

Public Comments

November 7, 2019 School Board Meeting

Good evening School Board Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Nolan, School Board Members, School Board Student Representatives, and Dr. Hutchings;

My name is Mary Gaddis and I am a kindergarten paraprofessional at John Adams Elementary School. I also serve as an EAA building rep at John Adams and represent Education Support Professionals (ESPs) on the EAA Executive Committee. I am here this evening to speak about the change in work hours for paraprofessionals at John Adams and the Early Childhood Center.

In late August, paraprofessionals were sent a letter which you have been provided a copy of. In the second paragraph of the letter, it states that there was a review of the ACPS paraprofessionals' work hours. I do not have a clear understanding of who this review was done with. It is my understanding that no paraprofessionals were included in these discussions. According to Policy GBB, there should be staff involvement in decision making. In addition, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) states that education support professionals should be involved in decisions which impact them. In this paragraph, it also states that paraprofessionals who are hourly employees are expected to work from 7:40 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. which is a longer work day than licensed staff who are scheduled to work from 7:40 a.m. to 2:55 p.m. It further states that the adjustment in work hours includes the 30 minute unpaid lunch as part of the work day. There is no ACPS policy which states that we have an unpaid lunch so this means paraprofessionals are not being compensated for this additional time. On the salary notification letter for paraprofessionals, it states that our work day is 6.8 hours so that would be from 7:40 a.m. to 2:28 p.m. In the TimeClock Plus guidelines for non-exempt employees on page 9, it states that the timekeeping system will automatically deduct a default lunch break. Please refer to the example provided in the guidelines. The guidelines also states that non-exempt employees should be receiving paid breaks and paraprofessional are not receiving these breaks. In August 2016, the John Adams staff was presented with a non-negotiables list which stated that the work hours for paraprofessionals were to clock in at 7:40 a.m. and clock out no later than 2:35 p.m.

In the third paragraph, it states that due to this shift in paraprofessionals might need to plan differently for their responsibilities outside of school so they were giving advance notice of the change in work hours. Due to the low pay of paraprofessionals, many work two jobs to meet their families' financial obligations. Therefore, this change in work hours had a major impact on their ability to work their second or third job. Many of the paraprofessionals feel that this change is in retaliation for bringing forth concerns about the work environment at John Adams last school year i.e. adults being asked to sit in kindergarten chairs, using student lockers for personal belongings, and performing prep work while standing.

In closing, there is no carbon copy to Dr. Wilkins or Dr. Hutchings on the letter which makes it seem like it was personal. We discussed this matter at meet and confer and the matter has still not been resolved. Paraprofessionals want and need to be treated with dignity and respect. We must be a part of the decision making processes which involve us.

Thank you for your time this evening.