



# Hart-Ransom Union School District

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Charter School

May 19, 2017

Dear Hart-Ransom Parents and Community Members,

This letter is being written from the Hart-Ransom Governance Team to the members of our community regarding the current state of negotiations between the Hart-Ransom Union School District and the Hart-Ransom Teachers Association, which is the teachers' union at Hart-Ransom Elementary School. The Hart-Ransom Governance Team includes the five members of the Board of Trustees as well as the Superintendent. This letter has been approved by the entire Governance Team.

As you may be aware, the topic of Reassignment has been a point of some disagreement between the District and the teachers' union during this year's negotiations, and it has received a significant amount of public attention in recent weeks. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of misunderstanding and misinformation among the members of our community about this topic. The purpose of this letter is to clarify for the public the views of the Hart-Ransom Board of Trustees regarding the topic of Reassignment.

This letter will not be able to answer every question that any member of our community may have, so we are inviting all parents and other members of our community to attend an informational meeting about negotiations and Reassignment that the District is hosting next Wednesday, May 24, 2017 at 6:00 PM in the Hart-Ransom Cafeteria. We also encourage every member of the Hart-Ransom community to visit the district website at <http://www.hartransom.org/> and read the negotiation updates and other communications about negotiations that have been posted there since these negotiations began in December 2016. These documents transparently communicate the facts about negotiations, and will help parents and community members better understand the issue of Reassignment and other negotiation topics.

The term "Reassignment" refers to a teacher changing grade levels or subject areas. "Voluntary Reassignment" is movement that is requested by the employee, and "Involuntary Reassignment" is movement that is not requested by the employee. ***The Hart-Ransom Board of Trustees believes that the school and district administration should have the contractual ability to determine the work assignments of the district's employees for the best educational outcomes for students.*** In most any business or organization, it is the management that determines the work assignments of the employees. Our current contract language about Reassignment removes the ability of our administration to make reasonable decisions about teacher Reassignment, and instead, forces the newest teachers at the school to be moved when Reassignment is necessary, without regard to what is best for the students. The Governance Team believes that the current contract language regarding Reassignment is not good for students, and we are seeking to improve the Reassignment language for the sake of our students.

There are several misunderstandings that currently exist about the District's goals and intentions regarding Reassignment. For example, some people believe that the Board and the superintendent have plans to reassign large numbers of teachers, or that the Governance Team or the administrators are targeting particular teachers for Reassignment. Nothing could be further from the truth. ***The fact is that the District does not actually desire to reassign any teachers at all, and the District is not targeting any teachers for reassignment. There are currently no problems in the school that we are seeking to address through reassignment. The only problem that we are seeking to fix is the contract language itself.*** If reassignment ever becomes necessary, the decisions about Reassignment will need to be made thoughtfully and carefully by the administration, and not be dictated by restrictive contract language that gives no regard to the actual needs of the students and the school.

The first and foremost priority of the Hart-Ransom Governance Team is to do what is best for our students. Secondly, we want to take good care of our employees. We value our teachers and the work that they do for the students every day in the classroom. We intend only good things for these friends of ours who have dedicated their professional lives to teaching the children of our community. We have treated our teachers with honor and respect throughout this negotiation process, and we will continue to do so moving forward.

We mean our teachers no harm, and the proposals that we have made regarding Reassignment are not harmful to teachers or students. As we have communicated to our union friends many times, the contract language that we proposed about Reassignment is completely open for dialogue and collaborative revision between the parties. All we have ever asked the union to do in regards to this language is to talk with us about it and work together with us to find ways to meet the needs of both parties in the contract language. This week, the union has said that they are now willing to meet with us and discuss potential Reassignment contract language that could meet the needs of both parties. We are currently working with HRTA to get that meeting scheduled as soon as possible.

We believe that we have a very good understanding of the fears and concerns of the union and its members about Reassignment. We have a variety of excellent suggestions for contract language that we are looking forward to sharing with the union as soon as we are able to have a substantive dialogue with the HRTA negotiation team about Reassignment language. We believe that this issue is actually a pretty simple matter that can be resolved very quickly once the two negotiation teams are able to engage in productive dialogue about it together. We would like to thank the HRTA negotiation team for being willing to return to the negotiation table to work together with the District negotiation team in discussing effective contract language regarding Reassignment so that this matter can be resolved as expediently as possible and allow everyone to move forward in a positive and productive way. If you have any questions or concerns about these matters, please contact Mr. Shipley at the Hart-Ransom District Office, at (209) 523-9996, and he will be happy to talk with you.

Best regards,

Jim Cover, Board President

Sandy Riggins, Vice President

Sid Miller, Board Clerk

Rich Rultz, Board Member

Seth Renicker, Board Member

Matthew Shipley, Superintendent