



## **SFUSD-UESF NEGOTIATIONS NOTES**

*March 22, 2006*

In response to UESF leaders' recent call for a strike vote by the end of March, SFUSD negotiators are asking union leaders to postpone the strike vote and remain at the bargaining table to complete contract negotiations. The Board of Education has offered the union salary increases totaling 7.5% by next June, including a 2% increase retroactive to January 1, 2006.

Interim Superintendent Gwen Chan and Board of Education President Norman Yee reiterated their respect and gratitude for the hard work of UESF members. "I greatly appreciate that thousands of educators are working tirelessly across our schools each day on behalf of our students," said Chan. President Yee added, "The Board's current offer is made in good faith to recognize their hard work while preserving the District's fiscal stability."

Ms. Chan, who attended the parties' most recent mediation session on March 13<sup>th</sup>, has also pledged to be actively engaged in future contract talks and pursue additional outside resources once a settlement is reached. "I sincerely want to work together to pass a local parcel tax for additional compensation and continue to press Sacramento for full funding of K-12 education," she said. "Considering that I am just getting started as Interim Superintendent, I hope our teachers and paraprofessionals will give me a chance to work with them to get the adequate funds we and our students need."

SFUSD negotiators are calling on UESF leadership to let their members vote on the proposed contract offer instead of threatening a strike, which would be harmful to both students and employees. UESF cannot legally strike until the conclusion of mediation and fact-finding by independent experts.

In expressing disappointment with union leaders' call for a premature strike vote, school district officials pointed out serious concerns, as outlined below.

### **SFUSD's Fiscal Condition**

- The State has failed to appropriately fund SFUSD and other K-12 districts across the state for the last four years.
- SFUSD's Board of Education has recently made painful decisions to consolidate schools. These decisions have made possible the compensation increases currently offered to teachers and paraprofessionals.
- The Board of Education is offering UESF employees increases in wages that will further stretch already thin resources.
- Meeting UESF's demands of a 10% pay raise would require significantly more expenditure reductions, including draconian cuts to schools, programs, and jobs.
- To avoid the fate of other Bay Area school districts that have gone bankrupt and have been taken over by the State, the Board of Education must balance demands for further compensation increases against SFUSD's fiscal solvency.

- Current negotiations are taking place in a time when health care costs are rising dramatically, SFUSD is losing funds due to declining enrollment, and the State continues to under-fund its Prop 98 obligations.
- In recognition of the District's financial condition, SFUSD principals have already accepted the same offer that UESF leaders are rejecting in favor of a strike. Contrary to information disseminated by UESF leaders, salary schedules for both principals and UESF members were last increased in School Year 2002-03.
- Oakland Unified School District went bankrupt largely due to signing union contracts that it could not afford, necessitating a \$100 million state bailout and the loss of local control. Oakland teachers now want to restore wage cuts of 4% they accepted two years ago due to that district's insolvency. By comparison, UESF leaders are encouraging members to strike for more than the 7.5% wage increases that SFUSD has offered.

### **Negotiations Process**

- UESF leaders have called a strike vote after only two sessions of mediation. Three more sessions are scheduled (3/21, 4/4, 4/10). All five sessions were scheduled mutually by SFUSD and UESF.
- Calling for a strike vote in the middle of mediation undermines the prospects of reaching a mediated settlement. SFUSD wants to remain at the bargaining table and is committed to continuing to negotiate in good faith, around the clock and as frequently as necessary.
- If mediation is unsuccessful, both parties would proceed to fact-finding, which would include an independent analysis of SFUSD's ability to afford pay raises by an impartial expert. District negotiators would welcome this independent analysis.
- A strike would only be legal following the conclusion of the legally prescribed mediation and fact-finding process. UESF leaders should commit to bargain in good faith and pledge not to call an illegal strike.
- The Board of Education is committed to following collective bargaining processes outlined in California law and working as hard as possible to avoid a strike.

### **Strike Implications**

- A premature strike vote will greatly increase the chances of a strike called by UESF leaders, forcing employees to choose between crossing picket lines and going unpaid.
- A strike could destroy chances for passing a parcel tax, which would significantly increase teacher compensation. SFUSD and UESF leaders should cease expending significant and precious energy fighting each other, when the best solution is to seek more funding together. The parties need to settle this contract with a fair raise for teachers and paraprofessionals that SFUSD can afford, and move on to work together for a parcel tax and more state and federal resources.

*For more information, please contact SFUSD Labor Relations at 241-6230  
or visit [www.sfusd.edu](http://www.sfusd.edu)*