

Some school districts assume supplemental funding won't come

By **NORA FROESCHLE**
World Staff Writer

Some area school districts responded to the lack of supplemental funding for cost increases associated with this year's \$3,000 teacher raises by assuming they were not going to receive it.

"You typically just build it in and assume the district is going to have to cover the cost," said Trish Williams, chief financial officer for Broken Arrow Public Schools.

Williams said her district's cost for the supplemental funding for the teacher raises is \$467,781, but that is not the only supplemental funding issue.

"We have teachers that have their salaries paid through federal programs. For those teachers, the state did not provide the \$3,000 increase," she said.

The cost to the district for those raises was \$311,175, Williams said.

"The other thing is, the Legislature passed a law to give a 50-cent-an-hour increase for support employees," Williams said, adding that the increase cost the district another \$35,000.

At Union Public Schools, the funding shortage added up to \$1 million.

"A million dollars is a lot. It's a lot for teachers we could have funded; it's the

additional costs that we've had to incur in utilities — we've had an increase in operating costs," said Debbie Jacoby, chief financial officer for the district.

And unless the Legislature comes through on funding for next year, teaching staff may be affected.

"We put all of our first-year teachers on a temporary contract, and those contracts will expire on June 30, and we will wait to renew until we know more about how they're really going to fund us for '07-08," she said.

The district has between 75 and 100 teachers on temporary contracts, she said.

Small districts may have struggled even more with the lack of funding, but planning was key for Skiatook Public Schools.

"You knew going in it wasn't paid. You know that upfront, and you hope they'll do the supplemental, but you have to plan as if they're not," said Superintendent Gary Johnson.

The cost for Skiatook was about \$235,000, he said.

The total budget for the district was about \$14 million, and \$235,000 is "a pretty good-size hit when 86 percent of your budget is tied in payroll costs," Johnson said.

He said the problem will compound next

year if it is not fixed, and he was among the administrators from around the state who were at the state Capitol on Wednesday, urging lawmakers to come through on a \$95 million supplemental appropriation for common schools.

"We had a good crowd — board members and school administrators. We visited with a lot of people, but we don't have an answer," he said.

Sen. Johnnie Crutchfield, D-Ardmore, said senators have been willing all along to give schools the \$21 million they need to pay benefits attached to the \$3,000 across-the-board pay raises granted to teachers last session.

However, the House, which had called for more modest raises, agreed to fund only the \$3,000 pay hikes.

House and Senate leaders are meeting almost daily to discuss the supplemental funding bill.

World staff writer Mick Hinton contributed to this story.

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Underwood returns to give 'Idol' performance

idol moments
by matt gleason

"American Idol" hopefuls watched from their stage-side seats as Checotah native Carrie Underwood returned to the very show that helped transform the Okie farm girl into a multiplatinum, multi-Grammy Award-winning superstar.

As Underwood belted out her stirring tune "Wasted" on Thursday's live results show, the Top 12 performers saw what they could be if America dubs them the next Idol.

Among those Top 12 is frontrunner Melinda Doolittle, who attended Union High School and the University of Tulsa.

Phil Stacey, who has family ties to Shawnee, also made it into the Top 12 despite giving his weakest performance of the contest this week.

As for the castaways, it seems America came to their senses.

Finally, Although Sanjaya Malakar survived to annoy again, two of the weakest acts on the show got the boot.

Yes, Antonella Barba, the lousy singer with the beautiful face and revealing pictures on the Internet, and Sundance

Head both went home.

If only you could see the smile on my face.

Joining them on the road to obscurity are Jared Cotter and Sabrina Sloan.

Host Ryan Seacrest also announced that the No. 1 show in America will present "Idol Gives Back," a two-night benefit April 24 and 25.

The money will go to programs for impoverished people in the U.S. and Africa.

"Idol" sponsors will donate money for each vote cast after the April 24 episode.

The two-hour results show on April 25 will feature an all-star group of singers and will allow viewers to donate online and via toll-free lines.

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LAYOFFS:

The hearing for the certified staff is set for 6 p.m. March 29. However, sick time and unpaid vacation won't be addressed.

FROM A-1

Gayowski said the support staff was advised to request a hearing, and each must do so individually. However, the district may decide to hold one hearing for all of them.

Gretta Wiseley, who is among the 22 support staff who were terminated, attended the emergency meeting. She said unpaid sick and vacation days are particularly important to the support staff.

"For some people, it amounted to \$3,000 to \$5,000," she said.

Wiseley said she has around four weeks of accumulated sick time.

But Gayowski said the matter would not be addressed at any upcoming hearings.

"That would be an issue coming out of their negotiated agreements, not out of state law. So if the district is supposed to do something ... with respect to any unused leave and they fail to do that, that's a contractual matter, and they would need to file grievances," he said.

Wiseley said the district indicated it



Catoosa High School sophomore Ryan Nadler uses a marker to write a protest message on the T-shirt of junior Robert Lockhart on Thursday morning. Students at the school are upset over the layoffs of 28 district staff members this week. Robert's sleeve reads "Save Our Staff."

ROBERT S. CROSS /
Tulsa World

still might pay for unused vacation days.

The hearing for certified staff is set for 6 p.m. March 29, and Gayowski said he expects to be there as an advocate for staff members who request it.

He said it will be a semiformal hearing, with each side making an opening statement and witnesses being called.

The OEA is interested in how Catoosa chose the teachers to be dismissed and other matters, he said.

"The key is, what sort of due process procedures are in place, meaning for what grounds could a school district let somebody go?" he said. "Was the procedure followed properly, and do they have a legitimate basis for what they're

trying to do?"

Terminations for certified staff would become effective at the conclusion of the hearing if the administration prevails, Gayowski said.

Seeking employment elsewhere now is a good option because, Gayowski said, the district probably would not retain the employees for the next school year anyway, given its budget problems.

"The unfortunate thing is, there are real people whose lives are being disrupted by this," he said.

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Opera takes down Coweta band in contest's final round

By **MATT ELLIOTT**
World Scene Writer

Teenage Coweta metal band Crooked X was beaten by an 11-year-old Goldsboro, N.C., girl singing an opera song in the "Ultimate Finalists Round" of the Living Room ... Live! Kids contest on CBS's "The Early Show."

During the contest, "The Early Show" airs videos of children performing songs and the public can then vote for several days on their favorite.

Last Monday, the clips were aired, and Crooked X, who performed the original song "Death of Me," faced off against 11-year-old Madeline Edwards singing "O Mio Babbino Caro" and 8-year-old Katherine Fritsch of Raleigh, N.C., who sang "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The winner was announced Thursday and Edwards will perform live on "The Early Show" Tuesday.

Interviewed before a rehearsal Thursday, the band thanked the show's producers for selecting its music. With the contest behind them, they plan to get back to rehearsing and scheduling

gigs.

Despite the band's loss, the contest exposed millions to the band's music.

The band said it is in the middle of negotiations with a management company they couldn't name yet.

"I hope it's our music, man," said vocalist/guitarist Forrest French, 13, when asked what they think has gotten the management company interested in them. "I hope they don't like us just because we are kids."

Also, "We're talking to some pretty important people right now," said lead guitarist Jesse Morton-Cooper, 13. The band rehearses about 6 times a week at the house of drummer Boomer Simpson, 13.

Crooked X, who won the Spot Music Awards' rising star last year, will perform in an all-ages show March 17 outside C.J. Moloney's in Broken Arrow, opening for Caroline's Spine.

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