



*The continuing budget shortfall facing the 2010-11 school year has created the need for drastic reductions, many of which are impacting employees and their positions. In February, the school board raised 2010-11 class sizes, which means that some employees will no longer be needed at their current assignment and possibly may need to take positions in other schools or departments.*

### **How many teaching positions would be affected?**

The total number of positions affected is still being determined. The increase in class sizes approved by the board in February will result in a reduction of approximately 475 teaching positions. Many of these positions, if not most, may be absorbed through normal attrition. However, not every position can be absorbed and there is expected to be a Reduction In Force (RIF) process. More information about the process and criteria for eliminating a position through RIF is forthcoming.

### **What about other positions?**

Aside from teaching jobs, the positions that are mostly or 100% locally funded by the school system – which means they are funded by Fulton without state or federal contributions – and that have the least impact on core student academics were evaluated. In many cases, these are programs that few systems have or that Fulton funds at a higher ratio than other systems. For example, many systems don't have as many social workers, psychologists and counselors as Fulton does. They also don't have elementary band/orchestra programs or instructional support teachers. In more prosperous times, Fulton had appropriate funding to offer these programs and was able to fund additional positions above what other systems funded.

### **How are counselors, school psychologists, ISTs and school resource officers affected?**

Superintendent Loe originally had recommended a change in staffing that significantly impacted staffing levels of counselors, school psychologists, instructional support specialists and school resource officers. Information received Thursday, March 11, from Governor Perdue, however, indicates that Fulton may not be cut quite as deeply as originally thought – an estimated \$6 million less. As a result, Dr. Loe is now recommending that the workforce of social workers, psychologists and ISTs be reduced by 25 percent rather than 50 percent. She also is recommending that school resource officers be kept at their current staffing levels. All other recommendations for personnel cuts remain unchanged.

Also, Dr. Loe is recommending the addition of a flexible support position at each regular middle and high school. Principals can use this position to offset one of the cut positions, such as a counselor, media specialist or teacher. The undesignated assistant administrator position also can be considered for high schools.

### **If a position is recommended for elimination, when would affected staff be notified?**

Right now, the positions identified for elimination are only recommendations. They have not been approved by the school board. However, Dr. Loe felt announcing these recommendations as early as possible would give affected staff members more time to seek other positions in the

system or to pursue other career opportunities for next year. Supervisors have already contacted these employees and explained the recommendations.

The school board discussed the recommendations at their March 9 work session and have the option of approving the recommendations at March 18 board meeting. If the school board approves them, Human Resources staff and school principals will begin working with the employees about other potential positions or begin working through the RIF process.

### **Are there cost-saving measures that do not involve personnel cuts?**

Approximately 85% of the school system's budget goes toward salaries and benefits, which means there are few viable options that don't impact personnel. Due to several consecutive years of declining local revenues and cuts at the state level, the school system has done everything possible to keep the budget situation from affecting the livelihood of its employees. Unfortunately, schools and central office departments have cut nearly as much as they can without undermining the quality of support they provide to the classroom. There is nowhere else to turn except that of personnel-related reductions.

These current recommendations represent a phase in the budget process, and in April, Dr. Loe will recommend a second phase of cost-saving measures that do not involve staff reductions. These most likely will be further reductions to central office departments and re-prioritization of some initiatives.

### **How does Fulton's situation compare to neighboring school systems?**

The reductions and cuts made over the past few years have actually put Fulton in a better situation than many other school systems. However, Fulton may seem to be in a tighter situation because of several factors that are exacerbated by the system's large size, such as:

- 1) A continued decline in state revenues
- 2) Lower projected local revenues – high percentage of property tax bill appeals, foreclosures, and the continued struggle of the commercial property industry in Fulton
- 3) Increased costs for the 2010-11 school year – student growth of approximately 1,700 new students, the opening of the Feldwood Road elementary school and a new start-up charter school, and increased employer-paid contributions to the Teachers Retirement System.

### **How long until the economy improves?**

According to Roger Tutterow, a Mercer University economics professor and a national expert on the economic situation, the recession is likely over in the sense that the nation's gross domestic product is showing signs of improvement. However, he notes that company payrolls will take time to improve and that it may be 2013 before companies get back to pre-recession employment levels.

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