

## WOONSOCKET SCHOOLS LAYOFF ALL TEACHERS



It seems like educators in all corners of the world are in danger in the current economic situation. We have talked a lot, in the recent past, about the cuts to the schools in major cities, with cuts that will affect hundred of teachers and hundreds of thousands of students. That could give you the impression that it is only large cities that have mis-managed their budgets, and that only those schools are getting less than they need when it comes to the task of educating our students. The truth is that it is much harder than it seems everywhere and even school districts with a more modest challenge than the one faced by districts in cities such as New York and Philadelphia are having real problems making ends meet. Today we are going to talk about the proposed teacher layoffs in the town of Woonsocket, R.I. For those of you who are familiar with the city, or its schools, here is a look at how the school board **describes itself**: "Welcome to the Woonsocket Public Schools, the cornerstone of Northern Rhode Island. Our city schools are made rich and vibrant through the heritage and diversity of our students and community. Dedicated teachers blend the past with the future through the use of advanced curriculum, eclectic instructional practices and cutting-edge technology. Our goal is to prepare our students to meet twenty-first century challenges and opportunities. " Apparently, the school board of Woonsocket feels like it can make do without some of those dedicated teachers, because of Wednesday night the Woonsocket School Committee voted to send out layoff notices. Those notices, which have gone out to all of the 600 teachers in the school district have the literally potential to impact everyone who teaches at the schools. The move is more of a protective measure for the Woonsocket School Committee, since they are required by law to give any teacher who is going to be laid off for the next school year notice by the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. It is this requirement, which is set by the state of Rhode Island, is meant to give workers time to interview and find new positions for the next year. While that may not be possible for all of the workers to find new jobs the good news here is that it is unlikely that all of the teachers will be let go. The school board is covering its own interests by putting all of the workers on notice. That way when they decide how many people need to be laid off, and in what areas of the school they can afford to lose them, they can layoff with out delay or opening themselves up to lawsuits from workers who have been displaced without the proper amount of notice. The problem is for the workers. Think about it, when everyone gets a maybe layoff notice it is hard to know who should be planning for a new job and who should be ignoring the notices. Currently, the teachers union plans to take legal action over these notices, but nothing has been filed yet.

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