

# Board letter.

I am a long time Social Worker with RPS 205. It is unfortunate that the Social Work department is down 15+ positions. Social Workers are leaving because of the incredibly poor treatment/harassment from principals and other administrators. Other special education departments are given assistance and offered monetary incentives when they are short staffed. The social work department had a plan to make sure our most vulnerable students are given SW support by using the open positions to pay the existing SWs to work their planning period. When the school year started, an administrative decision was made to move ALL of the open Social Work positions to MTSS (a regular education program). Because of this decision, almost 200 high school students are not getting the Social Work minutes that are on their IEPs. The district made a conscientious decision to neglect their legal obligation to our students. This is unacceptable. Please make this situation right.

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be aware that my current assignment of three days a week at Guilford High School, with current student enrollment of 2166, does not allow me sufficient time to meet the direct service minutes of students with related services on their IEP due to the number of Special Education Team meetings, Initial Evaluations, and Re-evaluations, Annual Review and Parent Concern meeting I am required to attend. Our Guilford Team Schedule reflects that Team days are on Tuesdays or Wednesdays; however, meetings are being scheduled into Thursdays and Fridays as well, which will either take more time away from direct student contact, or I will be unable to attend the meeting due to other district assignment obligations.

As it stands, the culture and climate of doing "what is best for students," is not being taken into consideration, nor do I feel that I can be meeting student's needs when I am not given enough time to do responsible, thorough evaluations nor spend time meeting the individual needs of our RPS targeted demographic at the secondary level in this short amount of time.

Sincerely,

School Social Worker



Good evening,

Rockford School District is incredibly fortunate to have 34 outstanding social workers, who work tirelessly every day to support the extensive social/emotional needs of students and families. I **implore** ALL of you to go to at least one early childhood, elementary, middle and high school in RPS and directly meet with these awesome individuals!

When you are meeting with them, please ask them the following questions:

1. Why are student not receiving their IEP social work minutes district-wide?
2. What happened with social work placements THE DAY BEFORE students arrived in August?
3. Are you thinking of retiring early or seeking employment elsewhere, as did the 22 social workers, who have left in the past few years?
4. What are you not able to do each day for students, due to the very real, current social work shortage (which absolutely exists, but does not exist on paper, as the district transferred the social work vacancies elsewhere)?
5. What are your thoughts on the new, staffing formula that administration is using to determine current placements and future staffing (created by non-social workers, with no understanding of how we serve our students and families daily)?
6. Have you been paid for the extended days that you have ALREADY worked on SATURDAYS?

Most important of all, PLEASE ask them how they are? Please listen AND hear them! Show that you care! Give them a hug! Trust me, every social worker could use a hug right now!

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Dear Board,

I will keep this brief and to the point!

In my 24 years as a school social worker for the Rockford district that I chosen to work for, I have never seen our dept treated with such disrespect from administration.

First, 34 social workers are being asked to do the job of 51 from last year. We are told there are zero plans to hire more help. Instead they want to overwork and over stress the current social workers to the point of everyone wanting to quit.

This is especially felt at the high school level where one social worker is covering Auburn and Jefferson paperwork. Now they want to pull social workers from their current buildings to help fulfill minutes when existing caseloads are already crippling. They want to disrupt our current schedules & create chaos.

Zero concern for the mental health or well-being of any of us. Zero concern or regard for the job we all came here to do which is to work with children. Instead we are overwhelmed with evaluations & other paperwork beyond what is possible for one person. We can no longer utilize our expertise to work with ALL students instead we must focus our efforts on ONLY special ed students. These are only some of the reasons we have lost so many valuable social workers from our department to other districts namely Belvidere. The reputation of this district will now be that administration refuses to listen to, value, or keep the promises they make!

Currently, we are given an extra 20 days to complete work outside of school but guess what? We can only do it on Saturdays! The day most of us need to decompress & rejuvenate after a long work week & spend time with family. But that's not all....

Currently we are doing it for free! Why? Because our administration has neglected to get it on the board agenda to be approved by the board. We were told this would be in place at the start of the year.

Would you work for free?

I could go on and on but suffice to say.... If I could quit without giving a year's notice and still retain my health insurance, I would. So if 1 Social Worker is feeling that way, how do you think the others are feeling? Then where will district 205 be?!!!

Sincerely,

A very unhappy employee



October 14, 2024

Dear Rockford Public School Board of Education members And REA leaders,

I am a former Rockford Public School District Social Worker. I worked for the school district for just under 2 decades. I was a Rockford Public School graduate, I have lived in the community for my whole life, and I truly loved serving our students. Within the last several years, I saw the work demand become unrealistic, I felt there was a lack of support as well as respect, the employee morale plummeted, and there seemed to be no end to the dysfunction. My dedication to our students never wavered in my long tenure. I do not believe that decisions were and/or are being made with students' best interest in mind. Leaving my position as a social worker, my fellow co-workers, and students was the hardest decision I have ever made. When I began as a social worker a typical caseload was 20-40 students depending on what level you serviced. Last year, we had elementary social workers with around 60 (possible more) and high school social workers with 97-105 students on their caseload. Every new initiative, handle with care, MTSS, or code of conduct had a long list of Social Work demands. Every year became more unrealistic and more social workers felt forced to leave due to this dysfunction. I would have never guessed this close to retirement that I would make that decision. I expected to continue serving my students and school district until retirement. I felt like I was on a sinking ship with no life preserver. Historically there have not been caseload caps or financial incentives for extra duties. Last year was the first year some of us were offered a .2 and extra days to complete evaluations. I was scheduled to start this year with an unrealistic assignment and no financial compensation, so I chose to be one of the ones to leave. I hope that losing several veteran staff would force the district to wake up. I hope that the social work department will regain respect for the hard work they do. I hope that there will be more efforts to find incentives for new hires and to retain current staff. Most of all, I hope the Rockford Public School District will make adequate changes to ensure the social work department is given what they need to ensure our students are receiving the support they desperately need. I may not be a current RPS employee, but the students, staff, and district is still in my heart.

Respectfully,

Anonymous Former RPS School Social Worker

October 14, 2024

Dear Rockford Public School Board Members and REA leaders,

I have been a School Social Worker in District 205 for almost 20 years. When I first entered this District I was impressed with the commitment that was given to the Special Education Department and the emphasis on the importance of Social Emotional Learning. My dedication toward the students hasn't changed. I cannot say the same for the commitment and support of the Special Education Administration. In the last several years the communication, support, and respect for the Social Workers from the Administration has been discouraging. They have made promises that have not been followed through.

I am committed to the District's Mission: To collaboratively engage all students in an equitable first-class education for a changing world.

I am committed to the Vision: collaboration, communication, character, and continuous improvement.

Unfortunately, the Special Education Administration does not live by the RPS Vision, which is disheartening.

Actions speak louder than words. Below are the facts of the Social Work Department

- School Year 2023-2024: We had 51 allocations to the District's goal of having one Social Worker in each building to support the mission of Social Emotional Learning.
- End of School Year 2023-2024: Social Workers were informed the allocations would be reduced to 44 at the start of SY 2024-2025.
- School Year 2024-2025: At the beginning of this school year, we were informed that the allocations were reduced to 35. Administrators