

Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund

2024-25 Grant Application

Application Deadline: September 13, 2024

Rev. 7/30/2024

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

PROGRAM CRITERIA

Date: 8/27/24

MAXIMUM AWARD Grant award maximums are as follows:

- Up to \$42 million for an Elementary School
- Up to \$52 million for a Middle School
- Up to \$62 million for a High School

An applicant may not apply for projects that exceed an aggregate amount greater than the maximum grant award amounts listed above in any single year.

Applications will be reviewed in the context of projected enrollment to evaluate the reasonableness of project size and scope.

REPORTING

Grant recipients are required to submit a report by April 1 of each year, with each grant funds distribution request, and upon completion of the project, detailing: the use of grant funds, progress on the project, and impact of the project on the county's school capital plan.

Grant funds will be disbursed in a series of payments based on the progress of the project. To receive a distribution, the grant recipient must submit a request for distribution, along with documentation of the expenditures for which the distribution is requested, and evidence that the matching requirement has been met. DPI will provide grant recipients with Reporting and Distribution Request forms following announcement of awards.

AGREEMENT

A county receiving Needs-Based grant funds is required to enter into an agreement with the Department of Public Instruction detailing the use of grant funds, in accordance with G.S. 115C-546.12.(a). DPI will provide grant recipients with Agreement Forms following announcement of awards. Signed Agreements are due within 60 days of award announcement.

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

PROGRAM CRITERIA

Date: 8/27/24

EVALUATION

Applications are evaluated on critical needs, budget detail, and the following criteria per G.S. 115C-546.10.:

| Prioritization | Definition/Calculation/Data Source |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Tier Designation | Counties designated as development tier one areas. (NC Department of Commerce, 2024 NC Development Tier Designations) |
| Ability to Generate Tax Revenue | Total revenue generated by a one-cent per \$100 valuation increase in the county property tax rate. (NC State Treasurer, Analysis of Debt of North Carolina Counties 6-30-2023) |
| Ratio of Debt to Tax Revenue | <u>Debt</u> : Sum of County Debt from [General Obligation Bonds, Installment Purchase Debt, Special Obligation Bonds, QZABs and QSCBs, Certificates of Participation] (NC State Treasurer, Analysis of Debt of North Carolina Counties 6-30-2023) <u>Revenue</u> : Sum of County Revenues from Property Taxes, Other Taxes, and Sales Tax, FY 2022-23 (NC DOR, Statistical Abstract of North Carolina Taxes 2023, Advance Edition) |
| Critical Deficiency | The extent to which a project will address critical deficiencies in adequately serving the current and future student population. |
| Facility Construction | Projects with new construction or complete renovation of existing facilities. |
| Facility Replacement | Projects that will consolidate two or more schools into one new facility. |
| Applicant Status | Counties that have not received a grant in the previous three years. |

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

Date: 8/27/24

SUBMIT ONE APPLICATION PER SCHOOL CAMPUS – A PROJECT MAY INCLUDE MULTIPLE BUILDINGS

County: Jackson
Primary Contact: Kevin King
Title: County Manager
Address: 401 Grindstaff Cove Rd Sylva NC 28779
Phone: 828-586-4055
email: kevinking@jacksonnc.org

School Unit: Jackson County Public Schools
Primary Contact: Dana Ayers
Title: Superintendent
Address: 398 Hospital Rd Sylva NC 28779
Phone: 828-586-2311
email: dayers@jcpsmail.org

APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

Submit completed applications and supporting materials by Friday, September 13, 2024, via email to:

Nathan Maune | School Facilities Director | 984-236-2919 | SchoolPlanning-NBPSCF@dpi.nc.gov

SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST – SUBMIT ALL FILES IN PDF FORMAT

- Contact Information
- Application Form
- Project Narrative
- Budget Estimate
- Additional Documentation (as appropriate)
- Signed Assurance Page

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

PROJECT INFORMATION

Date: 8/27/24

Project Title:

Traditional Middle School for Jackson County Public Schools

Location:

Sylva - Jackson County

Type of Facility:

Traditional Middle School - 900 students

Short Description of Proposed School Construction Project:

See attached

—
See attached

(please attach additional information as necessary)

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

PROJECT INFORMATION

Date: 8/27/24

Was this project identified in the 5-year plan in the 2020-21 Facility Needs Survey? YES NO

If not, provide explanation and attach equivalent information:

See attached

Will this project replace any existing facilities? YES NO

If YES, which school(s): This project will consolidate the middle school classes at Smokey Mtn. Elem, Fairview Elem, Cullowhee Valley Elem, and Scotts Creek Elem. This will allow the former space to be repurposed.

How many students will be served by this project? 2132

Has Advanced Planning been done for this project? YES NO

District needs assessment has been conducted by Clark Nexsen.

Have Construction Documents been completed for this project? YES NO

Anticipated or Actual Bid Date: Sept 2025 - Anticipated

Planned Start Date of Construction*: Oct 2026 - Anticipated

Planned Completion Date of Construction: April 2028 - Anticipated

*Construction must begin within 24 months of grant award under G.S. 115C-546.12.(b) .

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

PROJECT BUDGET

Date: 8/27/24

Total NBPSCF Grant funding requested for this project: \$52,000,000

Minimum NBPSCF Grant funding for project to proceed (optional): _____

| Estimated Project Costs | Local (non-State) | NBPSCF Grant Funds | Total |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Planning | \$ <u>0</u> | \$ <u>850,000</u> | \$ <u>850,000</u> |
| Construction | \$ <u>8,000,000</u> | \$ <u>51,150,000</u> | \$ <u>59,150,000</u> |
| Other Costs* | \$ <u>0</u> | \$ <u>0</u> | \$ <u>0</u> |
| Total | \$ <u>8,000,000</u> | \$ <u>52,000,000</u> | \$ <u>60,000,000</u> |

*Project costs normally categorized as 'owner's direct costs' on a construction project – may include items such as site surveys, materials testing, site utilities, geotechnical reports, etc. Land acquisition costs are not eligible.

Source(s) of required Local Matching Funds:

Article 40,41,46 - County Tax Funds

Have any of the Local Matching Funds been expended at the time of application?

YES NO

If YES, provide amount expended: \$102,000

If YES, provide description of work: Facility needs assessment conducted by Clark Nexsen

Estimated Project Expenditures by Fiscal Year (show estimated period over which funds will be spent by Fiscal Year)

| Total Planned Expenditures | 2023-24 or earlier | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 or later | Total |
|---|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Local Matching Funds | 0 \$ | 0 \$ | 0 \$ | 8,000,000 \$ | 8,000,000 \$ |
| Requested NBPSCF Grant Funds* | 0 \$ | 850,000 \$ | 7,500,000 \$ | 43,650,000 \$ | 52,000,000 \$ |
| Total Estimated Expenditures by Fiscal Year | 0 \$ | 850,000 \$ | 7,500,000 \$ | 51,650,000 \$ | 60,000,000 \$ |

*Total requested grant funding cannot exceed maximum allowed under G.S. 115C-546.11.(c) .

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Date: 8/27/24

Any project funded with a grant from the Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund must follow the same review process as any other LEA capital project.

- A registered Architect and/or registered Engineer shall prepare the drawings and specifications in accordance with G.S. 133-1 through 133-4.1, as applicable.
- School Planning design review is required. Design documents must be submitted at appropriate intervals during design – SD, DD, and CD. Neither the LEA nor the County shall invest any funds in construction of the project until the review process is completed.
- Transmittal of drawings and specifications to School Planning must include the form at: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/project-submittal-form/download>
- Design of the project should be in compliance with DPI School Planning Guidelines: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/school-planning>
- DPI Facility Design Guidelines can be found at: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/facility-design-guidelines/download>
- DPI School Science Facility Requirements can be found at: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/science-facilities-planner/download>
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/science-safety-checklist/download>
- For projects involving the closing of an existing school, the LEA must follow these procedures: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/school-closing-procedure/download>
- For projects involving the demolition of an existing school building, the LEA must follow the closing procedure noted above and must submit a Feasibility and Cost Analysis: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/costfeas-1/download>
- DPI Lottery Capital Funding FAQ can be found at: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/schoolplanning/lottery-capital-funding-faq-document/download?attachment>

NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND FY2024-25 GRANT APPLICATION

ASSURANCE PAGE

Date: 8/27/24

By signing below, we assure the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction that we are officials of our respective organizations and we are authorized to submit this application on behalf of these organizations.

We certify the following:

- The information provided in this proposal is correct and complete.
- The project described in the application is within the parameters of the Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund as required in Article 38B of G.S. 115C-546, and that all of the required local funding is available and designated as a match for this project.
- All Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund grant proceeds and the required Local Matching funds will be used for the construction project described in the application.
- We will work cooperatively with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the project to meet statutory reporting requirements. We will report on project status and State and local funds expended by April 1 of each year, at the time of each distribution request, and within 90 days of project completion.
- Within 60 days of receiving a Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund grant award, we will enter into an agreement with the Department of Public Instruction detailing the use of grant funds, in accordance with G.S. 115C-546.12.(a).
- All applicable federal and state laws will be adhered to, including promotion of equal opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, political affiliation, or national origin.
- Generally accepted fiscal control and accounting procedures will be followed to ensure proper disbursement and accounting of funds from the Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund grant proceeds and required Local Matching funds.
- All Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund grant proceeds are subject to forfeiture provisions, requiring full repayment, in accordance with G.S. 115C-546.12.(c).

(Signature – Chair, County Commissioners)

(Date)



(Signature – Chair, Board of Education)

8-27-24

(Date)

Project Title: Jackson County Public Schools - New Middle School

Location: Jackson County Public Schools, Sylva, NC

Type of Facility: Newly Constructed Traditional Middle School to Consolidate Programming

Short Description of Proposed School Construction Project:

The intent of the proposed project is to build a traditional middle school to consolidate five middle school programs into one location. Jackson County Public Schools (JCPS) middle school programs are currently housed at four preschool through 8th grade elementary schools and one alternative setting school. The new middle school would address critical deficiencies including the district's average overutilization rate of 110% defined by a Clark Nexsen Facilities Assessment conducted during the winter of 2023/2024 and the limited academic opportunities available to students in the current structure of fragmented programming. Middle school students in grades six through eight would be consolidated under this plan. Building a new middle school will provide specialized facilities such as science labs, STEM labs, age-appropriate media centers, and fine arts facilities built to cater to the unique social, emotional, and developmental needs of this age group.

Describe the critical need this project addresses and the impact on student outcomes:

The current structure in Jackson County Public Schools presents many academic, instructional, and physical space deficiencies in supporting the success of our middle school students. The following addresses the critical needs within our system that a newly constructed, consolidated middle school would help alleviate.

- **Advanced Coursework & Curriculum Specialization**
 - Because of the size of our smaller preschool through grade 8 schools, many of our 7th/8th grade students do not have access to the high school course Math I (formerly known as Algebra I) and other high school courses allowable in middle school. These include English I, Earth Science and World History. A middle school would allow access to higher level coursework.
 - Academically and intellectually gifted programming is different in each school as well. A middle school would remedy this by providing differentiated and accelerated learning opportunities across multiple subjects.

- **Students with Disabilities/Students at Risk**
 - JCPS students with disabilities and students at risk are spread throughout the district. This means that our resources for these students are also spread across the district. A traditional middle school option would place all these resources in one location in order to help students achieve IEP goals as well as provide additional tutorial and enrichment options for students who are at risk.
 - Jackson Community School (alternative school) middle grades students in the behavior class do not have access to their grade level peers and are isolated from all middle school peers and coursework opportunities.
 - By removing middle school students from classrooms designated for their use at

Fairview School, it will provide additional ADA compliant spaces for K-5 students to utilize in a school that opened in 1974 and lacks ADA accessibility in many locations.

- **Improved Access to Career and Technical Education Programs**
 - In a newly constructed middle school, consolidating all CTE teachers into one building would provide each middle school student with a rotation of exposure to different career pathways in agriculture, STEM, business/marketing and computer science. We have four middle schools with different CTE structures and course availability. Three schools have STEM CTE coursework and the fourth has an agriculture program. This disbursement of offerings does not provide student choice and exploration opportunities. For example, if a student is enrolled at Scotts Creek he/she will participate in STEM CTE coursework and if a student is enrolled at Cullowhee Valley he/she will only have access to agriculture. This limits students' knowledge of various career options and early exposure to postsecondary opportunities.
 - New state requirements for computer science in middle school limits opportunities for offerings. We may lose other program areas such as agriculture and business marketing.
 - In a newly constructed traditional middle school, CTE classrooms would be designed and utilized for the purpose intended. Currently, classrooms are not equipped with the necessary facilities for CTE curriculum as they have been retro-fitted for the specific CTE program area. In fact, one CTE teacher operates from a rolling cart and does not have dedicated classroom space.

- **Access to Arts (visual, performing arts)**
 - We have successful programs in band at Fairview School and at Cullowhee Valley School which are facilitated and taught by a certified band instructor shared among the two schools. We have growing band programs at Smoky Mountain Elementary School and Scotts Creek that are taught by music certified teachers that also serve kindergarten students through 8th grade students. Consolidation of these programs would ensure high quality music/band education for each student as an equitable opportunity and reduce staffing costs as a result of the consolidation.
 - Currently, some of our schools have performing arts programs in theater and some do not. A new school would provide performing arts space, staffing, and opportunities for each middle school student to have access to choral and performing arts education.
 - Music teachers prepare lessons for kindergarten through 8th grade limiting concentration on one area or grade level and leaving little extra time for teachers for advanced choral or music productions.

- **Teacher Collaboration**
 - John Hattie's research lists "collective teacher efficacy" as the single most important determinant of student achievement. Collective teacher efficacy refers to the idea that when teachers collaborate, work together, co-plan, and approach

problem-solving within a team environment, students perform better. In our current structure, middle grade teachers do not have a “same-grade, same-content” team member to collaborate with. Currently, each school has no more than one teacher per grade level per subject. This structure prohibits common planning, collaboration, and professional learning communities commonly found in traditional middle school models which lead to high student growth. In the new middle school, each grade level would have 5 to 7 single subject teachers who would be able to have common planning, share interim assessments, and share resources.

- Traditional middle school development will lead to increased teacher job satisfaction which will boost school culture for both students and staff and lead to high academic achievement.

- **Student Transitions**

- Currently, the only transition that our students experience after entering preschool or kindergarten is leaving 8th grade and going to high school. Because our students do not experience transition in earlier grades their social and academic transition to high school is more difficult than students who experience transition to and from a traditional middle school. A middle school would expose students to additional peers, support, and other adults that would be specially trained to work with those students.
- By bringing together all middle school students into one building, students will be able to access a broader range of peers to build relationships based upon common interests. This will encourage students to be better connected to the school and community and to experience higher levels of self-confidence and self-worth.

- **Staffing Structures**

Under the current structure, support staff, administrators, school counselors, media coordinators, social workers and special area teachers provide services and instruction to students from ages 3 through 14. This broad range of service delivery often presents significant challenges as staff must be knowledgeable and equipped to meet the diverse needs of many different age groups.

Consider the following:

- **School Counselors:** They must provide counseling services to children aged 3 to 14, addressing a wide array of developmental and emotional needs.
- **Media Coordinators:** They are responsible for equipping libraries and creating lessons for students from ages 3 to 14, planning for 10 different grade levels.
- **Social Workers:** They work with families of children aged 3 to 14, navigating a broad spectrum of developmental stages and associated family dynamics, which is a significant strain.
- **Art and Music Teachers:** They plan and deliver lessons for 10 grade levels each week, accommodating the varied developmental stages and skills of students from early childhood to early adolescence.
- **Health/PE Teachers:** They must integrate and teach lessons across kindergarten to 8th grade, addressing physical education and health needs for a wide age range.

- **Administrators, Assistant Principals and Instructional Coaches:** They need to be familiar with the curriculum for 10 different grade levels, encompassing at least 50 different sets of standards across all curriculum levels.
- **Time Management:** Administrators spend substantial time managing discipline issues from Pre-K through 8th grade, detracting from other critical responsibilities.
- **Staff Training/Expertise**
The construction of a new middle school would allow staff to become specialists in their respective fields. This specialization would prevent staff from being stretched thin across various developmental levels, leading to several key benefits:
 - **Focused Expertise:** Staff would be able to concentrate on the developmental and academic needs of a narrower age range, becoming true experts in their areas.
 - **Improved Service Delivery:** Counselors, media coordinators, and social workers could provide more targeted support and interventions appropriate for middle school students.
 - **Professional Development and Training:** Staff will have access to unified training focused on high yield instructional strategies, middle school aged student physical and social-emotional development, and content specific best practices.
 - **Enhanced Curriculum Planning:** Art, music, and PE teachers could tailor their lesson plans more effectively to the specific developmental stages of middle school students.
 - **Efficient Administration:** Administrators could focus on managing discipline and academic issues relevant to middle school, leading to more effective school management and a better learning environment for students.
- **Extracurricular activities and sports**
 - Athletics teams would have greater accessibility to fields and facilities. Currently, district team student-athletes have to travel from each school to be part of these teams.
 - In a newly constructed middle school, Career and Technical Student organizations such as FFA, HOSA, and FBLA could be designed with new charters. Additionally, clubs and extracurricular activities such as robotics, Science Olympiad, and others could provide opportunities that all elementary schools don't currently have.
 - By consolidating middle school programs, we could have one club advisor for each extracurricular activity, broadening the scope of available opportunities without duplicating efforts across the district at multiple schools.
- **Other Considerations**
 - Consolidation into one well-resourced middle school can ensure that all students have access to high-quality education and facilities, reducing disparities between different neighborhoods and school districting zones.
 - Consolidation into one school may increase parental engagement within the school and would allow the school to foster unique parental support programs for all middle school families within the district.

Was this project identified in the 5-year plan in the 2020-21 Facility Needs Survey? No

For the past ten years, the school system's primary concern has been failing roofs and HVAC systems on all of our seven campuses. This has been reflected in the capital requests to the Jackson County Commissioners, and the Facility Needs Surveys for NCDPI. Fortunately, JCPS and the Jackson County Board of Commissioners could secure a QSAB loan for \$10 million to address the failing roof and HVAC needs. After three years of projects, we are happy to report that our roofs and HVAC are up to the needed standards. Since completing those projects, the district has now focused on other capital improvement needs. This is why this project has not appeared on the Facility Needs Survey for the past ten years. Also, previous boards have not been willing to discuss consolidation before.

Will this project replace any existing facilities?

This project will replace the middle school programs at five schools. Smokey Mountain Elementary, Scotts Creek School, Fairview Elementary, Cullowhee Valley School, and Jackson Community School. JCPS had Clark-Nexsen conduct a space study in 2023. This study indicated that JCPS is as a district average 110% utilization. The space that is currently used for middle school students at these five schools will be repurposed to allocate appropriate space for PreK-5 students to decrease the overutilization rate and to allocate classrooms and office spaces for their original intent. Pulling middle grades students out of elementary schools will open classroom spaces to create space availability for other opportunities, such as, STEM labs, health classrooms, student guidance spaces, etc. to relieve the overcrowding in the current structure.

The potential for these vacated spaces at elementary schools after the opening of a traditional new middle school includes:

- At Fairview, the kindergarten building would become a full childcare and preschool wing. This would be six classrooms. Currently, there are two preschool and four kindergarten classrooms in the building.
- Also at Fairview, pods could be remodeled to be appropriately-sized elementary classrooms.
- Empty middle grades spaces at all schools would allow for creation of career exploration spaces as early as 4th and 5th grade.
- True science labs can be created, especially for 5th grade which is an EOG tested area.
- Classroom and adequate office space for areas currently sharing spaces.
- Eliminate the use of exterior mobile units in two schools that are currently overcrowded.

How many students will be served by this project?

A three-year projection indicates JCPS will have approximately 800 middle school students from the five schools in the middle grades consolidation plan.

Has Advanced Planning been done for this project?

A facility needs assessment was completed in late 2023 for the entire district. The results of this facility needs assessment indicate the need for consolidation at the middle school level to support growth in the preschool through grade 5 physical space needs.



North Carolina General Assembly
House of Representatives

REPRESENTATIVE MIKE CLAMPITT
119TH DISTRICT

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300 N. SALISBURY STREET
RALEIGH, NC 27603-5925

PHONE: (919) 715-3005

FAX: (919) 733-3113

EMAIL: mike.clampitt@ncleg.gov

DISTRICT: PO BOX 386
BRYSON CITY, NC 28713

COMMITTEES:

FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND AGING POLICY, CHAIR
FEDERAL RELATIONS AND AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS, CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, VICE-CHAIR
WILDLIFE RESOURCES, VICE CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS
EDUCATION - COMMUNITY COLLEGES
REGULATORY REFORM

August 21, 2024

Nathan Maune, Director
School Planning
NC Department of Public Instruction
6319 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6319

Dear Director Maune,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Jackson County Public Schools' application for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Needs-Based Grant. This funding request, amounting to the full allowable amount of \$52 million, is essential for the construction of a much-needed traditional middle school in Jackson County where the school structure serves grades preschool through eight.

Currently, Jackson County does not have a dedicated middle school. Our students in grades 6 through 8 are distributed across four elementary schools and one alternative school. This fragmentation of middle grade education has posed significant challenges, including inconsistencies in curriculum delivery, limited access to career and technical education programs, and a lack of cohesive middle school programming for the arts, athletics and other extracurricular activities.

The proposed middle school will address these issues by consolidating the middle grades into a single middle school facility. This consolidation will not only enhance the quality of education by providing a unified and comprehensive middle school experience but will also improve operational efficiency and foster a stronger sense of community among students and staff.

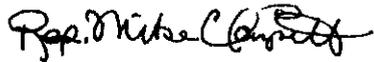


The new facility will be designed to support the diverse educational needs of our students. It will include modern classrooms, science labs, technology centers, and spaces for extracurricular activities, which are vital for the holistic development of our young learners.

The investment in this middle school is an investment in the future of Jackson County. By securing the full \$52 million in grant funding, we will ensure that our students have access to a high-quality education. It will also demonstrate our commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities for all students in our small, rural district.

I implore you to consider the profound impact this grant will have on our community and award the full grant request for Jackson County Public Schools. Should you require any additional information or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Representative Mike Clampitt
North Carolina House District 119
(919) 715-3005
Mike.clampitt@ncleg.gov



North Carolina General Assembly
Senate

SENATOR KEVIN CORBIN
50TH DISTRICT

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300 N. SALISBURY STREET
RALEIGH, NC 27603-5925
PHONE: (919) 733-5875
FAX: (919) 754-3235
EMAIL: kevin.corbin@ncleg.gov
DISTRICT: 28 IOTLA ST
FRANKLIN, NC 28734
(828) 524-7799

COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, CO-CHAIR
HEALTHCARE, CO-CHAIR
COMMERCE AND INSURANCE
EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION
PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT AND AGING
STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

August 21, 2024

To Whom It May Concern: NC Department of Public Instruction Needs-Based Grant

I am writing today to endorse the request from the Jackson County Public Schools (JCPS) request for funds to build a traditional middle school. The county does not have a traditional middle school at this time, and it is the desire of the system to consolidate the middle grades from four elementary schools and one alternative school into a newly built, traditional middle school campus.

JCPS is requesting the full amount allowable, \$52 million to build the school. I am in full support of this request. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Kevin Corbin





JACKSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

August 22, 2024

Dear Members of the Grant Review Committee,

We, the undersigned principals of Jackson County Public Schools, are writing to express our enthusiastic support for the grant application to fund the construction of a new traditional middle school serving students in grades 6-8 within our district.

As principals of our respective schools, we have witnessed firsthand the pressing need for enhanced educational facilities within our community. Our current educational infrastructure, while serving our students with dedication, faces significant challenges in accommodating the growing number of middle school students and meeting their diverse needs.

The proposed middle school will play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between elementary and high school education, providing a dedicated and conducive learning environment for students in grades 6-8. This new facility will not only alleviate the overcrowding in our existing elementary schools but will also offer state-of-the-art resources and career and technical education programs designed to address the unique developmental needs of early adolescents.

The benefits of constructing this middle school are manifold:

1. **Enhanced Educational Experience:** A modern, purpose-built middle school will offer specialized classrooms, technology, and extracurricular facilities that are crucial for fostering academic excellence and personal growth.
2. **Improved Student Transition:** By providing a dedicated space for middle school students, we will better support their transition from elementary school, offering targeted interventions and enrichment opportunities that are tailored to their developmental stage.
3. **Community Impact:** The new school will serve our community bringing together students, families, and educators in a central location that promotes collaboration and engagement.
4. **Relief for Existing Schools:** The addition of a new traditional middle school will ease the strain on our current elementary schools, allowing us to better focus on the needs of students at each educational level.

We strongly believe that this new middle school will be a cornerstone of educational advancement in Jackson County, providing our students with the resources and environment they need to thrive academically and socially. We urge you to approve this grant application and help us realize this critical investment in our children's future.

Thank you for considering our request. We are committed to working together to ensure the successful development and implementation of this much-needed project.

Sincerely,

April Bryson



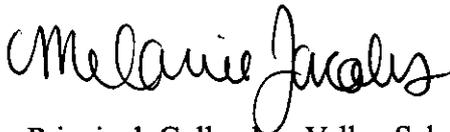
Principal, Scotts Creek School

Evelyn Graning



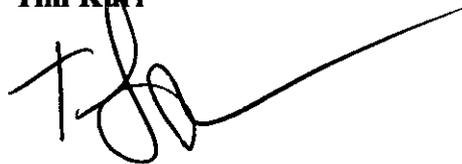
Principal, Jackson County Early College

Melanie Jacobs



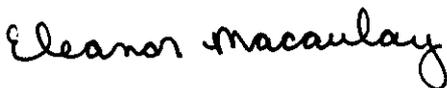
Principal, Cullowhee Valley School

Tim Kerr



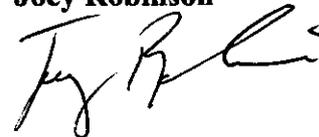
Principal, Smokey Mountain Elementary

Eleanor Macaulay



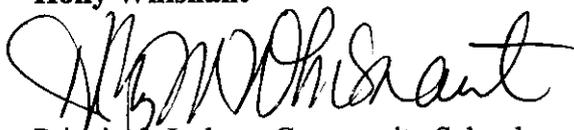
Principal, Fairview School

Joey Robinson



Principal, Smoky Mountain High School

Holly Whisnant



Principal, Jackson Community School



Dear Members of the Grant Review Committee,

As the Executive Director of the Jackson County Public Schools Education Foundation, I am pleased to write in support of JCPS receiving funds for a new traditional middle school. The JCPS Education Foundation has a mission to encourage, assist, and promote educational excellence for all Jackson County Public Schools students. Funding a traditional middle school directly aligns with this mission and our advocacy for greater opportunities for our students. A traditional middle school will offer students of Jackson County opportunities that most other North Carolina school districts already provide. I hope to offer insight into how this grant will have a transformative impact on our county.

Student Impact- A traditional middle school will create an incalculable number of opportunities and experiences for our students. Currently, JCPS students lack adequate band, choral, foreign language, and CTE experiences. All four schools work tirelessly to find a qualified teacher for these elective areas AND enough students to fill these classes, resulting in varied and unequal offerings depending upon which school zone the student resides in. Consolidating would allow JCPS to hire one full-time teacher for each of the aforementioned subjects and free up the other positions for expanded subject offerings.

Additionally, the middle school district athletes are spread over the entire county at their respective schools. To participate, parents are required to transport athletes to practices. When the JCPS students have access to a traditional middle school, all students will have the opportunity to compete in district sports without having to overcome transportation issues while experiencing team camaraderie and a sense of community by representing their one school.

Teachers/Staff Impact- The current PreK-8 structure forces teachers, staff, and administration to provide support services to students ranging in ages from three to fourteen. It is extremely difficult to provide students with staff that are trained and certified in each of these age brackets at all four schools. Another teacher and staff impact is the lack of collaboration across the four schools. Most schools have only one teacher per subject area. Operating on an island leads to inequitable experiences and varying preparedness for high school. Equipping our teachers, staff, and administration with proper training and collaboration opportunities only furthers the success rate of our students.

Facility Impact- Our teachers, staff, and leadership do a phenomenal job working with and maximizing the spaces they are given. The additional space produced by a traditional middle school would greatly enhance the educational environment of the existing four PreK-8 schools, three of which are operating at more than 111% capacity. The removal of middle school students at these schools would allow the schools to become in compliance with DPI classroom size standards without additional major capital expenditure.



Furthermore, a modern, state-of-the-art building and campus would give students access to facilities not available in all Jackson County schools, such as a science lab. With the required state science testing, science labs for all students provide a more equitable opportunity to successfully pass the test.

The educational and extra-curricular opportunities available to JCPS students are currently determined by the school zone in which they live. A school zone should never determine the opportunities a student has. The building of a traditional middle school would significantly increase the breadth of these offerings and afford them to ALL JCPS middle school students.

Sincerely,

Melissa Lewis
Executive Director