

SDUSD Superintendent on Budget Deficit and What Parents Can Expect

In her exclusive interview with NBC 7, Superintendent Cindy Marten expanded on parent's concerns with budget cuts going forward, and offered a better look at what to expect.

By [Megan Tevrizian](#), [Rory Devine](#) and [Samantha Tatro](#)

Parents and students in the San Diego Unified School District will soon see painful budget cuts, leading to possible layoffs. NBC 7's Rory Devine has the story. (Published Monday, Feb. 20, 2017)

The San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is facing a big budget deficit, and on Tuesday the Board will look at what to cut to make ends meet.

NBC 7 has learned ahead of Tuesday's meeting that the Superintendent Cindy Marten and the Board will take salary cuts in order to help balance the District's budget.

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Marten told NBC 7 that in addition, there will likely be layoffs to teachers and employees in non-teaching positions. Marten stressed the cuts will not impact class size limits.

In the week prior to the meeting, parents have been receiving emails from principals at their children's schools about those budget cuts, asking for feedback about how parents want the school to spend discretionary money the district gives to schools.

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In her exclusive interview, Marten expanded on parent's concerns with budget cuts going forward, and offered a better look at what to expect. Read Marten's full, transcribed interview with NBC 7's Megan Tevrizian below.

Question: "The first thing on the minds of most parents is what's on the chopping block?"

Marten: "We made our recommendations making sure our core class size limits are not going to be increasing. That's an important message for folks to understand that where we're going to address this budget deficit and the solutions that we've developed started at the top first. So what you're seeing is that the majority of cuts will be at the central office, and central office administrators. Making sure that those with teaching credentials will remain inside the classroom, teaching students next year. And I also have to say I'm really proud of our Board of Education, when you ask what's being cut the Board is taking action on Tuesday to reduce their own salaries, which I want to give them credit for and I'm doing the same thing. I'm asking the Board to have them reduce my salary as well. So you're seeing cuts as far away from the classroom as possible. Core class size limits are not going to be increasing so kids will have the same kinds of experiences that are producing the same great results San Diego Unified is currently getting today, that we're able to mitigate financial deficit in ways that we brought solutions forward that will least impact students in the classrooms."

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Question: "Will there be teacher lay-offs? If so, how many?"

Marten: "Yes, there will be teacher lay-offs and that's the part where parents go 'if there are layoffs, what happens to my kid's class size' – no the class sizes will be OK, the layoffs will be because some teachers that were not in the classroom will be going back in the classroom which creates the domino effect; so there is going to be some bumping that takes place when that happens and this is a long, complex process so when you say (how many is it going to be?), we're just getting the conversation started now in advance of the March 15 notices, but we're also bringing forward this week an early retirement package so teachers will have a chance to elect early retirement with the process that's coming forward. Once the layoff process begins, lots more moving pieces will happen. We don't know how many retirements we have, we have some vice principals that will be returning to the classroom, resource teachers that will be returning to the classrooms. All those get put together to see the final layoff notices that will happen later in the year. But we're just starting the process now and all the moving pieces will be put together in the next several months."

Question: "The district gave teachers a raise in spite of the fact the district knew it was going to be in a budget deficit. The Board has said it did that to stay competitive, to be able to attract the best teachers, but really – was that responsible?"

Marten: "We're looking at the labor market and we're wanting to be a district that can

attract and can retain the highest quality educators in the State of California and we want to make sure we're paying teachers exactly what we believe they deserve to live in this market. We're addressing the long term structural deficit and being able to address that with the type of integrity and thoughtfulness that we're doing right now to create a long term solution, so we can continue to pay all of our employees what we know they need to be paid to live in this labor market."

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Question: "What will happen to classified employees, or those who work in non-teaching positions?"

Marten: "This is a district with 17,000 employees and as we're finding solutions for a \$124 million deficit that's 10 percent of our overall budget, 92 percent of our budget pays for people. There are people outside of the classroom, we call them the classified staff that we're going to be making adjustments there as well. It is across the system, and we're making the same theory of action when we're making decisions about where we're going to find our solutions. How do we find solutions that least impact the overall instructional program for our students. We want to stay invested in the things that are producing our 92 percent graduation rate, our increase in test scores, our attendance rates. Frankly, teachers are part of that but so are bus drivers, cafeteria workers, health assistants, all across the system we have non-teaching staff that contribute to the outcomes that we get for kids. So when we make the decisions of non-teaching staff and our school communities are looking at how do we adjust and find solutions to address and adjust this deficit to stability once and for all, all members will be impacted to some degree but at the end of the day we've got solutions that work for kids, we have programs that are working for kids, and we're going to come out of this with stability, continue with achievement even though we have employees across the system being effected."

Question: "What will happen to the arts programs?"

Marten: "I want parents to understand we are very proud of our arts programs, our international baccalaureate programs, our dual language programs, those programs we consider to be essential to the core mission of our district and that's the key message that, although we're figuring out solutions to address this deficit, we're holding true and staying steady with the programs that have produced the results that we know. We have a five year strategic plan for our arts that we've used a broad based community, strategic advisory arts council that we're going to stay on our plan. We might have to adjust the timing of things but we have not walked away from our commitment to the arts. We know that a broad and challenging curriculum with focuses on world languages and our focus on the arts and having a robust approach that we call unlocking the genius for each and every student, we are not walking away from those things. We can actually bring forward a set of budget solutions and keep the core, the core. We know what our families expect for our kids and we're able to do that."

SDUSD Supe Cindy Martin on Budget Deficit

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San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Cindy Martin stops by NBC 7 San Diego to talk about the district's big budget deficit.

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