

Budget highlights

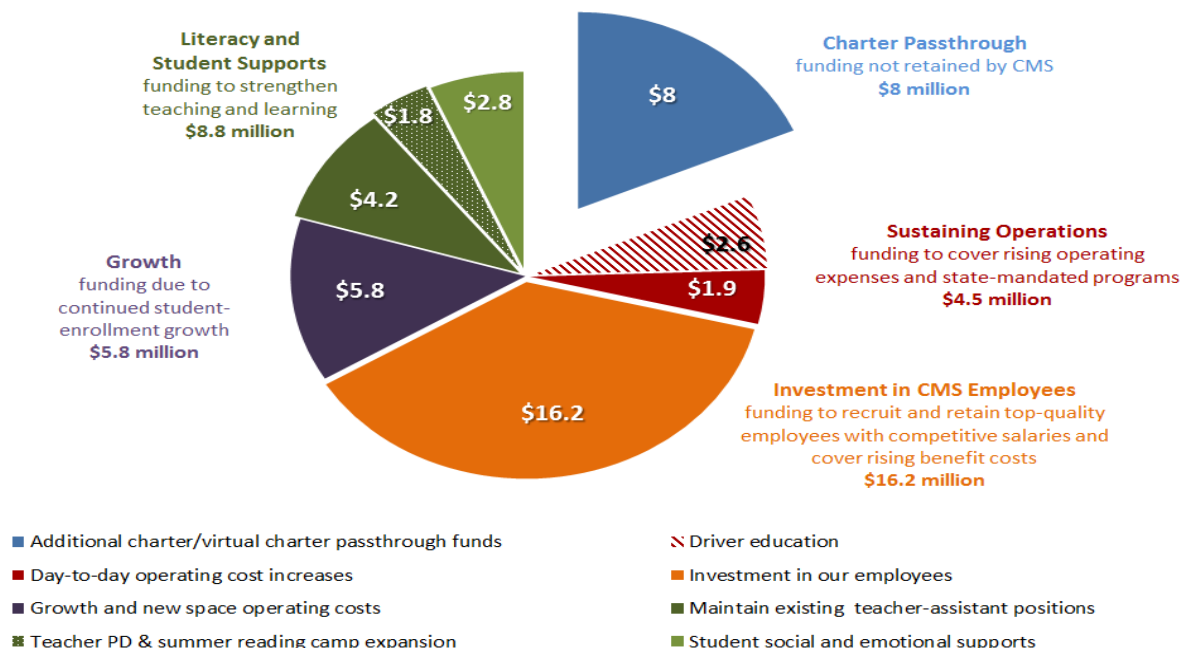
At Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, we strive every day to provide a personalized environment of academic excellence that prepares every graduate for success in college and in the global workplace. CMS is the second-largest school district in North Carolina and the 18th-largest in the U.S. It's also a growing school district. We expect to welcome nearly 148,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade in our schools next year – more than 2,400 than last year.

The 2015-2016 operating budget proposal seeks \$428.1 million in county funding, an increase of \$39.9 million over last year's budget. The requested increase reflects several fiscal realities:

- The impact of expanding educational models in NC (i.e. charter schools) – *nearly 20% of the CMS operating budget request to Mecklenburg County is for funding that will not be retained by CMS*
- Decreasing state money for state-mandated and other programs
- Rising day-to-day operating expenses and costs due to student enrollment growth

The proposal also identifies three focus areas to help strengthen academic outcomes for all students: continue and expand literacy supports, recruit and retain top-quality employees with more competitive salaries and continue and expand student support services. Employees, parents, students and community members have identified these as the most pressing needs for CMS. Here is a breakdown of the budget request:

The CMS 2015-2016 budget request: \$39.9 million more in county funding than last year



The above chart does not include \$3.4 million in CMS budget reductions and redirections

Three focus areas to advance student achievement

#1 Continue and expand literacy supports *to elevate literacy skills for students in all grades*

- The literacy skills our students need to succeed in college and in the global workplace go beyond reading proficiency and include higher-order writing, speaking and listening skills.
- Students who are proficient readers by the end of third grade are more likely to perform at college- and career-readiness levels in grades four through 12.
- Children who are not strong readers by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.

The proposal: \$4.2 million to maintain existing teacher-assistant positions which are critical to our focus on literacy in the early grades; \$1.8 million for targeted professional development for teachers in our middle and high schools, and to expand the state-funded summer reading camp for rising fourth-graders to rising third-graders as seats are available.

#2 Recruit and retain top-quality employees with more competitive salaries *to educate and serve all students*

- North Carolina's average teacher pay is ranked 42nd in the nation for 2014-2015 – up from 47th a year earlier but still about \$10,000 less than the national average of \$57,379.
- The average teacher salary in NC is lower than in any neighboring states.
- Most CMS employees have seen their net salary values decrease since 2008 due to inflation and rising health and retirement benefits costs.

The proposal: \$5 million to ensure all beginning teachers receive the state-proposed salary increase to \$35,000; \$9.8 million to provide a two percent increase to employees not covered by the state increase and \$1.4 million to address increasing costs for health and retirement benefits.

#3 Continue and expand student support services *to address social and emotional needs that can impede learning*

- All students can succeed academically but many come to school with social and emotional challenges that can hinder academic success, such as mental illness, depression, homelessness, hunger, etc.
- Current CMS ratios for counselors are effectively: one counselor to 525 elementary school students, one counselor to 380 middle school students and one counselor for 395 high school students. The recommended average for all three levels is one counselor to 250 students.
- CMS psychologists serve two to three times more students than recommended.
- Last year, CMS launched a four-year plan to strengthen social and emotional supports for students and schools, hiring a total of 41 new counselors, psychologists and social workers.

The proposal: \$2.8 million to fund phase two of the plan, adding 34 new counselors, three psychologists and three social workers.