

TO: Dr. Julie Morris, Harlem Superintendent

FROM: Harlem Federation of Teachers and Harlem Federation of Support Staff

DATE: March 9, 2010

For the past few weeks as budget planning and staffing projections have been taking place by administration, you have expressed on more than one occasion to the Harlem staff that any proposals/recommendations would be communicated to the Union and staff well in advance of any final recommendation and Board decision. Based on your administrative actions starting with last Thursday and culminating with the Board meeting/action last night, nothing could have been further from the truth as the following clearly indicates:

- The Union was not informed of this recommendation to eliminate 65 paraeducators through this new special education model until the very last moment – approximately 10 minutes before this information was emailed to staff and when the agenda for the March 8th Board meeting was posted on March 4th.
- Mr. Rosilez, during the March 8th Board meeting, made the comment that this plan/recommendation has been in the works for at least this entire school year, and yet this was NEVER once mentioned during the committee work on Special Education workload. In fact, the Union agreed to a workload plan without the knowledge of these changes as well.
- Ms. Johnson, during the March 8th Board meeting, made the comment while asking the Board if there were any questions that the Board has had this information for well over a month. Again, the Union was NEVER once presented or alerted to this information prior to last Thursday, and the window by which the Union could discuss these proposed changes had already been closed before it was ever opened.
- Now information is being forwarded to the Union that the District is going to release ALL first year through third year probationary teachers. While the Union is always aware of the potential for some reduction-in-force on a grade level or program basis, such a general and wide-sweeping plan has again NEVER been brought to the attention of the Union or staff. In fact, Union leadership was told during one of the recent monthly Labor-Management meetings that there would NOT be a wholesale release of probationary teachers.
- Finally, representatives from the Union were invited to a special closed-session budget presentation with the School Board on February 1st, and absolutely NOTHING during this presentation by District administration hinted at the need for any drastic cuts in certified or support staff or that the administration was in any way considering such options.

The communication on these issues, or lack thereof, to the Union is completely unacceptable. Administration is clearly engaging in a decision-making process that is secretive, hoping to discreetly push things through the School Board for approval without the Union's ability to at least discuss alternatives and options. Any past communications and "promises" to the Union and staff about being forthright and honest about the District's planning process appear to have been disingenuous. At a time when both sides are making final preparations to begin bargaining new contracts for teacher and support staff, such behaviors by administration have seriously damaged the District's credibility in promoting any cooperative and trustworthy dialogue with the Union now and in the foreseeable future.