

# Community Schools: an evidence-based strategy for equitable school improvement

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## ***United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County***

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# Application Form

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## *Question Group*

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Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

## **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds\***

Name of Project.

Community Schools: an evidence-based strategy for equitable school improvement

## **Amount of Funds Requested\***

\$1,476,681.00

## **Recovery Fund Eligible Category\***

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Community Schools are built on the principle that equity and educational excellence are inseparable. A Community School wraps a network of community partners around a public school while transforming that school into a hub of support for the surrounding community.

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on communities of color and low wealth communities was quickly evident in the lives of students. Community Schools are an equity-centered strategy uniquely equipped to ensure the recovery phase fully supports the health and well being of these communities.

Community Schools are built on four pillars: 1) integrated student supports; 2) family and community engagement; 3) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; and 4) collaborative leadership practices.

Community Schools are structured to generate, coordinate and connect services that remove barriers to opportunity and co-create solutions to support students and families in and out of the classroom.

## Project Plan\*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

We established our first Community School at Enka Middle in 2015 and now have seven Community Schools (Asheville High/SILSA and six middle schools: Asheville, Enka, Erwin, North Buncombe, Owen, Reynolds). We plan to establish two more by 2023. Community schools utilize and support the unique assets and needs of the community they serve while also operating as an ecosystem by supporting each other, sharing a set of guiding principles and using the structural components listed below.

**Community School Coordinators:** An employee at each school works closely with the Principal, parents and community to promote the school's vision and improvement plan. Primary functions include addressing barriers to services/supports, promoting family/community engagement, bolstering resources and coordinating the following tools/strategies:

**School Resource Teams:** These school-specific groups include school, community, parent and student representatives. Teams meet monthly to provide insight, track data and problem solve based on the unique assets and needs of the school and community.

**Early Warning and Response System:** This data dashboard and set of aligned practices equips teachers and community partners with a shared system for providing tailored student interventions and tracking based on attendance, behavior and grades.

**Results-Based Accountability framework:** This framework defines the results, target populations, performance measures, strategies and community partners that are needed to ensure success on shared outcomes.

**Volunteer Engagement and Support:** Coordinated volunteer efforts support students (e.g. mentoring/tutoring), teachers through teacher appreciation activities and the overall school environment through school beautification efforts.

**Community Partner Contracts:** UWABC invests in specific services based on the community assets and needs assessments conducted at each school by Community School Coordinators and School Resource Teams. Current contracted services include student mental/behavioral health support, family engagement, kindergarten readiness and after-school programming.

**Homework Diners:** These weekly events bring students, families and teachers together over a good meal and the chance to tackle homework together in a supportive environment. Community Partners offer supportive resources such as college/career nights, STEM activities, and health fairs.

**School Based Health Centers:** UWABC facilitates a task force with representatives from Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, MAHEC School Nursing and the Buncombe County Health Dept. to help establish this much needed resource. A cross-sector team (including family and community members) will soon select a Federally Qualified Health Center as the provider for Asheville and Erwin middle schools. Clinics

sites, which were selected based on poverty rates and opportunity/achievement gaps, will be on the school campuses, yet accessible to the full Asheville and Erwin districts.

## Statement of Need\*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

Community Schools directly confront the following inequities in educational outcomes:

Asheville City Schools/Buncombe County Schools combined graduation rates:

White: 89%; Black, Hispanic and multiple races: 82%

No economic hardship: 91%; Economically disadvantaged: 81%

Disparities are more stark when assessing college/career readiness. Students with “college ready” ACT scores:

White: 72%; Black, Hispanic and multiple races: 41%

No economic hardship: 75%; Economically disadvantaged: 44%

(NC Dept. of Public Instruction)

Community Schools are rooted in equity and address four underlying causes of this systemic issue:

1) Hunger, housing instability and lack of healthcare disproportionately impact the success of students of color and from low wealth homes. The Harvard Center on the Developing Child found that these types of barriers also contribute to chronic stress that further impacts achievement.

2) Learning opportunities (summer camp, music lessons, etc.) beyond the classroom are not equally accessible and low wealth students often go without these crucial learning experiences (Journey for Justice Alliance, 2018). According to the Afterschool Alliance, parents of underserved students strongly believe such experiences would help their children both in and out of school.

3) Students and families in marginalized communities often lack connection to their schools. According to the Partnership for Student Learning, welcoming, culturally informed schools are directly linked to improved student outcomes. Parents aware of the academic strategies of their child’s school are much better positioned to support their child’s academic growth.

4) School administrators often problem-solve without leaning on the lived experiences and wisdom of community members, parents and students. The Coalition for Community Schools found that an inclusive problem solving approach yields more comprehensive solutions while deepening partnerships and shared accountabilities.

## Link to COVID-19\*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

The Annenberg Institute found that COVID-19 will cause many students to begin the upcoming school year significantly behind, after achieving only 50-68% of the learning gains in reading and math this year relative to a typical year. These results disproportionately impacted students of color and from low income homes and have implications far beyond the classroom. A young person who drops out of high school is three times more likely to live in poverty and six times more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system. High school graduates live nine years longer, on average, than those who don't graduate. Increased tax

revenues, lower healthcare costs and decreased public assistance result in high school graduates conferring a \$250,000 benefit to the community during their lifetime (McLaughlin, Michael, et al., 2016).

Funding Community Schools is an investment in a comprehensive, equity-centered solution that directly removes barriers to educational excellence that exist outside of the classroom. Likewise, Community Schools produce both academic outcomes and life-long benefits to the health and economic well-being of students and families.

For example, UWABC is currently working with Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools to open School-based Health Centers (SBHCs) at Asheville Middle and Erwin Middle (sites based on poverty rates and opportunity/achievement gaps). A 2018 report by the American Public Health Association found students who use SBHCs have better grade-point averages and attendance records than their peers who lack access to care. Other benefits include: fewer emergency department visits and hospital admissions, increased use of vaccination/preventive services, higher birth weights, and lower substance and alcohol use. The clinics (offering both primary and mental/behavioral healthcare) will be physically located on school campuses but accessible to the full Asheville and Erwin districts.

## Population Served\*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

All students at our seven Community Schools: Asheville Middle, Asheville High/SILSA, Enka Middle, Erwin Middle, North Buncombe Middle, Owen Middle, Reynolds Middle. Community Schools are centered on equity and thus students facing inequities and barriers to success (eg. students of color, students from low income homes, students with language barriers) are prioritized in this work.

Totals for 7 schools

Population: 5,009

Students of color: 33.78%

Students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch:37.45%

Population By School::

Asheville Middle - 678

Asheville High & SILSA - 1075 & 319

Enka Middle - 645

Erwin Middle - 686

North Buncombe Middle - 542

Owen Middle - 490

Reynolds Middle - 575

Students of Color

Asheville Middle - 41 %

Asheville High & SILSA - 31.3 % & 31 %

Enka Middle - 29.6 %

Erwin Middle - 41.7 %

North Buncombe Middle - 19.4 %

Owen Middle - 24.1 %

Reynolds Middle - 42.1 %

Students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch

Asheville Middle - 38.6 %

Asheville High & SILSA - 23 & 25.9 %

Enka Middle - 45.6 %

Erwin Middle - 38.1 %  
North Buncombe Middle - 42.4 %  
Owen Middle - 44.7 %  
Reynolds Middle - 44.5 %

## Results\*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

1) % students with an on-track indicator for Attendance. Baseline: 72.3%. Goal: reduce # of students off-track by 5% per year.

2) % students with an on-track indicator for Behavior. Baseline: 92.9%. Goal: reduce # of students off-track by 5% per year.

3) % students with an on-track indicator for Core Course Grades. Baseline: 71.6%. Goal: reduce # of students off-track by 5% per year.

4) % of students reporting that they feel safe in school. Baseline: 79%. Goal: reduce # of students who do NOT feel safe by 5% per year.

5) # students served by school-based health. Baseline: not available

6) Average number of school days missed by students with care-managed chronic health conditions. Baseline: not available

7) % of students returning to class after a visit to the school nurse or nurse practitioner. Baseline: not available

## Evaluation\*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Performance measures 1-3 will be collected via the Early Warning and Response System software (Learning Circle). Learning Circle automatically pulls attendance, behavior, and core course grades data from the schools' student information system (PowerSchool) and organizes it in an interactive, easy-to-use format that can be viewed by district and building-level administrators, teachers and community partners. The level of detail is determined by role-based privacy and security standards.

Users (depending on specific security standards) can also view data on user-defined subsets of their students. For example, Community School Coordinators can view data for the group of students enrolled in a particular program, for all 7th grade boys, for Hispanic students who have the highest attendance rates, or any combination of such parameters. This enables timely, powerful analysis as well as thorough and accurate reporting.

Performance measure 4 is based on data from the Community and Youth Collaborative Institute (CAYCI) and Panorama surveys administered to students yearly. These data sources also provide an important lens on a broader set of school climate and student social-emotional learning progress in each school.

Performance measures 5-6 will be collected and reported by the forthcoming contracted school-based health provider. After the contracted provider is selected, the UWABC data team will work closely with the provider to establish strong data collection and reporting procedures.

More broadly, in order to ensure alignment across school and partnering organizations toward measurable progress towards our shared goals, UWABC staff facilitate a cross-sectional Results-Based Accountability workgroup to design, track, and improve upon a shared set of community-level and program-level metrics. This key infrastructure enables us to stay aligned with our purpose and to dynamically adapt our work and partnerships to most effectively achieve our shared outcomes.

## Equity Impact\*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Community Schools directly address the inequities that accelerated through the pandemic and we will continue centering equity in the recovery. Educational outcomes should not be predictable by race, home language, income, or any other characteristic of identity. This work is focused on improving practices, policies and partnerships so that every student in our community attends a high quality school that offers abundant, equally accessible opportunities for student success in and beyond the classroom.

Community Schools have demonstrated school-level success in closing the opportunity/achievement gaps. From January 2018 - January 2020, our first four Community Schools (Asheville, Enka, Erwin and Owen) saw improvements in attendance, behavior, and core course grades (ABCs). While there was a 10% increase in the overall student body on track in all ABCs, an even greater 15% increase was found for Black, Hispanic and multi-racial students. (Note: This data was pulled mid-year from the EWRS dashboard and has not been reported via NC DPI and is therefore not for public release at this time.)

Community Schools address the disproportionate impacts (ie. life-long educational, health and economic disparities) of inequities through tackling several root causes, two of the most intrinsic being lack of access and lack of voice/power. For the former, our Community Schools focus on increasing the number of supports available to students and families, while also paying close attention to barriers (eg. lack of language justice, transportation) that may prevent utilization. For the latter, Community Schools are intentionally designed to share decision making with community members, students and parents. These individuals serve on School Resource Teams directly involved in deciding which additional on-site supports (ie. (school-based investments) are prioritized. Community conversations with students, families and marginalized community groups inform this decision making process.

## Project Partners\*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Subcontractors:

Provider TBD (via RFP)  
Language translation and interpretation services  
8.5% of scope

ACCESS Family Services  
Individual and group mental/behavioral healthcare (English and Spanish)  
2.3% of scope

Asheville City Schools Foundation  
Afterschool programming via In Real Life; Parent engagement and leadership programming  
4% of scope

Center for Relational Practices  
Restorative Practices training and consultation (in City and County schools)  
1.1% of scope

Caterers of color (TBD. Previous providers included: Cooking with Comedy, Ettison Group, Kente Kitchen, Girl Go Cook, Miss P's Catering and Delicious Dogz)  
Hot, fresh weekly Homework Diner meals  
7% of scope

Additional Service Providers (TBD)  
Several additional community partners will be selected based on the assets and needs assessments conducted at each site. School staff, community members, parents and students will be directly involved in determining the service needs and providers.  
6.2% of scope

Non Funded partners critical to project:

Federally Qualified Health Center for School Based Health Centers (currently in selection process)  
Asheville City Schools (ACS)  
Buncombe County Schools (BCS)  
Buncombe County Community Engagement  
Buncombe Partnership for Children  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of WNC  
Children First/ Communities in Schools  
Journeymen  
OpenDoors of Asheville  
Sparrow Research Group  
UNC Asheville  
Warren Wilson College  
Western Carolina University  
YMCA of WNC

Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) are in place with ACS and BCS defining data-sharing policies and procedures, financial commitments, shared leadership between Principals and Community School Coordinators, plans for joint utilization of facilities and commitments to evaluation, shared professional learning and continuous quality improvement.

MOU's are also in place with all funded and unfunded partners to ensure entities hold a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and key performance metrics.

## Capacity\*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

We have followed national best practices since our Community School launch in 2015. We have also developed a solid collective impact framework to ensure relational trust and accountability exists between all Community Schools and community partners. Our strategic plan supports our Community Schools commitment by aligning departmental priorities with the community school strategy. Our commitment is also clearly articulated in our statement of focus: “We employ the community school strategy as the organizing framework for elevating student success, supporting families, and engaging communities throughout Buncombe County.”

We currently employ fifteen full-time staff, including seven Community School Coordinators, to guide and grow the community school strategy. These individuals have extensive experience and participate in ongoing professional learning related to their roles and accountabilities.

In addition to the Community School Coordinators, our team includes eight employees that provide system-wide backbone support. One staff supports the overall network of schools, service providers, teachers, parents and students with a singular focus on equity; two staff oversee the Early Warning and Response System, data collection, evaluation and ongoing quality improvement efforts; two staff supervise the Community School Coordinators and also support principals at each school: two staff manage and support our growing network of contracted community partners (including establishing two school-based health centers); and one staff directs the growing scope of this initiative.

We are currently in year two of a five-year Full Service Community Schools grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education. This grant enabled us to expand our footprint, increase the depth of school-based services and solidify the capacity needed for this growing network of school and community partners. Our Finance and Operations team has extensive experience managing numerous federal funding sources.

## Budget\*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Recovery-Funds-budget-UWABC-FINAL.xlsx

## Special Considerations\*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

Four Pillars of Community Schools.pdf

1) The submitted budget is for total costs over three years. The per year expenses are available upon request.

2) The priorities outlined above directly align with those in the Buncombe County 2025 strategic plan, including: Increase kindergarten readiness; Increase third grade literacy rates, especially among underperforming students; Strengthen relationships among educational partners; Reduce racial disparities in student achievement; Improve college and career readiness; Support initiatives that support full option graduation (workforce, vocational, or college/university readiness).

3) The leading Community Schools principle, that “Equity and educational excellence are inseparable” directly aligns with the County’s foundational focus of “Equity: Systems, policies, and practices that support equity for all people and an organizational culture that embraces diversity and inclusion.”

4) On April 20, 2021, the Buncombe County Commissioners approved joining the United for Youth Network, a multigenerational, cross-sector, cradle to career partnership. This network has great momentum, a growing list of partners (Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, City of Asheville, YWCA, Big Brothers Big Sisters of WNC, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, UWABC) and exists to achieve the following goal: By 2035, ALL Asheville City and Buncombe County students graduate from high school ready and fully prepared to pursue their goals and dreams.

5) Community Schools and the broader United for Youth Network have garnered significant interest (and some early investments) as an impactful investment strategy by several large foundations that support educational equity throughout WNC.

6) Community schools are efficient and cost-effective. They coordinate the delivery of services to avoid duplication and maximize student supports. According to the Learning Policy Institute, every \$1 invested in a community schools strategy results in up to a \$15 return to the community.

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- Recovery-Funds-budget-UWABC-FINAL.xlsx
- Four Pillars of Community Schools.pdf

## Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

<b>Organization Name:</b>	<b>United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County (UWABC)</b>
<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>Community Schools: An Evidence-based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement</b>
<b>Amount Requested:</b>	<b>\$1,476,681 (total over three years)</b>

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 1,476,681.00	Pending	
UWABC Campaigns	\$ 2,969,065.00	Pending	Annual "Live United" Fund and Centennial Fund (3 yrs)
US Department of Education	\$ 1,460,087.00	Confirmed	Full-Service Community Schools Grant
Sisters of Mercy Foundation	\$ 165,000.00	Confirmed (Year 1)	Received annually since 2017
CFWNC - Asheville Merchants Fund	\$ 75,000.00	Confirmed (Yrs 1 & 2)	Received annually since 2017
CFWNC - Human Services Fund	\$ 60,000.00	Confirmed (Year 1)	Received annually since 2016
Dogwood Health Trust (Current)	\$ 200,000.00	Confirmed	
Dogwood Health Trust (Future)	\$ 3,000,000.00	Pending	
Levine Foundation	\$ 225,000.00	Pending	
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 9,630,833.00</b>		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating	Notes
<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>					
Community Schools Coordinators	\$ 324,986.00	\$ 1,299,951.00	\$ 1,624,937.00	Operating	Recovery Funds support 20% of total project. Includes: 7 FTEs (year 1) and 9 FTEs (years 2 and 3)
System-wide Backbone Support	\$ 536,695.00	\$ 2,146,781.00	\$ 2,683,476.00	Operating	Recovery Funds support 20% of total project. Includes: 8 FTE total: Equity and network Support (1 FTE); EWRS, data collection, evaluation and continuous quality improvement (2 FTEs); Community School Coordinator supervision and principals support (2 FTEs); Community partnerships/SBHCs (2 FTEs); Overall CS initiative/network direction and growth (1 FTE)
<b>School-Based Investments</b>					
Community Partner Contracts	\$ 325,000.00	\$ 1,300,000.00	\$ 1,625,000.00	Operating	Recovery Funds support 20% of total project. Includes: \$65,000 per school/year. See Project Partners (subcontractors) in Narrative for additional details
Homework Dinners	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 600,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	Operating	Recovery Funds support 20% of total project: Includes:\$30,000 per school/year (food and preparation, on site logistics, teacher stipends, materials)
<b>School-Based Health Centers</b>					
Personnel	\$ -	\$ 1,685,880.00	\$ 1,685,880.00	Operating	Includes medical assistant, clinical nurse, nurse practitioner, therapist and nutritionist
Annual Supplies	\$ -	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	Operating	
SBHC Indirect Costs (20%)	\$ -	\$ 337,176.00	\$ 337,176.00	Operating	Includes legal, accounting, payroll, marketing, printing
Start-up Costs Equipment	\$ 40,000.00	\$ -	\$ 40,000.00	Capital	Medical equipment
Renovations	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 300,000.00	Capital	\$150,000/school to convert existing facilities to accommodate health clinics at Asheville and Erwin Middle Schools
Nat'l School Based Health Centers All. Coach	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	Operating	

<b>Indirect Expenses</b>					
Occupancy	\$ -	\$ 72,498.00	\$ 72,498.00	Operating	Utilities, custodial
Supplies	\$ -	\$ 14,286.00	\$ 14,286.00	Operating	Increases with additional schools in years 2 and 3
Equipment Leases/rentals	\$ -	\$ 21,060.00	\$ 21,060.00	Operating	
Software, Computer & Network Services	\$ -	\$ 75,703.00	\$ 75,703.00	Operating	
Printing	\$ -	\$ 7,050.00	\$ 7,050.00	Operating	
Postage/freight	\$ -	\$ 7,857.00	\$ 7,857.00	Operating	
Telephone/fax	\$ -	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00	Operating	
Conferences/Training	\$ -	\$ 157,722.00	\$ 157,722.00	Operating	For staff and school/community partners
Program Expenses	\$ -	\$ 50,400.00	\$ 50,400.00	Operating	
Travel	\$ -	\$ 11,072.00	\$ 11,072.00	Operating	Local travel for all staff
Meetings	\$ -	\$ 54,286.00	\$ 54,286.00	Operating	
Professional Fees	\$ -	\$ 50,280.00	\$ 50,280.00	Operating	Interpreters; data processing
Insurance	\$ -	\$ 12,150.00	\$ 12,150.00	Operating	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 9,630,833.00</b>		

# Four Pillars of Community Schools

Community Schools overview video:

<https://youtu.be/5dTXujuJRc0>

