



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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Speech on inequities of budget cuts delivered by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée at the Feb. 26, 2008 Board of Education meeting:

Our district is in a financial crisis. Even though our district's own data show only a projected \$2.4 million loss of revenue from the state next year, our administrators are proposing \$3.7 million in cuts tonight, leaving a \$1.3 million surplus to go on a tax-payer financed spending spree. Our superintendent must explain to the community why \$1.3 million of new spending is necessary in the middle of this financial crisis. But no matter what explanation is offered, it is an inescapable fact that \$3.7 million of cuts will be made if tonight's proposal is enacted, of which \$3 million will have a direct negative impact on the classroom in the form of cuts to classroom teachers, daily on-site classroom support for teachers and students, and classroom supplies for our students.

If tonight's proposal is enacted, 33 teachers and 5 clerical workers will lose their jobs. That's 38 positions erased. This represents about 10% of the teaching force, or about 8% of all non-management employees in our district. I have a study here from the Las Virgenes school district. It compares 21 districts statewide that are similar in size, constituency, and/or resources to Beverly Hills, including Santa Monica, Palos Verdes, La Cañada, and San Marino. Beverly Hills ranks 17 out of 21 on the percentage of the budget spent on instruction. However, Beverly Hills comes in 2nd place on student enrollment per district-level administrator. This means that no other district in the study except for Santa Monica had fewer enrolled students per district office administrator than Beverly Hills. And finally, Beverly Hills ranks #1 in district administrative costs per student. We spend about \$900 in administrative costs for each student enrolled. The average for the 21 districts is \$460 per student. Last Wednesday, our Board Vice-President Nooshin Meshkaty remarked favorably that La Cañada is a lean district. This study backs her up. La Cañada spends about \$410 in administrative costs per student...less than half of what Beverly Hills spends.

If this proposal is enacted tonight, only one part-time administrator will be out of a job. One-half of one position versus 38 non-management positions, including 33 teachers. This is not right for kids. The proposed cuts fall disproportionately upon the classroom while protecting district office administrators. Where do our superintendent's priorities lie? Last November, our superintendent attempted to secure a premature extension of her employment contract, backing down only after widespread opposition throughout the teaching staff and the community. However, in that same month our superintendent did succeed in negotiating a healthy pay raise for herself and to this day remains the only employee in our district to have received a raise this year. The results of internal polls of the staff on these two incidents indicate widespread dissatisfaction with these actions. I fear that our superintendent's credibility among the staff is going down.

I end tonight not with my own words, but with those of Clif Smith, the publisher of the Beverly Hills *Courier*, who editorialized the following on February 22: "The worst form of public school mismanagement is the padding of administrative staff at the expense of classrooms. We detect the bureaucrat population growing as a protected class while the classes suffer. We fear the best teachers are being forced out at the expense of extra district staff."

Community, parents, BHEA members, Board, administrators...I thank you for your attention.