

FY22 Budget Continues Conservative Fiscal Approach

Proposed Plan Emphasizes Classroom Needs, with No Tax Rate Increase

At the May 20, 2021 School Board meeting, CCSD Superintendent Dr. Brian V. Hightower presented the Board of Education with a proposed total budget of \$567 Million for the 2021-22 school year. The budget, which was developed over the course of six months, begins annually with School Board Members establishing funding priorities for the District.

Chief Financial Officer Kenneth Owen led a budget ad hoc committee of staff throughout the winter and spring to develop the plan, which balances the budget with no increase in the school millage (property tax) rate for 2021-22.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Brian V. Hightower said the budget represents a focus on fiscal efficiency and placing priority on the classroom, while keeping teacher and support staff salaries competitive for attracting top talent to CCSD schools.

“Our School Board and our School District have a well respected reputation for strong financial stewardship,” said Dr. Hightower. “This budget reflects our efforts to balance needs and resources, while adding some services and supports we know our students and employees need to be even more successful.”

The General Fund (operating budget) comprises most of the annual budget, with \$435 Million for day-to-day operations. While the property tax rate stays the same, this budget shifts a quarter of a mill from operating fund to debt service which will reduce the need for future construction borrowing— and the associated interest costs.

The School Board tabled the budget for a 30-day public review and will hold three public hearings for input, then take action for formal adoption at its meeting June 17.

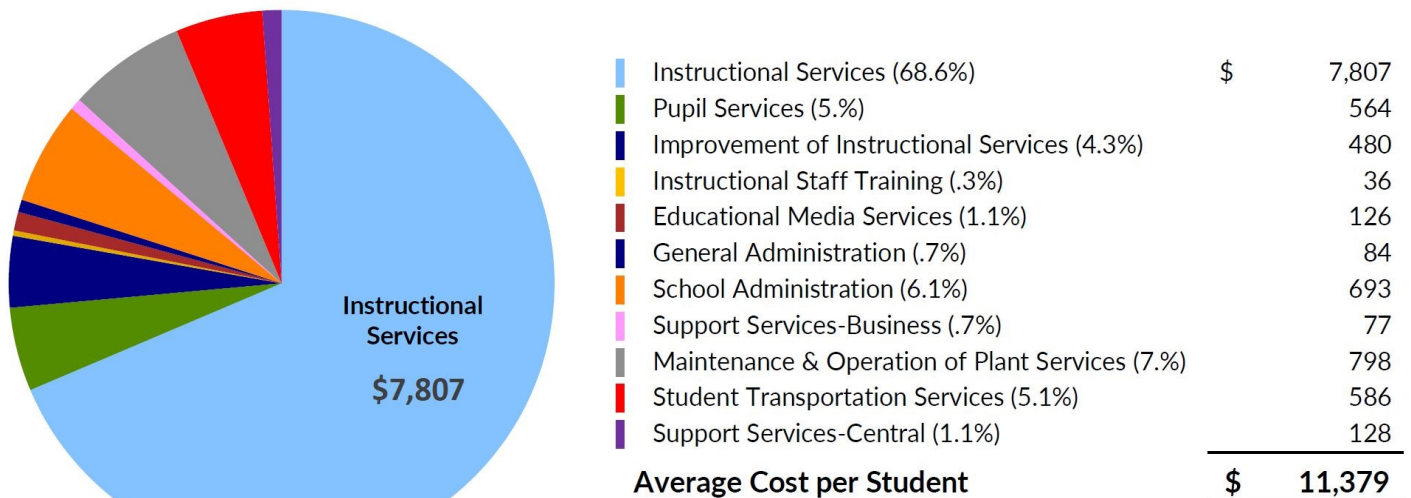
Proposed Budget Includes:

- Full school year (180 days) for students
- No increase in millage rate for taxpayers
- Longevity step increase for eligible employees
- 1% cost of living raise for eligible employees
- 125 additional teachers to meet student achievement needs
- More support staff for students— 2 nurses, 2 psychologists, 1 additional social worker
- 69.1% of the General/Operating Fund appropriated directly for school instruction
- Additional teacher allotments in Career, Technical and Agriculture Education (CTAE) and Gifted programs
- Utilizing “pay as you go” model for purchase of up to 12 new school buses to replace aging vehicles, as well as technology, infrastructure and other capital outlay expenses using current Ed SPLOST collections

Revenue Notes:

- State funding reflects a \$9.4 Million State Austerity budget cut
- Federal funding includes \$15.7 Million CARES II Federal funds for targeted needs and expenses

OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT: FY2022



Based upon anticipated student enrollment of 40,938

No Increase in School District Tax Rate for FY2022

MILLAGE RATE BREAKDOWN	Tentative 2021-22 Millage Rates
State of Georgia Required Local Effort Quality Basic Education	5.6
Assessment by County Government for Reimbursement of Tax Collection Costs (2.10%)	0.39
CCSD Maintenance and Operation	12.21
Debt Service	1.25
TOTAL MILLAGE	19.45

The millage rate, which in conjunction with the assessed value of property, determines the overall tax bill for the owner, is set annually by each governing body in the county. The Cherokee County School Board has not increased its millage rate in more than 11 years.

The 5.6 mills sent to the State as part of the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) formula funding for Cherokee County this year represents \$56.6 Million of local property tax money that will become part of the State's "Equalization" allocation. Cherokee County is not eligible to receive equalization dollars, making CCSD one of the "donor" districts in the state.

ANTICIPATED REVENUE FY2022

TOTAL STATE REVENUE

\$220.9 MILLION

TOTAL LOCAL REVENUE

\$275.9 MILLION

TOTAL FEDERAL REVENUE

\$40.4 MILLION



CCSD is GA's 9th largest school district
and Cherokee County's largest employer

CCSD STAFFING

4,887 Full-time employees

- 2,761 Certified teachers
- 1,167 Non-instructional support staff
- 762 Certified instructional support staff
- 197 School administrators

Note: Detailed information about the CCSD budget and past financial audits can be reviewed on the [Open CCSD webpage](#)

CCSD Keeps Administrative Costs Among Lowest in GA

The Cherokee County School District continues to rank among the lowest 10% in the state when it comes to per pupil spending on general administrative costs. CCSD's rate for FY2020 of \$142 per student is 39% below the state average of \$232 per student. CCSD also compares well on school-based administrative costs, where it sits in the lowest quartile among Georgia school districts. School Nutrition Services is another area where CCSD stands out for financial efficiency, in the lowest 10% for program costs.

2020 GENERAL ADMIN COSTS PER STUDENT

CHEROKEE COUNTY	\$143
CHEROKEE CHARTER	\$472
CLAYTON	\$197
COBB COUNTY	\$182
DEKALB COUNTY	\$262
DOUGLAS COUNTY	\$151
FAYETTE COUNTY	\$142
FULTON COUNTY	\$199
GWINNETT COUNTY	\$187
HENRY COUNTY	\$116
ROCKDALE COUNTY	\$306

Source: GOSA

Federal CARES II Funding Supports CCSD Classrooms

Federal funding, which makes up slightly more than 7.4% of the CCSD total budget, is significantly higher in FY2022 due to federal allocations made to school districts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CCSD is scheduled to receive \$15.7 MM in Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA – CARES II) in FY2022 to provide:

- Additional teacher allotments to assist with academic remediation efforts,
- Supplemental learning opportunities to include summer school, before/after-school and in-school tutoring,
- Additional teacher support for Digital Learners,
- Additional school-based staff (Nurses, Psychologists and School Social Workers) to assist with the physical and mental well-being and health of students,
- Additional laptops for student use,
- Additional custodial support to contain the spread of viruses, and,

- Replacement of air handling/mechanical equipment where needed to support improved air quality in schools.

Other federal funding is intended to meet the teaching and learning needs of our most at-risk students. This includes those students from low-income households and those with disabilities, who typically require a much lower personnel/pupil ratio and significantly more resources to address their educational needs.

FISCAL NOTES

- The Cherokee County Board of Education has maintained a balanced operating budget with no increase in the local tax rate in the last 11 years.
- The last eight CCSD external audits have been “clean” with NO findings.



Ed SPLOST Update

Cherokee County voters overwhelmingly (73%) approved the 2016 Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (Ed SPLOST) for capital improvement projects across the District. The tax is approved for five years, and funds are budgeted in FY2022 for:

- Classroom addition, auxiliary gym at Creekview HS
- Classroom addition at Creekland MS
- Begin multi-year project to replace Cherokee HS
- Begin multi-year project to replace Free Home ES
- Construction and equipping of a Non-bonded Ed SPLOST funds are used to purchase digital resources, student laptop computers and other devices

COMPLETED 2016 Ed SPLOST PROJECTS

- Installation of synthetic turf fields at all six CCSD high school stadiums
- Installation of security foyers at CCSD elementary and middle schools
- Purchase of new school buses to replace aging vehicles in the fleet
- Classroom addition at Mill Creek MS
- Agricultural Science building at Creekview HS
- Healthcare Science Lab at Sequoyah HS

2016 Ed SPLOST Projects Underway, Scheduled for Completion August 2021:

- Renovated athletic facilities at Etowah HS stadium
- Auxiliary gym at Woodstock HS
- Classroom addition at Woodstock MS

The District also will complete needed major repairs and renovations at existing schools using funds from Ed SPLOST. CCSD is grateful to Cherokee County voters for their continued support!

The renewal of the Ed SPLOST will be on the ballot in November 2021. This is a proposed RENEWAL of the existing penny, it is NOT an additional tax and will NOT increase the county sales tax rate.



CCSD Has Track Record of High Ratings for Financial Efficiency

The Cherokee County School District earned one of the highest ratings from the State for FY2019 financial efficiency, tying for the best rating among Metro Atlanta counties. It was the third consecutive year to achieve one of the highest scores possible.

The State's Financial Efficiency Star Ratings measure school districts' spending per student in relation to those students' academic performance according to the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Ratings range from a half-star to the highest rating of five stars. No star ratings were available for FY2020, as the Milestones tests used in the calculation of CCRPI were not given due to the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of schools statewide in spring of 2020.

The Cherokee County School District has earned 4.5 stars for three consecutive years, among the best ratings in the State. Only 10 other school districts of the 180 in Georgia earned a 4.5 in 2019, with just one of those being a Metro Atlanta county system; only three districts statewide earned a 5.

The State did generate the expenditure data for FY 2020, which shows CCSD's average per-pupil spending of \$9,563, averaged over a three-year period (2017-2019), places the district in the top quartile for conservative spending. Out of 180 school districts in Georgia, 144 are spending more per student than Cherokee County.

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Source: Financial Efficiency Star Rating data for FY 2020