

Vancouver school district advises 800 teachers of possible layoffs

BY JANET STEFFENHAGEN, VANCOUVER SUN JANUARY 19, 2010



The Vancouver school district is sending notices today to 800 teachers advising them of possible layoffs and asking them to update their qualifications.

Photograph by: Peter Battistoni, Vancouver Sun files

VANCOUVER - The Vancouver school district is sending notices today to 800 teachers advising them of possible layoffs and asking them to update their qualifications.

"The letter is not a layoff notice - it is the beginning of the process to prepare for possible layoffs," the district says in a release today. "The letters are being issued in accordance with teachers' collective agreement, which requires that notices of possible layoffs be issued by February 15 if the district is contemplating layoffs for the following year."

Letters are being delivered to teachers with five or fewer years of service. Like many school districts, Vancouver is bracing for financial difficulties in 2010-11 and is forecasting a budget shortfall of \$17.5 million to \$36.3 million.

"The district has increased costs coming due to decisions made at the provincial level," board chair Patti Bacchus says in the release. "We believe the provincial government has an obligation to fund those costs to ensure we are able to provide adequate staffing and resource levels to meet the needs of our students. We've already had to cut over \$47 million in accumulated annual spending since the beginning of 2002/03 and further reductions will make it increasingly difficult to meet the learning needs of our students."

If teachers are to be laid off, notices will be issued in early May, the release says, adding that the last time the district had to lay off teachers was in May 2004.

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