



April 14, 2010

Dear Certificated Staff:

The District's bargaining team has been meeting with the CCFT bargaining team since January 25, 2010. At the last meeting on Monday, March 22, it became clear that both teams had reached an impasse in those talks. In the prior bargaining sessions, the District's bargaining team presented the financial situation and discussed various alternatives and options to maintain a balanced budget. The team is working diligently to reach consensus on the level and manner of the concessions that are needed from the union contract for 2010-11 and beyond.

Accordingly, the District has asked the state Public Employment Relations Board to assign an impartial, independent mediator to help facilitate further bargaining sessions. The mediator is expected to be named soon and talks will commence again. The District is approaching mediation as an opportunity to promote constructive dialogue between the parties, give both teams an important fiscal reality check, and build positive momentum toward a mutually acceptable labor agreement.

Two commonly asked questions about the impasse process are:

Q: Is the District at impasse under state collective bargaining law?

A: The Regional Director of the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) has determined the existence of an impasse. The State Mediation and Conciliation Service (SMCS) will assign a neutral mediator to facilitate talks between the two teams. It may be several weeks before the first mediation can be scheduled. The District will be participating in good faith in these mediated talks.

Q: How does mediation work?

A: It varies according to the style and techniques favored by the appointed mediator. In most cases, on the day of the mediation session, the mediator might meet together with the parties and then shuttle back and forth between their separate caucus meetings to float ideas and offer/counteroffers. The role of the mediator is to see if he or she can identify where the parties might be willing to compromise on their positions. The mediator also can offer his or her own suggestions for a settlement. This is all done in closed sessions not open to the general public or employees. It is up to the mediator to decide how long mediation should continue. Sessions are scheduled as long as the mediator feels they will be productive. Mediation can last weeks and sometimes even many months.

At this point, it is safe to say that everyone at the table understands the magnitude of the challenges the district is facing to manage rapidly reducing resources from the state without jeopardizing the ongoing program and employment needs. Unfortunately, it is not a case of *if* cuts will need to be made, but rather *how* they can be accomplished collaboratively and compassionately. The District is committed to participating in mediation in good faith. The highest priority continues to be providing a quality learning environment for all students. We recognize the prime importance of your role in that equation.

Making decisions in this extremely volatile, uncertain and unpredictable financial environment is difficult. Districts around us who have over-committed their budgets in the past are now paying the price. Districts that locked in restrictive language have now mortgaged their ability to be flexible enough to survive in these changing circumstances. The price tag for accepting furloughs and other budget cuts cannot be restrictive conditions that make it difficult to rebound once these economic hard times are over.

We value the contribution you make every day to the success of our school district. We also appreciate your patience, understanding and support as we work through this mediation process toward agreement. As we move forward with mediation, we will keep you informed of our progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dr. Myrna Rivera Coté".

Dr. Myrna Rivera Coté
Superintendent