

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



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

School Culture

Racial Equity

Preparing the Soil for Leadership and Growth

Implementation Description

For the past 20 years, The Arts Based School (ABS) has provided excellence in education rooted in an integrated curriculum and multidisciplinary learning. To accommodate their growing student population, they planned to expand their capacity by purchasing a surplus building in a historically black neighborhood in Winston-Salem, outfitting the building through available NC ACCESS funds, and ultimately opening a second location in fall 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic postponed those plans, but the unforeseen delays provided time for equity initiatives, including implementation of a weighted lottery and leadership development among school staff. Leaders at the school described this time of purposeful waiting as tilling the soil and planting seeds to prepare for new growth.

With the intention of offering more equitable access to students at their current and future location, the ABS administration decided to initiate a weighted lottery. Studies have shown that weighted lotteries are a simple way to ensure the integration of children from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (Potter, 2019). Researchers have also stated that a diverse environment increases students' critical thinking skills, empathy, and creativity (Phillips, 2014). In order to implement a weighted lottery, the school updated their charter to include a weighted lottery and educated their currently enrolled families and stakeholders about its potential benefits. With the support of the NC ACCESS team, the school rewrote their charter to include

About This School

The Arts Based School

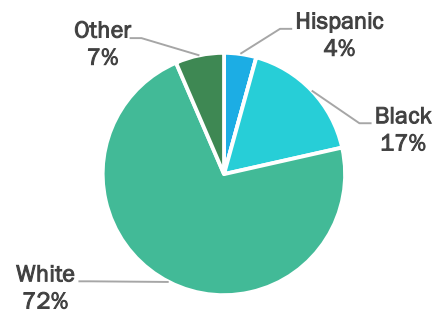
At The Arts Based School, our approach to teaching and childhood development is designed to support all children. We deliver a rigorous academic program, following the NC Standard Course of Study, integrated deeply with the arts: music, dance, visual art, and theater. Our curriculum is inherently interdisciplinary and project-based, with culminating experiences of exceptional depth and scope at every grade level. We believe that the arts are innately powerful forms of learning and self-expression for all children.

Year School Opened: 2002-03

Grant Awarded: 2020-21

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-8

2020-21 Student Demographics



% ED Student Population: 23%

Urbanicity: Urban / Winston-Salem, NC

Persons in Poverty (Forsyth County)⁶: 15.2%

the use of a weighted lottery, which the NC Office of Charter Schools approved shortly after the 2021 enrollment period. Therefore, the new lottery will be administered during next year's enrollment period beginning in February 2022.

The 2021-22 academic year was also a time for growth in school leadership. As the weighted lottery system increases the number of educationally disadvantaged (ED) students at ABS in the coming years, school administrators knew they needed to better prepare themselves and their staff to address the needs of diverse learners. Therefore, both the Principal and Assistant Principal participated in monthly, full-day equity-focused professional development (PD) through the NC ACCESS program. They shared perspectives and strategies from the PD sessions with their teachers and used the information to develop a more in-depth equity-focused training to deliver to their entire staff in the fall. Providing specialized training for school staff is an important aspect of providing adequate support for ED students and ensuring academic success (TNTP, n.d.) Additionally, one of ABS' teachers was accepted to participate in the NC ACCESS funded year-long [Aspiring Minority Leaders Program](#). She began her career at ABS as an instructional assistant, and with the school's support, was able to complete her coursework to become a certified teacher. Now she is completing her administrative internship and earning her Masters of School Administration through the program in order to take on an administrative role with the opening of the second building in 2022-23. Because of unexpected delays caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, ABS had additional time to prepare for the implementation of a weighted lottery and develop leadership capacity to more fully meet the needs of staff, students, and families who will join the ABS family as the school expands into their second facility.

Results

Results of ABS' weighted lottery will become available after it goes into effect in spring of 2022.

The teacher who participated in the NC ACCESS funded Minority Leadership Training experienced significant professional growth through the program. The training gave her the knowledge and skills to accept new leadership roles at ABS, and will launch her into an administrative position at the school's second location.

Challenges

Construction delays caused by COVID-19 were certainly challenging for school administrators. However, the delays allowed additional time for leadership development.

At times, the equity focused professional development challenged the beliefs and opinions of some staff members and led to discomfort. Additionally, families who had been on the school's wait list for a long time felt that the addition of the weighted lottery was unfair to them. Therefore, it was essential for school leadership to educate all stakeholders on the rationale for change.

Future Modifications

ABS is still in the process of securing a building for their second location, and the weighted lottery will be implemented during the 2022-23 enrollment period, which begins in February 2022.

School leadership is using the NC ACCESS PD model to develop staff equity training, which is scheduled to take place in August 2021. The training will focus on research-based strategies for eliminating barriers to education, specifically for students experiencing poverty. Additionally, they plan to continue participating in their NC ACCESS cohort network to receive support and advice as they implement their new weighted lottery and provide equity training to staff.

Critical Components

Getting Started

The administration emphasized the importance of communicating with families and staff to ensure that everyone understood the motivation behind their current equity initiatives. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of establishing trusting relationships with other leaders in education, particularly through their NC ACCESS cohort of subgrantees, to have ongoing dialogue as they address equity issues at their school.

Ongoing Supports

Leaders at ABS contributed much of their success to their ability to network with equally committed school leaders in their NC ACCESS cohort. The cohort provided a community of trust and a safe place to ask questions and share ideas. They plan to continue meeting regularly to support one another as they work to improve equity in education.

Equity Connections

The use of a weighted lottery has been shown to increase a school's ability to enroll students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and thereby reduce the academic achievement gap (Quick, 2016). ABS revised their charter to include a weighted lottery system in order to ensure equitable access to education for students in their community.

Research shows the importance of raising up school leaders of color, yet minority school leaders are significantly underrepresented in school administrator positions across the country (Fay, 2019). When ABS supported their teacher as she pursued NC ACCESS's Aspiring Minority Leaders Program, they played a role in increasing equity in education for students and staff as recruiting and retaining minority leaders can positively impact school cultures and academic outcomes for students of color.

Research

1. Fay, L. (September 16, 2019). "As schools diversify, principals remain mostly white — and 5 other things we learned this summer about America's school leaders" LA School Report. Accessed on September 30, 2021. Retrieved from <http://laschoolreport.com/as-schools->

[diversify-principals-remain-mostly-white-and-5-other-things-we-learned-this-summer-about-americas-school-leaders/](#)

2. Quick, K. (October 14, 2016). "How to Achieve Socioeconomic Integration in Schools". The Century Foundation. Accessed on August 11, 2021. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/facts/achieve-socioeconomic-integration-schools/>
3. Phillips, K. W. (October 1, 2014). "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter: Being around people who are different from us makes us more creative, more diligent, and harder-working". *Scientific American*. Accessed on August 11, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>
4. Potter, H. (May 16, 2019). "Testimony: D.C. Charter Schools Should Use Weighted Lotteries to Promote Integration". The Century Foundation. Accessed on August 11, 2021. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/testimony-d-c-charter-schools-use-weighted-lotteries-promote-integration-halley-potter/?agreed=1>
5. TNTP: Reimagine Teaching. (n.d.) "The Opportunity Myth". Accessed on August 11, 2021. Retrieved from <https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/>
6. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts North Carolina, Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>