



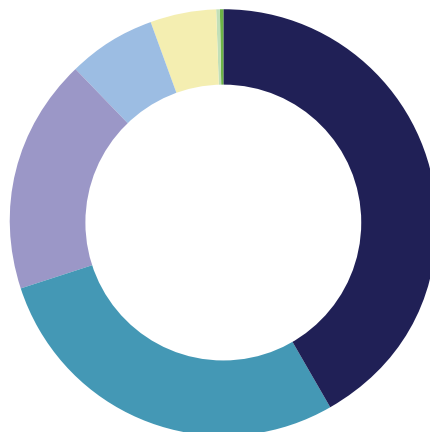
GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS



68,202
STUDENTS



62.92%
STUDENT
POVERTY LEVEL



- BLACK: 41.92%
- WHITE: 28.16%
- HISPANIC: 17.79%
- ASIAN: 6.79%
- MULTI-RACIAL: 4.85%
- AMERICAN INDIAN: 0.32%
- PACIFIC ISLANDER: 0.16%



Invest Forward is an initiative that encourages districts and states to prioritize investing a significant portion of their American Rescue Plan resources in helping students successfully access postsecondary education and succeed in future career pathways. As part of the effort to equip district and state leaders with high-impact strategies to guide their investments, Invest Forward will continue to highlight the work of **innovative local and state leaders** who are using the once-in-a-lifetime stimulus funding to give students a better tomorrow by investing in postsecondary pathways today.



“If these funds are utilized correctly, we can eradicate some of the barriers that we previously couldn’t address due to lack of funds. Too often people focus on ‘achievement gaps’ rather than ‘opportunity gaps.’ We need to make opportunities more feasible for our students, especially those who have been underrepresented and marginalized; the stimulus funds can support us in reaching that goal.”

—CLINTON A. WILSON
Supervisor of High School Counseling,
Guilford County Schools

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY AND CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

Investments in strong postsecondary pathways—the meaningful connections between K-12 education and college and career—are vital to ensuring a better future for our young people.

Guilford County Schools is the third-largest district in North Carolina, serving nearly 70,000 students in the Greensboro and High Point areas. Under the leadership of Superintendent **Sharon Contreras**, a member of Chiefs for Change, the district is seizing the opportunity presented by the American Rescue Plan to invest in a diverse set of supports to build more robust postsecondary pathways for its students.

PEERS SUPPORTING PEERS



When the pandemic took hold in 2020, Guilford leaders knew that the massive disruptions would likely result in significant learning loss and worked proactively to put **academic support programming** in place. This includes a peer tutoring program, supported by stimulus funds, to help students catch up in English language arts and mathematics. Approximately 80 Guilford high school students and 80 local college students have been recruited to serve as tutors for middle and high school students in the district. **Peer tutors** are trained by Teaching and Learning Department content supervisors and Tutoring Department supervisors and receive a monetary stipend for their work. In addition to the academic benefits for those being tutored, the district believes that when students serve as tutors, and receive formal training and payment, they get valuable exposure to potential careers in education. In addition, offering high school students the chance to **connect with college peers** who are also serving as tutors allows those high schoolers to build relationships with people who can help them navigate their own paths to postsecondary education and training.

EXPANDING EARLY COLLEGE ACCESS



Like many districts across the country, Guilford County Schools has seen rising interest and success in early **postsecondary opportunities**

for its students in recent years. Specifically, its **Career and College Promise Initiative**, which offers dual enrollment opportunities through a partnership with Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC), has seen significant growth; in the past three years, participation has grown from **600 to 1600 students** per semester. Stimulus funds presented an opportunity to remove barriers that have prevented additional students from participating in dual enrollment opportunities. The district can now provide buses for students to get to and from GTCC, eliminating the transportation barrier that previously hindered some students. Guilford has also been able to waive textbook fees for participating students.

LOOKING BEYOND GRADUATION



Guilford County sees the stimulus as an opportunity to invest in **longer-term structures** that will have impact beyond the pandemic. The district is in the process of building a system to

track the postsecondary progress and outcomes of its graduates, enabling leaders to understand successes and pain points and better target interventions during students' K-12 experiences. Although Guilford has access to National Student Clearinghouse data about its students, district leaders want to get an even more specific understanding of how students perform after high school to better develop appropriate resources and supports. A **cross-sector leadership team** representing accountability and research, student services, teaching and learning, and career technical education is engaged in a process to custom build a **postsecondary outcomes data system** to support this work. The district has already begun conducting outreach to postsecondary admissions and retention offices to build stronger connections with local institutions to advance the shared goal of student success.



LOOKING AHEAD: IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

In the months and years ahead, Guilford County Schools plans to bolster its advising capacity and build on the initial success of after school learning hubs as ways to provide students with extra navigation support to reach their postsecondary goals.

In considering ways to maximize the impact and ensure sustainability of stimulus funds, Guilford County leaders offered several ideas for consideration:

- **Get the data.** For stimulus-funded initiatives to be sustainable, they will eventually need to be built into regular district budgeting processes. Don't wait to collect data on the impact of stimulus-supported programs to make the case for their inclusion in longer-term priorities.
- **Take a critical look inwards.** In figuring out where to most effectively direct stimulus funds, it's important to look at existing data to see where the inadequacies lie. A close look at student achievement, postsecondary enrollment and persistence, early postsecondary opportunity participation, and more can help districts see where they might be falling short and could benefit from stimulus investment.
- **It takes a team.** Stimulus investment planning should be a long game—and for the long game to succeed, there must be many different people at the table. Analyzing a district's needs and priorities through different lenses can help create a more robust, well-rounded plan.