



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members

January 29, 2009



BHEA to Decide on City Council Endorsements on Feb. 2

The BHEA Representative Council will hold a special meeting on Feb. 2 to vote on the question of endorsements in the upcoming Mar. 3 Beverly Hills City Council election. In December, the RC laid the groundwork for the endorsement process by approving the issuance of questionnaires and the establishment of candidate interviews with BHEA. Nine of the 11 candidates are seeking BHEA's endorsement. BHEA received completed, written questionnaires from, alphabetically: Willie Brien, Linda Briskman, Barry Brucker, Fran Cohen, Michael Hakim, Virginia Maas, John Mirisch, Nili Nathan, and Richard Stone. All 9 of these candidates will have completed their face-to-face interviews with BHEA by Jan. 29. BHEA's interview team, consisting of Sec. Kate Biggs, Vice-Pres. Mark Frenn, and Pres. Chris Bushée will review all candidate responses and present a recommendation to the RC on Feb. 2 for discussion and ultimately a final vote.

In previous RC meetings, the topic of City Council endorsements has been debated. Some RC members have expressed support for BHEA endorsing candidates because:

- Approximately 15% of our members live in the City of BH.
- The City supplies a significant amount, about 18%, of the school district's budget.
- Of a desire to increase BHEA's political power and visibility in the City.
- Former school board members often run for City Council, as is the case in this election.
- The City and the District share a close and mutually beneficial relationship.

Other RC members have expressed opposition to BHEA endorsing candidates because:

- Our members are not City employees.
- Of the possibility of creating adversarial relationships with those we do not endorse.
- Some in the City may not agree with or understand why BHEA is endorsing City Council candidates.

The final decision on endorsements lies with the RC and is scheduled for a vote on Feb. 2. The meeting begins at 3:45 p.m. in Room 118. All BHEA members are welcome to attend.

Keep Calling Lawmakers to Save Education Funding

- **Call Sacramento:** 1-888-268-4334.
- **Call Washington, D.C.:** 1-800-294-9811.
- **E-mail Sacramento:**
<https://listserv.nea.org/t/975/78605/19/0/>
- **E-mail Washington, D.C.:**
<https://listserv.nea.org/t/975/78605/20/0/>

Budget negotiations in Sacramento and in Washington, D.C. are heating up. By law, Sacramento politicians must come to agreement by Feb. 2 on the California budget. One of the latest proposals would take away the restriction on class size reduction funds...which could result in school districts increasing K-3 class sizes above 20:1 in order to use these funds for other priorities. Sacramento lawmakers are still actively considering cutting \$10.8 billion out of public education and reworking Prop 98 to get out of paying schools \$7 billion that's owed us from budget shortfalls in previous years.

Yesterday in Washington, D.C., the economic stimulus bill passed in the House of Representatives and now moves to the Senate. CTA urges you to tell our U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to include public education funding in this stimulus bill.

Both BHEA and CTA need your support to keep the pressure on lawmakers to spare education from these cuts. Please call or e-mail. Phone numbers and e-mail addresses appear above.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Feb. 2: Special BHEA Rep. Council meeting on endorsements. 3:45 p.m. HS, Room 118.
- Feb. 3: Board of Ed. study session on the district budget and on facilities. 4:00 p.m.
- Feb. 9: Holiday.
- Feb. 10: Board of Ed. meeting.
- Feb. 12: BHEA Rep. Council meeting. 3:45 p.m. HS, Room 118.
- Feb. 16: Holiday.
- Feb. 17: Certificated bargaining session.
- Feb. 24: Board of Ed. meeting.

Layoffs in BHUSD? Unknown at This Point in Time

Our district administration has not yet decided on whether or not to recommend the issuance of layoff notices. The budget situation is still in flux at both the state and federal levels. On Feb. 3, our Board of Education will hold a 4-hour study session that will be partly devoted to the district budget and may provide some clarity with regard to the possibility of layoffs.

By law, our district has until Mar. 15 to issue layoff notices to certificated employees. The issuance of a layoff notice does not necessarily mean that the district will act upon it. The district has until May 15 to make that decision.

Last year, the district issued about 35 layoff notices but only acted on about 10. Unfortunately the two-month period of time between Mar. 15 and May 15 causes a great deal of stress for everyone involved. If the district decides to issue layoff notices this year, then BHEA urges a responsible approach that does not result in "over-noticing" of our members.

Explore Your Member Benefits Online at CTA.org.

BRIEFS AND UPDATES:

- Cell Phone Use: The Dept. of Human Resources has reported to BHEA that the district has received reports of our unit members using their cell phones to conduct personal business during class time. BHEA has not verified the accuracy or number of these reports and is simply passing along information with this news item. BHEA cautions our members against the type of behavior alleged in these reports as it may result in administrative discipline.
- Spam: "sms@bhUSD.k12.ca.us: Policy Violation" Have you received e-mails with this title? If so, then you should know that over 99% of these e-mails are spam and not legitimate, as indicated by the message inserted at the bottom of each of these e-mails from the BHUSD Information Technology Department. The tiny fraction of legitimate ones only involved inbound e-mails that happened to contain particular flagged words or phrases. As of Jan. 29, the district has modified the server so that staff should no longer receive "sms" messages. BHEA has asked our district administration to issue a memo to all staff to clarify that "sms" e-mails that appear to accuse our members of violating system policy are, in fact, bogus and will not be used for any disciplinary purpose in the future.
- Special Education: At least one special education teacher has disputed our district's characterization of the current state of students who transitioned out of El Rodeo's now-closed special day program. BHEA has learned that several of the students who were moved into the resource program are requiring a large amount of one-on-one time, calling into question the appropriateness of the transitions. Furthermore, BHEA has learned that in the course of the district's investigation into this matter...that at least one special education teacher who received students from ER's special day program was never asked how the students are currently faring in her class...even though the district characterized all but one of the transitioned students as "doing well." BHEA will follow up with the district on this matter.

Board of Education Summary of

Meetings

January 27:

- ER teacher Kerry Mazor and HS teacher Michelle Halimi were honored for their contributions to the service learning program.
- A preschool committee that investigated the feasibility of a district-run preschool reported to the Board that it advises against creating its own preschool program...saying it would be cost-prohibitive. Rather, it recommends partnering with the City of BH to expand the City's preschool program by: providing more BHUSD classroom space for the City's program; creating a Dir. of Early Childhood Education position; and negotiating with the City on management of the program. Board member Brian Goldberg said the district has no intention of stepping on the City's toes with its management of the current preschool program and said that a "continuum of education" from Pre-K to Grade 12 is important. Board member Myra Demeter said she supports building a "partnership" with the City.
- Supt. Jerry Gross said that the district sold \$72 million of Measure E bonds recently and received a good rating from the bond companies.
- Approved the individual school site plans. Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus said that the HS still has developmental English and developmental science courses. Board Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty said that it is important that all HS classes get appropriate support for struggling students...not just some. HS Prin. J Guidetti said that some students admit to not taking the STAR exams seriously and advocated for better use of formative assessments. ER Prin. Pat Escalante said that her school is continuing with a voluntary middle school student mentoring program involving teacher mentors.
- Approved a \$20,000 contract, paid for with a BHEF donation, with the Debbie Allen Dance Company to implement an arts residency program that will focus on dance and music. Visual and Performing Arts Coord. Dana Findley reported that teachers in many grade levels will work with the contracted professionals to implement instruction. Reported that Grades K through 5 will receive classroom visits. Reported that the contracted work will occur during P.E. at the middle school and high school levels. (After the meeting, Ms. Findley told BHEA that teacher participation at the elementary level is voluntary. She said that each K-8 site was

allowed flexibility in determining exactly which middle school grade levels would receive the instruction. She said that teachers have been included in the development stages of this program. She said that instruction will begin next month.)

- Goldberg abstained from a 4-0 vote to approve a series of minor revisions to Board policies because he said that he is not confident that the administrative staff understands the difference between policy and practice.
- Approved a \$40,000 Calif. Dept. of Ed. grant for a CAHSEE intervention course to be taught by HS BHEA unit members to assist juniors and seniors who have not yet passed one or both parts of the HS exit exam.
- Board member Myra Lurie asked to explore "district of choice" status as a way to capture some state money for students on inter-district permits when BHUSD becomes a basic aid district.

January 13:

- Approved the curriculum for HS Mandarin Chinese. HS Foreign Languages Dept. Chair Corinne Carlson said that she did not write the draft for the course. She said that we should not be expanding the foreign language program in the current poor economy. She said creation of Chinese may endanger enrollment in other languages and that keeping enrollment high in foreign languages has been "challenging." BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée said it is not an appropriate time to be expanding program with the current state budget deficit. He said that this Board item comes as a surprise because the administration never informed BHEA that it would come up for a vote tonight. Straus said that tonight's approval would not obligate the district to hire a teacher for the course. Lurie said that Harvard-Westlake has had Chinese for several years and that implementation of this course is one of the 2008-2009 BHUSD goals. She asked to explore "grant money." Meshkaty said that she does not want Chinese to jeopardize enrollment in other electives.
- Approved moving forward with negotiating contracts with two companies for branding of BHUSD and BHHS merchandise...with apparel being one possible branded item.
- Received community input on possible changes to permit policy and practice as it relates to students attending BHUSD on opportunity permits. (BHEA has reported many of the specific points on this issue in prior editions of the *Consensus*.)