

CARLSBAD: School officials ask for public input on budget

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School officials in Carlsbad are asking for the public's help to decide the best way to curb spending next year.

[Carlsbad Unified School District](#) officials expect to have an \$11 million shortfall in the 2012-13 school year if finances continue as they have recently.

District officials have discussed a number of possible budget cuts, including slashing employee pay, closing schools or delaying the opening of the long-awaited Sage Creek High School in eastern Carlsbad.

Anyone can take the "[expenditure reduction survey](#)" online by going to the district's website, www.carlsbadusd.k12.ca.us .

The survey will help the district determine the best way to handle the projected shortfall, Superintendent John Roach said.

"Preferences, comments and suggestions ... will be taken into consideration as I create a list of recommendations to present to the board of trustees," he said.

Roach said the district wanted to go to the public in the hope that residents could offer some suggestions that school officials hadn't considered.

The board will review proposed cuts at its next meeting, scheduled to start at 6 p.m. Nov. 9 at City Hall, 1200 Carlsbad Village Drive.

Last week, the trustees discussed which spending cuts they would consider and which they wouldn't.

They said they are dead set against increasing class sizes further or laying off counselors. This year, sizes in most grades were raised to about 30 students per teacher.

Either layoffs or salary reductions will probably be necessary to balance the budget next year, because about 85 percent of the district's spending goes toward employee salaries and benefits.

District and teachers union officials haven't begun discussions, so it's too early to know how much pay employees would be asked to give up.

It would take a 20 percent cut to salaries and benefits to balance the budget next year without any other reductions, Roach said. A cut that big isn't likely, he said.

If property values or state education spending doesn't increase, district officials expect to be short nearly \$11 million next year.

This year, district officials expect to bring in about \$71 million and spend roughly \$82 million. The district has enough in reserves to cover the difference this year but won't have enough next year, officials have said.

District revenue has declined from \$89 million in 2008-09 to \$83 million last year and a projected \$71 million this year.

The district needs to present potential budget cuts to the [San Diego County Office of Education](#) in December or risk losing some autonomy.

The online survey will be available until district officials finalize their 2012-13 budget in June.

The survey results and more budget information will be available on the district's business services blog, www.carlsbadusdbusiness.blogspot.com .