



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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Speech on negotiations delivered by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée at the Aug. 26, 2008 Board of Education meeting:

“Good evening. I stand before the Board and the public this evening to talk about the start of this school year. Tomorrow teachers return to work. And although there will be lots of smiles and trading of summer stories, one big, big subject will be on weighing on teachers’ minds. Namely, contract negotiations. Unfortunately, negotiators for BHEA and the district have been unable to reach agreement on salary and benefits. Although we have narrowed our differences considerably, teachers will start this school year making the same amount of money as they did on July 1, 2006...over two years ago. Inflation has eroded the buying power of these salaries and sky-high gas prices have created a difficult situation financially for many teachers.

“Happy people make better employees. You see, the more you have to worry about making your mortgage payment, the less focused you’ll be on your job. Some teachers are now having to get second part-time jobs to make ends meet. Some teachers are leaving in search of better salaries and more affordable neighborhoods. The west side of Los Angeles is a very, very expensive place to live. Our compensation package needs to be reflective of this. Other districts in California have done a better job than us recently in keeping up with the Joneses. Finding top-end salaries in the \$90,000 range is now quite common. Some California districts even top \$100,000 coupled with starting salaries no lower than \$50,000. Our top end barely breaks \$80,000. The Beverly Hills Unified School District has the second-highest per-pupil funding rate in the state of California when all revenues are taken into consideration. There is no reason why we can’t set a goal of attaining the second-highest salaries in the state.

“It’s a simple principle, really. You attract and retain the best employees by offering the best compensation package. Tell teachers that they’re valued by spending money on them. Invest in your human resources. There is no single factor of greater importance in the education of students than that of the teacher. Recently, the district has found money to restore cut programs and will on September 9th consider a recommendation to restore cut supplies. I assert to you tonight that you must take a balanced approach and also allocate sufficient money to seal the deal on salaries and benefits. We’re very, very close to agreement. Show the teachers, counselors, and other certificated members that you value their work and their commitment to students. Give your bargaining team the latitude to achieve a fair settlement. It’s very much within reach. We are this close to an agreement. Teachers deserve to work in an environment where their primary focus can be on innovative, ever-expanding teaching techniques, and not how to make ends meet for their families. Thank you.”