

Week brings new attacks on school funding

The week brought new attacks on the money that makes for a livable community.

Supt. Eric Smith Tuesday told the school board to ready for as much as \$24 million more in cuts. The "costs" that might turn into cuts are in a story that begins on this page.

The Education Budget Advisory Committee Wednesday recommended that county commission-

ers cut the schools' request for local money **no more** than \$17 million. Ironically, this is a group that has become convinced, after meeting for hours every other week for months, that school funding is nowhere near adequate to educate all children. The group has vowed to figure out what a quality school system will really cost.

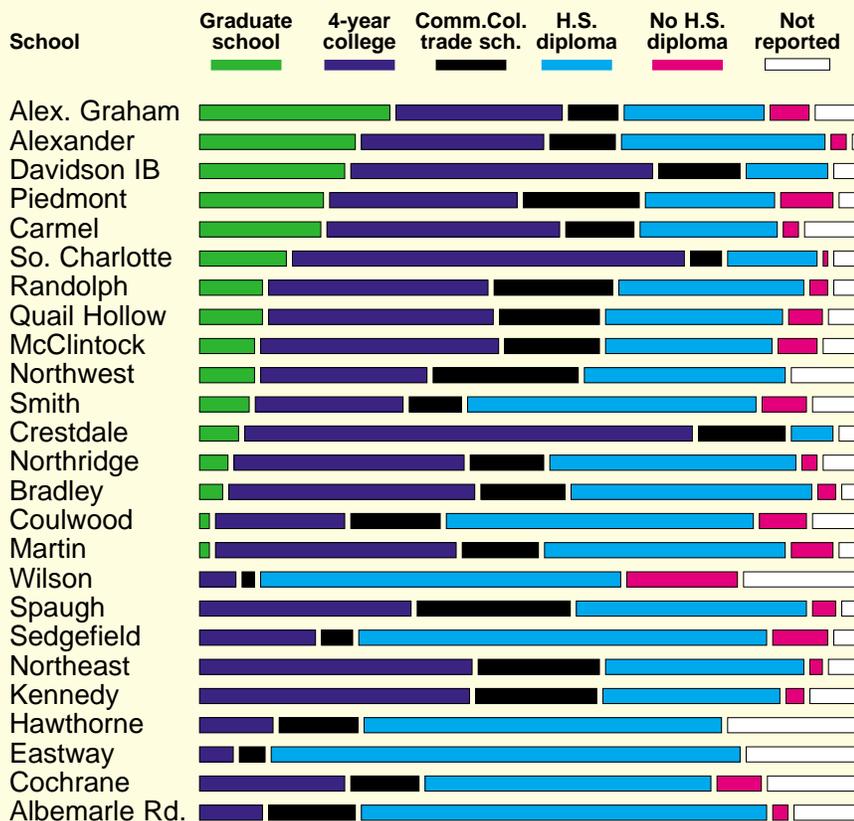
Commentary

Also Wednesday, the Capital Budget Advisory Committee, an 11-member body meeting without a quorum present in the room, voted 3-2 to tell county commissioners they should put on the ballot the bonds for new suburban schools, but not the bonds to bring older schools up to today's baseline standards.

And from Raleigh, the news was **Continued on Page 3**

Middle schools, by parents' education level

Test data is now reported by level of education attained by students' parents. Bars below represent data on parents of middle school students who last year took the required 7th-grade writing test.



Notes: No data was available for Marie G. Davis and Ranson. J.T Williams data was incomplete.

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Smith lists possible targets if more must be cut from budget

CMS Supt. Eric Smith Tuesday night offered the school board a list of more than \$24 million in new budget cuts that may be necessary if state and county governments continue to whittle away at education funding.

"It is time to be thinking of this magnitude of impact for CMS," Smith said.

"This is not a recommended list of cuts. I don't think cuts are warranted," he added.

Mecklenburg County is considering limiting its school allocation to \$262 million, the same amount CMS received this current fiscal year. Next fiscal year, CMS is expecting to have 6,500 or more additional students to teach and is opening four new schools.

At the same time, the state is now considering cuts in funding for schoolhouse employees, Smith said.

About 60% of CMS funding comes directly from the state of North Carolina.

About half the money on Smith's list, or \$12.4 million, would be

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Smith lists possible budget-cut targets

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obtained through elimination of certified teachers who are in support positions – from assistant principals and counselors to media aides and family advocates.

Smith said the list would affect 280 to 300 certified teacher or administrator positions, on top of the 300 positions already eliminated by earlier scaling back. Smith did not address whether elimination of the positions would mean layoffs. But the board just finished putting in place a reduction-in-force policy that applies to band and orchestra teachers, and there were only a couple dozen people affected by those cuts.

Smith's full list, in descending order of size.

\$4.4 million – The state is now considering giving its employees no pay raise. If it doesn't, CMS

could save \$4.4 million by not having to give raises to locally funded teachers and administrators. If the state does end up giving a raise, Smith wants to match it for locally funded staff.

\$4.2 million – Eliminate half the schools' media specialists.

\$3.2 million – The "one bright spot" in budget news, Smith said, is that \$3.2 million from the federal Improving Teacher Quality grant may be available to offset losses in county funding.

\$2.7 million – Eliminate half the locally funded assistant principal positions.

\$2 million – Eliminate half of the locally funded elementary literacy facilitators. These staff were instrumental, Smith said, in reading gains made after 1996.

\$1.6 million – Legal fees held over from now-closed desegregation litigation. This fund might have been tapped to support the schools' \$200,000-to-\$500,000 part in studying a new minority and women's business program, but the board has not yet approved that expenditure.

\$1.3 million – Eliminate remaining locally funded media assistants.

\$1.2 million – Eliminate locally funded family school advocates.

\$1.15 million – Middle school athletic programs. There would be no time or money to convert to intramurals for next year.

\$700,000 – Eliminate half of the instructional facilitator positions at middle and high schools.

\$655,000 – Eliminate support for testing in Advanced

From Readers

Governor, give it back

The people of the State of N.C. must make the governor give back the money that belongs to the local governments that he is holding. That is the most absurd thing I have ever seen happen in our state. Then we would have the money needed for programs.

Gale Pendergraph

'An abomination'

Okay, what can I do to help? Who do I need to e-mail, call, write to, etc? This is an abomination and if I had the means I would bail out of this system and go the private school route.

Melissa Raphael

Placement, "one of the strongest AP programs in the nation."

\$384,000 – Shutting down Channel 21, the CMS TV station that broadcasts education programs and school board meetings.

\$358,000 – End Junior Achievement programs.

\$275,000 – Eliminate half the locally funded psychologist and social worker positions.

\$250,000 – End Arts and Science Council-sponsored arts programming in the schools.

"These are not recommended" cuts, Smith said. "They would have major implications and ramifications on how we operate as a system."

Educate! a journal on public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen interested in the welfare of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

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Week adds to attacks on school funding

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equally bleak, with legislators heading into a short session looking at a \$2.1 billion budget shortfall for the year beginning July 1.

There's been a dance lately around whether city and county governments would or would not receive money that was promised by state agreements but that has thus far been withheld by Gov. Mike Easley. It's an important issue for the schools, because some of that money would have gone to support the school budget.

Mecklenburg County Manager Harry Jones has said that if state pass-through of utility franchise fees and money in lieu of inventory taxes does not materialize, he'd recommend that the schools budget be held to this year's amount. By Friday a Charlotte Chamber lobbyist was flatly asserting that that money was "gone." This despite the possibility of 6,500 more students this fall.

All the while, the folk who set tax rates at state and local levels are silent.

County commissioners Chairman Parks Helms has said that not raising tax rates was a "given." In an April 21 article for Educate!, he wrote that "developing and sustaining a successful public school system will not be accomplished by continually increasing funding for school operations and capital improvements." He called for "a more focused, efficient and effective system for delivering quality educational services...."

Those 6,500 additional students expected in Mecklenburg classrooms this August will need 250 or more teachers. Today's teachers work for peanuts; will the new hires work for nothing?

Fighting over scraps

Perhaps the longer-term damage being doing to CMS is to set one group against another in a

Provide 'whatever funds are required'

Excerpts from Tuesday's report to county commissioners from the Education Budget Advisory Committee.

We commend the advances our school system has made, but we refer ... to the appended report, "The Trip As Yet Untaken," for a clear and alarming characterization of the challenges which lie before us.

We acknowledge the efforts of the school system has already made to use the balanced scorecard instrument to correlate performance goals to allocation requests, and we urge increased reliance on this instrument to create a budget that 1) is the product of a careful assessment of needs and resources and 2) can be used to instill public support for a school system that is responsibly meeting the real needs of our young people.

We urge the BOCC to reject the concept of a continuation budget. We feel the public's confidence in the budget process is crucial in earning the support necessary to truly meet the challenges that face our students. The continuation budget however, breeds cynicism, not confidence.

We emphatically express our disappointment in a state allocation system that denies to the young people of Mecklenburg County the educational opportunities they deserve....

The current budget request... EBAC requests that the BOCC consider a funding range of \$258 million to \$275 million. With this range there are certain caveats:

- 1) CMS present a three-year financial plan by the end of this calendar year so long-range planning can begin in a timely fashion.
- 2) CMS develop next year's budget using a zero-based budget approach.
- 3) CMS begin immediately the process of implementing the savings delineated in the McKinsey report [on operations, food service, etc.].
- 4) CMS begin looking at ways to reorganize the management structure necessary to reflect the changes due to growth of student population, physical plant and changing demographics of the student population and the need to continue to improve the educational process.

EBAC wishes to clarify this recommendation by stating emphatically that the objective of the entire Mecklenburg County community is to provide whatever funds are required to turn the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System into the premier public school system in the State of North Carolina and the country. It is everyone's desire to provide an education system where every child is provided access to an equitable, effective school for learning whatever skills are necessary to reach their full potential for success as an adult. The community's leadership must not only acknowledge the unmet educational needs before us, we must also join the Board of County commissioners in advocating for additional State funding....

struggle for survival.

One schools leader asks, for example, why Smith has targeted for dismissal half the locally funded literacy facilitators at the schoolhouse level when there are

"reading coaches downtown that only come to the school every so often" and are not being cut. Perhaps the better question is: Why, when 58% of the district's

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low-income sixth-graders last year were NOT reading on grade level are we talking about dismissing a single reading instructor?

In the space below is contact information for state and local leaders whose decisions will shape the schools' budget.

Enforcing status quo?

One recommendation of the CMS budget advisory committee,

excerpted in the box on page 3, was that "CMS present a three-year financial plan by the end of this calendar year so long-range planning can begin in a timely fashion." The county commissioners liked the idea, and told Helms to request it from school board chairman Arthur Griffin.

Commenting on current budgeting, committee member Howard Haworth said, "What we wind up seeing is a plan that is one year in duration and we see it late in the game before the free-for-all starts.... This board of county commissioners and citizens ought to know what the trip is going to

cost."

But Smith issued a warning about long-range planning, a caution made more poignant by state actions that are today changing the rules for spending that was budgeted a year ago.

"We have absolutely no clear directions on what state school funding is going to be. That makes long range planning difficult at best," Smith said.

"My experience with the political world," he added, is that long-range plans "lock your down to certain expectations. That's the situation we have been in the last

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How to reach leaders dealing with school budget issues

The following information is as provided by elected officials to the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections.

State government

Gov. Mike Easley

Office of the Governor
Raleigh, NC 27611
1-800-662-7952
E-mail at Web site: www.governor.state.nc.us

Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue

The State Capitol
116 West Jones St.
Raleigh, NC 27603
(919) 733-7350
E-mail at Web site:
www.ltgov.state.nc.us

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Charlie Dannelly (D33)
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(704) 336-2573
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six years.” To raise student achievement, Charlotte must be ready to do more, not to “limit strategies” to whatever was in a three-year plan.

Smith also bluntly suggested that the community may be resting on its laurels now that it is out of court.

“I see two very alarming trends,” Smith said.

First, the county is poised to

reduce support for education as a percentage of its total budget.

Second, the recommendation to seek bonds for new schools but not for repair of outmoded ones “splits the baby” and ignores “the specified, spelled-out, promised needs to the parents of this community.”

“That’s a value statement,” Smith said, one “we give to all children of this school system.”

University Park Baptist pastor Claude Alexander raised some of the same issues in a column in Thursday’s Charlotte Post.

Alexander said the post-litigation era would test “the communi-

ty’s commitment to the full and equal education of all its children. ... the community’s value of a racially integrated educational environment as opposed to a racially isolated educationa environment... [and] whether we will be able to continually present ourselves and be viewed, with integrity, as a model of positively addressing the matters of racial and ethnic inclusion and equity.”

A stand on principle

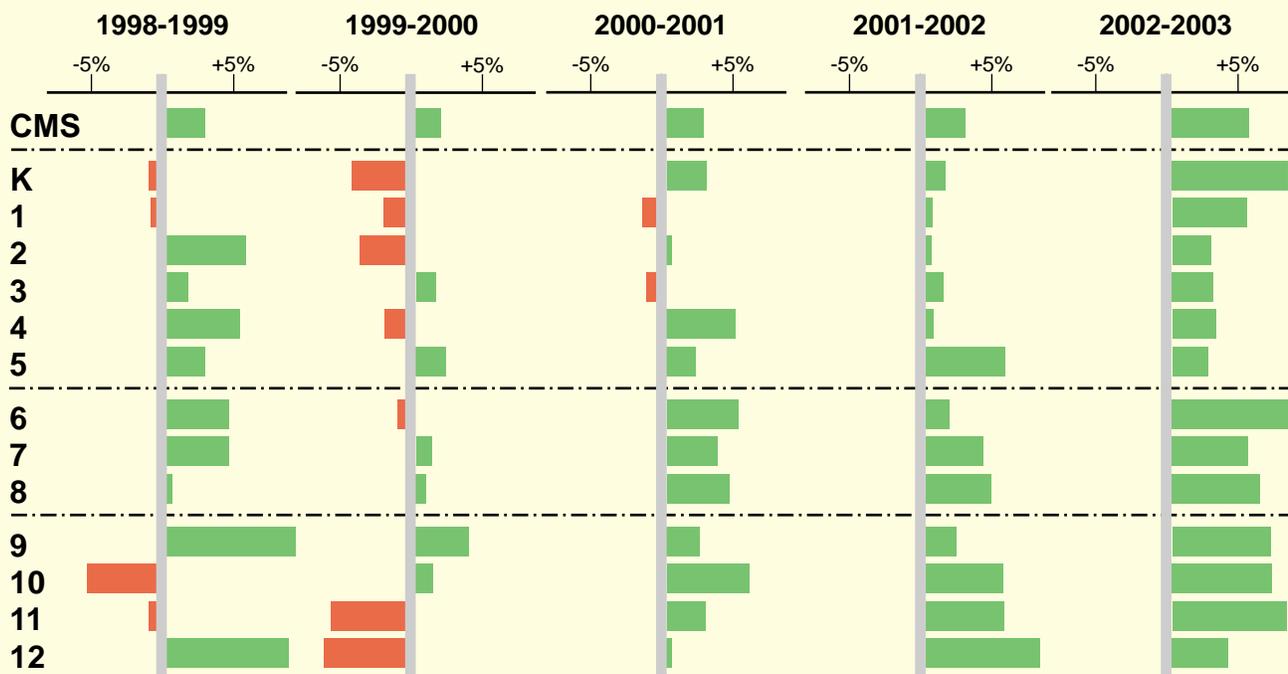
School board member George Dunlap took a stand Tuesday night against the state’s tactics of

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School growth varies by grade level from year to year

Enrollment growth for CMS has been relatively consistent over the last several years, ranging from 1.9% in 1999-2000 to 3.0% this year. Next fall’s anticipated growth of 5.8% is attributed to community growth, charter school shifts and the arrival of students drawn from private and home schools by the neighborhood-based assignment plan. But as the bars below show, growth in any one year does

not affect all grade levels equally. And overall growth may mask declines at specific grade levels. All this complicates the planning process and, for example, explains shifts of teachers from one grade level to another as student needs dictate. Smaller class sizes make elementary growth most expensive. But high school students require the most expensive buildings.



Notes: Bars are based on actual enrollment change from previous year, except for 2002-2003, which is based on current estimates of fall enrollment. Incomplete data for special classes at all grade levels is not included in this chart. Numerical

data – the number of students at each grade level for each year – is posted at www.cms.k12.nc.us/inside/news/budget02-03/Page154.htm

Source: CMS

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withholding money already promised to local governmental units.

April's school board budget amendments included elimination of a total of \$2,877,352.00 from 13 school budget line items. This is the schools' share of the current-fiscal-year money frozen earlier by Gov. Easley.

That cut and "close to \$20 million" now expected for the year beginning July 1, Dunlap said, will "minimize our ability to close the gap between high achievers and low achievers. It will exacerbate our... student-teacher ratio. It is going to cut out funding for band and orchestra.

"While I realize I can't stop this process, I don't have to be a party to it by voting for it."

On a 7-1 vote with vice chair Wilhelmenia Rembert absent, Dunlap stood alone.

The name game

The board named Greenville's elementary after Walter Byers, a principal at Fairview Elementary that served Greenville until the entire community which was bulldozed in '60s urban renewal. The decision upset one contingent from the neighborhood, which wanted it named Greenville Park.

Without controversy, the new elementary in Coulwood was named Mountain Island.

– Steve Johnston

Percentage of students at Level III (grade level) or IV on 7th-grade writing, 2000-2001, by level of educational attainment of their parents

Comparable data for CMS and for North Carolina is not yet available for the writing test results.

(# valid tests in 5 categories)*	Graduate School		4-year College		Comm. col., trade school		HS Degree		No HS Degree	
	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV
CMS Middle Schools										
Albemarle Road (249)			28	96%	38	76%	176	48%	7	71%
Alexander (316)	79	95%	92	87%	34	85%	103	62%	8	63%
Carmel (244)	51	96%	99	92%	29	76%	58	47%	7	71%
Cochrane (181)			48	69%	23	43%	95	48%	15	67%
Coulwood (301)	6	67%	67	78%	46	70%	158	53%	24	38%
Crestdale (404)	26	92%	293	92%	57	79%	28	71%		
Davidson IB (75)	18	100%	37	87%	10	100%	10	80%		
Eastway (191)			12	75%	10	50%	169	45%		
Bradley (312)	12	100%	125	85%	43	67%	122	62%	10	0%
Alexander Graham (201)	65	91%	57	90%	17	59%	48	48%	14	36%
Hawthorne (77)			11	82%	12	67%	54	57%		
Martin (357)	6	100%	141	96%	45	87%	141	65%	24	46%
Kennedy (228)			105	72%	47	87%	69	48%	7	57%
McClintock (250)	23	91%	100	88%	40	85%	70	70%	17	47%
Northeast (386)			174	97%	77	86%	126	81%	9	67%
Northridge (320)	16	81%	124	85%	40	90%	132	72%	8	88%
Northwest (136)	13	85%	40	85%	35	71%	48	71%		
Piedmont (217)	44	89%	67	70%	41	63%	46	59%	19	37%
Quail Hollow (367)	39	87%	137	80%	62	55%	108	46%	21	52%
Randolph (276)	29	90%	100	69%	54	54%	84	51%	9	33%
Sedgefield (189)			36	94%	10	40%	126	69%	17	41%
Smith (221)	19	74%	56	75%	20	85%	109	69%	17	53%
South Charlotte (497)	72	97%	320	93%	26	81%	74	77%	5	60%
Spaugh (189)			65	92%	47	89%	70	66%	7	43%
J.T. Williams (36)			25	100%			11	100%		
Wilson (187)			13	54%	5	100%	129	39%	40	78%

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Notes: No reports were available for Marie G. Davis and Ranson, and J.T. Williams was incomplete. Numbers in (parentheses) may understate the number of students tested in each parent education category because if the number of students in a category at each school or district is smaller than 5, those results are not reported.

Briefs

History scores: On National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, 90% of 12th-graders were not proficient in American history, while 83% of eighth-graders and 82% of fourth-graders were not proficient, the New York Times reported. Scores showed some narrowing of the achievement gap among ethnic groups at some grade levels.

www.nytimes.com

Exempting immigrants: Georgia will not test immigrants in their first year, and in their second year the scores will be included in the school average only if the student was at the same school the previous year, the Journal-Constitution reported.

www.accessatlanta.com

Rules come later: January's federal education bill requires districts to offer transportation out of some low-achieving schools beginning this fall. But federal guidelines on that process won't come out until January, the Washington Post reported.

www.washingtonpost.com

Dropouts rising: About 26% of 18- to 24-year-old Arizonans don't have a high school or general-equivalency diploma, an increase of 10 percentage points in a decade, the Republic reported. Arizona is last among the states in dropout statistics.

www.arizonarepublic.com

Single-sex education: Boys' suspensions have decreased and achievement is up since Seattle's Thurgood Marshall Elementary separated girls from boys in classes, the Washington Post reported. The Bush administration will revise Title IX, which bars gender discrimination, to make it easier to set up such classes.

www.washingtonpost.com

Testing the line: A San Jose, Calif., teacher is under investiga-

Quote ... Unquote

"Every place we've looked, resegregated schools are profoundly unequal, and all the promises to make them equal have failed. Almost always, the resegregated neighborhood schools have concentrated levels of poverty."

— Gary Orfield, Harvard University, quoted in May 7 School Board News at www.nsba.org/sbn

tion in connection with encouraging students to opt out of end-of-year testing, Education Week reported. California law allows teachers to notify parents of their right to withhold their child from testing, but prohibits teachers from actively recruiting parents to pull their children out.

www.edweek.com

Wireless in Michigan: Legislators have approved \$10 million for the first of three phases of buying wireless computing devices for every school student, eSchoolNews reported. Individual districts will decide whether to buy handhelds or laptops. The state spent \$100 million last fall to equip all teachers with laptops.

www.eschoolnews.com

Prom ruling: An Ontario court ordered a Catholic high school that accepts government money to allow a gay senior to attend his prom with a same-sex date, the National Post reported. The case, widely reported this spring in the

Canadian press, is not over and may or may not result in any legal precedents.

www.nationalpost.com

Graduate admissions: A circuit court supported the University of Michigan law school's use of race as one factor in admissions decisions, said the policy was narrowly tailored as required by the Bakke decision, and that providing racial diversity at the law school was a compelling state interest, the Free Press reported. Lawyers said the decision would be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which might take the case because circuit courts have rendered conflicting verdicts in such cases.

www.freepress.com

Afterschool horizons: At Head Middle in west Nashville, an afterschool program using college student volunteers has raised students' academic sights, the Tennessean reported. And the college kids didn't just tutor: They taught entire classes, and saw their kids improve — giving them a sense that teaching is "important, substantive work."

www.tennessean.com

Acting out: A two-year-old alternative program for in-school suspension in St. Paul, Minn., has surveyed its former students and found a direct correlation between students' unacceptable behavior and the students' perception of how much their teachers care about them, the Pioneer Press reported.

www.twincities.com

Calendar

May

21 Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services.

Personnel/Policy Committee, 3 p.m., board conference room

28 School board meeting, 6 p.m. Board Room.

30 Commissioners hold public hearing on county budget, which includes money for schools, 6 p.m., Government Center.

June

11 School board meeting, 6 p.m. Board Room.

13 Curriculum Committee, 9:30 a.m. Board Conference Room.