

✓ CF Education 5-24-91 RP

# County education office to cut 1991-92 budget by \$800,000

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The Santa Cruz County Office of Education's budget for 1991-92 will be reduced by about \$800,000, with the audio/visual program getting a 22 percent cut and employees not likely to get a cost-of-living raise.

Jim Maxwell, assistant superintendent of business, said the education office is not now plan-

ning to issue layoff notices, but added that "it's a possibility."

The office is putting together the 1991-92 budget, which will amount to about \$14 million. Adding to the budget woes, Maxwell said, is that by law, the education office must have a 3 percent reserve, or about \$420,000.

The 1991-92 budget, which must be finalized in September, doesn't include a cost-of-living adjustment for employees, Maxwell said. He is not worried about workers being angry about not getting the annual raise.

"I think the employees understand," he said. "They are aware of the situation the state is in."

This week, officials in Sacramento announced the state's projected deficit had risen to \$14.3 billion, up almost \$1.5 billion in about 30 days. Legislators think the deficit could climb even higher before they start wrestling with the budget in a few days. The Legislature must submit a budget to the governor by July 1.

Maxwell said most of the education office's money is in cate-

gorical funds and can't be shifted around, as is the case in school districts. He expects cuts in several programs, ranging from 4 percent to 22 percent.

The County Office of Education provides a number services to county school districts, including special-education classes, adult school, vocational-training programs, audio/visual materials, and services to the handicapped.

One project whose funding is threatened is the operation of the Duncan Holbert School pool in Watsonville. The pool is used by many handicapped students, who often are sent to the pool by their doctors for exercise. In many cases, being in the water provides the only form of whole-body exercise they get.

Chris Hertel, director of special education for the County Office of Education, said the pool is open, and although some of its funding will be cut for next year, she doesn't anticipate it will have to be shut down.

Hertel said her department is "prioritizing" certain services and the pool's budget is under review.