

# Expanding High-Quality Early Childhood Education within Asheville City Schools and Local Communities

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*FY2022 Early Childhood Grants*

## ***Asheville City Schools***

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# Application Form

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## ***INSTRUCTIONS***

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Buncombe County requests proposals for community based projects to enhance outcomes for young children and their families in our community. Grants made through the Early Childhood Education and Development Fund will be focused on access to quality early childhood care and education.

Please refer to the Grant Guidelines published on the Early Childhood Grants website at [buncombecounty.org/grants](http://buncombecounty.org/grants) for complete information about the grant program, including: Purpose; Funding; Eligibility; Timeline; Grant writing workshop; Review process; Awards; and more.

**Applications are due by 5:00 pm on February 12, 2021.**

Scoring will be based on the following criteria:

1. Need - project meets essential community need
  2. Project Plan - clear, reasonable steps connected to meeting need
  3. Proposed Results - impact on selected strategy
  4. Capacity - ability of this organization to carry out this plan
  5. Equity - approach is informed by diversity, equity and inclusion
  6. Budget - clear, reasonable and matched to community need and project plan
  7. Overall - project value and fit with Early Childhood Fund
- o Scoring will be on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum total score of 35
  - o Each criteria is weighted equally.

## ***FUNDING***

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### **Funding Request\***

How much funding are you requesting for this project for FY2022?

\$920,000.00

### **Budget Narrative\***

Explain how grant funds will be used, specifically what type of expenses will be covered by County funds.

Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) and Asheville City Schools (ACS) are currently considering locations within the public housing communities focusing on Pisgah View, Hillcrest, Southside, and Maple Crest. The budget includes costs to maintain 4 classrooms within these communities for the 2021-2022. The request includes salaries, supplies and materials, transportation, nutrition, outdoor space materials, building maintenance, utilities, and insurance. ACS provides no-cost access to all departments and relevant partnerships including: human resources, finance, technology, student services, and curriculum and instruction. In addition to maintaining 4 classrooms, the budget includes an additional 18 scholarship slots to

be utilized across our program. This will give more families access to affordable, high quality early childhood education. By offering slots with various funding sources, we can ensure representational and equitable enrollment groupings and increase affordable access to childcare. The model we are proposing for these classrooms aligns with Buncombe County's goal of Universal PreK for all children.

## Budget Details\*

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

FY22\_ECE\_Grant\_Budget\_Form.xlsx - Sheet1.pdf

## Partial Funding

If the project were to be offered a grant for partial funding, what are your priorities?

## Multi-Year Funding

If you would like this project to be considered for multi-year funding (up to 3 years), what amounts would you request for years 2 and 3? What milestones would this funding allow you to accomplish? Explain why more years are needed to accomplish goals.

We would like to request multi year funding for this project with the same amount of funding each year at \$920,000 for years 2 and 3. Asheville City Schools has a goal of decreasing the achievement gap between white and black students. With this funding, we will give children a strong foundation in social emotional learning and academics so they enter kindergarten ready to learn and achieve greatness. One focus on the district is increasing early literacy resources for families and teachers including training families on literacy rich homes. This funding will also allow us to provide high quality early childhood education at an affordable rate for families who cannot afford high quality early childhood education in order to gain economic sustainability. Finally, our teaching staff will continue to gain professional development including coaching on best practices in order to implement social emotional learning frameworks, curriculum, and assessments to fidelity.

# APPLICATION

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## Project Name\*

Expanding High-Quality Early Childhood Education within Asheville City Schools and Local Communities

## Strategy\*

Please select all that apply

- Increase slots for enrollment
- Increase quality
- Support families
- Enhance effectiveness of overall system of early care and education

## Grant Guidelines\*

Have you read and understood the information presented in the FY2022 Grant Guidelines for Early Childhood Grants (Grant Guidelines)?

Yes

## Organization\*

Give a brief history, including date of founding, focus, services, and record of success. What is your organizational structure, and what are the demographics of your staff and board?

Founded in 1887, Asheville City Schools (ACS) serves 4449 students in grades PK-12. The district's vision is to empower and engage every child to learn, discover and thrive and the mission is to create learning environments that ensure excellence with equity for all students. ACS has 10 schools: 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and 2 high schools. Demographically the district serves 50% boys and 50% girls, while 37% are minority students and 63% are non-minority. The graduation rate is 90.7% with 75% of our schools meeting or exceeding growth in 2018-2019.

Asheville City Schools Preschool Program (ACSP) opened at the current location at 441 Haywood Road in 1992 with a total of 8 classrooms. In 1993, the program secured a AA license for child care. The demographics of ACSP are similar to ACS as a whole; however, our program design focuses specifically on serving children who qualify for needs-based and subsidized programs (e.g., Head Start, NC Pre-K and Child Care Subsidy). As the demographics of Asheville have changed in recent years, we have seen the same shift in our program demographics. Historically, 80% or more of Preschoolers have met or exceeded widely held developmental expectations each year.

The mission of ACSP is to prepare children to reach their full potential through developmentally appropriate and family-guided education. Due to COVID-19, our 2020-2021 enrollment has decreased from the previous year; we are currently serving 144 children across ACS at 4 elementary sites and remotely. All of our sites hold a 5 star license from DCDEE. Demographically, we serve 45% girls and 55% boys, while 28% are minority students this year. Initiatives for this school year include teaching in a virtual setting, social emotional development, and professional development on Anti-Bias Anti-Racism. Funding sources for the 2020-2021 school year include: NC PreK, Head Start, Developmental Day, Child Care Subsidy, Scholarships, and Tuition.

## Need for the Project\*

What is the main issue this project is established to address? What data or stories are available to show that need?

The goal of the district is to ensure equitable access to PK for all children. Applications for income-based programs (e.g. Head Start, NC Pre-K and Child Care Subsidy) vary from year to year, and ACSP typically maintains a wait list. The majority of our income-based slots are designated for the NC Pre-K program for 4-year-olds, limiting the number of 3-year-olds we can serve each year. Maintaining scholarship slots that are not specific to 4-year-olds helps us serve more families in need of high-quality preschool education. Continuity of Care for children in early childhood has many benefits including strengthened relationships within the classroom and improvements in behaviors. Maintaining tuition slots addresses the community need for affordable childcare. The average cost for childcare in Buncombe County exceeds the current market rate of \$775 per month. As noted in "Asheville's child care dilemma: Access, affordability issues loom large",

families just over the limits to qualify for subsidized care often have the hardest time finding quality child care.

As recently reported by the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, “The COVID pandemic has put affordable child care further from the reach of many North Carolina families.” ACS is currently restructuring the preschool program and focus for the 2021-2022 school year. With this unexpected restructuring, we will move our classrooms out of the Asheville Primary into additional elementary school buildings and into the community. Within the community, families stress the importance of full-day, full-year care in order for families to gain economic security. The goal is to offer full-day, full-year care at most sites including our community sites. Due to the impact of COVID-19 precautions on class size, increased cost around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies, decrease of enrollment, and unexpected closures, our projected budget suffered significantly for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

## Project Plan\*

Explain the project and how it will work. Include the overall purpose and any models or evidence-based practices that will be included. What specific activities and milestones are included in the project plan?

This project proposes expanding the comprehensive Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) Program by opening classrooms within the local community focusing on public housing communities. Locations will be determined in collaboration with Asheville Housing Authority and Head Start. These classrooms will allow our program to serve at least 175 children across 9-10 classes, with additional PK slots blended into ACS’s 3-6 year old Montessori classrooms at their new location at Hall Fletcher Elementary School.

In addition to high-quality classrooms, ACSP provides comprehensive services to ensure student success. Transportation is provided as much as possible considering route, ratio, and space constraints. Breakfast, lunch and snack are included and meet the National School Lunch Program guidelines. Staff work with each site’s support services such as the school social worker, school counselor, and school-based mental health services to ensure services are coordinated to best meet the needs of each family. Head Start provides our program with a Family Service Worker who works collaboratively with the support services team.

All classrooms blend tuition enrollment and income-based enrollment for a diverse preschool experience. All sub-groups are mixed heterogeneously across classrooms, including children with disabilities. By restructuring our locations, we will be able to provide families with exceptional early childhood education within their community at little to no cost. By eliminating the location barrier for families, we will be able to reach more families within the community. We propose that the community sites become an option for families by offering scholarships to serve children who demonstrate a level of need equivalent to NC Pre-K criteria with a focus on 3-year-olds. This evidence-based enrollment design is grounded in equity, matches our current practices, and ensures young children are not grouped solely based on need. (Aguiar, Aguiar 2020)

## Results\*

What results do you hope to achieve with this project? Be specific about the impact the project will have on the strategy(ies) you selected. Also explain how you will measure the results, including any specific measures that will be tracked.

Asheville City Schools (ACS) has one of the largest achievement gaps in the state. As noted in a study completed in California, “three and four-year-olds who attend preschool are more likely to do well academically and socially throughout the rest of their schooling.” Our goal is to provide all children with a strong foundation in order to build success in school and life.

Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) benefits from being part of ACS, which allows collaboration with our K-12 counterparts and supports a coordinated systems approach. Expanding classrooms into the community sites increases availability of high-quality early childhood education. We address issues of affordability for families by offering scholarship slots and more affordable tuition rates for school-day (\$525) and full-day (\$775) care. Scholarships will serve children who do not qualify for a subsidized program but whose families cannot afford high-quality care. Our program design and emotional-social priorities (e.g., NC Preschool Pyramid Model and Conscious Discipline) cultivate a system that responds to the needs of families, such as those impacted by trauma, poverty and addiction. Finally, staff members who have access to the ACS benefits and pay structure as well as a strong system of professional learning support, in turn support a robust early childhood education career track. Teachers also are able to vertically align curriculum and support children as they transition to Kindergarten.

## Slots

For projects requesting funding for slots, also please include:

- Total new early care and education slots created
- Total slots maintained
- # of Subsidy slots created
- # of Subsidy slots maintained
- # of teachers/staff positions created
- # of teachers/staff positions maintained

Total New Slots: 18

Total Slots Maintained: at least 175

# of Scholarships: up to 50

# of staff positions maintained: 12

ACSP classrooms are designed to serve 18 children, with a lead teacher and support from two teaching assistants to ensure classroom coverage and ratio compliance (1:9) throughout the day. ACSP operates a school-day (8:00-2:30), school year option at all locations. This project will allow us to operate a full-day, full-year (7:30-5:30) option at most sites. Families select the options that meet their needs, based on availability and eligibility, as applicable.

## Workforce

For early care and education providers, also please include:

- Total # teachers/# staff employed
- Education levels and credentials of staff

Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) classrooms are staffed with highly qualified educators; lead teachers possess Birth-Kindergarten teaching licensure and assistant teachers meet school district requirements

Currently ACSP employs 24 classroom staff including 10 NC Birth-Kindergarten Certified Teachers. Eleven teaching assistants hold either an associates or bachelors degree in child development or early childhood education. Three assistants have earned their early childhood credentials, at a minimum, and are working towards their associates in Early Childhood Education. Teacher Assistants are able to participate in the Child Care WAGES that provides an education-based salary supplement. Another program staff can

participate in is T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood North Carolina Scholarship Program that will support staff in furthering their education.

In addition to classroom staff, the program employs three coordinators to support the day-to-day operations and fidelity of the program. All three coordinators hold a NC Teaching License. One Coordinator has a Master's in Early Childhood and one coordinator working on a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education Leadership, Policy, and Advocacy. The program director oversees the entire program and holds two Master's degrees in Child Development: Birth-Kindergarten and School Administration.

## People Served\*

Who will be served by this project? Include how many people and the expected demographic makeup, including race and ethnicity. You may also provide socio-economic, disability/special needs status, community, etc.

This project will support 18 new slots and assist with maintaining at least 175 slots across the district. The focus of the sites in the community will be children who live within the communities and the surrounding areas (Pisgah View, Hillcrest, South Slope, and Maple Crest). Each school year, the demographics of the children vary across our program. However, this community funding would reduce barriers for marginalized communities in accessing PK through ACS in several ways. This funding would support scholarship slots for families with low wealth who cannot access Head Start or NC PreK, increase the number of Head Start eligible 3-year-olds we can serve by offsetting low reimbursement for this age group, increase ACSP locations easily accessible to families in subsidized housing, and support the staff needed for expanding locations with full-day childcare and transportation services. Staff who serve in the classrooms will include a lead teacher and two teacher assistants with a combined 50+ years of service.

## Equity\*

How does your organization define equity? Describe your organization's equity strategy and how it is reflected in the proposed project.

Asheville City Schools (ACS) prioritizes ensuring excellence with equity for all children and has developed a district-wide equity plan for the current school year. Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) is fully engaged in equity work and ensures all classrooms are representational and equitable to the extent possible. We have adopted practices that are evidence-based and ensure equity is embedded in all aspects of implementation (e.g., the NC Preschool Pyramid model and Conscious Discipline). All ACSP classrooms are fully inclusive settings for children who qualify for Exceptional Children's services. Currently, 44% of the district's preschool-aged children with disabilities are served within our classrooms. Finally, ACSP does not suspend or expel children but uses evidence-based practices to support ALL children in the classroom. Challenging behaviors are a sign of missing skills, therefore, supporting children in the classroom helps them gain problem solving and self regulation skills.

During the current school year, ACSP has continued an initiative to increase Culturally Relevant Education (CRE) using One School One Book alongside Asheville Primary School focusing on a monthly theme. CRE is a conceptual framework that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences in all aspects of teaching and learning within the classroom and across the school (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Milner, 2017). CRE is critical in improving student engagement and achievement, and college readiness and success for all youth, particularly for students of the global majority. All staff receive professional development from Britt Hawthorne on Anti-Bias Anti-Racism Education (ABAR). Britt has focused on the four goals of ABAR and walking classroom staff through developing an anti-biased book collection within their classroom. In addition to professional development, Britt is available to classroom staff during her office hours.

## Collaboration\*

List any formal and/or supportive partners. Describe their roles in the project. How will they make it stronger?

Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) has many partners contributing to the design and success of ACSP. This project will add an additional community partner, Asheville Housing Authority. Internally, all ACS Departments support the implementation and success of ACSP, including Student Services, Nutrition, Curriculum and Instruction, Exceptional Children, Maintenance, Transportation, Finance and Human Resources. Currently, ACSP owns two buses with appropriate 5-point child restraints in order to transport children safely. For the 2021-2022 school year, our transportation department will collaborate with us to support transporting children to all sites across the city.

Our partnerships with Head Start, NC Pre-K, and Child Care Subsidy will continue to support other subsidized slots within all classrooms, enhancing overall program quality. The services and support we receive to implement Storytelling and Story Acting, the NC Preschool Pyramid Model, and other community partnerships (e.g., school-based mental health services, Buncombe Partnership for Children, SUNSHINE Project, etc.) will continue to be implemented program-wide.

Our program also collaborates with a couple of state partners. We work closely with the Office of Early Learning to implement the NC Preschool Pyramid Model. Currently, three classrooms are at fidelity with these practices but all classrooms implement practices daily. Another state partnership is through the NC Department of Instruction. Our program participates in the NC PreK/K Demonstration Program with one classroom serving as an observation site for early childhood professionals.

## Sustainability\*

How will the project continue to succeed after the funding of the grant? Explain your plan for making this an ongoing effort.

During the spring of each year, Asheville City Schools Preschool (ACSP) will work with Asheville City Schools to assess the overall Preschool budget in order to plan for the next year. There are several options for sustainability which can include: increase NC PK slots and Head Start slots based on needs through local partnerships, increase developmental day slots across the district, increase tuition enrollment across the district, and increase locations accepting childcare subsidy. Without the continued funding for the community sites, the amount of scholarship offerings will have to decrease.

## *OTHER*

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### Other

Is there anything else that you want the committee to know?

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- FY22\_ECE\_Grant\_Budget\_Form.xlsx - Sheet1.pdf

## Early Childhood Education and Development Fund Proposed FY2022 Project Budget (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)

<b>Organization Name:</b>	Asheville City Schools
<b>Project Name:</b>	Expanding High-Quality Early Childhood Education within Asheville City Schools and local communities
<b>Grant Amount Requested:</b>	

<b>FY2022 Proposed Project Revenue</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Proposed Buncombe County Early Childhood Grant	\$ 920,000.00	
List other sources: Private Pay	\$ 209,250.00	27 private pay slots
List other sources: NC PK/Head Start	\$ 150,660.00	27 children
List other sources: Head Start		
List other sources:		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,279,910.00</b>	

<b>FY2022 Proposed Project Expenses</b>	<b>Proposed Grant</b>	<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Personnel	\$ 636,000.00	\$ 82,500.00	\$ 718,500.00	4 certified teachers and 8 teacher assistants/local supplement
Travel/Training		\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	SFQ Funds from Buncombe Partnership for Children
Technology		\$ 77,410.00	\$ 77,410.00	Devices for staff (NCPK)/internet security/building security
Curriculum/Assessments		\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	TSG license purchased by DCDEE
Licensing/Dues			\$ -	
Nutrition	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	Monthly charges for breakfast, lunch and snack
Transportation	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 35,000.00	Contract with Emma Bus Lines for additional Transportation/local funds
Supplies/Materials	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 9,500.00	consumables/supplies/materials/SFQ funds
Building Maintenance/Repair	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	
Rent/Occupancy/Utilities	\$ 40,000.00		\$ 40,000.00	utilities
Furniture			\$ -	
Playground/Outdoor space	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	moveable equipment and materials, surfacing, and construction as needed
Printing/Marketing/Website/Postage		\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	copier/paper/postage
Admin Expenses (Legal, Accounting, Insurance, etc.)	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 70,000.00	legal and insurance
Other (please list in comments section)	\$ 139,500.00		\$ 139,500.00	18 scholarship slots
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 1,279,910.00</b>	

<b>Overall Organization Budget</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
FY2020 Actual Year-End Revenue		
FY2020 Actual Year-End Expenses		
FY2021 Adopted Budget Amount	\$ 2,373,016.86	
FY2022 Proposed Budget Amount		