



## No teachers to be laid off in South Kitsap after all

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SOUTH KITSAP — Two weeks ago, it looked like 47 teaching positions would be cut from South Kitsap School District in the upcoming school year. Thursday, that number was down to 17.

By late Friday it was 10, and those to be laid off will be hired as subs until a position opens up, under an agreement reached between the district and the teachers' union.

The reduction in force for teachers was part of a \$4 million package of cuts approved by the school board Thursday. A total of 25 positions, including the 17 teachers, were slated for elimination, as the district faces declining enrollment, increased personnel costs and somewhat lower local levy collections.

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Late Friday, Superintendent Karst Brandsma announced in an email to families that 10 teaching positions would be eliminated in the budget plan, but people now filling those positions would receive a "contract without assignment," given the likelihood some if not all of them could be called back in September.

School districts are legally required to notify individuals affected by a RIF by May 15.

Some positions can be cut through retirement and resignation. The district initially projected at least 28 positions gone through attrition. More are expected between now and the end of school.

Districts typically budget conservatively. Come fall they often have more students than expected in certain grades or at certain schools, requiring them to rehire for the positions they just cut.

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But given the uncertainty, teachers with low seniority who receive a layoff notice typically look elsewhere for work even though they may be hired back in the fall.

"The timing of these notifications causes a stressful and worrisome process as district administrators wait for announcements of staff retirements, resignations and final student enrollment numbers," Brandsma said.

The agreement with the South Kitsap Education Association addresses the RIF roller-coaster. SKEA president John Richardson said the union is satisfied on behalf of its members but still concerned about other positions and budget items to be lost. Richardson said the union believes the district is over-budgeting for salary expenses.

"Ultimately, I don't want anybody to lose their job," Richardson said. "I'm still concerned about the cuts that are happening, and I'm concerned about how that impacts students. It's still SKEA's stance that those cuts don't need to be made."

In this budget cycle, the district will receive increased state funding approved in the recent legislative session, but the final numbers aren't available yet.

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