

Rainy day fund may save up to 160 teaching jobs

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San Francisco school officials smiled Tuesday morning as Mayor Gavin Newsom promised to give the district \$11.5 million from the city's rainy day fund to save the jobs of 130 to 160 teachers who would otherwise be laid off.

But it's not nearly enough to save the more than 500 teaching and administrative jobs on the line - and half of what school officials later said they need and expected, leaving them surprised and disappointed.

The mayor's \$11.5 million figure is based on a new interpretation of Proposition G, the ballot measure voters approved in 2003 for a rainy day fund - a pot of money filled in good economic times and drawn down when times are tough.

The school district faces a \$29 million shortfall next school year. Proposition G says the school district can qualify for up to 25 percent of the fund's balance in any given year.

The definition of balance, however, isn't clear.

The mayor said the city will qualify this year for a share of the money - up to 50 percent of the \$92 million now in the fund. Then, depending on how the law is interpreted by the city controller, the school district could be eligible only for 25 percent of what's left, Newsom said. That would give the district \$11.5 million - just half the \$23 million it would get if its share was calculated from the full \$92 million.

Newsom said the \$11.5 million was just a minimum and could go up, but he would not commit Tuesday to providing more even if the controller allows. The mayor and supervisors have final approval of allocations from the fund.

"We're still working through the numbers and the math," he said.

After the morning press conference, school officials and some supervisors said they disagreed with the quarter-of-what's-left formula.

"We believe it says that it's 25 percent of the whole thing, not 25 percent after 50 percent has been taken out," said school Superintendent Carlos Garcia. "We have made that clear."

Garcia said district officials will make that argument with Controller Ben Rosenfield this week.

"Needless to say, we're grateful, but it was a little bit alarming for us," Garcia said, adding that even getting a quarter of the \$92 million - \$23 million - would still fall short of need.

Rosenfield said Tuesday afternoon it is premature to say how much money could go to the school district and that he hasn't yet determined what percentage of the rainy day money would be made available.

"It's an open question. We don't have an interpretation" of Prop G, he said.

Several school and city officials, including Supervisor Eric Mar and school board President Kim-Shree Maufas said that when they voted for Measure G, they didn't think the city would get the first cut of the fund and then shave off the schools' share.

The author of the measure, former Supervisor Tom Ammiano - now an assemblyman - said his intent was 25 percent of the whole.

During the press conference, the mayor and several supervisors said they are committed to putting children first.

"We're all in this together," Newsom said.

Garcia announced Monday that the district expects to send out 362 layoff notices to teachers and 144 to administrators, but wants to rescind as many layoffs as soon as possible, depending on how the rainy day money shakes out.

With the promise of \$11.5 million in rainy day money, Garcia said, up to 160 teaching jobs could be saved - more if additional Proposition G money comes in.

Last year, city officials allocated \$19 million from the rainy day fund to the schools - allowing the district to rescind all 500 layoff notices issued.

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