



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members

April 2, 2009



District Rescinds Three Layoff Notices; One Remains

- **Within 48 hours, the number of layoff notices drops from four to one. Board discussion on filling a vacant administrative position focuses on budget priorities.**

The confluence of several events has allowed our district to pull back three layoff notices. On Mar. 24, the Board of Education officially hired BHEA unit member Carter Paysinger as one of the three assistant principals at the HS. Paysinger will start on July 1. This created a vacancy in the HS physical education program, allowing the district to pull back two fractional layoff notices. Also, at the Mar. 24 Board meeting, BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée spoke to the Board regarding the layoff situation where he presented the Board with three options for finding money to retain the affected teachers. Since cancellation of the two aforementioned layoff notices was a fait-de-compli, Bushée turned his attention to the two outstanding notices, one given to a K-5 teacher and another to a K-8 PE teacher. At this same meeting, several parents urged the Board to rescind the layoff notice given to the K-5 teacher.

On Mar. 25, the district administration added to the agenda of an already scheduled Mar. 26 Board meeting a proposal to pull back the layoff notice given to our K-5 unit member by reopening a previously eliminated teacher-on-special-assignment position. TOSAs are BHEA unit members. When the Board convened on Mar. 26, they voted 5-0 to support Gross' proposal. Bushée spoke briefly at this meeting to praise the proposal and to thank the administration for being proactive in finding ways to save unit member jobs.

BHEA will continue to advocate for the cancellation of the last active layoff notice affecting the K-8 P.E. teacher. The district did not layoff any administrators this year nor close any administrative positions. One of the options that Bushée suggested to the district at the Mar. 24 Board meeting was to not fill a vacancy in the administrative position of custodial manager and use those savings to avoid laying off BHEA unit members. When it came to a vote later in the meeting, however, the Board voted 4-1 to hire a new manager. Board member Brian Goldberg voted against it. Prior to the vote, Board members and administrators made several comments. Goldberg said he wants to keep "cuts away from the classroom." He said he's not convinced that hiring another custodial manager will help the district. He said that his "no" vote sends a "clear message" about matching "priorities to our budget." Gross said the district needed to fill the position to supervise custodians so that they can do a better job at cleaning. He said that tabling this hiring decision to a later date is "not an option." Asst. Supt. of Business Services Cheryl Plotkin said that there are many custodial needs, including extended hours for deep cleaning and coordination of services with Measure E construction. She advocated for filling the managerial position. Board member Myra Demeter called this position "essential" and cited a need to "re-inject" enthusiasm in the custodial department. Board member Steve Fenton pointed out that a compromise could be found to hire a custodial manager and also save the K-5 teaching position. Board member Myra Lurie said the layoff notices were precipitated by declining enrollment. In response to a pointed question from Goldberg, Plotkin acknowledged that the money saved by not filling the managerial position could be used to save teachers' jobs.

CTA's Campaign to Save School Funding Begins as May 19 Special Election Approaches

On Mar. 22, the State Council of Education for the California Teachers Association voted to support ballot measures 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 1F. These propositions will appear on the May 19 special election ballot. Here are the reasons why CTA is urging you to vote "YES" on these measures:

- **Prop 1A:** Strengthens the rainy-day reserve for state revenues and extends by one to two years some of the temporary tax increases passed by the California legislature earlier this year. Prop 1A must pass in order for 1B to pass. They're linked because 1A provides the school funding mechanism for 1B below.
- **Prop 1B:** "Hard-wires" \$9.3 billion of public school funding that is already owed by the state. Instead of waiting for the state government to pay schools what we're legally owed under the Prop 98 minimum funding guarantee, Prop 1B takes the decision out of the legislature's hands and forces payment of this money to school districts, beginning in 2011-2012 and continuing for several years until it's all paid back. Prop 1A must pass in order for 1B to pass.
- **Prop 1C:** Inscribes what schools have been getting in lottery-generated revenue and wraps it into Prop 98, which will allow this revenue to receive budgeted cost-of-living adjustments in the future...and no longer be subject to the ups and downs of lottery performance. Needed to provide \$5 billion to balance the state budget.
- **Prop 1D:** Temporarily redirects money from the Children and Families Act of 1998 to support health and human services for children up to age 5. Needed to provide \$600 million to balance the state budget.
- **Prop 1E:** Temporarily redirects money from the Mental Health Act of 2004 to support screening, diagnosis, and treatment of illnesses affecting children and young adults up to age 21. Needed to provide \$227 million to balance the state budget.
- **Prop 1F:** Prohibits state legislators, the governor,

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

and other state constitutional officers from receiving pay raises in years when the state runs a deficit. Needed for accountability of elected officials.

The state of California is facing a \$42 billion deficit. CTA is supporting this package of six propositions because it provides an immediate solution to eliminate this deficit and balance the state budget. At the same time, it strengthens revenue guarantees for public schools and lessens the need to lay off educators in the future. CTA urges you to vote "YES" on Propositions 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 1F on May 19. Go online to CTA.org for more details.

BRIEFS AND UPDATES

- **Pay Issue Resolved:** On Mar. 11, BHEA reported that we were moving to involve a state oversight agency to compel BHUSD to issue retroactive payment to five unit members as agreed upon with our district in a memorandum of understanding. Fortunately, the district has now complied with its obligations, retroactive pay has been issued, and BHEA can now withdraw both the grievance filed on behalf of our members and our request for state intervention.
- **Grievance Update:** There are currently 10 active BHEA grievances. One is in Step 1, the informal stage. Eight are in Step 2, the formal site-level stage. One is awaiting a BHEA Executive Board decision on whether or not to seek binding arbitration. BHEA is pursuing violations of the following articles: salaries, transfers, professional assessment of certificated personnel, and parent complaints.
- **Parents, Teachers, Administrators Meet for Coffee:** BHUSD has embarked on a series of "coffees" held in the homes of various BH residents. These meetings are led jointly by Board of Education Pres. Nooshin Meshkati and Supt. Jerry Gross. The second of these coffees occurred on Apr. 1 where approximately 20 parents, Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus, and three teachers attended, including BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée. Bushée shared both historical facts and employee perspective on several of the topics discussed in the 2-hour meeting, which included: cleaning and maintenance of facilities, the May 19 special election, GATE, special education costs, quality of BHUSD education, middle school configuration, student permits, class size variation, BHEF fundraising, City-BHUSD shared technology services, playground supervision, PE scheduling in the K-8s, and incentives for parental involvement. Most of these topics were raised by parents in a free-flowing question-and-answer session.

Another Productive BHEA-BHUSD Meeting

For the second time in as many months, members of BHEA's Board of Directors met with BHUSD administration representatives to continue a dialog started at a meeting on Feb. 11. The more recent meeting occurred on Mar. 25 and focused on the following topics: BHEA unit member input on curriculum, how grades are reported, Wednesday morning late-starts at the K-8 sites, management philosophy, professional development, articulation among sites and grade levels, releasing of tests, district office administrators visiting school sites, and STAR testing scheduling. While no conclusions or decisions were made on any of these topics, meeting participants shared viewpoints and made progress on developing communication channels to discuss these and other issues. BHEA K-5 Dir. Elaine Palazzo, Vice-Pres. Mark Frenn, and Pres. Chris Bushée joined Supt. Jerry Gross, Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus, and Asst. Supt. of Human Resources Sal Gumina for this 90-minute meeting.

Algebra Curriculum Updated

The Board of Education voted 5-0 to accept the recommendations of a math advisory committee comprised of 7 math teachers and 2 district administrators. Teacher on special assignment Josh Schmidt presented the committee's work to the Board. The focus of the committee was algebra readiness. Many of the recommendations centered around providing adequate support for students enrolled in existing math courses at the middle school level, with the committee reporting that middle school students "see the value" in HM's early morning math interventions. The biggest curricular changes were the elimination of Algebra A in 8th grade and the elimination of Algebra A/B at the HS. The committee recommended a new HS course called Conceptual Algebra that is more "hands-on" and uses a "different approach" to instruction but maintains the "same concepts" and requires that students be held to the "same standards" as the high school's current first-year Algebra course. The committee said that it does not yet know how students in this UC-approved Conceptual Algebra course would move to the next math level. Board members generally praised the committee for its work.

Summary of Mar. 12 BHEA Rep. Council Meeting

- Reported that the approved bargaining agreement on salary and benefits increases for our IA unit members has not yet been implemented. Retroactive pay has not yet been issued and the new salary rates were not reflected on the Mar. 10 paychecks.
- Reported that no decisions have been made yet on potential changes to the HS bell schedule for 09-10. The focus has been on how to best provide "intervention" for students.
- Reported that an architect has been selected to work on the HS Measure E construction.
- Reported that based on a recent HAW facilities meeting, there appears to be room for improvement in the degree and effectiveness of communication between contractors and subcontractors for HAW-related construction. Facilities meetings continue at a slow pace at ER. Some frustration was reported with the progress of facilities meetings at HM and the HS, with one HS facilities committee member reporting that she was not invited to a recent meeting.
- Reported that at a recent GATE Committee meeting, parents requested from the district more information and updates on the GATE program...but the district did not commit at this time to creating a newsletter for such a purpose. Reported that after-school GATE programs are being contemplated. Reported that middle school teachers were cast in a negative light.
- Approved a BHEA bylaws revision to make representation on the Executive Board more proportional to our grade level distribution.
- Reviewed the current BHEA and BHEA PAC budgets.
- Treas. Stewart Horowitz reported on his recent CTA treasurer training. He said that changes to tax laws present continual challenges to unions and that the IRS requires and enforces strict record-keeping for non-profits like BHEA.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Apr. 16:** BHEA Rep. Council meeting, 3:45 p.m., Room 118, BHHS.
- **Apr. 20:** Certificated bargaining.