

# San Bernardino city teacher jobs spared; cheers at meeting

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

By MELANIE C. JOHNSON

The Press-Enterprise

SAN BERNARDINO - School district officials will slash spending by \$31.1 million without laying off the 155 teachers who received preliminary pink slips.

The San Bernardino City Unified School District trustees voted 7-0 Tuesday night to revise a belt-tightening plan, which includes leaving 29 vacant posts unfilled, reducing health benefit costs by using an alternate program, and considering an early retirement incentive plan.

The new options could be used for \$4.2 million in savings if some of the district's planned cost-cutting measures approved in March don't pan out, said Mohammad Islam, assistant superintendent of business and finance.

Measures to save money already approved include a three-day furlough for employees, a 10 percent reduction in all office budgets and a hiring freeze.

The board vote to keep teachers comes as school districts are looking at ways to reduce spending in light of the state's \$8 billion budget cuts and the governor's proposal to slash \$4.4 billion in education spending next year.

Islam said although the governor has not submitted his budget for revision this month, he does not think it is likely that changes will be so great that it will require the layoffs.

That brought cheers from the crowd.

It also brought relief for parents, students and teachers involved in the district's California Cadet Corps program. Nearly half of the program's teachers were on the list of those who received preliminary layoff notices.

Capt. Willard Hughes, who teaches at San Geronio High School, said the board did the right thing. Lt. Stephen Cook, a teacher at Del Vallejo Middle School agreed.

"It's a blessing for the kids, especially the sixth-graders who have only had one year of experience in the program," he said. "Now they can go through seventh, eighth, ninth and through high school."

City Councilman Chas Kelly attended the meeting in support of the program after hearing from concerned parents. The Cadet Corps is the kind of program the city and school district should work together to keep, he said.

The vote followed a student-led protest outside of the Board of Education building on F Street earlier in the evening.

Around 50 student leaders from the Inland Congregations United for Change had a news conference prior to the board meeting with several trustees and Superintendent Arturo Delgado there in support.

Rocio Ruiz, 17, helped plan the protest, and along with other local high school students has gathered 5,400 signatures opposing the governor's budget plan. The group intends to send the petitions to the governor, she said. "This is something that is going to really affect teachers, students, and community as a whole," she said. "We just really need our voices heard."

Ivan Aguayo, an 18-year-old Cal State San Bernardino freshman, said colleges are getting hit, too.

"Why cut from education?" he asked. "Why not cut prisons? They cut education ... people end up in prison. Our prisons are full already."

Reach Melanie C. Johnson at 909-806-3069 or [mjohnson@PE.com](mailto:mjohnson@PE.com)