

TRENTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

"Children Come First, Los niños son Primero."

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CONCERNS RAISED DURING PUBLIC COMMENT

September 29, 2016 Board of Education Meeting:

Ms. Betty Glenn, President of the Trenton Paraprofessionals Association, expressed concern about the District's use of Source4Teachers and stated that she is not responsible for the problems that are occurring with the 1:1 Aides. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Mr. Joe Carpenter, Inclusion Teacher at the Ninth Grade Academy, said that all his classes are out of compliance. He discussed the negative impacts on his students of having privately contracted 1:1 Aides. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Ms. Rhonda Williams, Special Ed Teacher of Grades 3-5 at P.J. Hill Elementary School, also discussed issues with the 1:1 Aides. She said the aides are not capable of doing the job and are not reliable in their attendance. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Mr. Billie Hayes, Community Member, said the State Monitor does not have the authority to approve agenda items when there is no Board Meeting. He referenced the actions of September 19, which are posted on the District's website. He also disparaged the Board President and Board Attorney, and he stated there is no accountability in the District. He expressed concern with the Superintendent Search process and with Special Education services in the District. **PERRY LATTIBOUDERE/LIZ DEJESUS**

Ms. Taiwanda Taylor-Wilson, Parent, expressed concern with the privatization of the Paraprofessionals and the 1:1 Aides and criticized the Board President. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Ms. Darlene McNight felt that some parents are given the impression that they are not welcome in the schools. She also felt that students are not the first priority in the District. **WILFREDO ORTIZ**

Mr. Mike Goodman, PTA President, felt that the Board is pushing the parents and community against the wall on some issues. He also expressed concern about Special Ed issues. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Mr. Ron Sanasac from Trenton Education Association (TEA) spoke about the civil rights of Special Ed students, and he felt that their needs are not being met. He also expressed concern about the cost of outsourcing and of legal services. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Ms. Janice Williams, Grievance Chair of TEA, spoke about violations in the provision of Special Ed services as per students' IEPs. She also said that substitute teachers are being used in place of Paraprofessionals and 1:1 Aides to give the appearance that all vacancies are filled. **LIZ DEJESUS**

Ms. Twanda Taylor, Vice President of TEA, expressed concern with Special Ed issues and said there are many problems. She stated that someone should be held accountable. **LIZ DEJESUS**

TEA President Naomi Johnson-Lafleur felt that the Board does not respect the city, parents, students and staff. She said that Special Ed services are not being provided to the students in the proper manner, and she placed blame on the Board and Administration. **LIZ DEJESUS**

RESPONSE TO ALL CONCERNS STATED ABOVE:

The Trenton Public Schools was faced with a budget shortfall during the budget development for the 2016-17 school year.

When projected expenditures are higher than revenues there is a budget shortfall. There are multiple reasons for the shortfall:

- **Rising cost of employee benefits and salaries**
- **Flat funding**
- **Increased enrollment in charter schools and school choice**
- **Decline in enrollment in Trenton Public Schools**

Among the positions impacted because of the shortfall were 92 paraprofessionals that service self-contained special education classes. This decision was very difficult. It was made due to the fact that paraprofessional positions are IEP driven and are fluid based on the student needs. As a result, the district was forced to outsource the paraprofessionals.

There was a bidding process in compliance with the Public School Contracts Law. The vendor who is awarded the contract must strictly follow the guidelines established by the Board. Paraprofessionals hired for the position must meet the requirements set forth by the NJDOE. Minimum requirements consist of an Associate's Degree, 48 College Credits or successful completion of the ParaPro Assessment. The ParaPro Assessment is a general aptitude test that is required in many states for paraprofessional certification. The District will also oversee the work of the paraprofessionals hired by the vendor and will ensure that a high quality service is delivered.

The transition to the outsourced model has not been as smooth as we hoped. However, we are working closely with Source4Teachers to fill all the vacancies. As of October 11th, there is a 95% fill rate for paraprofessionals and a 99% fill rate for the one-one aides. Clearly the goal is 100% staffing for all district employees daily.