



HICKORY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Hickory Public Schools

Week in Review

January 20, 2017

"A snapshot of HPS good news"

PRESSED FOR MONEY



Longview Elementary media coordinator Caroline Brown shows fifth-grader Vanessa Ramirez-Soto how to use an iPad camera to produce a television broadcast for Longview Elementary School. The equipment was purchased with money from a Hickory Public Schools Education Foundation grant.

Schools seek out unique funding solutions

BY JOHN RAILY
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Putting together a school budget is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle — and administrators always hope they aren't missing any pieces.

Local county and state funds make up more than half of the monies school systems use to operate. While some of these funding sources have increased — Catawba County raised its per-pupil funding for each school system to 3.8 percent — it's still not enough to keep books on



Fifth-grader Vanessa Ramirez-Soto (right) at Longview Elementary uses an iPad camera to film a news broadcast as students Bryon Phillips, Mario Reyes Garcia and Elizabeth Tlanepantia-Lopez read the daily school news.

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Funding

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desks and teacher assistants in classrooms. Whether it's a bake sale or a grant from a local education foundation, every school and every school district starts every new year looking for ways to improve funding gaps they face.

The Parent Teachers Organization (PTO) at Sherrills Ford Elementary in the Catawba County Schools system stepped up their pursuit of funds this year with a new online program called Make It Happen.

They raised more than \$30,000 in just 17 days in December. The goal was \$15,000. The money will go to provide an average of \$25 per student for various school-related expenses and \$200 per teacher to reimburse for classroom materials. The funds also will help to send teachers to professional development courses.

"The thing is we're unique in that we are not a Title I school, and we depend on our PTO to fund a lot of activities we're able to do," Sherrills Ford Principal Lathan Feeler said. "With things that have happened to budgets the last few years, we had to get creative with the way we fundraise for our kids and get resources for our students."

The Hickory Public Schools Education Foundation has played a key role in providing extra resources for its students in the Hickory Public Schools system.

Last year, three elementary and two middle schools received a share of nearly \$37,000 in grant money from the foundation. The foundation established its Innovation Grants Program two years ago to help continue improvement through creative teaching in Hickory Public Schools (HPS).

"The PTA in all our schools fund many projects their schools cannot fund," box toys, Loves Rewards, Fall Carnivals, Discount Booklets, school nights at local restaurants, etc., the education foundation Executive Director Sandi Fotheringham said via email. "They all solicit donations from parents and community for spe-

cific projects such as playground equipment and walking tracks.

Our Foundation is focusing on two areas: Teacher Creative Ideas Grants and a Teacher Recruitment/Retention Package."

Jenkins Elementary was awarded the largest creative grant last year, \$9,364. The money was used to create a technology room for the students at the school where they could experiment with STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math) projects.

Another example of outside funding was by the Parent Teacher Association at Hickory High School. They helped raise \$3,700 by selling Loves Foods gift cards. Proceeds from the sale will go toward Hickory High staff development and enrichment.

Overall, Hickory Public Schools has 66 percent of its funding come from state money, 17.5 percent from local and 7.5 percent from federal.

"The HPS Director of Finance Adam Steele shared several examples of why the amount of funding still falls short in certain areas."

"Finding quality teachers has become difficult because North Carolina is 47th in the nation in teacher pay, and the NC Teaching Fellows (scholarship program) has been cut," he said via email.

He said teacher assistants have been moved and have been moved to hourly and student days only.

At-risk funding has decreased around \$200,000 over the last four years as some of the funding is now grant funding. The Central Office allotment has been reduced three times over the last five years as well.

English as a Second Language funding has been reduced and there has been a loss in federal programs in Title I and Title II, Steele said. There has been a reduction of assistant principal months of

employment from 11 or 12 months to 10 or 11 months based on position.

The Newton-Connor City Schools system takes advantage of the value in its own buildings to help bridge some of its funding gaps.

The system uses money from renting out school buses and other facilities to fund the NCCS Innovative Grants, which was started in 2014.

"NCCS embraces the fact that every child learns differently and that the number of ways we can engage students is limitless," Director of Education Middle Grades Tammy Brown who also oversees the grant program said.

"Our goal as educators is to prepare students for college, career and beyond and NCCS Innovative Grants will be awarded to fund projects that extend the regular curriculum, encourage higher-level thinking skills, and enrich student learning through culture, art, music, and other activities."

Teachers who receive a grant are encouraged to create interactive and enhanced learning experiences that would not be possible without additional funding.

"These opportunities may include but are not limited to providing engaging learning opportunities outside of the standard curriculum or piloting innovative educational programs," Brown said.

The grants are available to staff or students who work in Newton-Connor City Schools. The past examples show just how creative some of the projects funded were. They included a body double robot, utilizing a remotely controlled segway with an iPad attached to keeping homebound students in the classroom at Sherrills Ford Elementary, according to last year's grant winners' information.

The grants program also helped to fund a hydroponics and aquaculture

project at Discovery High School. The project allowed students to perform hands-on activities that were directly linked to the North Carolina Essential Standards for Biology, including environmental impacts of traditional farming and pesticide resistance.

The grants support the purchase of equipment, materials or experiences which go beyond school budgets," Brown said. "Innovative Grants are not intended to become a regular funding stream for ongoing projects."

Individual teacher grants for classroom projects are limited to \$1,000. Collaborative grants for two or more teachers are limited to \$1,500.

Counting by pupils

Catawba County Schools Chief Financial Officer Karla Miller said education funding in general has declined since 2008-09.

"Our state budget has been particularly hit in the areas of teacher assistants, non-instructional support (substitutes, office support and custodial) and supplies and materials," Miller said via email. "Catawba County allocates our funds based on a per pupil allotment, which has increased over the last 10 years."

"We just simply don't receive enough to cover all of the initiatives we'd like to pursue," Miller said.

Make It Happen

The PTO at Sherrills Ford had this problem in its crosshairs when it created the Make It Happen campaign.

Instead of selling, the campaign had students reach out to friends, neighbors and relatives for tax-deductible donations and based on how much they raised the students could win prizes.

"We tied this event into our fall festival — here is where we did our big prize winner drawings, a way to get more people at the festival and raise more money," Haugstatter said. "We also had prizes for the teachers whose class raised the most money — an incentive for teachers to encourage their students to get out and ask for donations."

The PTO plans on continuing the campaign with the Make It Happen page still up on its website, after the Make It Happen campaign.

Exceptional care. Right where you are.

Catawba Regional Hospice

828.466.0466
CatawbaRegionalHospice.org
3975 Robinson Road, Newton, NC

Special visitors at Oakwood Elementary! (left) Two HPS Board members, Margaret Pope and Julie Correll, recently enjoyed lunch with the students at Oakwood!

Three 5th graders presented to the guests: (L-R) Frannie Zagaroli, Pablo Velez, and Mebane White



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(L-R) Discussing K-64: Hickory Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Robbie Adell, County Commissioner Chair, Randall Isenhower and County Manager, Mick Berry

Catawba Commissioners Vote YES for K-64!

During the January 17 meeting of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners, the K-64 Resolution was presented by County Manager, Mick Berry and County Attorney, Debra Bechtel.

“We’ve been bringing this together for quite some time,” said Berry, as he addressed the crowd in Newton’s historic courthouse.

“It takes a lot of great work collaborating as a team. The three school systems, Catawba County Schools, Hickory Public Schools and Newton Conover City Schools – along with Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC), have exemplified ‘success on steroids’ as they made this a county-wide approach,” said Berry.

“Every student in the county will have access to technology, soft skills, employer engagement, and opportunities with local employers who have footprints all over the world,” said Berry. “The leaders in these efforts are clearly a united team, combining education with the Catawba County Economic Development Corporation, the Catawba County Chamber of Commerce and the Catawba County government. There’s also a host of collaborative community businesses bringing the K-64 Resolution to fruition.”

A critical first step, according to Berry, is to leverage the private funds and to anticipate the public kick-off.

Dr. Garrett Hinshaw, president of CVCC, stated that K-64 proves the existence of collaborative unity in Catawba County. “We are working together—and building partnerships. This effort will assure that every child has an opportunity for their future,” said Hinshaw.

According to Dr. Robbie Adell, superintendent of Hickory Public Schools, implementing K-64 in the education of all students in Catawba County will change this county’s landscape -- forever. “K-64 will reduce the poverty in our community. We will send more kids to college. We will have greater success in helping our English-as-Second Language (ESL) students,” said Adell. “I thank the County Commissioners for their consideration and voting for the future of our children.”

Additional speakers following Dr. Adell included Dr. David Stegall, NCCS superintendent, Dr. Matt Stover, CCS superintendent, Dr. Garrett Hinshaw, president of CVCC, Scott Millar, president, Catawba County Economic Development Corporation, and Lindsay Keisler, interim president, Catawba County Chamber of Commerce.

During the presentation by Dr. Stover, the County Commissioners were provided with technical devices for a session in virtual reality (viewing images of a school) using Google Expedition.

The next steps, said Bechtel, will include meeting with the current participating partners and review the resolution and bylaws as we work to fulfill the goals of the county’s economic development and education.

The K-64 Resolution was then presented by Commissioner Chairman, Randall Isenhower, for a vote. Commissioner, Sherry Butler made the motion and the vote for the K-64 Resolution was unanimously passed by the Catawba County Board of Commissioners which also include Vice-Chair - Barbara Beatty, Kitty Barnes and Dan Hunsucker.

In closing, Commissioner Isenhower shared his enthusiasm for the K-64 Resolution. “I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the research and preparation. A significant amount of funds will go into K-64, but I believe this will be a success as it will be run by the people of Catawba County—collaborating for the future,” said Isenhower. “What great partners we have and I have great confidence in the success of K-64.”

Hickory Public Schools Superintendent Robbie Adell

Private or Public

Like many people in public education on Tuesday, Adell tentatively watched the confirmation hearings of DeVos.

"When I think of choice, really what we're talking about is privatizing schools," he said. "For me, I just go back to my own childhood. I'm a true believer in public education. I think it serves its purpose. I do think as with any organization as large as public school systems across the country, that you're going to have problems."

Adell said schools are reflections of their communities.

"We have to stop a lot of times what we're doing and deal with social issues that may not necessarily have anything to do with the curriculum, and regardless of whether you're in a private school or a charter school, you're going to end up having the same issues," Adell said.

He does think there's room for improvement in public education and points out the pressure systems are under because they are generally one of the biggest expenditures of state and local governments.

"When you spend a lot of money, you become critical, but I also think we have a lot of backseat drivers when it comes to the conversation about public education," Adell said. "Everybody seems to be an authority on it, whether they work in the business or not."

Cost of Privatization

During the 2014-15 school year, North Carolina spent an average of \$5,634 per student, which was 67.9 percent of the per-student expenditure in the state, according to ncpublicschools.org. The federal government spent \$635 and local funds averaged \$2,027 per student.

Education continues to represent the largest portion of the budget for Catawba County, with 44.6 cents of every property and sales tax dollar allocated for instructional costs and capital needs of the three public school systems and Catawba Valley Community College, according to figures released in May in the Catawba County budget overview.

For fiscal year 2016-17, Catawba County increased its funding from \$1,483 to \$1,540 per student. There are 24,020 students enrolled this school year in three school systems. The budget also planned for future student growth by setting aside \$435,000 to be used for future capital needs.

It's the distribution of such large



ROBERT C. REED/HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Hickory Public Schools Superintendent Robbie Adell hopes the country continues to support public education because of how encompassing it is for all students.

amounts of funds that worries Adell the most when privatization comes up in any conversation concerning school choice.

"I truly believe if the privatization of public education gains momentum and we see it going in that direction and we start losing kids, I think from a national standpoint, what were going to see is a lot of backseat drivers dealing with privatization at that point," he said. "People will become more infused and more critical with what's going on in those arenas than us because of them taking our students."

Specifically, Adell sees educational jobs taking a hit if privatization, through the use of the Opportunity Scholarship, pulls more resources from public school systems. The program provides funding up to \$4,200 per year, per eligible child, to attend participating non-public schools.

"Sixty percent or more of a public education budget is all about employment of people," Adell said. "Say you lose 100 kids at \$8,000 a pop; that's going to mean teaching jobs; that's going to mean administrative jobs. It could be devastating if we have that kind of migration towards privatization."

Regardless of how the confirmation process ends for DeVos, Adell said he hopes the country continues to support public education because of how encompassing it is for all students.

"We don't turn kids away at our door for any reason and we move them academically, socially and emotionally as quickly as we possibly can," he said. "I can't say that is true of some of the other models out there because some of those are more selective and we're not."

"I think it's a value to our kids and our community. ... I love it."

Smiling Faces of Oakwood!



School Spotlight:
Submitted by Lindee Parsons

At Northview Middle School,
we learn through doing.
We do COMPUTER work.
We do INDIVIDUAL work.
We do LIFE work.
We do FRIENDSHIPS.



We do FIELD TRIPS.
We do FIERCE
COMPETITION.



We do FINE ARTS.
We do FUN.



Promoting
Effort.

Pursuing
Integrity.



Producing Excellence.