

OEA Speaks

Olympia Education Association
1619 State Avenue NE, Olympia, WA 98506
Phone: 360-742-0828 Website: www.olyea.org
Email: jobi.boe@washingtonea.org

President's Corner – March 2023

The looming budget crisis for the Olympia School District makes for anxious times. The constant talk of cutting programs, positions, and even schools is unnerving. In this OEA Speaks I am going to attempt to share with you everything OEA knows and can do to help. After reading, if you have more questions, please get those questions to your building representatives so we can discuss them at the 3/15 representative council meeting.

The district's consistent message about the budget deficit is: low enrollment, inadequate funding from the state, and the loss of ESSR funds. We are awaiting a budget analysis from WEA.

So far, no decisions have been made regarding reducing the budget. The school board has the following items on future meeting agendas.

- March 9, 2023: 2022-2023 Budget Report. 2023-2024 Budget Survey and Timeline.
- April 12, 2023: 2022-2023 Budget Update. 2023-2024 Reduction in Force Update or Process

They can add agenda items up to the Friday before a meeting. I would anticipate something budget related added to the March 23 meeting.

I have included language from our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) when applicable. That language is in bold and here is a link to the [CBA](#). Most of this information comes from Appendix A Staff Retention.

RIF defined: RIF stands for reduction-in-force. **Appendix A I. In anticipation of the possibility of a reduction-in-force, the District will annually compile and place on the District website the certificated employee seniority list. Employees will be listed from greatest to least senior using the formula for determining experience/seniority shown below. This list will include the following information: total teaching experience; Olympia School District teaching experience; certifications; and endorsements.**

Before a RIF is determined the Board of Directors use this guideline in our CBA: **Appendix A III. Guidelines for programs and services to be retained, reduced, or eliminated.**

RIF Process/timeline:

After they go through the above process, if they determine certificated staff will be reduced, they then determined what positions will be retained or reduced. **Appendix A IV Certificated Staff Retention**

RIF notices must be given by May 15. We will know before May 15th if we are RIFing and where the line is. The district must have time to mail the notice to one's residence. Legislature plays a role in this timeline and they do



not end their session until April 24. For example, if OSD announces its RIF line, then the legislature provides more money for OSD, they may be able to move the RIF line down. The earlier OSD announces its RIF line, the more likely it will be changed. The longer OSD waits to announce its RIF the more anxious everyone becomes. It is a fine line to balance.

Why do districts put the RIF line higher than they need?

If the district decides to cut a program (I will use the Mandarin Language program since we don't have one), the Mandarin teacher's job would be cut. In order to get to the Mandarin teacher on the seniority list the district must cut up to their spot. If they have 10 years' experience, everyone with 10 years' experience and below would be put on the RIF list. The Mandarin teacher would then have the option to choose from any open position for which they are endorsed. If they are only endorsed in Mandarin, they would not have a position. If they also had an English endorsement, they could choose from any of the English positions that were RIFed below them. This is an extreme scenario and meant to add clarity but not panic.

What can I do to help?

- Be kind, considerate, and thoughtful to your colleagues.
- Contact your legislature. You can literally stop by their office and tell them personal anecdotes. You can also call or email. Link to WEA [Take Action and Get Involved](#)
- If you have been RIFed or involuntarily transferred in the past, offer up your advice or tell your experience to your colleagues. Let your building rep know if you would like to be part of a bigger support group beyond your building.
- Attend or listen to School Board meetings.
- Attend your union building meetings.
- Read Appendix A in our CBA

What if you do get RIFed?

- An official notice will be mailed to your residence (this is called a pink slip but it is not pink).
- You will be told by your building administration if you are getting a notice.
- We know this can be emotional and are asking that you be notified at a convenient time that won't disrupt your duties.
- This does NOT mean you will actually lose your job. The RIF line will be moved down if/when the district is certain of its finances for 2023-2024. OSD has been through a RIF process before where everyone was rehired.

How does RIFing work with Involuntary Transfers?

- Involuntary Transfers are in the CBA under **Article XIV Open Positions, Transfers and Reassignments**
- If it is determined a RIF is necessary, the district will put in a line on the seniority list. Everyone below the line will receive a RIF notice.
- Buildings will be given their FTE allotment for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Buildings will move certificated staff around to fit FTE.
- If needed, administrators will ask if there are any volunteers to transfer to openings at other schools.
- If not, enough people volunteer to move buildings, certificated staff may be involuntarily transferred based on the seniority list and endorsements
- When that process is completed, the district will offer any and all positions to staff on the RIF list based on the seniority list and endorsements. This process will continue through August 31, 2023.

Jodi Boe, President
Olympia Education Association
Cell 360-742-0828
Jodi.boe@washingtonea.org

