

WHITE PAPER
BRAC-Related Public School Capital
Requirements for the Fort Bragg Region
October 23, 2010



SUMMARY

A 5,980-person growth in student population - that is directly related to BRAC and other mission growth at Fort Bragg – is expected to occur from 2006 through 2013. The significant military-related population increases in selected counties of the Fort Bragg region will cause serious shortages in education resources to include physical space, equipment, teachers, administrators, and per-student funding. The funding needs for each school system vary, but Cumberland, Harnett and Hoke Counties will experience the largest BRAC-related growth. Federal funding is urgently needed to augment county and state funds to build enough school capacity to accommodate the military-related student population increases in Cumberland, Harnett and Hoke counties. Based on the BRAC Regional Task Force's (BRAC-RTF) Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan (CRGP) published in October 2008 and the updated school needs assessment in June 2009, projected that enrollment growth will overwhelm the ability of the local school system to provide adequate facilities for those students. That enrollment growth has been occurring and continues to occur. This need is immediate.

THE CHALLENGE

Based on the CRGP and the updated school needs assessment in June 2009, an additional (unplanned and unfunded) 5,980 students will be enrolled in the public schools surrounding Fort Bragg by 2013 as a result of base realignment and closure and other mission growth at Fort Bragg. The BRAC actions are required by law to be complete by November of 2011, and the largest increases in student population for the Fort Bragg region will occur by 2012. Considering that many of the current schools are already at capacity, the need for funding to implement new school construction is urgent.

These additional 5,980 students will enroll in the region's schools. Normal growth for the region had anticipated an increase in students; however, the influx of students as a result of military expansion was not included in these planning figures. As a result, there is no funding, and no funding capacity to prepare for this increase in student population. Failure to address this funding shortfall will result in overcrowded facilities and classrooms, decreased quality of education, increased safety concerns, and a decrease in the quality of life in local communities.

SCOPE

The immediate need is for an additional \$219.6 million in funding for school construction for Cumberland, Harnett, and Hoke Counties to accommodate both the normal growth and the expected growth in student population that is directly related to BRAC and other mission growth at Fort Bragg. This is just the need for the schools that are ready to be built. There are

other schools being planned in response to the military-related growth that are not included in this list.

SCHEDULE

Much of the preparation necessary for the listed school projects has been completed, so once funding for school construction is available, the delay for planning should be minimal. But constructing a school takes time and this need is immediate.

COST

The analysis in Table 1 reveals that \$68.4 million¹ of the estimated \$219.6 million in funding for new schools is to accommodate the military-related student population for those new schools. This is not all of the proposed school construction. This only represents the school construction that is pending at this time. (For example, Hoke County also needs an additional elementary school and their current high school is at capacity. The school system is waiting on the results of a facilities needs Master Plan to determine how to best meet these needs, but do not have the funds to contract for the Master Plan. That process is expected to take four months to complete, but the system cannot begin until funding is identified. The proposal that the school system received from their architect for preparation of that Master Plan is for \$87,000.)

Cumberland County is planning for \$69 million in new school construction that includes an estimated \$26.17 million to accommodate the military related student population. Harnett County is planning for \$136 million in new school construction that includes \$38.3 million needed to accommodate the military-related student population. Finally, Hoke County is planning for \$14.6 million in new school construction including \$3.94 million to accommodate the military-related student population. These projections are in addition to the construction of three new DoDEA schools on Ft. Bragg.

Some argue that the formula used above understates the true cost of the military related school construction. This is true. The \$68.4 million only contemplates current construction and does not take into account the overall impact of the additional BRAC related students. The most objective way to account for this overall impact is to look at the average construction cost per student and apply that to the total military-related new student growth. The average per student school construction costs based on Table 1 is \$30,995.² That multiplied by the 5980 student projected military-related growth comes to over \$185 million. If you contemplate just the projected military-related student growth (4587) in Cumberland, Hoke, and Harnett counties, that total comes to over \$142 million.

¹ This is based only on the percentage of military-related students that are projected to attend these new schools. So the \$68.4 million dollar figure is actually far less than the actual construction costs incurred, because this in no way accounts for all of the other BRAC growth related students who are attending existing schools. Whichever school they attend, BRAC growth related students are creating the need for greater school capacity.

² This number is a weighted average of the "Capacity" and "Total Cost" columns in Table 1.

Table 1 – Estimated School Construction Costs³					
School System	Level	Capacity	Total Cost	Military-Related Costs	Military-Related Proportion⁴
Cumberland	Middle	900	\$20,000,000 ⁵	\$10,000,000	50%
	High School	1260	\$49,000,000 ⁶	\$16,170,000	33%
Harnett	Elementary	950	\$21,000,000	\$8,400,000	40%
	Middle	1000	\$31,000,000	\$9,300,000	30%
	Middle	1000	\$31,000,000	\$ 4,650,000	15%
	High School	1500	\$53,000,000	\$15,900,000	30%
Hoke	Elementary	475	\$14,600,000	\$3,942,000	27%
			\$219,600,000	* \$68,362,000	
*This amount rises to \$98,802,000 when recently completed school projects are included.					

CONCLUSION

There are a substantial number of additional students coming to the region as result of the BRAC actions and other military growth. These students are and will be enrolling in the region’s public schools. The current building infrastructure cannot accommodate these students. School construction is very expensive and the counties have limited funding options.⁷ It is important to note that the local governments are doing their part.

Unless other resources are accessed (i.e. federal, state or private) to help with school construction, the counties will have to pay for a solution using property tax revenue. That of course assumes that the NC Local Government Commission will permit them to borrow the money.⁸ The average property tax rate for the counties in the Fort Bragg region is already 22% higher than the state average.⁹

These local governments are dealing with an unforeseen situation that is not of their making and that is seriously impacting their ability to educate all the children in their jurisdiction - both military and civilian. In the absence of outside assistance to address this funding gap, the resulting impacts will include a combination of the following: overcrowding, fewer resources in the classroom, students in mobile units, more safety issues, higher property taxes, and very upset parents - both military and civilian.

³ Cumberland County cost estimates were provided by the school system facilities personnel. Hoke and Harnett County cost estimates were provided by their respective engineering firms.

⁴ Estimates of the proportion of military-related students for the new schools were based on the current military school population in those locations and were provided by Phil Farrell (Harnett), Mark Whitley (Cumberland) and the NC State University Operations Research and Education Laboratory (Hoke).

⁵ School will be built on land already owned by the school system. Land cost is not included.

⁶ Cost includes the purchase of a 25 acre site.

⁷ See the White Paper on Public School Financing in North Carolina published by the BRAC Regional Task Force on November 10, 2010.

⁸ See Page 2 of the White Paper on Public School Financing in North Carolina published by the BRAC Regional Task Force on November 10, 2010.

⁹ Data sourced from the NC Association of County Commissioner’s (NCACC) website.