

Information about the Colorful Pages Project for Buncombe County's Tipping Point Grant

Briefly explain the project.

"All children deserve books in which they can see themselves and the world in which they live reflected. Multicultural literature belongs in every classroom and library -- on the shelves and in the hands of children, librarians, and teachers. The challenge for librarians, teachers and others is identifying authentic, reliable books by and about people of color and First/ Native Nations." -Cooperative Children's Book Center

A small group of local mothers, passionate about racial equity, is working to get **books featuring characters of color and by authors of color** into WNC schools. We call our project the Colorful Pages Project (CPP).

We will use social media, our community connections, and other crowdfunding strategies to raise money to buy books for schools. As people donate, we will highlight their good work on Instagram. Between those "thank you" posts, we will engage our followers in conversation about racial equity and highlight local businesses run by POC.

We will purchase new and gently used books. We will begin by buying picture books for 1st grade classrooms in Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, and local public charter schools. The goal is to bring every class a box filled with at least one book per student.

Support from bookstores, businesses, school faculty members, outreach organizations, and community members has already been secured. We have done hours of research, connected with similar projects throughout the country, and reached out to dozens of enthusiastic locals.

We will use part of our Tipping Point grant money to immediately purchase books. We will create photo, video, and testimonial promotions to powerfully launch our campaign and build further support and momentum.

This project is necessary and crucial. Not only will it address the need to diversify our public schools' book selections, but it is an important step towards achieving what the real goal: equitability for ALL our area's children—not just a select few.

Vision* How do you see this project making a difference in your community? Describe the story that exists now within your community or group and how your project might shape a different story.

The Colorful Pages Project is a tangible way to begin to address the systemic and institutional disparities for children of color in our classrooms. Children of color can engage and relate to books that reflect the rich diversity of perspectives and experiences within and across race and culture.

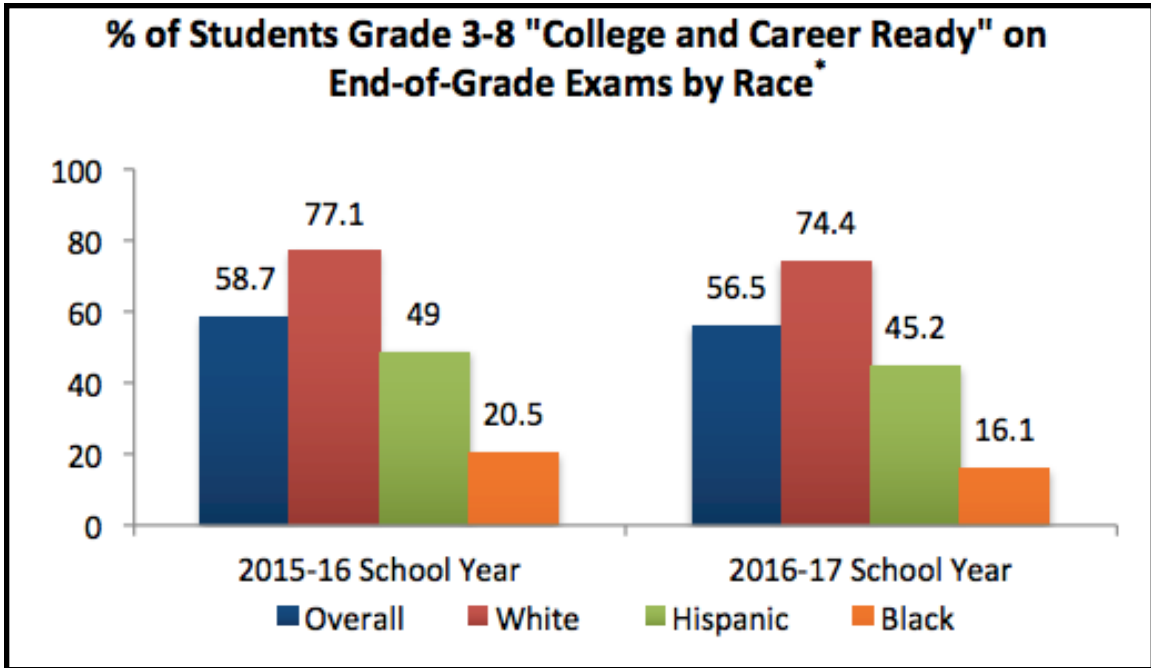
By seeing themselves in a positive manner, children of color may be given the opportunity to alter and change any negative narratives associated with their race/culture/ethnicity while simultaneously developing a deeper understanding of themselves. This project will prove to be incredibly healing to children of color while also affirming their collective and individual identification.

This project comes at a great time for Asheville City Schools. They are working toward a goal of Excellence with Equity. They have partnered with Integrated Comprehensive System (ICS) for Equity. We recently spoke to the principal at Vance Elementary about the Colorful Pages Project. She welcomed the idea of increasing the number of picture books that feature characters of color.

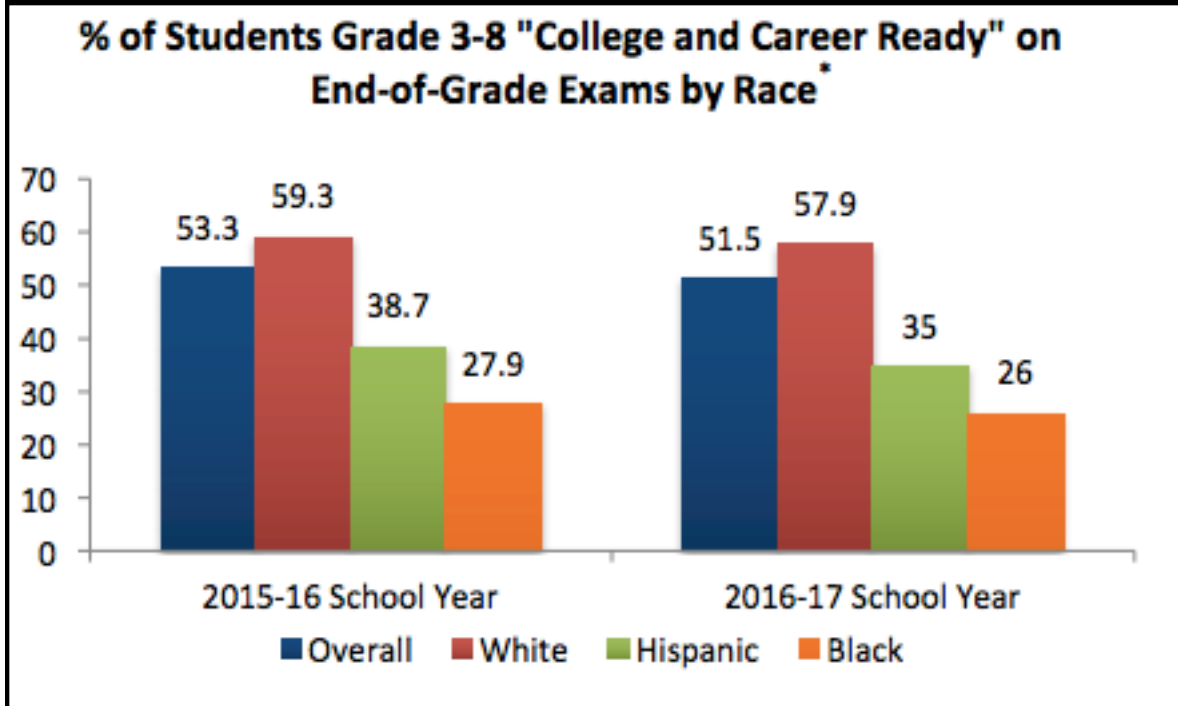
Buncombe County Schools' Strategic Plan lists "Embrace Diversity" under Beliefs: Our Core Values. There is no mention of race or racial equity within the stated goals or actions of the strategic plan. However, the county has made Spanish Immersion/Dual Language programs accessible to more students this year. We believe that the Colorful Pages Project would be an effective way to move towards racial equity in Buncombe County Schools.

North Carolina schools are not escaping the School To Prison Pipeline (STPP) label. "The STPP is the system of policies and practices that push students out of school and into the juvenile and adult criminal systems. The STPP has many entry points. Once students are caught in the STPP, it can be very difficult for them to reengage and be successful at school. In almost every NC community, students of color are overrepresented at each entry point to the pipeline." -Youth Justice Project

Asheville City statistics



Buncombe County Statistics



Goals*

How your project connects to “Ensuring Positive Place,” “Connecting People,” and/or “Improving Equitable Opportunity”.

For more information about the THRIVE Model, visit: <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/thrive-tool-health-resilience-vulnerable-environments>

We believe that the Colorful Pages Project is in line with the values and motives of the THRIVE model.

We want public schools to be a Positive Place for ALL students. One determining factor is whether students feel like they belong. Filling bookshelves with books that reflect the faces and experiences of a diverse range of students is a significant step towards racial equity in schools.

The CPP aims to Connect People by highlighting (via social media) the good work being done in the community to promote racial equity, to be a simple and powerful way for community members to get involved in the fight for equity, and a way to encourage those who are not yet involved in racial equity measures.

The ultimate goal of the CPP is Equitable Opportunity for All. We know that all humans, regardless of skin color and background, are valuable members of our community. We are heartbroken and furious for those who are disadvantaged due to the historical and systemic oppressive systems that continue to operate today. We know that all parts of our community will be stronger when everyone has equal opportunity, voice, and power to create change. We know this in our hearts, and it is confirmed in research, data, and history.

Having a diverse selection of books in the classroom will begin to foster different dialogue between student and teacher, as well as between peers. The opportunity to learn and begin to understand one another, at a young age, will plant the seeds for this dialogue to continue as children develop and engage in their communities. Possible talking points and discussions may include race, cultural, and ethnic differences and overlaps.

“The more books there are, especially books created by authors and illustrators of color, the more opportunities librarians, teachers, and parents and other adults have of finding outstanding books for young readers and listeners that reflect dimensions of their lives, and give a broader understanding of who we are as a nation.” CCBC

Partners*

Provide a list of partners involved in the project and their roles.

We have support and encouragement from local bookstores: Malaprop's Bookstore, Firestorm Books, and Spellbound Books have given us book recommendations, offered to promote us via social media, and offered significant discounts on books featuring characters of color.

Teachers and principals in local schools are on board. This work seems to be an idea on the mind of many, on the to-do list of few, and in the budget of fewer.

We have been in communication with and are receiving overwhelming support from the Center for Participatory Change, Diversebooks.org, the Literacy Council of Buncombe County, Habitat Brewing, High Five Coffee, Tepeyac Consulting (racial equity consulting), and many individual community members.

We have made dozens of connections with people doing similar work across the country. These change makers are ready and willing to promote our work.

We plan to support PTOs who have already begun racial equity work (Claxton's for example), and invite others to partner with us. We want to empower schools and PTOs to take on this issue. We will support as much or as little as needed in order to get boxes of books into classrooms.

Our idea was inspired by Marisol Jimenez, a local racial equity consultant. We will seek support and promotion from more leaders and experts.

With these partners, we can continually improve our vision, scope, and strategy. Our partners and supporters inform our decisions. They will support us and we will support them. We will use social media to highlight the good work of local businesses, organizations, and individuals, and we will ask them to share our work. We will ask for donations to buy books. We will ask businesses to provide simple ways for their customers to donate (for example, adding \$1, \$5, and \$10 donation buttons to their POS tablets). We will ask businesses to sponsor whole boxes of books for classrooms, and we will thank them with photo opportunities, posts, and links to their businesses.

Budget*

How will these funds be used?

Some of the funds will immediately be used to buy picture books to be delivered as soon as possible to first grade classrooms. These first deliveries will be set up ahead of time with principals and teachers. The deliveries will be documented with photo or video (with permission) and featured on our Instagram feed and in promotional communication.

The rest of the grant will be set aside for a variety of other needs:

- With hours of work picking through used books stores, thrift shops, and online used book sellers, we are able to save hundreds of dollars per class box, therefore getting books in the hands of many more children. A new picture book costs about \$17 resale, while sites like biblio.com sell some books for \$1 + \$0 shipping! We are also harnessing the power of social media, and need to dedicate several hours each week to this form of communication and promotion. We would like to pay our team members (who up to this point have done this work for free) an hourly living wage. Paying for this work will help several of us afford to put in more hours and make us more attractive when recruiting help. We are currently a team of 3: two white women and one woman of color. We'd like to intentionally recruit people of color to strengthen our perspective and future goals.
- We will work with actionnetwork.org. For \$10/month, we can access more tools and support through this activism support organization.
- We will use set aside funds to complete class boxes of books when we are short funding. It will be important that our followers see continual momentum, so if one month we have not raised enough money to purchase a whole box of books, we will use our set aside funds.
- With set aside money we can incentivize donors (short-term dollar per dollar matches).
- Because we are always learning and hearing the needs of the community, we would like to keep some of money aside for future ideas and opportunities that help us reach our goal of getting boxes of books featuring characters of color in every first grade classroom in the area.

Sustainability*

Do you have other available funds for the project? Describe how the project will be sustained going forward.

A picture is worth 1,000 words, and a video is even better! We will use this grant to launch the project. We will jump into full swing, and be able to show potential donors pictures, videos, and testimonials.

With the TP grant, we will be able to say, "Look at the good that is happening. You can help us reach so many more students!"

This is a crowdfunding project. We will work with actionnetwork.org to raise money continuously. We have found that locals are overwhelmed by problems in our country. They want to do good, but supporting a cause needs to be clear, convenient, and easy. Supporting CPP meets those criteria.

We will use Instagram and in-person interaction to tell the story of how books can empower children, how racial equity will improve our schools and society, and current stories of racial inequity.

We are here to highlight the good work of others. For every supporter who wants to be highlighted, we will tell their story, promote their business, or agree on something that feels important and reciprocal.

Our most active partners and public leaders will be invited to join us on Delivery Days. These will be opportunities for great press. Taking photos and video with a box of books at a local business, being greeted at a school by the principal, and handing out books to students (with permission) is desirable for anyone who benefits from good press.

Using actionnetwork.org, we will have support connecting and engaging with supporters, communicating stories, and building ladders (ladder example: follow us on IG, tag a friend in the comments under a post, buy a \$3 CPP bumper sticker, donate \$5 to get one book in a classroom, get your workplace to sponsor a box, volunteer at a fundraising event, ask your PTO to take on getting one box per classroom K-5).

With the support we have already garnered and feedback we have collected, we feel confident that the community will fund this effort. The Tipping Point Grant money will be an amazing way for us to kick off and illustrate the project for potential donors.