



# ***Why Balanced Schools?***

**Good For Our  
Wallets**

**Tom Oxholm**

The Wake Education Partnership with its community partners  
Wake County PTA Council, Cary Chamber of Commerce, Greater Raleigh Chamber  
of Commerce, and KPMG Peat Marwick, present...

# Show Me the Money:

A Community  
Guide to  
Wake County  
Public  
School System  
Spending



# Quality Matters 2001:

A Wake Community Review of the Public's Schools



## Civitas Institute Study Finds Wake County Ranks in Top Quartile of Cost-Effective Schools

The Civitas Institute issued a study last week that purports to rank North Carolina's 115 school systems on the basis of how much they spend to graduate one student. To arrive at the per-graduate cost they took the last 13 years of local, state and federal education spending – spanning a student's public school experience from Kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade – and then divided the total 13-year investment by the 2008-09 graduation rate.

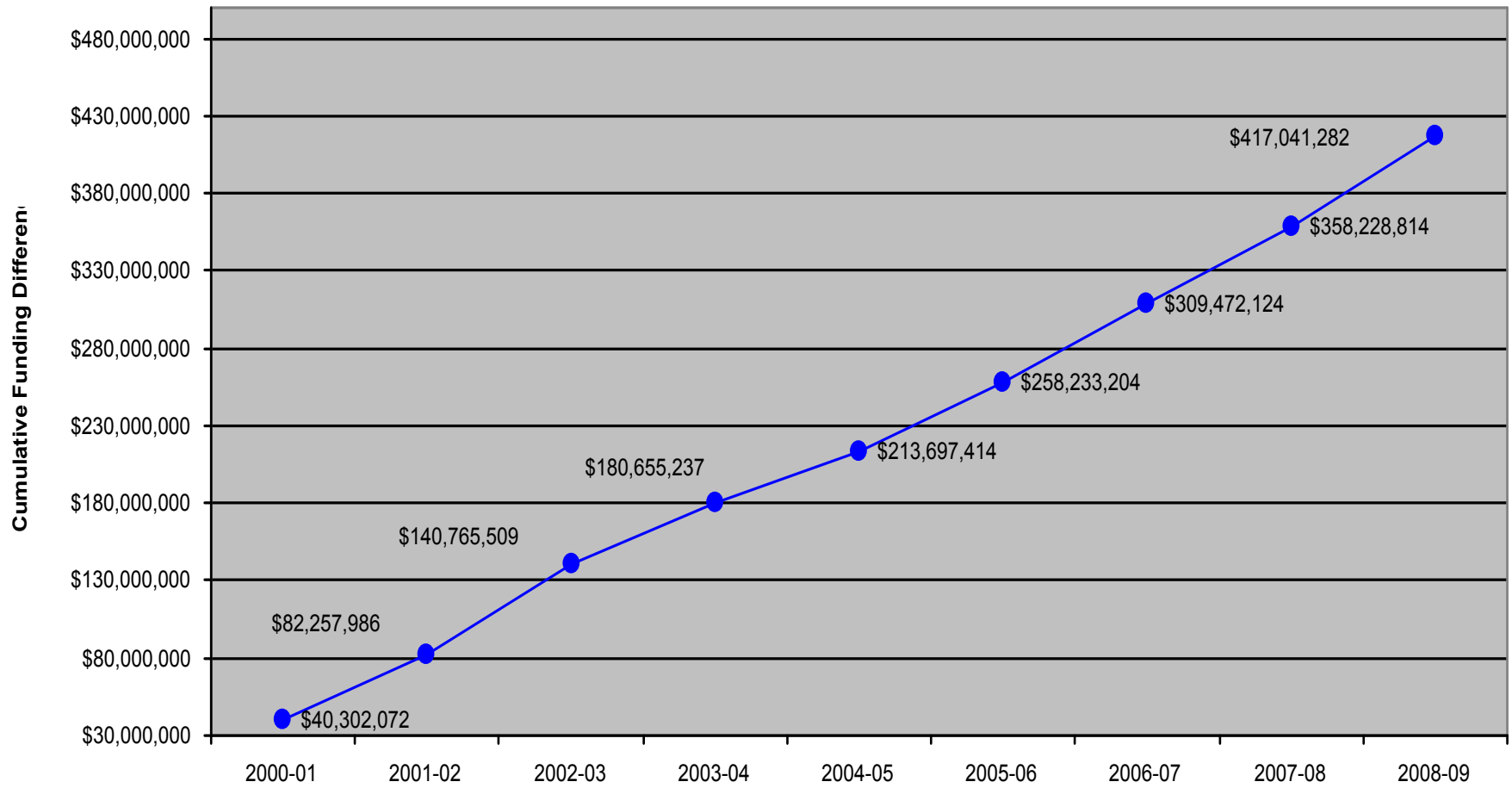
Predictably, under this approach school systems with low graduation rates were found to invest considerably more per high school graduate than were systems with high graduation rates. Tyrrell County schools, for instance, had the state's lowest high school completion rate in 2008-09, graduating just 57.9% of its students. Subsequently, its per pupil graduation cost was \$265,395 using Civitas methodology.

Wake County's per-graduate cost was found to be nearly \$20,000 below the average per-graduate cost, coming in at \$123,006 per graduate versus the \$142,027 statewide average. That put Wake in the top quartile for cost-effectiveness.

Wake was the only urban school system to rank in the top quartile. Forsyth and Guilford Counties ranked in the second quartile and Charlotte-Mecklenburg was in the next-to-the-lowest quartile with a per-graduate cost of \$141,693 per graduate. However, it must again be pointed out that the primary difference in per-graduate costs per school system results from differences in graduation rates. In 2008-09, Charlotte Mecklenburg's high school completion rate was only 66.1% while Wake County's was 78.4%.

**Cumulative Incremental Funding to WCPSS  
If Funded as CMS Given Differences in County Appropriations & Supplemental Taxes  
WCPSS Enrollment in Each Year 2000-01 through 2008-09**

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profiles 2000-01 through 2008-09



**Figure 2. Comparison of Per Pupil Expenditures for WCPSS and CMS (local portion only)**

**(Excludes Child Nutrition)**

*Sources: NC DPI Statistical Profiles 1999-2000 through 2007-08  
& Selected Financial Data - 2008-09*

