

# ▶ The Family FOCCUS Initiative

*Future Observers Creating Change Unified in Service*

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***“Be the Change You Want to See in The World.”***

<https://TheFamilyFOCCUSInitiativeLLC.org/>

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## ***EDUCATIONAL HEADWINDS***

*Without improving the educational support that the nation provides its low-income students – students with the largest needs and usually with the least support – the trends of the last decade will be prologue for a nation not at risk, but a nation in decline.*

# The Family FOCCUS Initiative

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The Family FOCCUS Initiative (“FFI”) is a Gastonia, North Carolina based nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the at-risk communities of Gaston County, North Carolina.

FFI partners with schools, faith groups, businesses, and local government to support an uplifting future for the at-risk students, knowing that no one organization can afford to do this alone. Our community outreach team is helping to connect, organize and inspire the school’s internal champions so they have the support they need to educate and engage our students, their families, and teachers.

### **Poverty Impact on Education**

The Public-School Forum of NC’s 2019 Local School Finance Study found that the ten highest spending counties spent on average \$3,200 per student compared to \$755 by the ten lowest spending counties, with a gap of \$2,445 per student.

While there are several challenges accompany low-income households, here are some of the most glaring physical problems: substandard housing, inadequate nutrition, unsafe neighborhoods, lack of access to health care and lack of support at home.

This puts these students, who are coming to school with higher needs, at a distinct disadvantage from their more affluent peers. Students from high poverty backgrounds need support and extra resources to make up for the educational resources and opportunities they are not afforded, and often just the opposite occurs.

FFI’s support features consist of – *Pillars of Success* - that allows us to develop a holistic outreach model which can be dynamically shaped to support our at-risk students and their families with the resources required for their unique success.

### **Pillars of Success**

- School Partnerships: FFI seeks partnerships with schools with a high percentage of low-income students and/or students of color and tend to have fewer resources, spend less on salaries of school staff, lack adequate instructional materials, and have worse physical building conditions.
- Community Outreach: FFI targets children from low-income homes are more likely to experience food, housing, and energy insecurity. They are also more likely to suffer from poor nutrition and inadequate healthcare.
- Academic Support: FFI’s academic support refers to a wide variety of instructional and educational supplies, and/or personal hygiene items provided to students in the effort to help at-risk students accelerate their learning progress, catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school.

## Performance Profile

FFI strongly believes all children deserve a high-quality, equitable education and the opportunity to reach their full potential. A deeper dive of child poverty demonstrates that poverty rates are even worse for the nation’s youngest kids, with a high rate of racial and ethnic discrepancy.

The Federal Poverty Levels (FPL) is determined using food cost estimates from the 1960s and recent research suggests that most families would need twice the FPL to pay for their basic needs. For 2020, the poverty threshold for a family of 4 is \$26,200 for the contiguous 48 states.

### Community Outreach

Children in low-income and minority neighborhoods are more likely to be exposed to toxic stress, such as witnessing or experiencing violence, the death of a parent, or having a parent who is incarcerated.

A core benefit of our school partnerships is the ability of the school’s social workers to collaborate with the students and their parents to determine academic or personal hygiene items needed in support of their sustainability, wellbeing, and resilience.

### Partnerships

Our goal is to champion the most at-risk student population. Given the following 2020 statistics from Gaston County Board of Education, our initial support is focused on Hunter Huss High School. <http://gaston.k12.nc.us/huss>

• Graduation Rate	76%
• Number of Students	1,063
• Avg Std Score 2019	17.2
• Ranking	426/514
• College Readiness	7.8
• Free/Reduced Lunch	71.60%

### Academic Support:

From September 2020 – April 2021 we worked with Hunter Huss social worker to provide a spectrum of academic or personal hygiene items based on the social worker surveys.

• Belts (unisex)	10
• Earbuds for school laptops	112
• Hand Sanitizers	32
• Notebooks	138
• Notebooks Dividers	45
• File Folders (3 prong)	70
• Colored Pencils	72
• Dry Erase Boards	36
• Dry Erase (pens. erasers)	76
• Kleenex	80
• Socks (unisex)	40
• Bottle Water	2,600
• Granola Bars	900
• Toothbrushes/Paste	30
<b>Total Items</b>	<b>4,241</b>
<b>Students Impacted</b>	<b>1,763</b>

### Food Insecurity:

Children experiencing food-insecurity have worse educational outcomes and achievement scores. According to recent research, the cognitive, emotional, mental, and physical consequences of food insecurity and poor nutrition, follow children into the classroom, often resulting in poor academic performance.

During 2020, FFI supported ten (10) families of 4 with **Thanksgiving Meal Bags** and ten (10) families of 4 with **Christmas Meal Bags**, which equates to eighty (80) family members receiving holiday nutrition.

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The Family FOCCUS Initiative (FFI) is a faith-based organization structured and certified as a tax exempt, nonprofit organization under IRS 501 (C)(3) statutes.

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

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Morris Bryant	Executive Advisor
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