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EIN #: 11-2732919

To the Members of the Garden City Board of Education:

We write this letter as the Executive Board of Garden City SEPTA, The Special Education Parent Teacher Association. We have the privilege of advocating for the families and students within our district who have special needs; whether a child needs speech or occupational therapy services, resource room, a one to one classroom aid, has a learning or developmental disability or other health diagnosis, SEPTA works hard to try to advocate for all of our special learners and our Garden City community. After hearing from both parents and educators alike through emails and conversations, we have heard that an unexpected change to the structure of an integral part of school for many of our students is taking place. We are advocating for the continuation of Garden City School District's ICT Classes as they are currently structured.

ICT stands for Integrated Co-Taught class. This is a class that has both a full time special education teacher and a full time general education teacher, and serves both general education and special education students. This class's existence is directly connected to the needs of a special education student's learning goals; it is considered the least restrictive environment for the students' whose IEPs call for it. The teachers in the ICT class are both full time lead teachers to all of its students. From what parents and teachers are reporting to us, a change going forward will remove the full time special education teacher from the classroom. The special education teacher will move between this classroom and also have a resource room schedule of students.

The benefits of an ICT class include lower teacher-student ratios, as instead of one teacher working with 26 students, it is 2 teachers working with 13 students each. The benefits of this structure help both our special education and general education students. Teaching techniques are more varied with two teachers, as are approaches to working with students and forming a community. There is more individualized attention, students are more engaged with two teachers, and there is less potential for distraction. With two experts working together, the learning goals, accommodations and modifications of student IEP's are more naturally and efficiently followed and met. Lastly, ICT classes where both teachers are present in the classroom all day, promotes community and inclusion as both teachers and all of their students are equal in priority and consequence. All of these benefits come from the hard work and time of the teachers in charge; these things do not happen by luck. They take hard work and time to make it happen.



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We would also like to speak up on behalf of resource room families: while we know our teachers are professionals, we are concerned about the amount of preparation time that will be provided to special education teachers who are pulling double duty in a co-taught class and resource room. Will our students' needs be sufficiently met if educators are pulled in several directions? How will this alteration of roles for our teachers impact the students who require an ICT classroom setting? How will the alteration of roles impact our students who benefit from resource room?

Teaching in general, and teaching students with individualized goals specifically, takes effort, know-how and time. We see first hand the work, collaboration, time and energy that goes into both the ICT and Resource Room settings. We do not understand why the structure is changing, especially without input from stakeholders. We want to know what can be done to keep it in place as it currently stands.

We are Garden City Schools- a district noted for mastery, achievement, and excellence. Let's continue to serve our ICT and Resource Room students at those same levels of excellence and mastery, with a formula that is working for so many.

Please, feel free to reach out to either SEPTA or any parent that has contacted the Board in regards to this issue to understand our experiences and feelings about the current ICT and resource room model.

Thank you for your time,

THE GARDEN CITY SEPTA EXECUTIVE BOARD