



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

Web: BHEA.org

241 Moreno Drive, Beverly Hills CA 90212

Phone: (310) 277-9364

Speech on the quality of educators and the injustice of layoffs delivered by CSEA Pres. Paul DeVargas at the Feb. 26, 2008 Board of Education meeting:

Good evening.

Aristotle said that “[those] who educate children deserve more honor than parents who merely gave birth; for bare life is furnished by the one, the other ensures a good life.” Whether the educators of this school district are to be shown that honor which they deserve will be decided tonight by a panel of six.

The world of educators does not end at the classroom wall. It continues in the school’s offices, libraries, halls, and playgrounds. ALL of the employees of this and every school district are educators, whether they are called teachers, instructional aides, secretaries, playground aides, custodians, groundskeepers, food service workers, or any of the myriad of working people who your children learn from every day while at school.

Tonight, nearly sixty educators have been put in the cross hairs of this district, thirty-nine of whom may be terminated altogether — though guilty of no wrongdoing. Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition, and this is evidenced by the fact that tonight the subsistence of these sixty educators is up for debate at all.

Teachers teach because they care. But when threatened with becoming the scapegoats for administrative failures, it becomes difficult to do either. What will students learn about caring for others, when his district teaches him that it’s okay to discard people like so much trash, as long as it keeps the books straight?

Tonight you must consider whether or not to allow these sixty educators to continue to teach the children of this community. Tonight you must consider whether or not to teach your children the true value of an educator. Tonight you must consider the value of human beings versus the value of the almighty dollar. But inasmuch as moral principle is a looser bond than pecuniary interest, tonight it is imperative that you consider the fact that yours are not the only children affected by the decision made tonight by you six.

Bad administration, as we have witnessed, can destroy good policy; but even the best administration can never save bad policy. The layoffs proposed tonight, ANY layoffs, are bad policy. Do right by our students, do right by their parents, do right by the future of this community, and do right by this district’s educators, both inside and outside of the classroom.