



January 15, 2016

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Dear Modesto City Schools students, families, and community:

Thank you for your patience as we continue to work through the negotiation process with our teachers and other certificated staff. We remain optimistic that we will be able to come to an agreement and continue to bargain in good faith, keeping our students at the forefront of all our decisions.

We began the negotiation process in March 2015. Since then, the District's bargaining team met with the Modesto Teachers Association (MTA) 11 times to negotiate contract language. The District and the MTA agreed negotiations were at an impasse November 3, 2015. Impasse provides an opportunity to have a third party mediator help finish negotiations.

Our first mediation session was December 15, 2015, and while the meeting was positive, we did not come to an agreement. There are three unresolved areas:

1. Salary – MTA proposes a 7.3% salary increase – the District proposes:
 - 4% salary increase (Classified and management staff already accepted this percentage increase)
 - Work year will remain at 185 days
2. Hours of Employment – the District proposes:
 - The ability to adjust start and end times by limited amounts to better serve families
 - TK-6 teachers will complete grades the last day of school (last trimester only) to ensure families receive timely information on student progress
 - Continue two site staff meetings per month, allocating 15 minutes for MTA business at one meeting per month
 - Provide teachers with 14 early release days for teacher collaboration
 - Clarification of the preparation time for teachers in grades 1-6 due to holidays or minimum days
3. Staffing ratios – the District proposes:
 - Continue the practice of staffing instrumental music based on student interest
 - Maintain current contract levels for high school counselor and college counselor ratios

In Modesto City Schools, the average teacher compensation is higher than any district in Stanislaus County, and higher than the average teacher compensation in the state. We are not experiencing the struggle to hire teachers that other Districts are experiencing. In fact, the majority of our teachers have spent their entire career in the Modesto City Schools.



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I value teacher voice and have increased communication with individual teachers and the MTA. In addition to regularly visiting schools to see what is happening first-hand, I invite staff to meet with me to discuss concerns and address rumors.

At the District level, I meet with the MTA leadership to answer questions they have regarding Board of Education meeting agenda items prior to every board meeting (usually every three weeks). In addition, I meet with teacher representatives from every school at my "Superintendent Advisory Council" meetings three times during the school year. Group participants are able to ask questions and clarify information they've heard as we learn from each other.

At the site level, teachers have more input than ever before in site-based decisions thanks to the District's investment in Professional Learning Communities (PLC). PLCs foster collaborative learning among teachers, and increase teacher empowerment and student success.

The new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) provides MCS with additional funds to address struggling students' needs. We are required to engage our stakeholders to create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) to describe how we will use the funds to improve student outcomes. Through this new budgeting process, in the last two years we have:

- Increased mental health services
- Provided science camp for all 6th graders
- Provided football helmets with concussion sensors
- Invested in high school specialized pathways and ROP programs
- Added STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) opportunities
- Increased parent outreach
- Increased access to technology
- Provided field trips to the Gallo Center for the Arts
- Expanded summer school opportunities
- Expanded music programs
- Increased programs for English learners

We are thrilled to be able to provide all of these things and hope to maintain, and add more of these services and opportunities for students. Our next mediation session with the MTA is Wednesday, January 20. I continue to work hand-in-hand with Board of Education trustees and the District's bargaining team to make certain our students have multiple opportunities available to ensure their success.

Respectfully,



Pam Able
Superintendent