



Schools slashing jobs

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Administrators, others expected to return to the classrooms

The Monroe County School District could cut as many as 38 positions from 12 schools because of a dwindling budget and less state funding.

Tuesday in Key West, Superintendent Randy Acevedo proposed to the School Board eliminating 38 positions and cutting discretionary spending by 15 percent to meet a board-imposed \$88 million cap on the 2008-09 budget.

The cap, approved by the board last month, is about \$6 million less than the \$94 million spent by the school district in 2007-08.

On the chopping block are almost 38 full-time and part-time positions, including 13 curriculum resource teachers, about eight office workers, seven teacher's aides, three athletic trainers and seven assistant principals.

Acevedo estimates the cuts will save about \$2.7 million, and said it's unlikely the district will be forced to lay off employees.

Instead, he said, assistant principals and curriculum resource teachers will be encouraged to return as classroom teachers, and other positions will be left vacant through attrition.

In addition to the job cuts, Acevedo also proposed cutting:

- Discretionary spending in schools by 15 percent.
- \$500,000 in school insurance premiums.
- \$315,000 in maintenance spending.
- \$75,000 in transportation.
- \$400,000 in the Exceptional Student Education Department.
- \$270,000 in the clerical budget.

Those cuts would save the district almost \$3.5 million but would likely result in more positions being cut at the administrative level, Acevedo said.

He also said the district could save about \$300,000 by offering early retirement incentives to three administrators close to retirement.

Because the budget won't be finalized until the summer, Acevedo said that if schools "have a way and really have a desire, they can find a way to trade the positions back" by swapping the funding for that position with funding for another one.

Schools statewide are cutting back on spending in anticipation of a \$3 billion cut in the state budget, which largely targets education.

Proposed state budgets in both the Senate and House also require school districts to fund a higher percentage of their budgets with local property taxes than in previous years.

Acevedo said all cuts were made in areas that "keep impact as minimal as possible to schools."

Acevedo also presented new job descriptions and a new salary schedule for 95 administrators who had previously been earning extra, or supplemental, pay.

The board voted 3-2 in February to do away with supplemental pay, which had for years drawn accusations of giving unfair bonuses to administrators.

Since 2006, two independent audits and a report from the state Auditor General's Office criticized the district for the amount of supplemental pay given to administrators.

Both independent audits suggested doing away with supplements or rolling them into administrative salaries, but administrators argued they were awarded supplements only for work done outside of their job descriptions.

Unlike the old salary schedule, Acevedo's proposed salary schedule does not rely solely on years of experience to place administrators at certain pay levels.

"It would be up to me to place them on the salary scale depending on experience and what they do," Acevedo said.