

Date: March 23, 2010
To: Melody Gutierrez, Sacramento Bee
From: Linda Tuttle, Sacramento City Teachers Association
Re: Response to Questions

SCTA President Discusses the Challenges Ahead

As a veteran teacher and president of the Sacramento City Teachers Association, I represent the voices of more than 3,000 teachers, nurses, librarians, counselors and other certificated employees in the school district. We are the professionals who work most directly with the students in this district, and I can tell you, we are, all of us, committed to providing a quality education to our students. Currently, however, drastic state budget cuts and changes in the district administration are creating challenges for all of us. That's why it is more important than ever to work together instead of engaging in divisive tactics that don't serve anyone's interest.

1. What are SCTA's feelings toward concessions (specifically furlough days and health benefits)?

The health benefits for the teachers cost less than other bargaining units within the Sacramento City Unified School District. How much would be saved if administrators, janitors, or secretaries were on the SCTA plan? Recently, there have been a rash of proposals from the district that include asking teachers to take furlough days to help balance the budget. I couldn't disagree more with this approach. Why furloughs? I can't think of a more destructive cut to education than shutting down schools or shortening the school year. One proposal by the district would have teachers give up valuable professional development time as part of a furlough package. Eliminating teacher training days is hardly in the best interest of our students. In fact, research shows that, if anything, quality professional development results in gains in student achievement. Furloughs may be a quick fix to the district's budget problems, but are detrimental to our students in the long run. Instead, SCTA has identified money to be cut in ways that will not have such a great impact. We think we should be working together in partnership with the district to come up with a more positive and less harmful solution.

2. Have those feelings changed over the last few weeks? What is SCTA's response to dozens of teachers coming forward saying they would be willing to take furlough days or have higher copays in order to save teachers jobs?

The district met with SCTA and expressed a mutual interest in keeping class sizes low, reiterating the responses of more than 10,000 teachers, parents and students who were surveyed at the beginning of the year. The District asked how we can work together to find the monies to provide lower class sizes, and SCTA delivered on that request, presenting savings options that far exceeded what could be saved through furloughs. Some of the \$4.3 million of cost savings ideas proposed by the Association include allowing high school teachers to receive professional development credit for common planning time, compensating coaches differently, and reducing use of substitutes by eliminating activities that pull teachers out of the classroom. Unfortunately, these proposals were dismissed by the district administration. SCTA continues to maintain,

however, that these are viable solutions and that we work together to keep budget cuts as far away from the classroom and our students as possible. While we understand that some of our members have offered on their own to take furlough days or agree to higher health insurance co-pays, these are still proposals that must be considered and bargained collectively at the bargaining table.

3. How would you characterize negotiations with the district?

The current collectively bargaining agreement between the District and the Association expires in the summer of 2011, and there are no negotiations anticipated until that time. However, when we do sit down to negotiate our contract, we hope to engage in a fair process that is based in reality. This District has a habit of making cuts directly to the classroom, while increasing or expanding experimental pet projects and the use of consultants. Teacher salaries in the Sacramento City Unified School District are lower than surrounding Districts. This must be reversed if this district is to continue to attract and retain quality teachers.

What do we support?

It is more than lip service that teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions. That's what we are talking about. When we give that up, the impact goes far beyond our own livelihood. We need to work together to find the resources to improve our classrooms, not decimate them. That's why we support equity, smaller class sizes, and more counselors and psychologists to work with our students. Some of these resources can be acquired through cost shifting, while other items may require a new revenue source such as a parcel tax. This last concept will require more trust than we have at this moment, but this cooperation is what will help students thrive

4. Do SCTA executive board members receive stipends or other pay for their work? If so, can you please send me how much each is for current executive board members?

The only stipends SCTA executive board members receive is an opportunity to go to two conferences every year. Generally, they elect to go to those offered by the California Teachers Association. These statewide conferences are designed to provide knowledge and skills for members as they go about the work of the organization. Examples of these trainings include CTA's Good Teaching Conference, its Urban Issues Conference and its Equity and Human Rights Conference. Each of them offer valuable training by professionals for professionals.

5. Questions about SCTA President Linda Tuttle: I do not receive an SCTA stipend or other pay. I earn my teacher salary.

- Time served on SCTA Executive Board = Off and on for last 24 years
- Time served as SCTA President = Elected to 2 terms from 1995-99 and then elected 2007 and elected for a second term in 2009
- Time served as a teacher in SCUSD = Hire date 9/82