

## Budget approved

A 7-2 majority on the CMS school board Tuesday approved Supt. Jim Pughsley's \$979.2 million budget for 2005-06. But support was hardly that strong.

Anticipating that the Board of County Commissioners will not approve the requested \$52 million increase in local funding in June, several members wanted a smaller budget "ask." The effort buckled when District 3 member George Dunlap argued that the school board's task was to state the needs of children.

Perhaps the best summary of the budget situation was offered by District 6 member Lee Kindberg:

"You know, folks, we're going to be going more rounds on this. We've already had written notification that the state is looking at cutting our budget 4%, and the state is 58% of our budget – and they drive what salary benefits increases our people get. So we're going

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# Trolling for truants

## Center staffed for academics as officers pick up out-of-school youth off the county's streets

Truant officers hired to help turn around three CMS high schools are bringing out-of-school students to a new site at a west-side recreation center, Supt. Jim Pughsley reported Tuesday night.

The new facility also serves as an alternative school for students suspended for from three to 10 days, he said.

More centers will operate this fall, he said, "dependent on the budget."

Expanding on remarks made earlier to an AARP meeting (*Educate!*, April 8), Pughsley said truant officers were operating out of Garinger, West Charlotte and West Meck high schools.

"They are very active in the neighborhood," he said, "and in fact many of the places that kids used to hang out, they're having to either stay home or find a new place to hang out now.

"In fact, we have picked kids up and we have taken them back to

school.... These officers also work with the case managers, parent advocates and making home visits."

"Hopefully, we'll be able to continue this practice next year.

"Just last week," Pughsley said, "we opened our first suspension and truancy center as well. That is to service all three of the High School Challenge programs" out of the Amay James Recreation Center.

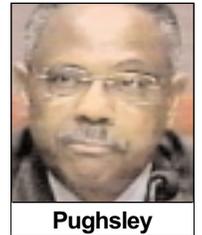
"It is staffed and again, we're trying to gain as much experience with it this year as we possibly can so that again, dependent on the budget, we can move forward and establish additional centers next year.

"These are students who are consistently causing problems, behavior problems, or they're truant. We would intend to pick truant students up, take them to the centers, provide them with academics during their stay."

Amay James will accommodate about 75 students, and future centers, at Park and Rec or other sites, would each hold a similar number, Pughsley said.

Earlier Tuesday, parent activist Blanche Penn commented to the board, "Usually I talk about alternatives to suspension.

"As you all know, our young people are out in their streets so bad. I was out on Beatties Ford Road walking, and it was like a gang of kids, about six, seven kids out of school at 10 o'clock in the



**Pughsley**

## Citizen panel backs \$600 million bond

A unanimous Bond Oversight Committee Tuesday night said CMS should look for a November bond issue of more than \$600 million. The alternative, the panel said, would be a district still playing catch-up 10 years from now.

"Today, 20,000 of our children attend our schools without a seat in a brick-and-mortar classroom," said Norm Gundel, a committee member.

"Seventy of our brick-and-mortar schools fall below the standards of our newer schools, some critically below. In addition to

these existing backlogs, we expect to grow by 53,000 additional children over the next 10 years.

"We are building and renovating schools now, but every year we fall further behind. This August we will open only three new schools. Last August we opened none. Our current construction rate is not building and renovating enough schools to meet the needs of our children.

"Tonight you will consider the 10-Year Capital Needs Assessment plan to address these

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# New small high schools differ from magnet programs

*The writer is executive director of the Raleigh-based New Schools Project, an initiative of the N.C. Education Cabinet and the Public School Forum of N.C. with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.*

The piece about Olympic High of course caught my attention (*DidYaHear*, March, 25). Thanks for the mention. These new, small and rigorous schools differ from magnet schools in some fundamental ways.

First, students remain in their school for most if not all of the school day. As a result, teachers in the core courses are able to work as a team to make connections across the curriculum.

Magnet schools are typically programs of study in which a few courses have been offered to create an incentive for student and family enrollment decisions. Often magnet schools offer a thematic focus.

In magnets, however, there is typically a non-magnet student population that often is sorted in the ways that traditional high schools sort students.

In fact, magnets typically maintain the same range of course offerings for students with students who are perceived to have less academic ability being sorted into lower level courses, etc.

Tony Habit

## Poor will subsidize poor

If a state lottery brings in even \$200 million per year, which is twice the \$100 million currently reported, this is only \$2 million per county. For counties with small populations, that is substantial, but for Mecklenburg and other large counties it is insignificant.

What seems likely is that most of the lottery tickets will be sold in Mecklenburg and other large counties and the money will be

spent in poorer counties.

An interesting piece of politics.

It is a proven fact poor people buy more lottery tickets than those better off. So our wise politicians, led by the very moral Rep. Jim Black of Mecklenburg, have arranged for the poor people of the richer counties to subsidize the education of the poor people in the poorer counties.

Lewis Guignard

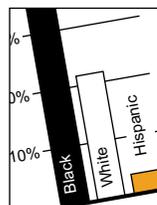
## From Readers

## How are charts built?

*The writer is a graphic arts designer for Asheville City Schools.*

We always admire your *Educate!* publication. We noticed this month the charts on school violence. Could you tell me where you got that information and what software do you use to create the charts. They looked wonderful!

Elaine Carter



*Editor's response: The data, as mentioned in the article, is from an annual report to the N.C. State Board of Education prepared for the board's April 6 meeting. Educate! is built in Quark XPress version 5.0.1. Charts using bars are built on the page using rectan-*

*gular boxes, sized proportionally either by algebra (e.g., 100% = 173 points tall; 64% = 110.72 points) or manually against a vertical grid. Charts using lines are drawn against a picture of the source's chart or manually against a vertical grid. These methods are time-consuming but flexible, and minimize Educate!'s PDF file size, a key concern for dial-up subscribers.*

## Thanks for Educate!

*The writer is a member of the Orange County Board of Education.*

I really enjoy these CMS articles. Thanks so much for sending them!

Liz Brown

**Educate!** is a journal on public education focusing on Charlotte-Mecklenburg and N.C. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen.

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**People:** Leonard R. (Deacon) Jones, president; Lucy Bush Carter, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director and *Educate!* editor. Assisting with this edition: Stephanie Southworth.

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National TV-Turnoff Week  
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# Bond issue

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needs. The Bond Oversight Committee unanimously recommends that you implement this plan for full completion within 10 years. Proposals to stretch out the completion over a longer time span or to build less than the full plan within 10 years are simply inadequate. We cannot fall further behind.

“Full completion of the 10-year plan within 10 years requires, in our opinion, that we begin with a General Obligation school bond referendum this fall of at least \$600 million, exclusive of land acquisition.

“Only an amount of this magnitude will allow us to begin building at a rate that will allow us to fully complete construction of the 10-year plan within 10 years.

“Anything less will leave us further behind in 10 years than we are now.”

The board later approved the capital needs assessment, a document that lists \$1.975 billion in needs. The list includes:

<b>Growth</b>		<b>66%</b>
New schools	\$1,081,079,086	
Additions	112,325,000	
Support facilities	23,550,000	
Land	83,360,000	
<b>Mandates, initiatives</b>		<b>3%</b>
Instruct. Tech.	\$11,175,700	
Legal mandates	22,800,000	
Fire alarms, etc	19,700,930	
<b>Renovate, renew</b>		<b>31%</b>
Plumbing	\$16,152,800	
Roofing	10,060,623	
HVAC	32,293,200	
Paving, sitework	3,695,250	
Electrical	4,500,000	
Stadiums	26,677,550	
High school tracks	4,775,000	
Windows	5,584,500	
Gym bleachers, floors	9,118,000	
Auditoriums	7,125,000	
Classroom bldgs.	501,559,709	

**Nathan Fox**, a seventh-grader at Alexander Graham Middle, marking April as Autism Awareness Month.



Fox CMS-TV3

“The kind of help I get helps me get through the school day and not worry about the future and forget about the past... At my school there are people who really help me.... I want to be a good person a whole lot and I know it’s my job to stay in school.... Even my old friends have autism and, as a matter of fact, some of them can’t talk and I know some of them don’t understand, and some of them don’t even read or write. And I think every person with autism needs to learn to understand things. So I would actually like to thank you all for letting me read my own speech.”

## Voices from the board room

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to be going several more rounds on this. This won’t be the last time we have to deal with this.

“I do have some real concerns about the flat funding that we’ve had for the last four years. So per-student [local] funding has clearly dropped every year, for four years. Now, it was at its all-time high in 2001.

“But it is true... that if we look at just funding our for our K-12 kids, without Bright Beginnings or charter kids, and we go back to the ’01-’02 numbers per student, and multiply it by our projected enrollment, then that’s \$294 million local, just for the growth in our K-12.

“Then you add on the charters, which we have no control over, and you add on Bright Beginnings, the local component of it, and that brings you to \$314 million, which is not significantly different from the number we’ve got in front of us....

“I’m concerned about escalations in costs we cannot control, and those have definitely happened over the last four years. Fuel costs are clearly up... and of course the utilities have done some similar things....



Kindberg

“Salary and benefits are 86% of our costs. And those are clearly up every year.

“Charters are growing significantly, and those are costs we cannot control, and the number of students is not something we can control....

“We have managed through some significant cuts that the superintendent itemized to manage with the flat funding from the local. We have had increases from the federal – of course, that is categorical, we are told how we have to spend it – and we have had increases from the state since that’s based on formulas. But local has been flat.

“This budget does address some things that we know we must do, and it’s addressing things that the community is demanding.

“The big thing is teachers. If we don’t make the most of the teacher-student interaction, then all the rest of this is useless. Because that’s what we’re here for: It’s for the teachers to teach and the students to learn.

“Having such a strong focus on teachers in this set of initiatives I think is exactly what we’ve said we as a board said we wanted to do.

“Our community is demanding new options for dealing with discipline, and that also improves the working environment for those teachers, and this budget initia-

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tive does talk about new options for dealing with discipline.

“We’ve had concerns from all of our schools about dealing with kids who don’t speak English, and this budget does include an initiative to deal with those kids who come to us with the greatest gaps in their English skills and their formal education.

“So I certainly can’t argue with any of the initiatives that he’s put forward. And those are all the big-ticket items.

“I also, however, recognize that we are talking still lean economic times, and that we are not the only ones with costs that are up.

“The county has been giving their people higher raises than the state has been giving ours, but that’s neither here nor there. That’s the way this system is set up and we have to live with it.

“I would like to see us cut this [budget]. I don’t know if 10% is the right number, but I would have liked to have looked at some options on that. But quite frankly, I don’t feel that we’ve necessarily done all that could to find some differences.

“But the only way to reduce this [budget], because 86% of our costs are people costs, is to either stop doing certain things, or do some

**Pamela Murray** is a parent with a child at Villa Heights Elementary, a Talent Development magnet.



Murray

“We need to have an established, understandable track K-12 for magnet schools. As it stands now, our students are being split into various locations based on their home high school feeder area, which is very difficult to understand. I would challenge any of you [on the school board] to tell me where people are going to go for various schools. We have a lot of splits, from elementary to middle to high school.... We would ideally like to have those (feeder) schools located close to each other....”

### Voices from the board room

things very differently.

“And those are not things we can come up with around this dais tonight.

“I do feel we need to lay out a plan to work through, and I’ve got a little list of things that I wanted to look at, transportation and buying mobiles....

“But we have to do things differently for any of those things to work, and we have to be sure we understand the consequences....

“So I would like to see this board commit to laying out a plan for the year to divide what we’ve got here into more manageable pieces and really seek new and different ways to do some things – or just stop doing some things. Or to recognize we’ve done all we

can.

“But at least go into it in detail, and lay out that plan for the next 12 months, and find what we can do to reduce this more.

“But at this point, while I would like to see reduction, I’m going to support the superintendent’s recommendation.”

School boards traditionally have rewritten their budgets after county boards have failed to appropriate the schools’ full request. This year appears headed for the same result.

For more information on the budget, see [www.cms.k12.nc.us](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us)

### A matter of decorum

After one particularly egregious interruption by a school board member, chairperson Joe White dressed down his colleagues Tuesday night this way:

“People, we constantly criticize our students for their inability to behave themselves properly, and yet I have a board that I can’t control enough to stop interrupting people talking.

“I will give you my word. I will recognize each and every one of you that want to speak. Y’all all know that.

“Respect each other enough not to interrupt people when they’re speaking.”

**Deshauna McLamb** is a board member of Winners Plus Agency, a parent education and advocacy group.



McLamb

“If you would consider mixing school populations with striving achievers and high achievers, the funding would be uncomplicated, because we are working in partnership with one another to achieve a common goal, that is, to possess the best education possible for all children – not to keep them back and held at bay from each other.... Maximizing student achievement lowers the price tag on an already strained budget.”

### Voices from the board room

## Briefly...

**Choice impact:** Fewer rising ninth-graders in the High Point area received their first choice of high schools this year than last, the Greensboro News-Record reported. The Guilford district is in the second year of a choice plan for High Point's three high schools. To increase diversity, Guilford began specialized academic programs such as performing arts and international studies at each high school and uses a lottery for placement. Although only 50 students did not get their choice for the current school year, the number has tripled for next year.

[www.news-record.com](http://www.news-record.com)

**County ownership:** Wake County commissioners backed off a proposal to force the county's school board to build on county-purchased sites for schools until a future meeting with the school board, the News and Observer reported. Traditionally, N.C. districts own schools and school sites. Commissioners supporting the idea of county-owned schools say it would increase access to land, give them control over the location of schools, and solidify the county's bond ratings. Wake, Mecklenburg and other districts

## Trolling for truants

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morning and that bothered me.

"So we just need to focus a little bit more on what we can do with these children that continue to be out of school. I think I shared with you one time before that my house got broken into. Now, I don't know who did it. But I tell you one thing, we need to start focusing on what these kids are doing, especially when their parents are working...."



## DidYaHear?

✓ A coalition of 60 local and statewide groups called Campaign for Housing Carolina supports boosting the N.C. Housing Trust Fund to \$50 million from \$3 million, the Philanthropy Journal reported. The move would help "more than 6,000 families find affordable housing each year, create more than 3,000 jobs, generate \$30 million in tax revenue and leverage \$200 million in housing development."

— Send intelligence to [swannfello@aol.com](mailto:swannfello@aol.com)

are increasingly building schools through joint use agreements, using municipal or county funding for the portion of the campus aimed at community use.

[www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com)

**More leeway:** Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced that Under No Child Left Behind, more learning-disabled students may now be given special tests. The New York Times reported that in the past only 1% of all students were allowed special tests. The new policy will allow an additional 2% of students to take alternative end-of-grade tests.

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

**Tradeoff:** Florida Gov. Jeb Bush wants to trade the current small class sizes for increased teacher salaries, the Palm Beach Post reported. The state currently has a class size amendment requiring 18-22 students per class in elementary and middle school and no more than 25 in high school classrooms. Bush wants the amendment to consider district averages rather than individual classrooms. Critics argue that Bush is using teacher salaries to repeal the class size amendment.

[www.palmbeachpost.com](http://www.palmbeachpost.com)

**In college too:** About 5% of high school students took college courses in the 2002-2003 school year, the Boston Globe reported. Dual enrollment, which allows high school students to attend college classes, is found in 38 states.

Rural schools and those with high minority populations are less likely to offer such programs.

[www.boston.com](http://www.boston.com)

**Atten-shun!:** Military schools that are a part of the public school system are popping up in districts around the country, the New York Times reported. Currently the schools are mostly in low-income minority neighborhoods. Supporters argue that these schools provide stability to inner-city youth but critics argue that military schools are feeding underprivileged youth to the military.

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

## Calendar

### APRIL

**19** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services, 3301 Stafford Drive off Wilkinson Blvd.

**19** Parent meeting on comprehensive review of assignment plan, Waddell High, 6-8 p.m. Subject: Boundaries and feeder patterns.

**20** School board's Safety Committee, 3:30 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

**21** School board's Personnel Committee, 2 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

**21** School board's Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 2 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

**26** School board's Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

**26** School board meets, 6 p.m., Government Center Meeting Chamber.