

SWEDESBORO BOARD OF EDUCATION

COMMUNITY UPDATE #4

June 20, 2017

Why did the BOE cancel the initial request for proposal and issue a second request for proposal?

The District decided to cancel the initial RFP so that additional specifications could be provided. The District revised and published a new advertisement for Paraprofessional Services to include specifications regarding utilization of full time staff and description of offered employee benefits. A proposed salary guide was also included in the RFP.

Can our current paraprofessionals work for an outsourced company and continue to work in our District?

If the BOE does choose to go with an outsourced company, our paraprofessionals will be offered the option to continue working in our school district. It will be up to the individual staff member to decide if they would like to continue to work for the identified company and continue to work with the District and our children.

Who hires the paraprofessionals if the District contracts with a private company?

The District will retain all hiring rights. Like we do now, District administration will interview and place any and all paraprofessionals. Currently, we have several long term substitute teachers and paraprofessionals hired through our existing substitute service provider. Every individual has been interviewed by District staff and selected as a qualified candidate. The District will maintain this practice.

Do we have any Insight Paraprofessionals currently working in classrooms?

Yes, we do have several paraprofessionals who work in a specific classroom each day. The District has received positive feedback from staff, parents, and administration regarding the work that these individuals do each day to support our children. These paraprofessionals have never been regarded as "strangers" in our schools.

If the District outsources paraprofessional services, will the paraprofessionals receive training?

The District is committed to continuing to provide 184 work days as per our current contract to maintain our training standards. Working with an outsourced company will allow us to provide this training in the summertime, prior to the start of the year, due to the District's ability to be more flexible and schedule professional days at times when it would make the most sense for our paraprofessional staff to receive it. This is not an ability that we currently have due to contractual obligations, and this increased flexibility would not result in additional expenses.

The District will continue to provide our own training to our paraprofessional staff. Staff will continue to receive crisis training as they currently do, and we will continue to use our own preferred providers. The District will not forfeit our right to provide our own training.

Monthly paraprofessional faculty meetings beyond the school day will continue even if the District utilizes a private company. Paraprofessional staff will continue to receive support during these monthly meetings just as they do now.

If the District chooses to privatize these support services, early dismissal student days will be identified as days for additional paraprofessional training/support. This is another option that we currently do not have due to contractual obligations, and this additional flexibility would not result in additional expenses.

Who will provide the 2017 summer ESY services?

All of our current paraprofessional staff have been officially offered the opportunity to apply for one of the 12 support positions in our ESY program. It is the District's preference to hire our current staff; however, it is their choice if they want to continue to work during the summer months.

Our current staff who apply will still receive the contracted approved hourly rate of \$22.00 to perform their responsibilities, and they will also continue to receive their District provided benefits through August 31, 2017.

However, due to existing contractual factors, the paraprofessional staff would need to be employed through the Insight Service for this summer. Our current staff, if approved by administration, would be hired for this summer's ESY program if they were interested in summer work.

Even if our current staff works for the Insight during the ESY program this summer, they still would be eligible for unemployment compensation at the conclusion of the program as defined by New Jersey Law.

If Governor Christie signs the proposed Assembly and Senate funding agreement and SWSD receives an additional \$257,000 for the 2017 – 2018 school year, will the Board of Education reinstate all paraprofessional staff at their current level of benefits and abandon the RFP process for outsourcing paraprofessional staff?

As previously expressed, the Board of Education is committed to exploring cost savings options at all times. It is anticipated that outsourcing paraprofessional staff will result in a \$500,000 savings to the District. Over the last 2 years, the District has reduced other services based upon budgetary constraints as set forth below. At this time, we have no guarantee that the proposed agreement will result in any dollars to the District for the 2017-2018 school year. Should we receive the money under the proposed Agreement, the BOE will listen to the District Administration's recommendations on how best to allocate any additional monies. Therefore, we cannot say for certain at this time how the District will proceed. In 2016 – 2017, four teaching positions were eliminated from the budget which impacted the following grade levels: kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, and 3rd grade.

- Although class sizes remain under the approved level of 25 students or less per class in K - 4, the reduction of teaching staff did result in increased class sizes.

- Anticipated class sizes for 2017 – 2018:
 - Kindergarten: 22 anticipated
 - (Current registration as of 6/2017 = 192 students)
 - First grade: 20-21
 - Second Grade: 23 – 24
 - Third Grade: 20 – 21
 - Fourth Grade 24 – 25
- Special education student placement is continually impacted. Student placement is consistently based on the legally approved limits:
 - In-class resource room class sizes: up to 8 students
 - Pull-out resource room class sizes: up to 9 students
 - LLD self-contained class sizes (grades K -6): up to 16 students
 - MD self-contained class sizes (grades K -6): up to 12 students
 - Preschool disabled class sizes: up to 12
 - ABA/Autism class sizes: up to 6 students
- Hiring full-time guidance counselors in each building:
 - Currently, the district employs two full-time guidance counselors and two part-time guidance counselors. Originally, the 2017 – 2018 budget included the potential for each building to employ a full-time guidance counselor. This has since been eliminated from the budget.

Sincerely,
The SWSD Board of Education Finance Committee