

## 1,400 PHILLY SCHOOLS WORKERS GET PINK SLIPS



Things have not been great for the schools in the city of Philadelphia, as you already know if you live in the area, or if you follow the coverage on this site. The district was dealt another blow today when a third round of layoffs rocked the schools. This time it was 1,400 employees that got the boot. While these layoffs were not to the teaching staff, instead they came to the blue-collar workers who deal in facilities and transportation maintenance services, this is still a serious loss of jobs for the city. This was not the first mass layoff for the city of Philadelphia in the last 12 months. In September the city's school district had to cut jobs by about 850. Then over the summer roughly 1,000 teachers were cut from the budget as well. So on the whole the schools have shed more than 3,000 jobs since the end of the last school year. At the current moment however the officials for the school district are hoping that the settlement of a dispute with the workers union can mitigate some of the layoffs. If the members of the Local 32BJ, Service Employees International Union, are willing to make some concession than they will be able to keep some of the jobs. Or as school district Spokesman Fernando Gallard told a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "As a result of this rejected agreement, there remains a budget gap that the district must close this year, and the district now anticipates it will face significant budget challenges in the coming years. The district is now forced to take other steps to achieve needed savings and to keep all of its options open regarding staffing in future years." In order to prevent the layoffs the workers would have had to agree to about \$16 million in concessions. Though currently the school has not made any comment on what exactly those concessions would have entailed, and neither has the union. One of the reasons that union leaders cited for not making the concessions was the fact that while they were asking the ground level workers to take a \$16 million hit the school district was also preparing to give a \$1 million payment to the former Superintendent of schools, Arlene C. Ackerman. The average salary of the workers who are being laid off is about \$18.43 an hour, which means that they earn less than \$40,000 a year. Their benefits however are costly as well, but still the idea of making cuts while a higher paying employee get a bonus has to sting. Interestingly enough the workers will have ample time to find new work, as the layoffs will not actually take effect until Dec. 31, 2012. A full year of notice before a layoff is required as per the union contract. The district has already given hints that the midyear cuts to the schools personnel, and to budgets, are not finished. At this time no specifics of which workers may be cut, or when the next round of layoffs can be expected, have been given at this time.

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