



37 school jobs on chopping block

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The Monroe County School District will cut 37 jobs from local schools and 17 department positions, according to a plan laid out at the school board's meeting this week.

Cuts at the school level are to be made by individual principals, who have discrepancy on how to restructure their staff, said school Superintendent Randy Acevedo after the April 22 meeting.

The plan referred to the salaried positions as "allocations." Each allocation is equal to a specific salary, so one allocation may equal more or less than employee. For example, a teacher is one allocation, an assistant principle is 1.44 allocations and an office clerk is .65 of one allocation.

For example, principles can save more total jobs by letting some senior administrators go. Or they can save veterans by cutting more lower-level positions.

Acevedo introduced a school-by-school plan at the Tuesday meeting. In it, the district's administration recommended certain areas take the brunt of the budget axe, including high school athletic trainers, substitute teachers and assistant principles, among others.

Marathon High School is losing the most allocations with 4.375, according to school documents. Key West's Glenn Archer Elementary will lose the least with 1.938 allocations.

The difference in allocations is intended to spread the pain to schools that either have more total allocations or are expected to decline in enrollment, Acevedo said at the meeting. In all, the schools will eliminate \$2.73 million dollars with the allocation cuts.

Acevedo said he hopes the school can avoid firing any one by not renewing teachers' contracts, placing administrators back in classrooms and offering incentives to induce early retirement. But he also said many could reject the changes and some will be fired.

"If the early retirement folks take advantage of that program — for every position that takes that — that's one less in that precinct that will be cut," Acevedo said.

The district office will lose five maintenance allocations, two from transportation, four from special education programs and six clerks. Combined with other savings, Acevedo will cut \$3.55 million.

School Board member John Dick said he wanted more cuts at the district office level.

“Where I have a problem is [Acevedo is] asking too much from the schools and we’re not getting enough from the central office,” he said.

School Board member Andy Griffiths said the district office had good reason to not make further cuts, including challenges created by the county’s special geography.

But Griffiths said he did think the largesse of the school’s administration had grown unchecked. He said he wanted the district to shift to treating principals like CEOs of individual schools, decentralizing the school administration.

“It’s like my captains with my boats,” he said. “I would like to have control, but am never going to be able to control the ship like he can. The more I can do for him, I enable him. We’re paying these people a lot of money, and I think they should be able to do more.”

The board heard other contentious issues at its meeting, including discussion over the first draft of new salaries for administrators. The schedule will eliminate an incentivized payment plan — known as supplemental pay — where employees could perform work beyond their job description and receive extra pay.

Under the new plan, employees will be paid a flat salary, incorporating extra duties. Dick voted against the schedule, saying he didn’t yet have enough information. The rest of the board passed the draft. Acevedo said he would bring a new version once he had completed further budgeting.

Another issue that drew controversy was a contract With Reality Vision Consulting for \$2,800. Acevedo said the company would help the school identify and implement risk reducing measures based on the school’s first risk assessment. Dick and board member Steve Pribramsky voted against the contract, saying school officials should be able to perform the services themselves. The board passed the measure 3 to 2.