

Schools in Kansas City, Missouri are being shutdown

Written by shajuan lewis

We have some news about the school district in Kansas City, Missouri. The board of education has decided to close almost half of the public schools due to budget cuts, and low enrollments. The vote was to close 28 of the city's 61 schools and cut 700 of 3,000 jobs. There will 285 teachers let go as part of these firings.

There were several factors that led to the decision to close these schools. The closings are expected to eliminate the schools district's \$50 million deficit. Another factor is the lack of students. Enrollment has declined by half in the last 10 years alone, to 17,400 children. The schools are now only 48 percent full. Part of the reason that the student population is decreasing is because many are leaving to schools in the suburbs or charter schools.

Part of the importance behind this plan was to avoid falling into bankruptcy and getting taken over by the state.

Parents and community members disagree with the plan. Rasheedah Hazziez a parent in the school district said where's my daughter goin to go? "I don't have a car. What happened to the time when our schools had a future? I live in Midtown and we already had too many vacant buildings. Now we're going to have more? I guess we'll just keep falling."

At PSU, this makes us think about Mayor Nutter's plan to close libraries. Last year, Philadelphia was making budget cuts and Nutter wanted to close libraries. Just like the closings in Kansas City, this would have meant that students wouldn't get our proper resources.

Another connection between the situation in Kansas City and what we're dealing with in Philadelphia is the effect that new charter schools have had on school enrollment. Because the district's schools have been failing, many people have turned to charter schools as an alternative. In the past decade especially, the number of charter schools in Philadelphia has increased dramatically. This has resulted in declining enrollment in many neighborhood public schools. Within the past year, we have seen the district propose the closure of some schools, such as Gillespie and William Penn, because enrollment has declined so much. Also, a "right-sizing" policy, which would potentially close some schools with low enrollment, was adopted as part of the Philadelphia school district's strategic plan, Imagine 2014.

BY: Shajuan Lewis and Greg Jordan-Detamore

This news story was part of our latest radio show, On Blast.