



Jackson-Madison County School System

NEWS RELEASE

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Supporting Students and Staff; Keep Going or Stop *Superintendent continues to push new programs and support for staff*

JACKSON, Tenn. - Jackson-Madison County School System (JMCSS) has experienced an incredible three-year journey that has captivated the community and families, garnering tremendous support for our public school system. Under the visionary leadership of Superintendent Dr. Marlon King, JMCSS has maintained an unwavering focus on providing top-notch programs for students and making substantial investments in the professional and financial growth of our esteemed staff.

As the upcoming budget cycle approaches, Superintendent King is making a second ask to the County Commission. He fervently requests the restoration of the \$416,900 that was previously reduced due to a decline in student enrollment. In 2022, King's first ask of the commissioners was to fund the Pope School project. The County Commission and the School Board unanimously supported this request. Now, in 2023, the ask is to restore funds the commissioners withheld due to enrollment decrease; it is imperative to note that this reduction did not account for fixed costs and the essential support required for our pre-K classes, as not all are funded by the state. Additionally, Dr. King is urging Madison County to renegotiate the 2010 Ameresco (energy-efficient) Agreement that has been successfully paid off. The funds requested will be instrumental in providing vital support for our students and dedicated staff.

“One lesson that I learned during the Pope funding request is that it was said the school system never asked for funding. As I engage stakeholders, the question arises around when will the schools ask. So moving forward I will be very deliberate around my requests for support for students and staff of the school system,” said King.

In a remarkably short span of time, our school system has achieved notable milestones. We have installed new playground equipment in 11 schools, acquired a location for a Virtual School, upgraded gym LED lights, expanded LOOP options, introduced middle school baseball and elementary basketball programs, are upgrading Malesus to be an Innovation STEM Hub and building a district-wide football/track facility, increased the number of art and music teachers in elementary schools, added an assistant principal at all elementary schools, added an instructional coach for all schools, hired three reading coordinators, implemented a district-wide telephone system, launched the Vex Robotics program, supported several schools around deferred

maintenance, and incorporated state-of-the-art technology whiteboards, among countless other advancements. Our investments extend beyond students, encompassing raises for teachers and

employees, staff bonuses, absorption of insurance premiums, and unwavering support for professional development opportunities, both within and outside the district.

Superintendent King emphasizes, "I think that some people believe that the expenditures suggested are overspending, and these budget requests are for me personally, but they don't realize they are for the betterment of our students and staff. The remarkable progress our students have made is a testament to the dedication and commitment demonstrated by our teachers and staff members across the board."

The administration strongly advocates for supporting students, families, and staff alike. Although some concerns have been raised regarding expenditures supporting professional development, staff well-being, and student celebrations, it's evident that these investments are worthwhile based on the continued successes the system is experiencing, particularly when there is the unwavering support of our community. Numerous business and community partners stand ready to support our public schools, as exemplified by the resounding success of the JMCSS Gala, which has raised an astounding total of \$180,500.00 over the past two years. This figure does not even encompass the numerous financial gifts pouring into our school system.

"While we are encouraged by the anticipated support from the County Commission for our public school system, there are some commissioners and elected officials that question the spending and the upcoming funding request. Hence, I implore all stakeholders who recognize the importance of the work we have embarked upon to talk to their County Commissioners and see where they stand in supporting our students and staff," Superintendent King passionately expressed. "We have stayed under budget and increased fund balance since I have been here, and I plan to continue that pattern."

Today, JMCSS proudly stands as a Level 5 school district, boasting 12 Level 5 schools and 4 Level 4 schools. The graduation rate has soared to 90%, and we have made substantial improvements in ACT scores. Most recently, 31 students were bestowed with Black Cards for achieving an outstanding score of 30 or higher on the ACT. Furthermore, our teacher beginning salary ranking has climbed from 108th in the state to an impressive 60th. These achievements fill JMCSS employees and stakeholders with immense pride.

Now is the time to exhibit unwavering support for our students and staff, who dedicate themselves tirelessly to enhancing the outcomes of our school system. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) prepares an annual report for the state of Tennessee and although there are multiple indicators considered to determine the overall ranking, we have observed incremental progress in the Education indicator. The TCCY annual report states, "At 89th, Madison County is near the bottom of Tennessee Counties in child well-being. The county's strongest area was Education."

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