

# Bargaining Update

*Pittsburg Unified School District*



October 16, 2020

## **ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

As we continue to navigate the challenges of Distance Learning and COVID as a District, one of ongoing legal and ethical obligations is to ensure our students with special needs are assessed so that we can ensure they receive the services they need even during distance learning. Almost all assessments are done in person, or with a small team and the students. While some of these assessments have and will continue to occur virtually, there are some assessments that must be done in-person to meet legal requirements, and equally important, to ensure an accurate assessment occurs, making sure the right supports are provided to students.

Our District is a member of the Contra Costa County Special Education Local Plan Agency ("SELPA"). In August, our SELPA issued very detailed guidelines on how to conduct these assessments in person and to ensure the student and staff remain safe. We are following these guidelines and have actually added a few additional precautions unique to our District. Even though many schools and businesses are being allowed to reopen in Contra Costa County, from dining establishments to gyms, we are proceeding with caution because the safety of our students and staff remains our highest priority.

As part of our effort, the on-site and in-person assessments or services will comply with State and Local health and safety requirements including social/physical distancing requirements, and the latest guidance from the Contra Costa County SELPA. We are making sure that before any unit member provides any in-person assessment or services for any student, the District shall ensure that the unit member has received the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment. Before any employees provide any in-person assessment of any student, the employee must complete our required professional development on the safety protocols and procedures arising from the legal requirement to assess and provide certain in-person assessments to students and comply with the Contra Costa County SELPA guidance. Of course, this training will occur mostly remotely, and will occur within employees' regular contract workday.

The District has also designated room(s) at virtually every school site where the in-person assessment or service shall occur for a special set up, with Plexiglas shields and other items, to ensure the testing area is safe and sanitary. This will also make these assessments more convenient for many parents and for staff. Excellent progress is being made on getting these set up, and before any assessment or service occurs in

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these room(s) we'll make sure they have been properly set up to comply with the Contra Costa County SELPA guidance. We're also making sure that each designated room(s) where any in-person assessment or service occurs is properly sanitized in accordance with the CDC and Contra Costa County Health Services Department guidance before each assessment or service. Finally, we're making sure each of our assessors has his/her own assessment kit to minimize the sharing of assessment kits.

We have also been meeting with our teachers' union (PEA) to discuss any effects that might exist from these limited in-person assessments and have been doing so since September 15, 2020. These in-person assessments are the same types of assessments our assessment teams have done for years. While discussions with PEA are going slow, we've also received good feedback from a number of employees, and we are moving forward to begin providing the in-service assessments as soon as we complete the setup of assessment rooms at each of our sites, and provide the additional health and safety training for all staff who will be involved in these assessments.

Of course, these special education one-on-one assessments don't change our commitment to wait until the end of the first semester (January 2021) before we make any decisions about returning to school for in-person learning, whether its hybrid or a full return. We appreciate the support and encouragement from our parents and broader Pittsburg community that we keep the health and safety of our students and staff at the forefront of the decision making process as we determine when to return to in-person learning at our school sites.

We are excited about restarting these assessments to support our students, and we will keep you updated on our discussions with the union.

As a reminder, all of our [Bargaining Updates](#) are posted on the District's website.