



Teachers Association of Long Beach, CTA/NEA

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February 21, 2011

Felton Williams, President
Long Beach Unified School District
1515 Hughes Way
Long Beach, CA 90810

Chris Steinhauser, Superintendent
Long Beach Unified School District
1515 Hughes Way
Long Beach, CA 90810

RE: Layoffs

Dear President Williams and Superintendent Steinhauser:

We write regarding the LBUSD's decision to issue approximately 1,000 layoff notices to TALB members. You have stated that these cuts are required due to school funding reductions that are likely if voters fail to approve an extension of existing temporary taxes, as part of prospective June ballot initiative. We agree with this premise, to a point. We know of no other moderate to large districts planning to issue notices of over 20% of the certificated unit. Thus, we believe that there are some internal causes and concerns that are contributing factors to the excessive number of LBUSD layoff notices.

Decision Making Process

"Decisive budget action is needed now – for next year – in order to avert unmanageable cuts two years from now. "
TALB public comments to the LBUSD Board of Education, January 27, 2010.

The School Board did make significant budget cuts last year when these comments were made before the school board. The cuts were intended to balance what was then characterized by the District as a \$90 million, two-year shortfall.

By September, things had changed as the District benefited from unexpected increased funding in the form of approximately \$17 million in additional annual revenue that was not factored into the earlier fiscal equation, plus about \$15 million in one-time money from the Ed-Jobs bill. The two year effect of the cuts made by the School Board last spring, and the ongoing revenue increase, should have resulted in a balanced budget going into next year. Modest layoffs may have still occurred this year, but they would not have been nearly as "unmanageable" as currently proposed; because the need to cut programs would have been lightened by the effect of implementing reduced cuts over two-years.

Instead, the District administratively restored staffing. These decisions all but negated many of the School Board's staffing reductions from last spring. The School Board should have made the decision to restore staffing in public chambers, so the fiscal ramifications of the decision and resulting potential for massive layoffs this spring could have been considered before action was taken. As it turned out, the decision was not made in public and has had significant fiscal consequences.

The decision did not save jobs, erased the School Board policy decision last spring, and left the District with the need for massive cuts going into next year. Balancing the budget earlier with the more modest cuts approved by the School Board last spring *would* have saved many teachers, nurses, and librarians from the layoff process. Failing to execute the School Board's decisions last spring has now resulted in hundreds of additional layoffs and a diminished likelihood less senior employees laid off will be rehired in the near future.

Even if the June initiative passes, we are looking at program cuts that would otherwise not been necessary. And if the initiative fails, the cuts will be much higher than they should have been due to the failure to carry out the School Boards actions from last year; acting earlier and achieving the multi-year effect of smaller cuts.

Common Data & Unanswered Questions

We are concerned by the lack of common data and unanswered questions as they relate to the upcoming layoff of hundreds of teachers, nurses, and librarians.

The District recently claimed that it has reduced the ranks by 500 employees from last year. We can't find any confirming evidence to support this claim in standard district fiscal documents. The District also claims cuts to "have cut more than \$170 million in the *past* three years." Likewise, District documents on expenditures over the past three years are inconsistent with this statement.

Resolving difficult problems starts with a common understanding of the problem, including mutually accepted documentation. If such documentation exists for these claims, we would be pleased to review it with the District. If it exists, however, it will add to our confusion over the need for such massive layoffs.

Transparent Priorities

Previously, we expressed concern about the decision to administratively restore programs outside of the public School Board process. We are also concerned about a number of other layoff related decisions that have been less than transparent.

Skipping Criteria: The School Board is again allowing the administration to make decisions about "skipping" (creating exceptions for the objective criteria of credential and seniority). Skipping is generally demoralizing for employees because the criteria can be subjective. TALB requested last year that the School Board make a decision about skipping at a public meeting as a part of the layoff resolution. We requested the same this year. The School Board again decided to allow administration to make decisions at their discretion. This process allows for policy decisions that are not subject to public input or review, until after the fact. It is an important matter that will determine who losses a job and who does not. Even after the staff explanation, which erroneously claimed that the Administrative Law Judge makes the decision and admitted to recommendations about individual job skips (as opposed to larger job categories), the Board allowed the process to continue with little comment. The failure to vet and approve specific criteria, as was done with the tie breakers, will leave the School Board vulnerable to a process that may be marred by accusations of administrative cronyism.

Secretive and Selective Restoration: Last year, when programs were administratively restored, approximately 100 of the restorations were Teachers on Special Assignment. Unfortunately, in many cases, these jobs were simply added to staffing ranks and then never made available on an equitable basis to the hundreds of teachers who were displaced. Administrative decisions were made about placements that were never vetted fiscally or contractually.

Inconsistent Documents/Unexplained Priorities: District documents outlining cuts for the coming year are inconsistent with other district documents. For example, the District budget reduction document claims a reduction to Teachers on Special Assignment from a current number of 157.9. Yet earlier documentation from the District regarding the current TOSA staffing identified the current total as over 200. Over 40 positions are, in this case, unaccounted. Despite

repeated requests from School Board members, no specific documentation was provided regarding administrative claims that TOSA positions must be protected at a certain level due to grant funding requirements.

Likewise, on February 1, the District made a recommendation to cut \$10 million from central office costs and an additional \$3 million in home to school transportation expenses. On February 15, the transportation reduction had been eliminated and the recommended reduction to the central office had been reduced from \$10 million to \$8.525 million. When a School Board member inquired regarding the transportation reductions, staff said it was now included in the central office reduction. It now appears that the recommendations of the central office and transportation went from a total of \$13 million on February 1, to \$8.25 million on February 15, resulting in a loss of about \$4.5 million in savings. Despite repeated requests from School Board members, no specific details of the cuts were provided concerning these reduction (of note, all of the classroom based cuts were very specific – and exact number of FTE’s in specific programs).

At the same meeting on February 15, high school health and computer applications programs were eliminated for a saving of approximately \$4 million. This cut was added to the recommendations without warning and without any site based input. In fact, it contradicts existing graduation requirements and, like the claims with the TOSA’s, could lead to a loss of Federal funding tied to the programs. It appears the health and computer programs were added to compensate for the reduction in central office cuts.

Moving Forward

We are committed to working with the District to achieve fiscal stability, save jobs, and protect our student programs. But future collaboration is a two way street that requires a commitment to dialogue and compromise. The Board must listen, question, and act independently.

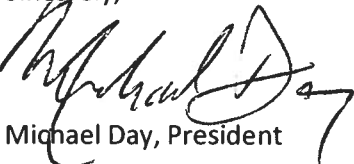
We are dismayed that the layoff situation is, as Board member Mc Ginnis said “abhorrent”; but not for the same reasons. Our dismay comes from the fact that we believe the bulk of these cuts were also avoidable.

Moving forward, the June initiative presents the District with a chance for somewhat of a “mulligan”, a second chance to stabilize the budget and save programs. If we are given the chance by the legislature, TALB will be your strongest partner in working to pass this initiative to support our local schools.

We also hope that you will reflect on where we stand as a district and as partners in the success of the schools. We hope you will recognize that TALB members have already absorbed personal sacrifice in the form of pay cuts, benefit cuts, job loss and now, even deeper layoffs. Please don’t use upcoming negotiations again as a point of division between the layoffs and the false promise of saving jobs in exchange for additional pay and benefit cuts. Beyond the fact that it is iniquitous to ask employees to economically cannibalize each other, it just does not work. Trying to save jobs and programs with pay and benefit cuts doesn’t save jobs; but it does demoralized employees, and leads to a cycle of annual layoffs. Saving jobs and student programs requires ongoing revenue.

Let’s work together to keep negotiations from becoming an attack on employees who have already given so much. Instead let’s work together and combine our joint resources so we can get past this low water mark and begin to rebuild.

Sincerely,



Michael Day, President



Joe Boyd, Executive Director

Copies: Jon Meyer, School Board Member
John McGinnis, School Board Member
Mary Stanton, School Board Member
David Barton, School Board Member
Ruth Ashley, Human Resources
Debra Ecung, Employee Relations Services