



# BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

*Educational Employees Working Together*

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## CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members  
June 19, 2008



### Progress Made on Money at Bargaining Table

After a 6-month lull at the certificated bargaining table without substantive progress on salary and benefits enhancements, negotiators came together on June 10 and finally moved forward. Several new options were discussed as bargainers contributed fresh ideas on reaching a fair settlement. Bargainers have scheduled three dates in July to continue talking.

BHEA has displayed a large amount of patience throughout the spring as our district continued to set new markers for reopening compensation talks. Some of these markers have been: 1) Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's November 2007 announcement that he would be recommending a 10% cut to the state education budget; 2) the governor's formal budget proposal unveiled in January 2008; 3) the state legislature's decision in February to spare public education of all but token current-year budget cuts; 4) our district's March second interim budget report showing a \$3.4 million deficit after reserves in 2010-2011; 5) the governor's May revision to the state budget which eliminated a call to suspend Proposition 98; 6) our district's May 30 announcement of a budget that showed a \$6.4 million surplus after reserves in 2010-2011; 7) action in the legislature that may result in partially funding next year's COLA to our state revenue.

Other more recent events have included 1) the Board's June 10 decision to create a new, several million dollar "basic aid" reserve intended to be a hedge against an unexpected spike in enrollment (basic aid is a funding mechanism that allows eligible districts to use locally generated property tax revenue in lieu of state funding); 2) yesterday's announcement that a tentative agreement has been reached between BHUSD and the City of BH on a renegotiated JPA contract, a significant source of local revenue for our district that will bring in additional millions of dollars under the terms of the new contract.

With our district slowly moving more toward self-reliance on local revenue and away from notoriously unpredictable state funding, BHEA sees much of the financial uncertainty that our district expressed concerns about earlier this year now evaporating and giving way to a better bargaining climate. It is BHEA's strong desire to conclude negotiations as soon as possible and join the 132 other L.A. County bargaining units that have already settled their contracts for this year. BHEA and BHUSD opened negotiations on this year's contract on Sep. 18, 2007 and have already reached accord on some language items.

### BHEA Rep. Council Meeting Highlights

Highlights from the Jun. 12 BHEA Representative Council meeting:

- Received as a guest PTA Council Co-Pres. Nadine Neiman. RC members and Neiman discussed ways to continue strengthening bonds between BHEA unit members and parents, such as more joint attendance at PTA and BHEA meetings. Neiman reported that PTA has set a fundraising goal for next year to completely replace recent district cuts to our schools' supply budgets and elicited BHEA member support for this effort. Also discussed were ideas for targeting certain fundraising for departments that have, in the past, been overlooked.
- Received as a guest Board Pres. Myra Demeter. Demeter first talked about her history as an educator in New York and her more recent endeavors in BHUSD, where she has served as a school board member since 2001. RC members and Demeter then shared perspectives on several issues, including compensation, appreciation, administration, and communication. Demeter said that she would enjoy more opportunities in the future to continue dialog with BHEA members.
- Student discipline was discussed. Members raised concerns about instances of lax enforcement of rules and also about instances where administrative consequences for infractions have not served as an effective deterrent. Members also discussed the teacher's role in helping to maintain discipline. Although most of the discussion focused on HS discipline, K-8 members offered comments from their perspective, too. Several suggestions were brought forth to address the issue, including 1) issuing surveys to get feedback from our members, 2) modeling HAW's system of monthly meetings between the principal and a BHEA representative to maintain an ongoing dialog, 3) documenting specific cases where discipline either has or has not been effective, and 4) raising awareness of the issue.
- Reported that an issue with longevity payments in the IA unit has been resolved.
- Reported that, contrary to what was presented at the Jun. 10 Board of Ed. meeting, no vote was taken at a recent school site council meeting to reduce IA positions at ER.
- Reported that the joint BHEA-BHUSD Insurance Committee has met to look at plans and rates to be offered for 2009. At this point, it appears that our district will stay in the SCEET pool, that Blue Cross will replace PacifiCare, and that there will be rate increases.
- Reported that BHEA is working with BHUSD on the impacts and effects of layoffs in the OTBS unit.

**MORE NEWS ON THE BACK...**

## Jun. 10: Board of Education Meeting Highlights

Highlights from the Jun. 10 Board of Education meeting:

- The HS Robotics program gave a presentation.
- Approved a redesigned GATE program for 2008-2009. Both PTA Council Co-Pres. Franny Rennie and Dir. of Curriculum Brian Tash presented the proposal, which will convert the current pull-out model with one that integrates GATE instruction into the regular classroom environment. Tash said that this will result in more differentiated instruction by the general education teacher. He said that state law requires GATE to be integrated into the regular school day. He said that professional development will be offered to teachers of grades 4 and 5 to assist with the GATE integration. He said that a voluntary GATE certification opportunity will be offered to teachers through UC San Diego. BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée spoke at the meeting and acknowledged that teachers, administrators, and parents had worked together to come up with the proposal...but expressed concern that the administration had not informed the leadership of BHEA about potential changes to working conditions that might trigger a need to bargain one or more aspects of the reconfigured GATE program. Board member Steve Fenton expressed concern that BHEA was not brought along in the process and called for better communication in the future. Board member Myra Lurie said that it appeared that there were internal communication problems within BHEA. She also said that she supports differentiated instruction. Tash told Board member Brian Goldberg that he did not believe that the changes to the GATE program impacted teachers' workday but rather represented a different approach to teaching. (BHEA is currently reviewing the specifics of the new GATE program and will soon make a determination with regard to any impacts and effects that would need to be bargained.)
- Voted to close two instructional assistant positions at ER and lay off the employees in those positions.
- Approved the BHUSD budget for 2008-2009. Goldberg asked several questions before the vote took place. It was reported that two Kindergarten classes will likely be added due to an unexpected uptick in enrollment. The approved budget was essentially identical to the one unveiled at the May 30 Board study session with one exception: an increase in reserve amounts. The Jun. 10 adopted budget 1) increases the Board's regular reserve from 3.7% to 4.0% and 2) creates a new line called "basic aid" reserve. This basic aid reserve grows from \$2.0 million in 08-09 to \$3.6 million in 10-11.
- Approved a new Board policy for alternative credits toward graduation. The new policy will allow students, on a limited basis, to apply credits earned at community colleges toward high school graduation. Also, it will allow a maximum of two correspondence (online) courses to be applied toward graduation credit. Bushée addressed the Board and said that he was pleased with the district's willingness, at BHEA's suggestion, to incorporate part of a rationale statement into the Board policy that stipulates that the current minimum load of six Beverly Hills High School classes per semester be maintained. (This means that students applying community college credit or correspondence credit cannot, except in certain alternative education instances, substitute this as a means to take a lighter load of BHHS classes.)
- Fenton said that he would like to explore an apparel branding opportunity for our district—with potential worldwide sales—as a way to generate new revenue. He also called on the district to reinstate a laid-off groundskeeper.
- Goldberg disputed accusations that it is a "racist" policy to support a reduction in our district's opportunity permits. He said that our district's practice should "match its policy," which does not guarantee renewal of opportunity permits on an annual basis. He also said that he supports and does not want to reduce permits issued children of BHUSD and City employees.
- Board Pres. Myra Demeter offered many thanks and congratulations to students, parents, and employees.
- Lurie said that she would like to have the district offer Mandarin Chinese if there is a critical mass of students willing to take it. She also said that new (not existing) permits should carry a clear warning indicating that the district may not be able to renew them in the future for budgetary reasons.

## Jun. 3: Board of Education Meeting Highlights

Highlights from the Jun. 3 Board of Education meeting:

- A community member spoke out against possible reductions in the number of opportunity permits that BHUSD may offer in the future. He argued that all categories of permits need to be considered for reductions.
- Another community member asked the Board to reinstate the special reading program, arguing that its elimination will bring "mediocrity."
- Board Pres. Myra Demeter spoke about this year's retirees and noted their "individual touches" and "centuries of experience." Board member Steve Fenton said that retirees "made this district into what it is today."
- HS graphics teacher Deb Joseph gave a presentation on graphic design classes at BHHS.
- Supt. Kari McVeigh thanked retirees.
- Approved the creation of a new program specialist position in the special education department. Board members asked many questions regarding the costs of this new position. Asst. Supt. of Human Resources Sal Gumina said that this position is needed to deal with labor-intensive IEPs. Pupil Services Dir. Amy Lambert said that creation of this position in lieu of contracting out the same services privately will save our district approximately \$100,000. Fenton said that creating this in-house position helps to establish relationships to help parents feel more "secure" in the services their child is receiving.
- Agreed to pursue a contract with the California School Boards Assn. to receive governance services, i.e. assistance/advice on how to govern a school district effectively. There was general support from Board members on the concept and worthiness of receiving such services, but Fenton took exception with the price: \$3,500 for one day of services. The Board agreed to continue the discussion at a subsequent Board meeting.

### IMPORTANT DATES

- Jun. 20: Last day of service for certificated staff for the 2007-2008 school year.
- Jun. 30: First day of summer school.
- Jul. 2: Certificated bargaining session.
- Jul. 10: Certificated bargaining session.
- Jul. 17: Certificated bargaining session.
- Aug. 1: Last of summer school.

***ENJOY SUMMER!***