

Consultants, Contracts, and Legal Assistance Q and A

For what kinds of things does Twin Rivers use consultants?

Although some groups lumped these three categories together, there are actually three separate categories of consulting contracts that Twin Rivers used since our creation:

- 1) Professional Consultation – these are the folks who worked with our leadership teams to assist with our processes, procedures, infrastructure, and organizational reorganizing over the past two years. Most of these are one-time costs related to the complexity of unification.
- 2) Consulting Contracts – these include after school programs, assemblies, staff development, field trips, etc. Most of these are everyday costs associated with running school programs and many are funded by federal and state categorical programs.
- 3) Legal Assistance – addressing the dozens of inherited lawsuits, managing a problematic and ill-timed construction project, negotiating multiple bargaining unit contracts into one while adhering to unification education codes, special education and charter guidance, and preserving educational resources from being used to buy out former administrators. Most of these are one-time costs related to inherited issues and the initial complexity of multiple-contract negotiations.

Why do we need consultants?

Although we have extremely talented people who worked very hard to create our new district, from time to time we turned to outside consultants for assistance. They offered us an impartial opinion about effective practices across a wide variety of districts.

Our leadership team performed two jobs since the unification vote:

- The everyday business of running our schools that most district administrators experience
- A second job of completely creating, revising, and re-structuring a new school district

Merging four existing school system structures and creating a new district is a unique and somewhat rare situation that few districts ever experience. In fact, no district in California accomplished a unification the size and complexity of the creation of Twin Rivers in more than 60 years.

Why do we need legal help with negotiations?

In a normal year of a negotiations process, an established team from an association and an established team from leadership come together and discuss the articles that need minor changes to an existing contract.

In the past two years, associations needed to elect new leadership, create a new negotiations team, and together with district leadership, create a completely new contract while taking into consideration each of the four existing contracts, severe State budget cuts and the Education Code related to unification. The District engaged legal experts to ensure that in the process of negotiating a new contract, the rights and conditions of the existing contracts and unification laws are followed.

Will we always need a lot of consultants?

No. It is always a difficult decision to spend precious resources on consulting, especially during such tough State budget cuts. We will need much less consulting assistance once our new district is simply making minor revisions to contracts, our organizational structure and processes.