

FY2024 Buncombe County Early Childhood Grant Report

Organization Name:	Buncombe County Schools	
Project Name:	ECE Program Stabilization	
Reporting Quarter: (Check one)	X	Quarter 1 (July 1, 2023 - September 30, 2023)
		Quarter 2 (October 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023)
		Quarter 3 (January 1, 2024 - March 31, 2024)
		Quarter 4 (April 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024)

Narrative summary of grant related activities

Please provide a brief summary (no more than 1500 characters). You may attach supplemental documents if needed.

Quarter 1	<p>BCS Learning Labs have partnered with BPFC & hosted 2 training sessions in Q1. Staff participated in an overview/launch to PD at the start of the school year, as well as attended PD for Creative Curriculum with other preK Ramp up teachers. Teachers are meeting with BPFC coaches every other week to address needs/request support for the new curriculum. Director is collaborating with the new ECE workforce coordinator, a position funded through Dogwood Health Trust, to ensure that ECE teachers in the high school are learning and accessing the new curriculum tools as well. High school students will be trained in creative curriculum and utilize aspects of the curriculum to support the classroom objectives, as well as individualize student learning. Staff received new technology funded through state stabilization funds to support the creation of the digital student portfolios. These portfolios will inform instruction, can be shared with families and will also be used in the bridge to the work in our kindergarten classrooms with Early Learning Inventory that is collected in the first 90 days of the school. Director led the district ECE meeting and is requesting support for the board and leadership to review the proposal (see attachment) and make recommendations to support the program. The goal in Q2 is to get in front of district leaders and the board to share recommendations and work together to create a sustainable program that values licensed educators and supports all learners.</p>
Quarter 2	

Quarter 3	
Quarter 4	

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Progress toward annual goals

Measure	Annual Goal	Actual Results (Enter Data)				toward
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
# of sites that go through the preparation process for the quality rating system	4	4				4
# of sites that maintain their teaching assistant and support their requirements for licensing	4	4				4
% of staff that meet requirement to maintain the criteria for lead and assistant teacher	100%	100%				100%

Comments:

We are working with Buncombe Partnership to determine if any of my sites should go through QRS this year or not- TBD based on teacher goals.

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Use of funds to date and any budget considerations

Spending Category	Budget	Total Spending (Enter Data)				Remaining
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Personnel	\$ 250,800	\$ 20,769.31				\$ 230,031
Travel/Training	\$ 1,500	\$ 614				\$ 886
Technology	\$ 2,000	\$ 114				\$ 1,886
Curriculum/Assessments	\$ 2,000	\$ 129				\$ 1,871
Licensing/Dues						\$ -
Nutrition						\$ -
Transportation						\$ -
Supplies/Materials						\$ -
Building Maintenance/Repair						\$ -
Rent/Occupancy/Utilities						\$ -
Furniture						\$ -
Playground/Outdoor space						\$ -
Printing/Marketing/Website/Postage						\$ -
Admin Expenses (Legal, Accounting, Insurance,	\$ 5,000					\$ 5,000
Indirect costs						\$ -
Total	\$ 261,300	\$ 21,625	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 239,675

Comments:

September 29, 2023

Subject: Proposal for Investment and Support for BCS Learning Labs

Dear Members of the School Board and District Leadership,

I am writing to present a comprehensive proposal for your consideration regarding the continued investment and support for the BCS Learning Labs program. This initiative has proven to be of significant value to our school district, its students, staff, and families, and we believe that continued commitment to its success is essential.

Program Overview:

BCS Learning Labs is an innovative early childhood education program operating within Buncombe County Schools. This multifaceted initiative is purposefully designed to serve two vital segments of our community: our dedicated staff members and their children, while also fulfilling the legal requirement set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide education for students in our district with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The program's strength lies in its solid foundation, which rests upon key pillars, including effective funding strategies, exceptional staffing, comprehensive support systems, and its substantial contribution to the achievement of our district's overarching goals.

Funding:

1. **Balanced Enrollment:** BCS Learning Labs seeks to maintain stability through balanced enrollment. Approximately 50% of our enrollment comprises staff children, ensuring accessibility to the children of our dedicated educators. We propose that the school board supports tuition increases that align with market rates for non-staff members, while offering staff members a discounted rate for their children.

2. **NC PreK Site:** The recommendation is to establish BCS Learning Labs as an official NC PreK site, given its enrollment of NC PreK students will contribute \$719 per student from state funding. This adjustment will significantly enhance the program's financial sustainability.

Staffing:

As part of the proposed adjustments, it is imperative that the district formally commits to the following crucial aspect of BCS Learning Labs:

1. **Administrative Leadership:** BCS Learning Labs is led by a full-time director who holds recognition and inclusion as a district administrator. This recognition is essential to maintain the program's operational efficiency and impact. To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the program, the district's commitment to providing the necessary resources and support for this administrative leadership role, currently funded through grant money, is of paramount importance.

2. **Staff Compensation:** Staff working within the program receive pay parity with district teachers, ensuring that we attract and retain high-quality educators. This commitment is

particularly important given the specialized nature of early childhood education. By collaborating with the EC department, the district would guarantee the necessary resources to maintain this essential aspect of the program, thereby reinforcing our commitment to providing top-tier education for our young learners.

3. Adequate Staffing Ratios:

Revised Staffing Ratios to Meet State Requirements for Safety

We are committed to providing a safe and enriching learning environment for our young students. To ensure the highest standards of safety and quality education, we have made important revisions to our staffing ratios. These changes are in direct response to state requirements and are designed to uphold the well-being and educational development of each child in our care. In accordance with state regulations, we must implement the following staffing ratios:

Lead Teacher and Assistant Teacher in Each Classroom: Every classroom is now equipped with one lead teacher and one assistant teacher. This commitment to adequate staffing ratios is a vital aspect of our safety protocols. Having two dedicated educators in each classroom allows for closer supervision, individualized attention, and the immediate response to the needs of our students.

Support:

1. **Ensuring Equity and Inclusive Policies:** BCS Learning Labs is dedicated to safeguarding students and families against any forms of discrimination, especially when addressing learning delays and variances. This commitment is in perfect harmony with our district's core values, emphasizing inclusivity and equality.

2. **Curriculum Integration:** The program is fully integrated into the district's curriculum department, facilitating alignment from preK to Kindergarten. This includes the use of the North Carolina Early Learning Inventory (NC ELI) to support developmental progressions across various domains.

3. **Operational Support:** The program receives operational support from curriculum and the EC Early Learning Department, covering essential aspects such as purchasing, payroll, and programmatic needs.

Value to the District:

1. **Investment in Early Childhood Education:** BCS Learning Labs represents an investment in early childhood education, ultimately benefiting the district's future students by providing a strong foundation for their educational journey.

2. **Staff Retention:** The program actively supports staff retention by prioritizing placement in our classrooms, further enhancing the overall quality of early education in our district.

3. **Career Pathway Support:** BCS Learning Labs contributes to the Early Childhood Education Career pathway by offering high-quality experiences to ECE students, as well as post-high school employment opportunities and financial support for higher education.

Challenges and Necessity:

1. **Transition from Previous Practices:** Recent changes in licensing requirements and regulations have necessitated adjustments, including the employment of additional staff members to serve as assistant teachers, increasing the program's operational costs.

2. **Director's Role:** The role of the director is crucial to the program's success. Without a dedicated director, administrative responsibilities may fall on classroom teachers, potentially leading to overtime or supervision neglect.

3. **Licensing and Regulatory Compliance:** Maintaining compliance with licensing expectations and requirements is vital, as non-compliance could lead to the loss of funding opportunities and support from the state.

Continued below

Three-Year Plan to Transition from Non-Licensed to Licensed Teachers in BCS Learning Labs:

By implementing this three-year plan, BCS Learning Labs can transition from non-licensed to licensed teachers while honoring the commitment and contributions of its current employees. This strategy not only enhances the program's quality but also provides professional growth opportunities for staff members, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence in early childhood education, and ensuring readiness to serve all students.

Year 1: Laying the Foundation (Implementation Year)

Step 1: Assessment of Current Staff

- Conduct an assessment of the current staff to determine who possesses the qualifications and potential to become licensed teachers.
- Identify any gaps in qualifications and areas where staff members may need additional training or education.

Step 2: Collaborate with EC Department

- Establish a collaborative partnership with the EC (Exceptional Children) department, as well as regional professional development organizations to develop a clear pathway for non-licensed teachers to obtain the necessary credentials.
- Create a financial plan to fund the education and training of staff members pursuing licensure. This includes accessing local, regional, state and national funds for developing the ECE workforce

Step 3: Offer Professional Development

- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for non-licensed teachers, focusing on early childhood education, special education, and other relevant subjects.
- Encourage staff members to enroll in relevant courses at local colleges or universities.

Year 2: Transition and Training (Development Year)

Step 1: Identify Candidates for Licensure

- Based on the assessments from Year 1, identify staff members who are ready to pursue licensure.
- Assist selected staff in enrolling in accredited teacher preparation programs or courses. Collaborate with local ECE professional organizations to support this step.

Step 2: Financial Support

- Explore scholarship opportunities, tuition reimbursement, or other financial incentives to support their education.

Step 3: Mentorship and Support

- Assign mentors to non-licensed teachers who are working towards licensure.

- Offer ongoing support, including regular meetings, workshops, and guidance to help them navigate the licensure process.

Year 3: Certification and Transition (Transition Year)

Step 1: Teacher Certification

- Assist staff members in completing their teacher preparation programs and obtaining teaching credentials.
- Ensure that they meet all state licensure requirements.

Step 2: Transition

- Gradually transition non-licensed teachers to licensed teacher positions within BCS Learning Labs.
- Ensure that the transition process is smooth and minimizes disruption to the program.

Step 3: Continued Support

- Continue to offer professional development and support to newly licensed teachers as they settle into their roles.
- Monitor their progress and provide ongoing mentorship.

Throughout the Three-Year Plan:

Honor Current Employees:

- Recognize the contributions of current non-licensed teachers and acknowledge their dedication to the program.
- Offer opportunities for career growth, even if they choose not to pursue licensure, such as roles in mentorship, leadership, or specialized areas within the program.

Ensuring Inclusivity and Readiness for All Students:

- Emphasize that the need to be licensed ensures that staff are ready to serve all students, regardless of their learning abilities or needs.
- Highlight that licensed teachers are better equipped to provide inclusive and differentiated instruction, creating a more inclusive learning environment.

Evaluation and Adjustments:

- Regularly assess the progress of the transition plan and make adjustments as needed to ensure its success.
- Solicit feedback from staff members, mentors, and program administrators to fine-tune the process.

By implementing this three-year plan, BCS Learning Labs can transition from non-licensed to licensed teachers while honoring the commitment and contributions of its current employees. This strategy not only enhances the program's quality but also provides professional growth

opportunities for staff members, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence in early childhood education, and ensuring readiness to serve all students.

Continued below

Financial Overview: (based on 2023/24 school year projections)

In reviewing the financial information for our organization, we have identified several key expenses and revenues that shape our budgetary landscape. The following information is

Personnel Costs:

- Our Lead personnel expenses fluctuate across the 4 sites but average around \$52,000, totaling \$206,721.95.
- Assistant personnel costs have remained relatively stable, averaging approximately \$49,000, summing up to \$194,960.69.
- Director personnel costs is \$117,900.00 in FY 23/24.

Program Development and Substitutes:

- Expenses for program development and substitutes amount to \$6,000.00 annually.

Daily operational costs

- Snacks: Snack expenses have remained steady at \$1,500.00 per period, totaling \$6,000.00.
- Classroom Supplies: Our budget allocates \$1,000.00 per period for classroom supplies, totaling \$4,000.00.

Operational Software:

- Expenses for operational software: \$1,070.00.

Equipment (Playground/Classroom):

- Budgetary allocations for equipment maintenance and purchases is \$40,000.00.

Miscellaneous Operating Costs (Including Maintenance):

- Approximately \$3,000.00.

Total Expenses:

- Total expenses -\$579,652.63.

Revenues:

- Our primary source of revenue is tuition, at \$525 per student per month. This revenue has consistently been \$68,250.00 per period, totaling \$273,000.00.

Shortfall:

- Unfortunately, our expenses have exceeded our revenues, resulting in cumulative shortfall of (\$306,652.63).

Cost Per Student:

- The cost per student varies depending on the total number of students we have. It ranges from \$10,232.91 to \$11,702.93, with an average of \$44,588.66 based on different student counts.

Breakeven Monthly Tuition:

- To cover our expenses, we would need to charge a breakeven monthly tuition of approximately \$1,035.09 to \$1,114.72 per student, depending on our student count.

Operational Details:

- We operate for 186 days per year, following the BCS school calendar.
- The cost structure is \$5,250 per year, \$525 per month, \$28.23 per day, and \$3.50 per hour per student.
- There is also a \$50 enrollment fee.
- Student hours are 7:20 AM to 3:30 PM,
- Staff hours are 7:15 AM to 3:45 PM, including a required 30-minute lunch break.

Market Rate Comparison:

- The market rate for childcare services in Buncombe County (5-star) is \$912, based on information from the NC DHHS as of October 31, 2022.

In summary, our organization is currently facing a financial shortfall, and we need to carefully assess our expenses and explore strategies to increase revenue to ensure our long-term sustainability. Additionally, understanding the market rate for childcare in our area can help us make informed decisions about our tuition fees and financial planning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.