

SWEDESBORO-WOOLWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION

COMMUNITY UPDATE

MAY 5, 2017

As the Swedesboro-Woolwich Community is keenly aware, our community residents have been burdened with excessive tax increases as a result of the lack of school funding provided by the state of New Jersey. Keeping that in mind, the Swedesboro-Woolwich Board of Education (SWBOE) is elected to represent the community interests, and collectively, we believe that it is important to be mindful of tax impacts when establishing a school based budget. Our community has indicated through numerous forums, conversations, and by the defeat of two Kingsway Regional Referendums that they do not want an increase in their school taxes. As such, SWBOE is committed to minimizing tax increases while at the same time looking for cost saving alternatives whenever and wherever possible.

Below are the SWBOE responses to the questions we received throughout the last couple of weeks regarding our paraprofessional services.

Has the District voted to eliminate the current paraprofessionals?

No. At the April 26, 2017 Board of Education meeting, the BOE voted to explore the potential cost savings specifically for (1) outsourcing paraprofessionals, (2) substitute services for teachers, paraprofessionals, and staffing, and (3) homebound instruction. It is expected that several paraprofessional providers will submit their proposals for review by the May 16, 2017 deadline. A thorough analysis of all bid proposals and a review of the potential cost savings will begin after May 16, 2017. The analysis will include the District's role in the hiring and training process as well as the paraprofessional salary and benefit packages.

To the extent the SWBOE selects a contracted service provider, said provider would be required to provide health benefits for their full-time staff. We will be gathering additional information as to the packages offered by various providers in the coming weeks.

When will a decision be made about the paraprofessionals?

The District expects to make a decision regarding support services at the June 14, 2017 BOE meeting.

Why is the District considering this decision now?

The decision is a result of our state flat funding that was published on March 3rd and the review of our annual budget that was shared on March 15th and April 26th. Also, each year around this time, the District opens up its Request for Proposal Process (RFP). This year is no different as it is important to explore cost saving measures and assess current services whenever possible.

To learn more about the SW involvement in fair funding, please visit our [FFAC website](http://swedesboro-woolich.com/FFAC) or [updates](#) at swedesboro-woolich.com/FFAC.

Why was the proposed budget amended at the April 26, 2017 meeting?

The BOE decided to eliminate the available banked cap in the approved March 2017 budget. Banked cap is the unused tax levy created by an increase below 2% and/or cap waivers for enrollment or healthcare costs. Banked cap can be used in any one of the next 3 succeeding budget years. The tax impact if the banked cap remained would have been an estimated 1.24%. Without the banked cap, the estimated tax impact is .17%.

If the District outsources their paraprofessional services, who will work with our children?

If the BOE decides to select a paraprofessional provider, it is the District's hope that our current paraprofessional staff will apply. We would like to retain our paraprofessional talent.

However, in the event that our current staff chooses not to apply, then we will follow our usual hiring process. The only exception will be that we will not initially collect the resumes. Instead, the service provider will gather the resumes and share those resumes with the District. The District will then conduct interviews and select the right individuals for the job.

This is not like a substitute service. Newly hired paraprofessionals will be expected to perform their duties and responsibilities consistently throughout the school year as they do now.

If the District outsources their paraprofessional services, can someone who doesn't work for that service apply for the job?

Anyone can apply through the service provider for the job of paraprofessional as long as they enjoy working with children, have a minimum of 60 college credits, or hold a high school degree while also successfully passing the ParaProfessional Test. If someone submits a resume directly to the District, the District will re-direct that individual to the newly hired service provider. It is up to the candidate to decide if they would like to work for the provider or choose to look elsewhere for employment opportunities that better suit his/her specific needs.

How will an outsourced service know the needs of our children?

The District will continue to provide professional development for the paraprofessional staff. In addition, the paraprofessionals will also be provided with the training that their contracted service provider required as well. The District is committed to continuing our tradition of utilizing our own special education and child study team staff to train our support staff. The District will also obtain outside consultants to train as needed. This has been our long standing practice, and it will not change.

How are paraprofessionals hired in other Districts?

Many Districts throughout the state have addressed their budgeting and financial constraints through alternate ways. Many Districts have chosen to hire part-time paraprofessionals while other Districts selected a specific service provider to meet their needs.

In our regional area, the paraprofessional employment status reflects the following:

District	Paraprofessional Hiring Information	Benefits Provided
Logan Township	All paraprofessionals are part-time	No
South Harrison Township	Paraprofessionals were outsourced with <i>Source 4Teachers</i> in 2015 – 2016. One non-outsourced Paraprofessional remains in District. Paraprofessionals are part-time	No
East Greenwich	There are some full-time paraprofessional staff in District. New hires are all hired on a part-time basis.	Yes for full-time staff, No for part-time staff
Kingsway Regional	Full-time Paraprofessionals	Yes (Limited EPO Plan)

What alternative plans are there should the Board decide to retain the paraprofessionals as they exist today?

The District did budget a \$500,000 estimated cost savings into the 2017-18 school budget, which allows the District to keep existing services intact. This decision was budgetary in nature and not reflective of job performance. Our alternative, should the BOE not decide to outsource or change the paraprofessional services, is as follows:

- a) Reduce teaching staff by 4 staff members
- b) Reduce Staff Professional Development, Instructional Supplies, and Curriculum by \$55,000
- c) Eliminate after school tutoring and clubs for students
- d) Reduce Technology and Operations by \$40,000

During difficult times when tax payers have expressed the need to control tax increases, it is our responsibility as a Board to investigate other cost saving measures. Please understand that we value our paraprofessionals as they provide an important service to our District. We are trying to balance excellent services while keeping in mind the importance of a being fiscally responsible to the tax payer.

Sincerely,



Craig Frederick
SWBOE President