



Volume 3: Friday, May 11, 2018

"The safety of our students, and the support of the dedicated employees who daily serve to provide them with a superior education, are top priorities for our district. To that end, we are firmly committed to addressing your concerns and ensuring proper compensation, benefits, working conditions, and growth opportunities for our Transportation teammates."

– Dr. R. Stephen Green, Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT'S TRANSPORTATION SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Over 50 concerns have been shared with Superintendent Green and Chief Williams regarding the Transportation Department. Each concern has been documented, and the Superintendent, sub-committee, and district staff members are working collaboratively to address each one. To date, ten (10) concerns have been addressed, twenty-nine (29) are currently in process to be addressed, and fourteen (14) remain to be discussed in greater detail. The following concerns and status updates were discussed during our May 8th meeting. Some concerns will require time to research; however, all concerns will be addressed in future meetings and newsletters.

FINANCE AND HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT:

Concern: Better retirement plan.

Status: The District's Chief Human Capital Management Officer, Dr. Bernice Gregory, attended the meeting and provided the following overview of the Public School Employees Retirement Plan (PSERS):

History & Background

PSERS was established in January 1970 under Georgia Laws 1969 (O.C.G.A. Title 47, Chapter 4) to provide certain public school employees (i.e., school bus drivers, monitors, custodians, and non-management school nutrition workers) with a **supplemental** retirement plan.

Member contributions and contributions by the State are paid into PSERS for the exclusive benefit of the members of the System and their beneficiaries. All benefits are paid out of this fund and are separate from any other retirement income you may have. The ability of this fund to meet future obligations is examined each year by an independent actuarial firm specializing in pension and retirement plans. In addition, PSERS is examined annually by an independent accounting firm in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

PSERS is determined by a Board of Trustees consisting of the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System plus two additional members appointed by the Governor.

Benefits of Membership

If you qualify by years of service and age, PSERS provides lifetime retirement benefits, disability benefits, and death benefits. At retirement, options may also be chosen that can provide lifetime benefits to your beneficiary beginning at your death. The amount you receive is calculated by the years of creditable services multiplied by a specific dollar amount set by the Georgia General Assembly. Effective July 1, 2017, the current dollar amount is \$15.00. This amount is expected to increase to \$15.25, starting on July 1, 2018.

To receive a benefit, the employee must have at least ten years of creditable service. The retirement age for PSERS members is 65, but members can retire early at 60 with a reduction of benefits.

Member Contribution Rates

New Members who first join PSERS on or after July 1, 2012, will pay a required contribution of \$10 each month for the 9-month contribution period of September through May. This amounts to an annual contribution of \$90. Members who first join PSERS prior to July 1, 2012, will continue to pay a required contribution of \$4 each month, for an annual contribution of \$36.

Next Action: The Superintendent has directed Dr. Gregory and Ms. Jennifer Hackemeyer, Chief Legal Officer, to form a sub-committee group to develop options to the PSERS retirement structure for the Board's consideration under next year's legislative agenda. These possible options will be presented to the Superintendent for his review and feedback this fall 2018.

Additionally, the District's Chief Financial Officer, Dr. Micheal Bell, presented the following summary of two (2) supplemental 403(b) retirement investment options for those employees under PSERS:

1. Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA) 403(b) - Board Contribution: (THIS IS NOT REFLECTED ON THE PAY STUB)

- In the late 1970s, the Board of Education (Board) voted to end the District's social security contribution for all employees. Shortly after that, the BoE approved a 6% (pre-tax) TSA 403(b) contribution to be funded by the District for all employees through Fidelity Investments.

- In 2003, the Board increased its TSA 403(b) contribution to 7.5%. In 2009, the Board increased its TSA 403(b) contribution to 8%, which is currently held today.
- In July 2009, due to the economic downturn and financial crisis, the Board terminated all TSA contributions **except for PSERS participants (i.e., school bus drivers, monitors, custodians, and non-management school nutrition workers).** These employees continue to receive an 8% (pre-tax) Board contribution into their TSA 403(b) every pay period upon employment.
- All employees can gain full access to their TSA 403(b) funds at the age of 59.5 years without penalty. However, the employee will be required to pay taxes on these funds when they are withdrawn.

2. Individual 403(b) - Employee Contribution*: (THIS IS REFLECTED ON THE PAY STUB)

- All employees, including school bus drivers and monitors, can enroll into an individual 403(b) through any of the following four (4) retirement investment firms:
 - Fidelity Investments - www.fidelity.com
 - The Variable Annuity Life Insurance Company (VALIC) - www.valic.com
 - VOYA Financial - www.voya.com
 - MassMutual (the Hartford) - www.massmutual.com
- The present maximum deferral value (i.e., the maximum annual contribution amount allowable without possible tax liability) for employees under the age of 50 years is \$18,500. The maximum value for anyone over 50 years is \$24,500.
- All individual 403(b) funds are available for withdrawal at 59.5 years of age without penalty. However, the employee will be required to pay taxes on these funds when they are withdrawn.

*The District current 2% 403(b) match program for individual employee contributions does not apply to employees under the PSERS system.

Next Action: *The Superintendent has directed Fidelity, in partnership with our Human Capital Management Office, to host several informational workshops and personalize “one-on-one” sessions with employees to answer specific questions regarding their TSA 403(b) and individual 403(b) plans over the next year, starting in June 2018.* Additional details regarding specific dates, times, and locations for these workshops and “one-on-one sessions” will be provided in the next two weeks.

In the interim, anyone who has questions regarding their retirement benefits can contact **Ms. Deborah Burns, in our Finance Department, at 678-676-0155 or Fidelity at 1-800-343-0860 for assistance.**

Concern: Request to establish an integrated Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program within the Transportation Department, to include updates to the District’s Student Ridership Agreement and the Student Code of Conduct.

Status: The District’s Deputy Superintendent of Student Support and Intervention, Dr. Vasanne Tinsley, and Regional Superintendents, Dr. Bernetta Jones and Ms. Sherry Johnson, attended the meeting to inform the group of a sub-committee that is being established to assist with developing a PBIS protocol for our Transportation Department. The sub-committee group will include drivers, monitors, school administrators, a counselor, PBIS specialist, transportation administrators and other district-level staff members. The goals of the sub-committee are to:

- Define and provide clarity regarding PBIS and how the program can be used to improve student behaviors
- Evaluate and recommend changes to the Student Ridership Agreement
- Evaluate and revamp the Student Code of Conduct
- Provide training to local school administrators, drivers, monitors, and others to include topics such as:
 - Support for students with IEPs and 504s
 - Support for students with medical needs or mental health challenges
 - Deescalation techniques - How to work with difficult customers?
 - Effective use of Restorative Practices
 - Updated safety and security protocols for school bus drivers

Next Action: The sub-committee’s first meeting will take place during the month of May 2018, and an update on their progress will be brought back to the group in June 2018.

During this same period, the Regional Superintendents will also be meeting with a separate group of drivers, transportation management staff, parents, and local school principals to develop recommended solutions that will address concerns related student behavior on school buses and how our local school administration can assist in addressing these concerns. Their first meeting will take place on May 18, 2018, and they will be presenting an update to the Superintendent’s sub-committee in the next two weeks.