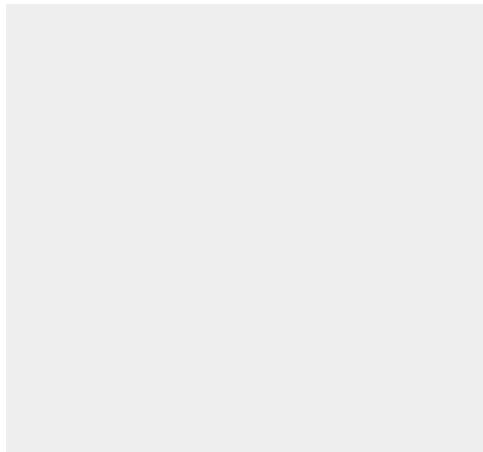


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# Meeting To Address School Cuts Draws Huge Crowd



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**SAN FRANCISCO** -- A crowd of more than a thousand concerned parents, teachers and administrators turned out Thursday night in at a town hall meeting in San Francisco to discuss ways to stop budget cuts from crippling the city's school district.

The hall meeting at Marina Middle School focused on coming up with solutions the day after the San Francisco Unified School District voted to send lay-off notices to almost than 900 employees, many of them teachers and principals.

Parents and teachers carried the same message: They are tired of a lack of funding and need to do something about it.

"I think it's time for parents and teachers to feel really empowered," said teacher Kat Klein. Klein said she encouraged parents to organize when the district announced it had a shortfall of more than \$100 million.

What came of that was the formation of a group of mothers called by some the "San Francisco Six."

Parent Crystal Brown was one of those leading the charge.

"We've heard from principals [that] we're cutting summer school," said Brown. "We're putting them into a war zone. These kids have no where to go and are not going to get lunch that day."

Brown and others involved said the town hall was no chit chat forum; it was aimed at finding immediate solutions to close the budget gap.

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School administrators said the cash crunch was backing them into a corner.

"It's not having enough to fund my teachers, you know? Do I want a computer teacher or 22 kids in the classroom?" asked Sherman Elementary School principal Sara Shenkman-Rich, "my battle everyday is I don't have the funds to create the education we could create."

San Francisco Superintendent of Schools Carlos Garcia said the state is 47th in the nation when it comes to spending for each student.

"We're rapidly approaching being dead last in how much we spend per student," said Garcia. "I wasn't the one. I didn't vote whether we have a \$113 million deficit. You have to point that one to Sacramento and our governor."

The governor wasn't at the town hall meeting, but State Senator Leland Yee was in attendance.

"I would urge all of you to ask all your reps that if you care about public education then don't vote for any cuts," Lee told parents.

One of the plans of action parents came up with Thursday night was to start looking up the voting records of their representatives

They said from now on they would cast their vote at the ballot box based on their legislators' voting record on education and budget issues.

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