



School Overview & Capital Campaign Executive Summary 2023-24

Background & Mission

Founded in 1997 by a group of parents and community members, Summit Charter School is a tuition-free, K-12 public charter school in Cashiers, North Carolina. Summit's mission is to engage students in learning experiences that stimulate discovery, inspire excellence, and nurture a positive influence in an ever-changing world.

Summit's primary goal is to graduate students who are academically prepared, engaged in their communities, and strong in character.

Accomplishments

- After serving our community as a K-8 school for over 20 years, we successfully completed our second year as a K-12 school with **15% growth in enrollment** and over 95% retention of students and faculty.
- Supported the education and life skills of 290 students and 45 staff in 2022-23. Going into the 2023-24 school year, Summit currently has enrolled over 50 new students and we are once again experiencing waitlists across multiple grades. **For the first-time in Summit's history, we will serve over 300 students** and 50 faculty and staff, each of which are steadfastly devoted to teaching our children how to be successful students, friends, and citizens.
- Supported K-5 students to achieve on-average over 1.5 years of growth in reading in one school year and K-8 students to achieve double-digit growth in proficiency levels in reading and math.
- Exceeded state performance averages on state End of Grade tests in all tested subjects in elementary and middle school.
- Performed two musicals that were written, produced, and scored by our musical theatre program
- Facilitated 60 extracurricular and off-campus learning experiences consistent with Summit's model of place-based education. A small sample of these experiences include hands-on visits to the Appalachian Trail and Blue Ridge Mountain peaks; capstone learning trips to the South Carolina Barrier Islands, the Teton mountains in Wyoming, and the rainforests of Costa Rica; community-service driven experiences to Fishes & Loaves, the Cashiers Historical Society, and the Humane Society; and college visits across the southeast.
- Won multiple Tri-State Athletic Conference Championships in middle school sports, including boys soccer, boys cross country, and girls basketball.
- Provided summer learning programming for students in reading, math, and science.
- Facilitated a "Step Up to Kindergarten" program for rising Kindergarten students to support their successful transition to Kindergarten at Summit.
- Remained debt-free while experiencing unprecedented growth across all grades.

Demographics

In the 2023-24 school year, Summit Charter School educates 300 students from Kindergarten through 12th grade representing four counties in Western North Carolina (Jackson, Macon, Transylvania, and Swain). As a public charter school, Summit is committed to educating all students. Our current student population includes:

- English language learners: 7%
- Economically disadvantaged students: 51%
- Exceptional learners: 11% (*Summit's Exceptional Children (EC) program ensures students with unique learning needs develop intellectually, physically, emotionally, and vocationally through individualized education*)
- Students of color: 25%

SUMMIT CHARTER SCHOOL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2024, Summit Charter School publicly announced a \$6.5 million campaign to support phase II of our expansion from a K-8 to K-12 school. Thanks to the generous support of early donors, Summit has secured \$4.8 million toward the \$6.5 million campaign goal, as well as \$1 million in donated goods and services to support the construction of the project. As a public charter school, Summit does not receive public funding for capital improvements and relies on private funding to fully fund the needs of its facilities and ultimately, the vital needs of its school children, faculty, and staff.

The capital campaign is a result of historic growth at Summit Charter School, which was established as K-8 in 1997 and was one of the first charter schools in the state of North Carolina. In 2018, Summit started adding a new high school grade annually, graduating its first senior class in the spring of 2022. Graduating Summit students have achieved a 100% graduation rate with 100% earning acceptance to college, including 71 offers of admission from 31 colleges and universities and life-changing scholarships. 30% of Summit graduates are first-generation college bound.

For the 2023-24 school year, Summit has 300 students currently enrolled, with 8 of our 13 grades at full capacity. This includes 57 new students. While enrollment has increased across multiple grades, middle school in particular has seen a significant increase over the past two years.

Since 2019, Summit has experienced a 28% increase in student enrollment. With this growth, Summit's current facilities have reached their capacity. The goal in this next phase of expansion is to create the additional space to maintain the small class sizes that are distinctive to Summit's program, and to support our current enrollment growth and longer-term enrollment goals.

As part of the expansion, Summit Charter School will add a new 15,000 square foot high school building, separate from the school's existing facilities but remaining on its 33-acres of land. The new building will include traditional classrooms, a science lab, a learning kitchen, rooms for individualized education, an outdoor courtyard, admin offices, and a large commons area. With this new facility, Summit will transition our current phase I high school building—built in 2019 at 6,600 square feet—into the school's new middle school building and will add a pavilion for middle school lunch and assemblies. Finally, the expansion project includes a student-designed fitness center, which was funded through a student-led project and opened doors in August 2023.

By transitioning the middle school into the original high school building, Summit also opens up classroom space for lower grades. This expansion will improve K-12 capacity, build upon our school's educational program, and welcome new families, all while remaining committed to small class sizes to support our students and teachers.

Locally-owned Sweetwater Builders managed the fitness center project and donated 100% of the builder fee. Following a formal RFP process, Summit hired South Carolina-based JDavis Construction to build the new high school building. Since the fall of 2022, a group of educators and stakeholders have worked diligently to design an expansion plan that strengthens the K-12 program at Summit and achieves its enrollment and financial sustainability goals. The new high school building is slated to open for the 2024-25 school year.

Fundraising efforts for the expansion are led by the Summit Charter School Foundation, a 501(c)3 that raises private funding to support Summit Charter School, which receives significantly less funding than a traditional public school. The Foundation is volunteer-led by a board of directors that include invested community members, current and former parents, and school alumni.

Enclosed please find our case for support for our capital campaign.