



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members

May 5, 2008



BHEA Articulates Message to Board of Education: Pull Back Layoff Notices, Break Logjam at Bargaining Table

BHEA orchestrated an organizing effort over the last two weeks aimed at calling attention to two critical issues currently facing our district: layoffs and compensation enhancement. BHEA has been gathering signatures from hundreds of its members on a letter asking our Board of Education to rescind layoff notices and to help put salary and benefits negotiations back on track. Our district administration has cited "overstaffing" as one reason for laying off our members. Because staffing decisions are a wholly district right, BHEA believes that our members should not suffer the painful consequences of layoffs. Rather, if our district believes that reduced staffing is needed, then it should develop a long-term plan to coincide with natural attrition from voluntary resignations and retirements. If our district moves forward with layoffs, it will force BHEA members to pay a steep price for prior staffing decisions over which they had no control.

On the compensation front, BHEA believes that a fair settlement can be achieved during this 2007-2008 bargaining year to increase unit member salary and benefits, despite the onset of the state budget crisis. Proposed state cuts to education would not begin until the 2008-2009 school year. The BHUSD budget currently shows \$1.8 million of unallocated reserves for 2007-2008...money that is available for compensation talks. BHEA believes that a fair settlement this year on money items would be sustainable because 1) projected Prop 98 cost-of-living allowances for our state revenues are healthy in the out-years, 2) this year's early retirement program was successful, and 3) our local revenues continue to be healthy in the form of fundraising and our Joint Powers agreement with the City of BH. Although projected declining student enrollment would bring less revenue, such a loss could be offset by 1) prudently planned staff reductions via natural attrition at the unit member level, 2) reductions of administrative staff, and 3) enhancements of local revenue.

Finally, our district needs to stay competitive. In order to attract and retain the highest quality employees, our district must offer the highest quality compensation package. Although this year's hiring season may not be very robust given the current turmoil with the state budget, things will turn around at some point. When the dust settles, potential new hires will compare our salary schedule and benefits package to others out there in California. Many school districts throughout California have already reached settlements for the 2007-2008 bargaining year (see table at right). These districts are able to showcase enhanced salary schedules and benefits packages while BHUSD is left defending a compensation package from the 2006-2007 school year.

BHEA and BHUSD have a shared, common interest in attracting and retaining quality employees. We made much progress on compensation during September, October, and November. Since December, however, BHUSD negotiators have come to the bargaining table and told BHEA that the district cannot talk about money. BHEA strongly urges our district to reconsider their stance. The district should start negotiating compensation again. Achieving a fair settlement is in the best interests of all parties.

April 10 Rep. Council Highlights

The BHEA Representative Council convened on Apr. 10. BHEA's commitment to interest-based bargaining (IBB) was discussed. Proponents of IBB said:

- Taking a harder line doesn't create more open dialog. Recent bad events have bled into the IBB discussion.
- Communication is better with IBB. It's harder to work together in traditional bargaining.
- IBB prevents bootstrapping...or linking of unrelated issues.
- Leaving IBB would be interpreted as hostile.

Detractors of IBB said:

- The current district administration calls for a different approach from BHEA. BHEA hasn't attained its goals using IBB.
- BHEA should not sacrifice its bargaining goals over concerns about its image.
- Traditional bargaining is not an inferior form of bargaining.

Other highlights from the meeting include:

- Discussed community involvement ideas, including themes centered around recognizing BHEA members for particular lengths of service.
- Conducted the first reading of a bylaws amendment on inclusion of a BHEA Secretary stipend.

Where is Beverly Hills?

Below is a regional list* of some Unified School Districts that have already settled compensation for 2007-2008 at a 4.0% increase or higher:

Acton-Agua Dulce	5.0%
Arcadia	5.0
Atascadero	4.5
Baldwin Park	4.0
Bellflower	4.5
Bonita	4.5
Claremont	4.3
Downey	4.4
Duarte	4.0
Las Virgenes	4.0
Long Beach	4.5
Norwalk-La Mirada	4.0
Paramount	4.5
San Marino	4.0
Shandon	5.1
Simi Valley	4.0
Ventura	4.0
Walnut Valley	5.1

* Source: United Teachers Los Angeles

More March 11 Board Meeting Highlights...

This article picks up where the Apr. 28 *Consensus* left off...tallying the highlights from the Mar. 11 Board of Education meeting:

- Board member Brian Goldberg asked to use the currently set-aside \$784,000 fire insurance settlement as a possible means of restoring some recently cut programs (reading specialists, EL teachers, librarians, and middle school French)...even if such a restoration would require reconfiguring the programs. Board member Steve Fenton agreed with Goldberg's idea. Board Vice-Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty said that, in the coming months, our district should continue looking at making more cuts at the district office and also at restoring cut programs. Board Pres. Myra Demeter suggested taking another look at the district budget in June. Board member Myra Lurie stressed that our district needs to budget yearly for field maintenance. The Board voted 5-0 to redesignate the \$784,000 as "Fire Insurance Settlement/Field Replacement." This vote allowed the possibility of using the previously designated \$600,000 for field maintenance for other purposes...such as restoring cut programs.
- Fenton advocated for a BHUSD-run preschool program as a revenue generator, saying he had support for this idea and its profitability from State Supt. of Schools Jack O'Connell. He asked for a blue-ribbon committee to be formed to explore this idea. Lurie supported formation of the committee as long as the Board of Education directs the process. She also questioned O'Connell's claim of profitability. Demeter asked how much potential preschool parents would be willing to pay, how teachers would be credentialed, and what the curriculum would be.
- Pupil Services Dir. Amy Lambert said that district attorneys are looking into the legality of legacy permits. She also said that LAUSD might not agree to release its students on legacy permits. She said that current projections show that even if legacy permits were to be approved right now, only a "handful" of these permits would be issued. Fenton said that alumni-based permits would "most likely be permissible" according to district legal counsel from May 2007. Goldberg said that legacy permits would allow BHUSD to have "more control" over opportunity permits so that our district may show appreciation for the community's support. He also gave credit to Lambert for the "fairness" of the current permit process.
- Lurie proposed to keep a minimum of two classes per grade level at each K-8 school for 2008-2009. She said that proposed state budget cuts and projected declining student enrollment are the reasons for having to cut teachers. She said that our district may not be able to continue getting students on permit from LAUSD. She said that small class sizes were good for education when economic times were better than they are now. She said that the layoff procedure is prescribed by law. She said that the City of BH and our district have met several times to talk about mitigation of health risks due to planned major construction near the corner of Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards. She said that risks include air quality, noise, traffic, and security. She said that "health and safety" of students is the district's #1 priority.
- Goldberg said Board members agree on some issues, disagree on others...but are trying to "work together." Meshkaty said that our district offers lots of resources to "all students." Demeter congratulated HAW Prin. Alex Cherniss and HS teacher Jen Tedford for recently earning their doctorate degrees.

BRIEFS AND UPDATES

- BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée spoke to parent PTA members on two separate occasions over the last few weeks...on Apr. 15 and Apr. 29. He talked about the layoff process, position closures, the early retirement package, the state budget crisis, and the need for all stakeholders in public education to voice their support for adequate funding for our schools.
- Veteran teacher and union activist Roz Fleishman was honored by BHEA at the regional CTA Bay Valley WHO Awards. Congratulations to Roz for her 30 years of dedicated service to BH children and to her union colleagues!
- Bushée attended a town hall meeting with California Speaker-Elect Karen Bass and Assemblyman Mike Feuer on May 3. The meeting addressed the current budget deficit in Sacramento and possible ways to address it. Bass and Feuer both displayed much support for public schools.
- Free-of-charge CERT training (Community Emergency Response Team) is available through the BH Fire Dept. The full 27-hour training consists of five sessions (3 Wed. + 2 Sat.). Those who complete the training receive a backpack full of useful emergency supplies. If interested, call Sonia Berman at the Fire Dept. at 310-281-2753. BHEA thanks Board member Myra Lurie for providing this information.
- A retirement celebration was held in Century City on Apr. 25 in the wake of the early retirement package officially moving forward. An estimated 40-50 staff members attended to relax and chat with many of the 18 soon-to-be retired BHEA members from across our district. Additional retirement parties and celebrations are being scheduled between now and the end of school. Ask at your school site for information.

One Thing You Can Do Right Now to Make a Difference in Sacramento: Call 1-888-268-4334

CTA has set up hotline for you to help combat Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed cuts to public education. Call 1-888-268-4334. If you're calling from your house, you should be automatically connected to your Assemblyperson or your state Senator. For a list of phone etiquettes and talking points, go to:

<http://bhea.org/BudgetCuts.htm>

Your input makes a difference...so make your phone call today!

IMPORTANT DATES

- May 6: Board of Education meeting.
- May 7-15: Range of dates that Board of Education must hold special meeting to act on layoff notices.
- May 8: BHEA Representative Council meeting.
- May 20: BHEA Certificated President in Sacramento lobbying legislators to adequately fund public schools.
- May 20: Board of Education meeting.
- May 20: Certificated bargaining session.
- May 26: Memorial Day (no school).
- May 30: Board of Ed. study session on the BHUSD budget.
- Jun. 3: Board of Education meeting.
- Jun. 10: Board of Education meeting.
- Jun. 12: BHEA Representative Council meeting.
- Jun. 20: Last day of service for certificated staff for the 2007-2008 school year.
- Jun. 30: First day of summer school.