

BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT 64

Minutes of the Committee-of-the-Whole on Hiring Practices in District 64
held at 6:30 p.m. August 8, 2011
Roosevelt Elementary School - LRC
1001 S. Fairview Avenue, Park Ridge, IL

President John Heyde called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. Other Board members present were Eric Uhlig, Pat Fioretto, Sharon Lawson, and Anthony H. Borrelli (arrived in progress at 6:46 p.m.). Also present were Superintendent Philip Bender, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Sandra Stringer, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning Diane Betts, Business Manager Becky Allard, Director of Pupil Services James Even, Director of Technology Terri Bresnahan, Public Information Coordinator Bernadette Tramm, and 8 members of the public.

Mr. Heyde stated the purpose of the meeting was to provide background to the Board on hiring procedures followed by District 64 and compensation practices for certified staff as approved in the District's contract with the Park Ridge Education Association (PREA) 2009-12 and other agreements.

Dr. Stringer reviewed the step-by-step hiring process as explained in detail in her written report. She noted that the process begins with the identification of the position to be posted, either a vacated position or a newly created position. She detailed the posting requirements for certified staff and for new positions, and the timeline established for the interview process. Dr. Stringer addressed the specific steps interested candidates, both in-District employees and outside candidates, must take to apply. Dr. Stringer then reviewed a multi-step process to screen applications and conduct interviews. She noted that for the 2011-12 school year, the District had added an additional screening tool to the online application system to rate teacher candidates in six areas of particular interest to District 64. She also described the essays required in the application. Dr. Stringer then discussed the multi-step interview process, selection of final candidates, reference checks and final interview before a contract is offered contingent upon Board approval via the Personnel Report submitted for action at Board meetings. Dr. Stringer offered examples of several different hiring scenarios to show how the process flows.

Board members then sought clarification about several points of the process. In responding, Dr. Stringer noted that timeline for the hiring process varies, and can be tighter closer to the start of a new school year. She also noted that the District states qualifications for a position in minimum terms, such as "at least" or "preferred."

Turning to professional compensation, Dr. Stringer reviewed the salary schedule attached to her report from the PREA contract for the current year, and pointed out how education and experience are used to determine placement on the schedule. She reported that for experience, called "step," District 64 acknowledges a maximum of six years of teaching experience, which was established in agreement with PREA during the 2003-04 school year. For education, called "lane," the past practice of the District has been to offer a candidate the equivalent to the degree and hours completed up to step 6 on the salary schedule. Dr. Stringer also indicated seven professional areas that require advanced course work over a bachelor's degree.

Dr. Stringer then answered a series of Board member questions and provided additional background on hiring. She noted that the classroom teacher positions have job descriptions that are the same throughout the District, and that hires are done by individual schools based on these general qualifications and expectations and any special requirements for the particular school position. She noted that the District always looks for teachers with a strong reading and instructional background, as well as literacy and differentiation skills. Dr. Stringer stated the

District is looking for teachers with passion committed to educating the whole child, and seeks teachers who would add to the specific grade/team they would be joining at a school.

In responding to questions about the current education level of the teaching staff, Dr. Stringer noted that at least three-quarters have master's degrees and that this is very typical for similar high-achieving districts. She also explained the process of how teachers join a cohort group to work through a master's degree and also the state requirements for teachers to obtain endorsements in specific subject areas.

Turning to broader considerations, Board members asked Dr. Stringer about any guidelines in terms of a financial perspective given by the Board. Dr. Stringer noted that for two years immediately prior to the 2007 referendum, the Board had requested the District to stay within a lower range but thereafter, it had returned to the direction of always looking for the best possible teachers the District could hire. Dr. Stringer also confirmed that the majority of the current teachers are over 10 years of experience and right in the middle for education. She noted that in looking at experienced candidates, District 64 does look at the districts teachers are coming from and is looking for districts with instructional programs similar to District 64 so the teacher has a strong background; she noted that for every position, District 64 receives from 800-1,200 for primary or middle grades, and that District 64 receives very strong candidates and has many to select from. Dr. Stringer also pointed out the District's exemplary mentoring program, which was the first in Illinois, and is required of all teachers new to District 64, regardless of their previous experience. She described the process by which District 64 teachers apply to be selected as mentors and how the program is structured.

Board members contributed ideas for possible future discussion, and noted that absent Board members should be offered an opportunity to contribute their ideas as well. Areas of interest that were expressed, included: possible financial impact of the Board altering its direction for hiring based on step/lane level; maintaining an appropriate balance of teachers on the schedule overall in terms of experience and education; opportunities for developing projections of step/lane of teachers for 10 years ahead to gauge the impact of possible changes in hiring; tracking grade levels or subject areas to see breakdowns of current staff step/lane; and impact of retirements on mentor pool in future years. Mr. Heyde stated the interest would be in looking at more data in the future to determine whether the District had a good balance and whether the current balance is satisfactory.

Mr. Heyde then invited public comment. Shelly Weiner, Park Ridge, noted the District had recently turned down an excellent teacher candidate. Charlene Foss, a Roosevelt parent, urged the Board to focus on budgeting and negotiations on the next teacher contract. Jerry Mulvihill, a Roosevelt teacher, expressed support for the current hiring process that allows District 64 to bring a variety of experience and education levels into the schools and also features a high level of teacher involvement in interviews to ensure the qualities of the candidate are a good match for the school's needs. He cautioned the Board not to draw assumptions that younger or less experienced teachers would bring more to the classroom than veterans.

Mr. Heyde concluded by noting the hiring process was not a topic of discussion the Board routinely tackles, and that it is interested in studying it both financially and to make sure the District has the best teachers teaching students. He noted that the Board does not want to make any moves that are rash, and wants to make sure it is doing the right thing by taxpayers but also students and parents.

Mr. Heyde concluded the Committee-of-the-Whole meeting at 7:37 p.m., which was followed by a brief recess before the Board of Education special meeting.

President

Secretary