

Madison Schools Performance Series

Paper # 2

Administrator Contracts

MMSD faces considerable fiscal challenges. Balancing next year's budget will be difficult and the School Board will likely decide to come to the voters with one or more referenda for additional money.

In tight budget times, every possible way to save money must be considered. This includes contract commitments to a select class of employees, administrators.

All administrator contracts are subject to approval by the Board. MMSD is required to give administrators six-month notification of non-renewal of a contract. Administrator contracts begin July 1, so a non-renewal notice is required by February 1.

Nearly 150 MMSD personnel work for the District under an administrative contract. Under these contracts, MMSD spends approximately \$15 million (assuming \$100,000 on average per administrative contract – salary and benefits). Of this total, approximately 15-20% of administrative positions are funded by grants.

Human Resources Policy 2.06 defines the policies related to administrator contracts. Newly hired administrators have one year contracts for each of their first three full years; experienced are issued one-year contracts; and experienced, competent administrators may be issued two-year contracts. Changes to two year contracts should follow rules described in Paragraph 2 of the policy:

An administrator who has been issued a two-year contract and whose performance is satisfactory shall be issued a one-year contract extensions in the spring of each year, thereby creating a two-year rolling contract, except an administrator may not receive a two-year contract if the District is considering reorganization, reassignment, reduction in force or other personnel action that may result in the elimination of the administrator's position. Satisfactory performance shall be defined as having received all "competent" or above ratings on the administrator's most recent MPA and performance appraisal."

Careful review of these contract positions should begin in the fall or earlier and be completed in January to allow for public Board discussion and any possible changes in the budgeting for these contracts for next school year. The Board needs to receive an analysis of which positions should be renewed and which might be available for non-renewal. To allow review time, the Board should receive this analysis in late December/early January. This has not happened.

Among the questions the Board should be asking of the Administration are:

1. How many administrators serve under contract? What is the cost of these contracts? How many positions are funded by grants? What is the amount of grant funding?
2. How many administrators have one-year contracts? Two year contracts?
3. What are the different categories of positions? Principals, assistant principals, accountants, personnel, coordinators, etc.? What suggestions does the executive staff have for reorganizing and reducing the cost of administrative staff by 5%, 10%?
4. What positions may be open due to unsatisfactory performance ratings?
5. What positions may be open due to retirements or resignations?
6. How many personnel should be told that their positions may be considered for elimination? If there's a potential for 10% reduction in staff, shouldn't 10% or more of the administrative positions be held open?
7. Should there be modifications to the system of administrator contracts and the number of years for renewals? Are there policy/contract changes that would increase the Board of Education's flexibility of contracting with administrators?
8. What would be the impact on instruction and administration from these cuts? List specific examples.

Notifying any MMSD personnel that their contract may not be renewed is obviously an action that should be considered carefully and be taken only if necessary. Laying off any personnel should be avoided at all costs and be used only as a last resort. However, one class of employees should not be protected if other classes of employees are subject to layoff later on in the budget process just because the particular contract they have includes these provisions.

Yet, this is what occurs year after year with the current MMSD School Board budget process; and it's the teachers who are left holding the bag, which directly affects children's learning. After years of budget cuts, there isn't a single employee or group of employees who is not needed. All employees need to be treated equally and fairly, and this is doable.

MMSD's tight budget situation requires that all possible avenues to reduce expenditures be examined and pathways to them be left open until the budget is balanced. All expenditures need to be assessed against the District's objectives and board priorities, including personnel. It's too early in the budget process to make a commitment to all administrators. Making such a commitment precludes the Board's ability to make decisions that are in the best interest of our children under the current fiscal austerity.

The School Performance Series is published by concerned citizens working together to improve Madison schools, see www.schoolsysteminfo.org for more information or on this paper contact: Linda Hall at lhall@merr.com.

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