

CCSD budget *cuts*

CCSD making cuts due to the budget shortfall

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Eighteen-million dollars. That's right -- six zeros chasing that 1-8, the amount that makes up the Charleston County School District's budget shortfall that was discovered and then confirmed by a forensic audit this past March.

"There was not any spending that was not legitimate," w Interim Chief Financial Officer Glenn Stiegman said. "Where we went wrong was in the budgeting of [the appropriate] expenditures and revenues. We had a shortfall in revenue of about \$9 million because we had some mistakes when we put the budget together for county property taxes."

Although the shortfall was due more to budgeting errors than miscalculating, it still leaves CCSD in a hole financially: an \$18 million dollar one.

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Trustee
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The new process the Stiegman refers to basically means that in kindergarten/elementary levels where a class size may be 25 students per one teacher and there are 50 kids total, there will only be allocated two kindergarten teachers for that year. At the high school level where classes are determined by ratio rather than size alone, class sizes are expected to increase by one student per teacher.

Stiegman also points out that a portion of the budget overage was to due teachers and assistant principals who were employed by "request."

"For example, in a school like Wando, there might've been a request for an extra assistant principal because ninth grade was larger that year or there were behavioral problems -- nine times out of 10 that request was granted -- without a budget in place," Stiegman said. "We redid all of those formulas and took out all of those extra positions."

Stiegman said he believes the cuts to teaching and central office positions, programs and other expenditures are justified.

"We tried to avoid [making cuts to] the schools as much as possible, but when you look at our personnel, 75 percent of our personnel is in the schools," he said. "So that's the biggest place you've got to take positions and still maintain proper staffing."

The CCSD Board of Trustees voted 7-1 to go through with the new budget plan in the fall. Trustee Michael Miller had the only dissenting vote, which he claims was on a financial and a moral basis.

"I recognize that we have some budget issues, but I do not believe that the cuts that we make should affect student achievement and schools," Miller said. "The schools nor the students were the reason for the budget shortfall. So I think it would be unfair that we have students directly impacted by our budgetary concerns, which is why I voted against it."

Miller proposed a different plan for dealing with the budget deficit.

"I proposed that we sell one of our vacant properties. [CCSD] owns somewhere between 10 and 18 vacant properties -- schools that we own that we aren't currently occupying," Miller said. "So if we are having a financial shortfall, and we have property that we aren't using but are still paying to maintain and upkeep, then why don't we look at selling one or two of those properties to give us the money we need to get out of the deficit?"

"But prior to [Mon-

day, April, 18] that wasn't even a conversation until I brought it up," Miller continued. "We have more teachers in the county than anything else, so I can see why theoretically, they would impact most of the budget. But teachers impact students, so if we're going to impact staff, I would prefer that we impact non-teaching staff. Let it be non-school based staff, people who work in the central office and make six figures a year."

Although the idea of simply cutting positions seems pretty cut and dry, a system of attrition and redistribution will foster into the cuts.

Essentially, people aren't getting "laid off." Teachers who leave, retire or quit are not immediately replaced. And teachers who are being "cut" are still given contracts to be CCSD employees, but their contracts do not "guarantee them a position at Wando," media specialist Emilie Woody said. Woody is also the 2015 CCSD Teacher of the Year.

"A budget has two parts," she said. "Money you bring in, and the money you spend. So if the budget doesn't work you have two options. You can either bring in more or spend less -- or some combination of the two. Currently, the school board has said they're not going to raise the millage, so the only option then to balance the budget is to cut. It's not what any of us want to see happen. No, I don't like it, but I understand it."

The reality is that the cuts are set, and teachers, central staff, administrators and other positions will still be impacted. One of these positions is Wando librarians/media technicians. Wando's library staff will go from five librarians to two, which will impact students just as much as cut teacher positions.

"I'll give you an example. The other day, a teacher called and said 'My SmartBoard just went out and I'm trying to teach, can you come fix it?'" Woody said.

"At the same time, there was a student in front of me who had a laptop from a laptop cart and his wasn't working, while all of his classmates were [working], and he was falling behind," she said. "At the same time as that, I had a class waiting in the library computer area for us to do a research lesson. There's one of me, and three things happening simultaneously. Which one do I do? Not do? They're all priorities, and now there won't be as many of us to help."

Science

Math

English

Middle and High school
class sizes to eventually
increase by one