

# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 21, 2008

**Contact:** Communication and Media Relations, 678-301-6020

## **Public hearings scheduled in preparation of millage rate adoption**

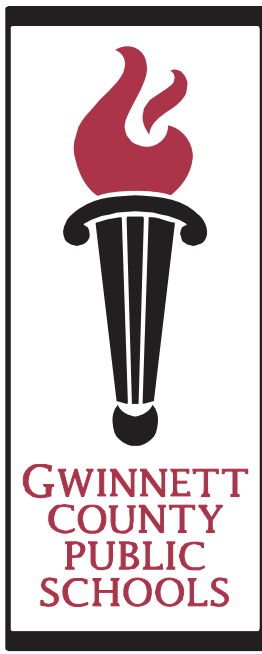
As required by law, the **Gwinnett County Board of Education** will hold three public hearings as part of its process for setting the millage. The first will be held on June 2, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room at the Instructional Support Center (ISC), located at 437 Old Peachtree Road NW in Suwanee. The second will be at 11:45 a.m. on June 9, and the third at 7:00 p.m. on June 9, with both occurring in the Board Room at the ISC.

The school system's Fiscal Year 2009 (FY2009) budget was adopted May 8, 2008. In setting the millage rate to support the FY09 budget, the School Board is looking to maintain the current total school millage rate of 20.55.

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 approximately 4,000 students, bringing the total projected enrollment for next school year to more than 159,000. To accommodate student growth this coming year, the district will open three new schools (Puckett's Mill, Rosebud, and Trip elementaries) and two replacement schools (Benefield Elementary and Lanier Middle— Lanier will be housed at Lanier MS and the White Oak ES facility this coming year).

State revenue cuts made to the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula beginning in FY2003 will continue in FY2009. State revenue for the FY2009 budget will be reduced by nearly \$8.5 million. While the QBE funding reduction is smaller than it was in FY2008, the cumulative effect of these reductions over the seven-year period is the loss of approximately \$125 million for Gwinnett County Public Schools since FY2003. This presents a formidable challenge in meeting the needs of the rapidly growing school system, not only for FY2009 but for future years as well.

These revenue shortfalls, combined with an \$11.8 million increase in the required "Five Mill Buy-In," have shifted a greater burden for school funding to local property taxes. The "Five Mill Buy-In" is the part of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula the state requires local school systems to support financially. Each system's share varies according to the county's property tax digest wealth.



### **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

***Carole Boyce,***  
*Chairman*

***Daniel D. Seckinger,***  
*Vice Chairman*

***Dr. Robert McClure***  
***Dr. Mary Kay Murphy***  
***Louise Radloff***

***J. Alvin Wilbanks,***  
*CEO/Superintendent*

### **THE MISSION OF GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*is to pursue excellence  
in academic knowledge,  
skills, and behavior  
for each student,  
resulting in measured  
improvement against  
local, national, and  
world-class standards.*

437 Old Peachtree Road, NW  
Suwanee, GA  
30024-2978  
678-301-6000  
[www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us](http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us)

It is the policy of Gwinnett County Public Schools  
not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex,  
religion, national origin, age, or disability in any  
employment practice, educational program, or any  
other program, activity, or service.

**--More--**

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 the Board of Education, 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 20.55, which is the same millage rate as last year's rate. 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 19.25 mills and the debt-service rate is recommended to remain at 1.30 mills. This is a total recommended millage rate of 20.55 mills.

At the proposed 20.55 mills, the school tax rate remains lower than it was in the mid-to-late 1990s. In fiscal years 1995 and 1996, the total tax rate was 21.85 mills, and it stood at 20.75 mills for the next three years.

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 Department of Budgets and Financial Reporting. For information, call 678-301-6210.