

**Wake County Public School System
Superintendent's Proposed Budget 2025-26
Board of Education Q&A
April 22, 2025**

- 1. If we reduce the funding for the restart schools from \$5 million to \$4 million and decrease the supplies budget from \$60 to \$55, will that be enough to cover the \$2.5 million needed to reinstate the employer contribution for dental insurance coverage?**

No, reducing funding for restart schools from \$5 million to \$4 million and decreasing the supplies budget from \$60 to \$55 is a reduction of \$1.8 million.

- 2. Will the reduction in clerical staff impact any restart or Title I schools?**

Yes, the following four Title I high schools will be impacted. Knightdale High School and Southeast Raleigh High School are also Restart schools.

- East Wake HS: 11 school secretary Months of Employment (MOE)
- Knightdale HS: 11 school secretary MOE and 5 clerical MOE
- South Garner HS: 11 school secretary MOE and 10 clerical MOE
- Southeast Raleigh HS: 11 school secretary MOE

- 3. Do we have 14 administrative leadership positions in Technology? What would be the national average for leadership roles in this department for our size? Is this due to the amount of chromebooks and hotspots that we have given to each staff and every student? Would this be possible to conserve devices for students in need only (considering relatively short life spans – I think it was said to be typically 5 years), and then have classroom devices in classrooms for students to use (this might also provide less wear and tear if they stayed in the classroom for assignments and only distribute to students that request for home)? What type of savings could that bring us?**

Technology Services currently has four senior director positions and 11 director positions. The administrative leadership positions in the Technology Department are below the typical range for school districts serving over 150,000 students. Large districts of our size usually have between 20 and 25 technology leadership roles. For example, Orange County Public Schools (FL), with approximately 209,000 students, has an estimated 22–25 leadership roles across key IT domains. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC), with around 140,000 students, maintains 17–20 leadership positions. Dallas ISD (TX), serving about 139,000 students, has at least 18–22 tech leadership roles. These figures reflect the broader staffing needed to manage infrastructure, cybersecurity, instructional tech, data systems, and support services.

4. When do we expect to “refresh” the chromebook devices that were handed out to all staff and students in 2020? What cost will that be?

WCPSS is developing a sustainable technology strategy to ensure long-term effectiveness of its technology investments. A recent survey gathered input from families and community members on district-issued student devices. All options will be reviewed, and feedback will guide formal recommendations to be presented to the Board soon. In 2020, Chromebooks were distributed exclusively to students as part of a large-scale 1:1 initiative; staff did not get a Chromebook. Given the typical 4–5-year lifecycle of Chromebooks, we have proactively begun the refresh cycle to ensure students continue to have access to reliable technology. The current phase of the refresh targets students in grades 3, 6, and 9. Devices collected from this process are being evaluated and repurposed as appropriate.

5. Is this a possible savings option, and if so what would that savings be?

“Outdated Software - The technology WCPSS has is decades old in many cases, much of the entire work throughout all of central services can be optimized with updates and purchases including the AI department to make streamlining solutions for our students and faculty much improved”

We are executing a multi-year technology plan to modernize the infrastructure and systems our students and staff rely on every day. This district-wide effort includes major upgrades to both school-based and central systems, aimed at streamlining operations, cutting costs, and enhancing service delivery. By adopting scalable, modern solutions—including AI-powered tools—we're transforming how we support teaching, learning, and district operations. Recent progress includes upgrades to core business systems and upcoming launches of Business Intelligence platforms, invoice automation, a new Student Information System, digital absence and time management, along with several infrastructure and security enhancements. This is more than a tech refresh—it's a strategic investment in a stronger, more agile, and future-ready school district.

6. As we budget for technology, is this accurate that we have disposed of 80,000 chromebooks in the past three years? What is the average yearly amount we dispose of? What is the cost to replace them all?

*“Purchasing - Our current ERD program for technology is no adequate and insufficient to provide sustainability for our 1-1 program, we need it evaluated and revised to allow for a better outcome in providing less loss per device to student and purchasing devices
-We have disposed of over 80k Chromebooks since 2021; this is not sustainable”*

We currently have an inventory of retired or damaged Chromebooks that are pending further action, including potential disposal, repair, or redeployment. At this time, the exact number of units designated for disposal has not yet been finalized. Our primary objective is to maximize the usability of these devices in support of student learning. Wherever possible, we aim to repair Chromebooks and return them to circulation for student use. In cases where full repair is not feasible, we will evaluate the potential for parts harvesting—cannibalizing non-functional units to assemble operational devices that meet our standards for deployment. Disposal will

be considered only after all other options have been exhausted. Again, it's important to note that our approach prioritizes reuse and recovery wherever possible.

7. How much is our budget for help desks and number of staff? Is it possible to see savings with this suggestion:

"Help Desks - We have multiple separate help desks with the pay fields all over the place, M&O has Maximo, Technology, Transportations, CNS as Cherwell. All have their own personnel at low level to process tickets, this is inefficient and should be consolidated to save money and streamline services to schools."

Our Technology Services Help Desk consists of seven agents who, in collaboration with other technology support staff, manage more than 140,000 support tickets annually. Across the district, we operate multiple specialized help desks, each equipped with staff and tools tailored to specific content areas. This distributed model is designed to address the diverse and unique needs of our users. While many team members are cross-trained, achieving first-call resolution often demands deep expertise across multiple systems to deliver timely and accurate support. Moving forward, we will continue to evaluate opportunities to consolidate help desk operations district-wide to identify potential cost savings and enhance service efficiency.

8. Of the proposals suggested a lot of classroom needs are listed to be cut. I am concerned about removing necessary needs and functions at the classroom level. Administration cuts listed were for vacant positions. Is there a way to consolidate any of those roles to address this suggestion:

"Unneeded Positions - We have many positions especially higher administrative positions that could be consolidated and dissolved and there are other positions that with proper evaluation are no longer needed but continued to be filled because we have not had a proper non-bias evaluation position by position that automation and technology can fill to the benefit of students and teachers."

Administration reductions covered multiple areas including contracted services, supplies and materials, workshop expenses, elimination of software applications, reductions in travel, and others. Ninety percent of the district's operating budget is at the schools. On a percentage basis over the past 17 years, central office has taken the majority of budget reductions and although central office currently represents 9 percent of the overall operating budget, central services represents 38 percent of the reductions in the Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

9. Do we have many positions that do not require a 40 hour work week? Could these roles be consolidated to keep staff, but remove excess positions, providing savings?

"...a full Central Services evaluation asking critical questions about all positions including what a 40 hour work week looks like, if it requires 40 hours, and if not what additional work might be added to if the position is sustainable. We should be doing this now before the likely

inevitable state auditorial processes begin scrutinizing funding and everything they contribute.”

Any positions that do not require a full-time work week are already part-time.

10. Is it accurate that our budget is 53% towards teacher salaries? What is that dollar amount? Could we get a breakdown of the other 46%: How much of our budget is allocated towards administrative staff in our schools and could you clarify the number of positions this accounts for along with percentage and funds allocated? How many administrative/staff employees are not at our schools? What portion of our budget is allocated for that (number of staff and aggregate amount)?

The Budget by Object Code on pages 50-55 of the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget provides the breakdown of salaries, benefits, and non-personnel accounts in detail.

- Salaries pages 50-51
- Employer Matching Benefits page 52
- Purchased Services pages 52-54
- Supplies and Materials page 54
- Capital Outlay page 55
- Transfers to Charter Schools page 55

The Staff Budget on pages 56-57 provides the breakdown of months of employment by type.

Months assigned directly to schools	183,762.67	
Months budgeted centrally but working in school	<u>27,495.63</u>	
Subtotal School-Based Months	211,258.30	94%
Central Services Months	<u>12,651.00</u>	6%
Total Months of Employment	223,909.30	100%

The cost of teachers and instructional support salaries and benefits is approximately \$1.2 billion or 53 percent of the operating budget. The cost of staff not working in schools is approximately 5 percent of the operating budget.

11. Do we have data on national averages needed in each department for a district our size?

We have researched and have not been able to identify a resource with information about staffing levels. We are currently undergoing a market competitive study to compare salaries down to the departmental level.

12. Could you provide clarity on when we would receive data regarding a structural study (salary, positions, national averages)?

An RFP was issued and a company was chosen to look at the capacity of WCPSS current salary structure to compete in the marketplace. We anticipate the results of that study will be in place to inform decisions surrounding the 2026-27 budget.

13. How many new school counselors has the district hired each year since 2016?

In 2016-17, WCPSS allotted 3,847 school counselor months to schools. The school counselor allotment to schools in 2024-25 was 5,259 months.

14. Please provide more details about the differences between the counselor positions affected by the formula realignment and the positions to be funded in the “Program Continuity for Behavioral Health Support Services” budget item? How are these positions different? Is there an estimate of the number of positions that could be phased out under the formula realignment versus the number of behavioral support staff that will be maintained under the program continuity item?

ESSER III carryover funds covered salaries and benefits for filled behavioral health positions, including counselors, for the first quarter of 2024-25. ESSER III funds ended September 30, 2024. Local funds are needed to cover the cost of the behavioral health positions for one quarter in 2025-26.

The formula change for counselors reduces the allotment for middle and high schools based on the number of students.

2024-25 Formula for Middle Schools

Traditional/Modified/ Year-Round operating on TR 4		Year-Round*	
Number of Students	MOE	Number of Students	MOE
1 – 425	10	1 - 500	12
426 – 775	20	501 – 910	22
776 - 1,225	30	911 – 1,440	34
1,226 - 1,550	40	1,441 - 1,820	42
Over 1,550	50	Over 1,820	52

2025-26 Proposed Formula Middle Schools

Traditional/Modified/ Year-Round operating on TR 4		Year-Round*	
Number of Students	MOE	Number of Students	MOE
1 – 425	10	1 - 500	12
426 – 775	20	501 – 910	22
776 - 1,225	30	911 – 1,440	34
1,226+	40	1,441+	42

2024-25 Formula for High Schools

Number of Students	Formula	MOE
1 - 1,875	10 MOE per grade level, 12 additional MOE for Dean of Student Services	52
1,875 - 2,250	10 additional MOE	62
2,251 - 2,625	10 additional MOE	72
2,626 - 3,050	10 additional MOE	82

2025-26 Proposed Formula High Schools

Number of Students	Formula	MOE
1 - 1,875	10 MOE per grade level, 12 additional MOE for Dean of Student Services	52
1,876 – 2,325	10 additional MOE	62
2,326 - 2,775	10 additional MOE	72
2,776+	10 additional MOE	82

15. How much funding is included in the 2025-2026 budget to support the move to twice-monthly pay requested by the board in 2024?

There is no funding in the 2025-26 budget to support the move to twice-monthly pay.

16. How much additional (non-federal) funding, if any, was required, to offset CNS deficits in the current fiscal year? How much, if any, is included in the 2025-2026 budget to address potential CNS revenue deficits in the coming year?

While CNS has dropped below the required two months operating budget, they still have a balance to cover costs. At this time, no local dollars are needed.

17. How many vacancies remain in Maintenance and Operations and how many of these vacancies have been open for six months or longer? If there are vacancies that have been open longer than six months are any of these in danger of being phased out in the current budget proposal?

Currently, Maintenance and Operations has 37 vacant positions or 444 months, and 20 positions or 240 months have been vacant for six months or longer. At this time, there is no plan to eliminate any vacant positions in Maintenance and Operations. Please keep in mind that a vacant position does not equal budget dollars that can be saved. We budget knowing we will have vacant positions and with our current fill rates, there is little to know lapsed salary occurring.

18. I would like to express that I am not in favor of proposal to cut: building subs, councilors/social workers, nurse positions, dental insurance, Restart allotments, and maintenance suggestions. These directly impact the classroom and I feel are necessary, and I do not want to see funds removed from these categories or anything effecting instruction and the function of our buildings. Maintenance also adds to value to our investment. I also worry about continued struggle with attendance and family vested interest. It would be helpful to know alternative options that do not have an impact on the classroom. I am also leery of spending the JUUL settlement funds that are allocated for Vape/drug education, which is a major concern for our schools. What are they chances that this will be 100% returned? What if next year we also see need for cuts, how will we reimburse the funds back to its proper allocation?

The superintendent has made a commitment to ensure the full amount of vaping settlement funds will be available for use for anti-vaping initiatives over the seven-year period.

19. For comparison, can you provide data on how the central office function has grown over the past 20 years?

The district has grown significantly over the past twenty years.

<u>2004-05</u>	<u>2023-24</u>
132 schools	197 schools
114,068 students	159,995 students
≈ 15,000 staff	≈ 20,000 staff

Public Education is human resource intensive. Approximately 80 percent of the district's operation budget expenditure is for staff salary and benefits. As the district has grown in numbers of students and schools, there has been growth in staff and non-personnel support.

Over this same 20-year period, the district's operating budget has grown from \$800 million to \$2.1 billion. Much of this increase is attributable to the increase in the number of staff to support more students and more schools, and the increase in non-personnel support required. Beyond that, inflation is a major contributor to the increase in total operating budget. Wage increases, employer benefit rate increases, utility rate increases, and cost of support contracts are some examples.

To give a specific example, in 2004-05, WCPSS employer retirement benefit rate was 5.82 percent. For every \$1 in salary that was paid, an additional 5.82 cents was paid to the State Retirement System. In 2023-24, the WCPSS employer retirement benefit rate was 25.02 percent. For every \$1 in salary that was paid, an additional 25.02 cents was paid to the State Retirement System.

To give a sense of how the central office function has grown over the past 20 years, we can look at growth in total expenditure over the 20-year period.

Expenditure on schools and direct school support grew 187 percent.

Expenditure on central office support grew by 72 percent.

During this same period, the cumulative rate of inflation (CPI) was 61.1 percent.