



JACKSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
2023-2024
ANNUAL REPORT



what's **INSIDE**

ThriveJCPS

Financial Report

Schools

**Engage, Enlighten,
& Enrich**

Departments



Jackson County Public Schools, NC



828.586.2311 | jcpsnc.org | 398 Hospital Road | Sylva, NC 28779

ThriveJCPS

a letter from our SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. Dana Ayers

Jackson County Public Schools is committed to fostering an environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Our three goals are to **Engage, Enlighten, and Enrich** each students in our schools. We proudly serve more than **3,500** students in preschool through thirteenth year across our district. With **nine schools** spread across our community, we serve a diverse student population, each with unique talents, backgrounds, and aspirations.

Our dedicated team of educators are passionate about providing high-quality education and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential. In our district, we prioritize a well-rounded education that prepares students not only for academic achievement but also to develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and collaboration.

Jackson County Public Schools places a strong emphasis on fostering a supportive and inclusive school community. We believe in the importance of building positive relationships among students, families, staff, and community partners. Through open communication and collaboration, we create a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

We are always exploring new opportunities for growth and innovation, embracing technology to enhance learning experiences, and preparing our students to become lifelong learners and responsible global citizens.

This Annual Report provides a look into our district, and what makes us **Jackson County Public Schools**.

Board of Education

The Board of Education consists of five members who are elected to serve four-year terms with the terms staggered so that as nearly equal to one-half as possible will expire every two years. All elections are nonpartisan and are held at the time of the primary election in even-numbered years. Board of Education members must reside in the district they serve, but they are elected county-wide. The superintendent is appointed by the Board and serves as secretary to the Board.



Elizabeth K. Cooper - *Chair*
District 1



Wes Jamison - *Vice Chair*
District 3



Abigail Clayton
District 2



Kim Moore
District 4



Dr. Lynn Dillard
District 5

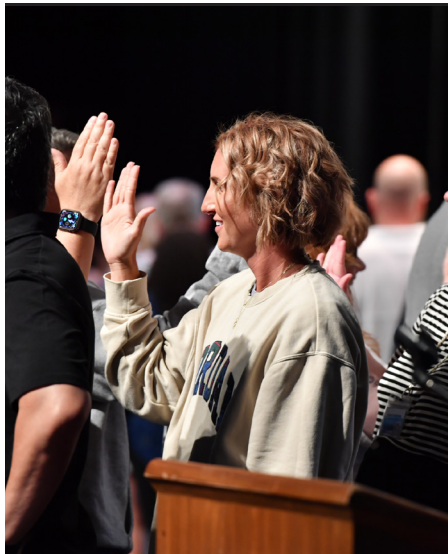


STUDENTS

3,573 total enrolled
as of end of school year

1,668 FEMALE 1,905 MALE

American Indian/Alaska Native262
Asian34
Black/African American35
Hispanic/Latino779
Multiracial208
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 1
White2,254

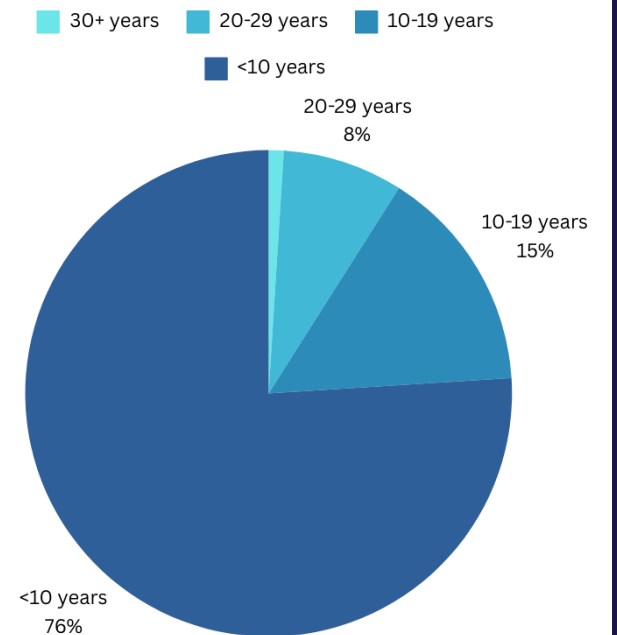


FACULTY & STAFF

646 active employees
as of end of school year

Years of Service

Administrators/Supervisors.....	12
Certified Teachers	248
Certified (Other)	60
Child Nutrition	32
Maintenance/Facilities	7
Paraprofessionals	116
Principals & Assistant Principals	18
Transportation	39
Other	114



AWARDS EVENING

Excellence in Education

This year, JCPS recognized our “Shining Stars” during the Excellence in Education Awards Evening held on May 2, 2024 in the Burrell Building at Southwestern Community College. The evening allowed the opportunity to recognize standouts in each department and level of employment as well as recognitions for school volunteers, retirees and servant leaders.



Holly Whisnant
Cullowhee Valley
2023-2024
Principal of the Year



Ed Davies
Smoky Mountain High School
2023-2024
Assistant Principal of the Year



Katie Ray
Smoky Mountain High School
2024-2025
Teacher of the Year



Matthew Ammons
Fairview
2023-2024
Bus Driver of the Year



Amy Browing
Scotts Creek
2023-2024
Support Employee of the Year



Becky Roper
Cullowhee Valley
2023-2024
School Nutrition Employee of the Year



Melissa Lewis
Fairview
2023-2024
Volunteer of the Year



April Bryson
Scotts Creek
Principal



Miguel Juan
Blue Ridge Early College
Student

Steve Jones Servant Leadership Award Staff & Student Awards

The Steve Jones Servant Leadership award was created in memory and honor of Mr. Steve Jones, Associate Superintendent, a dedicated and true servant to all of Jackson County Public Schools and its community for many years. The recipients of this award embody daily attributes of leadership through a servant attitude.

FINANCIAL REPORT

for fiscal year ending June 30, 2024

Maintenance & Operations

\$10,005,814 Million Total Budget

Total Expenditures \$9,607,969

Salaries & Benefits	\$5,959,059
Professional Services	\$740,840
Supplies	\$125,361
Other	\$3,180,554

Capital

\$1,455,700 Million Total Budget

Total Expenditures \$1,370,870

Maintenance	\$710,000
Technology	\$745,700

ALTOGETHER, OUR 2023-2024 RETIREES HAVE SERVED
372 YEAR AND 11 MONTHS.



Blue Ridge Early College
Principal - Dr. Nathan Frizzell
95 Bobcat Drive
Cashiers, NC 28717



Jackson County Early College
Principal - Melanie Jacobs
447 College Drive
Sylva, NC 28779



Blue Ridge School
Principal - Kheri Cowan
95 Bobcat Drive
Cashiers, NC 28717



Scotts Creek School
Principal - April Bryson
516 Parris Branch Road
Sylva, NC 28779



Cullowhee Valley School
Principal - Holly Whisnant
240 Wisdom Drive
Cullowhee, NC 28723



Smokey Mountain Elementary School
Principal - Tim Kurr
884 US-441 N
Whittier, NC 28789



Fairview School
Principal - Eleanor McCauley
251 Big Orange Way
Sylva, NC 28779



Smoky Mountain High School
Principal - Evelyn Graning
100 Smoky Mountain Drive
Sylva, NC 28779

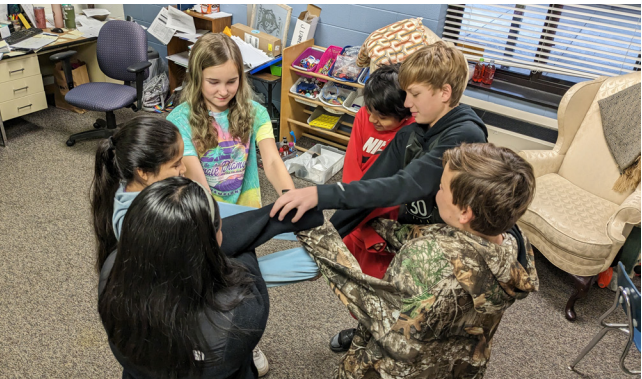


Jackson Community School
Principal - Heather Reidinger
3770 Skyland Drive
Sylva, NC 28779



Back to School Bash

The annual Back to School Bash, in partnership with the Jackson County Recreation Center in Cullowhee, is a unique opportunity to help meet our families needs throughout the district. During this free event, families have access to school information, backpacks, school supplies, immunizations, haircuts, and sports physicals. Items and services are donated by community members and businesses as a way to support our students and their families at the beginning of each school year.



Introducing Character Spotlights! In each monthly video we highlight a different staff or faculty member, who offers us a glimpse into their day, demonstrating their dedication to educational growth and positive impact on our students.



Engage, Enlighten & Enrich

Vaping Campaign

The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) kicked off a campaign to enhance parent education about vaping in October. This education included brochures, flyers, billboards, social media, public service announcements and education at all school events. A parent information night was also held to help educate our community about substance abuse in youth.


TALL COP SAYS STOP

National Presenter: Officer Jermaine Galloway



“High in Plain Sight”

★ ADULTS ONLY ★
Childcare will be provided

Sunday, November 5, 2023
SMHS Auditorium | 6:00pm-7:30pm
Dinner provided at 5:00pm



Register now for this FREE event!



How much
do you know
about youth vaping?



Scan to learn more!



1 in 7
high school students
and
1 in 30
middle school students
currently use
e-cigarettes.

www.fda.gov/tobacco

Kieran Foxx
NCSPA
Practitioner
of the Year



Kieran Foxx, a School Psychologist, was named the 2023 School Practitioner of the Year by the North Carolina School Psychology Association. She was selected out of seven finalists across the state.



The Smoky Mountain Academic Robotics Team (SMART) brought home the Impact Award at the Mecklenburg District FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition event in Charlotte. The Impact Award is the most prestigious award at FIRST, honoring the team that best embodies the mission of FIRST, representing a model for other teams to emulate.



Perfect Sanitation Scores

All Jackson County Public Schools cafeterias scored 100% on their sanitation ratings. This evaluation is conducted by the Jackson County Department of Public Health. Pictured is the School Nutrition team at Smokey Mountain Elementary.

Engage, Enlighten & Enrich

Healthy SnackMasters Competition

The Jackson County School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), Healthy Carolinians, Mountain Wise, and Jackson County Health Department partnered to sponsor the 12th Annual Healthy Snack Master Competition. This competition is open to all Kindergarten through 12th grade students enrolled in Jackson County Public Schools. Students either entered as an individual or as a group and created their own original recipe with unique name. Submitted recipes were reviewed by members of SHAC. The top student and group entries competed in the Healthy Snack Master Competition. At the Snack Master Competition, a panel of judges determined the winning healthy snack based on taste, appearance, presentation, healthfulness, and creativity. Superlatives were also awarded for the People's Choice, Most Creative Name, and Best Bite.



School Nutrition Department Brasstown Beef Partnership

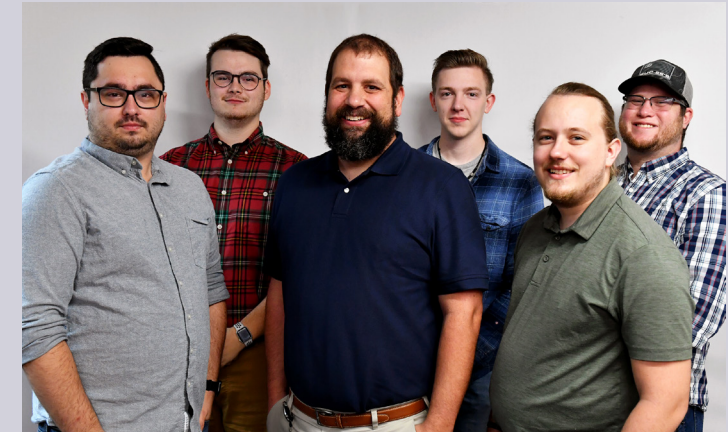
Jackson County Public Schools is happy to share that we began using local beef in some of our lunches. Purchased from Brasstown Beef (located in Brasstown, NC), the beef is used in chili, taco salad, hamburgers and spaghetti. We are excited to continue to serve our schools healthy and nutritious meals, and support local businesses too.



Initial LETRS® Cohort Finishes Required 2-Year Training

Our teachers are LEARNING, LOVE-ing, TEACHing, and TRANSFORMing at JCPS. Taking on a rigorous two-year LETRS® professional learning course was no easy feat. This required critical training has impacted our teaching will have a great shift on student development.

Lenovo Qualified Technology Department



The entire Technology Department became Lenovo Qualified PC Service Technicians. Having an entire team of individuals authorized to service devices throughout the district cuts downtime as we no longer have to wait for a technician from the company itself.

State and National Recognition Awards Outstanding Communication



The North Carolina School Public Relations Association (NCSPPRA) honored JCPS for excellence in communications. JCPS earned a total of three Blue Ribbon Awards for outstanding and effective communication. NCSPPRA presented the awards during a special ceremony held in High Point, NC. JCPS received one gold level award –Photography-JCPS Special Olympics, one silver level award-Special Events & Programs-Back to School Bash, and one bronze level award-Special Events & Programs-Excellence in Education Awards Evening.

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) also honored JCPS with two awards in their 2024 Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards. JCPS received one Honorable Mention-Social Media Engagement and one Award of Merit-Photography-JCPS Special Olympics.

Each entry was created by Public Information Officer, Shaneka Allen, who is responsible for district communications.



Jackson County Public Schools approved CharacterStrong as the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum for 6th-12th grade students to be used during the 2023-2024 school year. Currently, 47 staff members have been trained.

Through the use of the CharacterStrong curriculum, we have an opportunity to help our children learn the value of empathy, service, and connection.

Preschool Classroom Ribbon Cutting Dogwood Health Trust

In August, members of the JCPS staff and representatives from Dogwood Health Trust celebrated a new preschool classroom at Smokey Mountain Elementary School. This classroom is the third JCPS preschool classroom funded by Dogwood Health Trust, in addition to a preschool coordinator position for five years.



\$411,000 CTE GRANT Dogwood Health Trust



Jackson County Public Schools was awarded a grant from Dogwood Health Trust in the amount of \$411,000 for “Promoting Career Readiness and Workforce Development Within Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programming for Jackson County.” The central priorities of this grant are increasing educational and economic opportunities for students. Funds from this grant were used to advance education by hiring a staff person to assist students with career development activities, purchasing equipment to modernize high school CTE labs, a paid internship program for students, contributing to student travel and participation in Career and Technical Student Organizations, and providing CTE staff with high-quality professional development to prepare students for a dynamic and rapidly evolving workforce.



Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Thanks to a partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture, the following schools were selected as part of Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to provide meals at no cost to students: Blue Ridge Early College, Blue Ridge School, Cullowhee Valley, Jackson Community School, and Smokey Mountain Elementary.

With this program:

- All students enrolled at the identified schools received free breakfast and lunch.
- Families at the identified CEP schools did not have to complete school lunch forms.

School Safety Single-Entry Point



In the spring of 2018, in response to the school shooting in Parkland and JCPS experiencing 8 bomb threats, students from Smoky Mountain High School, Blue Ridge Early College, Jackson Community School and Jackson County Early College requested a meeting with the Jackson County School Board and the Jackson County Board of Commissioners. At this meeting the students laid out three requests to help with feeling safe at school. First was a school resource officer at every school in JCPS. Second, was additional counselors so that students with mental health needs could access help. Lastly they requested that schools be single entry points. Both boards agreed and the County Commissioners raised taxes to pay for additional counselors and school resource officers. Also, they approved funding for security walls and now all JCPS schools are single entry points.



Facilities & Maintenance

Our Maintenance Department plays a crucial role in maintaining safe and clean facilities and promoting a positive educational experience for students and staff.

1,859 SERVICE TICKETS RESOLVED



Student Support Services

The Student Support Services Department is made up of school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and the staff in the Exceptional Children Program. The goal of this department is to provide prevention, intervention, transition, and follow-up services for students and families. The professionals in the Student Support Services Department help to remove barriers that prevent students from learning.

13 COUNSELORS | **5** SOCIAL WORKERS
32 EC STAFF | **29** EC ASSISTANTS

Mental Health

JCPS is unique as we have our own Mental Health Team of **8** trained staff to serve our students, staff and faculty throughout the district. This year, the team developed a JCPS Risk Assessment Protocol and trained 45 staff members.

15 STAFF TRAINED IN RECONNECT FOR RESILIENCE
40 STAFF TRAINED IN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



Technology

The Technology Department is responsible for managing and maintaining an organization's IT infrastructure, including hardware, software, networks, and data systems. It plays a crucial role in supporting daily operations, ensuring cybersecurity, and driving innovation through the implementation of new technologies.

5,237 TICKETS RESOLVED
1,200 IPADS SERVICED | **4297** 1 TO 1 DEVICES SERVICED



School Nutrition

The School Nutrition Department proudly provides students with access to balanced and nutritious meals. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant piloted this year introduced students to various items they may or may not have been familiar with.

178,128 BREAKFAST MEALS SERVED
367,808 LUNCH MEALS SERVED



Transportation

The Transportation Department and bus drivers are essential to Jackson County Public Schools. Providing safe and reliable transportation to hundreds of students, our bus drivers **traveled over 330,000 miles in 34 buses** during the 2023-2024 school year.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Dana Ayers | **Superintendent**

Jake Buchanan | **Deputy Superintendent**

Angie Dills | **Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction**

Shaneka Allen | **Public Information Officer**

Laura Cabe | **School Nutrition Director**

Meagan Crews | **Director of Mental Health**

Laura Dills | **Executive Director of Federal Programs & Elementary Education**

Kelly Doppke | **Director of Student Support Services**

Josh Francis | **Transportation Director**

Adam Holt | **Director of Testing & Accountability**

Brent Speckhardt | **Director of Professional Development & Teacher Growth**

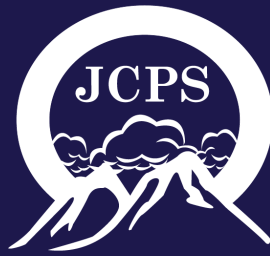
Greg Stewart | **Chief Technology Officer**

Teri Walawender | **Human Resources Director**

The Jackson County Board of Education is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, age, disability, gender, creed, national origin or political affiliation. Assignments are made in accordance with the need of the school system and are subject to change.

Departments





Jackson County Public Schools, NC



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