

Yonkers schools chief's budget reverses cuts

Written by Colin Gustafson
Mar 20

lohud.com

YONKERS — The city schools chief is proposing a \$536 million budget for next year that reverses deeply unpopular past cuts in staff and services.

Superintendent Bernard Pierorazio said he will present the Board of Education with a preliminary 2013-14 budget proposal calling for a \$23 million increase over the current year that reinstates full-day pre-kindergarten, junior varsity and modified sports, and some pupil support staff, including guidance counselors at all high schools.

“We are looking for a restorative budget,” Pierorazio said at a committee meeting Tuesday night. “We cannot move forward without offering our children the services they sorely need and deserve.”

A district spokeswoman was unable Thursday to say what positions would be restored. No layoffs are projected.

Guidance counselors, psychologists and other pupil support personnel were among the employees hardest hit by devastating cuts that wiped out about 630 school jobs between 2008 and 2012. Budget shortfalls also led the district to shorten pre-K to a half-day and kill junior varsity and modified sports programs in 2011. While a small fraction of the eliminated jobs have been restored this year, the other cuts remain in place.

Complicating Pierorazio’s plan to restore programs and staff is a projected \$28 million deficit. The district expects to use anywhere from \$4 million to \$12 million in reserve funds to narrow that gap, but without financial support from the city and state, Pierorazio said, “we are not going to be able to restore these programs.”

In Albany, the Assembly’s “one-house” budget bill directs more money to public schools and local governments, with an additional \$12 million in municipal aid proposed for Yonkers. Pierorazio said Tuesday that it was unclear how much extra money would go to city schools. And there is no guarantee that such a boost will make it into a final state budget.

Half of the city’s nearly \$1 billion municipal and schools budget this fiscal year goes to schools.