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Budget pinches teachers of certain subjects



PE teacher Amy Youngblood of Coral Springs is among the art, music, media, and foreign language teachers who are at risk of losing their jobs or having to work half time due to cutbacks being made at Broward County schools such as Sawgrass Elementary School in Sunrise. (Kimberli DiMare, FPG / May 5, 2010)

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With [Broward County](#) public schools having to cut back their budgets, some are choosing to make reductions in the specials department.

Schools have to make a six percent reduction in their budgets to meet the shortfall, said Nadine Drew, public relations representative for [Broward County](#) public schools. According to a press release, the county has suffered \$136 million in reductions from the state in the last three years.

Because of this, some schools are choosing to either eliminate or reduce specials in schools, including art, music, physical education and librarian positions.

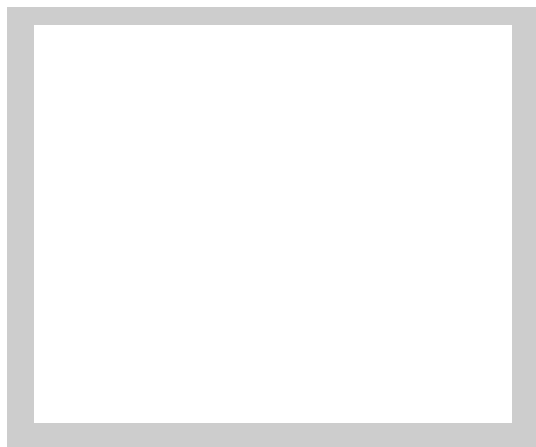
"Some schools may be using, as an option, half time or time other than 100 percent of some areas of specialties but it's really up to the school," Drew said. "Each school is currently working on just how they're going to do it."

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Sunrise schools are included. At [Sawgrass Elementary School](#), there had been rumors for weeks at the school of budget cuts, said

Michael Ryan, the school's [PTA](#) president and the chair of the city of Sunrise's Education Advisory Board.

"It wasn't until the principal presented his budget that I realized the scope and the impact of these cuts," he said.

In an e-mail to the Sawgrass family, Ryan wrote that art, media and music was proposed to no longer be full-time classes, in addition to physical education and Spanish already being cut back.

In a conversation with the principal, Ryan was told that the school would save \$194,000 by having art, media and music cut to half-time positions.

Parents and teachers immediately started expressing their concerns. More than a dozen parents e-mailed him and more stopped him while was out in the city.

"It ranges from disgust to sadness; you can feel the tears in some of the e-mails," he said. "And a sense of helplessness."

For Amy Youngblood, a physical education teacher at Sawgrass, the newest budget cuts are déjà vu. Last year, she taught at [Western High School](#) in Davie, where she was building the school's softball program. In April 2009, during her maternity leave, she received a letter telling her that she had been laid off. Then the day before school started, she was told she would be hired back to work at [Rock Island Elementary School](#) for the first half of the year, and then Sawgrass Elementary School for the second half.

"I'm flexible and I'll go wherever I need to go but I feel bad for the kids I leave," Youngblood said. "It's pretty hard on me emotionally and it's hard on the kids. If I do come back next year, I won't know until probably until the first day of school."

Youngblood said that she doesn't think teachers will take the part-time option, and that all the teachers should "stick up for what we deserve."

Ryan's daughter attends fourth grade at Sawgrass and came home one day upset that the school was going to cut art. Later, she announced that her and her friends were starting SOS, or "Save Our Specials," to help their teachers, outfitted with signs and possibly T-shirts.

"Parents have made due with portables and classes that were bigger than normal, with used books and fundraisers. But you can't take the teachers away and still have quality education," Ryan said.

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