

School Psych Email sent to GG on September 15, 2020

Dear Guadalupe Guerrero,

PPS School Psychologists appreciate your leadership during this difficult time for our school communities. We met with you last on March 3, 2020 to share our concerns about the changes to our three year cycle staffing formula that removed equity allocations for Title I schools and for students with the most significant disabilities served in focus classrooms. **This formula change resulted in a FTE reduction in 38% of our SCI, 43% of TSI, & 50% of Title I schools.** If the equity-based staffing formula had not been changed, our schools would have received an additional 9.6 FTE. Instead, our Special Education FTE was cut 2.0 for the next three years. **School psychologists have been reduced by 5% since our last three year cycle despite a 7% increase in students who receive special education services.**

Despite school psychologists' critical services to students with disabilities, and their unique contributions to MTSS, over the past four years school psychologists have been the **only** school based mental health professionals to have their FTE reduced. Our services to students, families and school are already stretched so thin, **further reductions during multiple crises that disproportionately impact students attending Title I Schools and students with the most significant disabilities is an injustice.**

**We are asking the district to consider one of the following options to address inequities:**

- **Option 1 Prioritizing Equity for Title I Schools and Services with Disabilities - 9.6 FTE** to maintain equity formula prioritizing services to Title I schools and for students with the most significant disabilities served through our focus classrooms
- **Option 2 Prioritizing Equity for Title I School - 4.8 FTE** to add .2 FTE to all Title Schools\*
- **Option 3 Providing Stability in a Time Of Crises - 2.4 FTE** to maintain service levels comparable to 17-20, even though there's been a 7% increase in students served in special education over that time period.\*\*

The need to prioritize and equitably support and staff mental health teams comprised of school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists who have distinct and complementary roles in supporting students and families has been amplified by the crises. School psychologists funded through the Special Education Department are the primary staff providing critical social/emotional and mental health support to students with disabilities. School psychologists are also integral MTSS team members in preventing disproportionate identification for special education, and further FTE reductions will hamper our ability to support our schools.

We understand that there are budgeting constraints and our district leaders have difficult decisions to make. We need your support in prioritizing students with disabilities and students attending Title I schools by preventing the reduction of critical social emotional and mental health services and the disruption of relationships school psychologists have formed with

families, students, and teams during a time when they are most needed. We also ask that mental health and services for students with disabilities be prioritized in the upcoming 21-22 budget by equitably staffing school psychologists and expanding the use of Student Success Act funding for the comprehensive school psychologist model. We ask the district to creatively seek solutions that preserve school psychologists' services to students and families including the growth of the comprehensive model in our SCI schools. We were heartened when OTL administration creatively agreed to forgo cost of living increases and preserve PE teachers.

\* Using the district calculated 20-23 FTE as the base for the FTE

\*\*The 21-22 three year staffing cycle would use the NASP 1:500 ratio or at a minimum would be based on pre-Covid 19 special education enrollment as Covid-19 has resulted in an inaccurate representation of how many students will require special education services in the next three years. Title I bumps would also be included in the 21-22 three year staffing cycle.

## **ADDITIONAL FACTS AND FIGURES**

### **Temporary Assessment FTE & SCI Comprehensive FTE Do Not Reduce Special Education Funded Building Based School Psychologist Responsibilities**

- While we appreciate the use of federal Covid-19 funds to temporarily hire 3 assessment center school psychologists to safely evaluate students who require in-person testing; this is just one important aspect of our role in schools. There has been an additional layer of service levels needed due to the impact of the multiple crises on students and families as well as the backlog of evaluations due to the school closures in the Spring.
- We are also thankful for the 2.8 Student Success Act FTE in the 7 K-5 & K-8 Schools of Collaboration and Innovation (SCI, formerly CSI) to fund comprehensive general education school psychologist MTSS services, but the reduction in special education funding for these schools can impact the success of this pilot.

### **The 20-21 staffing formula change by the Special Education Department resulted in:**

- School psychologist FTE has decreased by 5% since 2016 while the number of special education students in PPS has increased 7% in that same period of time (2016 and 2019 [Enrollment of Underserved Groups](#))
- 38% of CSI, 43% of TSI, & 50% of Title schools' special education FTE being reduced
  - These schools include: Cesar Chavez, Boise-Eliot/Humboldt, Sitton, Bridger, Faubion, James John, Lee, Sabin, Vestal, George, Lane, Ockley Green, Jefferson, Harrison Park, Harriet Tubman, Woodlawn
- 23 schools have a school psychologist only one day per week
- There are only 53.4 building-based special education funded schools psychologists serving over 101 district, CBOs, charter and all private schools within PPS boundaries

**Examples of school psychologists' MTSS practices when staffed within the NASP recommended general education ratio (e.g. blended Sp Ed & General Education Student Success Act funding) include:**

- Leading professional learning for school staff and providing consultation in PBIS and function-based Tier I practices
- PLC consultation and data analysis, universal screening, disaggregating data to inform equitable practices, using decision rules to match students to Tier II core academic interventions and monitor progress, strategies to meet diverse learning needs (e.g. Universal Design for Learning - UDL)
- Serving as SIT Data Analyst to match students to evidence-based core academic and social/emotional intervention and monitor student progress
- Collaborating as a member of the wellness and mental health team in suicide prevention and intervention; crisis intervention; threat assessment; sexual incident response and safety and support planning
- Evidence-based Tier II SEL groups and individual counseling (e.g. DBT, Coping Cat)
- Completing Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Support Plans (FBA/BSP) and Escalation Response Plans to promote student safety and well being
- Completing program evaluation (core academic and SEL) to determine effectiveness of schoolwide supports
- Research Summary - Improving School & Student Outcomes

Sincerely,

PPS School Psychologists