

BENTON HARBOR TO LAYOFF 20 TEACHERS



They say that a good education is the foundation of a solid life, but what will happen to the children in the Benton Harbor school district? The Benton Harbor Board of Education met earlier this week and came to yet another decision that is likely to impact the quality of education that the students will get. They are going to begin the process of laying off roughly 20 teachers and administrators. In addition to the layoffs the rest of the staff is going to have to take a ten percent pay cut in order to stay in their current jobs. Now, you may be wondering why before I said that this was another decision that could negatively impact the education of children in the area. In past year recent to save the budget this district has resorted to closing schools in order to keep themselves in the black. To add to things the school seems to have had a very poor sense of timing for layoffs. The layoff notices are expected to go out to the workers about a week before the holidays and the board members are taking an almost casual tone about it. Board President Anthony Jett told a reporter for [WNDU](#) the following. This could have been in February. It's tough no matter when you do it, especially if you have a heart with the holiday season. It's tough, but if we don't make the decisions the state is going to make the decision and they're not going to care" The reason for such drastic cuts is simple. The local school district is attempting to avoid being taken over by the state. The school currently faces a deficit of about \$18 million. If they cannot get that under control than the state will come in and manage the districts finances for them, making decisions about what will go and what will stay, in the form of a state emergency manager. The schools Superintendent Leonard Seawood told the following to the [WNDU](#) about the potential of being run by an emergency manager, "I feel confident that that will not happen. We still have a long ways to go. We still are addressing some of the concerns of the state and we're trying to do this now with this particular concession." The school district is already under a preliminary review by the state and this may be adding a certain amount of urgency to their decision-making. On the bright side at least in this case the administrators are being as fiscally responsible as they expect their staff to be. Superintendent Seawood has vowed to take the same percentage of a pay cut that the members of the teachings staff do. While the gesture may sound symbolic to the people who are being let go, that could actually represent several pupils worth of funding. He told the same journalist this about the cuts, "That's tough because given the fact they haven't had raises in four or five years. I'm all about the teachers because those are the ones that are educating our students and it could be on the flip side, it could be no job and that's 100 percent cut."

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