LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD APPROVES 566 PENSION BONUSES UP TO $1 MILLION WHILE RAIDING $45.4M IN CAPITAL FUNDS, LOSING 1,946 STUDENTS, AND REFUSING PRIVATIZATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fort Myers, FL — Facing a severe $92.4 million operational deficit that has led to non-renewal notices for 457 teachers, assistant principals, and student support staff, the School District of Lee County continues to protect massive payouts for administrative elites. Fresh analysis of updated April 2026 public records reveals that the Lee County School Board has approved **566 active pension bonuses (DROP) total**, carrying a staggering total liability of **$250,493,912**. Rather than cutting bureaucratic overhead or outsourcing non-instructional operations, the board has approved transferring **$45.4 million out of the capital new building and infrastructure fund** directly into operational accounts to cover its daily operating budget shortfalls.[1] The full list of Lee County School Pension Cash bonuses at: https://tripledippers.org/fl-2026-july-lee-schools-triple-dippers/

Lee County School Pension Bonus as of April 2026

Last	First	M	Job Title	Salary 4/2026	8yr Pension Bonus	Annual Pension*	5 Yr Bonus	Salary 04-2023	Banked Hours	Banked Value
CUPID-MCCOY	JENNIFER	Patricia	Chief Strategy Officer	$200,720	$1,011,004	$97,562			465	$44,873
JOHNSTON	SHANNA	M	Chief Human Res Officer	$189,289	$753,154	$72,679			1202.25	$109,410
BROOKS	LORI	M	Dir Physical&MentalHlthSvc	$143,914	$728,002	$70,252			2328.73	$161,124
VILARDI	CHARLES	R	Regional Associate Super	$162,241	$673,602	$65,003			945.75	$73,769
BUCKLEY	LINDA	C	Principal Elem	$135,227	$648,519	$62,582	$349,479	$113,682	844	$54,871
LAROSA	DAVID	P	Dir ArtsAthlActivitiesAdmn	$139,076	$628,178	$60,619		$123,821	459.5	$30,724
ROLES	ANGELA	R	Principal Sec	$137,699	$622,766	$60,097			979	$64,811
LETCHER	KELLEEN		Dir Budget and Grants	$157,232	$618,210	$59,657	$333,009	$131,879	797.25	$60,266
MAZZOLI	ROBERT	W	Principal Elem	$135,227	$616,852	$59,526			573.5	$37,285
TRENT	CHERISE	W	Regional Associate Super	$162,241	$614,534	$59,303	$329,953	$112,974	1424.75	$111,131
BROUGHTON	MONICA	T	Principal Elem	$135,227	$594,969	$57,415			865.75	$56,285
MANGAN	BRIAN	M	Dir Academic & Student Srv	$127,266	$580,148	$55,984			2284	$139,747
NEAL-BASKIN	RE'JOYCE	Elaine	Reading Sec	$90,861	$578,271	$55,803	$311,842	$72,118	369.61	$16,146

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o17qoClsjUA&start=7 and https://www.wgcu.org/education/2026-05-20/275-teachers-laid-off-lee-county-schools

IOVINE	MARTHA	B	Asst Prin Sec	$103,898	$576,603	$55,642			708.56	$35,393

This massive fiscal strain comes as traditional public schools in Lee County lost **1,946 non-charter students** between the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school years—the operational equivalent of closing two full 1,000-student schools. Despite shrinking enrollment, the district continues to over-allocate funds to administrative payouts rather than rightsizing overhead.

Among these DROP pension bonus participants, a subset of **183 employees were not satisfied with a standard 5-year pension bonus** and demanded and received an 8-year pension bonus. This 8-year subset alone accounts for **$40,636,955** in total cash payouts—creating an additional **$13,972,466 in extended windfall payouts** above the standard 5-year pension bonus. Top administrative payouts are led by Chief Strategy Officer Jennifer Cupid-McCoy, who is set to collect a single pension cash bonus of over $1 million, **$1,011,004** on top of her $200,720 annual salary and $44,872.57 in banked unused vacation, etc. hours. Cupid-McCoy's estimated annual pension will be $97,561. These pension bonus employees are Triple Dippers, collecting a pension and a paycheck at the same time to do the same job, and they are the only public employees who don't pay the standard 3% of their salary into the Florida Pension System. Taxpayers pay 22.12% of these "Retired Employees" salary into the Florida pension system. See https://tripledippers.org/

> "It is shameful that the Lee County School Board fired 275 classroom teachers and raided $45.4 million from our capital infrastructure accounts while protecting $250 million in pension bonuses for administrative elites. Taxpayers are forced to pay a mandatory 22.02% FRS surcharge—totaling over $8.8 million every year on these pension bonus employee salaries—while these "Triple Dippers" pay zero percent into the retirement system."

- **Dave Jaye, Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association; Lead Researcher, TripleDippers.org**

> "The Pension Bonus DROP program was designed to keep senior teachers in the classroom five years longer for their expertise. However, administrators and bureaucrats took over. Now the district has to take $45.4 Million from the Capital Outlay budget to keep these triple dippers in the cream of pension bonuses as we lose over 240 teachers."

- **Lou Navarra, Education Advocate**

“In a time when affordability is hitting taxpayers hard and even candidates for governor are acknowledging affordability as job one, it’s more than disappointing to see the Lee County school board continue to spend like there’s no tomorrow. We need accountability, and we need it now!”

- **Rick Stevens, Co-Founder, Florida Citizens Alliance**

While school districts like Collier and Duval County saved millions by privatizing janitorial services as far back as 2008, and public, private, and religious school systems routinely contract out non-instructional services, Lee County Schools refuses to streamline its non-educational operations. The district currently subsidizes 566 retired personnel drawing full paychecks and monthly pensions simultaneously, including non-instructional positions across Janitorial, Food Services, Transportation, Drivers Education, IT, and Clerical services.

> “Collier County, Duval County, and other private and religious schools have successfully privatized janitorial, food services, transportation, and IT to keep dollars inside the classroom. Yet Lee County keeps hundreds of retired bureaucrats on payroll, paying out over $11.7 million in banked unused leave hours and absorbing full benefit surcharges instead of modernizing services.” **- Dave Jaye, Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association; Lead Researcher, TripleDippers.org**

Alarmingly, these multi-million-dollar administrative payouts coincide with dismal academic outcomes for local students.

> “The longer students spend in Lee County, the lower their test scores become. U.S. News & World Report documents https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/florida/districts/lee-103042 that 67% of Lee High School students fail basic math and 57% fail at basic reading, making these students not job ready. Yet the Lee County School Board brags about an 89.8% graduation rate achieved through social promotion, not basic academic student achievement.” - **Dave Jaye, Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association; Lead Researcher, TripleDippers.org**

“Recently, Superintend Carlin released to the media that Lee County had all A and B schools. This is nothing but slick media posturing. We can have all A and B schools, but the students are failing with D's and F's for literacy as well as graduating High School with social promotion. To add insult to injury, test scores show that third grade students are only 53% literate and only 33%. can pass basic math tests. “Social promotion hands high schoolers diploma they can't even read.” - **Lou Navarra, Education Advocate**

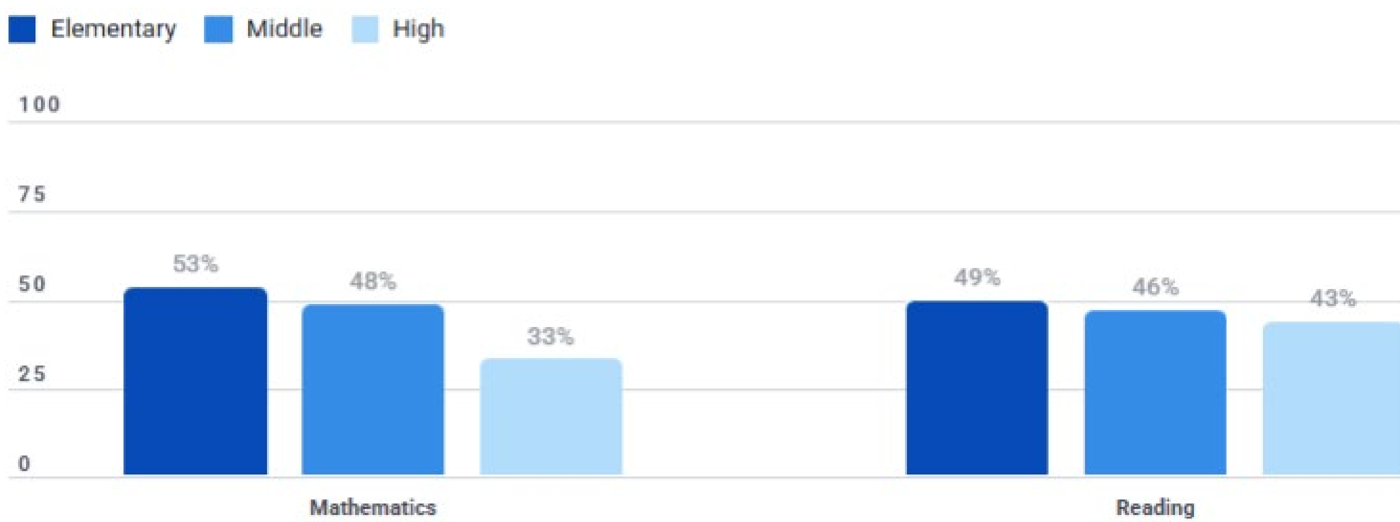
Compounding the fiscal burden, taxpayers must cover an annual **22.02% FRS surcharge** on top of these 566 salaries—adding **$8,832,202** in mandatory taxpayer funding every single year. Furthermore, active teachers and public employees are required to contribute 3% of their salaries into the Florida Retirement System, whereas these retired DROP employees pay **0%**, shifting their contribution burden entirely onto local property owners.

Test Scores at Lee County School District

In Lee County School District, 49% of elementary students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 53% tested at or above that level for math. Also, 46% of middle school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 48% tested at or above that level for math. And 43% of high school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 33% tested at or above that level for math.

High school college readiness	**22.1**
High school graduation rate	**10.0%**

Test score proficiency



"The solution is simple: do not renew the annual contracts of these retired Triple Dippers on June 30. But the incumbent Lee County School Board members refused again to replace over-allocated administrative posts with newly trained, entry-level educators, and privatizing non-instructional services would immediately save taxpayers over $12 million annually—enough to protect every classroom job, secure arts education, and balance the budget without raiding capital funds. But Lee County School Board chose to keep staff collecting over $250 million in pension cash bonuses."

— Dave Jaye, Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association; Lead Researcher, TripleDippers.org

The Banked-Leave Spiking Scheme: Inflating Final Payouts and Pensions

Compounding these multi-million-dollar pension bonus payouts is a hidden banked-leave payout system that drains over **$11.7 million** from taxpayers across all Lee Schools Employees. Under current Lee School district practices, retiring employees cash out thousands of banked unused vacation and sick hours at their final, highest career salary—rather than the lower rate of pay when those hours were earned. This loophole artificially inflates their final year's compensation, directly spiking the lifetime pension calculation base while draining public funds which should be used for tutors. To promote genuine work-life balance and protect public funds, the School Board must immediately cap annual banked days off at **40 hours per year** and mandate that any accrued leave cashouts be calculated at the employee's salary rate when the time was earned, rather than their final inflated executive salary. Tragically, instead of leading by example, Lori Brooks Lee School's Director of Physical & Mental Health Services School Counseling has banked over a year's worth of days off 2,328.73 hours charging taxpayers $161,123.60 and counting! Johnny Thomas has banked over two years of days off!

Top 5 Lee County School Employees by Banked Leave Hours

Rank	Name	Job Title	Location / Department	April 2026 Salary	Total Banked Hours	Cashout Value
1	**Johnny Thomas**	Worker Sites	East Lee County High	$46,777.20	**2,931.78**	$65,932.91
2	**Bruce Baker**	Technician Scrty & Vid Sr IT	IT Operations	$67,279.20	**2,714.75**	$87,810.68
3	**Gregory Hogan**	Custodian Head	Fort Myers Technical College	$52,448.40	**2,566.00**	$64,703.17
4	**Shenita Morant**	Operator School Bus	Trans East - Bus Operators	$43,330.56	**2,435.47**	$50,735.72
5	**Lori Brooks**	Dir Physical & Mental Hlth Svc	School Counseling / Mental Health	$143,913.82	**2,328.73**	**$161,123.60**

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