



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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Speech on layoffs delivered by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée at the Mar. 24, 2009 Board of Education meeting:

“Good evening. Personnel action you take tonight will allow the district to pull back two of the four layoff notices that it issued two weeks ago. I am here tonight to talk about the two remaining notices, one affecting a middle school P.E. teacher, another affecting an elementary teacher. I will ask tonight that you either reprioritize the district budget or spend more of the budget to continue your commitment to these two teachers and the students they serve.

Let’s look at the P.E. position first. Last summer, the district hired several additional P.E. teachers to lower the student to teacher ratio in middle school P.E. The district is now reversing course by laying off a middle school P.E. teacher. Student to teacher ratios will go up...unless enrollment goes down in middle school next year. Something we won’t know until September actually arrives. And what if enrollment goes down? Will our funding be affected next year? No, it will not. Why not? Because state law allows districts collect revenue based on the higher of current year or prior year ADA. The state gives you a year so that you can really verify that enrollment turned out to be lower before your funding is adversely affected. Take advantage of it. What if middle school enrollment stays steady or even increases? It might be too late to hold on to this good P.E. teacher, who may be already looking for a new job for next year. Why contribute to teacher turnover when it’s not absolutely necessary? Cost to district to keep this teacher in the classroom next year: \$38,000 + statutory benefits.

Now let’s look at the elementary situation. A layoff notice received by a new hire due to a teacher on special assignment returning to the classroom. Here we have a situation where the administration has determined that the district will be overstaffed in K-5 by exactly ONE teacher next year. Cost to district to keep this teacher in the classroom next year and help reduce class sizes: \$59,000 + statutory benefits.

I offer you three solutions: 1) Delay filling the vacancy that currently exists for the custodial manager position. Use that already budgeted money to keep these teachers in the classroom next year. 2) Use 0.2% of the 4% reserve for economic uncertainty to keep these teachers in the classroom next year. This option still keeps us above both the 3% state-mandated minimum and above the historical 3.7% minimum our district maintained for many, many years. Because our entrance into basic aid appears to farther out than originally projected, there is less urgency to keep a high reserve at this time. 3) Reallocate money from some other area of the budget where the impact to the classroom won’t be felt as acutely.

Time is of the essence here. Every day that passes increases the odds that we will lose these two good teachers. Invest in them and you invest in our mission to educate. Tell these two teachers, ‘You’re important to us. We’re going to tighten our belts and find a way to keep you.’ We are so close here. Two layoff notices. What a statement you would make to students and parents! Tell them, ‘We’re keeping your teachers.’ What a statement you would make to your employees! Tell them, ‘We’re maintaining our investment in you.’ And what a statement you would make to the

community at large! Tell them, 'In Beverly Hills Unified, we stick together as a team, in both the good times and the bad.' Thank you."