



NEWS RELEASE

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School Board Approves 'Financial Plan for Student Success' Request

District leaders call for a 'great comeback' in the aftermath of COVID-19

Fayetteville, NC – Calling for a 'great comeback,' the Cumberland County Board of Education approved Superintendent Dr. Marvin Connelly, Jr.'s *financial plan for student success* request that reaffirms the district's commitment to the actions outlined in The Cumberland Commitment: Strategic Plan 2024.

As part of this year's *financial plan for the student success* preparation process, district leaders built budget business cases to maximize the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds and to address many of the pressing needs that exist throughout the school system. However, there is a need for increased funding at the local level. The Board is requesting \$88.1 million in local funding from the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners. This represents an increase of 9.2 percent or \$7.4 million over this year's appropriation to fund local budget priorities.

"While we could not control the devastating effects of COVID-19 over the past year, how we respond in its aftermath is critically important," said Dr. Connelly. "We can and we will come back from this, and it will be a great comeback. Providing our students with equitable access to engaging learning that prepares them to be collaborative, competitive and successful in our global world remains our superordinate goal. The goals outlined in our strategic plan are even more relevant as we reimagine public education, how children learn and how educators teach."

While some students thrived in a virtual learning environment, others experienced a multitude of challenges. The budget request includes allocating significant resources to support students' academic acceleration and address the social and emotional impact of the pandemic on students' lives.

Cumberland County Schools (CCS) plans to strengthen and update learning environments to handle the demands of in-person learning in a post-Coronavirus world. CCS is now a one-to-one learning district, which means all students have access to a Chromebook. To ensure the long-term success of this initiative, the recommended budget includes increasing the number of Technology Services personnel.

In fact, CCS plans to invest in all premier professionals by increasing the local supplement for teachers, assistant principals, principals and classified staff. It has been six years since the last supplement increase, and according to Dr. Connelly, the pandemic magnified the urgent need to recruit and retain top-notch staff.

"During this pandemic, our education professionals have clearly reminded us all of the importance of public education," Dr. Connelly stated.

The local funding request also includes:

- Hiring additional personnel to support school leaders and enable schools and students to thrive in the aftermath of COVID-19.
- Increasing the number of project managers to address pressing facility needs in the district's aging buildings.
- Addressing anticipated salary and benefit increases as a result of projected state salary increases.

The district plans to allocate a significant amount of federal and state funds to support Performance, Accountability, Support, Empowerment (PASE) schools, which are schools designated by the state as low performing.

“As we look to the future and envision our school system in the aftermath of COVID-19, it is not about things returning to the way they were before the pandemic began,” said Dr. Connelly. “We must not only focus on the negative impacts of COVID-19; we must embrace what we have learned about how to improve public education. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine how we will engage students in robust learning experiences in Cumberland County Schools. In alignment with our strategic plan, this *financial plan for student success* provides funding for the road map to help us get there.”

The Board is required to submit its request to the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners by May 15 for consideration. To learn more about CCS’ proposed budget, visit www.budget.ccs.k12.nc.us.

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