



We stand to lose far more than funding

By Cindy Kowal, Executive Director

Before hanging up the backpacks and making plans for summer fun, please consider what schools will look like when students return in August if we don't act now to stand up for public education in Cumberland County. At this point in the state's budget process, Cumberland County schools stand to lose about \$32 million for the 2009-10 school year unless the legislature acts to make other cuts or creates additional revenue streams. Further, county schools Chief Financial Officer Ricky Lopes suggests that the 2010-11 school term could be even worse.



If you have school-age children, or even if you don't, here's a glimpse of how the proposed budget cuts will actually affect our children and, ultimately, our community: Two million dollars cut from "low wealth" funding. Statewide, only 13 counties receive this additional funding. Since Cumberland County receives about half of this revenue stream, Cumberland

County schools will disproportionately bear the burden of this cut. One hundred sixty-three K-12 teachers cut. You may see higher numbers quoted, but careful realigning and normal attrition puts the actual loss at this number - for now. This means larger classes for everyone and unemployment for our families, neighbors and friends. One hundred sixty teacher assistants cut in grades K-3, but mostly grades K-2. This means elementary school teachers will have larger classes and less help to meet individual students' needs. Eight hundred thousand dollars cut from transportation. Cumberland County schools already are disproportionately funded in this area compared to other large school districts and relies heavily on teacher assistants to drive buses. One million dollars cut from remediation funding. This will seriously jeopardize gains made to help struggling students stay on track. Thirty schools will not have any remediation funding. Three hundred thousand dollars cut from technology - Today's graduates require 21st-century skills and the ability to use technology is non-negotiable. One and a half million dollars cut from student accountability- This funding is a part of remediation and will directly affect student proficiency. Seventeen instructional support positions and eight literacy coach positions cut - Instructional support includes media, guidance and social workers - professionals who often work behind the scenes in a school, but provide vital services that are essential to student success. Because of proposed cuts in higher education at the community college and university level, funding for dual-enrolled students is eliminated. Many of our high school students take advantage of the Huskins program, i.e. the opportunity to take college courses while still in high school. To further prioritize spending in this budget crisis, the Cumberland County Board of Education voted to eliminate supplemental funding for media center book purchases (\$410,000), close the Evening Academy (\$450,000) and drop the requirement for an arts-education credit for high school students.

The current economic climate is forcing our elected officials to confront deficits that affect our quality of life and our ability to provide a sound, quality education for our children. Regardless of your political leanings, and whether or not you have children in school, in the end this affects all of us. There are future social costs to these cuts in unemployment, justice and social services that will be paid down the road.

Reality U...My Life

This spring over 200 Lewis Chapel Middle School eighth graders spent a few hours gaining a better understanding of what their futures may hold and how the decisions they make will affect their lives. "Reality U" is a program used by Communities In Schools (CIS) programs throughout the United States. This real life simulation activity assigns students "life scenarios" including careers, monthly incomes and family situations. The students are then provided mock checkbooks and move through various stations, in their school gym, receiving their paychecks and spending them on the essentials, such as rent/mortgage, utilities, food, daycare and transportation. At each station, students make decisions, with the guidance of a community professional, concerning the standard of living they will assume. For example, at the housing booth (manned by a Realtor), students decide if they want to pay for a one-bedroom efficiency apartment or a five-bedroom home. The program promotes the connection of academic performance to income levels, in hopes that students see the importance of education. Students learn basic skills in financial planning, goal setting, decision-making and career planning while having the unique opportunity to make connections with local business professionals.



("Funding...cont'd) Show our legislative delegation that you value public education and contact them via e-mail or phone. Negotiations are under way and the latest budget and tax proposals could restore up to \$12 million in Cumberland County - more than one third of our local deficit.

If you support the proposed tax increases or others in order to preserve education, let our legislators hear from you.



Project Tomorrow: An Education Summit for Cumberland County

In January 2009 CCEF sponsored the first education summit for our community by gathering 100 key stakeholders from business, education, government and the military to develop an action plan, i.e. Vision 2020, to serve our students and the community. The half-day event included an overview of our local school system by school board Chairman Greg West, a presentation by facilitators on national trends and challenges in public education and tabletop discussion by all participants. Vision 2020 Table Top Discussion generated eight focus areas for further study and community involvement.

FOUNDATION QUICK NOTES

- 44 Graduates from Fuller PLC in May
- \$5,000 STEM grant awarded to Douglas Byrd HS for alternative fuel cell competition
- \$5,000 STEM grant awarded to Jack Britt HS IST Academy of Engineering to enter NASA's Great Moonbuggy Race
- 1st Bill Harrison Scholarship awarded to Kurtys Neal of Cross Creek Early College for \$1,500.
- \$1,500 Scholarship awarded to Jacob Barge of Jack Britt HS
- 22 teams played in CCEF's 6th Annual Golf Tournament in June with Walter Vick's Team winning

