

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



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

Marketing and Recruitment

Increased Reach

A Place for Everyone

Implementation Description

Asheville PEAK Academy (APA) believes that all students have the capacity to achieve, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, when they are provided with a rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum and are held to high academic and behavioral standards. They are committed to serving primarily students of low socioeconomic status and Students of Color when they open in August 2021. Deciding on this brand-defining mission was an essential component for APA's recruitment plan as it impacted the strategies they utilized (LeRoy, 2018). School board members used available NC ACCESS funding to hire an Operations Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant who could effectively communicate the school's mission to the community.

APA's Operations Coordinator's responsibilities included creating a professional [website](#) for the school, managing the school's Facebook page, establishing new community partnerships, and nurturing existing relationships with local preschools and housing authorities. She also used NC ACCESS funding to print flyers and brochures which were distributed at local churches, community centers, and preschools, such as Head Start and Verner Center for Early Learning. All school marketing materials, including social media posts, were translated into Spanish to overcome language barriers with families. The school intentionally included verbiage that resonated with minority populations. This included the use of phrases such as "cultural relevance," "anti-bias," "trauma-informed practices," "diversity," and "inclusion" (Catherine Lordi, personal communication, June 23, 2021). While recent studies have shown that consumers are more likely to choose products or services from culturally relevant brands (Clickon, 2019), using this terminology is not merely a marketing ploy for APA. School leadership is

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About This School

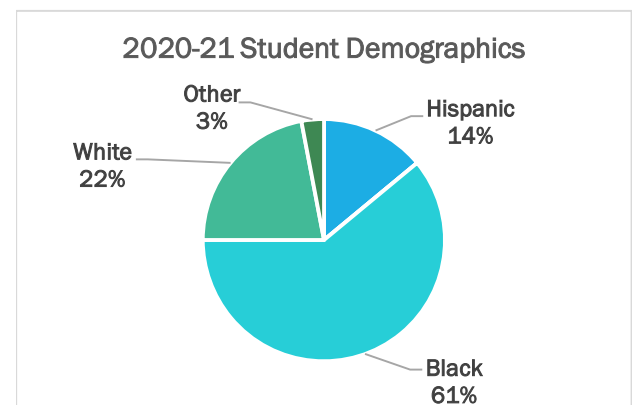
Asheville PEAK Academy

PEAK Academy believes all children can achieve at high levels, regardless of race or socioeconomic status when provided a rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum and held to high academic and behavioral standards. PEAK Academy will prepare students to become confident leaders, problem solvers, effective communicators, and life-long learners. PEAK will empower students to view themselves as change agents and community stewards, making real change in their community in partnership with local organizations. PEAK will ensure all students achieve academic excellence and obtain the knowledge, skill set, and virtuous character to reach their unlimited potential in Honors/AP classes in high school, in college, career, and life.

Year School Opened: 2021-22

Grant Awarded: 2020-21

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-2



% ED Student Population: 75%

Urbanicity: Urban / Asheville, NC

Persons in Poverty (Buncombe County)⁶: 12.2%



deliberately representative of the populations they plan to serve. Five out of seven of their board members and 60% of their current teaching staff are People of Color. The APA board believes that their authenticity and intentionality in approaching their mission is critical to success.

School leadership distributed print marketing materials at several in-person events, such as a [Juneteenth celebration](#) and three meet-and-greets in low-income neighborhoods located near the school's future building. APA representatives passed out school information as well as bumper stickers, water bottles, and snack items. Personal touches like these have been proven to strengthen school-home relationships

(Mulvenon, N.d.). The school also used NC ACCESS funding to purchase a pop-up tent and other colorful marketing equipment, which they were able to use at these public gatherings.

While some in-person events were limited due to COVID safety concerns, APA maximized their use of social media. The school used NC ACCESS funding to purchase multiple Facebook advertisements and engaged prospective families through their school Facebook page. The school hosted live [read-aloud sessions](#) and shared Meet the Teacher posts to introduce families to APA staff. The Operations Coordinator facilitated four interactive, virtual events which guided prospective families to make a craft or complete a science project together. The school bought supplies and coordinated pick-up times to eliminate the burden associated with supply costs, because supply costs and event fees can often limit school engagement for families experiencing poverty (Williams, 2017). Each virtual event garnered 20-30 attendees, and the school received positive feedback on the events.



Results

APA's enrollment is still open, but as of right now there are 104 students enrolled, which exceeded their goal of 102. Of those students, 75% qualify as Educationally Disadvantaged (ED), which exceeded their goal of 65%.

In addition, since the Administrative Assistant and Operations Coordinator began managing the school's social media accounts, their following has increased by 800%. In-person events were also fairly successful with about three families applying for enrollment after each event.

Challenges

COVID-19 safety guidelines altered the school's initial plans to canvas door-to-door in their community. Therefore, the school's leadership shifted their strategy to engage their community by participating in four socially-distanced, outdoor events, as well as some highly successful virtual recruitment initiatives. Since APA has not yet opened, they faced the challenge of asking prospective families to enroll before they were able to tour the building, meet the teachers, or hear success stories. School leadership has

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now located a building and has been able to introduce families to newly-hired staff through their Facebook page.

Future Modifications

Now that Asheville PEAK has successfully recruited families and met enrollment goals, school leadership is shifting their focus to cultivating strong relationships with these families.

Critical Components

Getting Started

NC ACCESS funding allowed APA's board to hire essential staff members, such as their Operations Coordinator and Administrative Assistant, who laid the groundwork for recruitment efforts through designing print materials, developing a web presence, and organizing recruitment events.

Ongoing Supports

Salaries for the Administrative Assistant and Operations Coordinator will be included in the school's operating budget moving forward, so they can manage ongoing marketing and enrollment initiatives. Additionally, APA hopes future recruitment will occur organically as currently enrolled families become ambassadors for the school.

Equity Connections

Studies have shown that *"children who attended [socioeconomically and racially] integrated schools had higher earnings as adults, had improved health outcomes, and were less likely to be incarcerated"* (The Century Foundation, 2019). APA has been very purposeful in recruiting Students of Color as well as students of low socioeconomic backgrounds. They want their school to be a positive learning environment where historically marginalized populations can receive a high-quality education.

Research

1. Clickon. (September 10, 2019). "Why Is A Brand's Cultural Relevance Important?" Accessed on June 24, 2021. Retrieved from <https://news.clickon.co/why-is-a-brands-cultural-relevance-important>
2. LeRoy, N. (November 20, 2018). "A Comprehensive Marketing Guide for Charter Schools". Bright Minds Marketing. Accessed on June 24, 2021. Retrieved from <https://brightmindsmarketing.com/marketing-operations/comprehensive-marketing-guide-for-charter-schools/>
3. Mulvenon, S. (N.d.). "What Can Public School Learn about Marketing from Charter and Private Schools". National School Public Relations Association. Accessed on June 24, 2021. Retrieved from https://www.nspr.org/e_network/2012-10_trendtracker
4. The Century Foundation. (April 29, 2019). "The Benefits of Socioeconomically and Racially Integrated Schools and Classrooms". Accessed on June 25, 2021. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/facts/the-benefits-of-socioeconomically-and-racially-integrated-schools-and-classrooms/?session=1>

5. Williams, M. (August 4, 2017). "Burden of purchasing school supplies affects families". Newsleader. Accessed on June 11, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.newsleader.com/story/news/2017/08/04/school-supplies-cost-45/539693001/>
6. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts North Carolina, Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>