

Dear Colleagues:

Over the past few months, we have been trying to work with the District to help identify ideas for saving funds to help balance the budget. We hope to continue that effort. However, we have learned that the open ended and transparent dialogue that has worked for all of us in the recent past is no longer what we can always expect.

The District leadership is acting in a way that has made positive dialogue very difficult. This morning in the Bee, we learned that the District was issuing a sort of manifesto in the form of major contract take backs based on a newly constructed belief that the District has the ability to force unilateral changes. The District representatives called later in the day and then apologized saying that they intended to let SCTA know about the proposals.

Yesterday, SCTA leadership met with the Superintendent and Ellen Bell who had asked for the meeting in order to start a forum for better dialogue. At no time during the meeting did the District say or indicate that they were planning on putting forward any proposals and any reasons why. We did have an open ended discussion that included the discussion over efforts that SCTA has been pushing in order to try to shift funds in order to maintain or improve program offerings. For example, last school year after the District temporarily eliminated the traveling music program by way of the lay off, SCTA and the District discussed ways to incorporate the traveling music teachers directly into school site rosters rather than making the teachers an add on or after thought that would be continually on a lay off list. At yesterday's meeting District did repeat its plan postpone any use of TFA teachers next year and only consider them for the following year. The District also agreed with SCTA that the Adult Ed program is too important to decimate.

We also discussed at length the necessity to build trust and transparency including the idea of putting forward joint advisories in the same manner that SCTA and the District had done often in the past.

At SCTA, we know that there is a tremendous amount of concern and consternation in the field over the current budget problems. Unfortunately the cuts are going to continue, primarily because the District has over expanded and because the current fixes are based on temporary funds. Additionally, the State budget picture will not be known until sometime in the summer. Also, even though the District reached agreements with the other bargaining units to reduce their work year from 242 to 239 paid days (or an average reduction of 1.2% for one year) the District still will be issuing out a high number of classified lay offs.

During today's SCTA Rep Council meeting, we will be discussing a survey that will be put out to membership. Our hope is to receive guidance from members to help us learn which ideas for savings are the best as well as priorities.

Those of you who were in the District during the difficult years in the 1980's and 1990's remember the sacrifices that were made to help establish reasonable and fair working and teaching conditions. Some of you may also remember our Dear Colleague letters that helped keep you informed. Together as colleagues we can continue to take the right actions for students and teachers.

Sincerely, SCTA