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HAGA ADAL, IT'S SATURDAY

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75¢ on Guam



■ Don't forget to vote in today's Pacific Daily News poll. Today's question:

Grade the performance of the Guam Waterworks Authority in responding to water leaks.

■ Results from yesterday's PDN poll are on **PAGE 2**

Schools short by \$10M

Guam DOE seeks reserve, facilities fund



"The goal here is to not to put anyone in a panic mode, but we want to ensure that we provide ample time."

NERISSA BRETANIA UNDERWOOD
superintendent, Guam Department of Education

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The Guam Department of Education is asking officials in Adelup and the Legislature to release a total of \$10 million in reserve and Territorial Educational Facilities funds so it can keep schools open through this fiscal year.

School system Superintendent Nerissa Bretania Underwood yesterday confirmed schools need about \$10 million to wrap up the fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. The department's projections indicate it will fall short sometime in September without the money, she said.

Guam DOE's about 32,000 school children will start classes

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DOE: Budget office hesitant to release reserve

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the new school year Aug. 10. If DOE is unable to access the funds, the department will have to shut down, Underwood said in a letter to the Bureau of Budget and Management Research.

Still, Underwood yesterday said the schools at least would be able to open in the fall.

"The goal here is to not to put anyone in a panic mode, but we want to ensure that we provide ample time," she said, adding that she didn't want to wait until August to request funds or disrupt the school year.

She added that education officials weren't asking for additional funds, but only what was appropriated to them.

All government of Guam agencies have 3 percent of their General Fund appropriations withheld. For the education agency, that means about \$5 million, said Budget and Management Director Bertha Duenas.

But Duenas said DOE has yet to provide a convincing case to receive its reserve funds.

The money appropriated for personnel services for schools was based on the staffing pattern DOE provided to the budget office in October, she said. Since then, DOE hasn't submitted any new figures to show its staffing patterns



Pacific Daily News file photo

Shortfall: Department of Education Superintendent Nerissa Bretania Underwood delivers her State of Education Address at Tamuning Elementary School on Nov. 13, 2009. Guam DOE is facing a \$10 million shortfall and may have to shut down if reserve or Territorial Education Facilities Fund money isn't released to address the shortfall, according to Underwood.

changed, Duenas said.

"The \$5 million, which was determined to be excess in personnel appropriations, based on information they themselves provided, was then identified as their share of the mandatory

3 percent reserve imposed upon every agency of this government due the decline in revenue collections this fiscal year," Duenas said.

finance services and not hiring any teachers unless there are unfilled positions.

The shortfall stems in part from the department's need to pay a note to the Guam Power Authority of about \$200,000 every month, Underwood explained. That's about \$2.4 million for the full year, she said — funds which aren't included in the appropriations.

It's a problem the schools have faced before, Taitano said. Last year, the schools were allowed to use bond money to address the operational shortfall.

Regarding the other \$5 million from the Territorial Education Facilities Fund that DOE is allowed to tap into, thanks to Public Law 30-104, Duenas said those funds no longer exist. "(The Department of Administration) zeroed out the balance of that fund, which the law relied upon as a source for those items of appropriation," she said. "Furthermore, the items of appropriation in that law include \$2.8 million for Capital Improvement Project reimbursements and \$1.6 million for textbooks, both of which don't have a direct bearing on keeping (schools) opened through September."

Shortfall cause

Taling Taitano, DOE deputy superintendent, said the department has taken steps to cut back expenditures for the summer, for example cutting off its contractual mainte-

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