

# Detroit Public Schools announces 10 percent pay cuts, massive layoffs

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Detroit Public Schools (DPS) Emergency Financial Manager Roy Roberts announced on Thursday that the district would demand 10 percent wage cuts from all employees in 2012, while axing 853 more jobs. The cuts are part of a broader dismantling of the public education system in Detroit, and will come on top of previous concessions and mass layoffs of public school workers.

The plan estimates that 66,360 students will enroll next year, down from 74,000 total students this past year. All major contracts with the school district, including transportation, utilities, and supplies, will be rebid with planned reductions in services.

Roberts, who has been given dictatorial powers to slash DPS spending, declared, "This budget will require us to live within our means while supporting the education plan that's been put in place." This "education plan" includes the closure of dozens of schools and the handing over of dozens more to private charter operators.

There will be sweeping job cuts in essentially every department including school administrators, clerical and professional staff, counselors, teacher aides, and central office supervisors. The plan calls for a small reduction in class sizes for fourth through twelfth grade—kindergarten through third grade will remain at 25. Roberts claims that most of the districts 4,400 teaching jobs have been spared.

That most teaching jobs will be "spared" is an outright lie. While leaving those who are fired absolutely helpless financially, the remaining teachers will face increasingly desperate economic conditions.

The Detroit Federation of Teachers has already made clear that it will work with the DPS in imposing yet another attack on teachers. In 2009, the DFT made concessions in wages and benefits averaging \$5,000 per

year for each teacher.

There are additional effective pay cuts. The DPS website notes, "The budget additionally assumes revised negotiated health, dental, life and vision plans with an 80-20 employer- employee payment structure." This is in reference to the cost sharing plan proposed by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder to demand that public workers pay much more for basic benefits. The district is counting on the DFT to agree to these changes and force teachers to accept them.

In another measure, the district's current \$327 million budget deficit will be reduced by selling off \$200 million in long-term bonds that are guaranteed by the state. This gives more cash to the district up front, but will likely be the pretext for demanding even more cuts in years to come.

The budget cuts are part of a continued assault on public education. At a press conference Monday, Snyder and Roberts announced the establishment of the Education Achievement System, a new state agency which will oversee Detroit's lowest performing schools starting in 2012. Teachers in these schools will have all their rights eliminated, while many of the schools will be prepared for transformation into for-profit charters. (See, "Bipartisan assault on public education in Detroit")

Behind Roberts stands the full force of the federal government, which seeks to use the dismantling of public education in Detroit as precedent for similar programs nation-wide. President Obama's Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan said that Detroit's EAS has the "potential to be a model not just for the city, not just for the state, but for the entire country."

All the local, state, and federal cuts are an attempt to further drive a wedge between teachers on the one hand and the students, parents, and the communities on the

other. In the Orwellian logic of American capitalism, any teachers who attempt to stand up for themselves against the draconian measures are presented as barriers to improving education.

A recent study in California by The Education Trust calls layoffs and frequent transfers of teachers "especially damaging to schools serving the highest numbers of low-income students, which are more likely than others to experience layoffs and mass personnel shuffling. Their students become victims of the churn."

The solution to the crisis of capitalism based on the framework laid out by the ruling class and their politicians will destroy the lives of teachers and students. The campaign to dismantle public education will continually attack teachers with wage cuts and the furthered elimination of basic democratic rights. The effect on current and future students who will be relocated, overcrowded, and disheartened is incalculable.



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