



CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members
August 21, 2007



School Board Race Begins

• **BHEA's political action committee to interview candidates, likely leading to endorsements.**

Every two years, seats become available on the Beverly Hills Board of Education. This November, three of the five seats are up for grabs. The filing deadline to declare candidacies has passed and there are four candidates. Incumbents Alissa Roston and Myra Lurie are running for reelection. Roston is seeking a third four-year term. Lurie is seeking a second term. Challengers Steven Fenton and Brian David Goldberg are also running. The top three vote-getters will be seated on the Board in December.

Last spring, BHEA formed a political action committee so that our organization may play an active role in the school board campaign. BHEA has issued invitations to all four candidates to interview with BHEA. The interviews involve asking the candidates questions on various issues in public education and employer-employee relations. Interviews are currently being scheduled toward the end of August. After interviews are completed, the interview committee will report back to our Representative Council at a special meeting on Sep. 6, at which time the RC will vote to endorse zero, one, two, or three candidates.

Other ways that BHEA plans to become politically involved in the election are: walking door-to-door in Beverly Hills in support of our issues and our endorsed candidates, mailing postcards to Beverly Hills residents with our message, and seeking media attention for our participation in the race.

If you would like to get involved, BHEA could use your support. Please let your site representative know.

ON THE BACK...

- May 8 Board of Ed. summary
- HAW mural controversy
- District's math initiative

Business and Inspiration at NEA Representative Assembly

The 2007 NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia was successful. The approximately 9,000 delegates from across the United States discussed, debated, and acted on 98 new business items and dozens of other resolutions and amendments to NEA's constitution and legislative agenda. This took four days to accomplish.

Also, seven presidential candidates, including Democratic front-runners Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, visited and addressed the assembly, each giving speeches 20-30 minutes in length. All candidates were warmly received by the delegates. The candidates were almost universally opposed to the No Child Left Behind Act, calling for it to be either scrapped or overhauled. The candidates tried to inspire delegates by contrasting their vision of the federal government's role in public education with its current role. Many candidates said that the federal government needs to contribute more money to education.

On the business side, here are some of the major actions/positions taken by the assembly this summer:

- Supports the rights of undocumented children in the U.S. to go to public schools.
- Supports an exit strategy for our troops in Iraq, citing the billions of dollars that could otherwise be spent on education.
- Supports full integration of public schools.
- Supports visual and performing arts, fine arts, foreign language, and English Learner education.
- Supports the elimination of the social security offset that reduces the amount of social security some public school teachers may collect for their private sector work.
- Supports parental responsibility and accountability.
- Supports alternatives to standardized testing for students with limited English proficiency.
- Supports mandatory Kindergarten attendance.

Two BHEA members attended the assembly. BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée represented BHEA as a local delegate. Instructional assistant Claudia Bushée represented CTA as a state delegate.

Results of National Board Survey Show Strong Interest by Staff, But Low Stipend Is a Barrier

On May 2, BHEA issued a three-question survey to the certificated staff to measure their interest in pursuing certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. A total of 69 surveys were returned. Here are the results:

1. Are you interested in learning more about the certification process? YES = 50, NO = 19.
2. If BHUSD were to offer larger financial incentives, would you be interested in becoming certified? YES = 56, NO = 12.
3. If BHUSD's annual stipend were to remain at \$1,629, would you be interested in becoming certified? YES = 7, NO = 58.

The results indicate that there is strong interest among the staff to learn more about the certification process. The results further indicate that BHUSD must offer larger financial incentives in order to get members to act on their interest.

BHEA will work on preparing and disseminating information about NBPTS certification to our members.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- Aug. 29: Staff returns to work.
- Aug. 30: Prof. development day
- Aug. 31: No school.
- Sep. 3: Labor Day.
- Sep. 4: Students return.
- Sep. 13/14: No school.
- Sep. 17: Partial 1st paycheck.*
- Oct. 1: Rest of 1st paycheck.*
- Oct. 19: Prof. development day
- Nov. 1: Full paycheck.*
- Nov. 6: Election day.

* certificated staff

May 8 Board of Ed. Meeting Takes Up Smoking, Technology

Highlights from the May 8 Board of Education meeting:

- Linda Omansky accepted a Board resolution marking Classified School Employee Week.
- HS photography teacher Timothy Briggs was recognized for taking students' pictures in the classroom setting.
- Iranian American Parent Assn. Pres. Nanaz Pirnia said that 2,000 people attended the March NowRuz celebration. She said that teachers supported the event. An IAPA spokesperson said that BHUSD did not support IAPA's advertising efforts to parents, in contrast to support it has received from past administrations.
- BH Vice Mayor Barry Brucker asked the Board to support an ordinance prohibiting smoking in open air dining areas. He cited second-hand smoke concerns, the negative effect of 'glamorizing' outdoor café smoking, and said that 'studies' show no economic detriment to restaurants. BH Weekly writer Rudy Cole spoke in opposition to the ordinance. He said no data show an adverse health risk, restaurants oppose it on economic grounds, that we shouldn't be 'legislating behavior,' and that the Board should not venture into City Council's territory.
- On this issue, Board member Myra Lurie said the City Council sought outside opinions. She said that smoking has unhealthy effects. She said she represents her 'constituency' of 'parents and kids' by supporting the ordinance. Board Pres. John Millan said that the Board's job is to look out for the health and safety of students. The Board then unanimously passed a resolution supporting the smoking ban ordinance.
- BV Counselor Janice Hart talked about a 7th grade study skills program called 'Why Try?'
- BTSA Coord. Diane Mead said that induction requirements for new teachers have increased. She said she would like BHUSD to provide more support to beginning teachers during their two years in the BTSA program.
- Supt. Kari McVeigh talked about empathy; she commended ER Prin. Pat Escalante and HAW teachers for supporting students when fires erupted last spring in the nearby Santa Monica mountains.
- Technology consultant Daryl Vidal presented his recommendations for reorganizing the district's technology support personnel and for purchasing and installing infrastructure for the new HS Science and Technology Center. Vidal's proposal included buying core networking gear but leasing end-user equipment, like computers. He also suggesting more outsourcing of technology duties. Vice Mayor Barry Brucker said that a technology partnership with the City of BH would be a better way for BHUSD to advance its technology goals. He cited the City's existing infrastructure investment.
- On this issue, both Board member Nooshin Meshkaty and Lurie were receptive to partnering with the City. Board VP Myra Demeter was also receptive to a joint venture with the City. She said that she would like to contract with a firm for backup technology staff and supports leasing some technology equipment. Ultimately, the Board approved parts of Vidal's proposal and resolved that the district would aggressively pursue partnership possibilities with the City. Vidal expressed concern about how delaying major decisions might push back timelines, particularly with the STC project.
- Demeter congratulated the recent National Honor Society inductees.

Board to Ms. Myers: HAW Mural Will Stay

At the May 8 Board of Ed. meeting, the Board voted unanimously to reject community member Betsy Myer's attempt to force the removal of a large mural on the wall of a building at HAW. Board Pres. John Millan read many cards into the record in support of the mural, including some cards from PTA leaders. Board member Alissa Roston said that BHUSD acted legally in approving the mural.

Myers contends that the mural is an eyesore because it is visible from Rexford Drive. Myers called the mural 'unauthorized.' She charged that she has not been provided any specifics on how the mural was funded. She said that she has offered to raise funds to remove it.

District Unveils Ambitious Math Initiative

On May 8, the Ed. Services Dept. unveiled its math initiative to the Board of Education via a PowerPoint presentation. Here are the highlights:

- Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus said the 3-year initiative has four foci: 1) maintaining the 3-year HS math graduation requirement, 2) realigning 8th/9th grade courses, 3) ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators in math, and 4) 'interventions.'
- Straus said research supports increasing math rigor.
- API scores get dinged when students are behind one or more grade levels in math.
- Two math coaches (one for K-3, another for grades 4-Algebra) will provide 'classroom embedded' professional development for those staff members who, on a voluntary basis, request it.
- Board Pres. John Millan said that this math initiative will cause 'no encroachment' on the general fund.
- The initiative calls for more benchmark tests.
- Other resources for teachers include 'teacher specialists' at the K-8 level, department leaders at the 6-8 level, and off-site professional development.
- Focus is on the 10.9% of HS students who graduate with only algebra mastery.
- Straus called for more articulation across school sites.
- HAW Prin. Alex Cherniss talked about 'improving instruction' in math.
- New software called Data Director will allow teachers to analyze student performance data.
- Part of administrators' professional development will be 'collaborative learning walks' through math classrooms.
- Slide #35 called for implementing 'open access to allow students to access accelerated coursework, with support, with teacher and counselor advisement for success in the course.'
- Slide #36 called for 'developing student support systems.'
- Straus said that BHUSD teachers believe that some middle school children face developmental challenges to being able to understand algebra at their age level. Supt. Kari McVeigh disagreed that there are developmental hurdles.
- Board member Nooshin Meshkaty said that HS teachers think that middle school students don't get enough exposure to 'word problems.'
- Board member Alissa Roston asked parents to get students to be present and on time to school as a way to help.
- Board member Myra Lurie asked to explore online resources so parents can help their kids at home with math.