

Beaufort County Education Association – Questions for Superintendent Moss

November 20, 2014

1. Why is it that buses are not air-conditioned? How can the district allow over 60 students on buses, during the spring and summer months, with temperatures over 100 degrees? Why aren't the special needs buses air-conditioned, when it is known that students who are on medication need to have air-conditioned buses?

No state buses are air-conditioned, but some special needs buses do have air conditioning. This is a state-level question because local school districts have no control over the vehicles purchased by the state for district use.

2. Can teachers who want to be involved in leadership other than the regular ed population be considered for the Leadership Cohort? Can it be advertised to all teachers requiring an administrator approval for the application process? In other words, if one wanted to be in Leadership for the Arts or Special Education be chosen as well, or has the "chosen" already been "hand-picked"? Will there be a leadership cohort offered for the arts or special education, or can educators join the cohort being formed in January.

If you are speaking about the Administrative Leadership Program we have begun, it was open to all to apply. There is a requirement for a principal's letter of recommendation. It is not structured around a particular program area. The program lasts 10 months. A new group will be able to apply next school year.

3. Do teachers in their last year of teaching have to go through the rigorous evaluation process? Teachers would like to be creative, innovative and enjoy their last year of teaching, trying new things that will enhance the learning process and student achievement. They are feeling stifled, and their creativity cut, because they are not going by a certain standard.

State law requires that all teachers be evaluated every year, either formally or informally.

4. Let's develop a district climate committee to ensure that all are being treated ethically and fairly across the board, with the understanding that this will improve staff morale district-wide.

That was the intent of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey we administered last spring.

5. Any idea when classified personnel can expect a pay review/raise?

The raise was not included in the 2014-2015 budget, but the Board of Education agreed to revisit the possibility of a raise for classified staff at the beginning of 2015.

6. Special education class sizes are growing at alarming rates at some schools. Are there any teachers who can be hired to reduce class sizes so students' needs can be met appropriately?

The district follows the class sizes recommended through IDEA.

7. What are BCSD's guidelines for student-to-teacher ratios with special education?

The district follows the class sizes recommended through IDEA.

8. How many years of teaching experience are required for employees applying for administrative/coordinator positions on the district level? It often appears that teachers who have not had much classroom experience are being elevated to district office administrative positions?

A minimum of three years' experience, a master's degree and a professional teaching certificate are expected.

9. Would the district consider creating positions for assistants to help first-grade teachers (1 or 2) among several teachers, to help with paperwork and in the classroom? PreK, kindergarten and special education have that asset, which we all understand is much needed. Nonetheless, first-grade teachers are just as needy.

We will discuss this during upcoming budget sessions along with other demands on funds we receive.

10. Would you please advocate for raising salaries for teachers, especially for those who have reached their step increase limit. Extending step increases to retirement.

The Board of Education has begun having these conversations.

11. Are administrators required to follow district guidelines for extracurricular stipends?

The guidelines allow site-based flexibility for distributing extracurricular stipends. We will discuss the benefits of having a standard schedule for these stipends.

12. At present, social workers (only here in South Carolina) are listed along with paraprofessionals. Why is the district NOT recognizing Master's-level social workers as professional clinicians. These clinicians are psychotherapists working in mental health, school health, behavioral health, educator consultants and substance abuse clinicians. These are only a few of their academically prepared professional abilities. If recognized properly, these professionals would be an asset to schools, along with guidance counselors and school psychologists, not just solely dealing with attendance.

The classification of staff is required by the state, including categories and titles.

From a Nov. 14 Beaufort Gazette newspaper article: *"In several programs, such as the dual-language immersion program at Hilton Head Elementary, students zoned for the school have not claimed all the spots in the special programs and have instead opted for more traditional instruction. However, the school's overall enrollment leaves little room in the building for others to attend, and the district has a cap on enrollment at each school. Several Board members said the district should adjust the cap, or make exceptions for students who want to join the programs."*

QUESTION 1: What is the district cap on each school?

Our current guidelines for acceptance into choice programs are connected to school capacities. Schools above 90 percent capacity cannot accept transferred students.

QUESTION 2: In high schools, all classes are very full with minimal to no room for additional students. Inventory is very low to nonexistent in some cases. With that said, what does the district plan to do with the current formula for FTEs to alleviate this and accommodate additional choice students for next school year? To analyze the effects of what is currently going on, we strongly suggest that the district have real conversations with guidance at each school to alleviate any negative hardships.

Each school is allotted personnel based upon its student enrollment. School schedules are site based and vary from school to school, which could affect class sizes.

If the district is planning on placing technological/CATE programs in the schools, how will we compensate those individuals coming from private industry to a teacher salary? In the past, we have had a teacher leave their profession to teach, took a \$10,000 pay cut, taught for one year and left the system because of salary. This may be an added expense. Furthermore, that makes it very difficult to find individuals to even apply for those industry-specific teaching jobs. Therefore, it may be cheaper to bring ACE up to state regulations/standards. What about the cost of implementing current ACE programs in Beaufort County schools vs. the cost of bringing ACE up to standards, letting those programs remain there and implementing new additional programs in the schools?

"How do you find the required kinds of skills meeting both the state requirements for certification, as well as industry certification, to be able to teach in an environment where you're preparing future workers?"

CATE teachers are compensated in accordance with the teacher salary schedule. This would not change for additional course offerings we will add. The district will actually save money by operating the programs within our district.