



## The Birmingham News

### Board closes schools, to discuss firings

Wednesday, April 25, 2007

**MARIE LEECH**  
News staff writer

The Birmingham Board of Education voted Tuesday to close five school buildings, and it will hold another meeting Monday to fire 176 non-tenured employees as part of a plan to cut \$15 million to \$18 million from the annual budget.

Of the five buildings closing, only two are operating schools: Curry Elementary and Kennedy Alternative. Banks Middle School will close, but has no students since Ossie Ware Mitchell Middle School opened in January. McCaw School, a court-appointed school for students with severe behavior problems, and Eureka Center, which houses the Family Literacy Center, also will close.

The state-mandated financial solvency plan is necessary because the system fails to meet a law requiring districts to have at least one month's operating expenses in reserves. That is about \$20 million for Birmingham.

The majority of the money the system will save comes from the 590 jobs the board plans to eliminate. Employee costs absorb about 85 percent of the district's \$233 million budget.

The 176 workers the board will consider cutting Monday are part of the 590 jobs to be eliminated, but Birmingham Education Association members say they have concerns.

Nearly 200 employees have already accepted early retirement packages and association members had hoped that would mean fewer layoffs, said Jacqueline Oglesby, a Birmingham Education Association official.

The board needs to see who has retired before cutting so many people, she said. For example, if a bus driver is retiring, that should be one less bus driver that will be eliminated Monday, she said.

But school officials said they will fire the necessary number of non-tenured employees and then re-hire some later. That plan drew resistance not only from the association, but also board member Virginia Volker.

She said many of those employees on the chopping block are nurses and bus drivers, who are in short supply everywhere. If the board gives them the pink slip, she said, they will likely find work elsewhere and Birmingham will be hard pressed to replace them.

"This is a simplistic way to do this and very barbaric," Volker said.

E-mail: [mleech@bhamnews.com](mailto:mleech@bhamnews.com)

© 2007 The Birmingham News

© 2007 al.com All Rights Reserved.