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CMS Gets Advice on Cutting Costs

By: Johnell Johnson

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CHARLOTTE—As Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools faces down major budget cuts, a national consulting firm is offering advice on how to run the schools more efficiently and save money- but it could mean larger class sizes.

Last month CMS trimmed 5.3 million from its budget for this school year with things like a hiring freeze and reduced costs at the central office. But larger cuts are coming.

That's why Superintendent Dr. Peter Gorman and the school board are looking to Education Resource Strategies to help plan for next year's budget.

"We're not saying that small schools, spending more on small schools, is necessarily a bad strategy," Jonathan Travers, Director of Education Resource Strategies, said. But we think that it is important for folks to be cognizant and deliberate about the extra investment that they're making."

That was just one of several items that Jonathan Travers with ERS discussed Wednesday during the media briefing.

The company also suggests that there is a relationship between students receiving free or reduced lunch and low test scores. He adds hiring quality teachers is more important than the quantity.

"Just making sure that all these things- academic time, individual attention, teaching quality- align with their fundamental vision for their instructional model," Travers said.

Gorman says that CMS may be short about \$70 million for the 2009-2010 school year and trying to save every penny will be critical.

"This is what we've been trying to do," Gorman said. "This makes it crystal clear and we're hoping that this will drive the board in the budget reduction process."

Gorman and the school board will hold a work session on Friday to talk about the potential budget cuts for the next school year.