

Dozens of Dallas, Texas area schools slated for closure

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Dozens of campuses are slated to shutter in North Texas amid budget shortfalls. Coppell, Lewisville, Plano and Richardson Independent School Districts, all major suburbs in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, are citing budget shortfalls and declining enrollment. This is part of a nationwide trend of school closures including in California schools, Illinois, Wisconsin, Colorado and elsewhere.

This is the list of specific closures:

- Coppell ISD is shuttering Pinkerton elementary. The district has a shortfall of \$7.5 million to \$8.7 million for fiscal year 2024-25, with an anticipated budget shortfall of \$18 million by FY 2027-28 according to current projections.

- Lewisville ISD is closing Creekside, Garden Ridge, Highland Village, B.B. Owen and Polser elementary schools.

- Plano ISD is closing Davis and Forman elementary schools, as well as Armstrong and Carpenter middle schools. The district is operating with a \$24 million budget shortfall.

- Richardson ISD is closing Greenwood Hills, Springridge, Spring Valley and Thurgood Marshall elementary schools. Richardson is facing a \$28 million budget shortfall, with the closing of the schools being a part of the broader “Project RightSize” austerity plan.

Parents and students have showed up to board meetings to voice their opposition to the moves. The *Dallas Morning News* has reported that more North Texas school closures are “possible.”

The number of jobs to be cut was not noted in the corporate media and could not be found in the board meetings, though hundreds, if not thousands, of workers are likely to be affected. In addition to teachers, janitors, cafeteria workers, librarians and others will lose their jobs as well, should these schools

close.

The local teachers unions have done nothing to mobilize opposition to the closures. Alliance AFT, the local American Federation of Teachers affiliate which covers Allen, Frisco, Garland, Plano and Richardson, has made no public announcements on the school closures on their website or on social media despite the fact that these closures will mean the loss of their own members’ jobs.

The NEA-affiliated Texas State Teachers Association had a post on June 18 on the closures, noting that schoolchildren who have had to switch schools during school closures suffer negative effects on their later education and employment. Beyond this observation, nothing has been said since.

The budget shortfall is in no small part due to the ending of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, which were provided in the early days of the pandemic. They have been allowed to lapse by the Biden administration as part of its anti-scientific effort to declare the pandemic over and shift funding away from education and towards war. This has worsened a situation in which US education funding lags behind international benchmarks by hundreds of billions of dollars.

The record \$895 billion military budget, intended for war with Russia and China, necessitates cuts elsewhere, including in public education.

But this is just a down payment for what the incoming Trump administration is preparing. Under the proposed education secretary, wrestling magnate Linda McMahon, the new government is planning to slash public spending on education and other social infrastructure, convert public schools into charters and attack the basic right to an education.

The justification given for closing down schools is

that schools are facing shrinking enrollment and budget shortfalls. The districts have collectively lost tens of thousands of students over the past decade with the trend anticipated to continue. Plano has seen a decrease of 7,750 in the past 12 years, with similar trends in the other districts. Dallas County, where most of the schools are located, has 24,000 fewer children under the age of 9 today than in 2012.

Much of this has to do with the aging population, which is in no small part a product of a society in which childcare, housing/rent, and living expenses in general are increasingly unbearable, as most jobs continue to not keep pace with inflation.

Certainly, shrinking attendance has impacted school budgets because schools receive their budget on the basis of attendance, a formula deliberately set up to deprive schools of funding. Less attendance means less funds. But the method of the corporate news arbitrarily picks facts in order to justify the current policy of school closure. It simply asserts that since enrollment is declining, and because there are budget shortfalls (supposedly due to there being “no money”), schools must close. This is a false conclusion and method. A number of unstated assumptions belying this argument simply don’t stand up to scrutiny.

If the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex were considered to be a country it would have a population of 7.64 million and a GDP of \$692 billion according to the St. Louis Fed, making it the 21st-largest economy in the world, on par with Sweden, Belgium and Poland.

But despite having a lower population than all of these named countries and a higher GDP, DFW schools consistently have higher student-to-teacher ratios.

According to *US News and World Report*, Lewisville has a 13:1 ratio, Plano a 14:1 and Richardson 13:1. But according to OECD data, Poland has an 11:1 student-to-teacher ratio, Sweden 12:1 and Belgium 9:1.

The defense of public education is incompatible with the warmongering of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, which includes the likes of American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten, who not only lauds McMahon, but supports Israel’s genocide against Gaza as well as the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

Teachers and staff looking to oppose the destruction of public education should join the Educators Rank-and-File Committee in order to link up with teachers around

the US and workers in other industries worldwide to defend jobs, public education and the social rights of the working class.



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