



# BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

*Educational Employees Working Together*

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## CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members  
May 22, 2008



### Board Votes Again to Extend Straus' Contract Despite Near Unanimous Opposition by Employees; Legacy Permits Narrowly Approved

- BHEA member poll found just 3 in favor of extension with 229 opposed.
- On second vote in as many months, Board votes to approve extension, 4-0; Goldberg abstains.
- Fenton expresses concerns with extension but changes vote to curry support for legacy permits.

Our Board of Education voted at their May 20 meeting to extend the employment contract of Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus through June 30, 2011. The vote was 4-0. Board member Brian Goldberg abstained.

Board Pres. Myra Demeter introduced the item. She said that although the Board already voted on Apr. 22 in closed session to extend the contract, further analysis revealed "conflicting" education code on the legality of this action. The vote on Apr. 22 was 3-2, with Board members Steve Fenton and Goldberg in the minority.

At the May 20 meeting, BHEA Vice-Pres. Mark Frenn reported the results of a member poll which asked whether or not Straus' contract, which currently expires on June 30, 2009, should be extended. Before the Board members voted, Frenn told them that of the 232 responses, 3 were in favor of the extension while 229 were against it. There were a couple of abstentions and a few members who wondered if the vote could be postponed.

Just before casting his vote, Fenton said that he was concerned that the employees voted almost unanimously against the extension. He went on to say, however, that he would vote in favor of the extension in deference to the majority. He said that he hoped the majority would reciprocate the gesture on issues important to him. In fact, later in the meeting Fenton was able to garner three votes in support of his signature issue of legacy permits when he accepted several amendments proposed by Board member Myra Lurie and Board Vice-Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty. Lurie and Meshkaty voted with Fenton to approve legacy permits. Demeter and Goldberg voted against the measure. Demeter has consistently opposed legacy permits from the start. Goldberg, an ardent supporter of legacy permits, said that the proposed amendments "eviscerated" the original intent of program.

### Education Fares Marginally Better in Budget Revision *Over 350 Union Leaders Lobby State Legislators*

- BHEA President delivers 256 signed letters from members and parents urging adequate school funding.

Although Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's May revision to the state budget takes a suspension of Proposition 98 off the table, he is still proposing massive cuts to next year's education budget. CTA's analysis of the "May Re-vise," publicly released on May 14, concludes that California public schools would still lose \$4.3 billion. The governor's original proposal called for \$4.8 billion in cuts.

On May 20, BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée joined over 350 local association presidents and other leaders from school districts across California in a massive lobbying effort at the Capitol in Sacramento. CTA's message to legislators was: 1) Not suspending Prop 98 is a step in the right direction, but Schwarzenegger is still proposing cuts to education, including

delaying cost-of-living adjustments; 2) The Governor's proposal to borrow against future lottery revenues is too risky and could result in schools not receiving promised funding; and 3) trying to balance Sacramento's current \$17 billion deficit cannot be accomplished through cuts only...that revenue increases must also be considered.

Bushée met with local area members of the Assembly, including Mike Feuer and Paul Krekorian. He also met with a staff member for Sharon Runner. On the Senate side, Bushée met with state Senator Jack Scott and with a staff member for Sheila Kuehl.

To each office that he visited, Bushée delivered a CD containing scanned, digital copies of 256 signed letters from BHEA members and BHUSD parents. The letters urged state politicians to spare the education budget from massive cuts. Bushée also delivered a CD to the governor's office.

### District Still Refuses to Negotiate Money Items

- BHUSD bargainers say they have no authority to negotiate total compensation.
- Consensus reached on changes to grievance article.

Despite a slight improvement to the state education budget, district negotiators continued to refuse to talk about increases to unit member salaries and benefits during the last bargaining session on May 20. With suspension of Proposition 98 no longer being proposed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, BHEA estimates that our district will be able to add back about \$600,000 of revenue to its out-year projections. For this 07-08 budget year, our district received a 4% increase to its state revenues. Total compensation negotiations progressed smoothly last fall but were abruptly halted by the district shortly before winter break. Throughout this budget year, our district has continuously shown an unallocated reserve of between \$1.6 and \$1.8 million dollars...money that is available for

*(Continued on page 2)*

Our district's 07-08 unallocated reserve = \$1,826,570  
Days with no agreement on money items in BH = 247  
Districts in CA reaching agreements since Jan. = 90+

(Continued from page 1)

salary and benefits increases.

On a brighter note, negotiators reached consensus on changes to Article X (Grievances). These changes include clarification of the definition of “grievant” as well as clarification of when Steps 1 and 2 of the grievance process may be skipped. Also, bargainers created a draft of a grievance timetable form.

Finally, negotiators blocked out several more bargaining dates over the summer since consensus has not yet been reached on total compensation.

## QUOTE

“BHEA is disappointed that the Board did not listen to the input from the staff, from the employees who have to work directly with Dr. Straus. We also are disappointed that the Board chose to take action on this contract extension 14 months before the contract expired, when there has been so much pain inflicted on the non-management employees of the district. We had 11 layoffs in the certificated unit and five or six in the classified unit.” —BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée quoted in the May 22 edition of the *BH Weekly*, speaking on Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus’ contract extension.

## Progress Achieved on Some Issues, Not All

BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée and Asst. Supt. of Human Resources Sal Gumina met on May 21. BHEA can report the following:

- Members who teach in the BHEF Senior Workshop this summer will be compensated at the regular summer school rate (~\$43/hour).
- A tentative agreement was reached on financial restitution for three RSP teachers whose caseload limits were exceeded in 06-07.
- Significant progress was made on achieving a mutually agreeable compensation model for the position of independent study teacher.
- At this time, BHUSD is unwilling to bargain: 1) compensation for K-8 mentoring program, 2) the impact and effects of partial layoffs.
- BHUSD wishes to charge BHEA for the duplication costs of a report that BHEA requested. Parties are also discussing other alternatives.

## Board Approves Several Changes to High School Graduation Requirements

On May 20, the Board of Education approved changes to our high school’s graduation requirements. Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus summarized the changes as follows:

- Starting with the graduating class of 2012, the minimum number of units required to graduate will increase from 220 to 230.
- Starting with the class of 2013, a new, semester-long Beverly Seminar/Life Skills course will be required to be taken during either 9th or 10th grade. At the Apr. 8 Board meeting, Straus said that this course will involve topics such as character education, ethics, tolerance, and college advisement—details to be determined through collaboration with HS staff.
- Starting with the class of 2012, all 9th graders must be enrolled in a science course. Currently, there are no grade-specific requirements for science courses.
- Starting with the class of 2012, the physical education requirement will be reduced from three to two years. Also, students must pass 5 out of 6 state fitness standards before exiting P.E.

Straus also said that alternative means of fulfilling any new requirements will exist. She also said that teachers will provide “support classes” for students who struggle.

HS Prin. J. Guidetti said that an “advisory” component may possibly be developed in the future to go along with the Beverly Seminar course.

Board Vice-Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty said that she supports creation of an advisory period at the HS. She said that this would allow students to interact more with teachers. She also said she wishes to expand athletic offerings within our physical education courses to encourage more students to voluntarily sign up for more than just the minimum requirement for P.E. Guidetti added that our HS P.E. teachers are “phenomenal.”

## DID YOU KNOW?

According to CTA, over 90 agreements on salary and benefits in California have been reached between local unions and their districts since the governor’s January state budget proposal. In fact, today’s edition of the *L.A. Times* reported that yesterday in Huntington Beach, agreement was reached on a retroactive, 3.5% pay raise. The article also said, “Teachers had protested in previous weeks, complaining that district officials’ negotiations were unfair.”

## May 8 Rep. Council Meeting Highlights

- Interest-based bargaining strongly affirmed.
- Board members Fenton, Lurie, Meshkaty visit meeting, address members.

BHEA’s continued participation in interest-based bargaining was upheld at the May 8 Representative Council meeting. The vote was 16-1 with 2 abstentions. Members of BHEA’s Executive Board, who direct the bargaining process, told the RC that they did not want BHEA to abandon the interest-based bargaining philosophy. At the April RC meeting, much discussion took place on this topic, as was reported in the May 5 edition of the *Consensus*.

By invitation, Board Vice-Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty and Board member Myra Lurie addressed the RC for about 30 minutes. Several broad issues were discussed, including the state economy, district-union relations, employee morale, management style, and communication. Parties also discussed the importance of finding common ground.

After Meshkaty and Lurie left, Board member Steve Fenton arrived, also by invitation, and stayed for about 30 minutes. Many of the same above issues were discussed. Also, Fenton and RC members talked about the importance of building strong ties with parents and the community.

Other highlights:

- Reviewed ideas for organizing activities to draw attention to the need for adequate school funding as well as the need for BHEA and BHUSD to reach agreement at the bargaining table on total compensation.
- Reported that our Board of Education on May 6 acted on several OTBS layoffs and that the Board reversed itself and decided to keep the district office Human Resources Coordinator/Credential Analyst position as an administrator position.
- Formally approved the bylaws change for the stipend for the office of BHEA Secretary.
- Approved the 2008-2009 BHEA meeting dates. (They are posted online at BHEA.org.)
- Reported that BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée won election for a 3-year term to the CTA State Council.
- Received an update on developments in the joint BHEA-BHUSD Insurance Committee.
- Reported that BHEA plans to soon hold an election for the office of Treasurer, which will become vacant on June 30, 2008.
- Recognized members Roz Fleishman and Tina Dagodag, two retiring teachers who served for many years in elected office on the RC.