

## **Fairport schools budget calls for dozens of job cuts**

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Fairport Central School District could cut the equivalent of 51 full-time positions for the 2018-19 school year.

The district faces tough financial decisions in an attempt to adjust to a declining enrollment, and the district budget calls for dozens of job cuts.

Community members and school staff expressed disapproval about the reductions and the potential loss of computer classes at the elementary schools at the Board of Education meeting Tuesday.

Fairport Superintendent Brett Provenzano and board members echoed that the losses will be mourned but the district is working toward a sustainable long-term plan.

Provenzano said 28.25 full-time equivalent teacher positions will be reduced for next school year. Some staff will be redeployed to other positions.

“We are trying to find a pathway to sustainability,” he said, adding that the reductions are responsive to a decline in enrollment “in order to balance our budget.”

The budget calls for the removal of 22 paraprofessionals, including teaching assistants and teacher aides in computer classes and special education.

The number of individual staff members impacted won't be as high as the total reductions number, according to the district. Some cuts will come from pending retirees whose positions will remain unfilled.

One office clerk would be cut, as well as a part-time clerical position and equipment managers.

Fairport elementary students have been taking weekly computer labs. With the new budget, computer instruction will be transferred to other teachers and library staff. The budget's reduction of staff for the labs will impact how the programs will be delivered.

“Losing dedicated support from the computer perspective and a technology perspective is about as bad an idea, I could possibly think of,” said Karl Helfner, a Brooks Hill parent who works in the technology field.

Another Fairport parent spoke up, calling the labs a bargain for the district as they were taught by teacher's assistants and educated students on more than keyboarding. Provenzano said the standards of computer and other 21st-century learning will not be compromised.

Despite the cuts, Fairport students will have similar opportunities as prior years in classes, clubs and activities, he said.

### **Why the reduction?**

“The decline in enrollment is such a big driver of this,” Board President Peter Forsgren said.

Enrollment is declining at about two percent per year and is expected to flatline in 2025, Provenzano said.

Forsgren said the district was previously making decisions on staff size, classes and clubs year-to-year, but coupled with the unpredictability of state aid, found itself here.

Those decisions had the right intentions but were not right in the long term, according to Forsgren.

“We weren’t making decisions that allowed us to project out and see what that impact would be,” he said. “We won’t be doing that anymore.”

If the budget is approved on May 15, the district will cut about 85 positions in two years.

The district is creating a strategic plan that will be a framework for all decision- making. The plan was created by a committee of about 100 people and will be in place by the end of the school year.

“Now we have a better picture,” Forsgren said.

Some parents questioned how hard the district worked to prevent the proposed cuts.

“When you read X number of teaching assistants will be eliminated next year, that you’re aware that this number includes the elimination of the three elementary school teaching assistants,” Anne Stager, a third-grade teacher at Jefferson Avenue School said. “It shocked me when I heard this news.”

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**Provenzano**