



# EDUCATION

## WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

In the Asheville area, the education and business community work closely together to build the elements necessary to support a vibrant economy.



**RIVERBIRDRESEARCH**

A DIVISION OF THE ASHEVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

## ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A-B Tech has 7 college-wide academic divisions including: Academic Success, Allied Health, Arts and Sciences, Business and Hospitality Education, Emergency Services, Engineering and Applied Technology, and Workforce Development/Continuing Education. A-B Tech offers 87 curriculum programs, 877 degrees, 109 diplomas and 646 certificates.

Source: A-B Tech Institutional Profile 2021-2022

### Craft Beverage Institute

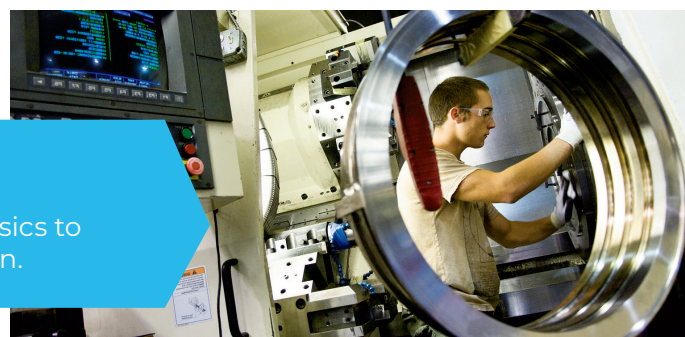
A-B Tech's Craft Beverage Institute of the Southeast provides the training needed to meet the professional standards of Asheville and Buncombe County's spectacular beverage industries.

### Advanced Manufacturing

The Advanced Manufacturing Center is a state of the art teaching facility focused on building and sustaining a skilled workforce.

### Information Technology

A-B Tech has certificates ranging from Computer Basics to Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) preparation.



## HAYWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Haywood Community College offers over 30 programs and supports workforce, industry, and small businesses through the Regional High Tech Center in Waynesville, NC.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Associate's Degree
- Enrollment (2022-2023): 1,634 curriculum students / 2,194 continuing education students
- Completions (2022): 278 Certificates, 221 Associate's

Select programs include:

- Auto Systems Technology
- Forestry Management Technology
- Computer-Integrated Machining

## BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Blue Ridge Community College offers more than 200 degrees, diplomas, and certificates in over 30 areas of study and has one of the largest Continuing Education programs in the state.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Associate's Degree
- Enrollment (2022-2023): 3,238 curriculum students / 6,509 continuing education students
- Completions (2022): 376 Certificates, 346 Associate's

Select programs include:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- IT & Computer
- Healthcare



>> Photography:

Courtesy of Blue Ridge Community College

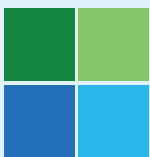
## ISOTHERMAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Awarded as one of the top online schools in North Carolina, Isothermal Community College offers custom training for new businesses and existing industry in the area.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Associate's Degree
- Enrollment (2022-2023): 2,350 curriculum students / 2,493 continuing education students
- Completions (2022): 700 Certificates, 363 Associate's

Select programs include:

- Computer-Integrated Machining
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing Technology



**OF THE 58 COLLEGES IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM,  
12 ARE IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA\*:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1   Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College | 7   Mayland Community College            |
| 2   Blue Ridge Community College                   | 8   McDowell Technical Community College |
| 3   Caldwell Community College                     | 9   Southwestern Community College       |
| 4   Cleveland Community College                    | 10   Tri-County Community College        |
| 5   Haywood Community College                      | 11   Western Piedmont Community College  |
| 6   Isothermal Community College                   | 12   Wilkes Community College            |

*\*Western North Carolina includes 24-counties: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey counties.*



# THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE

As part of the University of North Carolina System, UNC Asheville is one of the top public liberal arts colleges in the nation according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 3,233
- Completions (2022): 782 Bachelor's, 0 Master's

# 65%

of UNC Asheville's students complete original research in their field of study

# #9

 IN "NATIONAL PUBLIC  
LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES"

*U.S. News & World Report, 2024 U.S. News Best Colleges*



<< Photography:  
Courtesy of UNC Asheville



# SELECT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

## Engineering

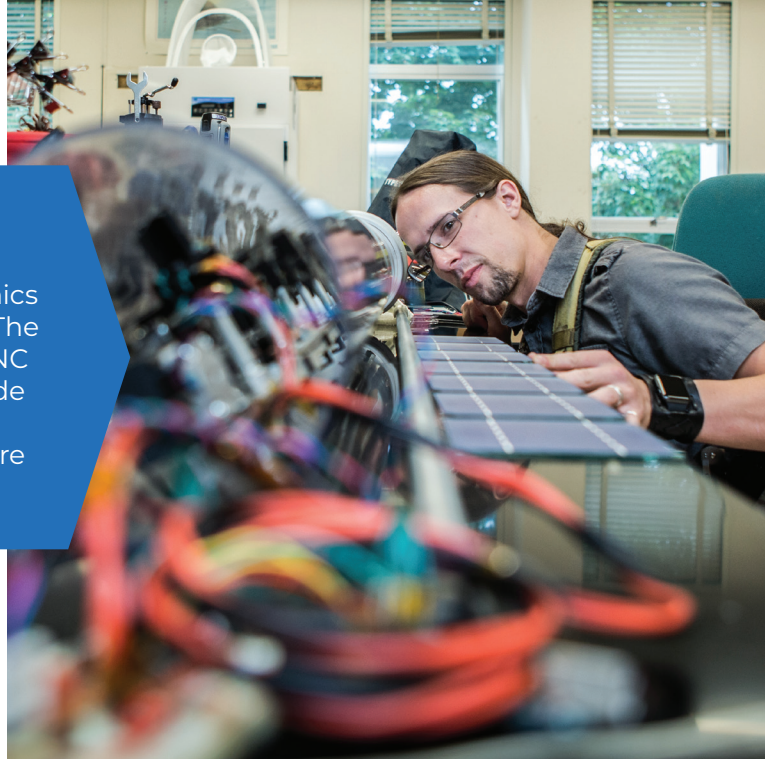
NC State and UNC Asheville jointly offer Mechatronics Engineering with all years completed in Asheville. The 2+2 Engineering program is also offered jointly by NC State and UNC Asheville with disciplines that include Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and more. Two years are completed at UNCA and two years at NCSU.

## Music Technology

The music department has a key partnership with Bob Moog Electronic Music Studio playing an important role in developing talent for music industry growth in the area. The music industry was estimated to contribute \$244M in total output and supported over 930 jobs in Buncombe county in 2022.

## Life Sciences

Biology and Chemistry Bachelor's degrees are offered with state-of-the-art research labs preparing students for Master's and Ph.D. programs. The Atmospheric Science program provides opportunities to connect with National Centers for Environmental Information, one of the nation's largest weather data centers.



<< Photography: Courtesy of UNC Asheville



# WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Also part of the UNC System, Western Carolina University (WCU) offers 115 undergraduate majors and 40 graduate degree and certificate programs.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctor's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 11,87
- Completions (2022): 64 Certificates, 2,736 Bachelor's, 614 Master's, 79 Doctor's

*Western Carolina is approximately 50 miles from Asheville and sits on 600 acres of gorgeous mountainous area. Several of the graduate and professional programs operate from a large instructional site in south Asheville in Biltmore Park Towne Square. These include degrees in Business, Counseling, Education Leadership, Engineering, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Public Affairs and more.*

**#9** AMONG "TOP PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES"

Best Value, Regional Universities (South) # 8

Best Colleges for Veterans, Regional Universities (South) # 8

*U.S. News & World Report, 2022 U.S. News Best Colleges*

## Nursing

Western Carolina University's Bachelor of Science in nursing prelicensure program is ranked first in the state by the Nursing Schools Almanac research team, in part for achieving an almost perfect rate of graduates passing the National Council Licensure Examination, on their first attempt. Additionally, WCU offers several highly ranked nursing degrees at the Master's and Doctoral levels in Asheville and online.



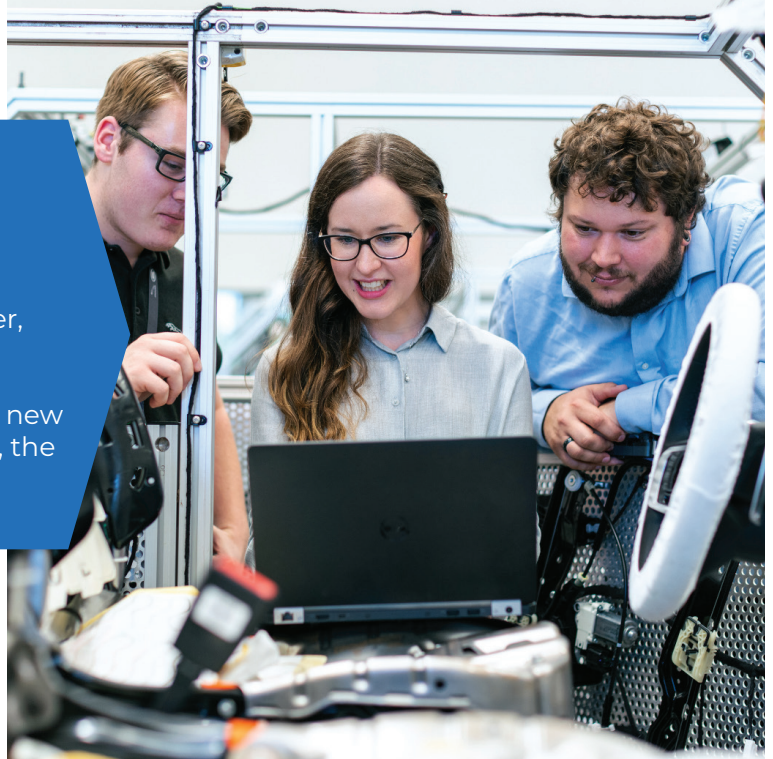
<< Photography: Courtesy of WCU



# SELECT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

## Engineering

The Bachelor of Science in Engineering program provides traditional engineering curriculum with extensive hands-on laboratory and real world experience. Concentrations include Electrical Power, Manufacturing, and Mechanical. The College of Engineering and Technology also partners with businesses, industry and entrepreneurs to develop new products and processes through The Rapid Center, the in-house research and development center.



## Data Science

The Graduate Certificate in Data Science is designed for the part-time student who wants to improve their skills in managing, visualizing and modeling with data. The stand-alone certificate program is located at the main campus and the instructional site at Biltmore Park-Asheville.

## Business Administration

WCU's Business Administration Program is home to the nationally renowned Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, as well as the Master of Project Management and MBA programs, which are fully accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), an international organization.



<< Photography: Courtesy of WCU

# APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Located in Boone, about 85 miles northeast of Asheville, Appalachian State University is part of the University of North Carolina system and is regularly cited as a top public school.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctor's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 20,641
- Completions (2022): 306 Certificates, 4,336 Bachelor's, 734 Master's, 12 Doctor's

## CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is an area of public education that focuses on providing students with opportunities in high skill, high demand and high wage areas. App State offers the only online degree program in the state of North Carolina for licensing Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers.

**#3** AMONG "TOP REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH"

*U.S. News & World Report, 2024 U.S. News Best Colleges*

## Nursing

At Appalachian State, the BSN, RN to BSN, and MSN programs are available within nursing. NCLEX pass rate for BSN students was 94%. Source: NC Board of Nursing, 2020-2022 3-year average.



>> Photography: Courtesy of Appalachian State University



TOTAL STUDENTS  
**286,157**

# ASHEVILLE AREA HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET

## WITHIN 25-MILE RADIUS\*\*

Enrolled Students: 16,345  
Completions: 3,621

- University of North Carolina at Asheville
- A-B Tech Community College
- Montreat College
- Warren Wilson College
- Mars Hill University
- Haywood Community College
- Blue Ridge Community College

## WITHIN 50-MILE RADIUS\*\*

Enrolled Students: 102,255  
Completions: 27,749

- Brevard College
- Clemson University
- East Tennessee State University
- Furman University
- Greenville Technical College
- Isothermal Community College
- Maryland Community College
- McDowell Technical Community College
- North Greenville University
- Southern Wesleyan University
- Southwestern Community College
- Tusculum University
- Western Carolina University
- Western Piedmont Community College

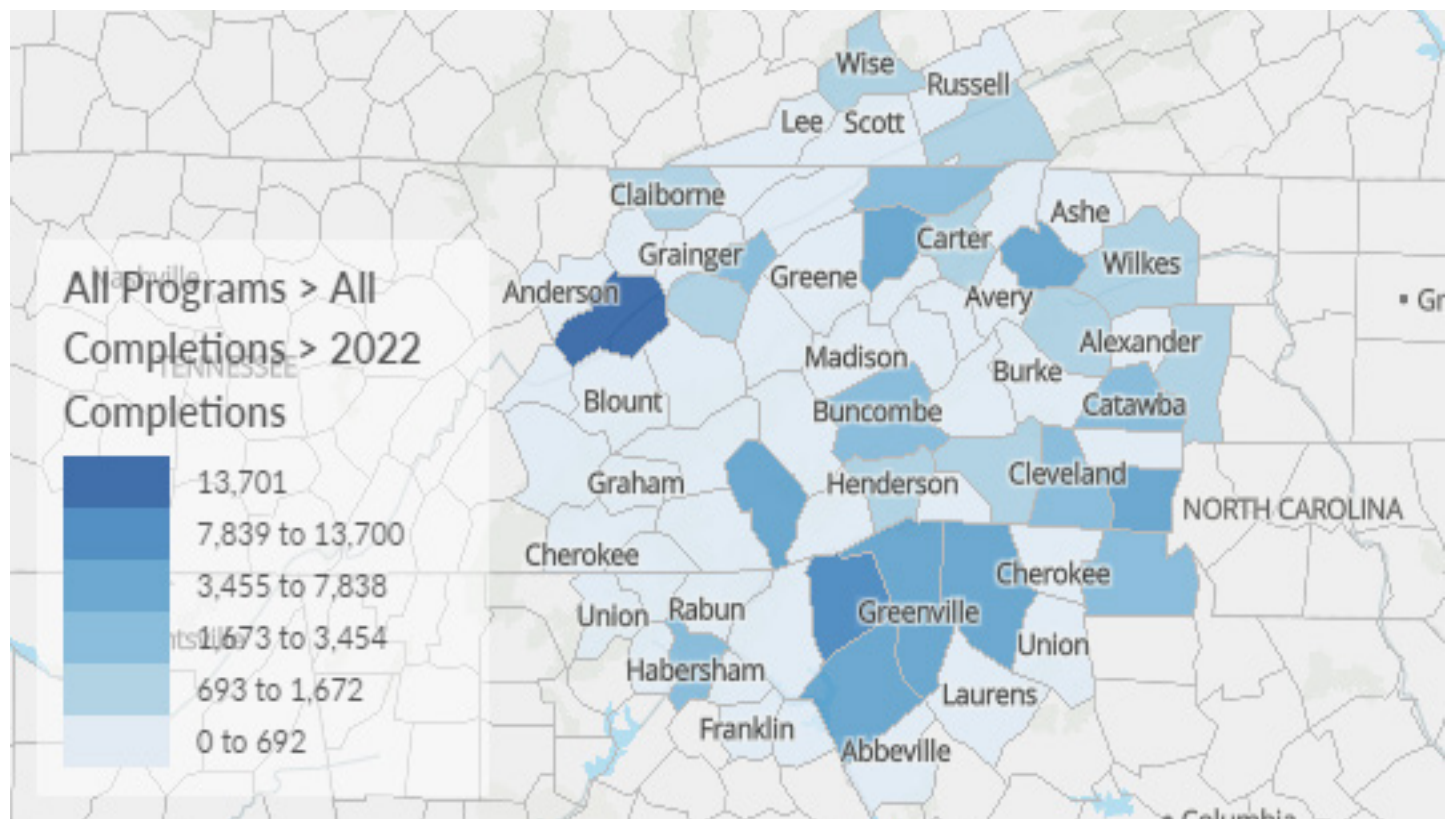
## WITHIN 100-MILE RADIUS\*\*

Enrolled Students: 286,157  
Completions: 82,208

- Anderson University
- Belmont Abbey College
- Converse University
- Emory & Henry College
- Gardner-Webb University
- King University
- North Georgia Technical College
- Piedmont University
- Presbyterian College
- Spartanburg Community College
- University of Tennessee-Knoxville
- University of South Carolina-Upstate
- Winthrop University
- Wofford College
- York Technical College
- Young Harris College

\*Schools that have a satellite campus in Asheville.

\*\*Not a comprehensive list and subject to change



# PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

## LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY

Lenoir-Rhyne University's Center for Graduate Studies of Asheville is one of the university's three campuses (other campuses are located in Hickory, NC and Columbia, SC). The Center primarily offers master's degree programs, and houses the Lenoir-Rhyne Equity & Diversity Institute (LREDI) and Thomas Wolfe Center for Narrative.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctor's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 2,405
- Completions (2022): 323 Bachelor's, 259 Master's, 25 Doctor's

Select programs include:

- Sustainability Studies
- Equity & Diversity Institute
- MBA Social Impact

### MBA in Social Impact

Emphasizes multiple business-related routes toward a better world and how they rely on one another. The curriculum is built for students who are interested in industries related to mission-driven for-profit companies, nonprofits, philanthropy, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other business models



▲ Photography: Courtesy of Lenoir-Rhyne

## MARS HILL UNIVERSITY

Located in Madison County, Mars Hill University is a private, four-year liberal arts institution. Founded in 1856 by Baptist families of the region, it is the oldest institution of higher learning in western North Carolina on its original site.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 1,073
- Completions (2022): 212 Bachelor's, 20 Master's

Select programs include:

- Business Administration
- Music Education
- International Studies

### International Studies

Students learn to analyze and tackle global issues while navigating the increasing complexity of our globalized world. Students gain experience with political science, history, economics, and more.





## MONTREAT COLLEGE

Montreat College is a private, Christian, liberal arts college founded in 1916. The main campus is located in Montreat, North Carolina, just outside Asheville. The college's School of Adult and Graduate Studies also has locations in Asheville, Charlotte, Morganton, and online.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 1,013
- Completions (2022): 1 Associate's, 159 Bachelor's, 42 Master's

Select programs include:

- Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Human Resource Management
- Cybersecurity

### Cybersecurity

Montreat College is designated a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).



## WARREN WILSON COLLEGE

A small, private four-year college located in the Swannanoa Valley near Asheville. Warren Wilson College is on an 1,100 acre campus where students can learn in a working farm and garden, in managed forests, in native wilderness, and on land-based work crews from landscaping to fiber arts.

- Award Levels: Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2021): 803
- Completions (2022): 160 Bachelor's, 23 Master's

Select programs include:

- Economics
- Environmental Studies
- MFA for Writers

### MFA for Writers

Established in 1976 and taught by nationally-recognized faculty, including Pulitzer and National Book Award winners, national and state poets laureate, and NEA, Guggenheim, Fulbright, and MacArthur fellows.



## DAOIST TRADITIONS COLLEGE OF CHINESE MEDICAL ARTS

Founded in 2003, Daoist Traditions College is a small, private four-year college located in the historic Montford district of Asheville, NC. The school prepares students to become successful practitioners of Chinese acupuncture and herbal medicine. Programs include a Master and Doctor of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (MAHM and DAHM), as well as a Certificate in Chinese Herbal Medicine (CCHM).

- Award Levels: Certificates, Master's Degree, and Doctoral Degree
- Enrollment (2023-2024): 91 (Master's and Doctoral programs)
- Completions (2023): 6 Certificates, 18 Master's, 26 Doctoral



# MOUNTAIN AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (MAHEC)

Serving Western  
North Carolina since

# 1974

Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) was established in 1974 to improve training and retention of healthcare professionals across Western North Carolina (WNC). Located in Asheville, MAHEC serves North Carolina's 16 westernmost counties and is the largest of the nine state AHECs.

*Of the **652** graduates  
with available data...*



*Of the **344** graduates  
practicing in the state...*



**280 GRADUATES**  
went on to practice locally  
in Western North Carolina  
**64 GRADUATES**  
went on to practice in other  
areas of North Carolina

**53%**

*of our total  
graduates  
are practicing  
in the state*

**81%**

*of graduates in  
North Carolina  
practice locally  
in Western NC*

**19%**

*of graduates in  
North Carolina  
practice outside  
of Western NC*

Infographics: Courtesy of MAHEC

## CREATING



**3,566 JOBS**  
locally in Western  
North Carolina



**815 JOBS**  
in other areas of  
North Carolina

**4,382 JOBS  
STATEWIDE**



## GENERATING

**\$602 MILLION**  
in local economic output  
for Western North Carolina

**\$138 MILLION**  
in economic output for  
other areas of the state

**\$740 MILLION  
STATEWIDE**

IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT\*



Photography: Courtesy of MAHEC

\*The AMA defines "output" as direct and indirect benefits.

\*\*Above data includes only graduates whose employment status could be located.



# HEALTH PROFESSIONS TRAINING & EDUCATION

## Residency & Fellowship Programs

MAHEC trains the next generation of healthcare professionals for Western North Carolina through residency and fellowship programs in addiction, critical care, dentistry, family medicine, general surgery, internal medicine, maternal-fetal medicine, ob/gyn, rural health, psychiatry, pharmacotherapy, and sports medicine.

# >80%

of MAHEC family medicine graduates stay and practice in WNC

## Student Education

MAHEC's Center for Health Professions Education provides opportunities that inspire and prepare students to pursue healthcare careers in WNC. Programs span high school through undergraduate, postgraduate, and medical school to create a pipeline of well-trained healthcare professionals for WNC, an underserved region.

*As of June 2023, more than 700 physicians and dentists have graduated from MAHEC.*

## Continuing Professional Development

UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC's Department of Continuing Professional Development conducts programs designed to meet the education and training needs of health and human service professionals in allied health, dental health, medicine, mental health, nursing and pharmacotherapy.

In 2023, MAHEC provided more than 700 continuing education programs to 100,000 participants in a variety of health professions from across WNC and the nation.



 Photography: Courtesy of MAHEC

# ASHEVILLE CITY & BUNCOMBE COUNTY K-12 SCHOOLS

There are approximately 25,000 K-12 students in the Asheville City and Buncombe County public school systems with nearly 3,000 students enrolled in Buncombe County Charter Schools.

## Laptops



## Tablets



**Our schools are connected with a wide variety of tools that enhance learning.**

# \$2.4 million

invested by Buncombe County Schools in 2019 for the Digital Learning initiative. The DLI provides every K-12 student in BCS with access to a digital device to enhance individualized instruction for critical thinking and creativity.

Asheville Area educators and business leaders collaborate to better engage young people in their learning. Teachers and leaders recognize the importance of equipping young students with the skills for success in a globalized era.

Students in middle and high schools build critical thinking and problem-solving techniques through hands-on learning and an innovative curriculum that emphasize Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) topics.



## STEM School Programs

Buncombe County Schools opened the Nesbitt Discovery Academy in 2014 to provide opportunities for students to engage in innovative STEM curriculum. NDA is currently ranked the #1 high school in the Asheville MSA and #7 in North Carolina (U.S. News & World Report, 2023-2024).





*To see ACT scores now at the level they were before the pandemic makes me very excited. It tells me we're trending in the right direction. Our scores continue to go up. Not that it's only about scores, but it's a great indicator of what I'm seeing in the classroom. I am seeing it.*

-Dr. Rob Jackson  
Superintendent, Buncombe County Schools

Source: WLOS, 2023

## Career and Technical Education

The mission of CTE is to offer dynamic 21st century programs to students based on the 16 national career clusters that align with the business and industry sectors in our area.

Both Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools provide **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** to prepare students for future careers and higher education. CTE provides students a way to earn college credits and credentials sought by local industries and businesses. The CTE curriculum also develops life and soft skills such as decision-making, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, leadership, and more.



## 4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATES GRADUATING IN 2022-2023

### Public Schools Mean SAT Scores (2023)

	Number Tested	Percent Tested	ERW Score	Math Score	Total
Asheville City	124	34.9%	574	533	1107
Buncombe County Schools	280	18.8%	582	553	1135
Haywood County Schools	26	6.1%	573	542	1115
Henderson County Schools	102	11.4%	595	575	1171
Madison County Schools	12	7.8%	588	554	1143
North Carolina	22,607	23.8%	567	556	1122
United States	1,608,613	N/A	510	493	1003

Source: NCDPI SAT Report

Note: Percent tested is the number of students taking the SAT divided by the final Average Daily Membership (ADM) for grades 12-13 + Extended Day 12-13.

ASHEVILLE CITY  
**372 — 91%**

BUNCOMBE COUNTY  
**1,645 — 91%**

HAYWOOD COUNTY  
**499 — 90%**

HENDERSON COUNTY  
**981 — 90%**

MADISON CITY  
**150 — 89%**

NORTH CAROLINA  
**104,511 — 86%**

Source: NCDPI Cohort  
Graduation Rates

# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

	Asheville City	Buncombe	Haywood	Henderson	Madison	NC	US
Population 25 Years and Over	71,253	200,084	46,815	87,179	15,610	7,172,112	226,600,992
Less than 9th Grade	2.6%	3.0%	3.2%	3.4%	3.5%	4.0%	4.7%
9th to 12th Grade, no Diploma	3.9%	4.9%	6.4%	5.0%	7.5%	6.6%	6.1%
High School Graduate	18.7%	23.2%	27.0%	25.2%	31.0%	25.2%	26.4%
Some College, no Degree	15.9%	17.2%	22.3%	21.7%	19.1%	20.4%	19.7%
Associates Degree	7.6%	8.8%	12.4%	10.7%	6.6%	10.0%	8.7%
Bachelor's Degree	29.6%	25.6%	17.6%	21.2%	21.1%	21.4%	20.9%
Graduate or Professional Degree	21.6%	17.5%	11.2%	12.7%	11.1%	12.5%	13.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## TALENT TRAINING & RETENTION



CAYLA gives Asheville's young people the opportunity to stay and work in Asheville, as well as to have valuable work experiences that will advance their future careers wherever they go. Learn more here: <https://www.ashevillenc.gov/department/community-economic-development/community-development/cayla/>



NEXT AVL pairs local university students with working professionals that offer connection, mentorship, and professional development. Through NEXT AVL, students will expand their professional networks and opportunities in Asheville so that they can pursue the NEXT step in their life after graduation as a young professional here – in AVL. Learn more here: <https://www.ashevillechamber.org/business-environment/talent-workforce/next-avl>



### SCAN QR CODE

to learn about myFutureNC's Educational Attainment initiative. WNC is one of 15 Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives in the state.



Riverbird Research, located in beautiful Asheville, North Carolina and established by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, is an award-winning team with over 25 years of combined experience in data and systems analysis. Our team leverages well-informed expertise in labor market data, demographic and economic research, and economic impact analysis to communicate regional assets and opportunities. Our network has a national reach and our process is collaborative and creative. Check out more research reports at [RIVERBIRDRESEARCH.COM](https://RIVERBIRDRESEARCH.COM)

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES:** US Census Bureau, Education Superhighway, EMSI, NC Community College System (NCCCS), IPEDS, and schools' sources.

### PLEASE CONTACT US

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