LITTLE ROCK
SCHOOL DISTRICT

May 30, 2024

Statement from the Little Rock School District Regarding Budget Cuts

The Little Rock School District remains committed to providing the best possible education for our students and a supportive work environment for our staff. Despite the impending budget cuts, LRSD is working to strategically manage resources to ensure minimal impact on classroom instruction and student learning. Making budget cuts in schools is never an easy decision, as it impacts the entire community, including students, teachers, and staff. However, these difficult choices are sometimes necessary to ensure long-term sustainability and the continued delivery of quality education. Our focus is to continue fostering an environment where students and staff can thrive and succeed. In light of the circulation of recent information related to LRSD's budget, the District would like to provide clarity and transparency regarding the recent budget cuts and non-renewals. Key points include:

1. **Impact on Classroom Teachers**:
    - Classroom teachers are not disproportionately affected by the budget cuts compared to other employee groups.
    - In the "Plan for $15 Million Dollar Budget Reductions," the 42 certified positions eliminated were among 100+ unfilled positions, meaning no actual staff members were impacted by these eliminations.
2. **Clarification on Non-Renewals**:
    - There has been misinformation about non-renewals. Different types of non-renewals include:
        - Interim/Temporary Teachers (35)
        - Schedule Changes/Course Reductions (21)
        - For Cause/Performance (27) - (new for LRSD)
        - Budget/Staff Realignment (21) - No teachers in this category
        - Program Changes (2) - No teachers in this category
        - Emergency Teaching Permit (ETP) (42)
        - School Closures (45)
    - Excluding interim teachers for cause/performance and ETPs, which are not related to the reduction of teachers due to budget constraints, only 66 teachers are being non-renewed for budget-related reasons (i.e., schedule change/course reductions and school closures). This number is expected to decrease as teachers fill available vacancies.
    - Currently, we have 99.5 teacher vacancies for the 2024-25 school year, and non-renewed teachers are expected to fill many of these positions.
3. **Current Impact Data**:
    - 66 out of 1713 teachers (4%) are affected by budget-related reductions, a figure expected to decrease.
    - Our goal is to reduce this to a 2% impact (30 out of 1713 teachers).
    - District staff positions are impacted by 4%, and non-teacher school-based staff by 3.2%.

4. **Misinformation Correction**:
    - Reports that secretaries, custodians, and paraprofessionals are being cut are not accurate. The 16 classified positions mentioned to have been eliminated were unfilled and deemed unnecessary.
    - We have vacancies for 8 secretaries, 11.5 custodians, and 61.67 paraprofessionals for the 2024-25 school year. Non-renewed employees in these groups are eligible for these positions and should not be without a job unless they choose to leave LRSD.
5. **Staff Concerns**:
    - Non-renewals for performance and the mutual consent placement process have been raised as topics of concern. Historically, accountability measures for performance were not a reason for non-renewal; displaced staff were automatically placed at schools with vacancies irrespective of performance.
    - Current mutual consent placement allows hiring managers to select the best candidate, unlike past procedures where staff were assigned to vacancies without manager input, negatively impacting schools with the greatest needs. Allowing a hiring manager to align qualified staff with the needs of his/her building directly influences student learning, engagement, and overall academic success.

The Little Rock School District remains dedicated to ensuring all staff understand these processes and are supported through these changes. We appreciate employees' continued commitment to our students and community.