

**From:** esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com <esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com>  
**Sent:** 12/14/2020 11:40:03 AM  
**To:** 'Copland Rudolph' <copland.rudolph@acsgmail.net>  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** FW:

This guy is growing on me.

**From:** 'Gene Freeman' via councilgroup <AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2020 10:37 AM  
**To:** Lara Lustig <lalalustig@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** Shaunda Sandford <shaunda.sandford@acsgmail.net>; Martha Geitner <martha.geitner@acsgmail.net>; Joyce Brown <joyce.brown@acsgmail.net>; James Carter <james.carter@acsgmail.net>; Patricia Griffin <patricia.griffin@acsgmail.net>; AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov; Brownie Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>; Alfred Whitesides <alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara@buncombecounty.org <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>  
**Subject:** Re:

Ms. Lustig,

Thank you for your email. There has been a great deal of thought about the safety and fiscal responsibility with the building that houses APS. There has also been a great deal of thought about the community created within the unsafe and antiquated facility . The move will be both good for the long term growth for both programs if the data suggests that course.

I am also glad to see that you are "livid". I too am "livid". I am livid that 80 percent of our African American students have been left behind. I am also concerned that the two programs mentioned in your email have demographics skewed toward a majority of white clientele. The data clearly says that our African American students should be the prominent make-up (based on needs) of our pre-k classes. However the housing of stated programs are in a majority of white neighborhoods making transportation for those students with lower socio-economics very difficult to attend. I am hoping more people will become "livid" with the outcomes of our students who have received the least of our public schools services.

Thank you for your interest in ACS. Keep safe and be well.

Gene Freeman

On Sun, Dec 13, 2020 at 2:53 PM Lara Lustig <lalalustig@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi, my name is Lara Lustig, and I am a longtime resident of Asheville and Buncombe County and a parent to first-grade twins who have been students at Asheville Primary School since they started as PK-3s three and a half years ago.

I have been involved with this incredible school as the parent representative of the School Improvement Team and a member of the Parent-Teacher Collective. I have been advocating for the expansion of this excellent and effective school to serve 4th and 5th grades for nearly 3 year now, only to have been patted on the head and turned away time and time again. It's been frustrating, to say the least.

So, hey, I've had my share of frustrations with various incarnations of the ACS Superintendent and School Board. But I am absolutely LIVID about how the preschool is being treated right now. I want to be clear that this isn't just about MY kids. This is about ALL KIDS in ACS.

Our ACS Preschool program is a MODEL of early childhood education for the state, and part of why it is so successful is because of the strong and caring community the teachers create in that building. Breaking them all up into small bits here and there is going to be a huge blow to this community of dedicated professionals. If we have any true desire to close the ACS opportunity gap, the preschool program is the foundation of this effort. The data exists. We know this is true. Montessori public education is also proven in multiple longitudinal studies to close the racial opportunity gap. ACS has already invested in and created a true gem of a school that needs to be nurtured, not hobbled.

And I have questions about selling the building so quickly. Why now? What's the rush? In the information Dr. Gene has shared with us, there is no clear and present danger to staff and students. If we do need to leave the building, why not take one more year to make plans and make the move with quality? Why are we taking our administrators' focus away from our students in this pandemic and sending them scrambling to figure out how to squeeze the Montessori school and some unclear number of preschool classrooms into the Hall Fletcher building by August? Does this really serve our students?

What other options were considered? Where is the analysis? What stakeholders in ACS and the larger community were brought in? This building is a meaningful and historic part of our community, and the location, which is central to lots of preschool families and located right on the bus line, as well, is an asset that should not be let go without serious consideration of what we're actually giving up.

This current speed-race to sell the building and property on Haywood Road to the detriment of both the preschool and Montessori school is unacceptable for many reasons. Overall, we are missing three things: 1) Transparency 2) Stakeholder involvement, and 3) Commitment to programs with successful outcomes for ACS students.

If the sale of this property is deemed absolutely necessary at this pace, we should prioritize doing everything possible to ensure the future success and expansion of both the preschool and the Montessori school. Specifically, there should be plans in place to expand the preschool program to serve more ACS students and to expand the Montessori school to 1) accept new students besides siblings, 2) expand to include 4th grade next year (we have 24 third graders this year who are truly shining and will show the fruits of ongoing Montessori learning), and continue to expand to include 5th grade the next year.

Please act to serve the interests of ACS students and preserve and nourish the amazing things that are happening at Asheville Primary School.

Thank you.

--

Best,

Gene Freeman, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Asheville City Schools  
85 Mountain Street  
Asheville, NC 28801

Office: 828-350-6145  
Fax: 828-232-4185