

The New York State Comptroller recently completed a review of the District's process to procure professional services. The review primarily focused on the 2019-2020 school year. The objective of the review was to determine whether a competitive bid process was applied to all professional services retained by the District.

After reviewing a draft of the report, we prepared a response to the findings which is included in the final report. While the Comptroller's report states "District officials generally agreed with our findings..." our response to the report points out that we believe there are circumstances where cost should not be the sole determining factor in the selection of some service providers.

Specifically, the Comptroller's report cited that the District did not competitively bid for professional services provided to our Special Education students. As stated in our response to the audit report, "While the District is mindful of its fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers, the primary criteria employed to select these providers is their ability to meet the specific need(s) of the individual Special Education student." Although cost of services is an important consideration, the provider, who is the most appropriate to meet the needs of our students, is the principal factor in that selection process. The students interact very closely with their providers, and the personal relationships formed are integral to the successful development of the student. We feel that an annual competitive bidding process, based solely on costs for these services, could force frequent changes in providers and inhibit a student's development as they adjust to new providers and/or programs.

The report also identified that the selection of our insurance broker has not been subject to competitive bid for nine years. The last competitive bid resulted in only two respondents. There are a limited number of insurance companies who will provide comprehensive coverage for school districts and an even smaller number of insurance brokers who serve school districts. The insurance companies pay the broker's fees, and the district has not experienced a significant increase in insurance premiums.

As well, regarding construction costs, we maintained continuity and standards by using the same construction management firm for the duration of the project as it progressed through each phase. All invoices reviewed during the audit related to services performed in conjunction with the existing capital project.

We recognize the importance of ensuring that quality services are obtained at competitive prices. However, we feel in some instances there are other factors equally, if not more important, than cost, especially as we strive to live up to our mission to "provide all of our students with the academic and social skills necessary to pursue their goals and become responsible citizens in an interdependent global community."

Our District continues to responsibly manage our resources in the best interest of our students

and community. District administration and the Board of Education will review and modify, as needed, existing purchasing and procurement policies to maintain compliance with regulatory requirements. District purchasing procedures will be reviewed and strengthened as needed to ensure consistent adherence to board policies.