Pender County Schools

2026-2027 Local Budget Shortfall

$2.7 million

Impact Statement

Local Budget Request

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS

The 2026–2027 request separates the cost to maintain current services from strategic investments that advance district priorities.

Category	Amount
2025-2026 Current Appropriation	$29,789,720
Proposed Increase to Maintain Services	$4,000,000
2026-2027 Minimum Budget Proposal	**$33,789,720**
Proposed Increase to Advance Services	$3,534,000
2026-2027 Budget Proposal to Advance Services	**$37,323,720**

Priorities to Advance Services:

- Supplement Increase +1.5% (Certified goes from 10.5% to 12%) - **$1,200,000**
- Supplement Increase +1.5% (Non-Certified goes from 5.5% to 7%) - **$448,000**
- Advanced Teaching Roles - **$100,000**
- Athletic/Extra Curricular Supplement Increase and creation - **$250,000**
- Salary Study Funding - **$500,000 - $750,000**
- HS - General Maintenance Employees - **(3) $186,000**
- Instructional Technology - **(1) $60,000**
- HVAC/General Maintenance - **(3) $240,000**
- Professional Development - **$50,000**
- Bus Retention Phase II - **$250,000**

Local Budget Request

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Executive Summary

Strategic Assessment Overview

In order to maintain 2025-2026 services and staffing levels, Pender County Schools asked for a $4 million increase in operational funding to cover the mandated increases to our employees' retirement expenses, health insurance, FICA/Social Security and Medicare for the upcoming school year. This $4 million increase was just to cover the cost of our current employees and services and does not include adding anything new for the 2026-2027 school year.

86%

Operational Budget Supports Staff

The majority of the district's operational budget is dedicated to staffing, making personnel costs the primary factor in each budget scenario.

$87,560.38

Avg. Annual Employee Cost

Includes salary plus 32.32% (current) in additional employment costs, including Social Security/Medicare, retirement, health insurance, and local supplement.

Staff Positions Lost

21

Employee Positions Lost

Financial Requirements

Cost Savings

$1,880,341.33

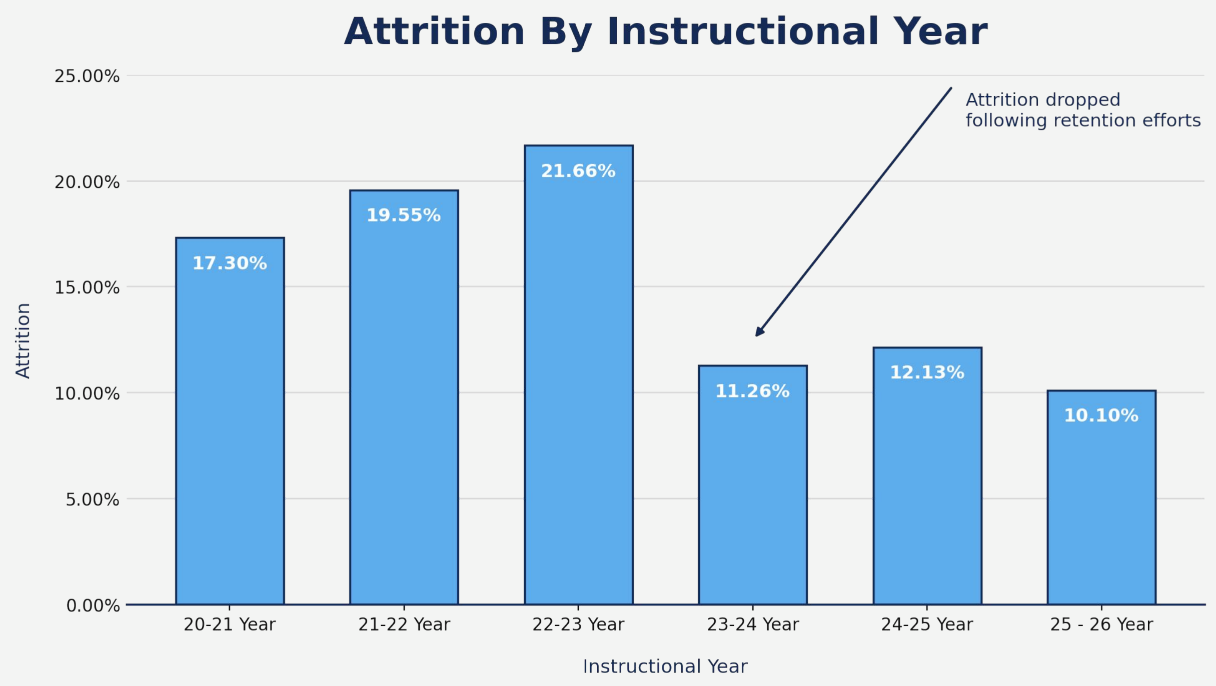
Shortfall Remaining

$829,658.67

OPERATIONAL IMPACT: *Loss of key support positions serving instruction, Exceptional Children services, and Beginning Teacher development.*

Staff Retention

- State, Regional, and National recognized program
- Significant Support mechanisms developed
- Cost to run the BT program - $295,440.39



INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

Supporting Teachers • Leading Learning • Improving Student Outcomes

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

- LETRS Facilitators (Volumes 1 & 2)
- Fundations Trainers (Levels K–3)
- mCLASS Trainers
- EVAAS Professional Development

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT

- Curriculum onboarding for all new hires:
  - Great Minds
  - Smithsonian Science
  - Heggerty
  - Geodes

ONGOING LEARNING

- School-Based Professional Development
- Back-to-School Training
- Administrator-Requested Training
- National Board Support

CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

- District Curriculum Inventory & Ordering
- Pacing Guides & Instructional Trackers
- Literacy, Math & Science Resource Hubs
- Elementary & MTSS Blueprint Development

ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT

- Schoolnet Assessments
- Quarterly Benchmarks
- Common Formative Assessments (CFAs)
- EOS Audits
- mCLASS Assessment Support

DATA & ACCOUNTABILITY

- District & School Data Reporting
- Literacy & Math Profiles
- State Reporting & RIA Data
- mCLASS Rostering & Access Support

LEADERSHIP & DISTRICT IMPACT

LITERACY INITIATIVES

- Read to Achieve (RtA) Camp Leadership
- K–3 Literacy Projects & Initiatives
- Individual Reading Plan (IRP) Support
- LETRS Implementation Support

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

- Lead Elementary Instructional Coach Team
- Attend District Curriculum Meetings
- Instructional Rounds Participation
- Support District-wide Initiatives

SCHOOL & TEACHER SUPPORT

- Support Multiple Schools & Administrators
- Long-Term Substitute Support (Lesson Plans & Resources)
- Support National Board Candidates
- Collaborative Problem Solving & Continuous Improvement

BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY | **ENSURING CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION** | **SUPPORTING ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY** | **LEADING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING** | **ADVANCING LITERACY & STUDENT SUCCESS**

★ INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES IMPACT EVERY SCHOOL, EVERY TEACHER, AND EVERY STUDENT. ★

Academic Performance:
Elementary Schools

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS- GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY (GLP)					
Test	2020-21 % Proficient	2021-22 % Proficient	2022-23 % Proficient	2023-24 % Proficient	2024-25 % Proficient
Math- 3rd	55.30	61.90	65.10	67.20	65.20
Math- 4th	47.60	56.00	69.30	60.30	67.70
Math- 5th	52.00	58.50	64.10	64.70	63.20
Reading- 3rd	44.70	45.60	47.70	50.00	44.20
Reading- 4th	50.30	52.30	63.90	56.70	61.10
Reading- 5th	47.70	52.10	53.40	57.70	54.60
Science- 5th	63.90	68.60	75.30	73.60	64.10

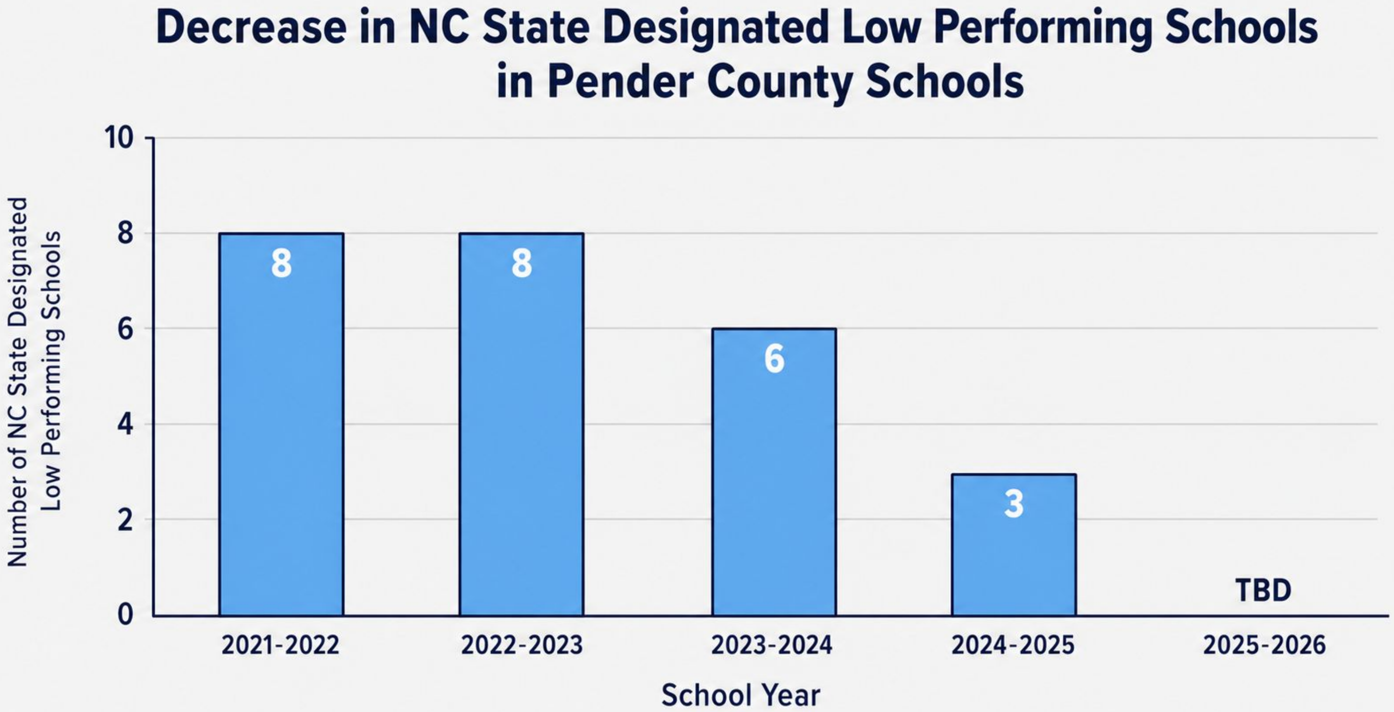
Academic Performance:
Middle Schools

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS- GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY (GLP)					
Test	2020-21 % Proficient	2021-22 % Proficient	2022-23 % Proficient	2023-24 % Proficient	2024-25 % Proficient
Math- 6th	46.80	49.40	55.80	59.20	64.40
Math- 7th	49.10	53.10	50.50	54.80	61.40
Math 8 - 8th	37.50	48.30	51.70	51.80	54.60
Reading- 6th	46.20	45.30	49.80	52.40	55.10
Reading- 7th	51.40	48.00	53.10	53.30	52.60
Reading- 8th	49.90	55.70	54.70	54.20	57.10
Science- 8th	80.10	77.60	72.10	74.30	63.00

Academic Performance:
High Schools

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS- GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY (GLP)					
Test	2020-21 % Proficient	2021-22 % Proficient	2022-23 % Proficient	2023-24 % Proficient	2024-25 % Proficient
Biology	55.20	57.80	62.10	62.00	56.90
English II	62.60	62.10	63.40	66.80	63.80
NC Math I	33.70	38.30	49.70	49.40	40.50
NC Math III	48.50	55.50	56.30	58.50	68.50
ACT 11th	58.00	50.00	48.10	44.70	59.60
Workkeys 12th	63.00	59.00	70.10	58.50	70.80
ACT/Workkeys	N/A	58.00	61.70	60.60	58.00

Schools are Improving



Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
(NC State Designated Low Performing Schools List)

Impact of Losing EC Coordinators

80%

Staff Reduction

Staffing Crisis

District-level support reduced from 10 EC Support members to 2. Shifts focus from proactive support to basic compliance.

- **Service Breakdown:** Reduced capacity for timely evaluations, eligibility, and IEP development.
- **Early Intervention Loss:** Elimination of Early Childhood Coordinator stalls support for 3-year-olds.
- **Operational Strain:** Critical liaison functions lost; school teams overextended with assessment duties.
- **Reduced Support:** Less coaching for teachers and direct assistance for students/families.

CRITICAL RISK: *Increased threat of due process complaints, state litigation, and costly compliance failures.*

Substitute Funding Reduction

25%

Decrease

Financial Requirements

Cost Savings

$625,000.00

Shortfall Remaining

$204,658.67

OPERATIONAL IMPACT: *Teachers and staff will be required to cover classrooms during shortages.*

Strain on Teachers and Staff

Loss of Planning Time

Teachers lose planning periods to provide class coverage, while staff and administrators spend additional time on daily arrangements.

Stress & Burnout

Increased workload contributes to higher stress levels and potential burnout among educational professionals.

Impact on Students

Less time is available for critical student support, targeted interventions, and instructional planning.

Operational Efficiency

School operations become more reactive, significantly reducing overall organizational efficiency.

OPERATIONAL IMPACT: *Teachers and students are negatively affected.*

TWC Data

	2024 TWC		2025 EOY	2026 TWC	
Category	**State**	**District**		**State**	**District**
Retention	83.24%	84.29%	83.96%	85.12%	86.60%
School Leadership	82.32%	81.39%	84.83%	84.22%	87.59%
Teacher Leadership	80.73%	82.56%	79.67%	83.03%	84.34%
Managing Student Conduct	68.99%	68.40%	74.30%	81.39%	82.48%
Safety & Wellbeing	84.78%	84.91%	84.24%	86.65%	87.73%
Facilities & Resources	82.54%	83.03%	70.65%	82.72%	83.17%
Community Support & Involvement	85.79%	86.35%	86.15%	87.05%	87.13%
Professional Learning & Support	75.71%	67.18%	67.44%	78.56%	74.02%
Instructional Practices & Supports	87.92%	85.91%	85.04%	89.47%	89.83%
Time	66.49%	61.92%	62.15%	68.38%	65.82%
Equity	82.82%	81.77%	79.11%	86.36%	86.29%
Total	**80.12%**	**78.88%**	**77.96%**	**82.99%**	**83.18%**

Professional Development

Eliminated

Schools receive zero staff development funds

Financial Requirements

Cost Savings

$180,000.00

Shortfall Remaining

$24,658.67

OPERATIONAL IMPACT: *Elimination of professional development opportunities.*

Impact on Professional Learning

Limited Release Time

Fewer available funds for substitutes limit critical release time for professional learning.

Decreased Participation

Participation in workshops, training sessions, and instructional coaching will decrease.

Scheduling Barriers

Collaborative learning opportunities during the school day become more difficult to schedule.

Operational Efficiency

Schools will need to shift toward alternative professional development models to adapt.

THE RESULT:
A CASCADE OF
MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Lower educator confidence and capacity → Less effective teaching and student learning → Higher turnover and increased recruitment costs → Weaker schools. Weaker system. Weaker futures.

SUMMARY IMPACT: *Professional Teaching Staff need 6 CEUs per 5 year license cycle.*

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS

Other Options Considered

Options	Savings Potential
Move All Coaches back to classrooms	**$1,880,341.33**
Move APs to 10 months	$200,000.00
Cut athletics	$900,000.00
Budget Subs to 50%	$1,250,000.00
Budget subs to 75%	**$625,000.00**
Decrease local supplement by .005%	$1,200,000.00
Moving to an in house PD Model	**$180,000.00**
Move PILA to regional sites	$315,000.00

NOTE: *These options were considered based on expenses paid out of local funding.*

Board Considerations

Financial Sustainability
Evaluate the long-term financial viability and sustainability of each proposed funding scenario.

Staffing & Student Services
Carefully consider the specific impacts of staffing changes on student services and overall district operations.

Recruitment & Retention
Assess the implications of each scenario on the district's ability to recruit and retain high-quality staff.

Budget Adoption Strategy
Determine the preferred funding strategy to support the FY 2026-2027 budget adoption process.

FY 2026-2027 PLANNING: *Decision framework for local appropriation funding scenarios.*

Risk to Recent **Successes**

Foundations of Success

Improved student performance, academic growth, and staff retention have been supported by professional learning.

Impending Slowdown

Reduced professional development opportunities may slow improvement efforts.

Instructional Impact

Limited access to coaching and collaborative learning may impact instructional effectiveness.

Retention Threats

Staff retention gains could be challenged as workload increases and support decreases.

STRATEGIC NECESSITY:

- *Progress is directly connected to investments in teacher support and learning.*
- *Protecting teacher time is essential to sustaining school improvement efforts.*

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS

Closing Statement

The positions being moved from district-level support roles back into classrooms have played a significant role in improving student performance, academic growth, staff retention, and support for schools serving our most marginalized students and families.

While these changes help address the immediate funding shortfall, they will also reduce the systems of support that help teachers teach, schools improve, and students succeed. The long-term impact will be felt most directly by students.