

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Virtual Ed: few employees furloughed

The Pottstown School Board voted last summer to offer only virtual education to its students for the first semester of this school year, which ends Jan. 14, 2021.

A handful of elementary school teachers are now piloting a hybrid program at Rupert Elementary School. Hybrid career-technology classes are being offering at the high school, and some special education teaching is going on in our school buildings. Everything else is virtual.

Tonight the school board will consider whether to adopt some form of hybrid starting Jan. 19, 2021 or whether to remain virtual.

In August, the school district furloughed or reduced the hours of 47 employees. They were mostly food service workers and a few custodians. Most of the food service employees are now being brought back to replace an

unsatisfactory private food service provider which was recently terminated.

Over the last five decades, the number of school district employees has mushroomed in comparison to our enrollment, which has been mostly the same since the early 1980s — about 3,400 students.

It's not the regular teaching staff that has increased, but the number of special education teachers and specialists — psychologists, therapists, paraprofessionals, aides, and others such as a "wellness coordinator."

All our specialists, even aides, can do their jobs remotely, we're told.

Tonight the school board will vote on a proposed new position at the middle school — a "school climate and culture coach." (I'll be voting no.)

Pottstown receives more than 40 percent of its funding from the state, and that money is guaranteed for the 2020-2021 school year.

But next year will be different. Right now the state is facing a \$5 billion tax revenue shortfall in 2021 and high unemployment.

We don't know how much funding we'll get in 2021-2022. We need to save as much money as we can, now.

*Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board's.*



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

School district employees	
Administrators	27
Classroom teachers	190
Special education teachers	43
Specialists	48
Paraprofessionals	59
Classroom aides	41
Nurses	6
Clerical	36
Custodial	32
Food service	50

Furloughed	
Food service	7
Custodial	9
Proctor	8
Hours reduced	
Food service	19
Tech support	2
Classroom aides	2
Paraprofessionals	2

### Pottstown taxation rank of 500 school districts in Pennsylvania (most recent year available).

2017-2018	7
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### Pottstown's Tax Base

Year	Total assessed valuation
1998	\$816,841,351
2019	\$764,486,739
2020	\$761,413,579

### Source of PSD funding 2020-2021 school year

Local	55%	\$35,511,647
State	42%	\$27,475,373
Federal	3%	\$2,381,663