



# JACKSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*Nicole Pormilli, Superintendent*

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April 19, 2024

The Honorable Phil Murphy, Governor of New Jersey  
Mr. Kevin Dehmer, New Jersey Commissioner of Education

Dear Governor Murphy and Commissioner Dehmer:

On behalf of the entire Administration and Board of Education of the Jackson School District, please accept this letter as a formal and desperate request to correct the education funding issues in our District. Jackson Township is an idyllic, rural township; our schools are a source of tremendous pride. We have a graduation rate of 94.1% and our students thrive in multiple Advanced Placement and Academy classes, competitive sports programs and award-winning bands, clubs and programs. Our school district boasts one of the best digital media academies in the country.

We have suffered a devastating \$22.4 million in state aid cuts under the S2 funding structure. The fact that it occurred during the same time our multi-language learner population increased by 459% AND our transportation responsibilities soared by 752% AND other fixed costs, outside of our control, including inflation have increased exponentially.

We are fiscally responsible. We have had two outside auditors look at our financial reporting, along with the Ocean County Superintendent and our state-appointed monitor. All four have concluded that we have been fiscally responsible prior to and throughout the S2 funding period. Yet here we are in a critical, unsustainable position.

We were recently informed by the county superintendent that we will not be permitted to seek a loan for the 2024-2025 school year. We are at a \$30 million deficit and the consequences are unimaginable. We have already cut 214 positions including administration, our class sizes have swelled well over the optimal learning size, we have postponed curriculum updates that are imperative to our students' education, and we have eliminated certain sports, coaches and co-curriculars. We have postponed much-needed facility investments and struggle to continue to assist students through learning losses. Meanwhile, mental health and academic needs have never been greater.

We are drastically underfunded. Based on the Adequacy Budget calculated by the NJ Department of Education, we are \$23,783,329 BELOW ADEQUACY. We are frustrated that the state's own guidelines for a district of our size are being diminished by the state itself. In addition, we were bracing for a \$806,460 cut in our state aid in this last year of S2 and were notified in March that the cut will now be \$4.4 million.

We hope you can hear our plea and our logic. This future generation cannot afford to lose more teachers, more opportunities and more experiences and should not be denied a truly comprehensive, healthy, and safe educational experience. We respectfully ask for your assistance to either restore our aid, or to allow us the option to borrow the funds we need to save our district.

Respectfully,

**Nicole Pormilli**, Superintendent of Schools  
**Dan Baginski**, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

**Giuseppe Palmeri**, Board President  
**Tina M. Kas**, Board Vice President  
**Allison Barocas**, Board Member  
**Megan Gardella**, Board Member  
**Brian McCarron**, Board Member  
**Dr. Erica Osmond**, Board Member  
**Tara Rivera**, Board Member

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## Information Document

**We implore you to use the information in this letter to truly understand our unique challenges and the devastation that would ensue without your assistance.** We have already cut to the bone.

At risk will be items that, while not defined by the state as part of a “thorough and efficient” education, are exactly that. **Please know, these items listed below COMBINED do not even reach \$30 million.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Elem Class Sizes = 35</li> <li>● MS &amp; HS Class Sizes = 35-45</li> <li>● Closing Schools (creating unsafe classrooms)</li> <li>● NO Athletics</li> <li>● NO Clubs, Band, Theater</li> <li>● NO Courtesy Busing (unsafe rural county roads with no sidewalks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NO School Resource Officers (SROs) and a significant reduction of security officers</li> <li>● NO Academic Supports (beyond the classroom)</li> <li>● Limited or NO AP Courses</li> <li>● NO late buses</li> <li>● NO facility improvements (safety issues)</li> <li>● Further Reduced Electives</li> </ul>
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**We have unique challenges.** The loss of \$22.4 million in aid is devastating. The fact that it occurred during the same time our multi-language learner population increased by 459% AND our transportation responsibilities soared by 752% AND other fixed costs, outside of our control, including inflation have increased exponentially - this has created an insurmountable challenge.

**We are drastically underfunded.** Based on the Adequacy Budget calculated by the NJ Department of Education, we are \$23,783,329 BELOW ADEQUACY. We are frustrated that the state’s own guidelines for a district of our size are being diminished by the state itself.

Based on the NJDOE State Aid Notice we received on Feb. 29, 2024, our Transportation, Security and Special Education Aid - all frozen at 2017-2018 levels - are drastically underfunded.

- Transportation Aid frozen at \$601,355 - **should be \$7,735,206**
- Security Aid frozen at \$854,977 - **should be \$1,882,669.**
- Special Education frozen at \$5,211,500 - **should be \$7,427,591**