

# San Leandro schools budget cut by \$4 million

■ Implications include district job eliminations, larger class sizes in elementary schools

By Karen Holzmeister

STAFF WRITER

SAN LEANDRO — Elementary schools will take the brunt of \$4 million in proposed cuts for the 2009-10 year, with school district trustees reluctantly deciding Tuesday to increase class sizes from 20 students to 28 students per teacher.

Larger class sizes were

estimated by district administrators to save \$1.3 million, mostly in teacher salaries and benefits.

Trustees also slashed the jobs of 10 specialists, who assist teachers in reading and other programs at the eight elementary schools, for a potential cost savings of \$770,000.

The district office budget in the fiscal year starting July 1 will drop by about \$733,000, while overall school supply budgets — for items such as paper, pencils and copier

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equipment — will decrease by \$75,000.

Among other reductions: the highly touted Lighthouse Independent Studies program for high school students will lose the equivalent of 1.8 full-time teachers, for a savings of \$177,000.

Lighthouse now has between 100 and 114 students, with class sizes set at 30 students to each teacher. With only three full-time teachers remaining, if the 1.8 teaching jobs are eliminated, the number of students accepted in the program may be reduced to no more than 90.

Alex Harp, principal of Lighthouse and Lincoln Continuation High School, was among 26 speakers during the 4½-hour meeting Tuesday. He urged trustees not to reduce services for the continuation and independent studies students, noting they included pregnant teenagers, teenage parents, former truant students and students "who cannot function at a regular high school."

Trustees cast a wide net to identify jobs, programs and services to eliminate. However, the uncertainty of the school district's educational funding from state and federal sources could mean the financial picture could get better — or worse.

The board's action, in large part, was designed to

meet a March 12 deadline to submit budget information to the Alameda County Office of Education, and to meet a state-mandated deadline of March 15 to begin sending out initial notices to employees who may be laid off.

The district's financial picture is unclear, Superintendent Christine Lim said.

That picture could become better or worse depending on the outcome of a special May election to ratify the terms of the budget passed earlier this month by state legislators, she said.

"If the propositions on May 19 don't pass, we have no (state) budget," Lim told trustees and the 125 people in the City Hall meeting room. Then, the district — and other California school, city and state agencies — will have to start developing new spending plans.

Trustees will meet next Tuesday to authorize sending the layoff notices.

However, Flavia Corria, the San Leandro High School representative to the board, said students will protest budget cuts from 7:30 to 8 a.m. today, Friday, and March 3. Corria said the peaceful protests will be held in front of the school, at 2200 Bancroft Ave. 350

Reach Karen Holzmeister at 510-293-2478 or kholzmeister@bayareanewsgroup.com.