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Cobb Schools Super Proposes Teacher Raises

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MARIETTA — Cobb Schools Superintendent Chris Ragsdale has proposed an average 6% raise for all employees in the district.

The pay bumps are included in the tentative 2025 budget the school board was scheduled to consider Thursday night. Ragsdale said raises will range from 4.4% to 9% across the board.

Of the \$1.85 billion tentative budget, \$54 million will go to bumping employee pay, with \$24 million of that coming from the state. Ragsdale thanked Gov. Brian Kemp for approving \$2,500 raises for every teacher in the state this March.

"Shoutout to the governor for providing additional funds to allow us to bring (these) raises, Ragsdale said. "... The governor's budget targeted teachers with a specific dollar amount. We did not do that. That dollar amount is obviously, yes, included in the raise, but we're going above and beyond the raise ... we take the raise across the board to every category of employee."

Ragsdale said teachers can expect to receive the highest raises, since they are on a salary-step schedule.

The raises will be achieved while maintaining the 18.7 millage rate the district set last year.

Brad Johnson, the district's chief financial officer, said the projected tax digest growth in Cobb for 2024 is 7.5%, compared to 14.6% in 2023, and added that the district is keeping those drops in mind when formulating the budget.

Jeff Hubbard, president of the Cobb County Association of Educators, said the raises for teachers are thanks to an exceptional district financial team.

"Our financial department is literally second to none nationally. They do an exceptional job of looking at all of the factors, tax bases, the different types of grants and things that make up our budget," Hubbard said. "When they say it is a conservative budget, it is actually a very conservative budget. They make a budget that is all meat and no fat. Because of that, and because they budget so well and forecast so well, even in this time of inflation they're going to be able to provide for all of our 19,000 employees. So, they are to be highly commended."

Hubbard added that he was especially pleased to hear that all staff will be given raises, and noted that with help from the state, employees can expect an extra bump.

"The key is 'all of the staff,'" Hubbard said. "Even better news is the state only gave \$2,500 for certified — or 4%. Actually with all of that incorporated even your minimal raise is going to be over 4%. That was quite exceptional news. In this era with inflation and things like that it's going to be well received."

Ragsdale said it's always his goal to center staff when proposing a budget.

"... My intent is to bring an employee-centric budget," Ragsdale said. "This is exactly that."

The school board was scheduled to consider approving the tentative budget Thursday night during its voting session. District administration will seek final approval of the 2025 budget at the May 16 board meeting.