



Graham County Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Graham County Schools receives \$100,000 program investment from Nantahala Health Foundation

Graham County Schools has received a \$100,000 investment grant from Nantahala Health Foundation to fund the expansion of mental health services for students and families. Working in collaboration with IMPACTT-NC, the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine, and HIGHTS, this grant provides funding for telepsychiatry services, therapy, counseling, and medication management services for students and families in Graham, Clay, and Macon County Schools.

Grant investment funds from Nantahala Health Foundation will be used to support IMPACTT-NC in establishing tele-school-based behavioral health services, specifically psychiatry services in Graham, Clay, and Macon County Schools. Funding will also be used to support HIGHTS in establishing an in-person clinical therapist in Graham County to lead WNC crisis response and provide therapy for justice-involved youth and substance use services.

Graham County Schools is honored to participate in this important initiative. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, as of 2023, North Carolina reported only 354 child and adolescent psychiatrists statewide—approximately 15 per 100,000 children. Of these providers, just 150 accept Medicaid, further limiting access to these critical and highly specialized services for children and adolescents.

Moreover, 60 counties in North Carolina reported having no child psychiatrist available, including Graham County, underscoring the urgent need for expanded mental health resources in our community, and our excitement at the opportunity provided to us through this grant and the Nantahala Health Foundation.

“These funds are critical to Graham County Schools’ ability to effectively address the mental health and behavioral support needs of our students and families. Access to child psychiatry services in our rural community is extremely limited. Partnering with the UNC School of Medicine has the potential to be transformative, providing vital services to students and families who otherwise may not have access to this level of care. This project would not be possible without the generous support of the Nantahala Foundation and the commitment and

leadership of Charissa Gray of IMPACTT-NC, Marcus Metcalf of HIGHTS, and Jennifer Irwin of Vaya Health,” said Graham County Schools Superintendent, Robert Moody.

About Graham County Schools

Graham County Schools is a public school district serving approximately 1,100 students in grades Pre-K through 12. The district maintains a high school graduation rate that consistently exceeds the state average and offers a diverse range of Career and Technical Education pathways designed to prepare students for the workforce and careers in skilled trades. The 2025 graduating class boasted 53% of graduates continuing their education at either a four-year university, community college, or trade school.

To support students’ academic, physical, and emotional well-being, Graham County Schools employs a comprehensive student support team that includes school nurses, social workers, guidance counselors, and a mental health liaison.

For more information about Graham County Schools and opportunities to support this community effort, please contact Dr. Jaime Hooper at 828-479-9820 or visit our website at <https://www.graham.k12.nc.us>.

About Nantahala Health Foundation

Working since 2019 as a regional catalyst for innovation and collaboration, Nantahala Health Foundation partners with nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties and the Qualla Boundary to improve health and wellness outcomes for all.

By addressing the root causes of health inequities and removing barriers to quality healthcare, education and economic opportunities, the Foundation’s impact is felt in its partnerships with regional change-makers. The Foundation has awarded more than \$4.3 million in support to some 232 programs totaling a financial investment of more than \$20 million throughout the region.

Additionally, the Foundation has invested more than \$254,000 to build the capacity of more than 150 regional leaders, equipping them to collaborate effectively with others and grow the people they serve, resulting in a richer, more inclusive, connected, and thriving community. Those who wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the nonprofit Foundation may do so by visiting NantahalaHealthFoundation.org.
