



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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Speech on the direction of our district delivered by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée at the Oct. 28, 2008 Board of Education meeting:

“In the eleven years that I have completed in our district, I have worked for five superintendents and more assistant superintendents than I can keep track of. This high rate of administrative turnover has created a years-long leadership vacuum that has coincided with the loss of approximately half of our teaching staff in the last five years. I have watched our district lurch from one set of policy initiatives to another. From power standards to professional learning communities to collaborative assessment conferences to interventions.

“The elimination of developmental classes at the high school has virtually no support from teachers. Why? Because our district has bungled its implementation. In fact, many teachers believe that the most vulnerable students who once had a successful support system at our high school now face even greater hurdles. I asked about 100 teachers yesterday their opinion on this question: ‘Do you believe that there are students right now at our high school who, as the result of the elimination of developmental classes, are in over their heads?’ It took less than a second for virtually all teachers to raise their hands.

“Here is an example. With the elimination of developmental courses at our high school, our district said that systems would be created to support students this year who now suddenly find themselves programmed into college-prep courses. There is no system in place. It has all fallen on the classroom teacher to figure it out on the fly in real time. It’s a scatter-shot approach. History – no support. Science – no support. Math – as of two weeks ago, let’s put two teachers into the classroom instead of one. English – let’s have students take an extra period of reading. There’s no plan.

“Here’s another example. Last year, our district eliminated developmental math entirely. All students were programmed into college-prep Algebra courses. Students who did not succeed in the first semester of Algebra had no course to go into to get their learning needs met. So, what did our district do? They programmed these students into second semester Algebra! Help came for these students in the form of after-school tutoring during the last two months of the school year. So, if our district is worried about falling test scores, let it be known that poor district planning has let our students down, not deficiencies in teacher performance.

“The intervention concept so fashionably bantered around at these Board meetings is so fragmented and without direction that tonight’s certificated personnel report asks you to approve two wildly different rates of pay for the same intervention work, paying K-8 teachers half the rate of high school teachers.

“I offer the following as positive solutions. 1) Reestablish trust between teachers and administrators. 2) Foster meaningful collaboration among colleagues that incorporates everyone’s ideas, not district-mandated collaboration that is viewed as busy work. 3) Turn to tried-and-true methods with proven records of success. Did you know that our English

Department has data that establishes, historically, the successful transition from developmental classes to college-prep classes as students move through the high school?

“Teachers are ready to find solutions. Please join us. Thank you.”