



PPS IS COMMITTED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

EXPLAINING PROPOSED CHANGES TO ARTICLE 9 ON DISCIPLINE AND SAFETY

October 26, 2022

Dear PPS families,

Every special education student deserves a high-quality and equitable learning experience. This belief is born from our lived experiences as educators, and from the relationships we have with children needing special education and their families. They are our community's children, our students, and the reason we became educators.

Our community made a commitment to our special education students when we [reimagined PPS](#), and directed us to celebrate the diversity of our learners and ground our work in racial equity and social justice.

Guided by those shared commitments, we aspire to reduce how often we exclude students with disabilities. We believe our students with disabilities are everyone's students, and we provide every PPS educator training and resources to support these students in general education classrooms. We want to operate with self awareness, address our implicit biases, and eradicate discriminatory systems.

Our shared commitments also lead us to offer a full continuum of special education programs if students are unable to fully access the general education classrooms. We do this not because we are required – although we are, by both federal and state laws – but rather because our community wants us to meet students where they are. That is a core goal we know we share with our educators and their union, the Portland Association of Teachers.

That shared goal has been expressed directly in the contract between PPS and the Association. The contract requires PPS to, “maintain a full continuum of special education services and sufficient seats in a variety of programs to meet students’ identified special education needs.”

But, as we work to renegotiate that contract, we ask our Association partners: why does this language exist in the *student discipline* section of the [contract](#)? This requirement for a continuum of special education services exists in [our district policies](#), [the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#), and [state law](#). It is the professed commitment of our Board of Education, our district leaders, and our community. **Why must we continue to reiterate our responsibility in an employment contract – and especially, why include it in the *discipline* section?**

In the coming weeks and months, we will discuss this directly in the course of negotiations and we look forward to learning more about the Association's position. We wanted to share that intention with our community, and we look forward to the conversation.

Jey Buno

Interim Chief of Student Support Services
PPS Collective Bargaining Team