



2014 Fall Survey: Issues, Questions, and Recommendations

Notes from meeting held in the Superintendent's Conference Room, 75 Calhoun St., on December 10, 2014

In attendance:

Michael Bobby, CCSD Superintendent

Bill Briggman, Executive Director of HR

Anita Huggins, Office of Teacher Effectiveness Director

Audrey Lane, Deputy Director of Human Capital

Erica Taylor, Communications Director

Michelle Nichols, CTA Steering Committee

Jody Stallings, CTA Director

1. Salary issues

The CTA requested that CCSD push for all teachers to be at 99% of the regional average, or, if this could not be accomplished, to bring all teachers (equitably, regardless of experience) as close to it as possible. Mr. Bobby said he is committed to compensating teachers according to the average, but would not commit to supporting that such pay be distributed equally: entry-level and inexperienced teachers may continue to be compensated at a higher percentage of the regional average in order to aid recruiting and retention.

Due to the degree of confusion regarding teacher salary issues this year, the CTA requested that CCSD respond to individual teacher questions by email. Mr. Bobby agreed and teachers can submit salary questions to compensation@charleston.k12.sc.us or call Rob Bowers at 843-937-6590.

The CTA requested that CCSD email pay stubs directly to teachers. 63 percent of teachers would like the district to return to this policy, and the CTA believes that easy access to pay stubs would both curtail confusion over teacher pay and foster good employee relations. Mr. Bobby disagreed, but said he would have his assistants look into the possibility.

2. District expenditures

In view of the results of our recent surveys, the CTA encouraged CCSD to implement an economic philosophy that puts more capital into teachers who deal directly with students and less into personnel that do not (in particular teacher consultants, district consultants, central administration, and school administration). Multiple studies have confirmed that larger district size has a negative impact on student performance. Given the size and scope of the CCSD, it is imperative that resources be allocated as directly as possible into the classroom. Given the fiscal reality of our economy, the most prudent way may be to shift non-essential administrative and non-essential, non-teaching faculty funding to classroom teachers. More "boots on the ground" would give teachers and students a better chance to succeed. Mr. Bobby said that he monitors class size and teaching faculty at all schools very carefully and is confident that reducing these numbers will not result in any considerable student gains. He said that he has seen no studies that show a correlation between lower class size and higher student success (although many

studies actually do suggest this, cf. <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Organizing-a-school/Class-size-and-student-achievement-At-a-glance/Class-size-and-student-achievement-Research-review.html>). Mr. Bobby suggested that no change in the philosophy the district uses to allocate funds would be forthcoming. He agreed to supply the CTA with a breakdown of the district's apportionment of teaching faculty vs. other personnel so we might compare it with other districts and possibly provide recommendations for change.

The CTA requested that CCSD develop a transparent system of reporting waste, improvements in spending or staffing, or other suggested budgetary improvements that can be accessed by the school board and district officials. Mr. Bobby agreed that this would be a useful tool in improving district spending and suggested that it could be an anonymous system.

3. Electronic notebooks

Based on information in our surveys, the CTA requested that CCSD make specific technological tools available for use (iPads, for example) and allow teachers to decide individually or in teams if the devices will help them to be successful rather than mandating implementation across the board. While cautioning against a "Lone Ranger" philosophy where teachers have free reign in their classrooms to make any and all decisions, Mr. Bobby agreed that this particular suggestion held both educational and fiscal merit and referred us to the classroom modernization committee to share with them our ideas.

4. Online trainings

The CTA requested that the district employ a policy to make online trainings count as one of our professional development days prior to the start of the school year. Mr. Bobby agreed in principle with this idea and said he would discuss it further with his administrative advisors.

5. Associate Superintendent

In the wake of the Academic Magnet issue and the district's handling of Mr. Walpole (as well as other issues of a similar nature that teachers have brought to light), the CTA sought assurances that Associate Superintendent Louis Martin (and all administrators charged with issuing teacher discipline) would apply teacher discipline in a fair and measured manner. We suggested implementation of an impartial panel that would include teachers to review recommendations for firings, forced transfers, or suspensions. Mr. Bobby agreed this was a possible solution and directed his advisors to look into the possibility.

6. Faculty Senates

The CTA requested that the superintendent reaffirm to principals the importance of maintaining a freely elected faculty senate where teachers can have genuine input on issues that affect their schools. Mr. Bobby shared feedback from principals that faculty senates were a good idea and agreed to continue to monitor their development and success. He also shared a survey of faculty senate members only who reported that their senates afforded them the opportunity to provide meaningful input for their schools.

7. Human resources

The CTA suggested that HR should respond to emails or requests within 24 hours. Bill Briggman, director of HR, agreed that this should be standard practice. The CTA also recommended that procedures should be in place to ensure that payroll and benefit errors are kept to a minimum and would be rectified in favor of the employee if an error resulted in an employee receiving less money than he or she was slated to receive. Mr. Briggman expressed his belief that employees should be treated fairly and professionally and agreed to examine some specific cases that may reveal where improvements can be made.

8. Principals

The CTA asked that measures be taken to improve leadership at James B. Edwards, Sanders Clyde, Springfield, and Stiles Point where a majority of surveyed teachers do not believe their principal is qualified to advise, offer criticism, and help shape them as a teacher. Mr. Bobby agreed and said he would direct the associate superintendents to look into and improve these issues.

9. Class Sizes

Based on our survey results, the CTA asked that measures be taken to work with the principals and teachers at Ellington, Drayton Hall, James B. Edwards, Jennie Moore, Military Magnet, Pinckney, Springfield, Stiles Point, and Zucker to more closely evaluate the problem of class size and reach a solution. Mr. Bobby agreed and said he would direct the associate superintendents to look into and improve these issues.

10. Substitute teachers

Based on our survey results, the CTA asked the district to work with administrators and faculties at Drayton Hall, Jennie Moore, Ladson, Lambs, Lincoln, Morningside Girls Academy, St. James Santee, and West Ashley Middle to come up with plans similar to other schools where teachers are not limited in the number of subs they are allowed to utilize. Mr. Bobby agreed and said he would direct the associate superintendents to look into and improve these issues.