

MANATEE SCHOOL CUTS INSUFFICIENT -- "Shared sacrifice" was the message Manatee County schools Superintendent Roger Dearing gave to employees when he asked them to accept a pay cut to prevent as many as 400 jobs from being lost. But it is not as simple as that. Even if employee unions agree to pay cuts, the district still has to make an additional \$6.3 million in cuts to reach its goal of \$21 million in budget reductions. That means cuts at schools and other districtwide programs would still be needed even if employees take the pay cut. It has left one local union questioning the district's claim that the pay cuts would mean no job losses. "When we go to the bargaining table, management is going to have to prove everything that they're saying," said **Pat Barber**, president of the **Manatee Education Association**, which bargains on behalf of 2,700 teachers and teaching assistants. The salary reductions the district is asking employees to accept -- 5 percent for teachers and other support staff, and 7.5 percent for top administrators, principals and assistant principals -- would save roughly \$11.8 million. The need for cuts has been forced on the district by falling sales tax revenues, record fuel prices, tax reform and state revenue shortfalls. Even with the pay cuts, the district will have to consider cuts that include reducing the number of reading coaches, field trips, bus routes and travel for school athletic teams. Administrators will also be asked to take six days of unpaid leave to save money. Also under consideration are the plans submitted by school principals to shave 4.2 percent from the budget of each school. Those proposals range from cutting assistant principals, guidance counselors and custodians to cuts in extra-curricular activities like band or JROTC.

ONLINE DATABASE TRACKS SANCTIONED TEACHERS -- It goes without saying that teacher misconduct is the exception to the rule. But a new state website that contains 1,200 cases suggests it happens more often than parents think. Unveiled in August, the Department of Education's online database lists teachers statewide whose teaching certificates were sanctioned after they engaged in allegedly criminal and/or unethical behavior, either on or off campus. The process isn't new. But it's more public than ever. There is no evidence to suggest teacher misconduct is on the rise. Or that teachers engage in criminal and/or unethical behavior more often than other professionals.

But by law and by tradition, teachers are held to a higher standard. And when they do get into trouble, it clashes with the prevailing image: Upstanding. Underpaid. Unsung. "In any field, you have misconduct," said Florida PTA President Lenelle Cruse, who heard about the state's Web site but has not looked at it. "But overall, we have fantastic teachers. We support our teachers 100 percent." The take from **Jade Moore**, head of the Pinellas teachers union: Keep it in perspective. The local cases represent a tiny fraction of the nearly 29,000 teachers working in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco and Hernando counties. In the past three years, about 10,000 teachers have been employed in Pinellas. "If you said there are 100 cases out there involving gross misconduct and we only had 1,000 teachers, I'd say it's a crisis," Moore said. "But if 9,900 of them have done nothing wrong, and 100 of them have, that's pretty good odds."

MANATEE SCHOOLS CUTTING 187 JOBS, MOSTLY TEACHERS -- Manatee school officials recently offered a deal to avoid 400 possible job cuts if all employees take a pay cut. But that promise rings hollow now for nearly 200 employees, mostly teachers, who were notified this month that they will lose their jobs at the end of the school year. As it struggles to make budget cuts of \$21 million next year, the district has cut loose 187 employees who work under one-year contracts. In recent years, annual-contract teachers were automatically renewed, except for those who were let go because of falling enrollment or poor performance. But this year, the district instructed principals to give termination notices to all one-year contract staff. District officials say the cuts are designed to give them flexibility to keep staffing low in case the pay cut deal is not accepted by teachers and other employee unions. The nonrenewed teachers would only be rehired if there are vacancies after the district finalizes its budget cuts in the next few months. Sarasota County's district is planning to cut \$20 million from its annual budget. Proposed cuts there include the elimination of 175 positions, among them literacy coaches, counselors and athletic coaches.

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154 TEACHERS TO LOSE JOBS IN SEMINOLE -- Budget cuts are having a big impact in local schools. In Seminole County, 154 teachers are losing their jobs. One of them is Suzy Behel. Behel was Florida's Biology Teacher of the Year. She has been teaching science at Lake Brantley High School for 25 years. "The biggest thing driving the cuts in our district is declined enrollment, which we've been facing now. We're going on our third year now," Regina Klaers of Seminole County Public Schools said. "Not as many students coming through the door and consequently, it's very logical, less students and you have less need for teachers." "Still have to pay the bills," Behel said. "What are they paying at the mall? You have to laugh; life is too short to cry." Teachers like Behel are enrolled in a deferred retirement program. They can only be rehired if positions become available. Seminole County is trying to reduce its budget by \$27 million.

VOLUSIA TEACHERS FIGHT BACK ABOUT POSSIBLE JOB CUTS -- One day after News 13 told you hundreds of Volusia County teachers were told they [could lose their jobs](#), the teachers are banding together, saying there has to be a better way. Union members held a private meeting in Port Orange on Thursday. They said they want to work with the district to ways to trim the budget without cutting teachers. Still, many teachers fear even if they keep their jobs, the budget crisis will still leave them unable to pay their bills. "As we have restructuring in the district, there may be a lot of people moving. So there is the potential that a teacher who lives on the east side of Volusia County could have to drive 30 miles to the west side of the county every day. And with gas approaching \$4 a gallon, that's a huge impact on them, especially if we are not able to get a salary increase," said [Andrew Spar](#), a spokesman for the [Volusia Teachers Organization](#).

LEE SCHOOLS LAY OFF ANOTHER 50 -- In every corner, there's a cut. As a half-dozen representatives of the [Teachers Association of Lee County](#) met with school district leaders Friday to discuss trimming teacher contracts, about 50 district employees were notified they had lost their jobs. Those laid off are the victims of the second major district cut in the last two months. All of the cuts were contained to the district's headquarters and doesn't include any teachers. The latest have until June 30 to apply for a new job in the district or clean out their desks and leave, all because of a property tax cut lawmakers promised wouldn't affect educators. Speech and Language Pathologist [Liz Cooper](#) has been in education 28 years. She is not one of those being laid off, but she is a member of the Association and has plenty to say about Tallahassee. "You wonder why the dropout rate is high. You wonder why the juvenile crime rate is high. Well look at what you've done. You've cut everything that would allow these children to get a decent education," said Cooper, who teaches at three schools, including Three Oaks Middle School in Estero. Association President [Mark Castellano](#) nearly boiled over with frustration before the

meeting's contract-cut brainstorming session. "Being an arts teacher all my life, I have defended fine arts tooth and nail all my life," said Castellano, his fist pounding on the table in front of him. "At some point, however, we may have to -- in order to get the public's attention -- simply say we can't open our doors at this time because the funding is not there. We cannot offer this service. ... I get so frustrated with the taxophobic nature of this state that people want service, but don't expect to pay for those services. This is the reality of the situation that you have created based on the votes you have cast."

MIAMI-DADE SCHOOLS PLAN DISTRICTWIDE CUTS -- Citing a growing financial crisis, members of the Miami-Dade School Board on Monday expressed support for postponing the salary increases promised to teachers, raising the price of school lunches and eliminating transportation for magnet- and vocational-school students. They also agreed once again to consider repurposing, a controversial proposal to close up to a dozen underenrolled schools, which came under intense scrutiny earlier this year. The measures are intended to cut more than \$284 million from the school system's 2008-2009 budget. Superintendent Rudy Crew calculated the shortfall based on an expected \$75 million decrease in funding from state legislators and over \$200 million in price hikes and other cost increases, he said. The votes board members cast at the workshop were not official, but gave Crew direction on how to move forward with cuts to the budget. Among the other moves a majority of board members supported:

- Cutting 261 positions from the district's central administration for a savings of \$20 million.
- Eliminating all nonmandatory summer-school programs, saving \$9.9 million.
- Agreeing not to rehire administrators or teachers who have already retired, saving \$13.9 million.
- Enforcing pay cuts for administrators, principals and vice principals, saving \$1 million.
- Eliminating bonus pay for administrators, principals and vice principals, saving \$1.4 million.

Crew's suggestion to postpone raises for teachers led to a heated debate Monday. In order to postpone the raises, which would save the district \$48 million, the board must agree to declare "financial urgency," school system officials said. Board Chairman Agustín Barrera said the raises, which were agreed upon in a three-year contract signed by the **United Teachers of Dade** and the district, were tied into funding from the state. "You pay for what you can afford, and we can't afford this right now," he said. Two board members disagree. "We need to give the teachers their step raises," Ana Rivas Logan said. "We made a statement that we were going to give them their raises. We should follow through." Marta Pérez added that teachers already struggle to get by. **UTD President Karen Aronowitz**, who was not at the meeting, said she was "furious" upon hearing the news. "The district has stated clearly that their first priority in the budget planning is to respect their commitment to our collective bargaining agreement," Aronowitz said. "And that's the first thing they bust." She also said that Crew had "lots of lots of stuff larded in here. Balancing the budget cannot come at the cost of salaries to teachers."

NEW LEE SCHOOL CUTS: 71 POSITIONS, COACHES SALARIES, BAND

UNIFORMS -- Lee County School District athletic coaches will be making less money, music instruments will go unrepaired and unreplaced, and marching bands will wait another year for new uniforms under a second round of proposed budget cuts. In a memo from Superintendent James Browder released late Monday, school board members were given a second list of suggested district cuts. The list also included 75 positions, only 25 of which were vacant. Seven positions in the district's Exceptional Student Education department, seven in Information Systems and 16 in Transportation make up the hardest hit personnel areas. The 50 employees have been notified and their positions will be eliminated as of June 30. Also eliminated in the proposal was overtime pay for employees and other security and transportation services according to the list. After-school and intramural programs will be reduced by two days a week. Overall, the proposed reductions totaled \$6.5 million from the general fund, Browder said in the memo. Last month, the district slashed \$8.2 million. Board Member Bob Chilmonik said the cuts come right out of the classroom, despite district officials saying otherwise. "This is what keeps students in school and keeps them interested. We have a terrible drop out problem. We have 54 percent of our black students not graduating," Chilmonik said concerning the cutting of the

coach's athletic subsidy. "I don't support taking money out of the classroom. I'm going to be very vocal about this in the coming months."

NASSAU SCHOOLS TO TRIM TEACHERS, STAFF -- There will be dozens of fewer teachers and other employees serving Nassau County Schools this fall after \$4 million in anticipated budget cuts are implemented, schools Superintendent John Ruis confirmed. Despite increasing student enrollment, the local school district is grappling with an expected reduction in state funding for the first time in memory. "I've been in this business 28 years, and I've never had less money from the state than I did the year before," said Susan Farmer, executive director of business services for the schools. The schools have no choice but to reduce employees to accommodate budget cuts, Farmer said. "When you have 80 percent of your budget in salaries, that's the only place to go," she said. Local schools' state funding has been cut twice already during this fiscal year, in October and March, costing \$2.3 million, Farmer said. State legislators are meeting now to determine how much more to cut funding, and the school district is preparing its budget for the year that begins July 1 with a working figure of \$4 million less than when this fiscal year began. Talks are ongoing with the teachers' union to consider how to implement the reduction in force, which would primarily affect new teachers if layoffs are required. Teachers that lose their jobs would be notified by the end of the school year. In addition to teachers, the schools are expected to cut two media center jobs, three guidance counselors and 11 non-instructional and paraprofessional positions. Farmer said administrative budgets are being cut by 10 percent. That means other administrative support staff, including school bus drivers, custodial staff and others, also could be cut.