



## School district expects less cuts than last year

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*The budget axe is falling softer than expected, as the Monroe County School Board looks to cut 35 teachers' contracts this year, according to the school district's superintendent.*

Last year, the school district did not renew 38 contracts with teachers in their first, second or third years of employment. Principals at each school can choose not to renew contracts with newer teachers. This year, principals were asked to cut a combined \$2.73 million by letting go personnel.

Acevedo said some might be "surprised" that next year's budget required fewer terminations. He also said that some of the 35 teachers were cut for reasons other than budget constraints.

Some teachers let go for budget reasons could be brought back if the school can negotiate acceptable early retirement packages for some of its veteran educators.

"We don't want to give the false sense of hope to anyone," Acevedo said. "It may not be that if 30 people retire that 30 people are going to get their job back."

School Board member John Dick said that some of the teachers let go might be left with a bad taste in their mouth. At issue is what he calls "double dipping," a practice where veteran employees enroll in Deferred Retirement Option Program, an early retirement program, then return to work a month later. All the while they collect their pensions.

"We're letting go some young people that we don't want to and there are some people who have retired and come back on," Dick said. "It's not a rampant issue here, but we need to resolve every issue we have now."

"Imagine that we've got someone we want to keep, and now they have to move away, and there's some big shot sitting in the district office double dipping. That's not going to sit well. It doesn't sit well with me."

The school board will consider the cuts at its meeting in Tavernier Tuesday at Coral Shores High School.

At the meeting Dick says he will also raise questions about why school law firm Vernis & Bowling worked on a suit against the school board for a year without informing the board. He also said the firm was asked to report to the school board about potentially extraneous legal bills, and then charged the board more than \$3,000 for that report, an amount he says is too much.

The issue will not be put to a vote, Dick said, but it could affect his vote on Vernis & Bowling's annual contract.

The school board also invited representatives from the state attorney and sheriff's office to Tuesday's meeting after a picture was sent anonymously to the board possibly showing students drinking alcohol. School Board member Steve Pribramsky said he hopes to discuss the school's role in the matter with the legal representatives.

"The pictures I saw were not on school property," Pribramsky said. "I don't think there's a lot, if anything, that the school board can do to tell parents how to parent their children."

Also on the agenda: Dick says he might put banning all out-of-county travel to a vote. He says it's "just the right thing to do" as the board makes cuts across the board.

The board will also consider merging possibilities of Glynn Archer Elementary and Sigsbee Elementary schools, as well as the future of Horace O'Bryant Middle School. Pribramsky said the middle school is on next week's agenda to quell any idea that it will change use or close.