

The mission of The Franklin School of Innovation (FSI) is to prepare the next generation of leaders, capable of solving problems and participating effectively and ethically as local and global citizens. Through challenging academics, real-world learning, and community engagement, our students discover their potential, develop persistence, and recognize the value of others. Our graduates are ready for the future they will create.

FSI opens in August 2014, serving students in the Buncombe County region. It is open to any student eligible for admission to a NC public school, including students with learning disabilities, limited English proficiency, and students who come from poor families and communities. Currently, over 55% of students in Buncombe County qualify for free and reduced lunch, a number which has steadily increased since 2006, and more than one in five people struggle to afford food in the Asheville/Buncombe County region. The percent of children living in poverty, currently at 27%, exceeds both the state and national averages. BCS is the state's 11th largest school system out of 115, and serves approximately 25,500 students. It is the largest district in Western North Carolina, with 42 schools spread over 660 square miles. Although there are several elementary and middle school level charter schools in the area, FSI will be the first charter high school. The only charter high school in the seven counties bordering Buncombe County, located in Rutherfordton, is an hour's drive away.

While the local education agency (LEA) serving Buncombe County provides an adequate education for some students, persistent achievement gaps exist. According to the N.C. Department of Instruction, nearly 90% of non-economically disadvantaged students are proficient on end of year exams, compared to 72% of economically disadvantaged students. The achievement gaps for English Language Learners and students with disabilities are even greater. Almost 81% of non-ELL students graduate from high school, yet only 41% of ELL students earn their diplomas. The percentage of students without disabilities who graduate is 82.1 as compared to 61.9 for those with disabilities.

FSI is implementing the school-wide Expeditionary Learning (EL) model to improve academic achievement and increase graduation and college enrollment rates for the students it serves.

The EL model has demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap for students receiving free and reduced lunch, English Language Learners, Hispanic and African American students, and students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). EL is a research-based model that combines high standards for students with instructional practices that emphasize student inquiry, critical thinking, collaboration, and craftsmanship. In addition, specific components of our program are designed to accelerate learning for all students, with particular benefit to economically disadvantaged students. The national network of EL schools and professional colleagues includes more than 150 schools, 4,000 teachers, and 45,000 students.

FSI is seeking funds from the CSP grant to cover planning and start-up costs associated with designing and implementing the school. Grant funds will also be used to conduct outreach and marketing efforts to inform the community about FSI, including translation of marketing materials into Spanish, with the objective of recruiting a diverse student population; support curriculum design and professional learning activities (including on-site coaching from our EL School Designer); purchase equipment and supplies necessary to carry out the educational program; outfit labs for science, technology, and arts labs to support an experiential, hands-on learning model; supply technology devices to economically-disadvantaged students; develop a school library; support tutoring and other enrichments to allow all students to learn at high levels; allow the Project Director and staff to attend the CSP Project Director's meetings; and contract services for translation.