

February 3, 2012

Setting the Record Straight: Negotiations

Topic	Facts
State of the State	Since 2008, the economic crisis in the state of California has resulted in an annual 20% cut to PUSD. If Governor Brown's November initiatives fail, PUSD will lose an additional \$3.7 million annually leading to a negative budget. Without the District's reserve, the County Office of Education will not approve our State mandated 3 year budget; and the County's deadline for budget approval comes before the November initiatives. Accepting Pittsburg Employees Association's (PEA) salary and benefits proposals would create a negative ending balance in 2014-2015.
Bargaining Sessions	Over the past 9 months, the District and PEA have attempted to reach a contract agreement. After 11 bargaining sessions, 60+ hours of negotiations since May 2011, still no agreement, except for a tentative agreement reached related to the 2012-2013 work year calendar; and an MOU to reimburse Special Ed Teachers for special added authorization. PEA's contract expired June 30, 2011. The District and PEA have continued to operate for the last 7 months under the previous 3 year closed contract.
Cutbacks	Unlike many surrounding districts, PUSD has not reduced school days for students or employees, has not implemented furlough days, nor reduced medical benefits, or rolled back salaries. In fact we have increased the number of teachers in the District and maintained step and column salary increases (1.5% annually). The District's sound fiscal management and shared sacrifice by all employees in recent years has placed PUSD in a position to offer a reasonable salary increase to teachers given current economic hardships. However, PEA wants more than PUSD can afford. PEA's last proposal (applied to all employees) would cost the District approximately \$13 million over 3 years which would create a negative ending fund balance.
Compensation	There are several important objectives the District has tried to accomplish through negotiations with PEA, including salary increases. \$60,000 is the average yearly salary for a PUSD teacher. With the District's most recent proposal the average teachers salary will increase by \$4,626 over 3 years including step in column. As of this writing, the District's offer over 3 years drops our reserves to the required 3%.
Benefits	The District's contribution to employee health insurance is very competitive and among the top third in Contra Costa County. \$14,676 per year is paid towards family medical benefits for each eligible employee. \$7 million dollars is spent annually for health and medical employee benefits. PUSD is committed to maintaining District contributions at the current level.
Teacher Evaluation CSTP	PUSD has sought to align the evaluation process with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). These standards were adopted by the state nearly 15 years ago, and are designed to ensure rigor with objective criteria that support and enhance classroom teaching, and improve student achievement. The District and PEA have been negotiating the incorporation of these standards since February 2009 (before the current round of bargaining).
Staff Meetings	It is imperative to preserve key language in the contract that has been a critical element in helping teachers and administrators collaborate on curriculum and educational strategies that support student achievement gains. This language has been in the contract for over 9 years and has allowed for a focus on instructional improvements within our District.
Elementary Prep	A proposed reduction in the length of elementary lunch to 30 minutes does not reduce elementary prep, but rather proposes the prep be structured differently.



A periodic progress report to the community from the Office of Superintendent Linda K. Rondeau

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