



Buncombe County

School Consolidation Feasibility Study - Appendices

January 2025



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Appendix A

Student Survey 2024

This survey was fielded via link/email.

(n=3,091)

Please note: Questions 8, 9, and 13 allowed an open-ended comment as a response. The major themes of those responses are presented here. An extended version of this appendix, including all open-ended comments provided in response to these questions, is available upon request.

1. Thinking about your current high school, respond to the following statements. (n = 3,091)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My school can be described as a good place to learn.	23%	60%	13%	3%	1%
I have plenty of choices when selecting academic and elective courses.	29%	51%	13%	5%	2%
I feel appropriately challenged in my classes.	20%	58%	16%	4%	1%
My school connects me to real-world issues and experiences.	14%	40%	30%	12%	4%
Most staff in our school have high expectations for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, or other factors.	30%	50%	15%	4%	2%
Most adults in my school respect student diversity.	33%	49%	14%	2%	1%
I feel welcomed and accepted by other students in this school.	20%	49%	22%	6%	3%
Education is the main priority in our school system.	21%	60%	14%	3%	1%

2. Please rate the quality of these aspects of your high school. (n = 3,091)

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	Undecided
School Bus Transportation	11%	29%	34%	9%	3%	15%
School Lunch	6%	19%	39%	17%	11%	7%
School Facilities	14%	41%	34%	7%	2%	2%
Instructional Materials	16%	43%	31%	7%	2%	1%
Afterschool and Extracurricular	28%	39%	20%	5%	2%	6%

	Strongly Agree + Agree / Disagree + Strongly Disagree										
	ACS		BCS								
	AHS (n = 113)	SILSA (n = 41)	Reynolds HS (n = 314)	BCS Early/Middle (n = 135)	BCS Virtual (n = 40)	Owen HS (n = 334)	Erwin HS (n = 495)	Enka HS (n = 272)	Nesbitt (n = 66)	North Buncombe HS (n = 284)	Roberson HS (n = 653)
My school can be described as a good place to learn.	92% / 4%	90% / 5%	87% / 3%	94% / 1%	88% / 0%	78% / 6%	69% / 6%	83% / 3%	95% / 2%	82% / 6%	89% / 2%
I have plenty of choices when selecting academic and elective courses.	92% / 3%	98% / 0%	87% / 5%	70% / 8%	83% / 3%	68% / 15%	75% / 7%	81% / 4%	76% / 11%	79% / 9%	88% / 3%
I feel appropriately challenged in my classes.	81% / 6%	88% / 5%	81% / 5%	88% / 2%	85% / 0%	72% / 9%	74% / 7%	78% / 4%	89% / 6%	79% / 6%	80% / 4%
My school connects me to real-world issues and experiences.	80% / 11%	76% / 5%	54% / 14%	73% / 7%	70% / 3%	42% / 24%	46% / 20%	53% / 17%	85% / 3%	51% / 20%	54% / 15%
Most staff in our school have high expectations for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, or other factors.	84% / 5%	95% / 0%	86% / 2%	90% / 1%	85% / 3%	77% / 8%	68% / 7%	79% / 6%	97% / 0%	80% / 7%	84% / 4%
Most adults in my school respect student diversity.	91% / 3%	93% / 0%	87% / 3%	91% / 0%	90% / 3%	82% / 6%	76% / 5%	81% / 4%	94% / 2%	79% / 2%	84% / 3%
I feel welcomed and accepted by other students in this school.	81% / 5%	83% / 5%	70% / 7%	88% / 3%	83% / 0%	62% / 12%	60% / 13%	67% / 12%	92% / 2%	59% / 13%	71% / 7%
Education is the main priority in our school system.	87% / 5%	90% / 2%	82% / 5%	87% / 2%	88% / 3%	79% / 6%	75% / 7%	82% / 3%	86% / 2%	83% / 5%	86% / 3%



	Excellent + Good / Below Average + Poor										
	ACS		BCS								
	AHS (n = 113)	SILSA (n = 41)	Reynolds HS (n = 314)	BCS Early/Middle (n = 135)	BCS Virtual (n = 40)	Owen HS (n = 334)	Erwin HS (n = 495)	Enka HS (n = 272)	Nesbitt (n = 66)	North Buncombe HS (n = 284)	Roberson HS (n = 653)
School Bus Transportation	48% / 13%	37% / 10%	43% / 8%	55% / 8%	30% / 5%	35% / 12%	43% / 12%	38% / 12%	38% / 13%	44% / 12%	31% / 16%
School Lunch	49% / 17%	24% / 20%	24% / 29%	16% / 32%	30% / 8%	23% / 33%	24% / 32%	24% / 25%	47% / 8%	23% / 29%	21% / 29%
School Facilities	69% / 10%	78% / 2%	57% / 9%	68% / 3%	60% / 3%	53% / 8%	46% / 10%	57% / 7%	79% / 6%	50% / 11%	52% / 10%
Instructional Materials	80% / 3%	78% / 0%	61% / 7%	73% / 4%	80% / 5%	51% / 13%	52% / 9%	58% / 4%	83% / 0%	58% / 11%	60% / 8%
Afterschool and Extracurricular	83% / 3%	88% / 2%	82% / 2%	38% / 22%	80% / 8%	61% / 6%	55% / 9%	69% / 5%	62% / 15%	67% / 7%	73% / 6%



3. Did you complete middle school in the same school system you attend now? (n = 3,050)

Yes	75%
No	25%

4. How well do you agree with this statement: My middle school classes prepared me well for high school academics. (n = 2,306)

	Overall	ACS (n=98)	BCS (n=2,197)
Strongly Agree	12%	29%	11%
Agree	49%	47%	49%
Undecided	25%	14%	25%
Disagree	11%	7%	11%
Strongly Disagree	4%	3%	4%

5. Which of these should definitely be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n =2,898)

	Overall	ACS (n=152)	BCS (n=2,746)
Whether it will save money	45%	41%	45%
Whether it will cost money to make the change	37%	43%	37%
Whether it will cost more after the consolidation	26%	31%	26%
Whether all the current schools will be kept open	41%	62%	40%
Whether all current staff will keep all of their positions after consolidation	46%	74%	45%
Whether it will improve school life for students	71%	80%	71%
Whether it will improve academic quality for students	69%	76%	68%
Whether it will improve academic course options for students	59%	64%	58%
Whether individual high school traditions will be continued	42%	45%	42%
Whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	46%	72%	45%
Whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	38%	52%	37%
Other	7%	3%	8%

6. Of the factors you identified, please rank in order the top 3 most important things that should be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n = 2,898)

	Overall	ACS (n=127)	BCS (n=2,770)
Whether it will save money	23%	17%	23%
Whether it will cost money to make the change	10%	5%	10%
Whether it will cost more after the consolidation	6%	6%	6%
Whether all the current schools will be kept open	15%	23%	14%
Whether all current staff will keep all of their positions after consolidation	19%	40%	18%
Whether it will improve school life for students	43%	46%	43%
Whether it will improve academic quality for students	36%	38%	36%
Whether it will improve academic course options for students	23%	25%	23%
Whether individual high school traditions will be continued	11%	12%	11%
Whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	17%	32%	16%
Whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	10%	10%	10%
Other	2%	1%	2%

7. Which of these should definitely NOT be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n =2,897)

	Overall	ACS (n=128)	BCS (n=2,769)
Whether it will save money	19%	33%	18%
Whether it will cost money to make the change	19%	24%	19%
Whether it will cost more after the consolidation	17%	13%	17%
Whether all the current schools will be kept open	13%	3%	13%
Whether all current staff will keep all of their positions after consolidation	12%	5%	12%
Whether it will improve school life for students	6%	1%	7%
Whether it will improve academic quality for students	7%	2%	7%
Whether it will improve academic course options for students	8%	3%	8%
Whether individual high school traditions will be continued	21%	27%	21%
Whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	15%	5%	15%
Whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	19%	20%	19%
Other	11%	8%	11%

8. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would worry you most about the change? (n=2,093)

Questions/Concerns	15%
Academics	11%
People	10%
Changes in school operations/values	9%
Taxes/money	9%
School location change	8%
School atmosphere/Student Life	7%
Effect on teachers	6%
Athletics/Extracurriculars	3%
Increase in violence/Safety concerns	5%
Differences between school districts	4%
Schedule/Calendar	3%
Transportation	3%
Lunch/food	2%
Quality	2%
School facilities/resources	2%
Equality	1%
Increased competition/less opportunities	1%
Effect on families	0%
Weather	0%
Irrelevant/Unclear	22%

9. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would excite you the most about the change? (n=1,801)

Academics/Learning Opportunities	17%
School District/Consolidation	17%
People/Student Body	16%
New opportunities/Extracurriculars	8%
School Environment	7%
Campus/Resources	5%
School Calendar/Schedule	5%
Lunch/Food	4%
Sports	4%
Diversity/Equality	2%
Questions/Concerns	2%
Teachers/Staff	2%
Experiences	0%
Policies	0%
School District	0%
Teachers	0%
Transportation	0%
Unclear	26%

10. What grade are you in this school year? (n = 2,742)

	Overall	ACS (n=147)	BCS (n=2,595)
9 th Grade	27%	22%	28%
10 th Grade	29%	38%	28%
11 th Grade	26%	22%	26%
12 th Grade	18%	18%	18%

11. Which high school do you currently attend? (n = 2,780)

School	Count	%
A.C Reynolds High School	314	11%
Asheville High	113	4%
BCS Virtual Academy	40	1%
Buncombe Co. Early/Middle/BCCI	135	5%
Charles D. Owen High School	334	12%
Clyde A. Erwin High School	495	18%
Community High School	13	0%
Enka High School	272	10%
Nesbitt Discovery Academy	66	2%
North Buncombe High School	284	10%
SILSA	41	1%
T.C. Roberson High School	653	23%
None of these	20	1%

12. What is your race/ethnicity? (n = 682)

	Overall	ACS (n=60)	BCS (n=620)
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	~0%	0%
Asian	12	2%	2%
Black or African-American	41	6%	6%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	116	17%	18%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	1%	1%
White	405	59%	58%
Multiple race/ethnicities selected	53	8%	8%
Other	22	3%	3%
I prefer not to answer	27	4%	4%

13. We have asked you these questions to understand the possible benefits and challenges if it is decided to consolidate Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools into one system. If you have any additional thoughts about the issue, please tell us here. (n = 251)

Don't consolidate	33%
Education quality/options	19%
Community impacts	7%
Consolidate	7%
Staffing/Budget concerns	5%
Equity concerns	4%
Financial concerns	4%
Transportation	2%
Tax concerns	1%
Equity concerns, Community impacts	0%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	10%



Appendix B

Parent Survey 2024

This survey was fielded via link/email.

(n=2,560)

Please note: Questions 9, 10, and 15 allowed an open-ended comment as a response. The major themes of those responses are presented here. An extended version of this appendix, including all open-ended comments provided in response to these questions, is available upon request.

1. Where do you currently have children enrolled in school? (n=2,366)

All of my children are enrolled in a charter school in Buncombe County.	1%
All of my children are enrolled in a private school in Buncombe County.	0%
All of my children are enrolled in Asheville City Schools.	21%
All of my children are enrolled in Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools.	0%
All of my children are enrolled in Buncombe County Schools.	67%
All of my children are homeschooled.	0%
I do not currently have children enrolled in school	1%
We have a combination of school enrollments in our household. At least one of my children is enrolled in public school at Asheville City Schools and/or Buncombe County Schools and I have other children enrolled in private, charter, or homeschool options.	8%

2. Do you have other children enrolled in either Asheville City Schools or Buncombe County Schools? (n=264)

Yes, I have other children enrolled at either ACS or BCS schools.	68%
No	32%

3. Thinking about your oldest child and their current school (n=2,282)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child's school can be described as a good place to learn.	48%	41%	9%	2%	1%
My child has great teachers.	52%	38%	9%	2%	0%
My child is appropriately challenged in their classes.	38%	41%	15%	6%	1%

	ACS (n=668)		BCS (n=1,588)	
	SA + A	D + SD	SA + A	D + SD
My child's school can be described as a good place to learn.	88%	3%	89%	3%
My child has great teachers.	89%	1%	90%	2%
My child is appropriately challenged in their classes.	76%	6%	80%	7%

4. Please rate the quality of these aspects of your child's school (n=2,260)

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	Undecided/ Not applicable
School bus transportation	17%	21%	13%	8%	3%	38%
School lunch	12%	29%	30%	9%	4%	17%
School facilities like buildings, classrooms, and school grounds	35%	43%	17%	4%	1%	1%
Instructional materials like books, computers, technology, and classroom supplies	32%	47%	16%	2%	0%	3%
Afterschool and extracurricular opportunities like clubs and sports	34%	33%	16%	5%	1%	11%

	ACS (n=657)			BCS (n=1,577)		
	Excellent + Good	Average	Below Average + Poor	Excellent + Good	Average	Below Average + Poor
School bus transportation	34%	14%	10%	40%	13%	11%
School lunch	36%	27%	10%	42%	31%	13%
School facilities	84%	13%	2%	75%	18%	5%
Instructional materials	82%	12%	1%	78%	17%	2%
Afterschool and extracurricular opportunities	75%	9%	6%	64%	18%	6%

5. Thinking about the school system in which you have children enrolled (either Asheville City Schools or Buncombe County Schools), respond to the following statements. (n=2,172)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Education is the main priority in this school system.	39%	46%	10%	4%	1%
The school system spends its money wisely.	16%	34%	36%	11%	3%
In this school system, students learn the necessary material to be prepared for the next grade.	29%	54%	12%	5%	1%
Students are treated equitably in this school system.	26%	46%	19%	8%	2%
The school system listens to the opinions and desires of the parents and community members	21%	42%	25%	10%	3%

	ACS (n=629)		BCS (n=1,515)	
	SA + A	D + SD	SA + A	D + SD
Education is the main priority in this school system.	85%	4%	86%	5%
The school system spends its money wisely.	39%	21%	55%	10%
In this school system, students learn the necessary material to be prepared for the next grade.	83%	6%	83%	5%
Students are treated equitably in this school system.	68%	10%	73%	10%
The school system listens to the opinions and desires of the parents and community members	58%	20%	64%	10%

6. Which of these should definitely be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n=2,123)

whether it will save money	37%
whether it will lower property taxes	18%
whether it will cost money to make the change	32%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	39%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	47%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	55%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	33%
whether it will improve school life for students	81%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	85%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	67%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	22%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	21%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	43%

	ACS (n=591)	BCS (n=1,523)
whether it will save money	38%	34%
whether it will lower property taxes	14%	18%
whether it will cost money to make the change	29%	31%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	34%	39%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	47%	45%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	52%	53%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	36%	30%
whether it will improve school life for students	85%	75%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	88%	79%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	70%	62%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	22%	21%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	24%	19%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	48%	40%

7. Of the factors you identified, please rank in order the top 3 most important things that should be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems.

Option	#1 n=892	#2 n=805	#3 n=771
whether it will improve academic quality for students	32%	21%	13%
whether it will improve school life for students	23%	21%	16%
whether it will save money	9%	6%	9%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	6%	5%	8%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	6%	6%	7%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	5%	10%	12%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	4%	6%	8%
whether it will cost money to make the change	4%	3%	3%
whether it will lower property taxes	3%	3%	3%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	3%	14%	14%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	3%	3%	4%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	1%	2%	2%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	1%	0%	2%

8. Which of these should definitely NOT be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n=1,710)

whether it will save money	22%
whether it will lower property taxes	44%
whether it will cost money to make the change	16%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	10%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	10%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	11%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	9%
whether it will improve school life for students	1%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	1%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	1%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	35%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	36%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	15%

	ACS (n=474)	BCS (n=1,164)
whether it will save money	24%	22%
whether it will lower property taxes	53%	41%
whether it will cost money to make the change	14%	17%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	7%	11%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	12%	9%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	13%	10%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	10%	9%
whether it will improve school life for students	2%	1%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	2%	1%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	2%	1%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	29%	37%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	29%	39%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	15%	15%

9. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would worry you most about the change? (n=1,328)

Community impacts	44%
Education quality/options	41%
Staffing/Budget concerns	16%
Equity concerns	11%
Financial concerns	10%
Transportation	7%
Don't consolidate	4%
Tax concerns	2%
Consolidate	2%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	3%

10. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would excite you most about the change? (n=1,084)

Education quality/options	32%
Don't consolidate	17%
Consolidate	15%
Financial concerns	15%
Staffing/Budget concerns	14%
Community impacts	8%
Equity concerns	6%
Tax concerns	3%
Transportation	1%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	10%

11. At what grade levels are your children? (Check ALL that apply). (n=1,893)

Less than preschool	3%
Preschool	9%
Elementary school	54%
Middle school	30%
High school	41%
High school graduate	7%

12. Which community do you live in? (n=1,922)

Alexander	1%
Arden	10%
Barnardsville	1%
Beech	0%
Big Ivy	0%
Candler	9%
City of Asheville	36%
Deaverview	0%
Emma Community	1%
Fairview	7%
Flat Creek	1%
I am NOT a resident of Buncombe County	1%
Leicester	5%
Sandy Mush	0%
Shiloh	1%
Swannanoa	4%
Town of Biltmore Forest	1%
Town of Black Mountain	3%
Town of Weaverville	7%
Town of Woodfin	2%
Unincorporated Buncombe County	11%

13. What is your race/ethnicity? (n=1,053)

Asian	2%
Black or African-American	2%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White	87%
Other	2%
I prefer not to answer	5%

14. Of your children enrolled in either Asheville City Schools or Buncombe County Schools, in which school is your oldest child? (n=2,346)

School	Percent
A.C. Reynolds High School	5%
A.C. Reynolds Middle School	1%
Asheville High School	9%
Asheville Middle School	5%
Avery’s Creek Elementary	1%
Barnardsville Elementary	0%
BCS Virtual Academy	1%
Black Mountain Elementary	1%
Black Mountain Primary	1%
Buncombe Co. Early/Middle/BCCI	1%
Candler Elementary	1%
Cane Creek Middle School	2%
Charles C. Bell Elementary	1%
Charles D. Owen High School	3%
Charles D. Owen Middle School	2%
Claxton Elementary	3%
Clyde A. Erwin High School	2%
Clyde A. Erwin Middle School	1%
Community High School	0%
Eblen Intermediate	1%
Emma Elementary	0%
Enka High School	4%
Enka Intermediate	1%
Enka Middle School	1%
Fairview Elementary	3%
Glen Arden Elementary	2%
Hall Fletcher Elementary	2%
Haw Creek Elementary	2%
Hominy Valley Elementary	1%
Ira B. Jones Elementary	2%
Isaac Dickson Elementary	3%
Johnston Elementary	0%
Koontz Intermediate	3%
Leicester Elementary	1%
Lucy S. Herring Elementary	2%
Nesbitt Discovery Academy	4%
North Buncombe Elementary	2%
North Buncombe High School	4%
North Buncombe Middle School	3%
North Windy Ridge Intermediate	1%
Oakley Elementary	1%
Sand Hill-Venable Elementary	1%



School	Percent
SILSA	3%
T.C Roberson High School	5%
Valley Springs Middle School	2%
W.D. Williams Elementary	1%
W.W. Estes Elementary	2%
Weaverville Elementary	2%
Weaverville Primary	1%
West Buncombe Elementary	1%
Woodfin Elementary	0%

15. We have asked you these questions to understand the possible benefits and challenges if it is decided to consolidate Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools into one system. If you have any additional thoughts about the issue, please tell us here. (n = 450)

Don't consolidate	36%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	20%
Education quality/options	13%
Financial concerns	12%
Consolidate	12%
Equity concerns	10%
Community impacts	9%
Staffing/Budget concerns	8%
Transportation	2%
Tax concerns	2%

Appendix C

Staff Survey 2024

This survey was fielded via link/email.

(n=1,286)

Please note: Questions 3, 6, 7, and 14 allowed an open-ended comment as a response. The major themes of those responses are presented here. An extended version of this appendix, including all open-ended comments provided in response to these questions, is available upon request.

Thinking about the school system in which you are employed (either ACS or BCS), respond to the following statements. (n=1,266)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Education is the main priority in this school system.	57%	35%	5%	3%	0%
Most administrative practices in our school system are highly effective and efficient.	21%	48%	17%	12%	2%
The school system gives student needs a high priority when making major decisions.	28%	46%	14%	9%	2%
Our central office has too many layers of administrators	26%	29%	25%	17%	3%
The school system listens to the opinions and desires of the parents and community members.	15%	46%	24%	12%	3%
Most teachers in this school system are excellent.	36%	52%	10%	3%	0%
Teachers in this school system have adequate supplies and equipment needed to perform their jobs effectively.	11%	36%	15%	29%	10%
Students are treated equitably in this school system.	21%	46%	16%	14%	3%
All areas of the school system are sufficiently staffed.	4%	11%	10%	48%	26%
Salary levels in this school system are competitive.	3%	18%	13%	33%	32%
I am actively looking for a job outside of this school system.	4%	9%	23%	28%	36%
I am very satisfied with my job in this school system.	25%	44%	19%	9%	2%
Funds are managed wisely to support education in this school system.	7%	25%	31%	26%	11%

	ACS (n=268)		BCS (n=746)	
	SA + A	D + SD	SA + A	D + SD
Education is the main priority in this school system.	89%	4%	93%	3%
Most administrative practices in our school system are highly effective and efficient.	56%	24%	74%	10%
The school system gives student needs a high priority when making major decisions.	74%	9%	76%	11%
Our central office has too many layers of administrators	62%	16%	51%	23%
The school system listens to the opinions and desires of the parents and community members.	64%	14%	62%	13%
Most teachers in this school system are excellent.	91%	2%	87%	3%
Teachers in this school system have adequate supplies and equipment needed to perform their jobs effectively.	67%	22%	40%	44%
Students are treated equitably in this school system.	63%	18%	68%	17%
All areas of the school system are sufficiently staffed.	29%	56%	11%	80%
Salary levels in this school system are competitive.	32%	53%	20%	68%
I am actively looking for a job outside of this school system.	11%	69%	13%	63%
I am very satisfied with my job in this school system.	74%	10%	68%	12%
Funds are managed wisely to support education in this school system.	36%	35%	35%	37%

1. Please rate the quality of these aspects of your school system (n=1,174)

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	Undecided
School bus transportation	18%	35%	26%	11%	3%	6%
School meals program	23%	37%	26%	8%	2%	4%
School facilities like buildings, classrooms, and school grounds	17%	41%	30%	11%	2%	0%
Facility maintenance	17%	41%	30%	11%	2%	0%
Facility cleanliness	22%	40%	28%	8%	2%	0%
Technology for staff use	27%	40%	23%	7%	2%	1%
Technology for student use	30%	46%	20%	3%	0%	1%
Course options for students	24%	38%	21%	5%	1%	10%
Afterschool and extracurricular opportunities like clubs and sports	32%	38%	18%	4%	1%	6%

	ACS (n =266)			BCS (n =755)		
	Excellent + Good	Average	Below Average + Poor	Excellent + Good	Average	Below Average + Poor
School bus transportation	47%	25%	17%	55%	26%	13%
School meals program	64%	19%	8%	59%	28%	10%
School facilities like buildings, classrooms, and school grounds	69%	24%	7%	55%	31%	13%
Facility maintenance	59%	28%	10%	59%	30%	11%
Facility cleanliness	59%	27%	14%	64%	27%	9%
Technology for staff use	84%	15%	1%	61%	26%	12%
Technology for student use	82%	16%	~0%	73%	21%	4%
Course options for students	75%	13%	3%	58%	23%	8%
Afterschool and extracurricular opportunities	84%	10%	3%	67%	21%	6%

2. Thinking about the other school system in the county, with which statement do you most agree? (n=1,157)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
There are a great many differences between the 2 school systems.	25%	41%	19%
There are many differences between the 2 school systems.	26%	29%	25%
There are some differences between the 2 school systems.	22%	16%	25%
There are a few differences between the 2 school systems.	4%	3%	3%
I don't know enough about the other school system to have an opinion.	24%	12%	28%

3. What do you think are the greatest differences between the 2 school systems? (only asked of those who selected “great” or “many” on the previous question, n=605)

Culture/Climate/Values	33%
Diversity	25%
Education quality/options	24%
Budget/Finances	21%
Teachers/Staff	19%
District size	13%
Equity	9%
Community/Families	8%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	6%
Facilities	1%
No difference	0%
Transportation	0%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	6%

4. Which of these should definitely be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n=1,083)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
whether it will save money	48%	37%	52%
whether it will lower property taxes	19%	12%	22%
whether it will cost money to make the change	45%	37%	48%
whether it will cost more after consolidation	46%	37%	51%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	58%	65%	55%
whether all current staff would keep their positions after consolidation	75%	81%	73%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	42%	44%	41%
whether it will improve school life for students	73%	76%	72%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	80%	82%	81%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	54%	50%	58%
whether individual school traditions would be continued	28%	32%	26%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	19%	30%	15%
whether parents of current students in the districts want consolidation to happen	35%	45%	32%
something else	6%	8%	5%

5. Of the factors you identified, please rank in order the top 3 most important things that should be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems.

Option	#1 n=833	#2 n=742	#3 n=725
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	24%	19%	15%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	19%	18%	18%
whether it will improve school life for students	15%	17%	13%
whether it will save money	14%	8%	6%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	9%	9%	8%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	5%	5%	8%
whether it will cost money to make the change	4%	5%	5%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	3%	5%	7%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	3%	6%	10%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	2%	4%	6%
whether it will lower property taxes	2%	2%	2%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	1%	1%	2%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	0%	1%	1%

6. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would worry you most about the change? (n=712)

Staffing/Budget concerns	58%
Community impacts	30%
Education quality/options	25%
Financial concerns	11%
Equity concerns	9%
Transportation	3%
Consolidate	1%
Tax concerns	1%
Don't consolidate	0%
Safety	0%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	6%

7. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would excite you the most about the change? (n=584)

Staffing/Budget concerns	32%
Education quality/options	23%
Community impacts	20%
Equity concerns	14%
Financial concerns	11%
Tax concerns	2%
Transportation	1%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	26%

8. Which of these should definitely NOT be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? (n=923)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
whether it will save money	20%	29%	17%
whether it will lower property taxes	46%	60%	41%
whether it will cost money to make the change	16%	20%	15%
whether it will cost more after consolidation	8%	9%	7%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	9%	8%	10%
whether all current staff would keep their positions after consolidation	7%	5%	7%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	8%	9%	8%
whether it will improve school life for students	2%	2%	3%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	1%	0%	1%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	3%	3%	3%
whether individual school traditions would be continued	33%	24%	36%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	46%	30%	52%
whether parents of current students in the districts want consolidation to happen	22%	14%	26%
something else	5%	5%	5%



9. In which school system do you work? (n=1,028)

Asheville City Schools	26%
Buncombe County Schools	74%

10. What is your current role in the school system? (n=1,014)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
Administrator	7%	8%	6%
Classroom teacher	48%	51%	47%
Instructional support (teaching assistant, etc.)	12%	13%	11%
Other certified staff (Librarian, Guidance Counselor, etc.)	18%	19%	18%
Other support staff (food services, office, custodial, etc.)	16%	9%	18%

11. How long have you worked in the school system? (n=1,023)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
Less than 5 years	30%	44%	25%
6-10 years	21%	21%	21%
11-15 years	16%	11%	18%
16+ years	33%	24%	36%

12. Which community do you live in? (n=1,012)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
A different surrounding county not listed here.	2%	4%	2%
Alexander	2%	0%	2%
Arden	8%	5%	9%
Barnardsville	0%	0%	1%
Candler	11%	9%	12%
City of Asheville	24%	41%	18%
Emma Community	1%	0%	1%
Fairview	5%	3%	6%
Flat Creek	1%	0%	1%
Haywood County	4%	4%	3%
Henderson County	5%	2%	6%
Leicester	7%	6%	7%
Madison County	2%	2%	2%
McDowell County	0%	0%	0%
Rutherford County	0%	0%	0%
Sandy Mush	0%	1%	0%
Shiloh	0%	0%	0%
Swannanoa	3%	2%	3%
Town of Biltmore Forest	0%	1%	0%
Town of Black Mountain	4%	2%	4%
Town of Weaverville	7%	5%	8%
Town of Woodfin	2%	4%	2%
Transylvania County	0%	0%	1%
Unincorporated Buncombe County	9%	7%	10%
Yancey County	0%	1%	0%

13. What is your race/ethnicity? (n=460)

	Overall	ACS	BCS
Asian	1%	1%	1%
Black or African-American	2%	5%	1%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	3%	3%	3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
White	83%	78%	84%
Other	1%	5%	1%
I prefer not to answer	9%	8%	9%

14. We have asked you these questions to understand the possible benefits and challenges if it is decided to consolidate Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools into one system. If you have any additional thoughts about the issue, please tell us here. (n = 195)

Don't consolidate	31%
Consolidate	21%
Community impacts	14%
Staffing/Budget concerns	11%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	8%
Financial concerns	8%
Education quality/options	6%
Equity concerns	6%
Tax concerns	2%

Appendix D

Community Survey 2024

This survey was fielded via link/email.

(n=308)

Please note: Questions 4, 5, and 10 allowed an open-ended comment as a response. The major themes of those responses are presented here. An extended version of this appendix, including all open-ended comments provided in response to these questions, is available upon request.

1. Which of these should definitely be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? Check as many as apply. (n=304)

whether it will save money	56%
whether it will lower property taxes	29%
whether it will cost money to make the change	32%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	40%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	36%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	44%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	30%
whether it will improve school life for students	69%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	86%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	69%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	19%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	14%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	26%

By Age Group

	<=55 Years n=114	56+ Years n=140
whether it will save money	51%	66%
whether it will lower property taxes	28%	34%
whether it will cost money to make the change	37%	33%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	44%	44%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	44%	29%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	61%	29%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	36%	24%
whether it will improve school life for students	75%	65%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	84%	89%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	69%	73%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	25%	14%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	18%	10%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	33%	21%

By Area	City of Asheville n=107	Other Areas n=150
whether it will save money	58%	60%
whether it will lower property taxes	31%	31%
whether it will cost money to make the change	36%	33%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	43%	43%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	37%	33%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	43%	43%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	35%	25%
whether it will improve school life for students	71%	69%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	90%	83%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	76%	67%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	12%	24%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	11%	15%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	26%	27%

2. Of the factors you identified, please rank in order the top 3 most important things that should be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems.

Option	#1 n=239	#2 n=216	#3 n=204
whether it will save money	19%	13%	6%
whether it will lower property taxes	5%	6%	4%
whether it will cost money to make the change	1%	2%	3%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	5%	7%	12%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	1%	2%	7%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	6%	7%	12%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	2%	2%	4%
whether it will improve school life for students	14%	19%	15%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	38%	23%	9%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	4%	13%	22%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	1%	1%	1%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	0%	3%	1%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	3%	2%	4%

3. Which of these should definitely NOT be considered when deciding whether to consolidate the school systems? Check as many as apply. (n=260)

whether it will save money	14%
whether it will lower property taxes	32%
whether it will cost money to make the change	22%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	12%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	23%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	21%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	18%
whether it will improve school life for students	2%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	1%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	2%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	35%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	47%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	29%

	<=55 Years n=103	56+ Years n=141
By Age Group		
whether it will save money	17%	11%
whether it will lower property taxes	37%	28%
whether it will cost money to make the change	19%	22%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	12%	13%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	18%	28%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	9%	30%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	11%	25%
whether it will improve school life for students	0%	3%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	1%	1%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	2%	1%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	34%	38%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	39%	53%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	19%	36%

By Area	City of Asheville n=104	Other Areas n=143
whether it will save money	16%	12%
whether it will lower property taxes	31%	32%
whether it will cost money to make the change	19%	22%
whether a consolidated system will cost more to operate	12%	13%
whether all the current schools will be kept open	28%	21%
whether all current staff will keep their positions after consolidation	26%	17%
whether specific schools will be kept open or closed after consolidation	21%	17%
whether it will improve school life for students	1%	2%
whether it will improve academic quality for students	2%	0%
whether it will improve academic course options for students	4%	0%
whether individual high school traditions would be continued	32%	38%
whether current high school students want consolidation to happen	55%	41%
whether parents of current students in the school systems want consolidation to happen	33%	27%

4. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would worry you most about the change? (n=188)

Community Impacts	41%
Education Quality/Options	26%
Financial Concerns	11%
Tax Concerns	6%
Equity Concerns	6%
Transportation	5%
Staffing/Budget Concerns	4%
Consolidate	3%
Don't Consolidate	3%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	11%

5. If Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools do consolidate, what would excite you the most about the change? (n=177)

Education Quality/Options	40%
Financial Concerns	28%
Staffing/Budget Concerns	22%
Equity Concerns	16%
Community Impacts	8%
Tax Concerns	7%
Consolidate	4%
Don't Consolidate	0%
Transportation	0%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	14%

6. How long have you lived in Buncombe County? (n=257)

10 years or less	24%
11-20 years	18%
21+ years	58%

7. What is your age? (n=261)

18-25	1%
26-35	11%
36-45	11%
46-55	18%
56-65	21%
66-75	25%
Prefer not to answer	1%

8. Which community do you live in? (n=260)

Alexander	3%
Arden	8%
Barnardsville	0%
Candler	7%
City of Asheville	42%
Emma Community	2%
Fairview	3%
Flat Creek	1%
I am NOT a resident of Buncombe County	1%
Leicester	3%
Shiloh	1%
Swannanoa	4%
Town of Biltmore Forest	1%
Town of Black Mountain	3%
Town of Montreat	0%
Town of Weaverville	5%
Town of Woodfin	3%
Unincorporated Buncombe County	12%

9. What is your race/ethnicity? (n=179)

Asian	2%
Black or African-American	3%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
White	86%
Other	3%
I prefer not to answer	4%

10. We have asked you these questions to understand the possible benefits and challenges if it is decided to consolidate Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools into one system. If you have any additional thoughts about the issue, please tell us here. (n = 98)

Equity Concerns	20%
Consolidate	18%
Education Quality/Options	17%
Financial Concerns	15%
Don't Consolidate	14%
Staffing/Budget Concerns	12%
Tax Concerns	6%
Community Impacts	6%
Transportation	1%
Undetermined/Irrelevant	26%

Appendix E

Focus Group Input

A total of 7 focus groups were held August 5-8, 2024. Combined, the focus group participants worked with students from Birth-PreK through After High School. There was both racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the groups.

Community Group/Interest Area	# of Attendees
Business/Foundation	7
Community/Student Supports #1	11
Community/Student Supports #2	7
Community/Student Supports #3	8
Health/Behavioral Health	10
Homeschool, Charter, Private School Operators	4
Secondary/Postsecondary	8
Total	55

1. Tell me about the educational environment in the 2 school systems. Are they about the same? Are there big differences – if so, where?

- ◆ At least several participants in each group indicated there were some differences.
- ◆ Comments related to differences between the systems:
 - *Tolerance for student behaviors is different. Kids in the county are suspended or have charges pressed. But another says it's happening in ACS and their rate is also high.*
 - *Cell phone toleration is different – looser at ACS.*
 - *County schools have more tech resources – apparent during the pandemic. Another said ACS all had it.*
 - *“Huge” difference in educational environment during COVID – BCS was in classroom, ACS was not. ACS kids were desperate to be in peer groups.*
 - *ACS had opportunities for >300 students to be in community center masked.*
 - *BCS is more challenging for families to learn about resources available.*
 - *BCS provides more challenging academics.*
 - *Seeing more black and brown families moving to county to be in BCS.*
 - *BCS has better school food.*
 - *BCS does a better job with retaining staff.*
 - *Most the of the ACS students at lower levels of academic achievement are BIPOC. Same lower end in BCS looks and feels different – their outcomes are diluted and spread out. Better able to concentrate effort in ACS.*
 - *BIPOC kids in BCS are subject to stereotypical treatment.*
 - *ACS doesn't have as much BIPOC representation as we would like.*
 - *BCS focuses a little more on SEL topics than ACS. ACS is lacking in SEL focus. Some agreement within the group.*

- *They serve different populations. Rural vs urban, city vs. country.*
- *Higher concentrations of poverty in ACS.*
- *Greater proportion of minorities in ACS.*
- *There are preferred schools that parents attempt to get their kids into.*
- *There are financial differences – ACS gets more dollars per student. BCS has a hardship budget.*
- *Some districts of BCS also have high minority percentages.*
- *Environment and resources are not equal.*
- *They are very different. Like Carolina and Duke.*
- *Differences in culture. Differences in focus.*
- *Differences in how opportunity gaps are acknowledged and addressed.*
- *ACS foundation has 10 employees and spends more than \$1M on programming - paying HS kids to do mentoring, running the afterschool programs, arts in residence program. Jason Reynolds, #1 banned book author in the country came to speak. BCS has a part-time staff of 3.*
- *ACS celebrates diversity. BCS doesn't feel that way. Sense of belonging for students in ACS*
- *In ACS, the school board is not talking about banning books. That is a topic of conversation in BCS. ACS is progressive as far as what is allowed in comparison to BCS.*
- *ACS has more afterschool opportunities. Some close in BCS schools have similar things but further out there are less.*
- *Different in leadership structure and implementation. ACS has a great identity – very unique. BCS is larger so they operate as one.*
- *Property taxes are much higher in Asheville – assumes that means costs are higher in ACS.*
- *Individual cultures. ACS is closer knit, more dynamic.*
- *BCS says “don't enter our space” to potential community partners. ACS says “welcome, we're just a hot mess.”*
- *ACS has the elementary magnet system.*
- *ACS only has 1 MS and 1 HS. BCS has a whole lot of both. ACS families should not have no choice, while BCS families have choices.*
- *Diversity is different.*
- *BCS has more money than ACS.*
- *Living situations – ACS BIPOC kids live in the projects. Poverty in BCS looks different.*
- *Teacher representation looks different. BCS is way less diverse. BCS has bigger rural educator feel. There isn't great diversity in ACS teachers, but it's better than BCS.*
- *ACS has higher rate of black students compared to BCS.*
- *AHS has more offerings than most HS, but they have the money to do that.*
- *Pay discrepancies – teachers make more in 1 than the other.*
- *ACS is in top 5 in terms of per pupil funding in the state.*
- *There is very little representation other than white in terms of BCS administrators.*

- *BCS varies a lot from district to district. Erwin is much different from Reynolds. In ACS, geographics drive the demographics. Lots of distinct populations within ACS, so maybe more to deal with across a small number – power struggle.*
- *Difference in academics – maybe the appearance is buried because the specific demos are buried within various BCS schools.*
- ◆ **Comments related to similarities between the systems:**
 - *Both systems have pretty much all-white leadership and that’s a negative.*
 - *Both systems could do a lot better. But fear a watering down with a merger.*
 - *Differences vary by school, not necessarily by school district.*
 - *Achievement gaps of black students is a concern in both districts.*
 - *At Camp Woodson both ACS and BCS provide opportunities for students to learn about possible career paths. The systems partner on this.*
 - *60%+ not reading on grade level in either system*
 - *Both systems are losing students to charters because of the perceived violence.*
 - *Emotional-social supports are not available. Kids don’t how to regulate. They lack problem-solving skills. Problem in both districts. Parenting classes would be very helpful. Some pushback that schools shouldn’t be expected to do all that. Maybe more community partnerships are needed.*
 - *Lack of leveraging community members as leaders is a problem in both districts.*
 - *Lack resources to address food insecurity and housing. True of both districts. Both districts also have chronic and high homeless student counts – both need more MKV resources.*

2. When you think about ACS, in what areas do you feel it excels?

- ◆ **Areas in which ACS excels:**
 - *Some say athletics, others disagree – ACS just isn’t as good in sports as it used to be*
 - *Do well with the high-flyer kids – they get the resources*
 - *City district feels more diverse and more welcoming. 1 pointed out that it is <13% diverse.*
 - *SILSA is excellent and provide opportunities.*
 - *AHS and SILSA are desirable programs.*
 - *They try harder.*
 - *They are more child-centered when a child has a problem.*
 - *Access to resources. More opportunities for transportation for kids to get to places.*
 - *More afterschool opportunity.*
 - *Afterschool programming. Extracurricular activities for sports and arts.*
 - *ACS feels vibrant. ACS celebrates diversity. Sense of belonging for students in ACS.*
 - *Early childhood program is bigger than BCS.*
 - *Elected school board is probably a step in the right direction.*
 - *Staff are all compassionate for families and kids.*
 - *People are invested in what they do.*
 - *ACS has more resources.*

- *Because they are smaller, they can put more intentionality in where they put those resources. However, with changes in leadership they are not always consistent in where they put the resources.*
- *Tries harder on diversity and inclusion pieces. See more programming – Girls on the Run, Arts, community.*
- *They use community well.*
- *Collaboration of foundation with ACS. ACS welcomes the foundation people at all levels.*
- *ACS has been addressing racial disparities with eyes wide open for >12 years. ACS is far down the path in this area. ACS recognizes that racism exists in our system and is working to address it.*
- *Have strong leadership right now and a strong school board.*
- *Innovative.*
- *Responsive to student needs.*
- *Opportunities for students to serve in leadership positions on the board of the foundation.*
- *Do a good job of listening to kids.*
- *At the HS, 32 AP courses, 4 years of ceramics, beautiful stadium. Seen families opt into ACS HS instead of BCS for that reason.*
- *Able to respond to the community well and directly, because of their small size. In contrast, BCS CO is far removed from people they serve.*
- *Staff in ACS can serve just one school while in BCS they serve multiple.*
- *Racial diversity is more likely in ACS. In BCS it is only white kids in honors and APs. They feel ACS is successful in this area because of their programming.*
- *Dual enrollment is much higher in ACS – maybe due to geography, maybe due to efforts by ACS to create access and equity.*
- *ACS has classes that BCS does not.*
- *ACS has AVID.*
- *Amazing district. Don't know why they run into the problems they have. They could innovate in ways that BCS could not because they are not so big.*
- *Small, nimble, well-resourced*
- *Been forced to be more responsive to diversity. Example of SILSO, mentorship, etc. BCS has not yet been forced to deal with this. BCS doesn't have that pressure yet.*
- *Strength to the localness of ACS. Lot of people grew up here and went here.*
- *There are pathways of excellence for high achievement.*
- ◆ **Negative comments made in response to the question:**
 - *“Nothing”*
 - *ACS pushes lower income students through. Poor kids are labelled “bad.”*
 - *504s/IEPs are manipulated by rich parents to get more time for their kid to take the SAT.*

3. When you think about BCS, in what areas do you feel it excels?

- ◆ **Areas in which ACS excels:**
 - *The alt program is excellent. Well designed.*

- *Have early college (ACS kids cannot participate in it)*
- *Each school feels like a community.*
- *Academics are really strong.*
- *Not afraid to put the right people where they need to be. ACS won't do that because they don't want to deal with the pushback.*
- *Likes the subdistricts - if 1 subdistrict is closed, not all schools are closed on snow days.*
- *BCS do a good job in connecting with the community. Good job trying to bring in the resources and it's authentic. They have a lot of pride in their schools and take a lot of pride in what they are doing.*
- *Accessibility to admins is easy.*
- *Change to global education focus is good – still pretty new.*
- *Artist in residency – specific effort that is growing.*
- *Consistency of leadership.*
- *The buildings themselves.*
- *Consistent school identity.*
- *There is some diversity and it has been growing. # of languages represented has grown.*
- *Consistent leadership. Lack of turnover in administrators is a positive.*
- *Accountability through elected school board has been present longer.*
- *1 of the BCS elementary schools has a strong international focus.*
- *Staff is also probably compassionate.*
- *Less of a focus on political correctness. More diverse in terms of rural, urban, suburban.*
- *A little more organized and consistent. They have more consistent systems.*
- *Way better communication.*
- *Openness to a mental health perspective.*
- *Have tried to put in place things to help teachers and their mental health. Focus on helping staff stay in district.*
- *Intentional in the direction they choose. ACS is wherever the wind is blowing that season.*
- *More community focused because they don't have as many resources as ACS.*
- *There are clinics that they open to other schools in the district.*
- *They work hard to provide equity in the resources that they do have – example of working to have a clinician available who takes private insurance.*
- *Having a fresh new superintendent who started as a custodian is great. He understands the responsibility. He has done a great job of being out with every employee. Dr. Jackson talks with teachers, custodians. It's more like a family.*
- *People come up to them at the ball game, at the grocery store, and tell them how excited they are about what is happening in*
- *There are great teachers. There are a few bad ones, but staff is generally great.*
- *It's the best group of principals in 40+ years. Superintendent has addressed performance issues and brought in the right people.*
- *Superintendent supports the foundation and the foundation does a great job.*
- *BCS principals have more agency because it's a larger system.*

- *More variety in CTE offerings and ability for students to finish full credentials.*
- *Does a good job at recruiting the rural areas for tech and career pathways. BCS students have opportunities to go directly into the workforce. “Opportunities for rural poor white students.”*
- *BCS secondary students have more options in general for those who excel outside the traditional classroom. But that’s partly a function of size.*
- *BCS makes an effort to provide interpreters and all languages are available by phone. Graduation from summer school program had simultaneous interpretation in Spanish.*
- *They have more space.*
- *Some individual schools have good connections with employers and therefore CTE pathways, workforce development.*
- *BCS schools feel bigger than they actually are.*
- *Nice athletic fields.*
- *Opportunity for rich extracurriculars – band, sports.*
- *Oakley ES is dual language and that’s working well.*
- ◆ **Negative comments made in response to the question:**
 - *Long silence at first in a few groups.*
 - *Feel dual enrollment is restricted in BCS to “certain students”. BCS has a higher GPA requirement than state requires and also in some cases teacher recommendations in play. “Saturation of power” in the BCS counseling departments. Allegation that counselor has denied students who asked to enroll in AP courses.*
 - *Concerns about whether BCS encourages AP courses versus dual enrollment in the same courses at AB tech.*
 - *General comment that we are not funding public education in general like we need to be.*
 - *Those outside BCS aren’t contributing to the system.*
 - *“Nothing”*
 - *Varying resources across the county – some schools closer to city have more resources*
 - *Mentioned racism and bias bleeding from deep county into rest of BCS and even into ACS*
 - *The level of connections with employers and CTE pathways varies by subdistrict. At Owen HS, there wasn’t anyone doing that. One splits the difference and says it matters which BCS district – some are really tapped into their local biz community while others don’t have much of local biz to get with.*

4. Is ACS missing anything important?

- ◆ *Discussion about systems for selecting students in ACS special programs is done by people with similar demographics – implying racism, kids being tracked out of opportunities.*
- ◆ *Accountability. Expectations are higher. This goes along with having an alternative place to put kids who are struggling. ACS doesn’t have that place.*
- ◆ *ACS lacks follow through with initiatives. They are throwing a lot of things at the wall.*
- ◆ *Missing a lot of authentic perspectives. Example of FB reels with just BIPOC kids is seen as fake by some of the BIPOC focus group participants.*
- ◆ *Missing transparency.*

- ◆ *Lack of support for children with high needs.*
- ◆ *Do they lack the resources or the will to help students – example of the BIPOC people in the room who get called in to help with the BIPOC kids.*
- ◆ *In ACS there is a subgroup of people who dictate what goes on in the district.*
- ◆ *Lack of intentionality of supporting mental health on the ground.*
- ◆ *People in positions of authority don't actually have the resources or authority to do things.*
- ◆ *MS is a challenge for every child. ACS has a new building but the kids are struggling. Some BIPOC MS students feel "persecuted." MS seems to be a "dreamcrusher place."*
- ◆ *ACS teachers leaving to go to BCS because they feel "taxed and tired."*
- ◆ *Poverty is a big part of what kids bring to school in the morning. Wants teachers to understand that. Maybe teachers need more training so they can be more understanding.*
- ◆ *Universal breakfast and lunch is missing.*
- ◆ *Kids are coming to afterschool stressed from having been in trouble in school.*
- ◆ *Academic outcomes for BIPOC and poor kids are terrible. Not enough attention being paid there.*
- ◆ *Worried those would not be as accessible for BIPOC and poor kids in there is consolidation.*
- ◆ *Consistent good communications to community partners. They hear about stuff through the grapevine rather than officially.*
- ◆ *A consistent goal that isn't dependent on a particular worker. No consistent priority for the system. ACS needs to pick a priority.*
- ◆ *It's so disorganized that when ACS asks for additional support services from a community organization, the organization is reluctant to provide the support.*
- ◆ *There is a new mental health liaison every year.*
- ◆ *It's more principal-run to the point that they are "little dictators."*
- ◆ *There have been no invitations to attend SHAC meetings offered to organizations that feel they should be part of that work.*
- ◆ *ACS doesn't appear to be sustainable financially. Is it a fund balance question?*
- ◆ *ACS lacks consistency of leadership. Hard to maintain a consistent trajectory. Hard to keep initiatives going.*
- ◆ *Someone from the outside will think ACS is attractive until you get here and see the mess.*
- ◆ *ACS doesn't remove ineffective administrators; they just move to the central office.*
- ◆ *Those who have stayed consistently in the ACS central office are the problem.*
- ◆ *There has not been a homegrown superintendent in their memories.*
- ◆ *The appointed school board perpetuated the hiring of friends and covering up of weak leaders.*
- ◆ *Socioeconomic stratification – not really even diversity. It's just people at the extreme ends and they are in conflict.*
- ◆ *Press has really added to a lot of the negative perceptions over the last 13 years. Headline grabbing, not really delving into the reasons why.*
- ◆ *Rising housing costs are pushing people out of ACS.*
- ◆ *ACS has a smaller population of multilingual learners and few staff who speak the languages of the students.*

- ◆ *Need more than 1 HS and 1 MS. Classrooms are overcrowded.*
- ◆ *SILSA is technically a separate school, but they share AP classes and extracurriculars in addition to space.*
- ◆ *Adequate pay and staffing for teachers.*
- ◆ *It's always been white women teaching how to use new curriculum, then ACS teachers not given time/resources to implement with fidelity.*
- ◆ *Not enough Latinx teachers or bilingual school secretaries. Feels the secretaries should be bilingual and reflect the community demographics.*
- ◆ *Parents are not as concerned as they should be.*
- ◆ *Students come to school with trauma and are unable to learn. A lot need extra support for mental health. A lot need more people that look like them to feel comfortable.*
- ◆ *ACS is more of a political dance – various areas vs. public housing.*
- ◆ *ACS has highest rate of teacher exodus in state. Teacher perception of discipline problems drives the turnover was suggested by one participant.*
- ◆ *Stability. Why has CO been a revolving door of superintendents for decades? ACS can't keep a superintendent. Also lack of stability below the superintendent as well in the CO. Always starting up something different. Why is there turnover at the top?*
 - *There is a lot of "gatekeeping".*
 - *ACS is top-heavy in the CO.*
 - *Incompetent people in the CO employ their friends.*
 - *Smaller group of homegrown people to choose from. Then, we want diversity.*
 - *Problem with affordability within the city limits.*
 - *We previously picked some people who were a bad fit – also we had an appointed school board responsible for some of those candidates. Now, probably some stigma attached to ACS positions.*
 - *It's a hard demographic to serve. Wealthy parents versus needy kids.*
 - *Every time they do a superintendent search, they don't look at their in-house people – ACS doesn't communicate a grow from within culture.*

5. Is BCS missing anything important?

- ◆ *BIPOC teachers and staff.*
- ◆ *SW and counselors. There are less positions per student in BCS.*
- ◆ *BCS struggles working with inner city youth.*
- ◆ *BCS is less responsive to the curricular needs of specific students, maybe because they are so big.*
- ◆ *BCS does not lean into those who can help. Instead, they tend to think they know better how to do it.*
- ◆ *Allegation of being scared to walk into the community.*
- ◆ *Long-standing interpersonal challenges between families that have lived here forever – results in the adult not being able to talk about the needs of a specific student until the adults resolve their multigenerational problems. No one is actually working together. The pandemic helped reveal*

this – communities came together to serve the kids and when they returned to school they showed growth. Now we have reverted to our old ways.

- ◆ *Town is small enough that it feels every pea under the mattress.*
- ◆ *The students who need us most are more diluted in BCS.*
- ◆ *Brought up the issue of attendance boundaries. Drawn in weird ways. Richer families are pushed toward particular schools.*
- ◆ *More stable leadership.*
- ◆ *Tendency to move staff around that should no longer be employed.*
- ◆ *Underlying level of racism and they move the problem to a different building.*
- ◆ *They focus on political correctness and not making too many waves.*
- ◆ *Sometimes they are too controlling of the narrative.*
- ◆ *Tendency to sweep things under the rug.*
- ◆ *BCS lacks vehicles smaller than a bus for transporting small sports groups.*
- ◆ *BCS remains in the hands of a certain group of individuals. All white board. BCS CO is a little more representative of the demographics. Also a lot of gate-keeping. This is less spotlighted than in ACS.*
- ◆ *Money and resources cover up what’s really going on in BCS.*
- ◆ *IEPs and 504s do not include input from parents.*
- ◆ *BCS has placed some kids with no English into classrooms without any supports, hoping the kid will somehow learn it on their own.*
- ◆ *Adequate pay and staffing for teachers.*
- ◆ *Inclusion classes are now muddled. 1st year language kids are now in there with EC kids. Used to have ESOL teachers in there, but they went away. A lot of placements are not correctly done.*
- ◆ *Mention that there are ESOL supports, but it’s not enough for students.*
- ◆ *Nobody is reading on grade level.*
- ◆ *With lack of new teachers there is a growing lack of accountability.*
- ◆ *Parents are not as concerned as they should be.*
- ◆ *Some of that community partnership is missing with this district. Community partners should not be begging for space and time to offer the resources they have to support students. Principals are not all bought in. District could do more to support partnerships.*
- ◆ *Current student services people are busy doing things other than establishing family relationships, so that work is not done. Also, SW and counselor ratios are absurd.*

6. Would consolidation solve any of the challenges either district has that you previously identified?

- ◆ General responses to this question:
 - *Issue of NC teacher pay in both districts – if there is savings from reduced admin positions, would that money be given to teachers?*
 - *Has it worked well anywhere else?*
 - *“Devil would be in the details.” How would property taxes work, how would policies work?*

- *What is the true motivation? Organizations are human-made things, so there is no set model that works.*
- *Several want more data in order to make a decision. Who would be left in the consolidated organization? Concerns that BIPOC staff will not be retained.*
- *Racism is the elephant that everyone is ignoring. Reynolds teachers have racist bumper stickers and are not reprimanded.*
- *Switching to elected ACS school board was a state mandate and it has not had long enough to begin to address the issues. Maybe some hopeful signs. But a huge number of ACS voters don't have kids.*
- *Non-white kids are not doing well in either district, so consolidation isn't likely to help.*
- *Maybe the CBOs, employer, and postsecondary partners would benefit from only working with 1 school system. Currently, they have to work with different learning platforms in order to input case notes, have to interface with 2 different individuals for their programs, have to learn 2 different sets of rules, etc.*
- *Depends on what consolidation is.*
- *Maybe it reduces some admin expenses and those dollars can be rerouted.*
- *Maybe it simplifies logistics – 1 school calendar, 1 person to go to for some stuff.*
- *Some assume it would mean job loss.*
- *The idea of consolidation carries some idea of elitism – it is common that parents have faked that they are in ACS limits.*
- *Some kids are going to succeed whatever the setup, but some kids are going to fail whatever the setup.*
- *Would merging help to unify everyone?*
- *It might benefit the county-county in terms of money, but not that it would necessarily benefit ACS or BCS students.*
- *Need to ensure consistent representation and equity lens across the entire district.*
- *Those in Section 8 are moving further and further out. And there are some communities where they feel that being black would be a real challenge. One called it “scary.”*
- *Uniqueness could be lost – could it be preserved?*
- *ACS lost 30% of teachers last year – biggest in state. Would 1 leadership team mean better retention of great teachers? Likewise, if transportation was widely available, that would be a point for consolidation.*
- *Is it just rearranging the furniture or could it be used an opportunity to shift the schools? It could be an opportunity for leadership.*
- ◆ **Responses specific to ACS:**
 - *If the model is that ACS just becomes 1 district within BCS, then no problems will be solved.*
 - *Some think they would not keep the same number of ACS ES. Some would be closed.*
 - *Cougar pride is real – AHS – concerns that would be lost.*
 - *Some feels ACS would lose more from the merger.*
 - *ACS parents would be concerned about whether they would have a choice in ES. However, the parents in the projects would only be able to send their kids to the schools the buses go to.*

- *Expectations for BIPOC students in ACS are lower – that would not be addressed by consolidation. Belief that BIPOC students can learn is lacking in ACS.*
- ◆ **Responses specific to BCS:**
 - *Outcomes for BCS black students are no better.*
 - *BCS started an SEL/community person a year ago and that person hasn't been out to the community yet.*
 - *It would not address other things – housing shortage, population changes systemic issues.*
 - *Racism won't end with consolidation.*
 - *We are asking schools to solve all the problems of society.*
 - *Danger of DEI initiatives in places without diversity ends up being you don't know how to apply it.*
 - *If consolidated, politics or micropolitics might not be resolved. The people with the most money would win again.*
 - *Would the powers be willing to keep the best of ACS and apply to BCS.*
 - *BCS wants help supporting black and brown students but they don't know where to start. More BIPOC families are being pushed into the county due to housing – they were “good with 5, but now there's 25”*
 - *Consolidation would allow the community to get behind 1 school system. Some think it might help.*
 - *Wonder if BCS is ready for the ACS slate of problems? Would there be enough representation in the combined district to be the advocate for the fragile student populations? Not sure how it could benefit.*
 - *Every BCS school is a Title 1 school. So there is poverty in BCS. So they also have fragile kids.*
 - *Maybe no one would lose jobs because they are having problems filling all positions anyway. Maybe combining resources would be a good thing.*
 - *Flip side – would a merger lead to just 1 person responsible for key functions and they would be overwhelmed?*
 - *How would diversity be maintained?*
 - *Would leadership be more stretched than they already are?*
 - *Potentially*
 - *Making it bigger might not make the problems go away.*

7. Are there inequities between the districts? Please describe.

- ◆ *There are inequities between ACS and BCS, but more so among the schools and their locations.*
- ◆ *ACS doesn't have day treatment but BCS does.*
- ◆ *ACS has not had alternative programs, while BCS has alternative schools. ACS is creating something now and used to have it, but enrollments dropped so it was ended. Now they are bringing it back – those kinds of resources have not been consistent.*
- ◆ *Schools open and close in ACS more than they do in BCS.*
- ◆ *ACS too small for some of the therapeutic supports.*
- ◆ *ACS leadership changes. BCS has been more consistent.*

- ◆ *ACS has more gate keeping, more being told “no”, more red tape. No one to go to talk about how we make this work. Perception that new ACS admins are not allowed to make changes or work on culture change. Maybe ACS is “too much to clean up.” No one has been invested enough to spend the time to fix the problems.*
- ◆ *ACS talks about closing the achievement gap, but every time there is a new leader how we do that changes, so we have to start over.*
- ◆ *There are a lot of admins in ACS per capita compared to BCS.*

8. In weighing the pros and cons of consolidation, what should be the deciding factor(s)?

- ◆ *Student success was noted multiple times across the focus groups.*
- ◆ *History – when we integrated the schools, BIPOC students got lesser education levels. In the former black schools here, students were educated by teachers with master’s degrees and kids had a sense of pride and community.*
- ◆ *It won’t work if ACS just gets folded into BCS. There has to be a merging, taking the good of ACS in.*
- ◆ *If it happens, we have to look at how the attendance lines are drawn.*
- ◆ *News has reported that ACS has the highest achievement gap and the highest rate of discipline disproportionality – they think top of the nation. They think the problem also exists in BCS but it’s buried because the data are not disaggregated.*
- ◆ *Question of whether there would be different size HS, academies. It would have to feel completely different from what exists now, otherwise it will just feel like ACS has been folded in.*
- ◆ *Look at new ways of educating. There are great ways that we don’t tap into. And we need to bring back some ways that worked in the past – look at PEAK charter school. PEAK doesn’t suspend.*
- ◆ *Is consolidation about students or just money and power?*
- ◆ *A lot of challenges in the districts are actually state issues.*
- ◆ *“We are focused on the wrong thing.”*
- ◆ *Would addressing food issue become possible? Would everyone have access to free breakfast and lunch?*
- ◆ *Ensure representation of the issues in ACS.*
- ◆ *How would it look everyday for a child going to school?*
- ◆ *Would families be engaged in the implementation?*
- ◆ *Some grass is greener thinking historically – is either really greener?*
- ◆ *Enormous distrust of the ACS leadership – ACS had to pay out some money to break contracts.*
- ◆ *Can a tiny district like ACS weather all the crazy things happening in public education in general? Then if it becomes a small part of a larger district would it get resources?*
- ◆ *Schools have become the frontline in trying to address childhood poverty. We ask them to play that role, but don’t give them the resources. So if that could be addressed in a merger, then it would be a good idea.*
- ◆ *How would the attendance boundaries be drawn? Pizza slice attendance rezoning would not be good; jelly doughnut model would be more acceptable.*

- ◆ *Process must include specific inclusion of families in public housing.*
- ◆ *Current attendance boundaries don't make any sense at all – neighborhoods are split.*
- ◆ *How much money could be saved and how would that money be spent on kids?*
- ◆ *Would there be more money/resources available to support the transition? How long would the transition be?*
- ◆ *Could merger include a more unified approach to NC Pre-K and other Pre-K?*
- ◆ *Transportation can be a big barrier to students/families participating in things.*
- ◆ *Maybe it would reduce useless competition.*
- ◆ *Bad culture in ACS is pervasive and it doesn't matter who is at the top.*
- ◆ *Observation that there are differences in work norms from former employees of both systems – ACS former workers have poor work norms.*
- ◆ *How it would be accomplished – would BCS absorb ACS or would it be a meeting of equals?*
- ◆ *Question of whether either system can manage bad people out.*
- ◆ *ACS has “pervasive issues” that 1 person can't seem to change.*
- ◆ *Belief that ACS leadership is more diverse. And ACS is better at paying attention to diversity.*
- ◆ *Would efficiencies be gained – merge facilities, facilities maintenance, maybe close some schools, buying bus fuel. All about finding efficiencies in running the businesses of both systems.*
- ◆ *How will citizens react, particularly if it results in a higher tax rate for county people?*
- ◆ *Question of whether it would really save?*
- ◆ *Do we even want public education in this country?*
- ◆ *This study is political – if there are efficiencies posited, it might sway the politics towards consolidation.*
- ◆ *Agreement to put students forward.*
- ◆ *It's an opportunity for the districts to learn from each other. That should be beneficial and should result in pulling kids back from charters.*
- ◆ *Could we offer special classes like ceramics on a consolidated basis so that it could reach more students – currently, not everything is offered in every school.*
- ◆ *Is there a way that curriculum could be developed that would honor students that don't go to 4-year college? Opportunities for every child on the learning spectrum.*
- ◆ *Athletics should be a factor – ACS has an amazing program. But if you're a football player in BCS you want to be in Reynolds. Led into a positive idea that we could have just 1 magnet for some things.*
- ◆ *Power dynamics will be a factor, even if it shouldn't be.*
- ◆ *Consolidation would not solve the problem of some principals really supporting CTE and some not. They are waiting for some principals who don't support CTE to retire.*
- ◆ *“What is the evidence?”*
- ◆ *What's best for students and families. Period. But it will come down to politics and money.*
- ◆ *Asheville is closer to Aspen than the rest of NC with the ultrawealthy coming in and making decisions for everyone else. And they all agree that the ultrawealthy always win.*

- ◆ *Would there be some advantages for students in consolidation? Maybe it could open opportunities for school choice, but then there would be longer transportation times.*
- ◆ *Would need to be a huge effort to make the workforce culturally competent.*
- ◆ *Could the leadership structure be improved? Who would remain?*
- ◆ *LGBTQ feel ACS is safer than BCS. Allegation that BCS fails these students and unreported hate crimes there.*
- ◆ *Demographics. Maybe shrinking enrollment leads to wanting a merger in order to keep up student choices.*
- ◆ *Some noted they cared more about who is running the classroom as opposed to who is running the systems. As parents, we fight K-12. We have bigger problems than consolidation can address.*
- ◆ *It might save some CO administrative costs, it doesn't change the basic problem of cost of living challenges.*
- ◆ *"The grass is all brown" – public education is underfunded.*
- ◆ *Every 10 years or so the state talks about consolidating community colleges and the conclusion is that it doesn't save that much. However, we could potentially looking at shared services – purchasing for example in order to save money.*
- ◆ *Those who are impacted need to provide input.*
- ◆ *What would happen to student representation?*
- ◆ *Allegation the BCS districts are gerrymandered.*
- ◆ *Allegation that BIPOC BCS students are not represented in AP, advanced programs because they don't feel comfortable there – they don't see anyone like them.*
- ◆ *If it's only about money, then consolidate. But money shouldn't be the only concern.*
- ◆ *"We all know how the state feels about Asheville."*

9. If there is a decision to consolidate, what would be your biggest concern/the biggest concern of the constituent groups you represent?

- ◆ *The kids are going to move to charter and private schools out of fear of what might happen in a consolidated school system. Parents feel like for the 1st time that they have a choice. Why not choose differently?*
- ◆ *Discussion of charters needing to work with publics for athletics – why don't the public districts support charters that are closing the achievement gap?*
- ◆ *Achievement gap - that matters the most*
- ◆ *Understanding what the real objectives are and what sets of data they are using to make this decision. Consolidation could happen tomorrow but the outcomes won't be seen for years. The community needs to know the objectives so they can make decisions today.*
- ◆ *Worries over who wasn't notified because the community is poor at communicating. The community would need to be prepared – whose strategic plan is busted, etc.?*
- ◆ *Wants the recommendation to include implementation requirements and also consider charters. Give charters a seat at the table when it comes to planning. Raised the possibility of space and resources for charters.*
- ◆ *What happens to staff? Would we lose the best of the best and is there a way to counter that?*

- ◆ *Hope it's not immediate as far as implementation. Then, who is in charge?*
- ◆ *"Such a great opportunity for something great to happen." But we saw how they squandered that post-COVID.*
- ◆ *If there is a merger, system would need to be even more intentional about race and equity.*
- ◆ *How would SROs part of changing the culture. There is disparity in this area - 1 district may work better with youth of color than the other. BCS has a high number of referrals for non-white kids. Bigger issue than just education.*
- ◆ *District lines need to really be district lines. Owen subdistrict gets a revolving door of principals. Kids that live in Owen district can go to Reynolds. Attendance boundaries need to be enforced and transfers not allowed. Also, enrollments need to be balanced.*
- ◆ *What will the organization chart look like? Am I going to have a job? Would all the CO positions have to be posted and everyone would have to reapply?*
- ◆ *Maintenance of pride and culture from both, primarily at the school level.*
- ◆ *How many months/years will the focus be on the work of consolidation instead of focusing on the kids? Concern that recent gains in ACS focus will be lost.*
- ◆ *Fear that the work of ACS around racism will be thrown out. Would we be able to have those conversations?*
- ◆ *Merger won't solve the bigger problems of funding education in the state.*
- ◆ *This is just another "defunding effort" on the part of the legislature.*
- ◆ *"I don't know that anybody's put a pencil to it." Common perception that there would be some savings in top positions. Someone mentioned savings in consolidating payroll, etc.*
- ◆ *Some don't understand the fear of change, especially since we are not getting perfect outcomes now.*
- ◆ *A benefit for foundation fundraising is that business owners would only get 1 ask, instead of multiple.*
- ◆ *What now?*
- ◆ *Will it be the same old same old?*
- ◆ *Who is losing their job?*
- ◆ *Will ACS be split up or kept whole?*
- ◆ *Attendance of students – enrollment, will it change?*
- ◆ *How will students be served?*
- ◆ *How will staff be served?*
- ◆ *General consolidation concerns - Poor and marginalized kids will be left out – the combined system won't have to pay attention to these kids.*
- ◆ *General concern – there would be short-term harm to students.*
- ◆ *General concern – it won't lead to more district stability.*
- ◆ *General concern – it will take a long time to see positive outcomes.*
- ◆ *General concern – There is no "good ship" to jump onto. BCS is not a shining star. Implication is that neither school system is so awesome that we should be seeking to replicate it further. But hard to be excellent when NC funding is below that of SC.*

- ◆ *General concern – rest of state wishes Asheville didn't exist because it's so liberal. Rest of county is less liberal – consolidating will create an uproar among them.*
- ◆ *General concern – will ACS kids be brought in as a district or will ACS kids be free to roam?*
- ◆ *General concern – how will marginalized kids be taken care of if there is a merger?*
- ◆ *More turmoil could drive kids out of both systems, so anything that is a choice could gain, just because people resent the change. Probably see more homeschooling. Net result would be a loss of students for both systems. 1 thinks they would gain for 2 years, then it would go back to about normal.*

10. If there is a decision to leave things as they are, what would be your biggest concern?

- ◆ *That BCS would not realize any efficiencies - desire for BCS to learn from ACS.*
- ◆ *Would both districts be okay financially? There is community talk that ACS is not as stable financially. Perception they are top heavy in admin.*
- ◆ *Why are there county schools within city limits and vice versa?*
- ◆ *ACS response to charter movement has been to say to parents, "how about if we do an internal charter school?" Segued into we planned for 5k students based on 2015 work in ACS and that didn't happen. Parents are upset that ACS hasn't been able to maintain the promises based on 5k plan. Consolidation discussion about people wanting their own stuff for their own kids.*
- ◆ *What now?*
- ◆ *Are the students being served?*
- ◆ *Same old, same old?*
- ◆ *ACS will likely to continue consolidating schools.*
- ◆ *Who benefits in either situation? Privileged kids will benefit the most*

11. Are there any other topics or items we need to discuss regarding the question of school system consolidation?

- ◆ *Need to figure how to get the charters and publics to coexist, for funding and as a collaborative system. There is demand for alternatives to the districts. Some charters serve kids on the edges of the bell curve while the district is meeting the needs of the kids in the middle.*

Appendix F

Forum Input

In September 2024, Buncombe County and Prismatic Services hosted a series of 9 in-person community forums and 1 online forum. The in-person forums were stationed-based and allowed attendees to move around and provide input/feedback at each station. Similar activities were available in the online forum using polling options. A total of 222 persons attended the forums.

Date	Location	Attendees
09SEP24	Owen MS	19
10SEP24	East Asheville Library	26
12SEP24	Cane Creek MS	11
13SEP24	Weaverville Community Center	30
16SEP24	Isaac Dickson ES	35
17SEP24	Erwin HS	4
18SEP24	Enka IS	5
19SEP24	Hall Fletcher ES	49
20SEP24	Skyland/South Buncombe Library	19
23SEP24	Online	24
	Total	222

Compiled In-Person Forum Data

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	59%
No	41%

Community Area (classified into CAPE-defined areas):

Area	#
Arden	4%
Candler	1%
City of Asheville	36%
Emma Community	1%
Fairview	4%
Flat Creek	1%
Leicester	3%
Swannanoa	4%
Unincorporated Buncombe County	4%
Other	43%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	Owen MS	East Asheville Library	Cane Creek MS	Weaverville CC	Isaac Dickson ES	Erwin HS	Enka IS	Hall Fletcher ES	Skyland Library
Large Cost Savings	#3	#3	#3	#4	#3	#3	#4	#3	#3
Small Cost Savings	#4	#4	#4	#3	#4	#4	#3	#4	#4
Education Quality Improvements	#1	#1	#2	#2	#1	#1	#1	#1	#1
Education Option Improvements	#2	#2	#1	#1	#2	#2	#2	#2	#2

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	45%	55%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	53%	47%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	60%	40%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	33%	67%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	28%	72%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	44%	56%

Results for each forum follow.

Date: 9SEP24

Location: Owen Middle School

Number of Attendees: 19

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	36%
No	64%

Community Area:

Area	#
Black Mountain	53%
Buncombe	21%
Owen District/Swannanoa	21%
West Asheville	5%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	14%	14%	50%	8%
Small Cost Savings	7%	0%	7%	69%
Education Quality Improvements	50%	21%	14%	8%
Education Option Improvements	14%	57%	21%	0%
Something Else	14%	7%	7%	15%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 - Loss of funding and resources for Asheville City Schools if consolidation happens which violates case law
- ◆ #1 - Before consolidation occurs there needs to be a plan to ensure equality for all students in the new consolidated districts
- ◆ #2 - How will consolidation lead to universal access to quality early childhood education?
- ◆ #3 - How will consolidation solve illegal, unconstitutional underfunding of public schools in North Carolina?
- ◆ #4 - Possible cuts to staff
- ◆ #4 - How will consolidation address the funding diff.

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	50%	50%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	69%	31%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	62%	38%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	46%	54%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	20%	80%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	38%	62%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *Smaller classes now*
- ◆ *The bragging rights of not being associated with ACS*
- ◆ *The potential of losing SMART lunch at Owen*
- ◆ *ACS doesn't get more money than BCS. Maybe ACS property ties go down*
- ◆ *The ability to cater to specific student needs, small schools and smallish districts sometimes do better!*
- ◆ *Students will have to discover a new school identity which may cause some disruption*
- ◆ *I'm concerned about what this does to the jobs of public school staff at county office and all the way down to schools. We see cuts every year; will this help?*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *Greater access to resources*
- ◆ *Consolidated bureaucracy means more money saving and more resources not redundant*
- ◆ *Maybe m students will gain more course offerings. Hoping so because we are told our ADM doesn't allow for more teachers/classes*
- ◆ *Possible sharing of resources. Each district has something to offer in experience and resources.*
- ◆ *Possible cost savings totally*
- ◆ *Hopefully more state and country funding*
- ◆ *No more us vs. them between districts*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *Different discipline of actions between city and county. Bringing rougher kids into a more disciplined school*

- ◆ *We need to wrestle with some of the deeper questions please encourage county commission to accept more public comments*
- ◆ *Having enough funding to support quality public schools*
- ◆ *Teachers earning jobs*
- ◆ *Equity in value of all students in regards of education teaching for all students is not made a priority!*
- ◆ *Losing services and the individual attention in small districts*
- ◆ *None, it needs to happen*
- ◆ *Changes in positions*
- ◆ *Don't make a quick decision that costs a lot (we can always do it later if things change).*
- ◆ *Losing services, resources, staff, and more. Wil this encourage county commission and state to find us appropriately*

Video Creation Station

- ◆ *(transcribed) The benefit for consolidation would be the quality of education of each student. Being able to add programs that would benefit the spectrum of students that we serve. And something special that might be lost, according to people I've talked to, is the identity of school districts and the loss of the small feel of Asheville City Schools versus the more urban feel of the Buncombe County Schools might be lost. I think the most important consideration, again, is quality education for each student. Also, the combining should save money, should be fiscally important to making this decision, because if we aren't saving money and utilizing that money that we have in a better way by combining transportation and combining some of the leadership and the department heads that could be combined, we should be saving money and be more efficient that way. Some good reasons for keeping things as they are is if there's such a diversity of programs between the two that it would benefit Asheville City to have some programs in place that Buncombe County isn't using and vice versa.*

Youth Question Response Station

“What is the best thing about your school?”

- ◆ *I love the specials and teachers at my school*

Date: 10SEP24
Location: East Asheville Library
Number of Attendees: 26

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	50%
No	50%

Community Area:

Area	#
Arden	5%
Asheville	38%
Buncombe	24%
Kenilworth	5%
Owen District/Swannanoa	14%
Oakley/Sweeten Creek	5%
Reynolds	10%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	22%	20%	36%	20%
Small Cost Savings	0%	4%	12%	64%
Education Quality Improvements	43%	32%	24%	0%
Education Option Improvements	17%	40%	24%	4%
Something Else	17%	1%	4%	12%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 - Equity! Asheville city has the highest inequity in test scores in the state.
- ◆ #1 - I understand ACS has a legal obligation to use the magnet system in elementary to prevent extreme segregation. If systems merge, what happens to that mandate? Can schools be integrated well without having Black students from ACS bus really far to schools beyond their neighborhoods?
- ◆ #1 - Lack of cooperation between school systems on issues affecting both, politics must be eliminated
- ◆ #1 - Timing that works best for students (not when we are still rebounding from covid impacts on schools)
- ◆ #2 - Teachers and school staff would be better supported (salaries)
- ◆ #3 - Representation of School Board to Mirror WARD System of County Commissioners i.e. Fear of Asheville population dictating education for whole county
- ◆ #4 - Better transportation
- ◆ #4 - Staff support: pay increases for teachers, and staff retention incentives



- ◆ #4 - Equitable services like student support, mental health, and social emotional learning

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	67%	33%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	73%	27%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	30%	70%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	22%	78%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	28%	72%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	68%	32%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *Unique history of ACS*
- ◆ *Recognition of diversity/historical view of Asheville*
- ◆ *Losing magnet schools*
- ◆ *Small school atmosphere*
- ◆ *Identity/Culture of both districts. A new one for ACS or BCS would not be bad! Second vote for identity, and would there be layoffs involved?*
- ◆ *The different communities have VERY different cultures/identities and very different school boards*
- ◆ *The thoughtful ACS school board is an important buffer between our kids and the NC legislatures policies (i.e. the parents bill of rights)*
- ◆ *Nothing*
- ◆ *If systems focus on keeping the best services & models of both, nothing has to be lost*
- ◆ *Asheville city might lose its neighborhood school feel*
- ◆ *Will magnet schools still exist? How will we ensure equity?*
- ◆ *BCS Dual Immersion Program*
- ◆ *Special programs may be strained as we ensure equity for all and uniqueness is driven out*
- ◆ *Schools in both systems have created special, innovative, student-centered frameworks & programs. These could be lost – would like to keep & have more options for students to choose “right fit”*
- ◆ *Will magnet schools remain available to all?*
- ◆ *Sense of identity that students may feel right now as part of their respective school system*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *Level the playing field for all county/city residents*
- ◆ *Increase pay for all teachers*
- ◆ *Consolidation/integration would reduce district-led administration costs and allow for more equitable distribution of community resources & state level investments*
- ◆ *Maybe it would result in better public investment in our local education systems? Bigger system = more power?*
- ◆ *I think/agree that consolidating resources would probably be the biggest benefit here*
- ◆ *Consolidating central & administrative offices & functions*
- ◆ *No longer exclusionary and financially stratified into “county and In-town”*
- ◆ *Sharing resources, ideas, and staff cultures would enhance a larger unified district*
- ◆ *Reducing administrative & central office duplication may mean additional dollars for teacher & staff salaries, recruitment & retention*
- ◆ *It would be an opportunity to create more diverse schools across the district, and also ensure equitable curriculum options for all BC students*
- ◆ *Equity. ACS have a major racial gap in their test scores. Consolidation would bring more resources to ACS students to help bring them on par with BCS*
- ◆ *Opportunity for consistent, sustainable & reliable school leadership. City school system has had multiple superintendents in short number of years*
- ◆ *Reducing costs and increasing innovation*
- ◆ *More fiscally responsible. Diversity – more ‘cross pollination’ of city & populations & experiences*
- ◆ *Better management of fiscal resources & budget oversight*
- ◆ *Diversity – consolidating costs – consolidating other resources*
- ◆ *Resources could be shared for all students*
- ◆ *Fiscally, it may be more financially responsible*
- ◆ *Opportunity for students to access resources across the two systems*
- ◆ *Reducing duplicated services to save money*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *Will each district be able to hold/keep what is working well?*
- ◆ *Loss of positions*
- ◆ *Will students feel they are a part of one or will it create factions across the district?*
- ◆ *Implementation may take time & could be delayed by local/state/other processes & impacts.*
- ◆ *What will the funding per pupil be based on?*
- ◆ *What funds it? State? County?*
- ◆ *Loss of the higher investment that ACS spends on our kids (it’s a big part of why we moved to the district!)*

- ◆ *Lawsuits! Cleveland County Schools consolidated, and it was YEARS of lawsuits, such a waste of money that could have been spent on kids*
- ◆ *Assimilating central office staff. How will this be done?*
- ◆ *Forcing assimilation too quickly – need to respect the different cultures & work environments & visions & move slowly*
- ◆ *Creating new school districts*
- ◆ *How to do this?*
- ◆ *Re-districting in a way that racially integrates all schools*
- ◆ *More competition for programs – programs that are already limited (ex: Nesbitt + SILSA) being more stretched to serve beyond their quality*
- ◆ *Timing. We just are getting back on our feet after covid. We had years of no assemblies, no field trips, no enrichment. If we refocus on bare bones when we haven't even come back to center, our students lose. Again.*
- ◆ *Will require rethinking governance*
- ◆ *Easier for the state legislature to bulldoze its poor choices on 1 district instead of having to address 2 school boards*
- ◆ *Monopolization of county-wide school board by Asheville population*
- ◆ *It would undermine the important concept of local control. Nothing for me without me.*
- ◆ *A bigger/newer system. It might cause parents and community groups to feel less connected & willing to be involved.*
- ◆ *Merging of school staffs, especially if broad redistricting is required*
- ◆ *Retaining great programs & staff in the merger. Keep what works, remove the duplication & inefficiencies*
- ◆ *How well transition would be managed so as to be the least disruptive to students currently in school*
- ◆ *How a less progressive school board would impact LGBTQ+ kids & families in the ACS district*
- ◆ *Would this be more for administrative purposes? Or would there be any tangible upsides for teachers & students?*
- ◆ *Driving people off because of costs*
- ◆ *Right now, housing prices and taxes for the city district make living in the AVL district more expensive – how will this be impacted – will all housing costs go up? Or will central AVL be more economical?*
- ◆ *How will book bans be handled in the merge? Will schools have to collectively remove books in each school?*
- ◆ *We water down the programs, and families with means leave for private/charter options, further degrading public schools*

Youth Question Response Station

“What is the best thing about your school?”

- ◆ *The best thing about my school is the teachers*
- ◆ *All of the people*

Date: 12SEP2024
Location: Cane Creek Middle School
Number of Attendees: 11

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	45%
No	55%

Community Area:

Area	#
Fairview	73%
Fletcher/Concord & Cane Creek	9%
Kenilworth	9%
Lower Brush Creek	9%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	18%	20%	50%	10%
Small Cost Savings	0%	10%	0%	80%
Education Quality Improvements	27%	30%	30%	10%
Education Option Improvements	36%	40%	20%	0%
Something Else	18%	0%	0%	0%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 - Overpopulation in new schools does not make sense in any way
- ◆ #1 - Student transition!; Transportation; Student sense of belonging and being welcomed

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	40%	60%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	78%	22%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	50%	50%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	10%	90%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	11%	89%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	60%	40%



Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *Only positive about consolidation! Add 1 school board member to represent the Asheville district on the Buncombe County school board.*
- ◆ *Resources will be stretched too thin. There are already students in high need in Fairview. People coming from Asheville are usually higher needs.*
- ◆ *ACS has a sense of family. Schools are small.*
- ◆ *Communication between the schools is excellent*
- ◆ *Collaboration is easily a small system*
- ◆ *ACS exists in a small diverse community, students are relatively close to schools. Parents can easily get to their child’s school.*
- ◆ *Language will be lost. There are too many new illegal aliens in Asheville because it is a sanctuary city. Being a teacher it is very difficult to teach the non-English speaking kids.*
- ◆ *Nothing lost, everything gained! Only 4400 ACS students + 21,843 BCS students, BCS had 26,000 students 10+ years ago and had no trouble operating the 10th largest school district.*
- ◆ *I think people can be mature enough to not lose something special if we work together*
- ◆ *District identities (traditions, mascots, etc.) can be lost with consolidation*
- ◆ *Time will be lost. Kids travelling long distances will be over tired and worn out.*
- ◆ *Fairview kids will lose small class sizes and attention from teachers*
- ◆ *Fairview will have a loss of community. We do not live near the people in the city.*
- ◆ *Resources will be lost*
- ◆ *Teachers will be overloaded and lose connections*
- ◆ *These are very different districts with different cultures, expectations, and how they operate. How do you combine it all so that voices feel valued?*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *There are zero benefits*
- ◆ *Possibly opens the opportunity to spread diversity of student populations*
- ◆ *Cost savings because of loss of students. This trend will not change for many years. We can’t wait for more children.*
- ◆ *Better balancing of student populations if districts are realigned, giving more staff and resources and course offerings to smaller schools*
- ◆ *More easily facilitates budget and policy discussions within the county (hopefully)*
- ◆ *Less waste of money operating schools with less than 400 kids*
- ◆ *Shared resources equal more resources including curriculum, intramurals, etc.*
- ◆ *No more duplication of services/central office positions – less overhead costs to free up taxpayer dollars for the classroom/other purposes*

- ◆ *Possibly consolidation of budgets*
- ◆ *Possibly more choices for students*
- ◆ *Possibly efficiency*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *Fighting*
- ◆ *Drugs*
- ◆ *Bad influences of a woke culture and DEI (Diversity, equity, and inclusion).*
- ◆ *Why can't charter schools also be approached for the distribution of Asheville's student population? We only have so much space in our schools.*
- ◆ *Savings will be minimal at the sacrifice possibly of quality...some central office staff can be eliminated probably, but then they have to pay unemployment benefits and BCS teachers will have to have their salary supplements increased to match ACS*
- ◆ *Too many vouchers equal a loss of public funds for public schools*
- ◆ *Why can't more mobile buildings be brought in for Asheville? They would most likely be needed in every other district with more kids coming in.*
- ◆ *Equity for each student. Funds used, per need identified so all can succeed.*
- ◆ *I hope the flawed BCS model of intermediate schools will not be inflicted on ACS if consolidated*
- ◆ *Will there be more stipends offered for those who want to send their students the private route? They are limited now.*
- ◆ *I am worried that Buncombe County will continue to maintain under-capacity schools instead of re-drawing individual school district lines to balance school populations.*
- ◆ *Research on small schools/classes is very strong. Student performance is greater in small schools/classes even for low-income and minority students.*
- ◆ *I am concerned that 'jobs' will be created for the central office staff who lose theirs. We need less not more administration.*
- ◆ *Children feeling cared about and welcomed if their school is changed*
- ◆ *Consistency in areas where consistency is important*
- ◆ *How programs are evaluated.*
- ◆ *They can't force kids to integrate and expect them to get along. It would have to start only when they have kids beginning from kindergarten age in order for it to work. Research schools in Boston with the NETCO program. I have personal experience working in the #1 School District in America, and there were so many flaws even when they did start out with the program in kindergarten.*

Date: 13SEP2024

Location: Weaverville Community Center

Number of Attendees: 30

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	60%
No	40%

Community Area:

Area	#
Asheville	3%
Buncombe	3%
Flat Creek	7%
Leicester	10%
Maple Trace	7%
Weaverville	70%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	11%	10%	19%	55%
Small Cost Savings	22%	15%	16%	0%
Education Quality Improvements	0%	40%	38%	0%
Education Option Improvements	44%	35%	28%	45%
Something Else	22%	0%	0%	0%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 – Impact on student well-being; mental health; whole student

Other Something Else Responses (not numbered):

- ◆ Please make sure students are not going to schools that are not outside of their district
- ◆ Not for 100%
- ◆ Financial management not good in ACS.
- ◆ We don't want this
- ◆ Who will lose jobs? Will teachers' pay be positively/negatively affected?
- ◆ Stop vouchers. They are hurting public schools. In my lifetime NC has gone from a top state for education to #21 in the country. You must prioritize maintenance of community connectedness.

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	14%	86%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	36%	64%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	61%	39%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	50%	50%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	43%	57%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	31%	69%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *At this late date, I think the issue isn't consolidation, but how the attendance districts are drawn.*
- ◆ *The equity initiatives that the city has. EG through ACS Foundation*
- ◆ *Access for students to community after school activities and parent engagement that is nurtured by community school placement*
- ◆ *Representation of diversity on the school boards*
- ◆ *Communal schools (forced busing)*
- ◆ *Two districts provide a choice for families and keeps kids in traditional public schools.*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *Greater pool of resources and creative teaching for both city and county*
- ◆ *Resources available county wide, no matter where they go to school*
- ◆ *Greater diversity in the county schools – socioeconomic, racial, cultural*
- ◆ *More even distribution of resources between county and city schools*
- ◆ *Asheville and Buncombe are now a truly urban area, and a single district will more accurately reflect that*
- ◆ *There would be more choices! And it would be different types of people.*
- ◆ *Unknown, need information*
- ◆ *In relation to administrative consolidation, increase wages and potential for increase retention and stability in these positions*
- ◆ *Nothing (3 responses)*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *The lack of info before surveying is insane. How can we weigh options on vague statements? Support public schools. Stop vouchers with tax money. This is a solution in search of a problem.*
- ◆ *Students do not want this. They have a special identity with their current schools.*
- ◆ *Will taxes increase for county residents? Will students be bussed from city out into county?*
- ◆ *This should have been done 50 years ago and we have needlessly perpetuated a dual system and its inherent inefficiency.*
- ◆ *Concern that the quality of education might be diminished*
- ◆ *My child going to school outside of district*
- ◆ *Desegregation*
- ◆ *Buncombe county is always expected to spend county taxpayer money on Asheville initiatives that are not values of Buncombe County*
- ◆ *Loss of identity each district has*
- ◆ *Lack of representation of BIPOC leaders in BCS. How does that impact ACS students and families?*
- ◆ *ACS seems much more forward thinking and progressive about serving all kids. I would love to see BCS gain these approaches but fear they will be lost instead.*
- ◆ *Busing*
- ◆ *Vouchers will be problematic for public school funding and enrollment*
- ◆ *Redistricting? How will this affect our district?*
- ◆ *Most concerned about the loss of ACS programs because it is smaller than BCS. If they are just pulled into BCS much will be lost.*
- ◆ *School board makeup? We just spent money to redistrict BCS board education then we are going to have to go through that again? Waste of money?*
- ◆ *It is being pushed without our (local) input under the guise of cost saving when it is a further attempt to destabilize public schools by inputting the city problems on us and promote flight to charter and private schools*
- ◆ *The cost savings is a misnomer. Any savings will come from further cutting teachers, staff, counselors, and other resources. Saving costs doesn't align with taking \$800 million dollars.*
- ◆ *Kids being sent to schools outside their local community, leading to less connection and engagement strained resources to accommodate parents opting more towards charter/private and the spiral from there*
- ◆ *Teachers' jobs in the county would be affected in order to keep Asheville staff*
- ◆ *Racial imbalance. Funding ACS vs BCS. Does ACS take cuts & does BCS get more?*

Date: 16SEP24

Location: Isaac Dickson Elementary School

Number of Attendees: 35

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	71%
No	29%

Community Area:

Area	#
Asheville	77%
Buncombe	3%
Candler	3%
Leicester	3%
Montford	11%
South Side	3%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	11%	7%	59%	15%
Small Cost Savings	0%	4%	15%	78%
Education Quality Improvements	33%	43%	11%	4%
Education Option Improvements	25%	46%	15%	4%
Something Else	31%	0%	0%	0%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 - Positions lost
- ◆ #1 - Work force quality of life
- ◆ #1 - Impact on black and brown students. Negative impact of merging into county system.
- ◆ #1 - I am interested in the total package. Not just 1 aspect.
- ◆ #1 - Continuity between the 2 districts (similar calendars, kids in same neighborhood can attend same school, etc.)
- ◆ #1 - What will preserve public education across our whole county
- ◆ #1 - Teacher attention to individual student needs. Distance of school from home. Diversity of student body
- ◆ #1 - Education quality improvement 1st would mean more pre-k could be provided, more kids can be on grade level metrics, and more kids graduate
- ◆ #1 - Social emotional health for students
- ◆ #1 - Identity loss
- ◆ #1 - Deciding factors to NOT consolidate: Education quality and Education options



Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	48%	52%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	56%	44%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	68%	32%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	22%	78%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	31%	69%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	35%	65%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *Local Schools led by local residents*
- ◆ *Culture, assistants, equity work, class size, higher loss of students to charter schools*
- ◆ *Magnet schools end diversity in classrooms*
- ◆ *School choice, educational opportunities (AP, etc.), racial and LGBTQ+ equity focus and commitment, and the student teacher ratio increasing*
- ◆ *Class size*
- ◆ *The staff to student ratio*
- ◆ *Focus on racial equity like racial equity ambassadors of ACSF – merged into a system with families actively working against these initiatives*
- ◆ *STEM high school (Nesbitt at BCS, SILSA at AHS) - Would be amazing if in the end we could provide more magnet/specialized schools for both districts*
- ◆ *Teaching positions, DLTs, AIG teachers, IAs, librarians, and assistant principals*
- ◆ *(AT AHS) AP Class choices, AVID, clubs*
- ◆ *Advanced classes (AIG, SILSA, honors)*
- ◆ *Attention to black student’s needs*
- ◆ *Magnet schools (4 responses)*
- ◆ *(At AHS) AP class choices, AVID, 2 band directors, speech and debate, robotics, small class sizes, progressive vibe, racial equity programs, readers and champions, and library books*
- ◆ *Racial equity programming and commitment*
- ◆ *Racial equity ambassadors*
- ◆ *Black student union*
- ◆ *ACSF commitment to equity programming/grants*
- ◆ *ACS class sizes*
- ◆ *Parent engagement*

- ◆ *Loss of identity of Asheville City Schools in the county school system*
- ◆ *Funding for libraries. BCS libraries do not have digital leads (ACS does). BCS does not provide budget for library books (ACS does)*
- ◆ *Racial programming and commitment, racial equity ambassadors, black student union, ACSF commitment to equity programming grants*
- ◆ *What happens to funding from ACS property taxes?*
- ◆ *Access to books and public libraries - Compare the restrictions on library access between ACS and BCS (books banned, public library opt in, books available in school libraries)*
- ◆ *(ACS) Instructional assistants AVID, magnet themes, AP classes, librarians*
- ◆ *A woke liberal outlook and approach to public education*
- ◆ *An adherence to values of inclusion, diversity of experience and expression*
- ◆ *Small class size!*
- ◆ *Staff numbers*
- ◆ *Access to AHS/SILSA unique programming*
- ◆ *Arts – ceramics, dance, etc.*
- ◆ *Number of AP courses*
- ◆ *Variety of CTE courses*
- ◆ *Hybrid classes*
- ◆ *SILSA programming*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *Financial stability and more resources*
- ◆ *Want access to Nesbitt for city school residents*
- ◆ *Being able to eliminate duplicate admin costs*
- ◆ *Accountability, transparency, school closures, staff turnover*
- ◆ *Being able to eliminate duplicate admin costs*
- ◆ *Want access to Nesbitt for city school residents*
- ◆ *Financial stability and more resources*
- ◆ *Getting rid of overhead costs and mismanagement*
- ◆ *Not one of the other IS city systems is going through this!*
- ◆ *As a former Department Chair at a community college consolidation of both systems would eliminate differences in scheduling, holidays, teacher workdays, etc.*
- ◆ *Save money which hopefully can be used for teacher jobs*
- ◆ *Maybe public perception might change -- feels like many in community are fed up with ACS*
- ◆ *Better utilization of transportation resources. We need to end the magnet school system within ACS*
- ◆ *Removal of ACS taxes from property taxes*
- ◆ *Raleigh republicans – they are planning for this!*

- ◆ *Not busing kids all over the ACS district with the magnet system = energy waste will be no longer*
- ◆ *Our central office being accountable to stay within budget with high paid positions.*
- ◆ *Consolidation of top-heavy management - Ex: boards that happens with two systems – save money*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *Kids having to change schools*
- ◆ *Lack of aligned values between systems – Ex: BCS is banning books and ACS is not. What will it mean for black and brown students to lose community and be forced into whiter schools?*
- ◆ *ACS instructional assistants losing positions and salary cap*
- ◆ *Losing my job*
- ◆ *ACS losing magnet themes*
- ◆ *Moving schools in the middle of high school based on where I live*
- ◆ *Losing deseg order - Example: Will Jones be all white if it is a neighborhood school?*
- ◆ *Losing the ability of a lot of ACS elementary students to have a neighborhood school*
- ◆ *How long it might take? It’s scary how much funding our public schools have lost this year, (thanks to NC voucher program) we need ways to consolidate money and resources quickly.*
- ◆ *Changing the cultures of each district*
- ◆ *Sacrificing our children’s education to “efficiency”*
- ◆ *More disruption to the old generation*
- ◆ *ACS students losing racial and LGBTQ+ diversity*
- ◆ *ACS students not having the same opportunity for positive outcomes they currently do*
- ◆ *Forcing students to move schools at the end of elementary/middle rather than continuing*
- ◆ *Increasing class sizes*
- ◆ *Worse conditions for ACS faculty and staff*
- ◆ *Students, teachers, families are not asking for it...This is “suspicious” as the kids say these days*
- ◆ *Loss of what makes ACS special and supportive of students*
- ◆ *Welcoming community (“you belong here”)*
- ◆ *Library access and freedom that is beyond what BCS provides*
- ◆ *Programming committed to racial equity for staff and students*
- ◆ *Racial equity (2 responses)*
- ◆ *Openminded practices for LGBTQ communities*
- ◆ *Autonomy for schools/teachers*
- ◆ *Children having to move to a different school, and different education opportunities*
- ◆ *Not repeating history without studying lessons learned during school integration when only black schools were closed*
- ◆ *How would black American kids’ fair in ACS/BCS school consolidation?*
- ◆ *BCS does not do a great job at focusing on racial equity and mental health at all ages. ACS does a much better job. This is my biggest concern.*

- ◆ *I have seen consolidation go very poorly in healthcare*
- ◆ *Closing schools in ACS and/or building new schools?*
- ◆ *Losing diversity*
- ◆ *Safety of children in larger more rural schools*

Youth Question Response

“What is the best thing about your school?”

- ◆ *The best thing about my school is the opportunities we get, like the amount of class options and inclusivity we have.*

Date: 17SEP24

Location: Erwin High School

Number of Attendees: 4

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	75%
No	25%

Community Area:

Area	#
Erwin	50%
Leicester	25%
Weaverville	25%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	33%	33%	33%	0%
Small Cost Savings	0%	0%	0%	100%
Education Quality Improvements	67%	0%	33%	0%
Education Option Improvements	0%	67%	33%	0%
Something Else	0%	0%	0%	0%

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	67%	33%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	50%	50%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	33%	67%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	0%	100%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	0%	100%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	67%	33%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *What happens to schools like The Early College, Nesbitt Discovery Academy, & SILSA?*



“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *One benefit would be that administrative (district) positions would be consolidated and (hopefully) cost less.*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *If my children will have to change schools.*

Date: 18SEP24
Location: Enka Intermediate School
Number of Attendees: 5

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	100%
No	0%

Community Area:

Area	#
Enka	100%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	25%	25%	0%	50%
Small Cost Savings	0%	0%	25%	50%
Education Quality Improvements	50%	25%	25%	0%
Education Option Improvements	0%	50%	50%	0%
Something Else	25%	0%	0%	0%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 – Safety, manageability

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	50%	50%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	75%	25%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	50%	50%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	25%	75%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	25%	75%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	50%	50%



Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *Short term loss of high school ‘district’ identities*
- ◆ *Safety*
- ◆ *Community identity*
- ◆ *Funding*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *Consolidation of financial resources*
- ◆ *More efficient operations*
- ◆ *More opportunity to reinvest savings into students/teachers*
- ◆ *Consolidating resources would hopefully expand educational opportunities for students*
- ◆ *I don’t think there are benefits to consolidation. A bigger system would be difficult to manage*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *Safety*
- ◆ *Funding*
- ◆ *Resources*
- ◆ *Smooth transition and implementation*

Date: 19SEP24
Location: Hall Fletcher Elementary School
Number of Attendees: 49

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	62%
No	38%

Community Area:

Area	#
Hall Fletcher	11%
Isaac Dickson	3%
Asheville	74%
OD	3%
Leicester	5%
Candler	3%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	6%	10%	50%	31%
Small Cost Savings	0%	0%	25%	62%
Education Quality Improvements	63%	37%	4%	7%
Education Option Improvements	22%	50%	18%	0%
Something Else	9%	3%	4%	0%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 - I'm do not agree with consolidation when the system's values are so far apart, case in point: Buncombe City Schools stopped allowing their students' access to "Epic Elibrary" because students could read books about LGBTQ characters and stories. My kids go to ACS and they have 2 moms, hundreds of students in both systems are LGBTQ. It is wrong to limit access to books. ACS supports its queer parents + students.
- ◆ #1 - Culture of the city vs. outlying areas.
- ◆ This station seems biased towards consolidation. My #1 is education quality improvements with or without consolidation. #2 - honor/emphasize/educate re cultural differences.
- ◆ #3 - Making sure that student services staff have the resources they need to do their jobs = hire more school counselors and social workers.

Other Something Else Responses (not numbered):

- ◆ What is best for our low income and BIPOC communities
- ◆ Disruptions to family's school choices, and whether it would cause a decrease in enrollment
- ◆ We have so much money why aren't we just spending It on public school?



- ◆ *Making sure educational opportunity isn't defined by where a child gets on/off the bus*
- ◆ *Equity!*
- ◆ *Local decision making.*
- ◆ *Maintaining desegregation order*
- ◆ *Impact on educator/staff pay*
- ◆ *Payouts to laid-off staff*
- ◆ *Maintaining magnet school offerings*
- ◆ *Local decision making*
- ◆ *Will there be fewer teaching assistants in the classrooms?*
- ◆ *Will support for EC students do down?*
- ◆ *Figure out a plan forward so there is stability and security for public school kids*

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	45%	55%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	29%	71%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	88%	12%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	43%	57%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	31%	69%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	19%	81%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *The number of students facing positions like having a digital lead teacher*
- ◆ *May forego smaller schools?*
- ◆ *Community/magnet culture at each school*
- ◆ *A.V.I.D. that helps lots of first-generation college students prepare*
- ◆ *ACS schools and administration is experienced and focused on serving the specific population of students in this district*
- ◆ *Magnet themes*
- ◆ *School choice*
- ◆ *More changes and uncertainty for the students/staff who have been through so much change*
- ◆ *Asheville city school foundation resources*
- ◆ *School choice*
- ◆ *School cultures (2 responses)*



- ◆ *Quality of education for all students*
- ◆ *Resources available for all students*
- ◆ *Local decision making*
- ◆ *School choice and bussing? Would it continue?*
- ◆ *ACS losing the ability to be innovative*
- ◆ *The socioeconomic equality between schools*
- ◆ *Will the desegregation policy still apply?*
- ◆ *Local community taping of the ACS schools. That is what a city should be about!*
- ◆ *The innovative work of ACS foundation – REAP, IRL, DREAM*
- ◆ *The individuality of the district, bigger is NOT better. Our kids have gone through so many changes in the past 4 years. Enough.*
- ◆ *Bigger is not always better*
- ◆ *Our diversity programs like GSA., REAP, and BSU which provide a safe community for many who feel they don't fit in*
- ◆ *It feels like currently each school is able to implement programs with some autonomy to make it unique. Will that be lost?*
- ◆ *Losing that small, local, "my school district" feeling."*
- ◆ *Magnet/Charter schools*
- ◆ *ACS values (no book bans) will be challenged if combined with BCS (which has banned 1 book district-wide and more in different high schools).*
- ◆ *Student needs being met*
- ◆ *More centralized equals more corporate*
- ◆ *Teachers and students would be lost and forgotten about*
- ◆ *If we merge with BCS, then we will lose all the work and practices in place for equity with Black and Brown children*
- ◆ *We will lose a lot of the best practices for Black and Brown children in special education services*
- ◆ *Loss of "community school" feel*
- ◆ *Less support for EC students*
- ◆ *Fewer teaching assistants in each K-5 classroom*
- ◆ *We might lose AVID, REAP and the support of diverse students and families such as the Black community, an LGBTQ*
- ◆ *City culture, reflected in arts, band and understanding of students' lives and possibly academic rigor*
- ◆ *If we combine with BCS, will we lose SILSA?*

"What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?"

- ◆ *Investment in current enrichment programs and magnet themes that ACS currently holds/partners with*
- ◆ *Potential for teacher pay increase (2 responses)*

- ◆ *Singular administration & cost consolidation*
- ◆ *Calendars would align*
- ◆ *Haven't been given enough information*
- ◆ *A more functional and unified central office*
- ◆ *More competent leadership*
- ◆ *Consolidate transportation office – more resources? Not much!!*
- ◆ *One board to hold accountable*
- ◆ *One administrative unit*
- ◆ *Savings on supplies and transportation*
- ◆ *Maybe a cost reduction?*
- ◆ *One common focused plan for improving the educational opportunities for ACS/BCS students*
- ◆ *Consolidated schedule*
- ◆ *ACS students would have easy access to a larger variety of programs/settings for special needs students*
- ◆ *Ideally resources will be improved or there will be additional resources provided*
- ◆ *Fewer administrative positions*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *How does it impact the school choice program in ACS? How does busing work?*
- ◆ *No one is being clear about what consolidation will actually look like. Whose jobs will be cut? Where will kids go to school? Will things mostly remain the same?*
- ◆ *Selection of Superintendent School Board Central Office School Admin*
- ◆ *There will be less support for students with special needs*
- ◆ *Students and parents' voices muffled*
- ◆ *LGBTQ+ students and families will be disrespected and erased in Buncombe County Schools. Evidence: BCS limited access to books on “Epic” because kids might read about LGBTQ characters or stories.*
- ◆ *Culture – BCS has book bans, bathroom, sports policies etc. that ACS families don't agree with*
- ◆ *Are we centering the voices of students and families of color?*
- ◆ *BCS is more conservative. If we merged a lot of our inclusive program would be lost*
- ◆ *Will a larger system be too big to manage effectively?*
- ◆ *Implications for preschool age services and special education services*
- ◆ *Loss of identity*
- ◆ *Culture, equity, choice, academic offerings, staffing, administration, tax base for stakeholders with no students, and the superintendent.*
- ◆ *How staffing and partnerships with nonprofits would be affected*
- ◆ *The city identity, differences, needs will be watered down in the larger county system. County is much more conservative and will impose changes such as book bans, decreased emphasis on services for LGBTQ students, etc.*

- ◆ *Cuts to student services staff (school social workers and school counselors).*
- ◆ *How will it impact the livelihood of employees*
- ◆ *Taxes – ACS tax*
- ◆ *What would happen to ACS magnet elementary school systems? This makes each school special and would be a huge loss if changed.*
- ◆ *Losing teachers*
- ◆ *Increased loss of qualified teachers resulting in larger student/teacher ratio and less funding per student*
- ◆ *Cuts to art, music, PE, media, tech, and support for students*
- ◆ *No book bans! Losing the growth and listening culture that is shaping up at ACS*
- ◆ *It takes years for schools and districts to form effective cultures where staff feel supported. Supported staff leads to better outcomes for students.*
- ◆ *How will cultural and equity issues be prioritized?*
- ◆ *Will there be consistency in language and practices?*
- ◆ *Teacher pay will decrease leading to more turnover*
- ◆ *Losing choice school (ACS)*
- ◆ *Less TA's/IA's per class*
- ◆ *LGBTQ+ students might have less "rights"/freedom to be themselves*
- ◆ *Teachers' pay will go down*
- ◆ *The state dictating board configuration*
- ◆ *State Legislature interference of many kinds*
- ◆ *Longer bus rides – longer commutes for parents, teachers, and students?*
- ◆ *Cuts to student services*
- ◆ *Watered down policies/practices to address the enrichment group equity efforts*
- ◆ *Staff cuts*
- ◆ *Bigger class sizes*
- ◆ *ACS has made it a priority to establish a District Equity Team to create district-wide equitable practices. I'm concerned we will lose this practice when or if we merge.*
- ◆ *Not having enough information to give valuable feedback*
- ◆ *Difference in social values between BCS/ACS*

Video Creation Station

- ◆ *(transcribed) Hello! My name is [redacted]. I'm an Asheville City Schools alumnus and I'm now an Asheville City Schools parent of an elementary-aged student at Claxton Elementary. I would be concerned about the consolidation and losing the special history of Asheville City Schools, which is the second oldest school district in the country, second only to Springfield, Massachusetts. Losing that long tradition, as well as is the question being, will it improve student performance? Student academic choices? Is it going to improve the overall student options for academic classes as well as possibly increase or improve the quality of teaching...lower people's taxes? And would fairness be a consideration?*

Youth Question Response Station

“What is the best thing about your school?”

- ◆ *Recess*
- ◆ *Teachers*
- ◆ *Lunch*
- ◆ *Snack*
- ◆ *I love my teachers*
- ◆ *IDES teachers are the best – love the choice elementary options ACS offers*
- ◆ *All students are accepted at AHS no matter their identity and efforts are made to increase equity*
- ◆ *ACS looks after ALL students, and we are able to respond to their unique needs*
- ◆ *LSH/HALL-FLETCHER kindergarten camp (K Jumpstart) with [redacted]*
- ◆ *Isaac Dickson “Letting our teachers have freedom to adjust the day and activities to help us out when we need it.”*
- ◆ *ACS values all students, teachers, and staff. We belong!*
- ◆ *Our inclusive programs would be lost*

Date: 20SEP2024
Location: Skyland/South Buncombe Library
Number of Attendees: 19

Attendees

Currently a parent of a school-age child:

Yes	53%
No	47%

Community Area:

Area	#
Arden	21%
Asheville	36%
Buncombe	21%
Reynolds	7%
Roberson	14%

Deciding Factor Station

Option	1	2	3	4
Large Cost Savings	13%	0%	36%	29%
Small Cost Savings	0%	0%	21%	57%
Education Quality Improvements	50%	18%	29%	0%
Education Option Improvements	6%	59%	14%	7%
Something Else	31%	24%	0%	7%

Something Else Responses:

- ◆ #1 - Ed quality. #2 - Ed options Improvement EQI
- ◆ #1 - Operational Efficiency
- ◆ #1 - Would either district lose current funding
- ◆ #1 - I am against the idea totally
- ◆ #1 - Student voice
- ◆ #2 - If by quality of education you include a value of “exposure to difference”, so there is equity institutionalized in the school. EQI
- ◆ #2 - Whether students would be bussed long distances due to the merger?
- ◆ #2 - Equity of educational opportunities between schools.
- ◆ #2 - How difficult will it be to provide transportation for the students? We don’t have enough drivers now.
- ◆ #4 - Equity of resources between schools. Estes has upwards of 800 students but 4 buses



Other Something Else Responses (not numbered):

- ◆ *What is the potential disadvantage to particular student populations? Ex: State + federal funding decreases to disadvantaged students?*
- ◆ *Humanity of the school. (The school’s ability to: prioritize relationships among students, teachers, parents, etc. and offer a child-centered and body-centered curriculum/culture/policies.) Giving children opportunities. To direct their own education, move physically, experience multi-sensory education, etc.*
- ◆ *Priority – Not allowing BCS quality to lessen if the two systems consolidate. What is the advantage of ACS to consolidate? Is it preferable to focus, money, and other resources on improving ACS first?*

Fact or Fiction Station

Statement	Fact	Fiction
Consolidation would save a lot of money	31%	69%
It makes sense to have 1 countywide school system	60%	40%
Something special about Asheville City Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	47%	53%
Something special about Buncombe County Schools will be lost if the systems are consolidated	38%	62%
Home property values in my area would be impacted if the school systems consolidate	33%	67%
Consolidating systems will likely improve educational opportunities for all students	38%	62%

Question Response Station

“What is something special that might be lost if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidate?”

- ◆ *ACS seems to have many more teachers of color. Where will those teachers go? Will students still see educators that look like them? Will the county try to bring in more diversity of educators?*
- ◆ *Our current culture of feeling like a community school, not a huge school system*
- ◆ *Historical meaning + value of city system*
- ◆ *ACS Foundation does great work! Keep it alive!*
- ◆ *Culture/identity unique to each system*
- ◆ *Teachers who are truly supported to teach from a child-centered, body-centered, relationship centered way.*
- ◆ *Loss of the special sales tax in Asheville City that provides \$1,000+ per pupil expenditure – in a merged system – how is this addressed?*

“What would be the biggest benefit to this community if Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools consolidated?”

- ◆ *Reduce redundancies – more opportunities.*
- ◆ *Streamline admin efficiency. Potential for growth and inclusion of DEIB communities.*



- ◆ *Diversity in students*
- ◆ *Administrative efficiency*
- ◆ *More stable leadership for ACS*
- ◆ *Could eventually create stronger, more efficient system; however, I believe we need to increase performance of ACS schools before consolidating*
- ◆ *The potential of greater equity for the students.*
- ◆ *A more equitable distribution of resources*
- ◆ *A more diverse (socio-economic class, race, family, structure, gender, religion, etc.) population (student body) at each school.*
- ◆ *Expanding academic options for all children*
- ◆ *More \$ for current ACS*
- ◆ *Nothing that I am aware of*
- ◆ *Better leadership. ACS has not had effective leadership.*
- ◆ *Possible whole community approach to schools + focus.*
- ◆ *Removes complexity, allows for sharing of best practices, saves money*
- ◆ *More alignment*

“My biggest concern about school system consolidation is: ____”

- ◆ *Underperforming children in each system – but especially ACS – will get lost in a larger system.*
- ◆ *Possible long-term cost to everyone. Smooth transition takes thought + time*
- ◆ *Losing a value of humanity at the schools.*
 - *Will consolidation mean larger school/class sizes? Will that then mean less child and body-centered learning?*
- ◆ *We will be so focused on saving \$ that we’ll take \$ away from schools that should STAY in schools*
- ◆ *Affecting the current quality of BCS schools negatively – would focus resources on improving performance of ACS before consolidating*
- ◆ *Not enough reliable transportation*
- ◆ *The reality of combining 2 significantly different cultures*
- ◆ *BCS having to pay for ACS financial issues, suffering because they have to get ACS back up to speed*
- ◆ *Impact of lowering federal funding to students who need these supports*
- ◆ *Open communication with both BCS and ACS communities*
- ◆ *Maintaining historical school traditions & pride*
- ◆ *Loss of dual language program*
- ◆ *Lack of parent participation*
- ◆ *Different cultures & teaching techniques*
- ◆ *Distracted leaders during transition*

Date: 23SEP2024

Location: Zoom

Number of Attendees: 24

Prismatic has not yet received the results of the Deciding Factor and Fact or Fiction polls conducted during the online forum due to disruptions from Hurricane Helene. Select comments and questions below were posted in the chat and Q&A section of the online forum:

- ◆ *How is this merger of both schools/how will this affect our special education programs and students? And how is this going to affect all the gang violence?*
- ◆ *What happened to trigger this study? It seems like that should be included in the research too.*
- ◆ *How many counties in NC currently have more than 1 school district? Has a county in NC recently merged 1 or more school districts, similar to what is being considered for Buncombe?*
- ◆ *I'd like to understand more about the reasoning behind mandating this assessment for Buncombe and ACS? Were any other school districts in the state asked to conduct a similar study? If so, why was Buncombe singled out?*
- ◆ *Are other city schools being merged at the same time, or is Asheville being singled out? {multiple similar comments/questions}*
- ◆ *So this is all about money because Buncombe gets money*
- ◆ *Sounds like a lot of mismanagement of money on both sides*
- ◆ *If it wouldn't save money, I honestly don't understand why it is being considered. One has to assume that it is complicated because this was politically motivated decision from the State, not locally motivated.*
- ◆ *What happens to the Federal Desegregation Order if the school systems merge?*
- ◆ *What is the predicted influence of consolidation on black-white disparities?*
- ◆ *I am scared for my child safety because of this and drugs*
- ◆ *Has ACS or BCS school boards taken a stance on the consolidation? Pro or con?*
- ◆ *I just don't know how we can comment on whether or not we support this without knowing how it will affect our kids. If there were great cost savings and all the school remained opened then maybe it's a good idea. But if my kids' school closes and they get separated from their friends then I would be opposed. I value stability for my kids above all else.*
- ◆ *You are asking us to trust something we don't understand. And I don't know the impact it will have on my child education moving forward.*
- ◆ *Where I grew (in Michigan) city schools districts are the norm. Counties have many individual school districts.*
- ◆ *As long as I can remember there as always be city and country and I think they should stay the same. But not all states are the same. Stop comparing us to other states.*
- ◆ *How does the total funding for student compare now between Buncombe and ACS? How would that be rationalized with consolidation? How does property tax factor into the total funding numbers, considering that ACS is much higher than BCS?*
- ◆ *Will you be sharing some of the demographics of the people who are for/against a consolidation?*
- ◆ *And why is there a firm that is not from Buncombe County doing this study*

- ◆ *I would like to understand the impact to dollars that go to our students now and what they would be post consolidation, because the number don't seem to add up. ACS currently pays more in property tax than BCS. ACS currently has more total funding per student than BCS. How would that be rationalized with a consolidation?*
- ◆ *My main question is how are we expected to give input without knowing the implications? Will schools be closed? How would differences between the two districts be reconciled (e.g., ACS has one 6-8 middle school and Buncombe county has a different set up for 5-8th)? Buncombe County does geographical districting and ACS does not. Will our kids be sent to different schools if we are in ACS currently if there is a merger?*
- ◆ *Sorry if I missed this, what was the reasoning behind mandating this assessment for Buncombe and ACS? Were any other school districts in the state asked to conduct a similar study? Why?*
- ◆ *The project scope is fantastic! I just don't understand why the state required that we do this study in the first place.*
- ◆ *What kind of timeline is being looked at?*
- ◆ *Why is this study happening?*
- ◆ *How come the state did not fund this expensive study if they required it?*
- ◆ *Has ACS or BCS school boards taken a stance on the consolidation? Pro or con?*
- ◆ *How would you manage the 22% difference between the county and city schools per child funding?*
- ◆ *How does Asheville's school magnet choice system work in Buncombe County's system?*
- ◆ *We were discussing school organization types (e.g., county vs township). Is there any correlation between school performance vs. the organizational type?*
- ◆ *An article entitled 'School district consolidation in NC' by Mark Chin in the "Economics of Education Review" by Mark Chin reviewed data from 18 prior school district consolidations in NC and showed decreased spending per student, decreased spending per teacher, and more experienced teachers leaving for more affluent school districts. Typically, the major push to consolidate schools is to give poorly run and poorly managed districts access to a greater tax base. Who is pushing this evaluation?*
- ◆ *I have an Asheville address but I live 5 minutes from a country school you are saying I will have to move my child*
- ◆ *If there is no promise of money being saved, nor a promise of everything keeping their jobs/roles, what is the benefit that is being studied?*
- ◆ *We have heard what you see as possible benefits, now...What are some of the possible drawbacks?*
- ◆ *Please comment on current staff turnover rates in BCS versus ACS.*
- ◆ *What is the anticipated effect of consolidation on Black-white performance and disciplinary disparities? This is a current issue in ACS.*
- ◆ *Will my child have to change school*
- ◆ *It was my understanding that the state has a law that requires when two systems consolidate that the lower funded system (Buncombe) has to raise the funding to to the higher level. So the county would have to add the school tax that city residents pay. Is that true?*
- ◆ *Are they going to cut special education*

Appendix G

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