

Fewer pink slips to come in South Kitsap as school board walks back cuts

Chris Henry, Kitsap Sun Published 2:11 p.m. PT May 9, 2019 | Updated 3:17 p.m. PT May 9, 2019

Interested in education? Support local journalism and read more of our coverage of school funding with a digital subscription to the Kitsap Sun (https://offers.kitsapsun.com/digitaloffer&gps-source=CPNEWS&utm_medium=mix&utm_source=news&utm_campaign=NEWSROOM&utm_content=CPNEWSD).

SOUTH KITSAP — The South Kitsap school board on Wednesday agreed to preserve 17 teaching positions that were slated to be axed under a plan presented last week by Superintendent Karst Brandsma.

South Kitsap administrators last week projected that \$6.1 million in cuts, including 47.5 teaching positions, would be necessary because of a combination of decreasing enrollment, higher personnel costs and a decrease in the amount of local taxes the state allows districts to collect.



A teacher speaks to the South Kitsap school board about proposed budget cuts on May 8, 2019, at Marcus Whitman Middle School. (Photo: Chris Henry, Kitsap Sun)

The board on Wednesday approved a resolution for up to \$4 million in cuts, including 25 staff positions, as well as operating expenses at all schools and departments. Personnel cuts include teaching positions, administrators and support staff.

The school district must notify individuals potentially affected by the reduction in force no later than May 15.

"No department has not been hit. No school has not been hit," Brandsma said.

At least 28 teaching positions will be left vacant due to resignations or retirement of employees who have already made their plans known. More attrition is expected, Brandsma said, but the final number is right now unknown.

Some RIF'd employees could be reassigned to other duties within their classification.

Some positions for school secretaries, facilities and maintenance, technology and other support staff that were set for elimination in the original plan have been restored.

The district was able to save positions in the 2019-20 school year by using more money from its "fund balance" (savings) as well as increased local levy revenue that will be available in 2020 under a bill passed in the recent legislative session.

Teaching positions that were spared from elimination include 10 elementary positions, four at the middle schools, one high school dean, one elementary Spanish immersion teacher and a nursing position, which counts among "certificated" (teaching) staff.

At the elementary and middle schools, 6.5 teaching positions will be eliminated, including a half-time position supporting the district's International Baccalaureate program, under the program reduction resolution approved by the board.

The high school will lose nine classroom teachers and a half-time instructor assigned to help students with credit recovery.

The high school, whose principal stepped down last week, will lose one dean. The assistant principal is in charge of the school for the remainder of the year. Enrollment at the high school is just more than 2,400 students.

Administrative positions targeted for elimination include the district's athletic director, two elementary school assistant principals and an assistant transportation director.

Classified (non-teaching) positions included in the RIF are one full-time position in the communications department, two security guards and one position in transportation.

The \$4 million in reductions also identifies cuts in operating expenses, including more than a half-million in school and department budgets and a \$16,000 reduction in arts funding.

More than a dozen staff, students and community members spoke before the board's vote urging them to minimize cuts that speakers said would contribute to larger classes at the high school and erode the district's arts and language programs at all grades.

Annabelle Nash, a student at South Kitsap High School, said talk of possible layoffs already seems to have hurt morale at the high school. One of her teachers with low seniority told the class he was stressed thinking about the possibility of losing his job.

"I think it's already negatively affecting our classrooms thinking about cutting teachers," Nash said. "As students, we kind of thrive on the new teachers because they understand our viewpoints more."

South Kitsap in the 2018-19 school year has an enrollment around 9,500 students and a budget of around \$150 million.

The budget planning meeting was held at Marcus Whitman Middle School following a "celebration of community partnerships."

Commentary by Jeff Graham: [Eliminating the athletic director spells trouble for South Kitsap \(/story/sports/2019/05/09/running-south-kitsap-high-sports-athletic-director-crazy/1152707001/\)](https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/sports/2019/05/09/running-south-kitsap-high-sports-athletic-director-crazy/1152707001/)

Read or Share this story: <https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2019/05/09/fewer-pink-slips-come-south-kitsap-school-board-walks-back-cuts/1153395001/>