



School Consolidation Feasibility Study Community Engagement Plan

Presented by

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Background

- September 2023 - State mandated that Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County School systems jointly study the feasibility of merging
- October 2023 - The school boards voted to designate Buncombe County as lead entity for the study, and Commissioners accepted
- November 2023 - Local project team was assembled including representatives of county government and both school systems
- March 2024 - Prismatic Services was selected as the vendor to complete the study through December 2024
- February 2025 - Findings and recommendations are due back to the state



Community Engagement Priority

The local project team established priorities for the feasibility study, including:

- Rigorous, comprehensive analysis of quantitative & qualitative data
- Equity analysis for all elements within the study
- Community engagement, including opportunities for impacted individuals to contribute to the study/learn about the findings & results



Vendor Scope of Work

Requirements of Prismatic Services:

- Work with CAPE to develop a strategic communications and engagement plan
- Provide the engagement instruments for focus groups, community meetings, online forum, and surveys
- Host drop-in style community input sessions
- Collect and analyze engagement results and input
- Incorporate results into the findings & recommendations of the report



CAPE Scope of Work

Buncombe County CAPE department responsibilities:

- Develop a community engagement plan in collaboration with Prismatic Services (with input from the schools and local project team), including audiences and engagement modalities
- Host a community engagement hub at engage.buncombecounty.org, including a community survey
- Coordinate with internal & external partners engagement logistics
- Promote opportunities for input through diverse channels
- Coordinate services to increase equitable access, e.g. language interpreting/translation



Community Engagement Plan Strategic Objectives

- Gather an extensive amount of public input to inform the findings of the school consolidation study
- Include diverse voices – including those with the potential to be most directly impacted by a school consolidation decision and those from historically underrepresented populations
- Inclusive, accessible, and unbiased approach
- Run broader engagement separately but concurrently with the consultant's interviews of key personnel and impacted audiences in focus groups and small, targeted conversations



Targeted Community Groups and Representatives

Buncombe County
School Staff, Parents
and Students

Asheville City School
Staff, Parents, and
Students

Community Based
Organizations

Faith Based
Organizations

Higher Education
Institutions

Special Interest
Groups

Local Business
Groups/Associations

Neighborhood
Associations



Communication and Public Engagement's Methods

Methods of Engagement

- 7 **Focus Groups** open to ~100 youth-serving community organizations
- 9 drop-in **Community Meetings** in diverse locations & times of day
- 1 countywide **Online Forum**
- **Community Survey** with paths for school personnel, parents, high school students, general public

Communication Tactics

- Social media (Facebook, Nextdoor, X, etc.)
- Earned media
- WRES programming
- Email
- Text messaging
- Grassroots (flyers, posters, community meetings)



Next Steps

- Public Input page is live and includes upcoming community meetings
- Widescale promotion of drop-in meetings & online forum
- Advertisement of online survey option
- Continued collaboration with school districts on planning & outreach



Project Considerations



Project and Process Impacts



Bias/Predetermined Outcomes



Engagement Fatigue



Conflicting Events



Language Barriers

