

Funding for Special Education Teacher, Related Service, and Support Staff Positions Requested in the 2020-21 Budget

Policy Reference: OE-4 Personnel Administration; OE-10 – Instructional Program

Background Information: At the February 3, 2020, Board Work Session, the following requests were shared to address the required programmatic needs due to growth of students with disabilities:

Special Education Teachers – Four (4) special education teachers for students with moderate and severe disabilities are needed due to growth and matriculation of students across levels. In order to ensure class size remains under the South Carolina defined minimum program and to ensure the district is serving students within their school of residence, additional teachers are needed at the following schools: Ocean Bay Middle School, Black Water Middle School, Carolina Forest Elementary School, and Pee Dee Elementary School.

Two (2) early childhood special education teachers are needed due to growth in the number of preschool-age children identified as needing special education services. Based on current numbers and projections for the 2020-21 school year, the current teacher caseloads will be above the South Carolina defined-minimum program without additional allocations at the following schools: Pee Dee Elementary School and South Conway Elementary School.

One (1) special education teacher for students with emotional disabilities is needed due to growth in the Conway attendance area. In order to ensure class size remains under the South Carolina defined minimum program, an additional special education teacher is needed at Homewood Elementary School.

Five (5) special education teachers for students with disabilities are needed due to growth in the special education population in several schools. In order to ensure class/caseload size remains under the South Carolina defined minimum program, additional teachers are needed at the following schools: North Myrtle Beach High School (2), Socastee Middle School, Myrtle Beach Elementary School and Myrtle Beach Primary School.

Behavior Coach for Autism – Two (2) behavior coaches for autism are requested for the 2020-21 school year due to growth in the number of students identified with autism spectrum disorders. Although there is no caseload maximum size regarding behavior coaches, current caseload sizes for the district's behavior coaches continue to significantly increase. In order to maintain appropriate service provision and support for students with autism spectrum disorders, these growth positions are needed.

Speech Therapist – One (1) speech therapist is requested for the 2020-21 school year. The number of preschool students needing speech services within itinerant service locations has significantly increased over the last three years, increasing from 55 students in the 2017-18 school year to 82 students as of January 2020. In order to ensure the caseload for our speech therapists remains under the South Carolina defined minimum program and ensure maximum Medicaid billing and reimbursement for these services, an additional speech therapist is needed to serve the district's preschool students receiving itinerant speech services.

Purpose: To enable the district to post and hire highly-qualified teachers for twelve special education teaching positions, two behavioral coach positions for autism, and one speech therapist position that are requested in the 2020-21 budget.

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Recommended Action: It is recommended that the Board authorizes the utilization of Unassigned General Fund - Fund Balance in the amount of \$1.3 million to post and hire twelve special education teaching positions, two behavioral coach positions for autism, and one speech therapist position that are requested in the 2020-21 budget.

Estimated Project Cost: \$1.3 Million

Recurring: X Non-recurring:
Funding Sources: General Fund