

School Consolidation Feasibility Study

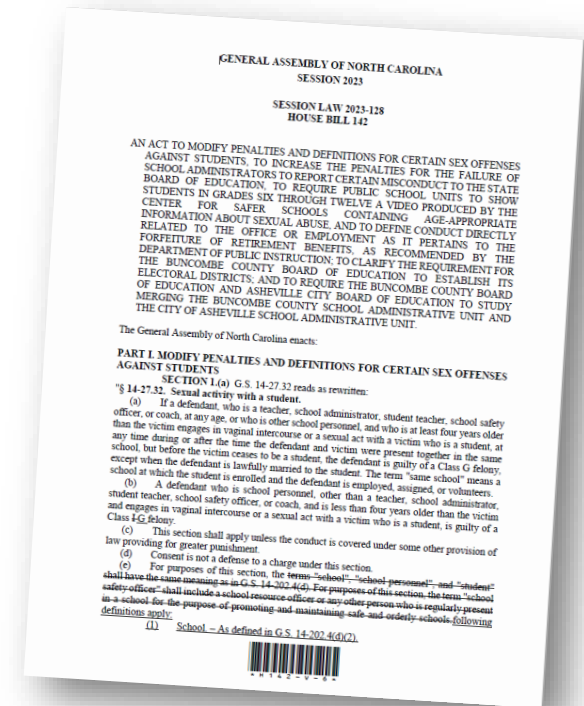
Rachael Sawyer, Buncombe County Strategic Partnerships Director

December 2024



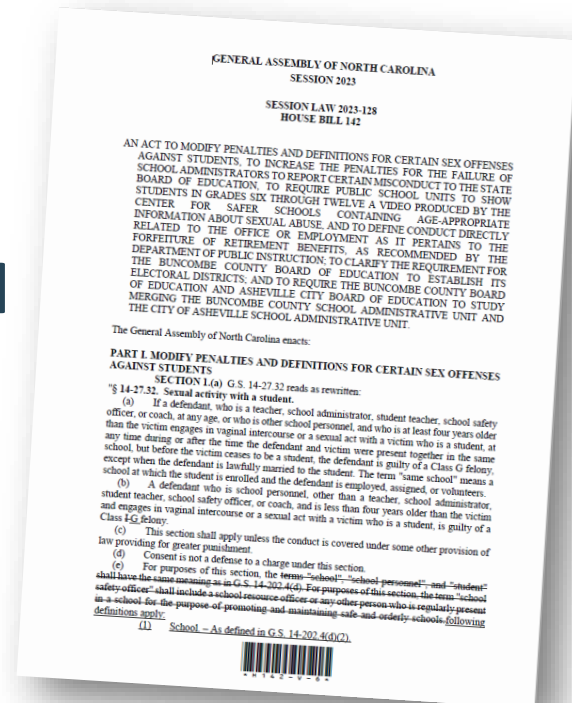
Project Background

- North Carolina General Assembly mandated that the Asheville City and Buncombe County school systems jointly study the feasibility of a merger
- House Bill 142 / SL 2023-128 was signed by the Governor on September 29, 2023
- Asheville City Board of Education & Buncombe County Board of Education voted to designate Buncombe County Government as the lead entity for the project
- Buncombe County Commissioners accepted lead role on October 17, 2023

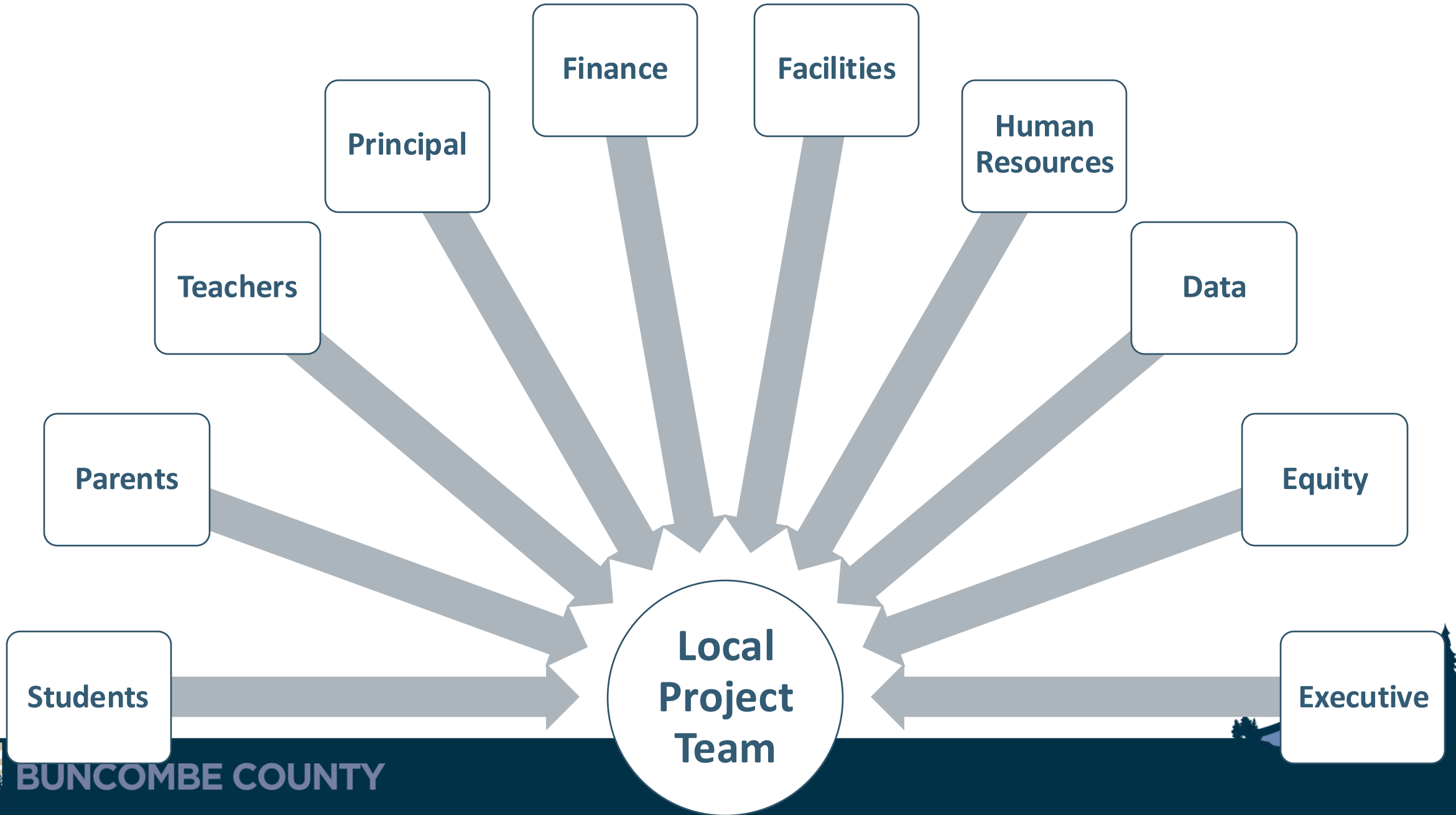


Legislative Mandate

“The Buncombe County Board of Education and the Asheville City Board of Education shall jointly study the feasibility of the merger of the Buncombe County School Administrative Unit and the City of Asheville School Administrative Unit, including the potential **economic and educational impact** of merging the school units and any **other relevant information**. The Buncombe County Board of Education and the Asheville City Board of Education shall report **findings and recommendations** to the standing committees of the General Assembly hearing elections matters no later than **February 15, 2025.**”

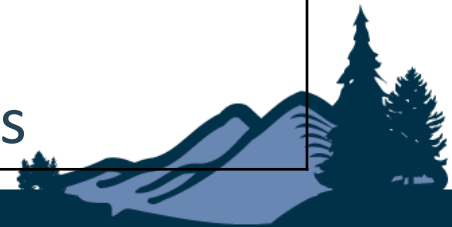


24-member project team, appointed by County Manager & School Superintendents (8 each):



Roles

Local Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design solicitation and review criteria• Review submissions, recommend vendor• Provide ongoing guidance & feedback
Buncombe County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate project• Issue solicitation & select firm• Identify funding, Issue and oversee contract
School Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jointly contribute to the study, including data & input to inform the study
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide input to inform the study
Contracted vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct the study• Provide a report of findings & recommendations



Vendor Scope of Work



- Utilize a rigorous approach in the completion of the study, including assessment of comprehensive factors - **Student membership, Academic, Student wellbeing, Policy & procedure, Operational, Facilities, Personnel, Governance, Financial, Partnerships, Geographical, Community, Historical & Contextual**
- Incorporate **equity** analysis for all elements within the study
- Center stakeholder and **community engagement**, including opportunities for impacted individuals to contribute to the study/learn about the findings & results
- Include qualitative & quantitative sources of **data** to accurately identify the feasibility of a consolidation
- Identify significant similarities & differences between school systems
- Include short- and long-term impacts as well as projections & scenarios
- Provide a comprehensive report including description of research method, summary of activities, findings, risks/benefits of consolidation, recommendations, and implementation considerations as applicable



Work Conducted So Far

- **87 Days on site**
- **1,143 data request items**, such as:
 - Academics
 - Budget & finance
 - Facilities, maintenance & custodial
 - Food Services
 - Security
 - Special education
 - Technology
 - Transportation
- **55 Focus Group Participants**
- **168 interviews** with personnel such as: teacher; principal; communications; custodial; equity; finance; human resources; nutrition; operations; student services; technology; testing
- **10 Community Forums**
- **7,245 Surveys Completed**
- **35 school observations**
 - Including facilities, school nutrition & transportation



Community Input

- **10 Community Input Forums**

- 9 in person and 1 virtual
 - Owen Middle School
 - East Asheville Library
 - Cane Creek Middle School
 - Weaverville Community Center
 - Isaac Dickson Elementary
 - Erwin High School
 - Enka Intermediate School
 - Hall Fletcher Elementary
 - Skyland/South Buncombe Library
 - Online
- 222 persons attended the forums

- **Surveys completed**

- 308 Community Surveys
- 2,560 Parent Surveys
- 1,286 Staff Surveys
- 3,091 Student Surveys

- **Input Gathered**

- Deciding factors (e.g. costs, education quality, efficiencies, academic life, student opportunities)
- Satisfaction with school services (e.g. curriculum, instruction, nutrition, transportation, extracurricular)
- Priorities & concerns



Project Timeline to Date

Legislative Mandate	September 2023
Project Team Formed	October 2023
Request for Proposals Process	November 2023 – February 2024
Vendor Conducts Study	April 2024 – December 2024



Next Steps

Status Updates to County Commissioners & School Boards (presented by County Staff)	December 2024
Report Received	No later than December 31, 2024
Presentation of Findings & Recommendations to County Commissioners & School Boards (presented by County Staff)	January 16, 2025
Findings & Recommendations due to General Assembly	No later than February 15, 2025
Endorsements of and/or Comments by County Commissioners & School Boards	Not required

