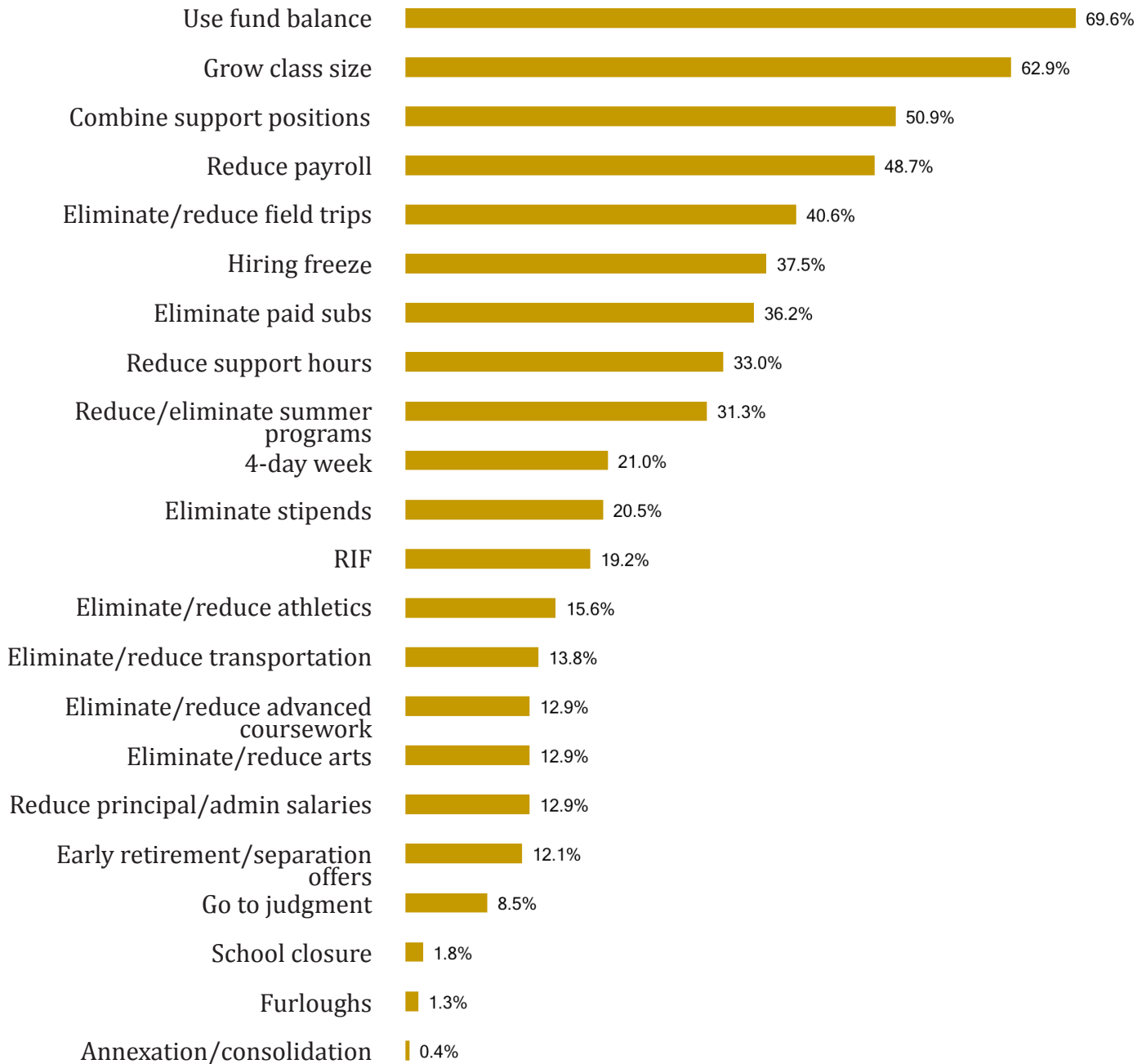


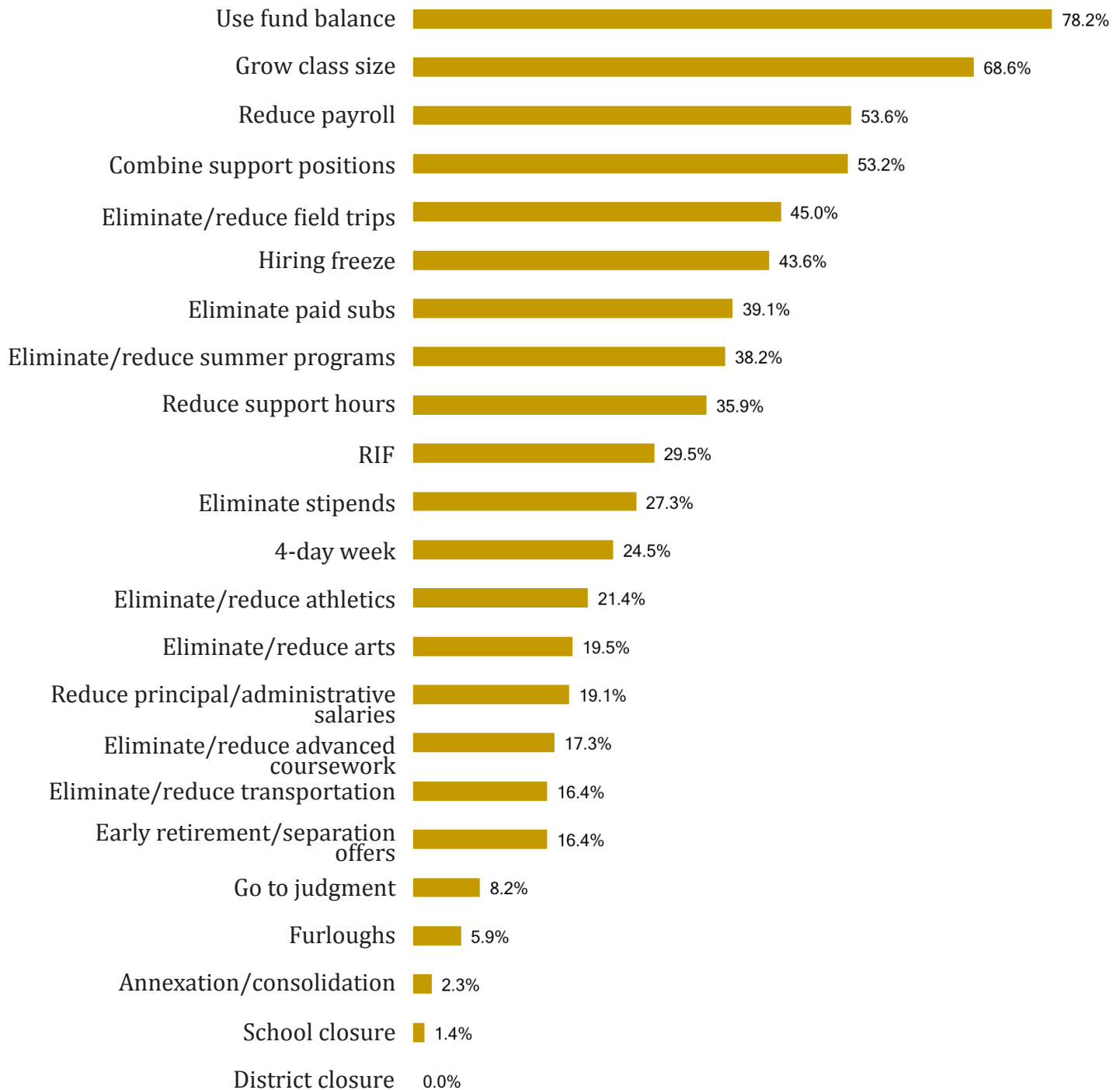


SURVEY: BUDGET CUTS LEAVING OKLAHOMA STUDENTS BEHIND

What action has your district taken to address current year cuts?



What cost-saving strategies are under consideration in your district for the 2017-2018 school year?



What cost-saving strategies are you implementing that might be important to share with other districts?

- Sell surplus items
- Review insurance
- No textbooks
- No janitors
- Cut academic calendar
- Contract treasurer and payroll
- Combine teaching positions
- Share administrative staff/teachers with other districts
- Adjunct teachers
- Fund balance
- Outsource custodial services
- Shorten bus routes
- Reduce athletic travel
- Programmable thermostats/reduce utility consumption
- Pay teachers to teach on planning periods
- Administrators teach without additional compensation
- Student recruitment
- Lease/purchase off-lease buses
- Grants
- Buy surplus technology/furniture
- LED lighting
- Volunteer coaches
- No district funding for athletics/fine arts. Programs must be self-sufficient.
- Outsource food service
- Limit travel for students and professional development
- Defer maintenance/limit repair costs
- Ask parents to provide supplies
- Close low-enrollment classes
- Shift salaries from general fund to building or federal funds where possible
- Energy conservation
- Renegotiate contracts
- Convert alternative education to online program
- Teacher attendance bonus (reduces need for substitutes)
- Teachers clean their classrooms
- Reduce maintenance personnel
- Rehire retired teachers
- Cross-district professional development collaboration
- Share superintendents
- Freeze administrator pay
- Reduce library services
- Furloughs
- Community Eligibility Provision (child nutrition)



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Survey: Budget Cuts Leaving Oklahoma Students Behind

Climbing class sizes and shrinking educational opportunities will become more widespread for Oklahoma students next year if state funding for schools continues its unpredictable decline, according to a new survey.

The survey from the associations representing school administrators and school board members asked school districts the effect of potential budget cuts for next school year. The survey, completed by districts representing more than two-thirds of Oklahoma's public school enrollment, found:

- Sixty-nine percent of districts expect to grow class sizes.
- Nearly all districts are considering cuts to arts, athletics, advanced coursework, summer programs or educational field trips.
- At least 44 more school districts may cut the number of school days through adoption of four-day school weeks or by shortening the school year.
- Nearly 30 percent of districts are considering a reduction in force.
- Sixteen percent of districts may reduce transportation services.
- At least 19 districts expect they may not have enough cash to pay all their bills this year.

Oklahoma invests less in public schools per student than nearly every state in the nation, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Leaders of the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration and the Oklahoma State School Boards Association are urging legislative leaders not to let education funding fall even further behind.

Education leaders also want assurance that if lawmakers agree on a teacher pay raise plan, it will be based on additional appropriations and won't be paid for by supplanting current funding. That counterproductive scenario would require districts to make cuts elsewhere in their budgets and likely reduce teaching staff.

"The bottom-line effect of budget cuts and financial uncertainty is obvious: We're leaving students behind," said Shawn Hime, OSSBA's executive director. "Many current and prospective teachers are leaving the state and profession because of low pay, growing class sizes and lack of classroom resources. Tight budgets are forcing schools to cut programs that we know are good for students. This path isn't sustainable if our state truly values education as the foundation of our state's economic future and the key to lifting Oklahoma families out of poverty."

CCOSA Executive Director Pam Deering said she speaks daily with superintendents desperately seeking hope as they plan for next year without solid budget information.

"We understand our state's legislative leaders are in an incredibly difficult situation and have competing priorities," Deering said. "Funding education must be our state's top priority. We continue to put the future of our students at risk with cuts, and we're eager to work with legislators so schools can make decisions in the best of interests of students."

Education appropriations are down \$110.4 million since the start of last school year, including \$69.1 million to date this school year. During that time, enrollment has increased, leaving schools with about \$160 less per student.

Since 2009, state appropriation cuts to schools have totaled over \$1 billion and Oklahoma has about 2,050 fewer certified educators while enrollment has increased by more than 39,000 students. Even with fewer educators, the state Education Department has issued 1,154 emergency teaching certificates – a record number -- to fill vacancies among a historic teacher shortage.

Districts also were asked about how they are addressing current-year budget cuts. They reported:

- Cuts in teachers, support employees and administrators.
- Reductions or eliminations of summer programs, student field trips, athletics, fine arts and advanced student coursework.
- Hiring freezes.
- Delayed textbook purchases.
- Elimination of paid substitutes in favor of recruiting volunteers.

Districts have worked with cities to reduce utility costs, pursued public-private partnerships, assigned janitorial duties to teachers and administrators, shifted costs to the building fund, outsourced child nutrition and other administrative services, relied on digital curriculum resources and hired retired teachers at reduced rates. Twelve districts are sharing superintendents.

More districts are weighing employee furloughs, and the number of districts that may pursue a reduction in force also may increase.

“We’re forced to do more with less, but that isn’t something to brag about,” said Colcord Superintendent Bud Simmons, noting his district’s state funding has dropped nearly \$1 million since 2009. He’s also doubling as elementary school principal. “It’s unacceptable, and we must invest in our students.”