

House Budget Makes Deeper Cuts To Public Schools

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A preliminary draft of the House education budget unveiled Wednesday outlines even deeper cuts to public schools and other educational entities than those previously proposed by the Governor and Senate but at the same time reflects the state's worsening revenue picture.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education Co-Chairs presented the budget draft that calls for reducing the \$12.3 billion continuation budget for public schools, community colleges and universities by 11.1 percent to \$10.5 billion. Cuts to public schools equate to \$932,947,956 and ultimately could result in the loss of approximately 12,000 public school positions.

"As a former school board member, I am familiar with the old tactic of proposing to cut something so you can generate public support for it," said Subcommittee Co-Chairman Rick Glazier, D-Cumberland. "That is not what we are doing here. This is real, and these budget numbers will have an extraordinarily negative impact on education in our state."

The most shocking public school cut includes a proposal to **eliminate five instructional days from the school calendar in 2009-10 and 10 instructional days in 2010-11**. The loss of the five instructional days next school year would mean a pay cut of roughly 2.5 percent for all 10-month personnel who would not be working those days. Several other proposed reductions for public schools also will have a direct impact on personnel and classroom operations.

"A sound basic education is a civil and basic right of every student in our state," said NCASA Executive Director Bill McNeal. "The House budget threatens the ability of this state to ensure that all students are equipped with the educational skills to be successful in this 21st Century environment, thus inhibiting our state's economic recovery now and in the future."

Highlights of the preliminary budget proposals for public schools include the following:

Impact on School Personnel

- Increasing class size by two students in all grades to cut 6,005 classroom teachers and save roughly \$322.7 million.
- Cutting all Grade 3 Teacher Assistants to eliminate 4,663 positions and save \$130.1 million.
- Cutting 354 Instructional Support positions (counselors, media specialists and social workers) to save \$21.5 million.
- Changing the Assistant Principal allotment from 1:799 to 1:890 to eliminate 187 10-month positions and save \$17.6 million.
- Reducing the Non-Instructional Support allotment by 5 percent to save \$20.2 million.
- Cutting the Central Office allotment by 5.38 percent to save \$6.5 million.
- Decreasing other categorical allotments that will impact personnel, although no estimates have been provided on numbers of personnel to be affected:
 - Eliminate the Improving Student Accountability allotment of \$38.3 million.
 - Reduce the At-Risk Student Services/Alternative Schools allotment by 10 percent to cut \$22.9 million.
 - Reduce the Transportation allotment by 5 percent for \$19.4 million in savings.

Other Proposed Reductions

- Reducing the Low Wealth Supplemental Funding to cover only counties that are 90 percent or below; thereby, eliminating funding for 13 counties (Craven, Cumberland, Davie, Gaston, Lincoln, Madison, Mitchell, Onslow, Pender, Perquimans, Union, Warren and Yancey) to save \$18.2 million.
- Cutting Small County Supplemental Funding by \$4.5 million.
- Reducing More at Four funding by 10 percent to save \$8.6 million.

- Eliminating Learn and Earn Online to save \$1.4 million.
- Eliminating the state funding of application fees for National Board Certified teachers to save \$3.3 million annually.
- Eliminating 100 Literacy Coaches to save \$12 million.
- Cutting \$38 million from Textbooks.
- Cutting all state funding for Staff Development for two years to save \$12.6 million annually.
- Redirecting \$60.5 million in school construction funds from the Public School Building Capital Fund to public school operations in 2009-10 and redirecting another \$64.5 million in 2010-11.
- Cutting the Department of Public Instruction budget by 11 percent to cut 52 positions in 2009-10 and cutting an additional 4 percent and 19 positions in 2010-11.
- Eliminating the funding for high school students who are dually enrolled at community colleges to save \$17.6 million.

These proposed cuts are just a few of the key elements of the preliminary House education budget, which may be accessed at: <http://ncasa.net/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=199>. Note that this document currently reflects some expansion funding for public schools, community colleges and universities, but senior House budget writers have told NCASA that this expansion funding will be eliminated from the education budget as it moves forward.

Since the budget subcommittees are expected to finalize their recommendations by May 27, all NCASA members should be contacting your own House members now to discuss how detrimental many of these cuts will be for your schools and your students and to urge them to find new revenues to head off these cuts. Contact information for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education is at http://www.ncasa.net/associations/2410/files/House_Approp_Sub_Education.doc and contact information for all House members is at <http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/members/memberList.pl?sChamber=House>.

NCASA will provide additional updates on House budget developments as they occur.