

Whidbey News-Times

# Schools awarded \$38M for jet noise mitigation

## Grants were awarded through the Community Noise Mitigation Program

By [Allyson Ballard](#) • October 3, 2025 1:30 am

Federal funds will help multiple Oak Harbor schools quiet jet noise.

More than \$38 million in federal grants have been awarded to Oak Harbor Public Schools to implement noise mitigation features at three elementary schools, according to documents provided to district board members for a meeting on Monday. The money was awarded Sept. 19, and the board approved its acceptance on Sept. 29.

The Department of Defense allocated \$16 million to the school district for use at Hillcrest Elementary, \$10 million for use at Oak Harbor Elementary and \$11.7 million for Olympic View Elementary.

“It’s a great opportunity for us and they don’t come very often,” Superintendent Michelle Kuss-Cybula said. “And it seems like we’ve had a couple great opportunities in this community in the past couple years.”

EA-18G Growlers and other aircraft from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island may cause disruptive noise in classrooms. The Navy is currently updating an Environmental Impact Statement related to Growler noise. A draft EIS found that Growler operations show “potential impacts on childhood learning.” Specifically, students at both Crescent Harbor Elementary School on North Whidbey and Coupeville Elementary School on Central Whidbey may experience a one-month delay in reading comprehension because of noise exposure, the draft states.

State and local governments and tribal entities affected by “fixed-wing aviation” created by military installations can qualify for these competitive grants as part of the Community Noise Mitigation Program, Kuss-Cybula explained.

“Depending on where the location of the fixed aviation routine or pattern occurs, that’s the decibel reading for the noise level,” she added. “So we have worked with NAS Whidbey to look at that map and then determine which of the schools would qualify for the noise mitigation program.”

The school district originally applied for noise mitigation grants for these three elementary schools as well as North Whidbey Middle School last January, but wound up declining funds for three of the four schools. Like many DoD grants, Kuss-Cybula said, each requires a 10% local contribution to match the money received and the district felt unsure about its budget and ability to do so.

“That’s why we pulled back on the three originally, making sure our impact aid payments came in and if we could use some of the impact aid as a match for these or capital projects,” she said.

### **Culture Secretary criticises BBC over lack of consistency**

Noise mitigation measures include upgrading HVAC systems and replacing windows, which Kuss-Cybula said can be costly. Tests will be conducted after each project to ensure the decibel noise created by jets is reduced, she added.

Construction for all three elementary schools is slated to begin Sept. 1, 2026, and end Dec. 31, 2027, according to the documents, what Kuss-Cybula called a “tight timeline.” To minimize the effect of construction on teachers and students as much as possible, she said the school district will try to “phase” construction and capitalize on summer breaks to complete the work.

According to a press release, the noise mitigation grants bring the total amount of grant funding secured by the school district over the last three years to finance capital projects to approximately \$208 million.

The Coupeville School District also received a noise mitigation grant of \$9 million for its middle and high school, Superintendent Shannon Leatherwood said in an email.