legal matters), more families served, and streamlined work efficiencies.



\$600K

Deepening our Focus on Equity

For 50 years, AFC's organizational values of equity, inclusion, and opportunity have been at the forefront of our successful advocacy. Staying true to these values means avoiding complacency and assessing, on a continuous basis, what more we can do to advance equity, inclusion, and opportunity in our organization and in our work.

With funding from this campaign, we will:



*Examine data to **identify areas where organizational practices could be strengthened** to promote equity, combat racism and other forms of discrimination, and **lead to outcomes that are client- and community-focused.***



***Hire a Director of Equity and Impact** to drive these initiatives to improve organizational practices in all aspects of our work, from how we staff the organization to how we select cases and policy goals.*



\$300K

Improving the School System for the Students We Serve

Many of the challenges facing NYC's students cannot be resolved one student at a time. Our policy advocacy allows us to address problems farther upstream, increasing the likelihood that students and their families have their needs met in their schools, rather than having to deal with the kinds of problems that lead them to call AFC.

AFC brings unique value to policy development with a fact-based approach built on our on-the-ground case work, extensive partnerships with organizations serving children and families, and collective expertise accumulated over 50 years.

With funding from this campaign, we will:



Add a new advocate to our three-person policy staff, increasing our fire power so we can press for effective use of \$7 billion in COVID recovery funds for the city's schools, while at the same time, leveraging the opportunity of a new Mayor, new City Council leadership, and a new Governor to advance issues important to the students and families we serve.



**Advocates for Children
of New York**

Protecting every child's right to learn

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