



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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Speech on management philosophy delivered by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée at the Nov. 18, 2008 Board of Education meeting:

“Good evening. One of the indicators of the health of any organization is the rate of turnover of its employees. Happy employees tend to stay a long time. Unhappy ones tend to leave. Based on the seniority list from last year coupled with the number of new members that BHEA signed up this year, I predict that our 5-year turnover rate is right around 50%. This means that one half of the certificated staff in BHUSD has left our district in the last five years. This represents the exodus of 160-170 employees since 2004. Chalking up high turnover rates to retirements, relocations, and other personal reasons presumes that there is not a problem, a notion I reject. There is a problem. We’re losing far too many employees far too fast. How can we work together to retain the quality teachers and quality education support professionals that we currently have?”

I think we need to build more trust, for sure. As we begin the search for our next superintendent, we are presented with another opportunity for renewal. As Board of Education members, you have the opportunity to turn in a new direction. I attended last night’s Board study session and listened carefully to your public comments. I am encouraged by your willingness to seriously consider a superintendent interview process that includes major employee and community stakeholders. This is a positive change. I hope that you are encouraged by our desire to advocate for positive change, too. Many of us have come here tonight to make you aware of some of the problems facing our district. And we come seeking stronger ties. We come hoping that our employer’s desire is to find solutions to these problems through dialogue with BHEA. So many of the members I serve have so much to give, yet feel uninspired and unsupported in our efforts to contribute to positive change. How can we turn this around?”

My suggestion is to, first and foremost, adopt a new management philosophy. One that embraces communication. One that reaches out. One that believes that employees are part of the solution, not part of the problem. One that respects our employment contracts. A philosophy that believes some of the best solutions to our curricular challenges can be homegrown rather than transplanted from other districts. A philosophy that pays more than just lip service to collaboration, but that actually incorporates input from employees into major decisions. A philosophy that recognizes, respects, and values BHEA members as vital human resources, worthy of the same care and maintenance as our physical infrastructure.

In BHEA’s opinion, hiring a superintendent with the above qualities is extremely important. This is why we have been advocating so strongly for inclusion in the interview process. We need a superintendent who will lead. Someone who will build trust with employees. I believe that we can lower our turnover rate. I believe that whatever luster our district has lost in recent years can be regained. We need to build trust. It will take a commitment from this Board and from our new superintendent to make it happen, a commitment that must be grounded in a new approach to management.

Thank you.”