

# 2008 School Bond, Swelling student populations overflow into mobile suburbs

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On January 17, 2008, Guilford County Commissioners voted to put two school bond referendums on the May 6<sup>th</sup> ballot: \$412 million for Guilford County Schools and \$45 million for Eastern High School.

The \$412 million bond includes building five new schools and expanding/renovating 15 schools throughout the county. This bond also includes additional athletic and support facilities at several schools, and autism wings at three schools. A separate \$45 million bond will rebuild and enlarge Eastern after fire destroyed the school last November. Go to [http://www.gcsnc.com/construction/proposed\\_construction.htm](http://www.gcsnc.com/construction/proposed_construction.htm) for more information and a complete listing.

The bonds will provide 7,000 new seats for a student population that has continued to grow by 1300 students a year for the last 8 years. A growth rate of 1300 students translates to one high school or 1.5 middle schools or 3 elementary schools per year. To keep pace with the student population growth over the last 8 years Guilford County Schools should have built between 8 to 24 new schools. The growth rate is estimated to continue or surpass current levels.

With more than 71,000 students in 115 schools, the county utilizes 622 mobile classrooms to accommodate the swelling population. Given the average class size, over 15,000 students are educated in mobile classes, over 20% of the Guilford County student population. Mobile suburbs are popping up around schools. With no remedy for this situation, county residents can expect to see these mobile suburbs grow by 260 mobile units over the next five years to meet the student growth rate in Guilford County. These mobile suburbs lack the security of brick and mortar. Children in mobile suburbs are at a higher risk when it comes to severe weather, fire and intruders.

Of the 27 projects on the county-wide bond, five are in the Southeast. Southeast Educational Advancement Coalition (SEAC) founded to give the Southeast area a voice and a presence relating to educational issues, consistently attend school board meetings, write e-mails and letters, and connect with leaders. SEAC successfully lobbied to receive over \$100 million in funding for the Southeast on the new bond referendum.

## **Southeast Projects Proposed for the 2008 Bond Referendum**

Southeast High School	\$33,311,222	New classrooms providing 360 seats, media center and gymnasium addition
Alamance Elementary School	\$20,300,161	Addition, demolition and renovations to convert to 700 student elementary school
Southeast Area Elem. School	\$24,893,360	New 700 student school in Southeast area including cost of site
SE Area Autism Wing	\$8,438,515	Autism Wing at Southeast Area Elementary School for 48 students
Southeast Middle School	\$13,088,725	New media center, auxiliary

		gym and dining room expansion. Convert existing media to classrooms providing 104 new seats
	\$100,031,983.00	

With severe overcrowding and disrepair of Southeast schools, the Southeast school system cannot adequately support the current student population. For the last 30 years this area received insignificant funding for maintaining and expanding schools. Thirty years of neglecting schools in the area is impacting the quality of education and property values. Good schools are crucial for thriving communities.

Southeast High School and Southeast Middle School both have growing mobile suburbs with 17 and 13 mobiles respectively. Based on current student populations, both are educating a third of the student population in mobile suburbia. Southeast High School has fourteen “roving” teachers that have no permanent classrooms in which to teach.

Projected enrollment increases promise to exacerbate an already stressed system in a very high-growth area. Core facilities, including bathrooms, cafeterias, gyms, and auditoriums in Southeast schools cannot support the *existing* students, let alone the yearly influx of young scholars.

All Guilford County children deserve a school environment that is healthy, safe, and most of all, conducive to their success. They need facilities that are flexible enough to accommodate modern and emerging teaching practices as well as diverse learning styles.

Maintaining a system of this size is a costly, expanding endeavor. Schools set the stage for successful and fulfilling futures. Investing in their future is an investment in yours!

Go to <http://www.southeastguilford.org/index.htm> for local school bond information.