

**April 17, 2019** – Increasing salaries and benefits for teachers, bus drivers and school nutrition workers is a priority for Guilford County Schools and a key element of the proposed budget presented by Superintendent Sharon L. Contreras to the Board of Education on Wednesday.

The budget recommendation includes \$8.8 million to match expected teacher salary and benefits increases at the state level, \$1 million for classified staff increases and an additional \$1 million for bus driver pay increases. School nutrition staff would also see a raise.

The proposal would also fund a teacher supplement increase of \$2 million, or about \$300 per teacher on average. Currently the GCS average supplement is \$4,764, about \$4,000 less than the \$8,649 supplement in Wake County Public Schools. That puts GCS at No. 9 in comparison with other local supplements across the state.

“Investing in our people is a commitment we made in our Strategic Plan, and we are hopeful that the Board of County Commissioners will support that investment,” Contreras says.

The proposed budget, if approved by the Board of Education, would include a request for an additional \$10 million from the county to fund the salary and benefits increases, as well as health insurance and retirement rate increases. Included in that \$10 million are funds to support a projected increase in charter school payments, liability insurance and retirement rates required by the state and instructional resources and professional development to support math and literacy instruction. The budget also would provide \$1 million to support chronically low-performing schools through teacher incentives and eliminating combination classes when possible.

The recommended budget includes a request for \$12 million in capital outlay funds, which would be spent on HVAC, roofing and electrical projects, as well as equipment. Last year, GCS received \$6 million for capital outlay, giving the district 50 cents per square foot for maintenance needs.

The district is expecting to see a cost savings of \$3.9 million through improved efficiency in the transportation department (\$1 million), a recently approved print services contract (\$200,000), and through consolidating schools (\$2.7 million).

Specifically, GCS would no longer consider Hampton Elementary as a separate school with its own principal. Hampton Elementary was one of three schools severely damaged by last year’s tornado, and was relocated to Reedy Fork Elementary. Many Hampton students, however, chose to attend schools closer to home, namely Simkins Elementary or Falkener Elementary. The other two damaged schools, Peeler Open Elementary and Erwin Montessori, would remain in their current locations at Bluford STEM Academy and Alamance Elementary, respectively.

Twilight high school program would also be re-envisioned. Twilight is an evening program to support students who are close to graduation but need flexible hours. Currently, the program serves 63 students in one location, but under the proposed budget, the program would be housed at three separate schools – Jackson Middle, Pruette SCALE Academy and Southern High. These changes would increase efficiency by using existing space, limiting transportation expenses and lowering staffing costs.

SCALE Greensboro, an alternative school, would be relocated to the Washington Street administrative building. Some administrative staff would be moved to the former McIver Education Center. Minor cost savings are expected from these changes.

The board will consider feedback on the proposed budget during its April 30 meeting. A vote is expected during the May 14 meeting, then the budget request will be sent to the county commissioners.