

# CHULA VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

84 EAST "J" STREET • CHULA VISTA, CALIFORNIA 91910 • 619 425-9600

EACH CHILD IS AN INDIVIDUAL OF GREAT WORTH

February 24, 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The state economy continues to demonstrate a very weak performance. In December 2009, the nation lost 85,000 jobs. California, with approximately 12 percent of the nation's population, accounted for 46 percent of the decline. California's unemployment rate remained at 12.4 percent compared to 10 percent for the nation as a whole. The loss of jobs has taken a downward spiral and creates huge long-term concerns. History is a powerful teacher as we look back at the stock market crash of 1929 and the jobless impact that surged five and six years later.

The District's 8 percent across-the-board salary reduction proposal presented at the February 10 bargaining session with our teachers' union was a bold request to prevent issuing statutory layoff notices to over 300 quality teachers. If adopted, this reduction would apply to all employees—not just teachers. We would like to remind parents/guardians that a \$2 million reduction at the District office is being implemented. Cabinet-level administration, coordinators and other management positions, and support staff will be eliminated.

As the Chula Vista Elementary School District Board of Education and administration reviewed options for a \$15 million budget reduction, we first turned to an across-the-board salary reduction. Every year due to the salary structure of the schedules, employees receive pay increases that equate to an overall 2 percent raise. The cost of salaries continues to rise even when there is no cost-of-living increase. Over the past three years, our overall average daily attendance revenue decreased by approximately 15 percent as expenses increased. The one-time federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money is gone, and the recently announced *Race to the Top* program is not targeted to fund school district operations.

By implementing an 8 percent across-the-board salary reduction, the District would save \$10.52 million and would provide the means to preserve small class size in Grades K-3 and retain over 300 teachers. Our teachers' bargaining unit must agree to this concession before it can be considered viable. This action would go a long way to balance our budget shortfall without layoffs of large numbers of certificated and classified staff. Preserving quality of instruction and retaining our teachers are imperative for our students and also play a significant part in stabilizing our overall state and local economy.

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION

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#### SUPERINTENDENT

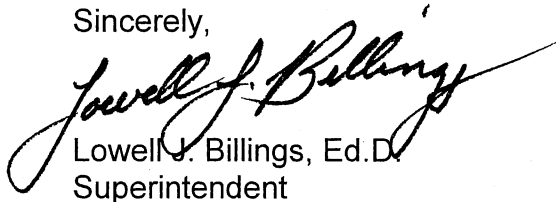
LOWELL J. BILLINGS, Ed.D.

We did not propose employee furlough days to the list of budget recommendations knowing that 185 days of certificated employees service is already limiting. Reducing the school year by five days would further disadvantage our students when compared to international standards where children attend school additional days.

We have evaluated the impact of using Class Size Reduction flexibility. A reduction of approximately 100 teachers cuts expenditures by only \$2 million and raises K-3 class size by 4 students. What this also does is disproportionately dismantle schools. Silver Wing would lose 46 percent of its staff, Otay 39 percent, and Harborside 36 percent. All schools would lose teachers. The impact would then require other teachers to transfer from their current assignments to schools vacated by laid-off teachers—with no guarantees for school assignments or grade levels. I was reminded of this impact during my recent school visits. Every school in the District would be reconstituted in some way because of layoffs in contrast to our proposed agreement on a salary reduction. On a previous visit to a school with higher longevity teachers, I observed them wearing "No 8 Percent Cut" buttons while the next school I visited with 50 percent of the teachers in temporary status did not display the button. This salary reduction at some level will be a gesture and unselfish display of compassion for all, especially the students who depend on their teachers. A significant salary reduction combined with other budget cutting options would leave discretionary funding in schools; maintain low class sizes; retain our highly trained, least senior teachers; and preserve school-based teamwork, collaboration, and trust.

This option leaves our system whole to best serve your children. Given the controversy surrounding this type of proposed recommendation, it is important that you hear the rationale and need for this type of systemic response to our state's budget crisis. We did not create the mess, but we are left with the responsibility to find the best resolution for all. The federal government prints money, the state issues IOUs, and CVESD must make ends meet. Everyone must sacrifice to make this work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lowell J. Billings". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "L" and "B".

Lowell J. Billings, Ed.D.  
Superintendent