



# BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

*Educational Employees Working Together*

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## CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members

September 11, 2009



### **BHEA Members Ratify Renegotiated Tentative Agreement As Board of Education Approves Stronger Employee Permit Policy**

- Long summer involved negotiating changes to class size article, retention of evaluation language, and Board movement on greater protections for members' children enrolled in BHUSD. Thanks go out to many.

A drawn-out summer of extended negotiations finally came to a conclusion on Sep. 8 with BHEA and BHUSD separately acting upon issues that hold mutual interest to both parties. One-hundred thirty-six certificated BHEA members voted to ratify a renegotiated package of contract changes, with only 7 voting against. Hours later, the Board of Education approved policy granting new rights to employees whose children are enrolled in BHUSD. Because the Board had previously voted to approve the contract changes now ratified by BHEA, the changes are now final and binding.

The agreement changed several provisions of the class size and professional assessment articles of the contract. Individual class sizes in grades K-3 may increase up to 22, but only for two years and under limited circumstances. Plus, all students must be counted in the limit of 22, regardless of their general or special education status. The district-wide K-3 staffing ratio must continue to be 20 students to 1 teacher. Full-time middle school teachers of core curricula won a new right to a limit of 145 students, in line with the high school. Plus, both middle and high school teachers won 'proportionality' rights, so class size limits are scaled down for teachers with fewer than five core sections. The evaluation article contains many revisions. The current method of two 30-minute classroom observations per year will continue as the default evaluation method, albeit with updated timelines and clarified language. But the big changes come with the creation of two brand new, voluntary evaluation methods: walkthrough and alternative. Walkthrough consists of six, informal 5-minute observations during the evaluation year. Alternative consists of a multi-year project. Both of these new methods are voluntary and require the mutual consent of the member and his or her administrator.

In addition, this agreement added the position of occupational therapist to the contract and created the 2011-2012 academic calendar.

The new permit policy the Board of Education approved grants employees the following rights with regard to the enrollment of their children in BHUSD: selection of school of choice as of August 1 based on space availability; continued enrollment for remainder of school year if employee leaves district mid-year; after two years of continuous enrollment at one school site, student will not be involuntarily transferred to another site.

Getting this agreement approved involved several fits and starts over the summer, precipitated by the Board's June 30 rejection of the original agreement. Consequently, many BHEA members worked overtime during the summer to renegotiate and retain key elements of last year's work. Thanks go out to members of BHEA's certificated bargaining team, who worked out all of the details of this agreement. Thanks go out to BHEA's Executive Board for providing the leadership and determination necessary to achieve an agreement that met our members' interests. Thanks go out to the bargaining facilitator, the district administration and its negotiators, and the Board for supporting this agreement. And finally, thanks go out to all BHEA members who participated in the Sep. 8 ratification process. Ultimately, it is you who will benefit from these contract changes.

### **BHEA Set to Vote on Sep. 17 on Endorsements in School Board Election**

- All members welcome to attend candidate interviews and Representative Council meeting next week. Details below.

The Nov. 3 Board of Education election is fast approaching, and BHEA will play an active role by interviewing candidates, issuing endorsements, and working to ensure victory on election day. Four candidates are vying for two open spots on the Board during this election cycle.

Several days ago, BHEA extended invitations to all four candidates to interview with our political action committee. This weekend, the committee will be finalizing the questions to be asked during the interviews. Question topics may include: next spring's superintendent search process, employee salaries and benefits; student permits for employees' children; cleanliness and safety of facilities; role of instructional assistants in BHUSD; qualities of good administrators; teachers' role in curricular development; Measure E construction; basic aid funding; staff turnover; relationship between BHEA and BHUSD.

As of today, three candidates have accepted BHEA's interview invitation: Lisa Korbatov, Jake Manaster, and Craig Davis. BHEA has made multiple attempts to invite Nooshin Meshkaty for an interview, but we have not heard back from her yet. The current interview schedule is:

- Monday, September 14. 6:00pm. Craig Davis.
- Tuesday, September 15. 4:00pm. Jake Manaster.
- Tuesday, September 15. 7:00pm. Lisa Korbatov.

All interviews will take place in Room 118 at the high school. BHEA invites you, as a member, to observe one or more interviews so that you may witness and judge firsthand candidates' responses to issues that matter to our union.

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## **BHEA Representative Council Conducts a Busy June Meeting**

Your BHEA representatives convened on June 11 to conduct the business of our union in the last regularly scheduled meeting of the 2008-2009 school year. During this meeting, the Representative Council:

- Held a discussion with Asst. Supt. of Educational Services Ilene Straus. Topics discussed were: the K-8 STAR testing schedule, the K-8 Wednesday morning meeting structure and content, the high school English Learner World History course, changes to the middle school foreign language program, reporting letter grades with pluses and minuses on transcripts, 5- and 15-week progress reports, middle school mathematics and Algebra curricula, student intervention, grouping of students in elementary and middle school, and high school course outlines.
- Held a discussion with Board of Education members Steve Fenton and Brian Goldberg. Topics discussed were: shared services with the City of BH, the November 3 school board election, employee morale, 'basic aid' school funding, budget cuts, high school bell schedule and course selection, 'a-g' eligibility requirements for university acceptance, hiring processes and decisions, and the upcoming superintendent search process.
- Unanimously recommended to BHEA members approval of the June 3 certificated tentative agreement.
- Approved a 2009-2010 balanced budget that maintains all services currently provided to BHEA members, reduces spending on food and beverages, and increases local dues by \$1 per month for full-time members. Reported that a major factor in the need to increase local dues is that BHEA revenues have decreased because of district layoffs and position closures over the last two years.
- Reviewed concrete proposals for bylaws updates for internal financial controls. Began discussion on potential bylaws changes affecting the term of office of BHEA Treasurer.
- Reported that the instructional assistants unit is exploring a survey to its unit members on their preferences for school sites and number of hours worked per week.
- Reported that the district committee exploring potential middle school configuration changes met and the administration said that maintaining four separate middle schools is still the current goal.
- Reported that the Facilities Advisory Committee is dealing with Measure E construction-related parking issues; the building just south of the old HS "math patio" will be demolished; a brand new HS "Building M" will be constructed to house administration and student services; ER will receive shading mechanisms; and a new square building will be built where HM's current rotunda building is located.
- Reported general results from a BHEA-administered K-8 professional development survey.

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Once all interviews are concluded, the interview panel will meet to analyze candidate responses and come up with an endorsement recommendation for BHEA to consider. Then, on Sep. 17, BHEA's Representative Council will convene to receive the committee's recommendation, deliberate, and finally vote on our endorsements. All RC meetings are open to members, so BHEA encourages you to attend the Sep. 17 RC meeting so that you may watch and participate in the endorsement proceedings. The meeting will start at 3:45pm in Room 118 at the high school.

BHEA's PAC, funded by voluntary member contributions, has saved thousands of dollars that are ready to be spent on this school board race. In addition, our union has over 400 members whose collective will is a power unto itself...with the ability to personally knock on thousands of doors throughout Beverly Hills in support of our endorsed candidates. BHEA is counting on our members to make the Nov. 3 election a victorious one.

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## **Tense Board of Education Meeting Lays Bare Divisions**

A relatively short official agenda was substantially lengthened on Sep. 8 as partisans for two Board of Education members sparred during the first two hours of an otherwise routine meeting. Dozens of community members were drawn to the Board meeting over revelations that Board Vice-Pres. Myra Lurie traveled to San Bernardino to witness the legal proceedings of a financial judgment rendered against her Board member colleague Brian Goldberg. The judgment was rendered in civil court over a private business dealing in which Goldberg was involved. The civil case was a personal venture of Goldberg's that did not involve BHUSD either financially or politically. Nonetheless, Lurie used time at the Board meeting to read excerpts of the judgment to the public and called into question Goldberg's respect for the law. She brought copies of the judgment to distribute at the meeting. Several audience members went to the microphone to criticize Goldberg, calling him untrustworthy.

But the lion's share of the speakers at the meeting criticized Lurie and her behavior. Easily 70 to 80% of those who spoke came down hard on Lurie, weaving several points together. They accused her of intruding into Goldberg's personal affairs, attempting to distract the community's attention away from more pressing school issues, and lack of civility toward her colleague. One speaker told her she was carrying out a "personal and political agenda" against Goldberg. Another said that Goldberg's legal problems had "no relevance" to our district. Several speakers told Lurie that her focus on Goldberg is intended to create a smokescreen to hide her own failings as a Board member. Several speakers specifically referred to the politically charged issue of the August termination of Strategic Concepts as the lead manager of Measure E construction. The district and Strategic Concepts have both sued each other, with the district citing contract irregularities. Lurie voted to approve the contract last year, but Goldberg voted against it saying that the bidding process was not competitive enough.

BHEA members Joyce Medway and Joel Pressman spoke at the meeting, as did BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée. Medway called on the board to return to school business. Pressman said all community members should act respectfully. Bushée spoke on behalf of our union, detailing Goldberg's accomplishments as a Board member, imploring the Board to return to good governance, and criticizing Lurie for attacking Goldberg instead of dealing with school issues. Goldberg offered a brief statement, saying he will continue to serve as a Board member and work diligently on behalf of BHUSD.

The rest of the meeting went smoothly. Board member Myra Demeter said legislation in Sacramento is awaiting the governor's signature that would allow BHUSD to recover 60% of the per-pupil revenue for out-of-district students on permit, even though we are now a basic aid district. Supt. Jerry Gross said that last year's state test results for BHUSD look good and offered thanks to all. He also said that another company has been hired to continue the Measure E construction work. Board Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty commented on the "excellence" of our district. Goldberg asked for data that show to what degree the Board met its goals from last year.