

# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Information, Resources, and Tips for Advocating for Our Educational Attainment Goals in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, & Transylvania Counties

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# Introduction

Please use the information and resources in this Advocacy Toolkit to support your efforts to advocate for greater educational attainment in our region. If you are using a digital version of this Toolkit, you may choose to click on the links embedded in the Table of Contents for easier navigation within the document.

The Policy Priorities and Strategies presented in this document are the result of years of collective and collaborative effort of our workgroups, action teams, P20 Council members, and staff. Our statewide partner, [myFutureNC](#), has vetted our Policy Priorities and Strategies and has given us their endorsement, and much of our advocacy efforts align well with theirs.

On the last page of this toolkit is a link to a living document that tracks the Status of K-12 Education Bills in the NC Legislative Assembly for the 2023 Long Session, which will give you the most up-to-date information on each of these bills.

# About the Land of Sky (LOS) P20 Council

## *What is the Land of Sky P20 Council?*

- A multi-sector, collaborative model that includes the entire educational and workforce pipeline
  - From preschool through graduate school and into the workforce
  - Promotes communication, cooperation, and alignment among all parts of the pipeline
- Sectors represented by P20 Council members include:
  - Education
    - 2 early-education agencies
    - 5 K-12 districts
    - 2 community colleges
    - 4 universities
  - Local Government
  - Economic and Workforce Development Agencies
  - Business
  - Nonprofits
  - Subject-matter Experts

## *Why was the Land of Sky P20 Council formed?*

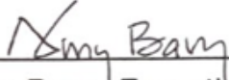
- To work toward enhancing educational attainment in our region through:
  - Planning **coordinated** initiatives, programs, practices, and processes
  - Developing policy priorities **specific to our region's needs**
  - **Advocating collectively** for those policy priorities on behalf of our region

## *What is the Land of Sky P20 Council's vision?*

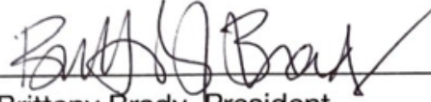
- To implement an educational attainment and workforce collaborative model that is sustainable, and which can be duplicated throughout other counties and states that provide long-term talent management solutions for local employers as they align educational objectives and outcomes to employment competencies

## *Who is included in the Land of Sky P20 Council?*

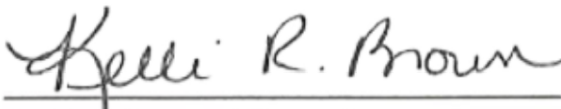
- Four counties:
  - Buncombe
  - Henderson
  - Madison
  - Transylvania
- P20 Council members:
  - Amy Barry, Executive Director, [Buncombe Partnership for Children](#)
  - Brittany Brady, President, [Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development](#)
  - Dr. Kelli Brown, Chancellor, [Western Carolina University](#)
  - Dr. John Bryant, Vice-President, Workforce Development & Community Affairs, [Pardee Health](#)
  - Jack Cecil, President, [Biltmore Farms](#)
  - Kit Cramer, President & CEO, [Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce](#)
  - Dr. Mark Dickerson, Assistant Superintendent, [Asheville City Schools](#)
  - Tony Floyd, President, [Mars Hill University](#)
  - Mark Garrett, Superintendent, [Henderson County Public Schools](#)
  - Dr. John Gossett, President, [A-B Tech CC](#)
  - Chip Gould, President, [Cason Companies](#)
  - Mike Hawkins, President, Pisgah Enterprises
  - Dr. Will Hoffman, Superintendent, [Madison County Schools](#)
  - Dr. Rob Jackson, Superintendent, [Buncombe County Schools](#)
  - Jaime Laughter, Manager, [Transylvania County](#)
  - Dr. Laura Leatherwood, President, [Blue Ridge CC](#)
  - Greg Lowe, President, [HCA North Carolina Division](#)
  - Dr. Paul Maurer, President, [Montreat College](#)
  - Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent, [Transylvania County Schools](#)
  - John Mitchell, County Manager, [Henderson County](#)
  - Avril Pinder, County Manager, [Buncombe County](#)
  - Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director, [Land of Sky Regional Council](#)
  - Deb Tibbetts, Executive Director, [Smart Start of Transylvania County](#)
  - Dr. Kimberly van Noort, Interim Chancellor, [UNC Asheville](#)



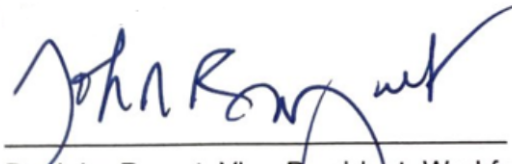
Amy Barry, Executive Director  
Buncombe Partnership for Children



Brittany Brady, President  
Henderson County Partnership for Economic  
Development



Dr. Kelli Brown, Chancellor  
Western Carolina University



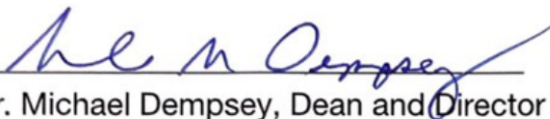
Dr. John Bryant, Vice-President, Workforce  
Development & Community Affairs  
Pardee Health



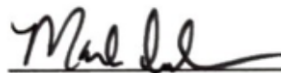
Jack Cecil, President  
Biltmore Farms



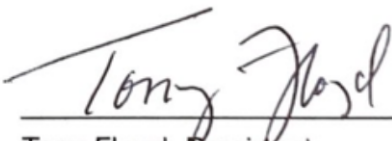
Kit Cramer, President & CEO  
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce



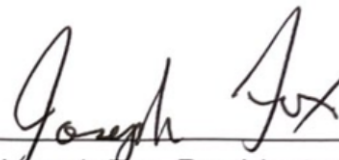
Dr. Michael Dempsey, Dean and Director  
Lenoir-Rhyne University's Center for  
Graduate Studies of Asheville



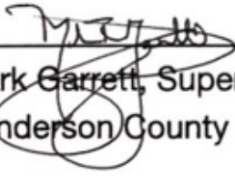
Dr. Mark Dickerson, Assistant  
Superintendent  
Asheville City Schools



Tony Floyd, President  
Mars Hill University



Dr. Joseph Fox, President and CEO  
Fox Management Consulting Enterprises



Mark Garrett, Superintendent  
Henderson County Public Schools



Dr. John Gossett, President  
A-B Tech Community College



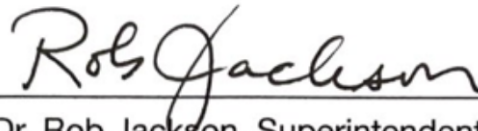
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Madison County Schools



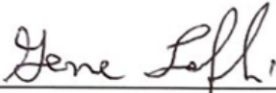
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Buncombe County Schools



Jaime Laughter, Manager  
Transylvania County



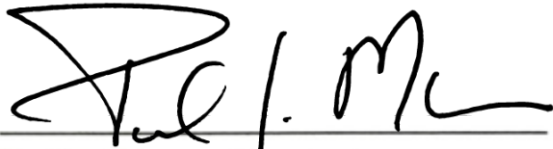
Dr. Laura Leatherwood, President  
Blue Ridge Community College



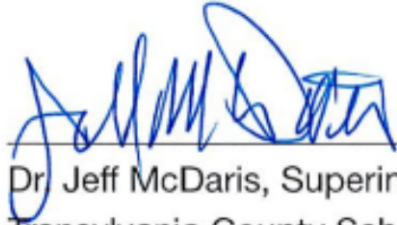
Dr. Gene Loflin, Associate Vice President of  
Instructional Services  
A-B Tech Community College



Greg Lowe, President  
HCA North Carolina Division



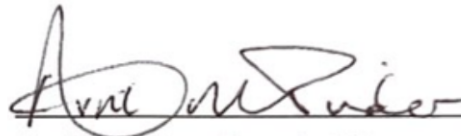
Dr. Paul Maurer, President  
Montreat College



Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent  
Transylvania County Schools

*signature contingent on board approval*

John Mitchell, County Manager  
Henderson County



Avril Pinder, County Manager  
Buncombe County



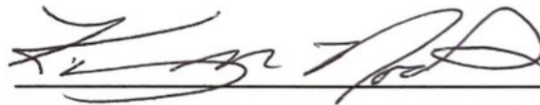
Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director  
Land of Sky Regional Council



Dr. Bill Sederburg, Chair  
WNC Broadband Project



Deb Tibbetts, Executive Director  
Smart Start of Transylvania County



Dr. Kimberly van Noort, Interim Chancellor  
UNC Asheville





*What are the Land of Sky P20 Council's strategic goals?*

- Early Childhood Education - 75% enrollment
- K-12 Education - 95% graduation rate
- Postsecondary Education - 65% enrollment
- Credentials & Workforce - 90% with competencies for employer needs

# Policy Priorities for the Land of Sky (LOS) P20 Council

## *Early Childhood Education*

1. Fully fund essential infrastructure to expand NC Pre-K to accommodate the expansion of NC Pre-K to all eligible four-year-olds.
2. Provide funding to expand eligibility for child care subsidies (child care vouchers).
3. Fund expansion of NC Pre-K to ensure access to all eligible four-year-olds through support for families and children.

## *K-12 Education*

1. Develop the pipeline of highly qualified and well-prepared teachers, school leaders, and support staff by developing a funding plan to ensure competitive salaries and benefits.
2. Ensure essential infrastructure is in place to support students, families, and school staff.
3. Provide school districts with greater policy and legal flexibility to facilitate greater alignment to local and regional needs.

## *Postsecondary Education*

1. Renew, sustain, and expand financial support for students at community colleges pursuing a two-year degree or an industry credential.
2. Develop a pipeline of highly qualified and well-prepared North Carolina Community College System and UNC System leaders, faculty, and staff by developing a funding plan to ensure competitive salaries and benefits.
3. Ensure adequate funding formula to support short-term and long-term high-cost programs leading to in-demand employment with living wages and benefits.

## *Credentials & Workforce*

1. Expand and strengthen coordination between K-12 and higher education to promote postsecondary pathways leading to recognized credentials leading to high-demand jobs with sustainable salaries and benefits.
2. Expand and strengthen coordination between higher education and industry/employers to promote short-term and non-degree workforce training and pathways that lead to credentials aligned with in-demand, living-wage jobs.

# Strategies To Accomplish Priorities Requiring Legislative Action

## *Early Childhood Education*

1. Fully fund essential infrastructure to expand NC Pre-K to accommodate the expansion of NC Pre-K to all eligible four-year-olds.
  - 1.1. Increase the reimbursement rate to provide full funding for all NC Pre-K providers, to account for rising costs, and to incentivize four- and five-start centers that do not currently participate in NC Pre-K to do so and meet its higher-quality standards.
  - 1.2. Increase the administrative rate for NC Pre-K Contract Administrators to 8%.
  - 1.3. Increase licensed NC Pre-K teacher wages and benefits to achieve parity with K12 public school educators.
  - 1.4. Develop alternative credential requirements for teachers.
  - 1.5. Provide start-up funding for new centers.
2. Provide funding to expand eligibility for child care subsidies (child care vouchers).
  - 2.1. Modify eligibility requirements to include parents that are actively looking for employment so that they can apply for positions, attend interviews, etc.
3. Fund expansion of NC Pre-K to ensure access to all eligible four-year-olds through support for families and children.
  - 3.1. Expand funding for NC Pre-K program to ensure all enrollees have access to full-day and full-year programs to meet family and community needs and to prevent summer learning loss.

## *K-12 Education*

1. Develop the pipeline of highly qualified and well-prepared teachers, school leaders, and support staff by developing a funding plan to ensure competitive salaries and benefits.
  - 1.1. Provide competitive salaries, benefits, and housing assistance programs to teachers, school leaders, and support staff.
  - 1.2. Support teacher pipeline and induction programs with full funding including the NC Teaching Fellows program and other Grow-Your-Own initiatives.
  - 1.3. Sustain educators throughout their careers by fully restoring master’s degree pay levels, expanding the Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR) program, and providing robust professional development to support high growth in every student.
2. Ensure essential infrastructure is in place to support students, families, and school staff.
  - 2.1. Fund the expansion of accessible, affordable, high-speed broadband throughout North Carolina.
  - 2.2. Increase state funding for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel, or SISP (e.g., school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists), to meet nationally recommended ratios, while allowing districts the flexibility to allocate the funds according to their own individualized needs for the various SISP positions.
  - 2.3. Increase funding for special education to include all aspects of special education—including TA’s, highly qualified special education teachers, and special education in Early Childhood—and increase the cap.
  - 2.4. Prioritize an investment in the science of reading in the early grades (PreK-3), including by fully funding Teaching Assistants for K-3 classrooms.
3. Provide school districts with greater policy and legal flexibility to facilitate greater alignment to local and regional needs.

- 3.1. Revise legislation to allow schools to align their schedules with their local community college to enable students to participate fully in the Career and College Promise program and take tuition-free college courses while in high school.
- 3.2. Develop a statewide database of approved/vetted private and non-profit vendors who provide curriculum support, supportive services, and more that will aid teachers, counselors, and students in their academic and social-emotional well-being.
- 3.3. Allow flexibility in school districts' budget allocations so they may choose to contract with any of the approved/vetted private or non-profit vendors from the statewide database to provide curriculum support, supportive services, and other supplemental services.

## *Postsecondary Education*

1. Renew, sustain, and expand financial support for students at community colleges pursuing a two-year degree or an industry credential.
  - 1.1. Develop and fund a state-wide NC Promise program that guarantees tuition-free community college.
  - 1.2. Fully fund the RAISE scholarship program, which would provide financial support to students that pursue an industry credential that is not eligible for federal Pell Grant support.
2. Develop a pipeline of highly qualified and well-prepared North Carolina Community College System and UNC System leaders, faculty, and staff by developing a funding plan to ensure competitive salaries and benefits.
  - 2.1. Authorize a third party audit of North Carolina higher education salaries and benefits with recommendations to bring NC higher education pay and benefits at or above the national average.
  - 2.2. Develop a budget plan to implement recommendations by 2025.
3. Ensure adequate funding formula to support short-term and long-term high-cost programs leading to in-demand employment with living wages and benefits.
  - 3.1. Conduct a review of the average cost of higher education programs at both community colleges and universities and develop and implement a funding formula based on the true cost of providing high cost programming to meet the needs of NC.
  - 3.2. Reassess the increasing costs of providing support services for students (mental health, substance abuse, etc.) and adjust the funding formula to provide greater support for services in support of our students.

## *Credentials & Workforce*

1. Expand and strengthen coordination between K-12 and higher education to promote postsecondary pathways leading to recognized credentials leading to high-demand jobs with sustainable salaries and benefits.
  - 1.1. Review all CCP operating requirements to make access to the high-school-to-community-college pipeline more accessible to all students in grades 9-12.
  - 1.2. Develop a web page identifying available pathways across NC.
  - 1.3. Hire a marketing firm to develop and roll out a CCP marketing campaign.
  - 1.4. Create a statewide data system for comprehensive credential measurements to ensure data pertaining to certifications, diplomas, and degrees is current and accessible for measuring progress to enable proactive decision-making at the state and local levels.
2. Expand and strengthen coordination between higher education and industry/employers to promote short-term and non-degree workforce training and pathways that lead to credentials aligned with in-demand, living-wage jobs.
  - 2.1. Develop statewide advisory boards in each of the career fields for input to the State of NC and colleges regarding needed skills, certifications, licenses, and training/education required to build a strong NC workforce.
  - 2.2. Fund Curriculum Improvement Projects (CIPs) to use business /industry input to review and refine curricula at the NCCCS and UNC.
  - 2.3. Hire a marketing firm to develop and roll out a marketing campaign on the importance of higher education credentials for obtaining in-demand, living-wage jobs. This should include a website listing credentials and where they may be obtained.
  - 2.4. Create a statewide data system for comprehensive credential measurements to ensure data pertaining to certifications, diplomas and degrees is current and accessible for measuring progress to enable proactive decision-making at the state and local levels.

# Success Stories of Local Initiatives

Action for Implementation Measures (AIM) Grants

Four grants of \$12,500 each have been awarded:



## Buncombe County Schools / Buncombe Middle College



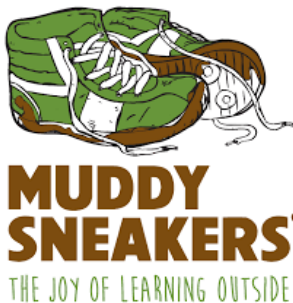
- 300 students and 3-5 industry partners were impacted by new branding that demographically matches the enrollment percentages of the subgroups found within the opportunity gap of the community
- Connects to *Credentials & Workforce - Objective 1: Expand and strengthen coordination between K-12 and higher education to promote postsecondary pathways leading to recognized credentials leading to high-demand jobs with sustainable salaries and benefits.*

## Literacy Together



- 75 students in two after-school programs in Buncombe County received literacy support, and 12 young adults of color were trained as tutor interns
- Connects to *K-12 Education Objective 3: Provide school districts with greater policy and legal flexibility to facilitate greater alignment to local and regional needs.*

## Muddy Sneakers



- 258 students & 12 teachers in Transylvania and Madison Counties benefited from instructional support in science education
- Connects to *K-12 Education Objective 3: Provide school districts with greater policy and legal flexibility to facilitate greater alignment to local and regional needs.*









## Smart Start Partnership for Children

- Parents of 20 children in Henderson County were enabled to look for employment by receiving childcare vouchers to enroll their children in licensed facilities
- Connects to *Early Childhood Education Objective 1: Expand access to NC Pre-K to all four-year-olds through support for families and children.*

# General Advocacy Tips

The following tips and suggestions were based in part on information obtained from the [North Carolina Economic Development Association \(NCEDA\)](#) video series *Driving Development*, which features LOS P20 Council member Brittany Brady, President and CEO of the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development and one of the Directors of the NCEDA.

1. **Build relationships early.** It is important to build relationships with elected officials before you have an urgent need.
  - a. An initial contact should include a check-in/update on your county/district.
  - b. Save policy/funding requests for a future interaction.
2. **Maintain relationships.** It is important to maintain those relationships through regular contacts that do not always involve an “ask” (i.e., a policy/funding request).
  - a. Suggestions for quarterly advocacy actions
    - i.  **Call** one of your legislators.
    - ii.  **Meet** one of your legislators for coffee.
    - iii.  **Email** one of your legislators.
    - iv.  **Invite** one of your legislators to an education attainment or workforce event.
  - b. Suggestions on what to share
    - i. Press releases, news stories, interviews, or other updates/news about the Land of Sky P20 Council and/or our region’s educational attainment.
    - ii. Stories of individuals/organizations who have benefitted from the Land of Sky P20 Council’s efforts.
3. **Communicate strategically and effectively.** Legislators are very busy and often have limited time to review your communications.
  - a. Limit your communication to one page at most.
  - b. Format your communication clearly and concisely—ideally as a bulleted list.
  - c. Different modes of communication are perceived as having different levels of importance.

# NC Government Roles in Education Policy & Funding

STATE

## Governor

- Appoints some members of the State Board of Education
- Prepares and recommends a budget for the General Assembly
- Serves as Chair of the Education Cabinet
- Convenes commissions and task forces

## Lieutenant Governor

- Serves as a member of the State Board of Education
- Serves as President of the General Assembly
- Casts tie-breaking votes in the General Assembly

## Superintendent of Public Instruction

- Leads the Department of Public Instruction
- Supervises and administers the public school system
- Keeps the public informed about the public school system
- Makes recommendations to the State Board of Education

## General Assembly (NC House & Senate)

- Sets state taxes (revenue)
- Writes and passes bills that affect education
- Creates and sets a budget for public education
- Determines how much public school funding comes from local governments

**County Commissioners**

- Set county tax rates
- Determine how much to allocate toward educational expenses, especially for capital costs such as building construction
- Collect and appropriate tax funds

**Local School Boards**

- Create annual budgets
- Request appropriations from County Commissioners
- Set local policies
- Hire local superintendents
- Administer local education programs

# Elected Officials by County

## Buncombe

Name	Phone #	Email Address	Office Address	Website
County Commissioners				
Jasmine Beach-Ferrara	828-250-4004		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>
Amanda Edwards	828-250-4005		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>
Martin Moore	828-215-2077		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>
Brownie Newman	828-243-0107		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>
Parker Sloan	828-231-4784		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>
Terri Wells	828-250-4008		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>
Al Whitesides	828-250-4006		200 College St, Ste 300, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx">https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/default.aspx</a>

<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone #</u>	<u>Email Address</u>	<u>Office Address</u>	<u>Website</u>
Asheville City Schools (ACS) - Board of Education				
James C. Carter	828-301-2894	<a href="mailto:james.carter@acsgmail.net">james.carter@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10</a>
Liza Kelly	703-220-7942	<a href="mailto:liza.kelly@acsgmail.net">liza.kelly@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10</a>
Amy Ray	828-989-6769	<a href="mailto:amy.ray@acsgmail.net">amy.ray@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10</a>
George Sieburg	828-279-7649	<a href="mailto:george.sieburg@acsgmail.net">george.sieburg@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10</a>
Rebecca Strimer	828-575-1399	<a href="mailto:rebecca.strimer@acsgmail.net">rebecca.strimer@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10</a>
Sarah Thornburg	828-779-2683	<a href="mailto:sarah.thornburg@acsgmail.net">sarah.thornburg@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/10</a>
Asheville City Schools (ACS) - Superintendent				
Dr. Jim Causby	828-350-6145	<a href="mailto:james.causby@acsgmail.net">james.causby@acsgmail.net</a>	Central Administration Offices, 85 Mountain St, Asheville, NC, 28801	<a href="https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/2460">https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/domain/2460</a>

Name	Phone #	Email Address	Office Address	Website
Buncombe County Schools (BCS) - Board of Education				
Margaret (Peggy) Buchanan	828-778-0920	<a href="mailto:peggy.buchanan@bcsemail.org">peggy.buchanan@bcsemail.org</a>	175 Bingham Rd, Asheville, NC, 28806	<a href="https://www.buncombeschools.org/o/bcs/page/meet-the-board">https://www.buncombeschools.org/o/bcs/page/meet-the-board</a>
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Rob Eliot	828-222-4874	<a href="mailto:rob.elliott@bcsemail.org">rob.elliott@bcsemail.org</a>	175 Bingham Rd, Asheville, NC, 28806	<a href="https://www.buncombeschools.org/o/bcs/page/meet-the-board">https://www.buncombeschools.org/o/bcs/page/meet-the-board</a>
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Buncombe County Schools (BCS) - Superintendent				
Dr. Rob Jackson	828-255-5921			<a href="https://www.buncombeschools.org/o/bcs/page/superintendent">https://www.buncombeschools.org/o/bcs/page/superintendent</a>

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## Henderson

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# Status of K-12 Education Bills in the NC Legislative Assembly for the 2023 Long Session

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19ZoEa3UUGTvfQ0vsult6y1IBCIQePzHimHxZZOrt0Zo/edit>