

## Ohio schools cut jobs anticipating funding cuts

May 26, 2011

By LISA CORNWELL

CINCINNATI Ohio school districts already are cutting thousands of jobs in anticipation of losing funding in the upcoming state budget, as unions and other education groups lobby hard at the Statehouse to get some of it restored.

In Cincinnati, 226 school district jobs have been cut, including 145 teaching positions. Columbus schools are eliminating the equivalent of about 260 full-time jobs, including about 200 teaching positions. Cleveland's district is eliminating more than 800 jobs, including 643 teacher slots. Dayton school officials are cutting nearly 300 jobs, including about 140 teacher and teacher-support positions.

"No corner of our district has been untouched by the cuts we have had to make," Dayton Superintendent Lori Ward said.

Smaller districts also are slashing jobs. The Medina district in northeast Ohio is cutting more than 70 teacher and teaching-support positions, and 13 teachers won't be replaced in southwest Ohio's New Richmond district.

The Ohio Education Association union says nearly 3,800 teacher and support staff jobs in Ohio won't be filled next year through layoffs, retirements or resignations, and more cuts are expected.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich's \$55.6 billion, two-year budget includes \$6.4 billion in education aid in its first year and \$6.5 billion in its second -- up 1 percent the first year and 2 percent the second. It would take effect July 1.

Kasich spokesman Rob Nichols says no district will take more than a 7.9 percent hit and most will see only a 4 percent to 5 percent decrease in federal, state and local funding.

Teachers' unions and groups representing school boards and school business officials estimate the lost federal stimulus funding and two big tax policy changes contained in the budget really mean districts will see \$3.1 billion in overall losses the next two years.

Stimulus money was intended to carry cash-strapped states through a national recession, after which their revenue streams hopefully would improve.

Nichols said districts should have been prepared for the stimulus dollars to dry up.

"Districts that failed to take into account the loss of federal stimulus money will have more trouble than most coping," he said.

The budget is now in the state Senate, where Thursday is the deadline for the next round of changes in the state's proposed spending blueprint. Senate President Tom Niehaus said Tuesday it was too early to tell what changes would be made to school funding, but education groups are lobbying intensely.

"We're trying to get legislators to understand how these cuts are going to impact students and communities, if people are losing jobs," said Sue Taylor, Ohio Federation of Teachers union president.

Taylor cited a study by the left-leaning Innovation Ohio think tank that estimates 25,000 teaching and support staff positions will be lost by the end of 2013 under the current plan.

"What is scaring a lot of districts now is what situation they will find themselves in come July 1," Taylor said.

Kasich's administration says his plan ensures that districts that rely the most on state assistance will not bear the greatest burden from lost federal stimulus funds. But the majority will see funding decreases, and more than 300 districts will no longer get a tangible personal-property tax reimbursement, said David Varda, executive director of the Ohio Association of School Business Officials.

That reimbursement and a public-utility tax reimbursement pumped over \$1 billion this year into districts that will be affected by the accelerated phase-out of those payments under Kasich's plan, Varda said.

Ohio Education Association spokeswoman Michele Prater said the strategy "passes the buck" to local communities, where pressure will be increased to raise taxes to provide basic educational services.

**Original Article:** <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9NF5GH8o.htm>