

The Arts Based School

For Immediate Release

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Arts Based School to Open Second Location

The public charter school, now in its 20th year of operations, adds a new location in Happy Hill to expand access to joyful learning through the arts.

The Arts Based School (ABS) has recently announced plans to open a second campus located in the Happy Hill neighborhood, adjacent to the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA), close to Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), and just two miles from its current location downtown. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Public school board has agreed to lease a wing of the original (now closed) Diggs Elementary school to the successful public charter school. It is set to open in August 2022 with kindergarten and first grade classes, and will add an additional grade level each year until it serves grades K-8.

“This is a long-awaited and very exciting new venture for our school!” said Principal Robin Hollis. “We have many friends and supporters helping to make this dream a reality.”

Abio Harris, President of the Happy Hill Neighborhood Association (HHNA), views the school’s expansion as “a positive development for our community.” For the past four years the HHNA has had a cultural summer arts program for youth with support from the Kenan Institute, and in 2021, started an after school program at the Sims recreation center in Happy Hill. Harris welcomes the expansion of arts and education in the Happy Hill neighborhood.

“We’re truly excited that we can help create The Arts Based School’s second campus,” said WS/FCS Superintendent Tricia McManus. “This school offers some unique programs and by leasing space at the former Diggs Elementary campus, the school can continue to grow. This also means we are living up to our strategic plan goal of building and strengthening partnerships and communication with educational organizations to better engage families and community stakeholders on behalf of all students.”

The Chancellors of both UNCSA and Winston-Salem State University have also endorsed the project: “I believe that The Arts Based School—in partnership with UNCSA, WSSU, and others—can make transformative things happen for the Winston-Salem community,” said UNCSA Chancellor Brian Cole. “The Arts Based School, since its inception, has been at the

forefront of curricular innovation, providing its students with unique and engaging instruction.” said WSSU Chancellor Ellwood Robinson. “It is my expectation that the addition of the proposed second campus will enable an even more diverse community of learners to experience all of the opportunities for educational discovery and self-expression that the Arts Based School has to offer. Winston-Salem State University looks forward to additional engagement opportunities with ABS, and I offer full support of this endeavor.”

Councilwoman Annette Scippio, who was educated in the original Diggs Elementary, was instrumental in the opening of the second location. “Music, song, dance, spoken word, and visual arts are the core expressions of every society and its cultures,” she says. “To gain knowledge through the experiences of our basic senses is a quest of wonder. I am thrilled that our neighborhood children will be so enriched through The Arts Based School.”

The school is currently accepting applications for its waiting list and for a few remaining openings in first grade. To learn more or to apply, visit www.artsbasedschool.com.

Background Facts:

- The ABS lottery annually leaves roughly 400 students on its waiting list. Before the COVID pandemic, the ABS board and administration began work to open a second school to address this demand, and also as part of a deep-seated institutional commitment to expanding access to deeply arts-integrated education.
- The ABS-Second Campus will be governed by the same ABS Board of Directors and run by the same administration team with additional administrative team members. The second campus will follow the ABS traditions and philosophy providing arts integrated instruction to deliver the NC Standard Course of Study.
- The Arts Based School admission lottery is weighted to give a 2:1 preference to students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, according to those federally established guidelines.
- Charter schools do not receive building funds. ABS is given state and local money for operations based on enrollment. ABS also received a \$500,000 NC ACCESS grant to use for the second campus operations. The ACCESS grant budget includes funding for curriculum materials, furniture, and technology. This grant cannot be used for construction or salaries.

The Arts Based School approaches teaching and childhood development in a way that is designed to support all children. It delivers a rigorous academic program, following the NC Standard Course of Study, integrated deeply with the arts: music, dance, visual art, and theater. The school’s curriculum is inherently interdisciplinary and project-based, with culminating experiences of exceptional depth and scope at every grade level.

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