

ATTACHMENT

The Sayre Area School District Board of School Directors

Public Statement on Furloughs and Layoffs

The Board of Directors of the Sayre Area School District are in the midst of making tough decisions which will undoubtedly impact the staff and the students of this district. Over the years, the Board has tried to maintain the educational spirit of this community and to sustain a holistic approach. However, the changing environment has left us with the reality that modifications on how and what we offer our students need to be addressed. During the past ten years, the district has realized a decline in our student enrollment in certain classes that do not comprise a full-day schedule for professional staff.

Other aspects of the educational realm have also made it necessary to make certain changes. Recent statements and initiatives presented by Governor Tom Wolf and Pedro Rivera, the Secretary of Education, emphasize the importance of school districts moving forward with STEM and STEAM curricula. With a renewed focus in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Design, and Mathematics, school districts throughout the state have had to look at the curriculum they offer to prepare our students for the future needs of this community, state, nation, and world. Education is not the same as it was just five years ago.

Based on these changes, the Board has tasked the Administration with looking at curtailing and altering how Sayre Area School District provides educational opportunities for all students. This task included the need to remove some course offerings and to concurrently concentrate on core classes to achieve the objectives offered by the state. Emerging from this analysis was the fact that the district must furlough teachers as well as lay off other support staff. This was and continues to be a difficult decision for us to make. We are losing great educators and employees who have provided exemplary service to this district and to our students.

While it is impossible to make these types of changes without having any impact on our students, it is important to note the following:

- Students will still have opportunities to take foreign or world languages.

- Health, physical education, and wellness opportunities are not being eliminated. In fact, these courses will expand their curriculum to include health-related topics lost with the elimination of other programs.
- The business program is not being eliminated; rather, the program will be enhanced through different curricular offerings.
- The English language arts and mathematics programs are being modified.
- The technology education program is not being eliminated. Instead, the program will be enriched through course offerings that support future initiatives.
- The fine arts program is not being eliminated. Students across the district will continue to participate in a comprehensive program that provides them with opportunities to explore a variety of media.

Following these changes, the Sayre Area School District will maintain a very robust curriculum as well as continue our relationship with post-secondary institutions offering advanced programs. Even with program restructuring, consolidation, and the elimination of some educational programs, other decisions are being considered that will have an impact on students, such as pay-to-play for athletics and assessing a basic classroom supply fee.

The Board continues to review the budget and make cuts where it is feasible, such as withdrawing the gymnasium renovation project. All of these decisions do not lessen the challenges that lie ahead for all of us. We continue to see a rise in the pension costs and health care costs for our employees, an increase in unfunded mandates from the state, and a rise in the daily costs of doing the business of the district. We understand that these decisions have a significant impact on our educational community; however, as a Board, we have the responsibility to consider the manner in which we sustain our programs and course offerings both now and into the future.

At this time, the Board has limited the number of furloughs of professional staff to 9 and the number of layoffs of support staff to 8. However, this is a fluid process, and we will continue to explore all of our options for staffing. We are hopeful that these professional and support staff members will be able to find employment elsewhere or will be able to come back when recalled. We stand committed to assisting them to the best of our ability, and we regret that these tough decisions need to be made to preserve the future of the Sayre Area School District.