

# NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



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

Technology

Accessibility

## Laptops: Useful Beyond the Pandemic

### Implementation Description

Monroe Charter Academy (MCA) is committed to partnering with families to develop children into thriving citizens. They utilize a rigorous, classical curriculum to cultivate wisdom and culture in their students. The school's plans to implement a 1:1 laptop initiative in 2020-21 was well timed as the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools into a fully virtual learning model. MCA utilized NC ACCESS funds to purchase the necessary laptops for their students. In addition, they had recently used this funding to secure a digital curriculum providing all students with the tools they needed to continue their education on-line. MCA serves a high needs population with 82% of students identifying as educationally disadvantaged (ED). Most of these students did not have computers at home, so it was critical that the school provide this resource. Studies have shown that reliable access to technology in education has a positive long-term impact on students from underprivileged backgrounds (National Education Association, 2008).

While students were able to access their daily instruction, it was also important to establish virtual classroom expectations. Researchers have found that typical classroom standards do not necessarily apply to virtual learning, and new expectations are often needed to help students and families stay connected and be successful (Team TpT, 2020). Each MCA teacher developed classroom expectations and shared them with students and their families. While in person, teachers communicated high expectations for engagement and carefully monitored students' time on devices. This proved to be an effective way to ensure that all students successfully utilized technology as a learning tool. Most families were pleased with the system of accountability and the structure it offered to their child(ren).

### About This School

#### Monroe Charter Academy

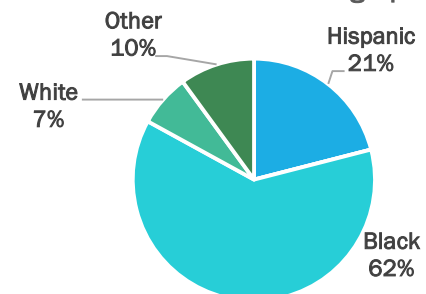
Our mission is to develop each child into an academically thriving citizen, by partnering with parents and the community, utilizing high expectations and a rigorous classical education, delivered with purposeful and spirited devotion.

**Year School Opened:** 2019-20

**Grant Awarded:** 2019-20

**Initial Grade Levels Served:** K-4

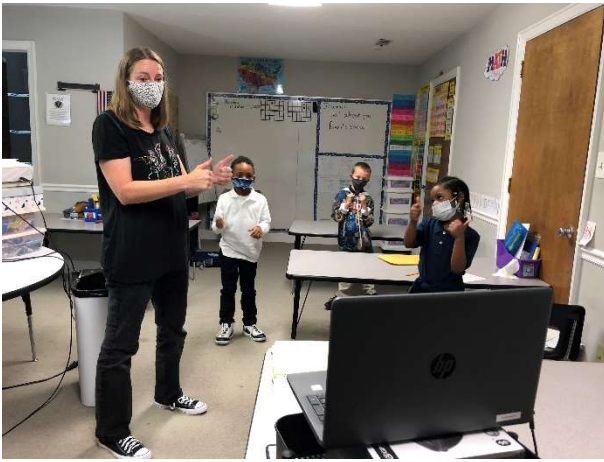
#### 2020-21 Student Demographics



**% ED Student Population:** 82%

**Urbanicity:** Rural / Monroe, NC

**Persons in Poverty (Union County)<sup>4</sup>:** 7.3%



*Music class being taught in-person and virtual at the same time.*

## Results

While there is concern that student, especially the youngest, may struggle to grow in a virtual learning environment, MCA found that all students grew at least 5-10 points on their MAP assessments during the course of the year.

## Challenges

Initially, families were concerned that the work was too much and too difficult. Teachers kept open lines of communication with families and were able to explain that this is the work that students typically complete during the school day, and that while the school does have high expectations for all students, it is achievable.

## Future Modifications

Although the 1:1 laptop initiative was especially critical during the pandemic, the school plans to make it a sustainable offering to families in need moving forward. School leadership also wants to equip their teachers through upcoming Professional Development sessions to understand and address other inequalities in their student body.

## Critical Components

### Getting Started

MCA found that before they were able to fully implement virtual instruction, they needed to ensure every child had access to a working laptop, the internet and high-quality digital curriculum.

### Ongoing Supports

The school is in the process of seeking funding to make 1:1 technology access for students in need a sustainable option moving forward.

## Equity Connections

Research has shown that one important way schools can provide a more equitable education is by provisioning students in need with access to technology (Anderson, 2019). MCA provided, and plans to continue providing, students with laptops and other educational resources.

## Research

1. Anderson, K. (April 29, 2019) How Access to Technology Can Create Equity In Schools. Digital Promise Retrieved from <https://digitalpromise.org/2019/04/29/equity-in-schools-access-technology/>

2. National Education Association (NEA). (May, 2008). "Access, Adequacy, and Equity in Education Technology: Results of a Survey of America's Teachers and Support Professionals on Technology in Public Schools and Classrooms". 1Library. Accessed on June 3, 2021. Retrieved from <https://1library.net/document/y6034r4y-access-adequacy-and-equity-in-education-technology.html>
3. Team TpT. (2020). "The New Norm: Setting Expectations and Procedures in a Virtual Classroom". Teachers Pay Teachers. Accessed June 7, 2021. Retrieved from <https://blog.teacherspayteachers.com/setting-expectations-and-procedures-in-a-virtual-classroom/>
4. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts North Carolina, Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>