SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

October 29, 2014

An Open Letter to CUSD Officials and Representatives

In light of Superintendent Campbell's recommendations to close schools and the District's and Board's pleas for the public to generate alternatives, we would like to call attention to recent decisions made to voluntarily increase spending. We hope to dispel the mystery surrounding how the District finds itself in this current fiscal "crisis". As presented at last night's Board meeting, the following is a timeline that demonstrates a pattern of:

- Correspondence from the Calaveras County Office of Education (CCOE) warning CUSD of their fiscal reality and strongly recommending against additional increases to on-going costs
- CUSD Board approval of AB1200 Disclosure Statements certifying that cost increases could be met
- CUSD Board approval of voluntary expenditure increases

April 30, 2013 letter from CCOE to Mark Campbell regarding the District's AB1200 Disclosure Statement for the Calaveras Unified Educators' Association (CUEA) agreement stating: "this agreement will require ***additional expenditure reductions*** beyond those already planned of approximately $548,000 in 2014/2015…In spite of these significant expenditure reductions, the District's projections continue to reflect deficit spending of more than $1 million dollars annually...It is evident that many of those reductions will be difficult to achieve both politically and programmatically. Our office believes that this agreement exacerbates what is already a financially tenuous situation for the District, and strongly recommends that the District does not make any further increases to on-going costs".

May 10, 2013 letter from CCOE to Mark Campbell regarding the District's AB1200 Disclosure Statement regarding the CASTA agreement reiterating CCOE's strong recommendation that the District not make any further increases to on-going costs.

May 14, 2013 the CUSD Board approved the AB1200 and agreement with CUEA. The purpose of AB1200 is to require the District to demonstrate fiscal solvency prior to any salary increase.

June 25, 2013 the CUSD Board approved the AB1200 and agreement with CASTA. When combined with the 5/14/13 CUEA agreement, these approvals **increased the District's cost by approximately $360,000**.

May 1, 2014 letter from CCOE to Mark Campbell regarding the District's AB1200 Disclosure Statement that reads, "an additional $436,000 in budget reductions would be needed to meet the reserve requirements and the salary agreement, and that deficit spending would continue". Per the letter, "our office believes that this agreement exacerbates what is already a financially tenuous situation for the District, and strongly recommends that the District does not make any further increases to on-going costs".

May 13, 2014 the CUSD Board approved an AB1200 Disclosure Statement certifying that the costs associated with the proposed collective bargaining can be met during the term of the agreement. The Board approved two salary and benefit agreements, one with CUEA and another with the ROP teachers, **totaling approximately $938,000 in new costs to the District**. The Board ignored the warning and recommendations from CCOE.

Six weeks later on June 24, 2014 the Fiscal Director announced that CUSD is looking at a $1.8 million deficit for 2014/2015. Superintendent Campbell stated that he "holds himself personally responsible for the position we are in today…we will work as a team to protect people, programs and kids."

June 30, 2014 the CUSD Board rescinded employment offers to 8 teachers and is now required to implement severe budget reductions. CUSD proposes to lay off additional teachers, increase class sizes to the maximum and close community schools.

Within approximately one year (May 2013 to May 2014), the CUSD Board approved voluntary increases to the District's on-going costs of approximately $1.3 million.

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Proposed Solutions
When reflecting upon the above timeline and sequence of events, we would like to present two possible solutions. They are based on the principles of FAIRNESS and EQUITY. These options do not include destructive, long-term cuts that disproportionately impact isolated sectors of our school district. These are unified solutions for a unified school district. They do not include the closure of schools and can eliminate or minimize the loss of additional jobs.

Preferred Solution: Institute salary and benefit reductions.
Meet the deficit by shared and equal sacrifice like we have always done in rural communities. It is understood that the negotiations for certificated and classified staff take place behind closed doors and staff are not able to discuss the status of these proceedings openly. However, management is not affiliated with a union. We ask that management step forward in a leadership capacity and offer concessions proactively. Do not wait to "follow suit" behind your employees. Step forward, assume your responsibility for the reality of this fiscal crisis and institute pay cuts at the management level ~ regardless of what happens at the other tables. Community members are demanding accountability.

Alternate Solution: Institute universal site budget reductions.
School sites and the district office could equitably share the reductions by making modest cuts at each site. Local authority can be exercised and each site can formulate individualized solutions (this can be a combination of cuts and/or revenue). The process can commence at each site and be a joint effort between administration, teachers, and families. This should include all programs. Without currently having access to all of the budgets, an exact figure cannot be determined, but an estimated 4.5% budget adjustment would need to be implemented at each school site and the district office.

Moving Forward
You (the bargaining units and district management) are in a unique position to come to the table and take a hard look at the voluntary spending increases that you have agreed to and implemented over the past two years. Regardless of whether or not you knew at the time what these agreements would do, you can take responsibility for the ramifications that we have seen to date. These agreements total nearly $1,300,000 in added, on-going spending and here we are scrambling to figure out how to come up with $875,000 in Phase II cuts.

You have the power to stop the destructive and divisive trend of pitting school against school, community against community. We are a unified school district. All of our schools and programs can potentially remain intact by considering an option that reduces salaries and benefits, bringing them back towards the figures that existed prior to the ill-advised, voluntary increases. These reductions can be temporary in nature and can be reinstated when district revenues increase. We ask that you consider offering retirement incentives and the reduction of Core Days, both of which could make the needed salary and benefit reductions even less.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and action.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheri Aguiar, Parent
Mokelumne Hill Elementary

Courtney Oneto-McDermed, President
Mokelumne Hill Elementary Partners-In-Education

Lynn Brown, President
West Point Elementary Parent/Teacher Group

Kelly Riley, President
Rail Road Flat Elementary Parent Teacher Club

* The referenced documents are being sent as attachments to this letter.

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