

DRAFT
Asheville Primary School Study
Fall 2021
G.S. 115C-72

I. Reasons to Consider “Closure” of Asheville Primary School in its Current Location Effective 2022-2023 School Year:

A. Why School Buildings are Kept Open or Closed

Schools are kept open for the following reasons (not an exhaustive list):

- Geographical necessity
- Outstanding performance, and/or
- Justifiable enrollment numbers

In contrast, schools are closed for the following reasons (not an exhaustive list):

- Low enrollment
- Better educational opportunities, and/or
- Economical considerations

B. Relocation of APS and “closure” of the existing building

The current issue before the Board of Education is the possible relocation of all students and staff from the current building housing Asheville Primary School (APS) to either the campus of Hall Fletcher Elementary (HFE) or the campus of Montford North Star Academy (MNSA). The current proposal under consideration is for APS to remain a stand-alone school with a separate school principal and school number with NCDPI. APS will simply co-locate with HFE or MNSA and share a facility. This is the same arrangement utilized by Asheville High School and SILSA, two separate schools sharing a single campus and facilities.

C. Compliance with G.S. 115C-72

Notwithstanding the fact that APS may continue as a school in a new location, G.S. 115C-72 is written such that a “study” should be conducted whenever the School Board considers the discontinuance of a physical building as a school. Thus, this study is offered to the School Board, faculty, parents and stake-holders as primarily relevant information related to this decision and in order to satisfy the requirements of G.S. 115C-72 to the extent that statute applies. The statute requires that the following issue be addressed:

1. Welfare of ACS Students - addressed throughout this document.
2. Geographic Conditions - covered below.
3. Increase / Decrease in Enrollment - no impact since all students will be transferred. Capacity at all impacted schools is covered below.
4. Inconvenience / Hardship to Students - covered below.

5. Cost of “Additional” Facilities - existing facilities will be utilized.
6. Other Factors - addressed throughout this document.

D. Reallocation of Limited Funds in Order to Improve Educational Opportunities for All Students in the City of Asheville

Closing Asheville Primary and co-locating the school with all the students and staff to either Hall Fletcher Elementary or Montford North Star Academy will improve the educational opportunities for all ACS students by;

- Continuity of the staff and student body at APS remains intact, only the physical location would change;
- Reallocation of funds necessary to maintain a building that is in need of costly repairs to directly support teaching and learning;
- Students enrolled at APS will be on an existing school campus that is recently updated, safe, and well equipped to foster a positive learning experience;
- The majority of the current APS staff will be reassigned to the HFE or the MNSA campus and be supported in the transition to a new campus; and
- The staff at APS and either school can work cooperatively to share limited resources to improve student outcomes.

E. Enrollment Compared to Other ACS Schools by Grade Level

1. 2017-18 School Year
 - a) APS K 7.25% (25/345)
 - b) APS 1st 4.16% (15/361)
 - c) APS 2nd 1.88% (7/372)
 - d) APS 3rd - N/A
2. 2018-19 School Year
 - a) APS K 9.76% (32/328)
 - b) APS 1st 6.16% (22/357) - Cohort decrease
 - c) APS 2nd 4.62% (16/346) Cohort increase
 - d) APS 3rd 1.44% (5/347) Cohort decrease
3. 2019-20 School Year
 - a) APS K 10.54% (35/332)
 - b) APS 1st 9.66% (31/321) Cohort decrease
 - c) APS 2nd 7.82% (28/358) Cohort Increase
 - d) APS 3rd 2.83% (10/353) Cohort decrease
4. 2020-21 School Year
 - a) APS K 8.31% (25/301)
 - b) APS 1st 9.54% (29/304) Cohort decrease
 - c) APS 2nd 8.03% (24/299) Cohort decrease
 - d) APS 3rd 6.96% (24/345) Cohort decrease
5. 2021-22 School Year (as Month 1 PMR)
 - a) APS K 7.79% (25/321)
 - b) APS 1st 7.59% (22/290)

- c) APS 2nd 7.14% (21/294)
- d) APS 3rd 7.12% (20/281)
- e) APS 4th 5.23% (17/325)

F. Building Cost of Repair

1. Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Fall 2021 Town Halls and/or public hearings to address parent and ACS concerns.
 - a) Town halls were held to address parent and community concerns regarding the safety of the building and the cost needed to repair it.
 - b) The Board of Education and presented this study as a “draft” on December 6, 2021, and a public hearing was held on December 7, 2021.
2. APS Ongoing Current Project Cost - 0
3. APS Critical Needs Summary Costs - \$4,270,589.77 (if we did everything on the list this year)
4. APS High Priority Cost - \$2,889,618.47 (if we did everything this year, please see full report to see the three and five years escalation).
5. Total Cost - \$7,160,208.24
6. Detailed PFA Report - Exhibit J
7. Cost of Repair per Student
 - a) $4,270,589.77$ (Critical Needs Summary) + $2,889,618.47$ (High Priority Summary) = $\$7,160,208.24$ (Total Cost)
 - b) Using the 2021-22 enrollment numbers (as of 10/19/2021) at APS for APS PK-4th grade students the average cost to fully repair the building is approximately: $\$7,160,208.24 / 133$ Students = $\$53,836.15$ per student.
 - c) Using the 2021-22 enrollment numbers (as of 10/19/2021) at APS for APS PK-4th grade students and the PK students enrolled at ACS Preschool on the APS campus the average cost to fully repair the building is approximate: $\$7,160,208.24$ (Repair Cost) / 189 (Students) = $\$37,884.70$ per student.

G. Utility Cost Savings

1. Utilities coded currently coded to the Preschool Building
 - a) Electric average monthly savings: \$ 2,493
 - b) Water average monthly savings: \$ 2,125
 - c) Gas average monthly savings: \$ 900
 - d) Internet average monthly savings: \$ 800
 - e) Phone/cell average monthly savings: \$ 1,300
 - f) Waste Management ave monthly savings: \$ 988
 - g) Other (safety inspections) ave monthly: \$ 255

Total yearly average \$106,332

H. Support Staff Savings

1. Due to reassignments and the non-duplication of staff (Bookkeeper, Data manager, SN, Custodian, Enhancement Teachers, Counselor, etc.), the approximated savings for staff costs is approximately \$500,000 per year.

I. Building Location Issues

1. I-26 Widening Impact
 - a) Loss of parking spaces
 - b) Loss of trees and possible damage to property trees
 - c) Negative sound impact due to construction and traffic increase
 - d) Proximity to interstate and air quality and negative impact on the learning environment
2. Proximity to Lucy Herring Elementary and Hall Fletcher Elementary and student and staff capacity.
 - a) Currently, 304 students are enrolled at Lucy Herring, 259 students are enrolled at HFE and 99 Students are enrolled at APS. Currently, 662 students are enrolled in the three elementary schools in West Asheville- HFE, APS, and Lucy Herring Elementary.
 - b) The distance from APS to Hall Fletcher is 0.7 miles. The distance from APS to Lucy Herring is 1.4 miles.
 - c) Currently, 54 staff are assigned to HFE, 51 staff are assigned to Lucy S. Herring, and 25 Montessori staff are assigned to APS. An additional 18 Preschool staff are housed in the APS building. Please note that this does not include vacant positions on the campuses of HFE, LSH, and APS.
 - d) The building capacity for HFE is 443. The building capacity for Lucy Herring is 512. The total capacity for HFE and Lucy Herring is 955.
3. Proximity to MNSA and MNSA student and staff capacity.
 - a) Currently, 233 students are enrolled at Montford North Star Academy.
 - b) The distance from APS to MNSA is 2.6 miles.
 - c) Currently, 34 staff are assigned to MNSA. Please note that this does not include vacant positions on the MNSA campus.

II. Possible Hardships Resulting from Closing Asheville Primary School

A. Staff, parents, and family connection to the campus

1. See all public hearing comments below.
2. Deep connection to the building and strong sense of community within a small learning community.
3. Feeling of more personal attention resulting from a dedicated building for APS.

4. Student concerns related to moving to a new building.
5. The need to effectively transition certain students with disabilities.

B. Loss of a Historical Building in West Asheville as a School

1. APS is one of the three remaining ACS Historical buildings used as a school.

III. Public Hearing Summary Spring 2021

A. Public Hearing March 16, 2021

1. Total Speakers - 18
2. Majority against the closure of Asheville Primary Campus

B. Written Statements to Board Spring 2021

1. Total Submissions - 33
2. Majority against the closure of Asheville Primary Campus

C. Summary Public Comment & Written Statements Spring 2021

1. Loss of or impact to the Montessori program if not allowed to remain on the Asheville Primary Campus.
2. Disruption of students, staff and families for new initiatives that fail. Historically ACS has abandoned programs such as KIPP, Balance Calendar at Hall Fletcher (year-round school).
3. Parents and community members expressed concern regarding the loss of community due to moving from the Asheville Primary campus to the Hall Fletcher campus for the Montessori program.
4. Good schools are made up of strong teachers interacting with students, school has little to do with a building. The ACS Board should be responsible for making the best decisions for the entire system and not back down in the face of opposition.
5. High demand for Montessori education, moving to HFE will decrease the number of slots available for the Montessori program.
6. Desire for administration to give the Montessori program a chance to thrive.
7. Strong belief that Montessori will increase the achievement gap.
8. Closing the school will result in a loss of state funding for a school and school principal.
9. Families are still struggling from the closure of school due to the pandemic. Making the decision to close during a pandemic seems rushed and unfair.
10. Slow the process down and wait at least one more year to include a more thoughtful process.
11. Easy to close a school, hard to reopen or open a new school.
12. Noticeable benefits of having preschool classes where children will attend elementary school.
13. Consider temporarily moving Asheville Primary to Hall Fletcher Elementary.
14. Expand Montessori to 5th grade.

15. 2,672 people signed the petition to not close APS
16. Consider using the American Rescue Plan Act to fund repairs needed for the APS campus.

D. **Preschool Clarification**

1. Many comments were in support of not moving the Preschool Program from the Asheville Primary campus.
2. Comments included the expansion of early childhood programming
3. Legally, the preschool is not part of the “school” as that term is defined in the general statutes.
4. Asheville Primary School is a school with a school number and principal.

IV. Public Hearing Summary Fall 2021

- A. Public Hearing December 7, 2021
- B. Written Statements to Board Fall 2021

V. Exhibits

- A. [ACS Board Meeting Work Session 8/3/2020](#)
- B. [ACS Board Meeting Minutes 9/10/2020](#)
- C. [ACS Enrollment Comparison K-4 \(2017-2022\)](#)
- D. [Spring 2021 ACS Renovations Critical Needs & High Priority Needs](#)
- E. DOT Website [Asheville Connector website](#)
- F. DOT I-26 Impact [Noise Study Report](#).
- G. Impact of Air Quality White Paper, [Proximity of public schools to major highways and industrial facilities and students’ school performance and health hazards](#)
Hopkins, J. S. (Ed.). (2017, February 17). The Invisible Hazard Afflicting Thousands of Schools. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <https://publicintegrity.org/environment/the-invisible-hazard-afflicting-thousands-of-schools/>
- H. [Fall 2021 - “ACS Staff & Families Are Invited to Share Your Feedback with the Board” Form Analysis](#)
- I. [PFA Capital Facilities Study Fall 2021](#)