

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Public hearings scheduled on millage rate adoption – Rate to remain the same, tax increase announced due to non-rollback**

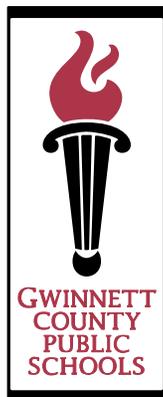
As required by law, the Gwinnett County Board of Education (GCBOE) will hold three public hearings as part of its process for setting the millage. The first will be at 7 p.m. on June 16. The second and third public hearings will take place at 11:45 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on June 25. All of the public hearings are scheduled to take place in the Board Room at the J. Alvin Wilbanks Instructional Support Center, located at 437 Old Peachtree Road NW in Suwanee.

The school system's Fiscal Year 2016 (FY2016) budget was adopted May 28, 2015. In setting the millage rate to support the FY16 budget, the School Board is looking to maintain the current total school millage rate of 21.85.

The budget provides resources-- both financial and human-- to help the school system accommodate its growing student population. GCPS' enrollment is expected to grow by more than 2,800 students, bringing the total projected enrollment for next school year to more than 176,000. To accommodate student growth, the system will open four new schools at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year.

Total state revenue will increase due to a reduction in the "austerity" cuts made to the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula, student enrollment growth, and increases in teacher benefit costs. While the QBE "austerity" cut is smaller than it was in FY2015, the cumulative effect of these reductions since 2003 is the loss of approximately \$864 million for Gwinnett County Public Schools. This still presents a formidable challenge to meeting the future needs of the continually growing school system.

Local revenue is also budgeted to increase by approximately \$13.3 million due to a projected net growth of 3% in the property tax digest. Even with the projected increase, the school district is collecting approximately \$100 million less in local property tax compared to what was collected for FY2009.



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All of the additional state and local revenue projected for FY2016 is needed to fund the projected student enrollment growth, provide a salary increase for teachers and other system employees, and increase the pay for new teachers. All employees will receive a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment and, for those eligible, a longevity-step salary increase.

In order to keep the local tax digest current, the Gwinnett County Tax Assessor's Office conducts annual property value updates (reassessments) on a rotating basis. By state law, local taxing authorities, such as GCBOE, must either keep their tax collections revenue-neutral (by decreasing the millage rate to offset the gained taxes from the property value updates) or announce a tax increase (even though the actual millage rate isn't increasing). The Board is considering adopting a combined millage rate of 21.85, the same millage rate as last year's rate, and therefore required to announce a proposed property tax increase. This means that taxpayers whose property has not been reassessed will see no change in their school tax bill.

The total school millage rate is made up of two portions-- the maintenance and operations (M&O) millage and the debt-service millage. Funds generated by the M&O millage pay for the day-to-day operations of the school system, including employee salaries, instructional materials, student transportation, and school utility costs. The debt-service millage is used to pay down the School Board's long-term debt from bond referenda passed over the years to pay for school construction.

The M&O millage is recommended to remain at 19.80 mills and the debt-service rate is recommended to remain at 2.05 mills. This will result in a total recommended millage rate of 21.85 mills.

Citizens may address the Gwinnett County Board of Education at any of the three public hearings. A sign-up sheet will be available at the hearings for those wishing to speak. There is no need to sign up in advance of the meeting date.

A copy of the adopted budget is available for public review on the school system's website at [www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us](http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us) or through the school system's Budget Department. For information, call 678-301-6200.