



Dear Chairman Hutchinson,

On behalf of the Wake County Board of Education, I am presenting the proposed budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year. This budget reflects a collaborative effort among our 181 schools, the superintendent, his staff and, finally, the Board of Education.

Our strategic plan continues to focus on our mission: **The Wake County Public School system will provide a relevant and engaging education and will graduate students who are collaborative, creative, effective communicators and critical thinkers.**

Furthermore, the plan has an ambitious goal: **By 2020, WCPSS will annually graduate at least 95 percent of its students *ready for productive citizenship as well as higher education or a career.***

Working under our strategic plan, the District has expanded collaborative spaces and flexible learning in schools, supporting a shift away from standardized testing and toward market-ready skills of the 4Cs —collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication. We are focused on reducing the predictability of a student's achievement based on ZIP code and socio-economic status, working to bring out the talents and achievement that are possible in every child.

WCPSS teachers are being challenged to change their mindset about students — giving students greater agency over their own learning and working to update curriculum to meet students' needs. Staff is expanding our work to support the emotional and behavioral learning of our students, bolstering efforts to address trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

It is a vision of remarkable education.

We appreciate the generous efforts made by the Commission in 2015-2016 and in 2016-17 by providing large, local funding increases. As you know, the increased funding improved teacher and staff salaries as part of a five-year plan to compete with other high-achieving districts in the nation. Our budget continues to target increased state and local funding to take definitive steps toward increasing teacher and staff salaries this year as well. To attract and retain a quality workforce, our salaries need to be competitive for top talent.

In our 2017-18 budget request, our School Board is asking for a significant increase to open four new schools, pay for increases in existing programs and handle enrollment growth. An increase of 2,000 new students, for example, would fill more than two new classrooms every week of the school year.

New or expanding programs are described in the Superintendent's message, with more detail in the budget itself. They include:

- Significant increases in counselor and social work positions;

- Money to create competitive salaries for our support staff, particularly in hard-hit areas such as bus driver recruitment and retention;
- Funding to significantly revise the themes of four magnet schools to help achieve the schools' goals of greater student diversity;
- Retaining special education teachers who were previously paid with a special federal education grant;
- Additional support for the Office of Equity Affairs;
- Improvements that provide teachers better access to materials and training;
- An alternative middle school program to keep students on track to graduate;
- Digital student portfolios such as those found in other leading districts that help provide parents, teachers and employers a deeper understanding of student skills.

Therefore, on behalf of the entire Board of Education, I am asking the County Commissioners to approve a County appropriation of \$455,129,360. We believe this amount will allow us to handle growth, maintain present programs and take reasonable steps toward meeting new demands.

The pressures on public schools are real — our School Board views the Commission as our partners in strengthening public education in Wake County. To stay competitive, WCPSS must remain the first choice among parents who want an exemplary education for their children. Please continue to be our partner in this work on behalf of our County's children. Together, we can:

- Provide a relevant and engaging education to each and every child in our system, regardless of socio-economic, racial, gender, or ethnic status;
- Focus on the emotional and educational needs of all of our children;
- Provide robust arts, athletic, and other co-curricular activities and learning;
- Improve the physical spaces where our teachers and students work.

We are thankful for your past support and look forward to maintaining our positive relationship as we continue working together to provide a quality education for all students in Wake County.

Respectfully,

Monika Johnson-Hostler
Chair, WCPSS Board of Education