



FOR RELEASE:
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Buncombe County Schools and LEAF Schools & Streets Awarded National Distinction by Kennedy Center

*Partnership is designed to enrich and promote arts-based
professional development for teachers.*

(ASHEVILLE, NC) — Buncombe County Schools (BCS) and LEAF Schools & Streets are among just *seven* teams nationwide selected to join the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Partners in Education, a program designed to assist arts organizations throughout the nation to develop or expand education partnerships with their local school systems. A primary focus of these partnerships is to provide sustainable and robust arts-based professional development for teachers.

“Art is a beautiful tool with the power to create community, hold cultural traditions and oral narratives, catalyze conversations, and to innovate learning spaces, said LEAF Community Relations Director Cortina J. Caldwell. LEAF is proud to partner with Buncombe County Schools in order to support the professional development of teachers and Teaching Artists, while also striving toward equitable access to the arts, and co-designing local programs.”

Numerous studies point to the value of arts education in improving student outcomes, yet teachers may not have the resources, access, or training to implement arts integration across the curriculum. Partnering with teachers is fundamental to arts-based learning. By the community strategically partnering to support and provide teachers with high quality and continuous arts-based professional development, teachers and students are exposed to new access points for learning.

“The arts engage the whole child in creative thinking, collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, and communication. It inspires and transforms students supporting them in

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becoming life-long learners as well as future citizens,” said Mario Rossero, Senior Vice President of Education at the Kennedy Center. “Essential to engaging the student is empowering educators with tools and skills to incorporate the arts into classrooms. Partners in Education not only assist with providing these tools but the learning experiences through the program foster and develop stronger collaborative relationships with the community. It is rewarding to see the impact on the students as teachers grow professionally through the arts.”

“What an honor to be selected for this unique partnership,” said BCS Superintendent Dr. Tony Baldwin. “We believe arts education is a crucial part of our students’ experience here in Buncombe County Schools. This partnership will give us access to world-class art experts which will enhance the learning experience for our teachers and students,” he added.

As the entry point for the program, a team consisting of representatives from BCS and LEAF Schools & Streets will participate in the Partners in Education Institute, April 23–26 at the Kennedy Center. During the four-day intensive, team members develop a plan customized to their community for how the partners will work together to create or further establish arts-based professional development programs for area teachers. Teams receive a detailed planning guide, attend performances, and meet with national education leaders and guest artists while at the Kennedy Center. A variety of interactive workshops, presentations, and classroom modeling demonstrations will also be offered to exhibit innovative and imaginative approaches to educating students. Information learned at the Institute has proven invaluable to past participants who have left the Kennedy Center with more confidence in their ability to create their own professional development programs for teachers.

The new teams will join the nearly 100 teams from 39 states and the District of Columbia already participating in the Partners in Education program, now in its 27th year. In addition, partnership teams receive national support from the Kennedy Center through access to Center resources including its roster of teaching artists to work directly with the school and students; follow-up consultation and ongoing communication to assist teams in program and partnership development, as well as annual multi-day convenings and intensive seminars. For more information, please visit [kennedy-center.org/partners](https://www.kennedy-center.org/partners).

ABOUT EDUCATION AT THE KENNEDY CENTER

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is the national champion for arts learning and creativity. Committed to increasing opportunities for all people to participate in, learn about, and understand the arts, the Center offers programs and events that strive to reflect the nation and its communities, and that are accessible and inclusive for all. From the Center's stages to classrooms and communities across the country, to online resources accessible nearly anywhere, the Center serves the burgeoning artist, the curious explorer, the student (of any age), the teacher and teaching artist—any person interested in arts learning and utilizing the arts for positive change.

As an essential component of the living memorial to President Kennedy, the Center's Education programs utilize the arts to embrace the ideals of service, justice, freedom, courage, and gratitude, and cultivate the Citizen Artists in all the people we serve. For more information, please visit kennedy-center.org/education/.

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