The Project Lighten Up Academy of Excellence had a very successful year the Afterschool focused on Literacy. Project Lighten Up provided stimulating activities such as Science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM). These activities focused on the development of excitement going to school for Pre-K and being successful. And, working with students first to eighth grades that also participate in the Afterschool Program.

Project Lighten Up - In preparation to effectively provide evidenced based literacy strategies, five staff members attended the Read to Succeed organizational training workshop held at the Arthur Edington Center. Additionally, the Reading Buddy Program provided Volunteers to work with the Pre-K aged youth and to maintain the fidelity and authenticity of the evidence based curriculum Project Lighten Up uses to promote literacy. With the assistance of the LINKS of Asheville, Project Lighten was able to work with 5 Pre-K students and 10 first to eighth grade improve reading skills. At the end of the school year we had two students on the AB honor roll. There were also 8 school age students that showed marked improvement since COVID. Project Lighten Up supports the curriculum that the schools are working with.

Studies show that the emphasis on preparing children to be successful students, learning needs to be introduced to children as early as possible. Project started the pilot to implement evidence based pre-reading, writing, and math for children ages 4 to 5. This year we had 5 Pre-K students that worked closely with the Reading Buddy Program. The observation and assessment that Reading Program provided shows that students showed an increase in verbal skills and word recognition.