

charlotteobserver.com | Regional News

[Comments](#) (0) | [Recommend](#) (0)

Student numbers fall short

With enrollment at 400 under projection, the county may get some funds back.

By Cliff Harrington
charrington@charlotteobserver.com
Posted: Sunday, Sep. 14, 2008

MONROE With enrollment lower than expected, Union County Public Schools may give back some per-pupil funding received from the county for this school year, Superintendent Ed Davis says.

Early numbers show the school system has about 400 fewer students than projected.

Official numbers for 2008-09 are not yet in and won't be tabulated until after the 20th day of school. But based on Davis's most recent numbers, the increase in students is lower than school officials thought it would be, he said in an interview.

Counts show about 38,600 students in Union County Public Schools, a 3.8 percent increase from last year. School officials had projected 39,000, a 7 percent rise.

Last year, the school system's student projections also fell short. In September 2007, the official 20-day count showed 37,100 students, Davis said. That was up 7.4 percent, but school officials were expecting 12.5 percent growth. Union County Public Schools did not return money to the county last year.

Each of the past two years, county commissioners have talked at length about how much money to allocate.

"We have a funding formula with the county that we agreed to this year," Davis said. "It's my recommendation that we live up to our end of the bargain.

"We need to do what we said. We need to give the money back, if we're going to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money."

Davis said it's hard to predict how many new students will come to the system each year.

Union County public schools has been a drawing card for newcomers during the past decade. A large portion of students in the system perform well on key tests.

But with a sagging economy and fewer new homes being built, "the rate of growth will be lower than we thought it would be," Davis said.