

Budget Message 2025-26 School Year

In accordance with Article 31 Chapter 115 of the General Statutes of North Carolina entitled “The School Budget and Fiscal Control Act,” the budget of Franklin County Schools for the fiscal year 2025-26 is hereby submitted by the Franklin County Board of Education and administrative staff.

The Franklin County Board of Education appreciates the interest that the Franklin County Board of Commissioners has shown for the education of children in our county. Both the goals of Franklin County Schools and the County of Franklin reflect an alignment of priorities as they relate to educational attainment.

Franklin County Schools

Mission: To cultivate a dynamic learning environment focused on success beyond the classroom; preparing, inspiring and illuminating the path so that all students will reach their full potential.

Vision: Building a stronger community one life-long learner at a time

Franklin County Board of Commissioners

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners has adopted as part of its Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals for the County - Goal Five: Multiple Educational Opportunities, “Create a bright future for our County’s students and residents by keeping educational goals and facilities current and relevant to the economic demands of the County;” and Franklin County Goals G5A and G5B guide the Board of Commissioners to “partner with our schools to ensure appropriate funding based on student population and statutory requirements;” and to “ensure school facilities are safe and contribute to student success and a positive learning environment.”

This Budget Message highlights our progress in key areas, and provides context for the Franklin County Schools 2025-26 Budget Request to the Franklin County Board of Commissioners.

Blueprint 2025: Our Progress

As we navigate our final year of **Blueprint 2025**, our current strategic plan, we are reflecting on the achievements and lessons learned as we actively plan for our future. The current plan was crafted through a collaborative effort involving teachers, parents, school leaders, community members, and business partners. Blueprint 2025 focuses on four key goals:

Goal 1: Preparing Students for College, Career, and Life Beyond the Classroom

At the heart of our strategic plan is ensuring that students are equipped for success beyond their school years. To this end, we developed a districtwide career development program that offers students in grades 5-12 opportunities to explore career interests. Additionally, we implemented a graduation plan that provides a clear path for all students, including targeted interventions for those who need additional support.

We also increased the number of CTE concentrators, providing students with valuable opportunities to earn credentials. In the 2023-24 school year, students earned 3,679 credentials.

Our district also offers several choice programs for families, including the Franklin County Early College High School, which graduated 46 students with associate's degrees in May 2024. We introduced a STEM Academy and expanded the STEM magnet program at Louisburg Magnet High School to a full schoolwide magnet program. At the elementary level, we launched a Spanish Immersion/Dual Language program at Royal Elementary School, which will expand as students progress through the grades.

Goal 2: Achieving Academic Success

Academic achievement is a critical focus for us. In 2024, 13 out of 16 schools (81%) met or exceeded growth expectations, with five schools—Laurel Mill Elementary, Royal Elementary, Franklinton High, Louisburg Magnet High, and Franklin County Early College High School—exceeding those expectations.

Franklin County ranked within the top three local districts in various grade-level assessments, including Math 1, where we achieved the highest scores in the North Central region for two consecutive years. Our elementary math scores were 10 points higher than the state average. Edward Best Elementary and Youngsville Elementary earned “B” ratings, while Franklin County Early College High School received an “A” rating and ranked in the top 10% statewide for growth. Furthermore, our graduation rate saw a 3% increase, reaching its highest level in five years.

Recognizing the importance of early intervention, we expanded Pre-K programming districtwide, held Parent & Family Workshops, and distributed over 550 kindergarten readiness packets to families.

Goal 3: Creating Safe, Orderly, and Supportive Schools

A safe and supportive environment is essential for students' learning. To enhance security, we ensured full-time School Resource Officer (SRO) support at each school and made regular upgrades to lighting, locks, and cameras.

We also implemented a discipline matrix and the Educator's Handbook to maintain consistent behavior management across schools. Professional development in trauma-informed practices and restorative approaches has been provided, and on-site mental health services are available to students who need them.

In addition, we have focused on strengthening family partnerships by holding biannual Parent Summits, which have proven effective in increasing parental involvement.

We conducted a comprehensive facilities needs assessment and a 10-year capacity study in collaboration with the Board of Education to prioritize necessary improvements. This year, we engaged in joint school visits with the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners to better inform our collective efforts to improve school facilities.

Goal 4: Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Staff

Our staff is vital to the district's success. We have provided longevity bonuses and

targeted incentives for hard-to-fill positions, and full funding of our local request by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners has allowed us to continue these efforts. Climate surveys and “stay” interviews have helped us identify areas to improve staff retention.

This year, we launched the “Teachers Educated and Cultivated at Home” (T.E.A.C.H.) program, a “grow-your-own” initiative in partnership with Vance Granville Community College and East Carolina University. This program enables students to earn an associate’s degree in early childhood education, work as instructional assistants while pursuing a teaching degree, and ultimately teach in Franklin County Schools, all at no cost to the student.

Franklin County Schools’ State of the District

On Thursday February 13th, I had the opportunity to provide the Franklin County Board of Commissioners and our larger community with a comprehensive look at the work taking place in Franklin County Schools. This event took place at Franklinton High School, and we were able to engage our students in a variety of ways in this presentation. From the Louisburg Magnet High School JROTC leading the National Anthem, to musical performances from the chorus at Edward Best Elementary School and Franklinton High School, to Franklinton High School Culinary Arts students preparing refreshments, and the opportunity to hear from student ambassadors from each of our high schools about their educational journey and next steps, the evening’s “State of the District” presentation was highlighted by the practical experiences of our students as they learn and grow in Franklin County Schools.

Here’s a link to this year’s “State of the District” presentation.

[State of the District 2025](#)

Looking Ahead: Blueprint 2030

Franklin County Schools has been actively engaged in development of **Blueprint 2030**, our district’s strategic plan for the next five years. This process is already well underway and will wrap up this spring with approval by our Board of Education. The new strategic plan will begin implementation in Fall 2025.

Through this work, we have gathered feedback to shape the plan’s direction. Nearly 1,200 parents, staff, and high school students shared their thoughts through surveys, providing valuable insights into our strengths, challenges, and priorities for the new plan.

We conducted Town Halls this spring at Bunn High, Louisburg Magnet High, and Franklinton High, and these events were well attended by parents, staff, community members, and students. We received vital feedback that is now being incorporated into our new plan.

Budget Request 2025-26

Local Current Expense Request

Local Current Expense Funds play an important role in supporting our efforts to ensure that our students have what they need to be successful. Areas impacted by local funds include:

Local Current Expense Budget at a Glance

- State, Federal and some granted funds support some salaries, benefits and operational needs, but local funding is required to supplement many of these areas of need.
- Categorical areas of support from local funding include the following and much more:
 - Retention and Signing Bonuses
 - Local Supplements for Teachers and Administrators
 - Central Office Support Staff Salaries & Benefits
 - School Office Support and School Leadership Staff Salaries & Benefits
 - Classroom Instructional Support Staff Salaries & Benefits
 - Worker's Compensation Insurance
 - Employer Provided Benefits (i.e. Dental Insurance, Basic Life Insurance)
 - General Liability Insurance, Vehicle/Fleet Insurance and Property Insurance
 - Instructional Support Programs (AIG, CTE, Pre K, STEM, Robotics, etc.)
 - Technology Support
 - Staff/Professional Development
 - Student Transportation
 - Maintenance of Buildings & Grounds
 - Electricity, Water and Waste Management

The 2024-25 current expenses request came with a significant increase, allowing us to maintain our longevity bonus for all employees. We are appreciative of this commitment from our Commissioners in support of our schools, and we have worked to honor our goal to come forward with little to no increase in our current expenses request for the 2025-26 school year.

Priority 1:

Maintaining Current Expense Budget at 2024-25 Funding Level

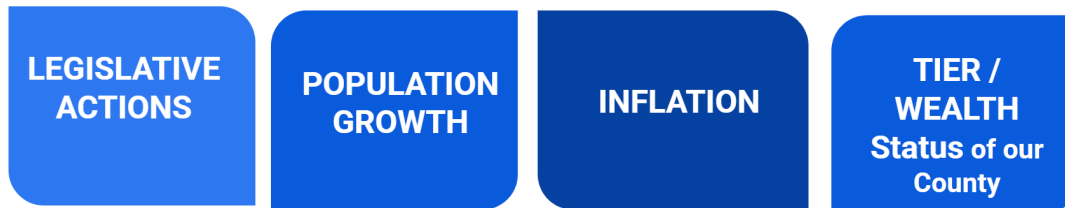
The Local Longevity Bonus was administered for three years using ESSER funding, which expired at the end of the 2024 school year. **In Spring 2024, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners voted to fully fund our local current expense request for the 2024-25 school year, allowing us to maintain this important retention bonus beyond ESSER funding.**

As part of our negotiation of this funding request, we told County leadership that we would work to bring minimal to no increase in our current expenses request for the 2025-26 school year.

We are working to honor that.

We are seeking a neutral or \$0 increase from the county to fund the local current expense budget for 2025-2026

Impacts to Current Expense Budget



What to Watch: Potential Impacts to Local Budget

The budgetary needs of Franklin County Schools are significantly influenced by several unpredictable external factors, including federal legislative and executive actions at the federal and state levels, inflation, population growth, and fluctuations in local wealth. Changes at the state or federal level—such as new mandates, shifts in funding formulas, or adjustments to educator compensation—can create sudden and substantial financial obligations for the district without corresponding increases in revenue. Inflation, even when moderate, continues to drive up the costs of materials, services, insurance, and employee benefits, placing additional strain on already tight budgets. Population growth within the county may increase student enrollment, while changes in the county’s overall wealth can affect the local tax base and, ultimately, the district’s funding. While we are not requesting additional funding at this time, these variables present real and growing concerns that we will continue to monitor closely. Should any of these factors shift significantly, our financial needs may change accordingly, and we may need to return with revised funding requests to ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our students and staff effectively. These combined unknowns make long-term financial planning especially challenging and highlight the need for flexible, responsive budgeting in a changing landscape.

Inflation

Despite a general perception that inflation has stabilized, the cost of doing business remains significantly elevated across all areas of operations. Vendors

have yet to return to pre-pandemic pricing, and ongoing inflation continues to impact expenses. Utilities and insurance costs, including property insurance (up 10%) and utilities (up 20%), have notably increased, further limiting opportunities to reduce operational costs. Salaries, benefits, and other operational expenses continue to rise, with projected increases in hospitalization (+5%), retirement contributions (+4%), and other benefits. Employer medical costs are also expected to rise from \$8,095 to \$8,500, and retirement rates are projected between 24.04% and 25%. Additionally, a 3% state legislative rate increase is anticipated effective July 1, 2025. These projections are based on historical trends and are still subject to final determination, underscoring the ongoing financial pressures organizations face.

Population Growth

The population of Franklin County has grown significantly over the past several years, and the number of students being served in either public or charter schools (both funded by the County) has reflected this growth.

As reported in February, we were slightly below our projections for 2024-25. However, our combined student projections for the 2025-26 school year for public/charter students in Franklin County is 11,079. This includes 7,927 (includes 133 PreK) for FCS plus 3,152 (includes 98 virtual) for charters.

Charter School Impacts

Charter schools present several operational and financial challenges for districts. Accurate enrollment projections are critical for budget planning, yet delays or inaccuracies in rosters and invoices from charter schools or their third-party management companies can disrupt year-end financial projections. LEAs have limited visibility into how transferred funds are utilized once they reach the charter or its management organization. The funding model, based on a per-pupil allotment, does not account for project-based funding needs and requires districts like FCS to share up to 28% of requested funds—originally intended to support traditional public school students—with charter schools. These funds are transferred directly to charters and do not benefit the district, while still requiring extensive oversight, including monthly per-pupil payments and manual address verification for students. This process increases administrative burdens and costs without providing funding for oversight, potentially necessitating a full-time position just to manage charter-related duties. As LEAs act as the financial conduit for charter school funding and invoicing, this system has raised widespread concerns across the state, especially with the rapid growth of charter schools.

Charter School Responses

Franklin County Charter	Franklin County Residents Enrolled 2024-25	*Franklin County Residents Projected Enrollment 2025-26
Crosscreek Charter	318	331 (13+)
Youngsville Academy	402	455 (53+)
Wake Preparatory Academy	975	1,058 (83+)
Total Internal Charter Enrollment	1,695	1,844 (149+)
External Charters Serving Franklin County Residents	1,244	1,308 (45+)
Total Projected Charter Enrollment of Franklin County Residents		3,152 (194+)

**These numbers are based upon actual PMR 5 data and projections reported from all Charter Schools as of April 8, 2025. This information is subject to change.*

2025-2026 Charter School Budget Review



YEAR	FCS ADM*	CS ADM*	COMBINED ADM	COUNTY APPROPRIATION	PPA	PAYMENT TO CS
2024-2025 <i>Updates based on most accurate PMR 5 for charters and Best ADM PMR 2 for FCS.</i>	7,988 <i>Originally presented as 8,043; 55 less than projected</i>	2,958 <i>Originally presented as 3,071; 113 less than projected</i>	10,946* <i>Originally presented as 11,114; 168 less than projected</i>	\$30,541,812	\$2,790* <i>includes the virtual students.</i>	\$8,437,509 <i>Final pay-out totals will be determined during fiscal year end close out. Projections show at least \$243,675 will be used to fund the students enrolled in virtual public and virtual charter schools.</i>
2025-2026 PROJECTIONS ONLY	7,927 <i>Based on January enrollment data; includes 133 Pre-K</i>	3,152 <i>Based on enrollment data from CS's; includes 98 Virtual</i>	11,079* <i>Projections show a combined increase of at least 133+ students.</i>	\$30,541,812	\$2,757*	\$8,689,213 <i>Final PPA TBD & based upon the county's appropriation for 2025-26 and PMR 1 & 2 results.</i>

These are "pass through" funds that the district receives and redistributes to charter schools

*ADM details are reflective of data from district PMR1 & PMR2 details provided which may differ from actual state calculated ADM and actual enrollment.

**Due to state legislative action to increase funding for students enrolled in virtual public/charter schools, the population of 98 students must now be realized in the PPA formula. The appropriation is no longer capped at \$790. Now funded at the regular PPA requiring @\$244,000.

Current Expense Request: In Summary

Franklin County Schools Current Expense Funding Increase Request	Franklin County Charters Funding Increase Request
No additional funding or increase to request to the County for 2025-26 	Based on state requirement for per pupil allocation (PPA) to match local school system PPA 
Franklin County Schools \$0	Franklin County Charters \$251,704
Because of the 168 student enrollment projections that were not realized during 2024-25, Franklin County Schools will not request additional funding in 2025-26 to cover enrollment increase projections for charters.	
Total Increase to Current Expense Request: \$0	

Capital Outlay Budget Request

Our schools are in urgent need of increased funding to address ongoing facility challenges, particularly in the areas of HVAC, roofing, and general maintenance and improvements. Many of our systems are aging and require significant investment to ensure safe, healthy, and efficient learning environments. For the past several years, we have not received facilities funding at a level sufficient to keep pace with these growing needs. As a result, critical projects have been delayed or only partially addressed, leading to compounding issues and higher long-term costs. To protect our infrastructure and provide students and staff with the environments they deserve, we must prioritize and invest more substantially in our school facilities.

This year, the Board of Education (BOE) and Board of Commissioners (BOC) have conducted joint school visits to evaluate facility conditions, a productive step toward better understanding district needs. The BOC has also initiated the formation of a joint facilities committee to explore how future facility demands can be addressed. Multiple work sessions have been held with the BOE to review capital requests and prioritize projects, focusing on key areas such as HVAC, roofing, and security. Additional sessions are planned to develop a comprehensive five-year capital project plan outlining long-term priorities and timelines.

Franklin County Schools has identified a total of \$98,190,880 in capital needs over the next ten years. Of this amount, \$45 million is allocated for the replacement of Franklinton Elementary School (FES), while \$53,190,880

addresses long-range facility needs across the district. The district has consistently applied for a needs-based grant to fund the new FES facility and will continue pursuing this funding opportunity. For the 2024-25 school year, the approved short-range capital outlay budget from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners is approximately \$1.8 million. Our request for the 2025-26 demonstrates a significant increase to address critical needs.

Capital Outlay Overview: \$4,174,043.18

Funding Request: \$4,174,043.18

Priority Areas:

- HVAC
- Roofing
- Security Enhancements

This request includes the installation of weapons detection systems at all traditional high schools, major roofing and HVAC projects, and upgrades to access control systems.

These investments represent a critical step forward in addressing priorities identified in our long-range facilities assessment.

2025-2026 Recurring Expenses

Lic/Title Fees	\$20,000
Bus Camera	\$50,000.00
Parking lot and other perimeter lighting	\$30,000.00
Parking lot and paving upgrades	\$200,000.00
Door access control	\$60,000.00
Door cores (security)	\$6,000.00
Safety and security door maintenance	\$100,000.00
Security cameras buildings	\$40,000.00
HVAC Maintenance	\$500,000.00
Fencing	\$70,000.00
Painting	\$50,000.00
Athletics	\$30,000.00
Band	\$30,000.00
Technology refresh	\$300,000.00
Capital improvements to existing sites	\$130,000.00

2025-2026 Projects

Facility	Budget	Name of Project
BES	\$9,825.00	Finish soffit around Holmes building
BHS	\$33,600.00	BHS auditorium roof recoat
BHS	\$100,800.00	New gym roof system gym
BHS	\$207,953.00	Correct foundation and repave tennis courts
BHS	\$40,000.00	Gaskell house abatement and removal
BHS	\$482,792.00	Track replacement
BMS	\$4,000.00	Rewire lift station
EBES	\$2,115.00	Gutter repairs
EBES	\$36,000.00	Seal gym roof
EBES	\$43,200.00	Replace roofs on existing mobile units
FES	\$33,456.00	New roof building B

2025-2026 Projects-(page 2)

FHS	\$250,000.00	Auditorium lights
FMS	\$30,000.00	Lift station
FMS	\$12,705.00	New logo on gym floor
LMES	\$18,407.00	Lighting
LMES	\$54,400.00	Skylight repairs
RES	\$81,734.21	Playground replacement
TLMS	\$25,200.00	Roof cafeteria
Technology	\$160,000.00	Server storage (5 years)
Maintenance	\$45,000.00	Folding chairs to ensure all locations have chairs for events
Transportation	\$25,000.00	New exhaust system
Total Projects	\$1,696,187.21	

Total Capital Outlay Requests

Recurring Expenses	\$2,477,855.97
2025-2026 Projects	\$1,696,187.21
Total	\$4,174,043.18



Additional Projects

In addition to the broader long- and short-range capital needs, several targeted facility improvement projects are currently underway or in planning. The Board of Commissioners has allocated \$1,000,000 for roof and window repairs at Franklinton Middle School to address critical building envelope issues. Dallas Brickhouse has been engaged to design the necessary repairs, and the project specifications have been finalized, with bidding expected to begin soon. Nearly \$2.5 million in ARPA funds have also been designated by the County to support HVAC system repairs across the district. The project is currently in the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) phase, with proposals being accepted through April 14. At Terrell Lane Middle School (TLMS), the chiller replacement project has been awarded to Ranex HVAC following a successful bid process, and work is expected to be completed by April 15. The County is also seeking to supplement funding for this project through lottery funds. These efforts reflect continued collaboration between the school district and county leadership to address immediate facility needs while planning for long-term capital improvements.

Summary of Budget

• • **\$30,541,812** (County Appropriation- Local Current Expense Budget)

\$4,174,043 (County Appropriation- Capital Outlay Budget)

Total Budget Request: \$34,715,855

<p>\$21,852,599 (local) \$4,174,043 (capital) Franklin County Schools District</p>	<p>\$8,689,213 <small>Projection details from previous slides</small> Charter Schools (within and outside of district)</p>
<p>**All details shared are based on current information and is subject to change**</p>	

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the current economic and political climate remains uncertain—with rising costs, evolving legislative priorities, and growth in our larger community—Franklin County Schools remains committed to responsible and transparent financial stewardship. We recognize the challenges faced by our community and, as such, have worked diligently to prepare a budget that does not include an increased request for current expense funding for the upcoming school year. This reflects our ongoing effort to maximize available resources while continuing to provide a high-quality education for all students. However, to address critical facility needs—particularly in the areas of HVAC, roofing, and other essential infrastructure—we are requesting an increase in capital funding. These projects are necessary to maintain safe, functional, and efficient learning environments for our students and staff. We appreciate the continued partnership and support of the Board of Commissioners as we work together to meet both the immediate and long-term needs of our schools.