

ESI Contract is unfair to substitutes and should be canceled immediately

Sept 9, 2017

Dear Superintendent Trujillo and Governing Board members:

Our organization, CARE, has thoughtfully observed and listened as the issue of outsourcing teachers continues to come up up during school board meetings. It is CARE's opinion that mistreating substitutes by reducing compensation and eliminating a realistic possibility for health care coverage is misguided and ill-advised regarding the District's public education mandate, particularly in light of the teacher shortage.

Twice monthly the Board hears new developments regarding the actual savings that the District incurs with such outsourcing, and the fabricated benefits that the substitute teachers receive. It is clear that neither ESI nor district officials were transparent about the purported healthcare coverage when they indicated that this was an opportunity for subs. It is only an opportunity for full-time subs who have more than \$300.00 per month--between 20 and 30% of their salary--to put into healthcare (despite the fact that the contract includes language specifically to follow ACA policies, which are that 9.5% of a salary is considered "reasonable" for health care.) Similarly, Dr. Sanchez was not transparent about the savings to the District from outsourcing. Though Sanchez claimed that outsourcing would result in \$1.6 million to \$3 million in so-called "cost mitigation" or "cost avoidance" the actual amount is a fraction of that--saving only \$600,000 or less. Meanwhile, the board boosted ESI's fees to just about \$600,000. Currently, the payments for outsourcing eliminate the savings from it, and substitutes are being exploited. This contract must be cancelled and subs must begin working for TUSD again.

Especially during a teacher shortage, the District relies heavily on substitute teachers. They are the only thing preventing students from having no teacher at all, or a class being thrown into another classroom where a certified teacher handles twice the regular student load, to everyone's loss. Also substitutes are not paid for professional development hours, although the school site expects their presence. In many cases, they are not provided with lesson plans, even though principals often have the lesson plans that were being taught by the primary teacher. In addition, long term subs' dismal "premium pay" hardly covers additional time spent grading and preparing lesson plans. And finally the phony health care benefits allegedly provided by ESI are outrageous and frankly a serious disincentive to subs who might consider working long-term with TUSD. How can this possibly benefit the Districts' reputation or its ability to recruit new teachers?

To establish credibility in the community our district leaders simply must stop saying one thing and doing the opposite. Subs know the

promise of health care was an empty one, and the attempt to deceive them as well as the public simply backfires by creating more distrust.

Instead of being financially strained to death, substitutes should be seen as a primary recruitment pool for certification. They have been on the job, and know what it entails and they are familiar with the student population. Since they have likely been all over the district, they are probably more familiar than many teachers as to what the district wide problems are. They could certainly solve the "leaving within 3 years" trend that school districts have been experiencing. The contract with ESI should be cancelled immediately and substitutes should become district employees upon notice. Given the 90-day cancellation clause in the contract, if this occurred before October 1st, substitutes could be employed by TUSD in January and their health care could begin then. TUSD employment would certainly facilitate any transition to certified teachers in TUSD, as there will be no waiting time while paperwork is filled out, and they can be helped with certification if necessary.

CARE does not accept the validity of a contract that saves the district roughly the same amount that is paid to the vendor, all the while taking advantage of a key workforce that the District relies on. We believe there should be a study session around this issue without delay. Such a session could be separate from monthly Board meetings so that all of the affected parties could present their views. The ESI contract for substitute teachers has already proven ineffective. The district needs to present accurate figures for how many short and long-term substitutes there are and what schools they are in, current figures for how many substitutes actually receive health care through ESI out of the entire pool, and how many transition to become certified TUSD teachers. Certainly if TUSD is to resolve the teacher shortage by helping substitutes get certification, this information will be necessary and should be made available to the public. And if TUSD is to continue using substitute teachers, it must cancel the ESI contract, hire those substitutes from within and allow them to sign on to TUSD benefit programs

Sincerely,

CARE.