

2ND ANONYMOUS DONOR SAVES 30 TEACHERS' JOBS IN TULSA



The plight of the cash strapped Tulsa Public Schools is attracting unanticipated benefactors, with yet another generous donation of \$1.4 million, from an unspecified benefactor, falling into their laps. The unexpected windfall is expected to save an additional 30 teaching positions. Earlier in the month, another anonymous donor had bigheartedly come forward and made a contribution of \$620,000 that went towards saving 15 teaching positions. 19 more teaching positions will be funded because of vacant administrative positions being held open. Officials have confirmed that 30 teachers will not lose their jobs, following the donation. 75 teaching positions were on the block, following the expiry of the federal Jobs Bill funding. Emboldened by the second donation largesse, Superintendent Keith Ballard said he hoped to find new sources of funding and raise enough private funding to save all 75 teaching jobs, more than half of which are already saved, thanks to the unexpected but most welcome benefactors. During an evening meeting, board member Ruth Ann Fate expressed her gratitude to the unnamed donors, saying, "They have literally saved our life for a brief period." Contemplating the same situation in the years ahead, for at best the donations would provide temporary relief, Ballard said, "You can see that allocations have been a priority for us. It's too bad that we have to go to the public and ask for teacher allocations, particularly when you see how flush the state is with revenue," he said. "It is regrettable that these are largely one-time monies. We will be facing this situation again if the Legislature fails to increase funding." Trish Williams, chief financial officer for Tulsa Public Schools said that the administrators were using the funds in saving teachers jobs, in schools where they were most needed. We are being "very judicious" she said. The budget she presented to the Board was most dispiriting and lacked optimism or any renewed hope for the future. The budget included flat funding from the state and yet another significant decrease in federal funding. She brought the demoralizing news that owing to decreased federal funding, owing to the closing of many stimulus programs, the Tulsa Public Schools would receive almost \$14.9 million less. Students with special education needs and those from low socio-economic backgrounds would also be getting their support cut by \$2 million. "We are regretful that we are recommending a budget tonight that is essentially taking a step backward," Williams said. "Unfortunately, those monies are going away, and the state revenues simply have not been appropriated to schools to replace those funds." Board member Leigh Goodson echoed similar feeling saying: "These are really difficult decisions we are having to make right now. It is unfun to listen to the sacrifices we are having to make to balance this budget." The meeting also approved collaborating with the Oklahoma State School Boards Association to help them find appropriate, local and internal candidates to succeed Superintendent Keith Ballard, whose contract would be expiring in 2013. "OSSBA is going to assist us in the recruitment, but this particular application process will be open to anyone and everyone," Percefull said. "Then the board would consider what applications could be received and decide whether we want to continue with this process or enter into another process." Vice President Anna America said that she wants to specifically mention that all rumors that the board has "preselected" a successor were incorrect. "That is not the case," America said. "We are eager to get multiple applications. Secondly, we have an aggressive timeline for a couple of reasons, ... but everyone on the board is committed to taking whatever steps are necessary."

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