

## SOUTH KITSAP SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Teacher layoffs tempered by district budget 'scenarios'

Budget cuts lowered to \$4 million for next school year, the board says

By Bob Smith

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PORT ORCHARD — South Kitsap School District's board of directors approved at its regular board meeting May 8 what it calls a "reduced educational program" for the 2019-20 school year.

But wrapped in that language will be budget cuts that total \$4 million and staff layoffs that include some teachers and

other certificated employees.

The school district's board approved the budget reduction, which will severely constrict a variety of services for the next school year. But the \$4 million cut approved last Thursday was \$2 million less than what was originally proposed by Superintendent Karst Brandsma at the board's meeting.

Board members, however, asked the superintendent at their regular meeting for additional information about the cuts to the educational program. A day later, Brandsma provided board members three "restoration scenarios" that detailed how those cuts could be spared. Board members approved all three of the scenarios Thursday night to bring the "reduced educational program" to the \$4 million level.

That's a share of good news for teachers and staff members who initially were looking at a reduction of 25 positions — 17 teachers — under the initial plan to trim \$6 million from

the budget. Instead, under any of the three scenarios proposed, Brandsma reported in a message to district employees and families that the number

of teaching positions to be eliminated would be reduced to 10.

Under an agreement hammered out with the South Kitsap Education Association, the district later said displaced certificated staff will be offered an alternative to a RIF notice. They will receive a “contract without an assignment” pending permanent placement.

Amy Miller, South Kitsap School District’s spokeswoman, said that staff members who accept an alternative contract will be available to fill in when needed at all levels and at all schools until they are placed in a permanent assignment using the recall process agreed upon in the SKEA Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Although teaching staff positions look to have been saved — resulting in no layoffs later in the year — Miller said the \$4 million budget reduction will nonetheless end up trimming certificated and classified administration, and operations positions impacting transportation, security and communication roles.

“We will continue to monitor enrollment and staff attrition closely,” Miller said. “All cuts are difficult and we value the difference our staff makes for the students of South Kitsap. There is amazing work taking place in our schools every day.”

Employees impacted by the cutbacks were required by state law to be notified by May 15.

Exactly how the negotiated cutbacks will play out remains to be seen. Resignations and retirements will soften the blow; in the current school year, the district has recorded 28 resignations and 10 retirements.

One of the more visible positions eliminated by the budget reduction is that of the district’s athletic director. The district’s communications department will also lose a full-time position.

Multiple factors necessitated cuts

The budget cuts were necessitated partly by a decrease in the school district’s student population. Currently, with 9,544 students enrolled — down 118 students from the previous school year — the district is

anticipating an additional loss of 92 students for the 2019-2020 school year. According to the district, each enrolled student impacts the budget revenue by about \$10,000.

Helping to soften the impact, the state Legislature this session raised the local levy cap to \$2.50, or \$2,500 per enrolled student. But board members and the superintendent indicated at the Wednesday meeting that an increase in levy funding does not solve the district's immediate budget shortage. Additional levy funds, to be collected in April and October, won't be available to the school district until next year. And those funds can't be allocated to general education, but rather to enrichment programs.

The presentation by the superintendent revealed that the new levy cap will restore approximately \$4.5 million to the budget in 2020.

The district will dip into its reserve fund for \$2 million to lessen the shortfall, Brandsma said at the Wednesday meeting.



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