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### **Schools: 14,800 teaching jobs in jeopardy**

*Another 5,000 job losses possible through attrition and non-teacher layoffs*

Schools could lay off more than 14,000 teachers next year if Gov. David Paterson's proposed \$1.3 billion cut in education aid is enacted, according to a report issued today by the New York State Council of School Superintendents (the Council) and the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA).

These cuts would translate into larger class sizes, less extra help, fewer advanced classes, and other lost opportunities for students, the report showed.

Under the governor's proposed 2010-11 Executive Budget, 99 percent of school districts in New York would see state aid cuts next year. In response to these proposed cuts, the Council and NYSSBA surveyed school superintendents across the state to gauge the impact of the loss of state aid on schools. Completed surveys were received from 323 of 702 superintendents – a response rate of 46 percent.

According to the survey, 77 percent of responding school districts would have to lay off teachers.

On average, these districts anticipate having to lay off 4.1 percent of the teachers they now employ. If all districts are forced to make teacher layoffs at the 4.1 percent rate found in the survey, a total of nearly 6,300 teachers outside New York City could lose their jobs. With New York City threatening to lay off 8,500 teachers, statewide teacher layoffs could number 14,800.

“School district leaders are doing their best to balance the needs of students and taxpayers. But over 70 percent of our budgets are devoted to personnel who provide programs and services for students,” said Robert Bradley, interim executive director of the Council. “Most districts cannot manage the proposed state aid reductions without eliminating jobs. We should not ignore the economic impact either. Imagine the reaction if a private employer announced plans to lay off thousands of workers across New York State.”

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Teachers will not be the only employees affected. School districts responding to the survey said they would need to lay off 2,594 non-teaching staff, including student support staff, administrators, and other employees, such as custodians, kitchen workers and bus drivers.

Another 2,600 positions, both teaching and non-instructional, are projected to be eliminated through attrition and retirement.

In addition to the numerous job losses, the survey also found that districts will have to cut school programs and raise tax levies to make up for the loss in state aid, furthering jeopardizing public education and burdening local taxpayers.

However, school leaders are working hard to keep tax increases to a minimum. According to the survey, 64 percent of districts will propose tax increases of 4 percent or less. More than 80 percent of districts surveyed expect to use some or all of their undesignated reserve funds.

“If school districts are going to minimize property tax increases while dealing with rising expenses and decreased state aid, it will be impossible to avoid employee layoffs,” said NYSSBA Executive Director Timothy G. Kremer. “Teacher and staff layoffs, especially on such a dramatic and widespread scale, will have far reaching consequences for students in New York’s public schools.”

Kremer said that with staffing reductions of the magnitude being considered, schools will not be able to avoid affecting the services students receive. According to the survey:

- 79 percent of schools anticipate increasing class sizes
- 70 percent expect to reduce elective courses
- 67 percent could reduce extracurricular activities, including athletics
- 65 percent expect to reduce or eliminate field trips
- 50 percent say they may need to reduce or cut summer school programs

However, school leaders also recognize that these challenging times require them to think differently, and operate more efficiently, Kremer noted. Toward that end, they have been exploring shared services with municipalities, considering functional consolidation with other school districts and BOCES, and examining the concept of regional high schools.

Moreover, the fiscal climate will put pressure on employee contract negotiations compared to more prosperous years. In some cases, districts and unions have renegotiated labor contracts as a way to avoid some layoffs and reduce the adverse impact of this fiscal crisis on students. This trend may be growing.

Still, state lawmakers can help school districts operate more efficiently by eliminating costly mandates and employee benefit sweeteners, as well as opposing shifting state costs onto local school property taxpayers.

“School districts are facing hard choices that will affect children and communities. We ask that lawmakers do their best, with funding and with flexibility, so that schools can innovate in serving students,” added Bradley. “For leaders in many districts, relief from the cuts is their only hope to be able to make better choices for the students and taxpayers they serve.”

*For the full report, entitled “Shortchanging Students: The State Budget Crisis and the State of Our Schools” and a regional breakdown of projected layoffs and job losses, please visit our websites at [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org) or [www.nyscoss.org](http://www.nyscoss.org).*

**About The Council:** The New York State Council of School Superintendents is the professional association of more than 700 superintendents and other school district leaders.

**About NYSSBA:** The New York State School Boards Association represents nearly 680 school boards and more than 5,000 school board members in New York. NYSSBA provides advocacy, training, and information to school boards in support of their mission to govern the state’s public schools.