

Good morning/afternoon Pirate Families and Community,

Last week was one of the most challenging and emotional weeks I have experienced here in PCS as we not only brought this unique and unpredictable school year to a close on Friday, but we were also able to provide an appropriate graduation ceremony for our seniors on Saturday morning which turned out to be one of the best ever and will no doubt be memorable for everyone involved. However, the most impactful event that occurred was the decision to lay-off 22 valuable PCS staff members in response to our ongoing financial challenges as a result of declining enrollment, along with the now impending cuts to the SAF (School Aid Fund) that will create an additional \$1.5 - \$2.4 million shortfall in revenue for the 2020-21 school year. I know the news of this has been making its way around our community since Friday as I have been fielding questions throughout the weekend and have been engaging in conversations via social media as obviously, our parents and community are concerned as rumors are beginning to circulate. At the same time, community members are beginning to mobilize in an effort to lobby for public education and look to encourage our legislatures to not decimate education as schools across our state are having to respond to this crisis which has been created from the pandemic. On Friday, I sent a communication to our staff regarding this situation, which I understand has also been forwarded to some in our community and thus, would like to share it with you as well so that everyone has the same information:

Although this day should be a day in which I should feel a sense of joy, satisfaction and relief with it being the "official" last day of school, what I am feeling is far from this given our students and staff are not here together to celebrate and even more important, the reality of what occurred at last night's BOE meeting with the laying off of 22 staff members is weighing heavy on all of us. I do appreciate everyone who was in attendance last night as I believe we had 76 present, but as I stated, we did record the meeting and is available with this email as there is a link below that will take you to the video.

I fully understand, appreciate and acknowledge the feelings of anger, confusion and even mistrust that comes with a situation like this as our greatest strength and value is being a tight-knit Pirate family and yesterday, our family was impacted greatly with the need to lay-off people we truly care about and value. The individuals being impacted are not only valuable employees, but more so, they are friends, mentors, colleagues, counselors, coaches, people who make us laugh, friends who will listen to us when we need to vent or are there to give us a hug when we need it. They are all that make us who we are and we will all be impacted by these changes.

I also understand the feelings/concerns that surround the rubric and process as this is something we have never had to use before and traditionally in education, is not how this process has worked in the past. We must remember that we did not create this process, but rather, this entire evaluation and law has been given to us by people in Lansing who do not have our best interest at heart and although we do try to use the evaluation system as a tool for growth, those who placed this new process on us do not care about growth, but rather, it was intended to do exactly what it is doing, impact good people, create animosity and division. We are not surprised by the emotions coming from this as we fully expected them as we tried for months working to put together a process that would be as equitable as possible, while following the mandates. The truth of the matter is that regardless of how we did this, in the end, we are going to impact good and valuable people, there is no way around this when we are looking at the number of people impacted. Some have made the suggestion that we should have overridden the numbers in the rubric to avoid some of the decisions that resulted. However, if we started making individual decisions without relying on the data (evaluation, scheduling needs and teacher certification), we would greatly jeopardize the integrity of the process.

There is also a sense of us not being transparent with this and please know, we needed to provide this to the BOE before sharing it out, but both Brian and Kathy are working to provide staff with their individual scores today. But please know that having this information will only be somewhat beneficial as we do not intend to send everyone's scores out as this data reflects personal evaluation data and it is not appropriate for us to send out. In addition, the rubric score does not reflect the full context of the process as we spent considerable time reflecting on teacher certifications and scheduling needs as this also played a large part in the decisions.

Some have also asked "Why do we have to lay off so many?" and in the past, we have had to reduce on average 6-12 staff based on the loss of enrollment and we have been able to do this by working with retirements and staff making decisions to work elsewhere. Given our current deficit situation and continual challenges with

enrollment, we worked collaboratively with the PEA (union) earlier in the year and agreed we needed to get tighter with our staffing and no longer can we hold on to protecting class sizes (we had some of the lowest in the county in comparison) and some programs as we have been working to do in the spirit of staying competitive with our neighboring districts and charter schools. Originally, we had set a target of reducing teaching staff by 14 in February, which wasn't too much more than we have had to do in previous years, once again, hoping that retirements and natural attrition would help soften the impact. Unfortunately, we have not gotten the retirements we were hoping for and as we all know too well, the impact of COVID-19 has turned all of our lives and profession upside down and has now made what was already a difficult road, much more challenging for all of us in education, but especially for us here in Pinckney. As Jamie stated in her presentation that is attached, the financial outlook is beyond scary and we must do what we can now to help prepare and with this in mind, we made the conscious decision to increase our number of staff from 14 to 22, knowing this is going to have a tremendous impact on us.

Lastly, some have shared with me that the feeling is that some of these decisions were directed at the PEA and is being seen as an "attack on the union" and I hope those of you have been around PCS for a while know and trust that we have always seen our relationship with the PEA as positive and see the union as an asset and although the decisions we have to make have not always aligned, in the end, we have always maintained a high level of respect and appreciation for one another and look to continue this as we must work together if we have any hope of riding through this storm. We have already shared the factors that were used in determining the decisions and we never strayed from those. We obviously have no control on who is a PEA member and who is not or what role they play.

Although we were intentional last night during the meeting to not share the names of those impacted out of respect to them, but we do realize that information is circling around the district and we will share this with you at this time so that we can make sure everyone has the correct information.

Chapman-Fallot, Sharon	High School Science Teacher
Courter, Jordan	High School Math Teacher
Drabek, Dave	High School Social Studies Teacher
Naab, Kelsey	High School Spanish Teacher
Palajac, Rachael	High School/Pathfinder Music Teacher
Pawloski, Tara	High School Special Education Teacher
Schott, Valorie	High School Student & Family Specialist
St. Clair, Todd	High School Science Teacher
Strobe, Molly	High School Spanish Teacher
Walker, Angela	High School English Teacher
Radelt, Joann	Alternative Education Teacher
Blackson, Amanda	Pathfinder/Navigator Music Teacher
Carlson, Jeff	Pathfinder/Navigator Physical Education Teacher
Gallagher, Victoria	Pathfinder Math Teacher
McHugh, Tom	Pathfinder Social Studies Teacher
Watts-Richert, Barbara	Pathfinder Family & Consumer Science Teacher
Korechuk, Jennifer	Navigator Special Education Teacher
McHugh, Elizabeth	Navigator 5th Grade Teacher
Nagorsen, Brittany	Navigator 6th Grade Teacher
Cogswell, Jarrett	Country Elementary Teacher
Mortensen, Mike	Country Elementary Teacher
Ignagni, Stacey	Farley Hill Elementary Technology Teacher

Today, I have had the opportunity to speak to several of our colleagues on this list, some who are angry with me and some who have given me hugs and hope to touch base with each of them at some point in the near future. Any and all emotions directed at me and the district are understandable as I do not take them personally as I do "get it". A PEA leader shared with me this afternoon as some are "afraid" to speak up or share their thoughts as they are scared, which greatly saddens me as this decision is not being done out of retribution nor have we ever made any decision in that fashion as that is not who we are as people or as a district. I do hope that if any of you

have any questions or concerns about anything, that you will find it within yourself to trust us with your concerns/questions, whether that be me, or anyone else who can help. We are all in this together (I know we are getting tired of hearing this) and although our work is hard and the decisions we must make are even harder, I do truly believe that we ALL have the right intentions and that we ALL are doing the very best we can with what we have been given. We know that there were many good questions that were being provided during the meeting last night that were not addressed as quite honestly, I lost total focus on the chat screen given my focus on the conversations. We are going to create some opportunities in the future to provide the appropriate forum to have more of a question/answer discussion and we will look to put something together early next week when our team meets on Tuesday.

I want to end by saying "Thank you" to everyone for all you have done this year, but especially these past few months as you all responded with great resilience, pride and fortitude in the midst of a pandemic by making sure our students did not suffer academically and emotionally. You did what caring, compassionate and committed educators do by once again, rising to the occasion on behalf of others. Thank you and if I don't have the opportunity to tell you personally, have a great summer with your family (or maybe by yourself as you may be sick of spending time with them) and please, continue taking care of yourself and those around you.

Please know that we are still in the process of working through specific staffing assignments as that work should be completed within the next couple of weeks. With that being said, I want to make it clear that WE ARE NOT CUTTING BAND/MARCHING BAND as some have heard nor are we cutting specials such as art/PE/music at the elementary levels. Also, WE ARE NOT CUTTING AP courses at the HS as these classes will be offered based on student interest. We fully understand and appreciate the value of these programs for our students and as we move forward, we are looking to be as efficient as possible with our classes and will look to consolidate classes when possible. For instance, instead of having separate 7th & 8th-grade band classes, we will just have one middle school band class. As we continue to transform into a smaller district, we can no longer offer the wide range of classes we have in the past, but at the same time, we will look for opportunities to do things differently and more efficiently without taking away valuable learning experiences from our students. We are also NOT cutting the Student and Family Specialist position at the High School as we will be moving current Pathfinder Student & Family Specialist Leslie Madill to the High School and current Navigator Student & Family Specialist will be shared between Navigator & Pathfinder.

It is also important to note that we are also taking advantage of three administrative retirements as we will not be replacing my Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Brian Higgins, Pathfinder Principal Eric Ray and long time High School administrator and CTI Director, Dr. Jim Darga. Current Pathfinder/Navigator Assistant Principal, Lori Sandula will be assuming the Pathfinder Principalship on July 1 and current high school Student & Family Specialist, Patty Higgins has been reassigned to become the Dean of Student & Family Services at both Pathfinder and Navigator.

We are looking to refine and improve some of the scheduling structures at both the K-3 and 4-6 levels that will help us to maximize our specials teachers, but also, we will be able to provide more structure for students in terms of their day-to-day schedules, which will also benefit our teachers as they will have more opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues, along with providing more equity in providing intervention support to students and special education services. As stated previously, I am sharing the Zoom recording of Thursday's Board of Education meeting, which includes a detailed presentation/update of our financial situation and also, shares details about the K-6 structural/scheduling changes I just referenced.

In an effort to be transparent with our community, I am also sharing the rubric that we used when having to make the very difficult decisions on who to lay off as I know several parents have contacted me personally to share their feelings and confusion on the "Why?" Not that I fully expected people to understand the rubric completely, what I do want to make known is that there are a lot of factors that must be included in the evaluation process and it was done using a three year average of the data. It is extremely important to know that the rubric does not provide the full context of the decision making process as we must also take into consideration our scheduling needs at each specific school, along with teacher certifications which dictates what and where teachers can teach. What has made this process so painstaking is that the staff members listed above are both good teachers and people and are not on

the list because they have done something wrong as my own children have had several of these teachers and the thought of having to do this has been devastating.

Given the projected enrollments for next year (HS: 808, Pathfinder: 305, Navigator: 470, Country: 296, Farley Hill: 335), we simply will not need as many sections of grade/content level classes, especially at the HS. We also have to acknowledge that these numbers may become even smaller as a result of COVID-19 as we anticipate some families choosing to keep their children home as a safety precaution. Please know that we are fully preparing to start school with all of our students physically in school, with the proper safety measures in place of course and we do hope that most, if not all of our students will be with us when we return in the fall.

I know this is a lot of information, but it is important for us to communicate fully as your trust and support is going to be paramount as we move forward into some challenging times. I will continue providing information as it is needed, along with detailed information about our upcoming Bond on August 4, which is going to be more important for us than ever.

Thank you.

Rick Todd
Superintendent