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Mounds View to lose 11 teachers, leave vacancies unfilled

The district is short \$1.5 million for 2009 and is keeping a reserve fund for an even-more-difficult 2010.

By **NORMAN DRAPER**, Star Tribune

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Mounds View schools will deal with a \$1.5 million shortfall next school year by employing fewer teachers, raising activity fees, freezing administrative salaries and allowing vacant positions to go unfilled, among other moves.

The Mounds View school board recently approved those measures, the sort that have become commonplace for many Twin Cities-area districts faced with rising costs and slim prospects of getting any new money from a Legislature that must erase a \$4.6 billion shortage over the next two years.

Because of declining enrollment, the district will have to cut six teachers, and it plans to lay off another five teachers to stanch the flow of red ink.

Also, district administrators, including Superintendent Dan Hoverman, have offered to accept salary freezes, resulting in savings that are more symbolic than significant: \$25,000.

More significant are \$820,000 in budget reductions for supplies and other services, the layoffs of six staff members in various administrative and maintenance areas, and layoffs in special education and the district's area learning center.

There will also be a \$10 increase in activity fees, although the \$700 family limit on total fees will stay the same. Although the board considered raising bus fees for students living within 2 miles of their schools, board members decided to keep the current \$225 per student per year.

The measures still leave the district with an \$8.8 million reserve fund, which Mounds View spokesman Colin Sokolowski said is being maintained for potentially far greater shortfalls next year.

District officials expect they will have to deal with a \$7 million deficit in 2010-11. That's assuming that the Legislature doesn't cut education spending, although a proposal approved by the Senate would do just that.

Some savings have come through improved efficiency. District officials say they saved more than \$200,000 in energy costs from July to December 2008 by installing more energy-efficient lights and boilers and by more carefully monitoring energy use in the schools. They expect a 10 to 15 percent annual energy cost reduction as a result.

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