

## 1. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

### A. Purpose of Project

“Wee Nurture Children” (WNC) is a needed project at Asheville City Schools Preschool because it will allow almost 200 young children (ages three to five) to experience the wealth of local talent, production, and natural resources available in Western North Carolina. Ninety percent of the children we serve are eligible for free lunch and have limited opportunities for travel, exploration, and first-hand experiential education. This project will give our children a chance to learn from local artisans, musicians, storytellers, dancers, food producers, and environmental educators. The WNC project will tap these rich educational resources to expand young children’s experiences with the arts and the environment.

WNC will have a variety of benefits for our children and preschool classrooms. First, we are developing meaningful learning opportunities across a wide variety of contexts for our youngest learners. Second, the project conveys the importance of bringing the community into our school, and then taking this knowledge back to the community. Third, empirically-based early childhood research recognizes that young learners transfer skills most readily when they have learned through “authentic” activities (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Yellend, 2000). Fourth, the real world approach of WNC affords our children the opportunity to demonstrate: a) that one learns by being involved in a meaningful activity; b) that adults and children learn together; and c) that learning takes places across contexts—both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition, the most effective early childhood programs include practical workshops focused on practical experiences and activities that enable children to develop important skills. Our hands-on, minds-on approach will allow our children to articulate what they know about a particular topic and identify areas of additional interest—items in keeping with our developmentally appropriate, child-focused approach to education.

The state learning standards for preschool is *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for NC Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*. In addition, arts, science, multicultural and literacy activities are integral components of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) which is used by the North Carolina Division of Child Development to measure child care facilities’ quality. The activities proposed represent the highest level of quality on this scale and will enrich the experience we can offer to Asheville City Schools’ youngest learners.

### B. Methods

The WNC project will occur monthly in our 6 preschool classrooms for 102+ children ages three to five. Children who participate in the Partners for Learning Success Program—a Smart Start funded project housed at ACSP focused on building English and Spanish early literacy skills—will also be invited to participate. Participants from these groups typically total 75 English speaking children, and 8-12 Spanish speaking children. The total number of children impacted by this project is expected to be 190. The following is a proposed monthly calendar of activities to occur onsite at the preschool. While field trips are taken throughout the year by individual classrooms, logistics make it impossible for us to transport all preschool classrooms; therefore, all activities will occur onsite in our Media Center—a room large enough to house all classrooms. Monthly topics are listed below:

*August	The Environment
*September	Animals
*October	Multicultural Dance
*November	Storytelling
*December	Puppeteers
*January	Fiber Arts
*February	Music
*March	Pottery
*April	Gardening & Food Production
*May	Painting & Drawing

Invited guests will demonstrate their craft(s) through short, developmentally appropriate, hands-on activities. In addition, theme-related books will be purchased and added to the permanent collections of all 6 preschool classrooms. The following example demonstrates how the project will work. In November, Poetry Alive will be invited to provide a live demonstration of poetry and nursery rhymes. During their presentation, children will be

asked to participate in acting out and saying poems. In the classrooms, make-and-take supplies will be added to extend children's understanding of poetry. Make-and-Take items could include children making their own "book of poetry" or creating drawings based on poems learned. Theme-related books—such as nursery rhymes—will be added to reading corners and various centers throughout the classroom (such as dramatic play, art...etc.). To encourage family participation, all preschool families will be encouraged to attend the monthly presentations, as well as participate in classroom-based make-and-take activities, and reading newly introduced titles to their child. As our proposed calendar and activities demonstrate, exposure to the arts, science, multicultural opportunities, and literacy are just some of the integral components of the WNC project.

The WNC project is innovative and cooperative in several ways. We recognize one challenge of working in an early childhood setting is learning to work in relationships where ownership of the learning process is a shared experience with children, families, and our broader community. We also wish to focus our efforts on preparing our children to be good adaptive learners, so that they can perform effectively when situations are unpredictable and demand change. Cooperatively, we will be partnering with three groups: families, community members, and Partners for Learning Success. Families will be invited to attend all monthly sessions, as well as classroom-based make-and-take activities. Community members will provide their expertise and skills on a monthly basis, and will be invited back to the preschool following their presentation to see how their efforts impacted our children's learning. Finally, Partners for Learning Success, a Smart-Start funded early literacy program for English and Spanish-speaking children not enrolled in a child care program, will provide suggestions for top-quality thematic children's books, as well as Make-and-Take activities.

### **C. Goals & Outcomes of the Project**

The WNC Project will have several goals for our children as well as our program. We anticipate that our children will gain a better understanding of their local arts and environmental community, as well as learn how to transfer skills they learn (such as observation) to other settings. A successful transfer will be reflected in their interactions with Make-and-Take activities as well as an increased use of thematic children's books. Children's participation in monthly presentations, Make-and-Take activities, and reading theme-based children's books is widely recognized as important in developing knowledge. Opportunities to tinker with materials and equipment such as seeds, soil, and gardening tools (April gardening theme) in situations with other learners give young children scope to observe, reflect on the consequences of actions taken, as well as to think about and discuss observations. Teachers will provide a supply of engaging, relevant materials, as well as conceptual support. They will state what is known, paraphrase, redirect, question ideas and approaches, provide information for the children's consideration, and assist with problem solving. Tinkering provides the basis from which our children can formulate questions and set about finding the answers.

Ultimately, this project is designed to enhance young children's community and cultural awareness—and to expose them to learning opportunities often not afforded them. Our monthly activities have the potential to open our children's minds to the wealth of information that exists beyond the confines of schools, and helps cross social and cultural boundaries. By introducing a new generation of Asheville residents to the wealth of local talent, production, and natural resources in our area, we help ensure the environmental and economic sustainability of our region. Additionally, because our Preschool Teachers (6) and Assistants (12) will participate in all presentations, activities, and read thematic books with young children, this project is sustainable at the school level as these individuals will also learn skills which can be used in future classroom activities across the years.

### **D. Evaluation**

A variety of methods will be used to track our children's understanding of local arts and environmental resources and track their pre-literacy skills.

First, each monthly presentation will involve a simple pre- and post- test to gauge: a) what knowledge children bring with them about each monthly topic; and b) what knowledge they gain as a result of the presentation. Prior to the presentation, presenters will be asked to devise three child-friendly questions to be asked before and after their presentation. A simple tally of responses will be taken.

In addition to an increased understanding of the local arts and environmental resources, it is expected that at the conclusion of this project, children at ACS Preschool will have increased their pre-literacy skills (including

vocabulary, letter recognition, and language development), their awareness of science and environmental concepts, their community and multicultural awareness, and their beginning math concepts. *Foundations for Early Learning* and the ECERS scale—resources used by the North Carolina Division of Child Development to assess program quality to enhance the development of children’s skills across all domains—will be used. Specific outcomes from *Foundations*, along with ECERS (at the highest level of “excellent”) include:

- i. Include a variety of activities that promote understanding and acceptance of diversity (ECERS) and cultural awareness. Promote respect and appreciation for each child’s culture and the cultures of others (*Foundations*).
- ii. Use books, pictures, and materials to add information and extend children’s hands-on nature/science activities (ECERS). Engage children in observing events, exploring natural objects, and reflecting on what they learn (*Foundations*).  
Offer music experiences that extend children’s understanding of music (ECERS) and use different types of music in the classroom regularly. Acquaint children with the many different kinds of music and musical instruments (*Foundations*) and invite authors, artists, musicians, and storytellers to the classroom so children can observe firsthand the creative work of a variety of people in the arts (*Foundations*). Offer art materials daily and relate art experiences to other classroom activities (ECERS). Invite professional artists, musicians, dancers and craftspeople representing different cultures and languages to visit the classroom (*Foundations*).
- v. Some books relate to current classroom activities or themes (ECERS). Provide and share fiction and non-fiction books that stimulate children’s curiosity (*Foundations*).

## 2. TIMELINE

Month	Presentation/Activity (1 X per month)	Make & Take Activity (1 X per month with additional follow-up & materials provided by ACSP based on children’s interests)	Children’s Books (New titles purchased monthly, and left as permanent classroom collection. Books rotated on a monthly basis)
July-August 2008	Arrange presenters for entire school year by August 15, 2008.	Order Make & Take materials for entire school year by August 15, 2008.	Purchase children’s books for all presentations by August 15, 2008.
August 2008	The Environment	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom’s literacy collection.
September 2008	Animals	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom’s literacy collection.
October 2008	Multicultural Dance	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom’s literacy collection.
November 2008	Storytelling	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom’s literacy collection.
December 2008	Puppeteers	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each

			classroom's literacy collection.
January 2009	Fiber Arts	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom's literacy collection.
February 2009	Music	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom's literacy collection.
March 2009	Pottery	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom's literacy collection.
April 2009	Gardening & Food Production	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom's literacy collection.
May 2009	Painting & Drawing	To be designed by presenter & conducted by classroom teachers & family participants.	Titles suggested by Partners for Learning Success & ordered by Education Coordinator. Titles to be in classroom by presentation time & to remain permanent part of each classroom's literacy collection.
May 2009	Data Compilation & Presentation of Findings		

### 3. BUDGET DETAIL

Date	Activities	Expenses	# of Participants
8-25-08	Environment Presentation	Materials: Make & Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6 Preschool Classrooms  Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300  Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)	Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning Success Participants: 75  Adults: 30
9-22-08	Animals Presentation	Materials: Make & Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6 Preschool Classrooms  Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300  Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)	Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning Success Participants: 75  Adults: 30
9-27-08	Multicultural Dance Presentation	Materials: Make & Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6	Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning

		<p>Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
11-17-08	Storytelling Presentation	<p>Materials: Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6 Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
12-15-08	Puppeteers Presentation	<p>Materials: Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6 Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
1-26-09	Fiber Arts Presentation	<p>Materials: Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6 Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
2-23-09	Music Presentation	<p>Materials: Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6 Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150 Children's Books for permanent collections of 6 Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost 6 Teachers 12 Assistants 12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102 Partners for Learning Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>

3-30-09	Pottery Presentation	<p>Materials:  Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6  Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150  Children's Books for permanent collections of 6  Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost  6 Teachers  12 Assistants  12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102  Partners for Learning  Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
4-27-09	Gardening Presentation	<p>Materials:  Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6  Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150  Children's Books for permanent collections of 6  Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost  6 Teachers  12 Assistants  12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102  Partners for Learning  Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
5-11-09	Painting & Drawing Presentation	<p>Materials:  Make &amp; Take Items: \$50 for materials for 6  Preschool Classrooms</p> <p>Honoraria for Presenter(s): \$150  Children's Books for permanent collections of 6  Preschool Classrooms: \$300</p> <p>Personnel: No cost  6 Teachers  12 Assistants  12 Parents (2 per room)</p>	<p>Preschoolers: 102  Partners for Learning  Success Participants: 75</p> <p>Adults: 30</p>
	<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<p>Make &amp; Take Materials: \$500  Honoraria: \$1500  Children's Books: \$3000</p> <p><b>Total: \$5000</b></p>	
	<b>ACSF Grant Funds Used:</b>		
	<b>Other Sources of Funding:</b>	<p>Our Preschool program is financially supported by the following: 20% of funding comes from Asheville City Schools; 20% comes from parent fees; and 60% from grant support. Therefore the amount the Preschool is able to commit to this project is exceedingly limited.</p>	