

Dear team,

I am writing to share an important update on our work to redesign our 2020-2021 budget while minimizing the potential impact of budget reductions on our schools and classrooms. As you know, at our Jan. 6 Board meeting, I [presented a set of recommendations \[resources.finalsite.net\]](https://resources.finalsite.net) that included \$13-\$14 million in savings from reductions and changes to district office services, \$2-3 million in savings from school closures and consolidations, and \$3 million in savings from changes to the elementary staffing plan. The proposed district office service reductions included approximately \$6 million in personnel expenses, including salaries and benefits.

This week, I submitted a formal recommendation to the Tulsa Board of Education that includes the reduction in force of certain certified and non-certified positions for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. This recommendation calls for eliminating and defunding positions across all service areas that are considered part of our district office: the Education Service Center, Enrollment Center, Wilson Teaching and Learning, Transportation, Maintenance, and other district offices housed within school buildings.

Even as we worked to mitigate the impact on our students and classrooms, the results of this reduction in force would (if approved by the Board) be felt in our schools. In some cases, we may see improved efficiency in service, but in others, school teams may experience reduced district office supports. While we have worked diligently to identify potential implications of these changes, it is likely that our school teams would experience unforeseen effects of the proposed staff reduction and reorganization.

Over the week, we engaged in a number of conversations with district office team members whose positions will be recommended for elimination. **All notifications to affected employees - both through conversations and through certified mail as needed - have been completed.** If the Board approves the recommendation for the reduction in force, these positions will no longer exist after June 30, 2020. In the event of Board approval, this recommendation would also create new positions to absorb the critical functions of certain positions proposed for elimination or perform different work to Shape Our Future. We are welcoming and encouraging all team members affected by the proposed reduction in force to apply for any open positions in which they are interested and qualified - whether those are the proposed new positions or existing positions.

This is extraordinarily difficult news to receive. Over the coming weeks, it will be important that we give each other grace and be mindful that our colleagues may be navigating through a hard time in their lives. These individuals are valued members of our district family, and we will do all that we can to support them both personally and professionally.

As members of Team Tulsa, I know that it is not unusual for you to hear questions about our district from your family, friends, and neighbors. There are some important facts about this recommendation that I hope you will help to share with our community:

- Job performance was not a factor in the identification of positions proposed for elimination. We developed these recommendations with a great deal of thought and care based **solely on the responsibilities** of each role.
- The individuals in the roles recommended for elimination will **continue their employment with Tulsa Public Schools through June 30, 2020.** We hope that, for many, there will be **opportunities** for them to stay within the Tulsa Public Schools family beyond that time.

Every employee whose position has been recommended for elimination will be provided with appropriate due process rights as may be required by law. If applicable, those employees have been provided with a written notice of their Board hearing rights. It is because of these due process rights that we face limitations around sharing detailed information about the proposed reorganization related to this reduction in force. In addition to our legal obligations, our core value of team means that we care for and support each other by protecting the privacy of our colleagues who are grappling with this difficult news.

We anticipate sharing more detailed information about personnel-related reductions during a special Board meeting in mid-February. In the interim, we will continue to work with affected individuals and teams to provide any and all supports that might be helpful in the event that the Board approves the recommendation. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your school leader, supervisor, or manager with any questions or concerns.

Throughout this budget redesign process, I have continued to be inspired by the “all in” spirit of this team. You have continued to stay grounded in the best interests of our students and families, and I am confident that this team of talented professionals are the right people to carry us through these difficult times and shape the brighter future that our children need and deserve.

Best,
Deborah

