

# NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools  
**NC ACCESS PROGRAM**  
NC Department of Public Instruction

Family and Community Engagement

Technology

## 1 to 1 in under 24

### Implementation Description

The American Renaissance School (ARS) located in Statesville, NC, serves students kindergarten through eighth grade. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, ARS had already outfitted every student in fourth through eighth grade with a device. However, in spring of 2020, the COVID-19 crisis accelerated their plans to equip kindergarten through third grade students with devices, and ARS needed to secure additional devices almost overnight. Providing every student with a device and adequate connectivity was essential to ensuring students had equitable access to education during COVID-19.

Until they knew how many devices they could acquire, school leadership assessed families' needs and prioritized technology distribution to their most at risk families first. The school's IT & Communications Director researched available products and pricing and presented his findings to the school board. He/She also secured 25 internet hotspots from the state along with a free data plan for the entire academic year. The Iredell County library provided additional hotspots to the school to fill in any gaps in coverage. The IT director ensured the school's internet infrastructure was able to handle devices for every student when they eventually returned to campus. Studies have shown that it is important for students to have the internet at home so that they can "*access learning materials outside of school*" and not fall behind academically (Anderson, 2019). ARS utilized available NC ACCESS funds to purchase iPads and protective cases, which are likely to extend the life of the device. With the support of NC ACCESS funds and community resources, ARS successfully reached a one-to-one technology goal in a narrow timeframe.

September 20, 2021

### About This School

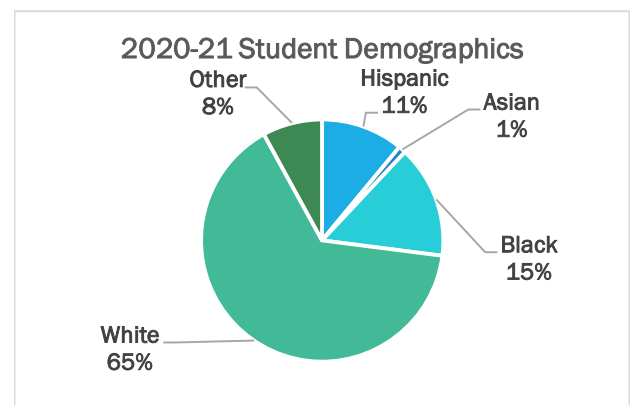
#### American Renaissance School

We are a K-8 public charter school in Historic Downtown Statesville. ARS originally opened as American Renaissance Charter School in 1998 and American Renaissance Middle School in 1999. The two merged in 2007 to form ARS as we know it today. Our mission is to ensure a standard of academic excellence by providing a nurturing environment that allows each child to reach their fullest potential as students and citizens.

**Year School Opened:** 1999-2000

**Grant Awarded:** 2020-21

**Initial Grade Levels Served:** K-8



**% ED Student Population:** 25%

**Urbanicity:** Suburban / Statesville, NC

**Persons in Poverty (Iredell)<sup>6</sup>:** 8.2%

After the school managed the logistics with purchasing and distributing devices, the leadership arranged for staff, students, and parents to receive the support they needed to transition to virtual learning. Staff training equipped teachers to maximize the use of the devices and navigate the online learning platforms. Family training sessions empowered parents to interact with programs similar to what their children would use in class each day. This practical training helped parents partner with American Renaissance, which was much needed in this season where families played a larger role in the day-to-day learning of their children than normal. Parents were able to operate the devices to follow up with their student's learning and to attend virtual parent meetings, such as conferences and IEP meetings. Studies have shown that providing "*information and guidance*" to families and teachers can in turn help students face the challenges of learning remotely (Manca & Meluzzi, 2020). Throughout the year, school staff continued to provide assistance with basic technological troubleshooting.

ARS leadership commented that their one-to-one tech initiative kept staff and students connected during the school shutdown. In a season of isolation, the devices promoted interaction and engagement in ways not possible with hard copy packets of learning materials. While the school returned to in-person instruction in October 2020, about 12-18% of their students stayed remote for the duration of the year. Teachers continued providing students with live instruction, real time feedback, and social emotional check-ins. For many students, the classroom is their safe place (Moshman, n.d.). When necessary, safety guidelines barred them from entry, it became even more important to teach social and emotional learning (SEL) skills to help them cope with unsettling world events (Prothero, 2020). School leadership commented that if it were not for the iPads, they would not have been able to connect with the students who needed them the most. ARS plans to begin the 2021-22 academic year in-person, but they will continue utilizing one-on-one student devices in order to support student learning both on and off campus.

## Results

100% of ARS students now have iPads and Wi-Fi in their homes. In addition to allowing learning to continue throughout the shutdown, these devices enabled more families to attend school events, such as parent-teacher conferences and IEP meetings, which increased overall parent involvement at ARS. The administration also began using the school's online learning platforms to host staff meetings, which increased efficiency.

## Challenges

The sudden need to procure devices and prepare for virtual instruction was challenging for the ARS administration and teachers. Fortunately, when school leaders asked their staff for help, they were more than willing to support one another to make the transition much smoother.

## Future Modifications

ARS will continue to host staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and IEP meetings virtually, as it continues to be convenient and efficient for both families and staff members.

Teachers will also continue to employ the technology training and experiential knowledge gained during virtual learning by utilizing iPads in their classrooms where it will add value to instruction.

## Critical Components

### Getting Started

ARS leadership commented on the essential role staff members played in researching, purchasing, and distributing devices. Staff members also provided training for colleagues and families in order to make virtual learning possible. Another aspect of ARS' success was their commitment to proactively and regularly address technology concerns with students and families.

### Ongoing Supports

School staff continue to offer timely tech support to ensure students and families are able to use the devices for their intended purpose.

## Equity Connections

Research has shown that ensuring every student has access to a device and adequate internet connectivity is an essential piece of equity in education (Anderson, 2019). In addition, when schools facilitate virtual meetings and events, it is particularly helpful for families experiencing poverty (Escobar, 2020). ARS originally began hosting parent meetings online out of necessity, but this change proved beneficial to families who may have otherwise missed IEP meetings or parent-teacher conferences due to a lack of transportation. Therefore, they will continue offering a virtual meeting option in order to support these families.

## Research

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